The Athenian Representative Democracy:

An Unintended Evolution

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Athenian democracy has long been regarded as a system of direct democracy - rule by the people. Scrutinizing ancient Athenian society, however, has lead to the proposition of an alternative view; Athenian Democracy evolved into a representative system. To argue this view, we first examine Athenian history, social structure, and political institutions. Next, we perform an analysis of Plato's The Republic, through a contemporary lens, to build an understanding of human nature, how governments are formed, and what constitutes a suitable government. Finally, the analysis of The Republic, coupled with the findings outlined in the literature review, are applied to ancient Athens to show that the Athenian democracy evolved into a system of representation..

Democracy is a form of government developed by the ancient Greeks around 500-400 BC. A product of continual power struggles and changes in economic equality, democracy was a radically different system of government by which the people ruled collectively rather than a single individual or small group of individuals holding power. After a series of conquests in Athens, democracy as a form of government was replaced, however the concept survived for several hundred years and regained prominence near the formation of the United States in the late eighteenth century. The modern concept of democracy appears to be very different than that of Athenian democracy on the surface, however it is possible that the idiosyncrasies of both forms of democracy are more similar than previously thought. This thesis provides an alternative way of examining the concept of democracy; is it possible that Athenian democracy was unknowingly designed as a pseu-

do-representative democracy despite the outward appearance of being a direct democracy? Or does direct democracy naturally evolve into a system of representation as the population scales upwards?

Given the historical accounts of ancient Athens and the availability of knowledge about contemporary social and government institutions, we have better ability to analyze past systems. To the Athenian philosophers, the type of government they were developing was inclusive of all "essential" people. Through the lens of contemporary social knowledge, the Athenian form of democracy was very exclusive to a certain group of individuals. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the Athenians were intentionally excluding part of the population, but it suggests that the Athenians were ignorant to their practice of democracy relative to what ideals it expressed. For instance, to be a government of the people, it follows that every sector of the population

should be able to participate in government; children and slaves are excluded from this aggregation to preserve the Athenian social and economic structure. Instead, it was the free adult male population of Athens that was allowed to take part in government and make decisions on behalf of the women and children living in their household. The power held by Athenian males over their households is akin to that of a legislative representative or a monarch, albeit in a lesser capacity. This suggests that rather than being a direct democracy, direct rule of and by the population, Athenian democracy was more aligned with representative democratic theory.

The secondary focus of this thesis is to examine the theoretical scalability of direct democracy and determine if it naturally evolves into a representative democracy. The Athenian population after the Peloponnesian War totaled 385,000 including women, children, resident aliens, and slaves; of this approximately 30,000 were Athenian citizens (Rothchild, 2007). The logistics of gathering eligible citizens to participate in governance vastly overshadows the effectiveness of direct democracy rendering the concept unusable on a large scale. One way to preserve aspects of democracy while maintaining legislative efficiency is by using a system of representation.

To develop this alternative view of Athenian democracy, this thesis will first examine the history of Athens before democracy was instituted. Subsequently, we will put into context what democracy was and how citizens were involved in governance. To better structure our alternative view, we will look at some of the pitfalls surrounding Athenian democ-

racy as it is traditionally described. Following the review of literature about Athenian democracy we will perform an analysis on Plato's The Republic through a modern lens to arrive at a conclusion regarding our alternative view of Athenian democracy and direct democracy's ability to function on a large scale.

Before beginning the literature review, there are several concepts and terms that must be defined to allow for clearer analysis. Solon and Kleisthenes were Athenian rulers who put fort democratic-style changes in the lead up to the formation of democracy as a system of government. Solon developed the precedent for institutions such as the Council of Five Hundred. Thucydides was a first-hand witness of Athenian life throughout the democratic period. Thucydides' The Peloponnesian War is a text in which several telling accounts of Athenian democracy occur, more notably the funeral oration of Pericles. On the subject of tyranny in regards to Athens, it must be established that the Athenian conception of tyranny dealt with a small group of individuals. Due to the political landscape of Greece in the years leading up to the implementation of democracy, the Athenians did not have much experience under the rule of a monarch. As such, many of their notions of tyrannical or malformed governments stemmed from oligarchic rule. The term *polis* refers to the political population of a nation, but more specifically Athens in the context of this thesis. Further definition of the *polis* will be elaborated upon later. Lastly, the term deme refers to a district of Athens.

Literature Review

The concept of democracy was developed circa fifth century BC in the Greek city-state of Athens. The premise behind democracy was that the majority of the people wielded the power of government rather than a minority of the population ruling the many. In contemporary times, it appears that the governments of developed nations claim to possess democratic tendencies as a measure of legitimacy. Indeed, most tyrannical regimes claim to have free and fair elections, a contemporary democratic ideal, while maintaining a stranglehold on political power. Although ideals such as free and fair elections or individual rights have become tenets of contemporary democracy, there was no such provision for elections nor was there a true concept of individual rights in ancient Athens. Because of the dichotomy between Athenian and modern democratic ideals, I pose the questions: was the original intent of the Athenians to develop the concept of direct democracy or was it actually a pseudo-representative democracy? If it was not a pseudo-representative democracy, is it possible that Athenian democracy naturally evolves into a system of representative democracy as the population of a nation scales upward?

Given the global influence of the United States, it follows that the state will attempt to continually advance its own ideals. But is it prudent to call the United States a democratic nation when it does not exhibit the democratic qualities of ancient Athens? Rather, the focus should not be on the United States' adaptation of democracy, but on ancient Athens. Through deeper analysis and interpretation, it seems that Athenian democracy was not so much the rule of the people as a whole, but of a select group of people ruling from the top down, consistent with the definition of an oligarchy. I, however, see the Athenian system of democracy as a pseudo-representative form of democracy. I do not believe that it was intentional that certain groups were excluded from participating in government; in part, some of this must have been a product of a patriarchal society. To begin, this literature review will briefly examine Athens before the implementation of democracy. Following that, we will investigate some concepts surrounding Athenian democracy and the role of the citizen in government. This discussion then leads to explaining structure of Athenian government, concluded by briefly examining some critical views of democracy

Athens Before Democracy

Before examining the concepts surrounding democracy, it is worth looking at the history of Athens prior to the implementation of democracy. By understanding Athenian history, it is easier to understand the motivations which helped to develop the idea of democracy. Tribal governments, economic changes, and power struggles were all factors that contributed to the development of democracy as a feasible form of government.

