DELIBERATION IN ANCIENT GREEK ASSEMBLIES

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When an ancient Greek ἀρχήν δῆμος (“people,” “assembly”) deliberated, what did it do? On one view, it engaged in a form of public conversation along the lines theorized by contemporary deliberative democrats; on another, a small number of “active” citizens debated before a much larger, more “passive” audience. On either account, deliberation is represented as an external, speech-centered activity rather than an internal, thought-centered one. The democratic ideal, it is argued, was at least occasional participation in public speech.

This article questions that interpretation. A study of βουλεύομαι, “deliberate,” from Homer to Aristotle reveals three models of deliberation: internal, dialogical, and a partial combination that I shall call “guided,” in which speaking and deliberating were performed by advisers and decision-makers respectively. Assembly deliberation was almost always represented as guided deliberation. The δῆμος—which is to say the audience—deliberated (ἐβουλεύετο), while those who spoke before it advised (συνεβούλευε). Citizens thus did not fall short of a democratic ideal when they did not speak publicly. To the contrary, internal reflection, culminating in a vote, was precisely how the δῆμος was expected to exercise its authority. The implications for our conceptualization of ancient Greek democracy are significant.

Deliberation as conversation and as oratory
Deliberation (τὸ βουλεύεσθαι) by large groups of citizens was commonplace in ancient Greece. Aristotle defined a citizen as “one who has the right to participate in deliberative (βουλευτικῆς) or judicial office” (Politics 1275b20) and associated these functions particularly with the multitude: “Over what matters ought the freemen and mass of citizens to have authority?...It is not safe for them to participate in the highest offices...It remains then for them to share in deliberation (τὸ βουλεύεσθαι) and judging” (1281b24-31). The Athenian, Spartan, Syracusan and other assemblies are the subjects of βουλεύομαι in numerous sources, and

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1 “Assembly” is often rendered “ecclesia,” but ἐκκλησία was virtually never the subject of a verb. The agent that deliberated was the δῆμος. Hansen 2010; Cammack forthcoming 2019 (a).

2 Οἱ βουλεύομαι, but that appears only in Aristotle and is seemingly distinguished from τὸ βουλεύεσθαι at Nic. Eth. 1113a and Eud. Eth. 1226b. ἐβουλεύσαμεν, “good counsel,” may also be translated “deliberation,” but since I am interested in the action denoted by βουλεύομαι (as opposed to its outcome when performed by a capable practitioner), it will not be explored here.

3 E.g. Aristoph. Ecc. 474-5, Lys. 510-14, Hdt. 7.144, Thuc. 1.36, 71-86, 3.36-44, 4.84, 118, 6.36,


démos, “people” or “assembly,” also frequently governed this verb.4

What activity did βουλεύομαι imply? It could indicate internal reflection, as it often does in Aristotle’s ethical writings. “A doctor does not deliberate (βουλεύεται) whether to restore to health,” but rather how to do it, a task typically completed alone (Nicomachean Ethics 1112b). It could also indicate dialogue, as in Herodotus’ account of the seven Persians who conspired to kill the Magian pretender to the throne (3.71-84), or in Socrates’ comment to Callicles in the Gorgias, “I once overheard you (pl.) deliberating (ὑμῶν βουλευομένων) how far you ought to practice wisdom” (487c).

Deliberation in ancient Greek assemblies is usually interpreted dialogically. In Sinclair’s translation of Aristotle’s Politics, for example, τὸ βουλευόμενον περὶ τῶν κοινών (“the element that deliberates on public affairs”) is represented as that which “discusses everything of common importance” (1297b40). Maidment’s Andocides recalls how after the the loss of Athens’ fleet in 405, “you discussed (ἐβουλεύσασθε) ways and means of reuniting the city,” while MacDowell renders this line “you had a discussion about unity” (1.73). Adams’ Aeschines cites a motion restricting “the démos’s discussion (βουλεύσασθαι) of peace” to particular days, and another specifying that “the démos should discuss (βουλεύσασθαι) an alliance” (2.109-10). Vince’s Demosthenes berates his audience for “not discussing (βουλεύσασθαι) any question at your leisure, but waiting until you’re already losing” (10.29); Trevett’s comments on “the great public interest of the matters you are discussing” (ὑμῶν βουλευομένων, 8.1). The translation “debate” has a similar effect. Like “deliberate,” “debate” may suggest either internal reflection or public speech, but in political contexts the latter is likely to be assumed. The representation of assembly speech as “deliberative rhetoric” or “deliberative oratory,” and its exponents as “deliberative speakers” or “deliberative orators” (as in many translations of Aristotle’s Rhetoric), also implies a communicative conception of deliberation.5

Ancient Greek politics has long been specially associated with speech. John Stuart Mill, in 1856, described Athenian democracy as a “government of boundless publicity and freedom of speech,” a characteristic he deemed “more practically important than even the political franchise” (1978, 324). Hannah Arendt called the polis “the most talkative of all bodies politic” (1998, 26), while Moses Finley defined politics as “the art of reaching decisions by public discussion” and noted that isêgoria, the equal right to speak in the assembly, was “sometimes employed by Greek writers as a synonym for ‘democracy’” (1985, 13, 18-19). Recent interest in deliberative democracy has brought this interpretation into sharper focus. Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson call Aristotle the “first major theorist” to defend the “deliberative ideal,” defined as a process in

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6 Aristot. Rhetoric 1354b, 1358b-62a, 1359b, 1369b, 1377b, 1413b, 1415b tr. Barnes, Freese, Lawson-Tancred, Kennedy; Lys. 14.45 tr. Lamb; Dem. 19.15, 22.48 tr. Vince; Aeschin. 1.1, 2.56 tr. Adams; Din. 2.15 tr. Burtt.
which “through the give-and-take of argument,” citizens “learn from one another, come to recognize their individual and collective mistakes, and develop new views and policies that are more widely justifiable” (1996, 43, 2004, 8, citing Politics 1281b). Jon Elster—citing the same passage of Aristotle along with Pericles’ defence of logos, “speech” or “discussion,” at Thucydides 2.40—agrees that “the idea of deliberative democracy and its practical implementation…came into being in Athens in the fifth century BC” (1998, 1). David Held represents Athenian public deliberation in Habermasian terms as “free and unrestricted discourse” governed by the “force of the better argument” (2006, 15), while Ryan Balot argues that “classical Athenian democrats believed that every Athenian had something potentially important to contribute to public discourse.” They thus aimed at “true democratic deliberation,” a “public conversation” in which “ideas are floated freely, objections and dissent are confidently and respectfully aired, further revisions and refinement of different opinions can take place, and a collectively supported decision issues in the end”—a process Balot finds “strikingly similar to the public conversations advocated by modern theorists of deliberative democracy” (2006, 66).