City-states in ancient Greece shared a rather typical system of government with that of other civilizations; Athens was a tribal government before the changes instituted by Kleisthenes in 507 BC (Held, 2006; Hansen, 1991). Athens was divided into four tribes, each of which sectioned into three ridings and several further subdivisions (Hansen, 1991). The ruling class of Athens was primarily composed of landowners and their rise to power gave way to tyrannical regimes (Held, 2006; Hansen, 1991); the words tyrannos and monarchos were synonymous words used to describe "the sole ruler who is responsible to no one other than himself, (Rosivach, 1988)" however changes in economic status for many Athenians led to shift in the balance of power favoring the small and medium-sized farmers (Held, 2006).

Tracing the redistribution of power in Athens shows the levels of instability the Athenians faced during the time period. Surrounding areas were governed by either tribal governments or monarchies. As Rosivach (1988) notes, Athenian democracy arose after the fall of the Peisistratids and other groups imposing tyrannical rule over the city-state. Tribes evolved into aristocracies and as the families of former aristocracies were killed or expelled, there were other groups aiming to fill the vacuum of power (White, 1955). As such, the power to rule moved constantly from group to group prior to the rule of Solon and Kleisthenes. Continually shifting alliances and positive economic influences of a burgeoning slave economy led to the elevation of lower economic classes. This constant change facilitated a dissolution of the line between the rulers and the ruled. Keeping in line with this brief discussion on tyranny and the Athenian city-state, it is important to note that during the democratic period of Athens, the Athenians did not have any direct experience with a tyrannical regime; the enemy of Athens was regression into an oligarchy rather than a monarchy (Rosivach, 1988). The eventual expulsion of tyrants from Athens did not necessarily mean the replacement of one form of government by another, bearing in mind the continual replacement ruling groups, but the opportunity for

the form of government already in place to function in such a way that served the interests of those other than the tyrant (Rosivach, 1988).

This brief look at Athenian history has provided some insight into the social and political landscape which produced democracy. It can be observed that a rotating control of power amongst groups contributed to the societal fear of oligarchs. An equalization of economic status, as well as a growing slave economy, allowed Athenian citizens to realign their self interests to involve more political activity. Alone, however, this does not explain how Athenian democracy may have been structured like a representative democracy. To make this connection requires analysis of Athenian democracy itself.

The Concept of Athenian Democracy

The idea of self-governance was unheard of in the ancient world. As previously discussed, Athens was ruled by tribal governments prior to the rule of individuals such as Solon and Kleisthenes. Following several reforms and a revised philosophy on humans and government, democracy took hold as the preferred constitution of Athens. However, the way in which democracy functioned, as well as the ideas surrounding democracy, supports this paper's claim of Athens being governed by a pseudo-representative democracy.

Given that the political systems in the ancient world were primarily monarchies or tribal governments, the development of democracy as a form of government was a radically new concept. According to the funeral oration of Pericles, later transcribed by Thucydides, the constitution of Athens was named a democracy, "because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people (Thucydides, 1972)." Held (2006) explains that the demos held the sovereign power to legislate and take part in judicial function, however Winton (2004) disagrees, arguing that this widely held view seems implausible. It seems that Pericles gives a unique definition of the term democracy based upon the meaning of the words *kratos* and *demos* (Winton, 2004). Rather than purely defining what democracy is, Pericles is offering a contrasting definition based upon other constitutions of the time period. The structure of monarchies and tribal governments placed power within the hands of one or several members of society. The successful function of democracy depended upon the involvement of many people in day-to-day governance (Winton, 2004). It is important to give thought to the context of phrases such as "the many" when examining the works of ancient Greeks, as well as scholars, because

a dichotomy between what democracy claimed to be and what democracy actually was begins to appear.

Democracy was not just a new form of government, but a new way of thinking in regards to the role of the citizen. Because of the importance of citizen participation, there was a shift in the thought behind who was allowed to participate in government. Economic differences amongst the *polis* had less bearing on political participation. An increase in the economic strength of small farmers circa 500 BC aided in this shift in ideology (Held, 2006; Hornblower, 1992). This meant that the poor Athenian citizen was not prevented from making contributions to government due to his lowly economic status (Winton, 2004). Individuals of the *polis* were able to wield influence through fine oratorical skills used to communicate to mass audiences (Ober, 1993). As Pericles points out, each individual was obligated to be interested in the affairs of the state in addition to their own, for he who minded only his own business had no business in Athens at all (Thucydides, 1972). Each piece of evidence points towards the integral role of the citizen in governing the Athenian state.

As mentioned previously, power was wielded through careful use of public speech. Thucydides identified a relationship amongst public speech, facts, and power itself (Ober, 1993). In the *ekklesia,* an Athenian institution which will be discussed shortly, there was no way for a speaker to know the social composition of his audience in advance (Ober, 1993). Without an individual being able to tailor their speech to the audience at hand, especially an audience the size of the *ekklesia*, the onus was on the orator to hone their rhetorical skills. The herald of the *ekklesia* would begin by asking the attendees who among them wished to speak (Kapparis, 1998) and an individual would be allowed to speak upon an issue for as long as his fellow citizens were willing to listen to him; when the members of the *ekklesia* grew tired of listening to a speaker they would shout him down (Ober, 1993). Taken in context with an individual's economic status and the fact that the demographics of the *ekklesia* were unknown to all participants, it can be seen how the emphasis on oration and rhetoric played such an integral role in the influence of power in Athens.

A new system of governing, democracy put power in the hands of the people in an attempt to move away from the oligarchic rule of the past. Rather than being simple peons, citizens became important political actors in Athens. Due to the central role of the citizen, continuous participation of citizens became integral to the function of the state. An emphasis on deliberation led to the *polis* developing oratorical

skills as a necessary tool in decision-making. After examining the role of the citizen, we now shift our focus to the concept of Athenian citizenship.

Athenian Citizenship

With the continual use of the term and focus on the citizen, what exactly was a citizen in Athens? Ancient Athens was a patriarchal society which gave responsibilities and rights to males; rights is being used as a general term in this instance given that the modern notion of "individual rights" cannot be directly traced back to Athens (Held, 2006). Indeed, Held (2006) and Ober (1993) explain that, "the demos consisted entirely of free adult males of strictly Athenian descent," to the exclusion of women and foreigners. It is with this definition of the Athenian citizen that the premise behind democracy begins to fail. How can a system of government claim to be "for the many" (Winton, 2004) when in fact only 10 to 20 percent of the population living in Athens were classified as citizens during the time of Athenian democracy (Reiter, 2013)? We will continue an investigation of this question shortly.

Ober (1993) argues against the notion that democracy in Athens was fundamentally dependent upon slavery or the exclusion of women; for the purposes of guiding this discussion, I will mainly examine the argument in regards to women. Aristotle noted that an Athenian household consisted of a master and slave, husband and wife, father and children; these three types of relationships described humanity in the eyes of the Greeks (Schaps, 1974). While there were distinct differences between free Athenian women and slaves, the lack of women in the Athenian political process corroborates the idea that a pseudo-representative democracy was the actual constitution of Athens. Schaps (1974) does say that in extreme cases women were documented as engaged in mass action, yet they were still excluded from participation in the *ekklesia* or the Council of Five Hundred. Rather, women were limited to mainly household duties while their husbands, fathers, or brothers were the heads of the household (Schaps, 1974). Any political decision was made not by the women, but the men. Through this we can see that the head of the household was king within the house, but a representative of the household in the *ekklesia.* The adult male was the voice of the household interests and he did not always have his wife's interests or his children's in mind (Schaps, 1974). The argument here is that calling the Athenian democracy a government of the many is disingenuous given that another group of the many, specifically women, were barred from government.

Athenian Institutions

Given the premise behind democracy, a possible misconception about the structure of the Athenian government would be that decisions were made by an aggregate of the *polis*, with no discernible institutions framing the Athenian governmental structure. Athens, however, contained institutions comparable to those seen in contemporary times such as the popular assembly and law courts, the *ekklesia* and *dikasteria* respectively (Reiter, 2013); additionally there were positions in office which were filled by lot. These institutions were developed in order to avoid a concentration of power among state officials (Winton, 2004).

Perhaps the most visible of the Athenian institutions, the *ekklesia* was regularly attended by approximately 5,000 to 8,000 citizens (Gomme, 1951; Ober, 1993) and convened over forty times per year (Held, 2006). Akin to the United States Congress, the ekklesia controlled finance, legislation, and foreign affairs, but rather than being expressly controlled by representatives, the *ekklesia* was controlled by regular citizens (Gomme, 1951; Held 2006).

The *ekklesia* contained a rather strange provision in regards to speech and its attendees. The *ekklesia* contained a law which gave priority to speakers over the age of fifty in debates (Kapparis, 1998). Looking back to the importance and power of public speech in Athenian society it is possible to see what sort of impact this may have had on institutional operations. This raises a question: were the older male Athenians a more powerful force than the younger males? At first glance possibly; Kapparis (1998) explains that at the beginning of a speech given by the young Athenian Demosthenes, the speaker apologized for being the one to open debate on an issue. If we recall from our earlier discussion, members of the *ekklesia* would shout down a speaker if they did not want to hear him speak. Given the fact that a young person could navigate around the formalities of age with a few apologetic words, it makes sense that the Assembly moved away from these practices, a remnant of the aristocratic state of the past (Kapparis, 1998).

Another political institution of Athens was the Council of Five Hundred. The Council was the executive and preparatory body for the *ekklesia*, as declared by Aristotle (Hansen, 1991). There appears to be some uncertainty on the composition of the Council of Five Hundred. Some scholars say that the Council was staffed by fifty members of the ten

tribes of Athens (Held, 2006), while other scholars claim that representation on the Council was based on the 139 demes, or districts (Hansen, 1991). Nevertheless, each of the members chosen to represent the tribes or *demes* were selected by lottery (Held, 2006). This system of representation based on tribe or deme helps to support our assertion of Athens being a pseudo-representative democracy. Rather than meeting forty times per year, the Council met every weekday and performed more day-to-day operations than that of the *ekklesia*. Hansen (1991) points out that the Council was more central to administrative function rather than making decisions like *ekklesia.* But given that the Council met more frequently and served as a preparatory body for the *ekklesia*, it is difficult to accept Hansen's statement about the Council's decision-making. While I will not claim that the Council was the true source of power in the Athenian government without performing further research, I will propose the idea that the Council had more of an impact on politics than Hansen explains.

Citizens were selected to staff the Council of Five Hundred and other offices through the use of the lot. The use of the lot rather than elections is important to distinguish because Aristotle regarded the lot as a democratic practice and voting as oligarchic (Taylor, 2007). Taylor (2007) questions if the lot was actually democratic in its practice or if those who volunteered for the lot were only a small cross-section of society, such as the wealthy or those who lived close to the city; it appears that the latter was more likely. Wealth was an influential factor in political activity, with wealthy families represented more heavily in many areas of political life (Taylor, 2007). Despite the attempt of democracy to equalize power, Athenian politics were riddled with corruption and bribery (Taylor, 2001). Similar to United States politics, money sped up the political process in Athens. In a society of supposed equals, wealth held the same amount of influence on democracy as it held in aristocratic societies (Taylor, 2001).

Despite being collectively ruled by the people, Athens was controlled by several institutions on a regular basis. The Athenian assembly convened at least forty times per year and was the central decision-making body of the *polis*. The Council of Five Hundred set the agenda for the *ekklesia* and was staffed by the lot, taking on the appearance of an institution which may be attributed to a representative democracy.

Critical Views of Democracy

Since the creation of democracy there has always been detractors to the system. The premise of democracy required large numbers of citizen participation, however the Athenians never had a full meeting of the citizen body (Carter, 1986). Thinking practically, it cannot be expected for the entire citizen body to meet. If thousands of people are expected to participate, and the *ekklesia* only met forty times per year, how effective can ruling and decision-making be? Hobbes' (1975) interpretation of Thucydides was that Athens functioned best when the constitution was democratic in name, but actually a monarchy under Pericles. Other scholars viewed democracy as chaotic, mob rule, with the power of the people being too excessive (Mitford, 1838; Saxonhouse, 1993; Stanyan, 1751).

This literature review draws upon historical evidence and scholarly analysis to show that the Athenian system of democracy may have been a representative system. By examining democracy from an alternative prospective, this research allows scholarship to better draw parallels between Athenian democracy and contemporary democratic ideals. Analyzing Athenian democracy with a modern viewpoint allows for a stronger basis for interpretation because of the possibility to see the evolution of democracy in both ancient and contemporary times.

Analysis

The purpose of this research is to develop an alternative way to examine Athenian democracy. This will be accomplished through logic and reasoning, examining the philosophy of Plato, and applying the knowledge to historical facts about Athens. To begin, we will lay the foundations of our reasoning by defining several key terms central to the philosophy surrounding our premise. Next, we will perform an analysis on human nature to create an understanding of human motivations. After that, the reasoning behind the formation of governments will be explained, and subsequent to this, is we will perform a deconstruction of Athenian democracy. Lastly we will expand upon how the concept of justice relates to government, later arriving at a conclusion regarding ancient Athens' status as a pseudo-representative democracy.