This interpretation is not free of difficulty. A major problem is the number of citizens involved. With a capacity of some six or eight thousand attendees during most of the classical period, the Athenian assembly-place on the Pnyx was one of the largest venues, but even smaller ones held several thousand citizens. As has often been observed, genuine conversation was in these conditions impossible. In Josiah Ober’s words, “if even one in a hundred citizens chose to exercise his isêgoria at any given meeting, the volume of debate that would precede the vote would cause the system to founder” (1989, 325). Yet meetings lasted no more than a few hours. Evidently only a tiny fraction of assemblygoers spoke at any given meeting; the rest simply listened and voted. How should we interpret this situation?

One possibility is to deploy the idea of a conversation over time. Though only a small number of citizens spoke at any one meeting, over the years it may have been possible to hear from many more. This suggestion finds support in Mogens Hansen’s estimate that some 700-1400 citizens acted as “occasional rhêtores” in Athens in 355-22, in addition to the ten or twenty citizens who spoke regularly (1999, 93-127). It is also supported by Robin Osborne’s contention that in the inscriptional record of the late fifth century, “the men who get up in the Assembly and successfully persuade their fellow citizens to amend the decisions they are taking are, in the large majority of cases, otherwise unknown to us,” sug-

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7 The meeting-place in fifth-century Argos held around 2500; Mantinea and Akragas, both 3000; Megalopolis, 6000. Robinson 2011, 13-14, 37-8, 42-3, 95, 229.
10 Ober 1989, 107-9, suggests a greater number of regular speakers, but that entails a rapid decrease in the number of occasional ones (Hansen 1989, 124). An arguably more significant problem is that rhêtor could indicate either a) a citizen who spoke publicly or b) a citizen who sponsored a decree but did not speak in its support—and as Hansen points out, this group may have been quite large (1989, 97). I intend to pursue this point elsewhere.
gesting that the “practical business of getting their fellow citizens to get the
details right was widely shared” (2010, 5). Yet the numbers involved remain very
small. 700-1400 “occasional rhêtores” amounts to only 2-5% of the Athenian citi-
zen population, while we know of only sixteen late fifth-century amenders.

An alternative to the “conversational” model is an “oratorical” one, ad-
vanced by many scholars, including Hansen and Osborne. As presented by Gary
Remer, the conversational model of deliberation is suited to informal settings
(Cicero observed that conversation, sermon, “finds its natural place in social gath-
erings, in informal discussions, and in intercourse with friends; it should also seek
admission at dinners”); it is characterized by equal or at least very extensive par-
ticipation, “so that as many voices as possible are heard in the debate”; and it pro-
cesses according to the “force of the better argument” among essentially coopera-
tive interlocutors.11 By contrast, the oratorical model appears in formal settings
(Cicero described oratory, contentio, as “the kind of discourse to be employed in
pleadings in court and speeches in popular assemblies and in the senate”); speaker
and audience are “not identical, as in conversation, but distinct,” in that “a few are
speakers, the majority are listeners”; and orators are not cooperative but “agonist-
ic,” aiming (again in Cicero’s words) to “prove one’s own case and demolish the
adversary’s.”12

The oratorical interpretation is certainly plausible. As Hansen argues,
there was no “exchange of views” in the Athenian assembly, only “debate,” that is
a “series of speeches of varying length” dominated by “a small group of half- or
fully-professional orators” (1999, 142, 144). These debates were inherently agonist-
ic, in that speakers aimed to persuade the audience to vote as they advised,
against the arguments of their rivals. As Elster notes, speakers did not even neces-
sarily address one another; they might “talk about each other—to point out weak-
nesses in their opponents’ characters or arguments—but not to each other,” a pro-
cEDURE quite different from what most deliberative democrats have in mind (1998,
2). Professional training would also have been desirable given the acoustical chal-
lenges of some venues, particularly the fifth-century Pnyx. As Christopher Lyle
Johnstone’s reconstructions show, “it is doubtful whether even half of the 5000
present could regularly understand what speakers were saying.”13 Moreover, even
after the Pnyx was rebuilt at the end of the fifth century, the Athenians retained a
secretary to read proposals and other documents aloud to the crowd.14 This man
was, unusually for Athens, elected, a process that cannot have been necessitated
by uneven levels of literacy, since other positions requiring literacy in this period
were filled by lot.15 Rather, it must have been sufficiently audible speech that was
in short supply.

The oratorical interpretation needs clarification, however. Who deliberated
when orators orated? The question arises because whereas the conversational
model envisages all assemblygoers performing a single activity—deliberation in-

11 Remer 2000, 72-4; Cicero De Officiis 1.37.132. See also Remer 1999, 43-9.
14 Ps. Aristot. Ath. Pol. 54.5; Dem. 19.70.
15 Ps. Aristot. Ath. Pol. 54.3-4.
terpreted as group discussion—the oratorical model distinguishes between two sets of actions, performed by two distinct groups: public speaking by a small number of orators, internal consideration by a much larger audience. Who deliberated on this picture—orators, audience, or both?