Laying the Foundation

Providing an alternative way of thinking about Athenian democracy is not a trivial undertaking. In order to adequately explain the reasoning, we must

first clarify a few terms to allow for a more precise understanding. First we will discuss what it means when something is *just* and what *justice* is. Following that, we will define government and explain the differences between *government* and *constitution*. It is of note that in the translation of *The Republic*, the word *constitution* is used in place of entities we would commonly call *governments*; later in this paper we revert back to using *government* rather than *constitution* to illustrate how constitutions are still systems of rule and simultaneously systems of government.

Individuals acting in a just manner, or an individual experiencing justice, was a major part of Athenian society, and the Athenian philosophy behind human action. *Just* can be defined as, "based on or behaving according to what is morally right and fair" (Just: Definition of Just in Oxford Dictionary, 2016), while justice is defined as, "just behavior or treatment" (Justice: Definition of Justice in Oxford Dictionary, 2016). The determination of what is considered "morally right" is the responsibility of society. Due to this, we must recreate the definition of *just* to make it applicable towards the target entity, ancient Athens. We can make the assertion that the definitions of just and justice are largely based upon reasonable individuals in a reasonable society. The determination of what is classified as reasonable, however, is also dependent upon society and the society's cultural values.

To reinforce the necessity of societal values for determining what is reasonable, take into account the ages in which men and women marry and procreate. "The age of consent refers to the legally defined age at which a person is no long required to obtain parental consent to get married... [and] it also refers to the age at which a person is held to have the capacity to voluntarily agree to sexual intercourse (Age of Consent Law & Legal Definition, 2016)." In the contemporary United States, the age of consent in some states is 16 years, while in others it is 18 years (Age of Consent Chart For The 50 States & D.C., 2016). It is considered unjust to engage in sexual acts with someone younger than the age of consent. Therein lies the issue; the age of consent varies from state to state which suggests that the definition of what is *just* varies from state to state.

It is observable that cultural and societal values can vary amongst states even when they are bound together as a united entity in the same time period. For instance, the grouping of states known as the "Bible Belt" possess values which are heavily influenced by the religious teachings of Christianity. Bible Belt states are generally opposed to United States progressive ideals such as same-sex marriage and abortion rights. In contrast, a state such as California is supportive of those progressive ideals; this exemplifies several states a part of the same union expressing divergent societal values. It follows that the definition of what is just in the contemporary era can contrast with that of Athens during the creation of democracy. Because of possible conflicts amongst definitions of what is just, the definition of *just* for the scope of this research will be, "preservation of an individual's general well-being." By extension, the definition of unjust will be, "damaging an individual's general well-being."

The term *justice* is as variable as the term just due to the various ways of implementing justice and the outcomes justice produces. To illustrate this point, take the following example: when a person is caught stealing an item, it would be just for the thief to return the item or pay the owner the cost of the item. The injustice in this situation is the theft of an item and the returning or reimbursement of the item's value would be justice being served. Through the triviality of this example, we see that there are multiple ways to serve justice when an individual has suffered one unjust action. In this instance, the owner receives some sort of compensation to correct the injustice.

Now consider a different example in which an individual murders another individual. To rectify the situation, the murder could possibly be jailed, fined, or executed. Once again, there are multiple ways to serve justice in this situation, but are the outcomes equal? Once taken, a life cannot be replaced, therefore paying a fine may not cover the cost of a life. Furthermore, executing the murderer only serves to take yet another life from society, and imprisonment can serve the same purpose for the length of imprisonment. At this point we must recall our definition of just: preservation of an individual's general well-being. By extending the definition of just and applying it to society, we arrive at the definition of justice: the preservation of society's function and well-being. Justice is not necessarily about the fairness or equality of the outcome, but preserving a society and allowing it to function unimpeded. Of the ways to serve justice in the murder example, the adequate outcome of preservation is determined by the society it occurs in. By extension, the form and effectiveness of justice is determined by society.

Rather than developing a definition through reasoning, as was performed for justice, it is more useful to define *government* by looking at the etymology of the word. There are several evolutions of the definition, the earliest appearing in the late fourteenth century being "an act of governing or ruling

(Harper, 2016)." In the 1550s the definition shifted to "[a] system by which a thing is governed." Further investigation reveals that government is an Old French word meaning "control, direction, [or] administration (Harper, 2016)." It appears that *government* deals with ruling and controlling the population.

Taking the same approach for the word *constitution* leads to an interesting conclusion. *Constitution* is a mid-fourteenth century word meaning "law, regulation [or] edict," stemming from the twelfth century Old French word *constitucion* and the Latin word *constitutionem* meaning "act of settling, settled condition, anything arranged or settled upon, regulation, order, [or] ordinance (Haper, 2016)." The word later evolved in the 1730s to mean "[a] system of principles by which a community is governed (Harper, 2016)." The word *constitution* is concerned with laws and regulations versus government's concern with rule. To that end, The Republic outlines several systems of principles which govern communities. For our purposes, *government* and *constitution* will be interchangeable terms. While a constitution may be an aggregation of laws, government typically creates these laws to guide society towards what it deems just.

We have developed several definitions which will facilitate our discussion on Athenian democracy. It was shown how the definitions of *just* and *justice* are functions of the society in which they apply. This gave way to the construction of a general purpose definition for both *just* and *justice* which differ from the Oxford Dictionary definition. Subsequent to that we examined the difference between *government* and *constitution*, taking care to note that, in *The Republic*, the translation exclusively used *constitution* rather than *government*. This illustrated how Athenians were possibly more concerned with laws and regulations rather than ruling the populous. Now that these terms are defined, the foundation of our argument has been formed. The next task is to explain human nature to better understand some of the motivations behind human actions.

Human Nature

An investigation into human nature must be conducted to adequately analyze the evolution of Athenian government. Government is controlled, and given legitimacy to, by the people within its sphere of influence. Given this fact, a government will take on the form and function of the persons who control it. Subsequently, society's reception of said government is based upon the competing natures of the rulers and the ruled. There are several claims from Plato's *The*

Republic about human nature which do not provide a realistic representation of what is observable in the real world, however they will allow us to construct a model which will ultimately help explain the disparity between the function of ancient Athenian democracy and the purported ideals of democracy. This section will provide counterpoints to Plato's claims to create a more realistic portrayal of human nature and tendencies.

> "Surely then, no doctor, to the extent that he is a doctor, considers or enjoins what is advantageous for himself, but what is advantageous for his patient? ... Doesn't it follow that a ship's captain and ruler won't consider and enjoin what is advantageous for a captain, but what is advantageous for a sailor and his subject (Morgan, 2005)?"

In this excerpt, Plato holds a rather optimistic view of human nature. The premise of this point is that when a person enters a profession, they will conduct themselves in such a way that the outcomes of their actions are of no benefit to them; the captain commands the ship for the advantage of their crew. The premise holds to be partially true in the fact that there is a reason behind every human action, voluntary or involuntary. Plato's view, however, neglects to account for a person's want for gratification. It is reasonable to believe that for every action, there is a personal stake in the matter. In the case of ruling, the possible outcomes are numerous: power, wealth, honor, glory, influence over society, to identify a few. It is optimistic, yet unreasonable, to expect people to rule for the advantage of the people rather than for some advantage of their own. Even the end goal of helping one's fellow humans can provide positive self-fulfillment to the "soul".

> "But do you think that those who rule cities - the ones who are truly rulers - rule willingly?... But, Thrasymachus, don't you realize that in other kinds of rule there is no willing ruler? On the contrary, they demand to be paid on the assumption that their ruling will benefit not themselves, but their subjects... And doesn't wage-earning provide us with wages, since that is what it is capable of doing?... would you call wage-earning medicine, even if someone becomes healthy while earning wages? ... We are agreed then, aren't we, that each craft brings its own special benefit?" Each [craft] does its own work and benefits that with which it deals. ... no

type of craft or rule provides what is beneficial for itself; but as we have been saying for some time, it provides and enjoins what is beneficial for its subject, and aims at what is advantageous for it - the subject... no one chooses to rule voluntarily and take on other people's troubles in hand and straighten them out, but each asks for wages (Morgan, 2005)."

In this instance, Plato is continuing to work based off of the assumption of a perfect world, or that the men in his examples are just. While he does draw examples from the real world, Plato seemingly does not apply his theories to real world scenarios. Plato implies that one action leads to one outcome; he says that wage-earning provides wages and then goes on to connect wage-earning and medicine in a way that asserts wage-earning is equal to practicing medicine. The mistake in Plato's reasoning is not exploring the converse: practicing medicine is equal to wage earning.

In order to do something that does not immediately contribute to survival, such as hunting, gathering, or farming, it takes will or some other form of motivation. The doctor does not practice medicine for no reason. The doctor receives something from the completion of the task, be it happiness, fulfillment, or even profit. Simultaneously, the patient receives good health and well-being from the doctor's treatment. This shows that a craft benefits both the craftsman and its subject, contrary to the philosophy of Plato. Similarly for those who rule, there is a component of willingness which influences their decision to continue ruling. Rulers possess an interest in the well-being of their subjects and the territory they control, consistent with Plato's reasoning. However, in addition to concern about territory and the city's inhabitants, rulers enjoy the benefits of their position. We have already established that there are positive outcomes of ruling that directly benefit the ruler. It follows that those in power will do what is necessary to preserve the benefits that result from being the ruler, thereby providing what is beneficial for the ruler.

"... no one, it seems, would be so incorruptible that he would stay on the path of justice, or bring himself to keep away from other people's possessions and not touch them, when he could take whatever he wanted from the marketplace with impunity, go into people's houses and have sex with anyone he wished, kill or release from prison anyone he wished, and do all the oth-

er things that would make him like a god among humans (Morgan, 2005)."

Humans are subject to temptation and tend to travel the path of least resistance when given the opportunity. This view on human nature is supported by some of the unjust actions taken by people who come into power, more notably those who build tyrannical regimes. When some individuals experience power they commit injustice against other members of society. The ends which power can provide can tempt individuals to commit unjust actions they otherwise may not have. This raises the question, how do we quell this temptation? One way to do so is to remove the opportunities for the consolidation of power. By diffusing the amount of power an individual can posses, the opportunities for individuals to wield power in an unjust manner decrease.

What has been described is essentially a democratic system; power dispersed into the hands of many people. The issue with spreading power amongst the populous is when the population begins to scale upwards, power becomes vastly diluted. The typical citizen is likely to not regularly use their power or want to take the necessary steps to use their power. Participation is an integral part of the democratic system, however there are opportunity costs associated with participation. To maintain focus on the more pressing matters in their life, disinterested citizens will relinquish this power to another individual, letting them make decisions on their behalf as best they can. Even if a citizen does not formally allow another to make decisions for them, lack of participation in a democratic system is equal to relinquishing power. This lack of participation and decision-making on the behalf of others leads to a redistribution of power. This redistribution is akin to a system of representation.

"... we are not all born alike. On the contrary, each of us differs somewhat in nature from the others, one being suited to one job, another to another (Morgan, 2005)." In general, people are naturally suited for certain tasks. Whether or not this is a measure of human nature or if it is a product of a person's environment is debatable and beyond the scope of this research. A person who correctly and consistently performs an action will become better at that action; no person starts as a master of their craft. It takes years of work for the mastery of a skill, and even with years of practice some people reach a plateau while others continue to improve. Applying this to ancient Athens, those who were able to devote more time to honing their oratorical skills and participating in the *ekklesia* would develop more skills in governance. Those with other obligations, or areas in their life which required

more time and attention, would stagnate in their skills of governance. For those who did not regularly participate, it is conceivable that the skills required for use in the *ekklesia* would deteriorate. Based upon information found in the literature review, the *ekklesia* was not heavily frequented. Although we cannot determine who exactly attended the *ekklesia* or at what frequency, it is reasonable to expect attendance primarily by the higher skilled individuals. This supports Plato's claim of individuals being suited to one job.

> "But isn't it of the greatest importance that warfare be carried out well? Or is fighting a war so easy that a farmer, a shoemaker, or any other artisan can be a soldier at the same time, even though no one can become so much as good as a checkers player or dice player if he considers it only as a sideline and does not practice it from childhood (Morgan, 2005)?"

The question Plato raises in this case also pertains to ruling. How can one be good at governance if it is not one's every day profession? We previously examined Plato's claim of individuals being better suited to certain tasks compared to other people. This question is an extension of that claim. It is reasonable to assert that Athenian citizens had other professions outside of the societal expectation of participating in government. Those professions were the livelihoods of those citizens. It follows that those citizens, if not supplemented by another source of wealth or income, would devote a much greater portion of their attention to their profession. Contrary to the beliefs of Athenian society, it is not reasonable for every person to have a stake in politics. Rather, the only probable interest these citizens would have in politics is in legislation that adversely affects their livelihoods or way of life.

Understanding human nature is an integral part of analyzing Athenian democracy. Dissecting some of Plato's philosophy regarding humans proved a prudent place to begin. We began by showing that humans perform actions for the end of a form of gratification. Furthermore, these actions require some form of motivation in order for an individual to perform them. When humans gain an appreciable amount of power, they are subject to temptation and corruption because of this power which leads to tyranny, in the case of ruling. After this we showed that humans are diverse creatures and are naturally suited to different tasks, however they can become proficient at a task given enough time and practice. In the case of

governing, not all individuals are suited and therefore tend to become disinterested in the political process unless legislation directly affected their livelihoods.