It is widely assumed that it was above all those who spoke who deliberated. Referring to Aristotle’s accounts of deliberative rhetoric in the Rhetoric and of the political significance of logos in Politics I, Bernard Yack argues that “political deliberation necessarily involves speech and argument because it involves the sharing of our reasoning…we deliberate together in political communities by making and listening to each other’s attempts to persuade us that some future action will best serve…the common good” (2006, 420).16 Bernard Manin, too, identifies deliberation primarily with participation in speech. “When we collectively deliberate, we adduce arguments to support our position, trying to persuade others that we have the better case” (2005, 17). He quotes Aristotle, Rhetoric 1.2, in support of this view: “Deliberation (sumbouleuein) consists in arguing for or against something” (2005, 15). Importantly, Manin makes room in his account for the “deliberation within” that “follows, and is shaped by, exposure to external argument” (2005, 3, fn. 2; Goodin 2000). Yet internal deliberation remains secondary to the communicative kind. Properly “solitary deliberation,” he writes, “without the input and stimulation of others,” would “presumably not have led to an internal deliberation of the same quality” (2005, 8).

The most influential voice on this topic is that of Mogens Hansen, and although his account of the classical Athenian assembly is not couched in the language of deliberation, it clearly advances a speech-centered conceptualization of political activity. Hansen portrays a “spectrum” of political participation in which the least active citizens did not participate, the most active spoke and proposed motions, and those who only listened and voted lay somewhere in the middle (1999, 268). “Ideally,” Hansen argues, citing Protagoras 319d, “the sum of active citizens”—that is, public speakers—“was equal to the whole body of citizens”; indeed, “the democratic ideology implied that it was a moral duty” to address one’s fellow citizens “from time to time” (1999, 268, citing Aeschines 3.220; cf. 1989, 11, 22). Hansen admits that the “ideal never matched the reality,” but attributes this to the “gap between the constitution and how it works” common to societies of all periods (1999, 267; 1989, 17). Unlike some interpreters, he does not represent those who only listened and voted in mass political contexts as wholly “passive.”17 But he certainly represents them as more passive, and therefore as less perfect citizens, than those who spoke, and this characterization has been widely followed.18

Both the conversational and the oratorical models of assembly deliberation thus assume a speech-centered interpretation of deliberation. This corresponds to a wider tendency to treat the application of the term “deliberation” to inward cognition as an extension of its communicative meaning. That interpretation was implied in Classical Philology in 1933, when Edward Boucher Stevens defined in-

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17 Contrast e.g. Dahl 1989, 225-31.
ternal deliberation as “a kind of inner conversation of a mind with itself” (1933, 104). Similarly, Robert Goodin, suggests that “deliberation within” is “perhaps invariably modeled upon, and thus parasitic upon, our interpersonal experiences of discussion and debate” (2000, 81). Richard Mulgan writes that it was “standard Greek usage” for “the verb ‘to deliberate’ (bouleusthai)” to be used “both of collective political debate and, by metaphorical extension, of individual deliberation, ‘taking one’s own counsel,’ as it were by a form of inner consultation” (1999, 195, italics mine). βουλεύομαι, these authors agree, originally indicated speech: its application to thought was an extension of the discursive paradigm, not the other way around.

*The disjunction between βουλεύομαι and speech*

Plausible as this interpretation may seem, it is surprisingly difficult to find cases of βουλευόμαι unambiguously indicating speech. It is not impossible, and a selection of such cases will be discussed below. But the evidence cited so far falls into three categories. First, cases where βουλευόμαι is typically interpreted as denoting speech, but closer inspection suggests otherwise. Second, cases where speech is certainly indicated and “deliberative” or “deliberation” appear in translation, but βουλευόμαι does not appear in the original. Third, cases believed to suggest the idealization of wide participation in public speech, but where other interpretations are likely.

Aristotle’s support for deliberation by the multitude at *Politics* 1281b falls into the first category. Drawing an analogy with the superiority of collectively-provided dinners over those provided at a single man’s expense, he suggests that some multitudes can contribute more of a certain politically salient thing than can a small number of men or a single man. This thing has often been interpreted as diverse speech, but as has recently been argued, that reading must be mistaken, since the specific tasks that Aristotle assigns to the multitude are deciding elections, audits and trials, none of which involved speech-making by the decision-makers. Elections took place in assemblies but without accompanying debate, while audits and trials were, across Hellas, decided by panels of judges who, Aristotle tells us, were banned from discussing matters among themselves (κοινολογώντα, *Politics* 1268b15). Most significant, Aristotle remarks that his argument “would also apply to animals,” which proves that speech played no part in it (1281b20–82a16). Logos, “speech,” “discussion” or more broadly “verbal reason” was precisely what Aristotle thought distinguished human beings

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20 Cammack 2013a; Lane 2013, citing Pol. 1281b30-35, 1282a6–14, 1282a25–35, 1286a25–28. Lane argues that the deliberation and judging performed by Aristotle’s multitude is restricted to that involved in elections and audits. This is possible, though not necessary (as Lane notes, 251). In my view, the passage picks up on the earlier discussion of ways of sharing in the constitution: a citizen may perform either a time-limited office (e.g. archon, treasurer, general) or an indefinite office (deliberating and judging without restriction). Once Aristotle has excluded common citizens from the highest, time-limited offices, “it remains (λείπεται) then for them to share in deliberation and judging,” without restriction (Pol. 1281b31).
22 Cammack 2013a, 180-1; Lane 2013, 251-2; Hansen 1999, 159-60, 218-20, 222-4, 233-5.
from other animals. Consequently, it cannot have been the politically salient thing he had in mind. *Aretē*, “virtue” or “excellence”—the focus of Aristotle’s analysis earlier in *Politics* 3—aggregated and even amplified in collective action, seems a more plausible candidate.

βουλευόμαι is also differentiated from speech in Thucydides. In Book 1, the Corcyraean envoy addresses the Athenian δήμος thus: “If anyone thinks that what we have suggested is indeed expedient, but fears that if he yields he will be breaking off the truce, let him consider that...he is deliberating (βουλευόμενος) upon the interests, not so much of Corcyra, as of Athens” (1.36). Both the singular verb and the speaker’s assumption that each listener is deliberating at the very moment he is speaking suggest an internal conceptualization of deliberation. Athenagoras of Syracuse implies the same thing when he argues that “You, if you deliberate well (εὑ βουλεύσητε), will examine (σκοπούντες) and form your estimate (λογεῖοθε) of what is probable not from what these men report but from your estimate of what shrewd men of experience are likely to do,” and that “while the rich make the best guardians of property, the wise make the best counsellors and the many, having listened, judge the best” (6.36, 39). Both the identification of βουλευόμαι with “examining” and “forming your estimate” and its distinction from offering counsel suggest internal deliberation.

Another example of internal deliberation appears in Demosthenes 19 and Aeschines 2, a pair of speeches occasioned by Demosthenes’ indictment of Aeschines in 343 for treason relating to an embassy to Philip of Macedon that had taken place three years earlier. Upon the embassy’s return to Athens, two assemblies had been held, and the case turned, in part, on what had happened there. According to Demosthenes, at the first meeting Aeschines had spoken against the proposed peace settlement, but at the second had supported it (19.13-14). According to Aeschines, however, he could not have spoken at the second meeting, for it had comprised only a series of votes. He asked the secretary to read aloud the decree setting up the meetings, which had directed that “in the first of the two meetings whoever wishes can offer advice (συμβουλεύειν), but that in the second, the presidents shall put the matter to the vote, without giving an opportunity for debate (λόγου)” (2.65). βουλευόμαι denoted the activity of the δήμος at both meetings. Demosthenes referred to “the two assemblies at which you deliberated (ἐβουλεύεσθε) about the peace” (19.13), while a witness for Aeschines referred to the meeting “when the δήμος was deliberating (ἐβουλεύετο) on the subject of the alliance with Philip...when no opportunity was given to address the people (δημηγορεῖν) but the decrees...were being put to the vote” (2.67; cf. 70). Quite clearly, the deliberations of the δήμος did not have to involve public speech.

The second category of evidence adduced in support of the speech-centred interpretation of βουλευόμαι comprises cases where speech is indicated and “deliberative” or “deliberation” appear in translation, but βουλευόμαι does not appear. An important example is “deliberative rhetoric,” the conventional name of the first type of persuasive speech discussed in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* (1.3, 4). This

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24 Cammack 2013a.
term appears in the first English version of the text, Hobbes’ *précis, A Briefe of the Art of Rhetoric* (1637), as well as in the translations of Jebb (1909), Freese (1926), Roberts (1954), Kennedy (1991) and Lawson-Tancred (1991), and in the writings of many recent commentators. By analogy with ἀρχή βουλευτική, “deliberative office” (Politics 1275b20), ζώον βουλευτικόν, “deliberative animal” (Historia Animalium 488b25), and φαντασία βουλευτική, “deliberative imagination” (De Anima 434a7), one might expect “deliberative rhetoric” to translate ῥητορική βουλευτική, but that phrase is not attested. Instead, Aristotle uses terms derived from either δημηγορία, “address the démos” (cf. Aeschines 2.67) or συμβουλέω, “advise” or “counsel” (cf. Aeschines 2.65). At Rhetoric 1354b, for example, he refers to τά δημηγορικά and ή δημηγορία, perhaps best rendered “public speeches” and “public rhetoric” respectively, while at 1358b, the adjective is συμβουλευτικός, “advisory.”

Describing “advisory” or “public” speech as “deliberative” need not, strictly speaking, imply a speech-centered interpretation of deliberation. It could possibly signify rhetoric intended to assist listeners in their internal deliberations, and it may be that that is what some translators had in mind. However, that interpretation is less plausible for “deliberative speaker” or “deliberative orator,” common renderings of δ συμβουλέωσιν, “adviser,” and δ δημηγορία, “public speaker” (Rhetoric 1358b). A “deliberative speaker” surely deliberates; yet Aristotle never used βουλεύομαι of orators. When introducing the topics that arise for discussion in assemblies, for instance, he referred to those “about which all men deliberate and those who advise speak publicly” (περὶ δὲν βουλεύονται πάντες καὶ περὶ δὲν ἄγορεσην οἱ συμβουλέουσιν, 1359b20). Speakers and deliberators are thus here distinct, but the distinction often disappears in translation. Hobbes titled the relevant chapter “the subject of deliberatives; and the abilities that are required of him that will deliberate of business of state,” where the latter unambiguously indicates a speaker. Freese has topics “about which all men deliberate and deliberative orators harangue”; Roberts, those “on which all men deliberate and on which deliberative speakers make speeches”; Kennedy, those “on which people deliberate and on which deliberative orators give advice in public”; Lawson-Tancred those “of deliberation, and those most often discussed by deliberative speakers.” Such renderings strongly suggest that “all men” and “speakers” are engaged in a single activity, but there is no basis for that reading in the Greek, and significant confusion may result. We have already encountered one example: Manin’s quotation of Aristotle as saying that “Delibration (symbouleuein) means arguing for or against something” (2005, 15). But while συμβουλέων does indeed mean “arguing for or against something,” it is distinct from deliberation (τὸ βουλεύοντα), the object of Manin’s interest in the rest of the article.

The third category of evidence concerns participation in public speech. Pericles’ funeral oration is often cited (Thucydides 2.40, tr. Smith):

26 TLG search to within 15 words, last accessed April 24, 2018.
27 Cf. Rhetoric 1.4.3, 1.2.11-12, and 1.6.1.
28 The same conflation of συμβουλέων and deliberation appears in Hourcade 2015.
Our public men have, besides politics, their private affairs to attend to, and our ordinary citizens, though occupied with the pursuits of industry, are still fair judges of public matters; for, unlike any other nation, we regard the citizen who takes no part in these duties not as unambitious but as useless, and we are able to judge proposals even if we cannot originate them; instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling-block in the way of action, we think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all.

Elster represents this as a positive view of “decision making by discussion among free and equal citizens” (1999, 1-2). But the distinction Pericles draws between public men who “originate” proposals and ordinary citizens who “judge” them suggests that, like Athenagoras of Syracuse, he did not expect ordinary citizens to speak publicly. What is celebrated here is the Athenian custom of “being instructed” (προδιδαχθέναι) by speeches prior to taking action, a process characterized by internal thought on the part of the decision-makers. Hobbes, in his 1629 translation, brought this out clearly: “We likewise weigh what we undertake and apprehend it perfectly in our minds (κρίνομέν γε ἐνθυμούμεθα ὥς τά πράγματα), not accounting words for a hindrance of action but that it is rather a hindrance to action to come to it without instruction of words before.” The Athenian multitude, on this representation, did not engage in public speech but rather envisaged and adopted proposals on the basis of advice.