Forming Government

First the discussion will cover how cities come to exist; government requires an entity in need of rule. After that, the discussion will shift to why governments are necessary. To aid in the discussion, we will develop a hypothetical model which helps explain the need for government. Next, the discussion will refer back to *The Republic* to explain the purpose that government fulfills and government's role regarding citizens.

"Well, then, a city comes to exist, I believe, because none of us is individually self-sufficient, but each has many needs he cannot satisfy (Morgan, 2005)." The basis of a city is bringing together people to provide good and services. One person cannot possibly provide everything needed for sustenance and live a comfortable life. As such, people will take on specialist roles to promote efficiency. If someone is not capable of a profession, it follows that they would choose another. That being said, let us apply this to human nature and government.

Contrary to Plato's belief that people are naturally suited for one and only one task, humans can learn to do several things proficiently. Proficiency amongst abilities is not mutually exclusive. To determine if a person is capable of a task, they must experience some training in the area, as well as perform the task itself. It follows that those who excel at a task will be come well known and overshadow those with lesser ability. This does not necessarily preclude those with lesser ability from continuing to practice the skill. Reintroducing government into the equation, people with experience and proficiency governing will overshadow the less experienced and less capable. The lesser experienced will still be able to govern, possibly deferring to their betters in some situations. Taking into account the structure of Athenian government, older members had more experience and more power. Athenian society functioned under the expectation that everyone was to participate in government. But from what we have discussed, we know that not everyone is capable of governance, and of those that are capable, not all share the same level of proficiency. This may have led to a system of deference towards elders and good orators, evident by the findings in the literature review.

"In fact, that is why the craft of medicine has been discovered - because a body is deficient and it is not satisfactory for it to be like that (Morgan,

2005)." Extending Plato's logic, government has been discovered and implemented because individualistic tendencies are not satisfactory. We previously discussed why cities are necessary, and the formation of governments follows a similar line of reasoning. Issues can arise when people function independently of one another, or even when people come together as a city. Can society trust the interested parties to settle disputes on their own? In certain situations, yes, disputes can be reasonably resolved. But in other situations, such as matters of justice, it is not always feasible for the parties to resolve the situation in a just manner without the aid of an impartial mediator.

Let us apply this reasoning to a hypothetical city, starting with a population of ten people. Being individualistic, while potentially problematic, is not necessarily detrimental to the well-being of society. Resources and goods will be relatively plentiful given the population size. Those who formed families will not have any notable obstacles in terms of claiming land other than the energy required to work and maintain the land. While some professions require more work than others, ostensibly everyone will face similar hardships. Less disparity amongst the populous regarding standard of living will lower the chances of individuals performing injustice towards one another.

Now, let us revisit the city when the population has grown to one hundred citizens. Due to specialization in various areas, some individuals will have a comparatively high standard of living to other individuals. There will be more competition for resources, with wealthier individuals more able to acquire the resources they need. Additionally, those people with higher standards of living will conceivably exert less effort to maintain their way of life. More people and more possessions affords more opportunities for injustice, and subsequently more severe types of injustice. This brings us to another excerpt from *The Republic.*

"Doesn't it follow that medicine does not consider what is advantageous for medicine, but for the body (Morgan, 2005)?" We can conceptualize government as the medicine and society as the body; government is the medicine for society. On the subject of medicine, it is created to cure a specific illness, regardless of its form. We know that some medicines have side effects, and these side effects can manifest differently in different people. While some of these side effects are not noteworthy, other side effects can seem to rival or even trump the illness. In our case, we are looking at democracy as the medicine for Athenian society. Democracy was the cure to the previous illnesses experienced by the Athenians - oli-

garchy and tyranny. The Athenian democracy has an identifiable side effect; rather than being the rule of all of the people, the way democracy was intended to function, only a few people actually wielded power.

> "... those who have done and suffered injustice and who have tasted both - the ones who lack the power to do it and avoid suffering it - decide that it is profitable to come to an agreement with each other neither to do injustice nor to suffer it. As a result, they begin to make laws and covenants; and what the law commands, they call lawful and just. That, they say, is the origin and very being of justice (Morgan, 2005)."

Government can be conceptualized simply as an agreement; government is a contract amongst citizens. People form governments to benefit the whole of society, which is evident through earlier examples. It is much more difficult for injustice to go unpunished if there is a collective agreement on what is or is not considered to be just. To gain a better understanding, examine government and justice from a different view. If citizens believe a current society or government is performing injustice, they will seek ways to subvert or replace it. In the case of Athens, democracy replaced oligarchy. Bearing in mind that the entire concept of democracy was new and radical, it is reasonable to believe that the Athenians were not completely willing to change the entire system. To maintain a sense of familiarity with government, it is conceivable that when developing democracy, the Athenians retained some of the oligarchic tendencies of the past.

Deconstructing Government

We have discussed human nature and some of the reasoning behind why individuals come together to form government. At this point we will shift our focus to deconstructing government. Through this deconstruction we arrive at the crux of one of our arguments; the natural evolution of a direct democracy is a representative democracy. Furthermore, we will apply the results of the deconstruction to ancient Athens.

"... I think we should adopt the method of investigation that we would use if, lacking keen eyesight, we were told to identify small letters from a distance, and then notice that the same letters existed elsewhere in a larger size and on a larger surface (Morgan, 2005)." Through Socrates, Plato performs a particularly effective experiment in which he attempts

to explain how a government comes to fruition by working on a smaller scale. Plato outlines the factors which affect a person who would subsequently go on to form certain types of governments. Working in a smaller scale allows for an easier understanding of concepts. We will replicate this experiment, albeit in a slightly different capacity.

A city is a modular unit formed, from largest module to smallest module, by districts, communities, and families. Several families come together to form a community, communities to form a district, and districts to finally form a city. To begin, consider a family consisting of a mother, a father, several children, and a handful of servants, to keep consistency with the Athenian family structure. Given that Athens was a patriarchal society, the father would be the figurehead, the king of the family, responsible for the decisions which would affect the standard of living of the household. The mother would be in charge of the well-being of the children, and the servants would be tasked with day-to-day upkeep of the family property.

Previously we discussed how cities are formed; individuals come together because it eases the burden of providing for oneself. Taking the next step in building this city, consider several families coming together to form a community. Recalling how each family possesses a king, we are confronted with the issue of multiple kings to rule one community. There are three ways the community can resolve the issue of who should rule: a member of the community can assume kingship, the more powerful families, in terms of wealth, can assume control, or each head of household can collectively rule the community. The first option is unlikely in a community with a small number of families; the risks outweigh the returns of a power struggle in a small community. After the elimination of a single king, two options remain: oligarchy and democracy. However, in this case the use of democracy is suspect. The contemporary definition democracy posits a rule by all citizens. But given that the fathers of families are the decision makers, their role shifts from king to representative, and democracy would then transition towards representative democracy.