_Protagoras_ 319d is also significant here. “When the Athenians have to decide (βουλεύσασθαι) something to do with the administration of the _polis_,” Socrates argues, “the man who rises to advise (συμβουλεύει) them...could equally well be a carpenter, a bronzesmith, a shoemaker, a merchant, a shipowner, rich or poor, well-born or lowly...” As we know from other evidence, anyone who wished could indeed speak publicly at Athens;²⁹ Socrates implies that anyone did. But Plato’s hostility to democracy means that this sketch may be a caricature or a _reductio ad absurdum_, not an accurate depiction of democratic ideals. Even if, as Peter Rhodes has argued, what Socrates describes “cannot be totally unlike what actually happened” (2016, 251), it is not a reliable guide to democratic ideology.

The Athenian orators are a better bet. Hansen (1987, 61) quotes Aeschines 3.220:

You blame me if I come before the people, not constantly, but only at intervals. And you imagine that your hearers fail to detect you in thus making a demand which is no outgrowth of democracy, but borrowed from another constitution. For in oligarchies it is not he who wishes, but he who is in authority, that addresses the people (δημογορεῖ); whereas in democracies he speaks who chooses, and whenever it seems to him good. And the fact that a man speaks only at intervals marks him as a man who takes part in politics because of the call of the hour, and for the common good; whereas to leave no day without its speech, is the mark of a man who is making a trade of it, and talking for pay.

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²⁹ E.g. Ps. Xen. 1.2.
According to Hansen, this passage “well presents” the “Athenian ideal” of “diffusion of political activity and avoidance of professionalism” (1987, 61), and he cites no others either here or elsewhere in defence of this point. Yet while Aeschines certainly depicts occasional public speaking in a positive light, he contrasts it not with failure ever to speak, but with speaking incessantly. “He who wishes” should come forward because of the “call of the hour,” rather than “leave no day without its speech.” It does not follow from this that public speaking was regarded as a “moral duty” for all citizens (Hansen 1999, 267).

Moreover, Aeschines was here not merely sketching an ideal, but defending himself against a specific attack from Demosthenes, and that attack reveals a significantly different conceptualization of ideal political behaviour (18.308, tr. Vince).

Nor was it [his] duty to hold his peace dishonestly and deceptively, as you [Aeschines] so often do. There is...a silence that is honest and beneficial to the city, such as is observed in all simplicity by the majority of you citizens. Not such, but far, far different is the silence of Aeschines. Withdrawing himself from public life whenever he thinks fit—and that is very frequently—he lies in wait for the time when you will be weary of the incessant speaker, or when some unlucky reverse has befallen you...and then...he breaks silence and the orator reappears like a sudden squall, with his voice in fine training; he strings together the words and the phrases that he has accumulated, emphatically and without a pause; but, alas, they are all useless, they serve no good purpose, they are directed to the injury of this or that citizen, and to the discredit of the whole community.

Hansen takes account of this passage by observing, correctly, that “the orators found no fault with the fact that many Athenians never addressed their fellow citizens” (1999, 267). But Demosthenes arguably goes further. He implies that there are not one but two ideal citizens at Athens: the ideal rhētor and the ideal man of the mass.30 Most men are not expected to speak, and their silence is both “honest” and “beneficial.” But expectations differ for those who do come forward. They should not speak incessantly—thus far Aeschines and Demosthenes agree. But neither should they stay silent, carp or criticize fruitlessly. Rather, they should put their rhetorical skills to good use, which meant proposing and leading actions—Demosthenes mentions alliances, expeditions, embassies, and domestic and foreign projects (18.311). Thus represented, democratic ideology demanded not occasional public speech from all, but useful speech-making by some and honest silence from most. The four-fifths of the audience that voted with Demosthenes on this occasion presumably agreed with him.

The evidence that βουλεύομαι implied public speech is thus surprisingly weak, warranting a more comprehensive investigation. How was this term defined

30 Cf. Manin (1997, 16, fn. 17): “The process of self-selection that...limited the number of speakers actually received explicit recognition...in the ideology of the first comer; ho boulomenos denoted anyone wishing to come forward to make a proposal, not simply anyone.”
by contemporaries? Was internal deliberation really as prominent as the foregoing analysis suggests? What other models of deliberation are available, and to what extent do they illuminate the activity of assemblygoers? The rest of this article seeks to answer these questions.

Defining τὸ βουλεύονται

不影响, is defined in Plato’s Cratylus, the pseudo-Platonic Sisyphus and Aristotle’s Nicomachean and Eudemian Ethics. The related βουλή also appears in the Platonic Definitions. Aristotle’s discussion is by far the most extensive and will accordingly be our main touchstone here, but it is noteworthy how little it conflicts with the Platonic accounts.

The most idiosyncratic (though not incongruous) definition appears in the Cratylus, where βουλεύονται is associated with shooting (βολή) or “aiming at something” (τὸ ἐφεύσθαι, 420c). Specifically, Socrates argues that βουλή (“will” or “counsel”), βουλεύονται (“to want” or “to wish”) and βουλεύονται (“to deliberate”) “express the idea of shooting, just as ἄβουλία [“poor counsel”]...appears to be a failure to hit, as if a person did not shoot or hit that which he shot at or wished (ἐβολέτε) or planned (ἐβουλεύοντο) or desired (ἐφίετο)” (420c, tr. Fowler). Exactly what βουλεύονται aims at is suggested elsewhere. In the Definitions, βολή is glossed as σκέψις περὶ τῶν μελλόντων πῶς συμφέρει, “consideration of what will be beneficial in the future” (414a), while in the Sisyphus, τὸ εὖ βουλεύονται, “deliberating well,” is described first as “a kind of seeking to discover the best actions to use for oneself (τὰ βέλτιστα εξευρέτων τοια ἑαυτῶι διαπράξασθαι), though without knowing them clearly, but this being some form of thought” (ἐν νοήσει, 388b), and then as “seeking after the best means to use for oneself for one’s own benefit,” specifically “as concerns practical matters” (τῶν πραγμάτων, 389b).

Putting these claims together, βουλεύονται seems to imply the consideration and selection, in thought in the first instance, of possibly beneficial future actions. This is also the kernel of Aristotle’s account, τὸ βουλεύονται, as represented by Aristotle, was typically internal; it meant coming to a decision about a course of action within one’s own power; and it was a two-stage process, involving first considering, then deciding. Moreover, while it could be performed by groups, Aristotle never explained precisely how.

That Aristotle took deliberation to be typically internal is easily shown. Nearly all his exemplars are single men—a doctor, a general, a gymnastic trainer, an orator, a Lacedaemonian, a prudent man, Pericles. Indeed, such is his focus on individual deliberation that this, rather than deliberation in general, is sometimes defined as his object of interest. That goes too far, since groups do appear in his analysis: in the Nicomachean Ethics, for example, he observes that “all particular divisions of men deliberate (βουλεύονται) about things attainable by their own actions” (1112b37), while in the Eudemian Ethics he states that “we do not

32 Eud. Eth. 1227a6-8, 1227a19, 1227b25; Nic. Eth. 1112a32, 1112b12-14, 1140a26, 1140b6, 1142a34. Cf. Hist. Anim. 488b25; Pol. 1260a1.
deliberate (βουλεύομαι) on affairs in India,” where “we” presumably refers to Greek communities rather than to single men (1226a28). Yet even when others are involved, individual deliberation is represented as paradigmatic. As Aristotle notes (and as will be discussed in detail below), we sometimes “bring in advisers (συμβούλους δὲ παραλαμβάνομεν), distrusting our own capacity to think things through” (διαγνώσαμε, Nicomachean Ethics 1112b10).

What did this activity involve? According to Aristotle, we deliberate about “things from us and from action,” or more elegantly “practical matters within our power.”34 We do not deliberate about eternal things such as geometrical truths, regular things such as solstices, irregular things such as the weather, random things such as finding treasure, or anything else caused by nature, necessity or chance (Nicomachean Ethics 1112a20-30). We deliberate only about outcomes attainable by human agency and not even most of those. A Lacedaemonian would not deliberate about the best political system for the Scythians, for Scythian government is not under his control (Nicomachean Ethics 1112a36). Equally, we do not deliberate about orthography, since how to spell a word correctly is not up to any one of us (Nicomachean Ethics 1112b1-4). Deliberation concerns only things within the power of the deliberator to effect, either via his own agency or via that of others under his direction (Nicomachean Ethics 1112b28). Its subject matter is limited because its purpose is limited. Deliberation decides the action of the deliberator. It is thus linked to both agency and choice. It presupposes that the deliberator is deciding between at least two courses of action, both of which strike him, at least initially, as possible to perform.35

This may seem a surprisingly narrow account. According to Aristotle, philosophical, historical and scientific questions cannot be deliberated about, because they cannot be influenced by the actions of the deliberator. That is not to say that they cannot be considered, examined, contemplated, discussed and so on. Ancient Greek, like English, recognized many kinds of intellectual activity. Among the terms Aristotle used to describe his characteristic occupation were θεωρέω, “theorize” or “contemplate,” σκέπτομαι, “consider” and σκοπέω, “examine.”36 But βουλεύομαι he reserved for practical matters, excluding even the process of settling on an opinion (Nicomachean Ethics 1111b30-12a13, Eudemian Ethics 1226a1-7). Though some form of imagination is common to all animals, he says in De Anima, the deliberative (βουλευτική) imagination belongs only to those that decide whether to do this or that (434a7-9).

βουλεύομαι thus implied coming to a decision about an action within one’s power, and this was a two-stage process. In English, “coming to a decision” is ambiguous: either the consideration performed prior to a decision or the final act of decision-making may be meant. There was less ambiguity about

34 Nic. Eth. 1112a30-1. Cf. Eud. Eth. 1226a26-33; Rh. 1357a. Cammack 2013b defends the claim that this means means as opposed to ends (Nic. Eth. 1112b12-15; Eud. Eth. 1226b10-13).
βουλεύομαι, because the stage reached was often revealed by tense. In the present tense, βουλεύομαι could denote either the entire deliberative process (both considering and deciding) or the process of consideration alone, while in past tenses it implied “decide after consideration” (LSJ). For instance, Aristotle used the present participle when the deliberator was still making up his mind. “The deliberator (ὁ βουλευόμενος) always deliberates for the sake of something...he always has some aim in view” (Eudemian Ethics 1227a6-7). The aorist (or another past tense) appeared once the decision had been made. “The weak, having come to a resolution (βουλευσάμενοι), on account of passion do not keep to what they decided (ἐβουλεύσαντο). The impetuous, on the other hand, on account of not making a resolution (τὸ μὴ βουλεύσασθαι), are led by passion throughout” (Nicomachean Ethics 1150b18). Neither the weak nor the impetuous, according to Aristotle, fail entirely to deliberate. The weak complete both parts of the process and form a decision, though they do not execute it, while the impetuous may begin but do not complete the process. And in Greek, the stage reached was shown simply by tense. There was no need to use another verb to specify the final act of decision-making, as there may be in English (see, for example, “making a resolution” in the translation above), since it was already intrinsic to βουλεύομαι.

This leads to a key point. The fact that βουλεύομαι denotes a two-stage process may hardly matter when the deliberator is one person, since both considering and deciding are internal and the transition between them may be virtually seamless. When the agent is a group, however, it matters quite a lot, because different processes will necessarily feature at each stage. “Considering” may involve internal thought, hearing speeches, or group discussion; “deciding” may involve voting or establishing a verbal consensus. This poses a problem for those interested in the mechanics of group deliberation. βουλεύομαι tells us only that a decision is reached; if we want to know how, we need more information. What more can we glean from Aristotle?

As it turns out, surprisingly little. Groups certainly did deliberate, in both the Rhetoric and the Politics as well as in his ethical writings. We are told, for example, that decisions about war and peace, alliances, laws and so on may be assigned to all citizens, to some, or to single officials, and that allowing all to deliberate (βουλευόσθαι) about everything was standard in democracies of Aristotle’s day (Politics 1298a1-35; cf. 1318b22-30). One passage in the Politics, to be discussed below, does provide a clue as to the mechanics of this process. But Aristotle never directly addressed how, or even whether, group deliberation differed from the internal paradigm he presented in his formal account—a lacuna which may itself be significant.