Expanding the scale of this example once more, multiple communities would come together to form a district, or perhaps even a small city. At this point in the venture, the city would be very resistant to a change in the form of government. Unless an individual is able to mobilize enough resources to secure a monopoly on power and become king, the city would remain as a functioning oligarchy or representative democracy. Through this example, it is an observable

phenomenon of how a city is the sum of its parts and mirrors its foundations.

By applying the results of this example, we can see the progression of ancient Athens. Surrounding cities at the time were either tribal governments, managed by elders, or monarchies, controlled by kings. In the case of Athens, the tribes evolved into aristocracies which created the foundation for future Athenian government. Although there were power struggles and new ruling families put into place, the government remained oligarchic in nature. It was not until there was a sufficient upset to the status quo, a restructuring of Athenian economic classes coupled with continuous power struggles, that the oligarchy was supplanted with democracy. However, with regards to both this example and the example in the Forming Government section, we see that it was highly unlikely that Athens was able to remain a true direct democracy. The growing population of Athens would have prohibited the participation of all citizens; recall the fact that a citizen was an adult Athenian male. Given the limitation of direct democracy due to population size, Athens would have evolved into a large-scale representative democracy. Consistent with Rosivach (1988), the government changed to serve the interests of those other than the tyrant - the former aristocracy.

Justice

Following our example on how government evolves, it is helpful to reintroduce the concept of justice into government. Justice is a major factor in why people come together to form both cities and governments. By further elaborating on what justice is and how it affects society, we can gain a better understanding of the evolution of Athenian constitutions. The following excerpts from *The Republic* cover tyranny in regards to justice, the power of injustice, and the fallibility of rulers and lawmaking.

> "... tyranny... uses covert means and force to appropriate the property of others... When someone appropriates the possessions of the citizens, on the other hand, and then kidnaps and enslaves the possessors as well, instead of these shameful names he is called happy and blessed: not only by the citizens themselves, but even by all who learn that he has committed the whole of injustice. For it is not the fear of doing injustice, but of suffering it, that elicits the reproaches of those who revile in justice. So you see, Socrates, injustice, if it is on a large enough

scale, is stronger, freer, and more masterful than justice (Morgan, 2005)."

Plato has Thrasymachus play the devil's advocate in regards to tyranny and injustice in this excerpt. In a tyrannical system of government, if a ruler, or rulers, is able to perpetrate injustice on a large enough scale, they can suppress any sort of resistance by the ruled and retain all of the privileges that power affords. Additionally, by holding so much power, tyrants are able to garner seemingly positive praise from both citizens and those outside of their sphere of influence. Because of this, those who commit injustice are fearful. Tyrants do not fear committing injustice, as it can provide for them the things they want, but they fear suffering some of the same types of injustice they perpetrate.

"Apparently, then, [the power of injustice] is such that whenever it comes to exist in something - whether in a city, a family, an army, or anything else whatsoever - it makes that thing, first of all, incapable of acting in concert with itself, because of the faction and difference it creates; and, second of all, an enemy to itself... (Morgan, 2005)"

Justice is an underlying principle which helps preserve the good in society. Injustice holds such a power that it becomes a corrupting influence when it is present, slowly undoing the good that justice provides. When a person is just, it naturally follows that they commit just actions. Furthermore, just actions tend to create good outcomes. When a person has unjust tendencies, these tendencies can overpower their just tendencies and actions. By nature, injustice has the ability to divide the populous and create factions; injustice affects everyone differently and it is in human nature to gravitate towards those who share similar interests. Multiple opposing factions can lead to government becoming its own enemy.

"Each type of rule makes laws that are advantageous for itself... And so by legislating, each declares that what is just for its subjects is what is advantageous for itself - the ruler- and punishes anyone who deviates from this as lawless and unjust... and are the rulers in each city infallible, or are they liable to error? So, when they attempt to make laws, they make some correctly, others incorrectly (Morgan, 2005)."

Plato's claim supports our assertion that the definition of just is based upon society. It is unreasonable to believe that every law, constitution, or government will be just. Because the views of society evolve with the passage of time, creating long lasting just laws is an unpredictable action. For example, take the Jim Crow laws following the reconstruction era of the southern United States, leading into the mid 1960's. The Jim Crow laws were deemed to be just by a majority of the political leaders and the Caucasian population of the southern states. However, those who were oppressed by the laws as well as some other Americans felt the Jim Crow laws to be unjust. Southern society created laws that were advantageous for those in power, consistent with Plato's words. It took a century for the Jim Crow laws to be unraveled, parallel with shifting societal views, however there remain individuals who believe the laws were justified.

With the premise behind democracy requiring vast citizen participation, it can be argued that those who led the shift from oligarchy to democracy made errors in their judgment. We have established that on a large enough scale, direct democracy becomes unfeasible; by society placing the onus on all citizens to participate, those who did not or could not participate are, in some capacity, unjust. But given the historical evidence of participation in the *ekklesia*, it is possible that society made a shift towards representation without having to openly replace their constitution. Recalling the connection between medicine and government, democracy was the medicine to oligarchy, and representative democracy was the subsequent medicine to the large scale direct democracy of Athens.

Connecting the Dots

After looking at several critical areas, we are finally able to complete our new way to examine democracy. At the onset of this research, we took a look at literature surrounding historical Athens. Following this, the research explained how democracy became the government of Athens. It was established that government revolved around citizens and their participation in Athenian institutions; who was considered to be a citizen in Athens was defined. At the end of the literature review, we briefly discussed some critical views of democracy which helped to show how direct democracy on a large scale was impractical.

After the literature review we began laying the foundations of our argument by defining several terms. By defining these terms we were able to develop an understanding which would later help facilitate our discussion. Next we examined human nature to

show what motivated their actions. Following this we discussed why cities and governments are formed, and subsequently ways how government may evolve. Lastly, we performed a cursory investigation on how justice affects government and how this may have influenced Athenian government. We will now connect the evidence to determine if Athens was a pseudo-representative democracy and direct democracy evolves into a system of representation.

It is a necessity for individuals to form cities. Self-sufficiency is only sustainable on small scales; when a society hopes to grow, people must choose areas to specialize in. Our analysis of human nature shows that some individuals are naturally suited for certain tasks, and by professions being distributed among the population, individuals are able to determine their natural task with little negative effect on their way of life.