The internal model confirmed

While Aristotle left some of the details of group deliberation open, in other respects his account is as accurate as one might wish. Every extant use of βουλεύομαι does indeed indicate coming to a decision about a course of action

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37 Including in parts of speech that do not show tense in English, such as participles and infinitives. In such cases tense shows not time but aspect: progressive/repeated aspect by the present tense, simple aspect by the aorist, and completed aspect by the perfect.
within the deliberator’s power. Moreover, the philosophical priority that both Plato and Aristotle accorded to internal deliberation is matched by its historical priority, in that every early use of βουλεύωμαι denotes internal activity. Internal deliberation even comes first grammatically, in that what originally distinguished βουλεύωμαι, “deliberate” (in the middle voice) from βουλεύω, “plan” or “advise” (in the active voice) was the fact that the subject of the verb was considering his or her own action, with emphasis on the “own.”

The earliest uses of βουλεύωμαι all feature single agents deciding what to do. In the Iliad, Zeus is said to have gone back on a promise to Agamemnon and “determined upon (βουλεύσατο) cruel deceit” (2.114, 9.21). Theognis advises “thinking (βουλεύον) twice and thrice...for the headstrong man comes to grief” (633-4), while Semonides’ vicious woman “ponders (βουλεύεται) only this, how to do the greatest harm she may” (Censure of Women 81-2). Later examples include Electra’s “Hear what I have determined (βεβούλευμαι) to accomplish!”; Oedipus’s “O Zeus, what have you decreed (βεβούλευσαι) for me?”; and Phaedra’s statement that she goes to die, but how “shall be my own devising” (βουλεύσομαι).38 In each case, a single person decides on an action within his or her power, and this remained a common usage.39

Such uses are just what Aristotle led us to expect. But something else emerges from our earliest texts that he does not discuss. Internal decision-making was in the archaic and early classical period represented not only by βουλεύωμαι, “deliberate,” but also by βουλεύω, “plan.” In Hesiod, Phocylides and Pindar, only βουλεύω appears in this context, while in Homer and Aeschylus βουλεύωμαι appears once, βουλεύω many times. In Sophocles and Euripides, βουλεύωμαι and βουλεύω are used about equally in this context, while in the fourth century βουλεύομαι was by far the more common. What accounts for this change? The answer both confirms the association of βουλεύομαι with internal activity and lays the groundwork for a better understanding of political deliberation.

To begin with the grammatical point: βουλεύω and βουλεύομαι are not different verbs but different voices of the same verb, the active and the middle respectively. The textbook distinction between these voices is that the active “represents the subject performing the action of the verb,” while the middle “shows that the action is performed with special reference to the subject” (Smyth 1956, §§1703, 1713). Specifically, “as contrasted with the active, the middle lays stress on the conscious activity, bodily or mental participation, of the agent.” Heading Smyth’s examples are “βουλεύω, plan, and βουλεύομαι, deliberate” (§1728).

Drawing on their earliest uses, we may elaborate on Smyth’s distinction. Though βουλεύω could show the subject planning—that is, designing and/or de-
ciding (OED)—his, her or their own action, it could also indicate the making of a plan by someone other than the decider, that is, the production or provision of advice. Βουλεύομαι, by contrast, specified that the subject of the verb was the decider. He, she or they were forming their own will (Βουλή).

The flexibility of βουλεύω is plain in Homer. Most often, the subject is a single person planning (or more negatively “plotting”) his or her own action, as in Phoenix’s report, “Then I hatched a plan (βουλέσα) to slay him with the sharp sword” (Iliad 9.458). But plural subjects are also common. The Trojans wish to know “whether our foes are planning (βουλέσουσι) flight”, so Dolon goes to Agamemnon’s ship, “where the chief men will be holding council” (βουλάς βουλέσειν, literally “planning plans,” Iliad 10.310-11, 325). Here communication is certain, as in Achilles’ lament for Patroclus, “Never more...will we sit apart from our friends and make plans together” (βουλάς...βουλέσσομεν, Iliad 23.77-8). Additionally, Nestor’s request that Agamemnon “follow whoever devises the wisest counsel” (βουλήν βουλεύση, Iliad 9.74-5) and Odysseus’ reference to a Phoenician who had given him “lying counsel” (βουλέσσας, Odyssey 14.295-7) suggest “advise,” making a plan for another rather than for oneself.

In other archaic texts, βουλεύω indicates not only “plan,” “plot,” and “advise,” but also “conspire,” “deliberate” and “consult.” These uses reappear in Aeschylus. βουλεύω suggests “plan” in the exclamation of an Argive elder, “One who wants to act must first plan (βουλέσα) what action to take” (Agamemnon 1359); “advise” in Prometheus’ sad plaint, “I, though advising (βουλέσω) for the best, could not persuade the Titans” (Prometheus Bound 206); and “decide” or “decree” in Eteocles’ declaration, “If anyone fails to obey my authority, a vote of death will be decreed (βουλέσσηται, Seven against Thebes 198).”

Βουλεύομαι, by contrast, appeared only when the subject was himself or herself the decision-maker, especially when conflict with others was involved. In the line from the Iliad quoted above, what will transpire is what Zeus has privately determined upon, as opposed to what Agamemnon had expected. Likewise, Theognis’ “Think twice and thrice” and Semonides’ description of the vicious woman suggest private, even secretive, decision-making. Aeschylus’ sole use of the middle βουλεύομαι is also revealing. When the chorus of maidens defies Eteocles, he tells them, in Sommerstein’s translation, not to “behave imprudently” (βουλέσομαι κακώς, Seven Against Thebes 223). “Behave” is far from a literal rendering of βουλέσομαι, but it aptly conveys the connection between thought and one’s own action that was essential to βουλεύομαι.