At this point, we see that when society comes together, problems begin to arise. Some professions are more profitable than others; the doctor will likely acquire more wealth than the baker due to the differences in difficulty of their skill sets. By extension, those individuals who are more wealthy are able to pursue more avenues of gratification and have more means to commit injustice. This inherent power they possess can at times augment their need for gratification and increase their propensity for injustice. Recalling Athens before democracy, the oligarchs were those propagating injustice and the Athenians sought to remove their power. The remedy the Athenians developed for oligarchy was a diffusion of power through democracy.

We explored, through hypothetical examples, how government forms and evolves. Families congregate to form communities, which later form districts, and subsequently form cities. When this model is applied to ancient Greece, specifically Athens, we see a similar type of formation. Families formed the original four tribes. These tribes eventually formed the *demes* which composed the Athenian city-state. When Athens reached the size of a city-state, the tribes became the oligarchs. This maintains consistency with our model. Our model states that people form oligarchies or democratic systems when the families come together to form communities. In this instance,

the tribes consolidated power for themselves rather than collective decision-making. Further consistent with our model and our discussions on justice, the Athenians later diffused power through democracy.

Recalling our example on government formation, at a certain population size, a democratic form of government must evolve into a system of representation. The initial Athenian democracy quite possibly was a direct democracy. Population growth means more people can participate, but does not mean they will. An individual's personal matters require more attention, leaving them with little to no ability to govern, as may be evident by *ekklesia* attendance numbers. Not participating in a direct democracy, by nature, concedes power to other people; the concept of democracy is predicated on widespread participation. Additionally, individuals may have possessed trusted friends or associates speak at the *ekklesia* on their behalf, recalling the emphasis on oratorical ability. Furthermore, a patriarchal society and slave economy meant that women, children, and slaves had a default representative - the head of household.

Applying all of these results yields an interesting conclusion. It does not appear that Athens designed democracy as a pseudo-representative system. Given the prior ruling systems of Athens and their motivations for political change, the Athenians seem to have intended and expected widespread participation by the citizenry. Women and foreigners were not allowed to participate in ruling is a reflection of Athenian societal values, rather than intentional exclusion. Consistent with our examples, it appears that Athens did, however, evolve into a system of representation. Furthermore, looking towards modern democracies we see that they are all based upon representation and elections rather than total citizen participation. Citizens can generally participate through electing officials or running for office. Modern society is more complex and more interconnected, making direct democracy impractical. Therefore, our newly developed view on democracy is as follows: on the small scale, democracy is a viable form of government. When a population grows and the differences amongst citizens become more apparent, democracy must evolve into a system of representation in order to efficiently remain as the government of society.

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Plato discusses the nature of humanity and governence with Aristotle in this detail from Raphael's The School of Athens, 1509-1511.

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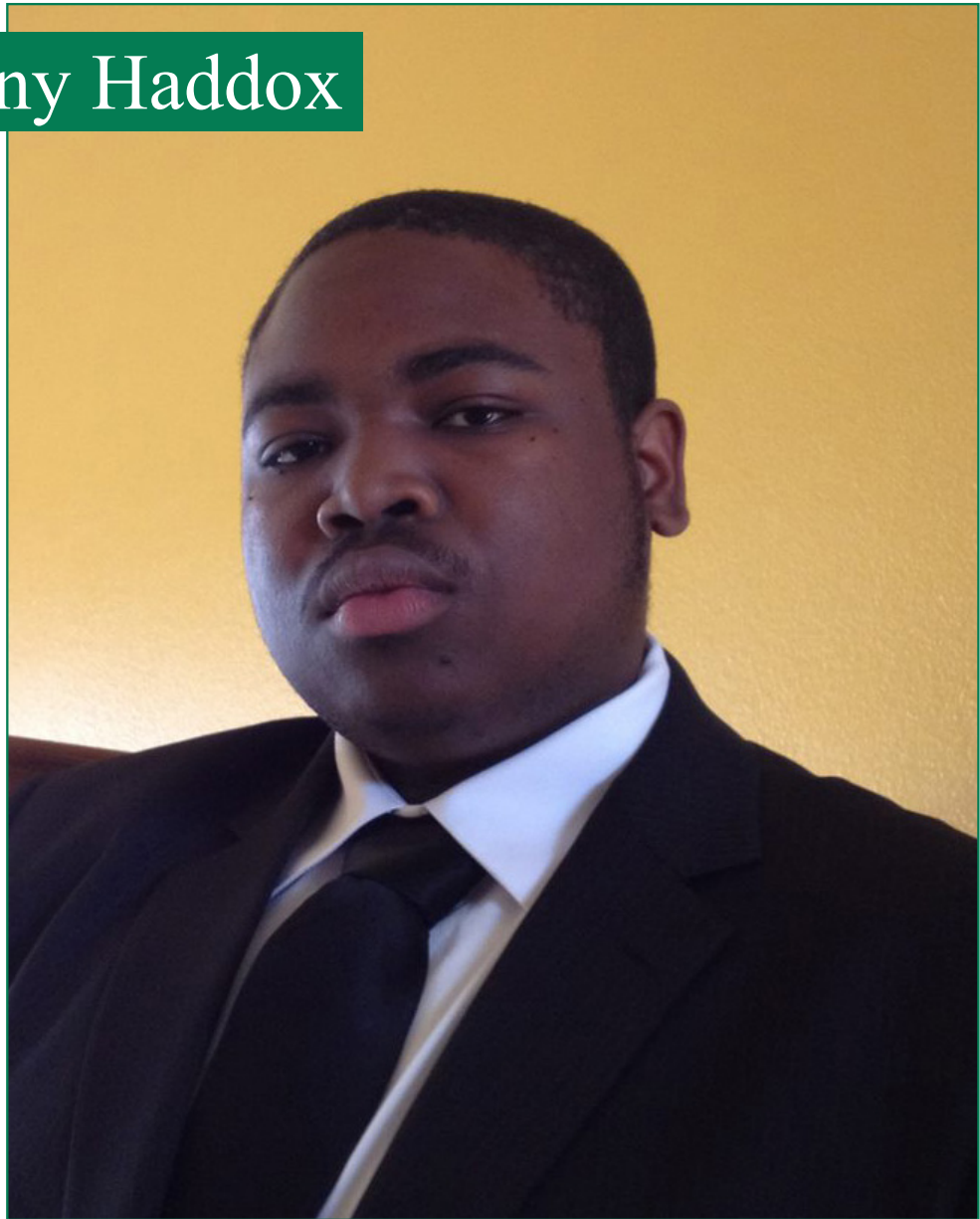
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