The association between βουλεύομαι and deciding one’s own action is finally confirmed by a steep reduction in the relative frequency of βουλεύω during

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41 "Plot": Od. 5.178, 187, 10.300, 344.
43 Cf. 1.531, 2.344-6, 377, 10.415; Od. 6.60, 13.439, 16.233-4.
45 Tyrt. Rhetra; Theog. 69-72, 1050-1, 1088; Pind. N. 9.37; Phoc. in Orion Anth. i.22.
46 Cf. Ag. 1223, 1614, 1627, 1634; Eum. 696; Pers. 758; Seven 200, 248; PB 206, 1031.
the classical period. In Homer, the proportion of active to total uses was 32/34, in the other archaic poets, 8/10, and in Aeschylus 16/17. But in Sophocles it was 13/22; Euripides, 18/32; Ps.-Xenophon, 3/9; Aristophanes, 6/21; Herodotus, 23/133; Antiphanes, 5/14; Andocides, 6/19; Thucydides, 23/110; Lysias, 23/42; Isocrates, 2/114; Xenophon, 9/114; Plato, 5/103; Isaeus, 0/11; Aeschines, 6/46; Demosthenes, 14/168; Aristotle, 14/145; Lycurgus, 0/10; Hypereides, 0/4; Dinarchus, 1/8; and Theophrastus, 0/3.

What accounts for this change is specialization over time. The early prominence of βουλεύω gave way to less frequent usage as some of its functions devolved to other terms. Most importantly, “deliberate,” i.e. “come to a decision about one’s own action,” became the near-exclusive province of βουλεύομαι. What had been a way of emphasizing the subject’s authority over an action gradually became standard usage whenever the proposed action was decided by the subject. βουλεύω still performed this function occasionally, especially when the meaning was closer to “plot” than to “plan.” But “plot” was soon taken over by ἐπιβουλεύω, literally “against-plan,” while “advise” became expressed by συμβουλεύω, literally “with-plan.” βουλεύω, meanwhile, came to denote primarily the activity of councils and councillors. Lysias’s speeches contain only one use of βουλεύω that does not indicate council activity, as do those of Demosthenes. Conversely, in Demosthenes, “come to a decision about an action,” expressing no negative intent, was always represented by βουλεύομαι—just as in Aristotle.

Demosthenes and Aristotle were contemporaries (384-22), so we need not be surprised that they used βουλεύομαι in the same way. But we should note how fully Aristotle’s analysis has been confirmed. Our earliest examples of βουλεύομαι suggest not only that it indicated internal deliberation, but that it em-

47 Soph. Oed. Tyr. 618, 1417, Ant. 1179; Eur. Ion 984, El. 618, Med. 874, Or. 773; Aristoph. Birds 637, Clouds 419, Ass. 505, poss. Peace 690; Hdt. 1.73, 117, 120, 3.84, 6.52, 130, 8.97, 100, 9.106; Thuc. 1.85, 97, 132, 2.6, 3.28, 4.15, 37, 41, 51, 74, 5.63, 87, 111, 116, 6.18, 91, 8.50; Lys. 3.42; Dem. 19.21; Aristot. Met. 1013a.
48 Soph. Aj. 1055, El. 1001, 649, Oed. Tyr. 606, Ant. 490, Trach. 807; Eur. Andr. 804, El. 27, 1012, Hec. 855, 870, Med. 37, 316, 401, Orest. 1089, Rh. 862, 950; Hdt. 1.111, 210, 5.106, 6.61, 7.197, 9.110; Antiph. 1.26, 3.7, 6.16; Andoc. 1.95, 2.20; Aeschin. 2.115, 117; Dem. 19.21; Din. 1.30; Aristot. Pol. 1310a10.
51 Hdt. 6.37; Ps.-Xen. 1.9; Ar. Eccl. 444, Kn. 774, Peace 690; Ant. 6.45; Andoc. 1.75; IG 13 105.30, 49. Strikingly, βουλεύομαι was almost never used of councils in democracies. It appears only eight times with the Athenian βουλή, all atypical for one reason or another. Council decisions were usually represented by προβουλήω/προβουλέως, presumably in recognition of their preliminary status. This point is discussed further in Cammack forthcoming 2019 (b).
53 Dem. 19.21 (plot). Cf. 18.25; 19.154, 286; 21.111; 22.5, 9, 12, 16, 36, 40, 47.44; 57.8; 59.3-4.
54 Dem. 4.33, 8.67, 18.235, 272, 19.226, 21.41, 74, 23.12, 27.4, 36.31, 50, 37.13, 47.71, 52.30, 61.34, 41, 56, Ex. 19.

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phasized the internality of the deliberation taking place. Later, just as Aristotle implies, ΒΟΥΛΕΥΟΜΑΙ became the only way to denote coming to a decision about one’s own action. During the same period, however, we also find the first cases of ΒΟΥΛΕΥΟΜΑΙ used with a plural subject, some of which—unlike in Aristotle—definitely indicated speech.

**Dialogical deliberation: decision-making through discussion**

The earliest examples of ΒΟΥΛΕΥΟΜΑΙ implying speech are mid-fifth-century: “Have they actually decided (βεβούλευνται) to do this to me?” spoken by Sophocles’ Electra in reference to her mother Clytemnestra and stepfather Aegisthus (Electra 385), and Aeneas’ comment to Hector in Euripides’ Rhesus, “if this signalling is a trap...we shall deliberate” (βούλευσόμεσθα, 129-30). In neither case is speech explicitly attested, though it may be assumed. Elsewhere it is certain.

Herodotus, for instance, used ΒΟΥΛΕΥΟΜΑΙ to refer to the first meeting of the seven Persians who conspired to kill the Magian pretender to the Persian throne—a meeting at which they explicitly “exchanged speeches” (ἐδίδοσαν σφί...λόγους). The term reappears in relation to the “constitutional debate” said to have taken place a few days later (7.11, 80). Thucydides used it in military contexts, as in “the allies deliberated (ἐβουλευόντο) which of the remaining places they should go against next—the Eleans urged Lepreon, the Mantinians Tegea, and the Argives and Athenians sided with the Mantinians,” and the discussions of Nikias, Alkibiades and Demosthenes prior to the expedition to Sicily (6.25, 7.47). As noted earlier, dialogical deliberation also appears in Plato, in Socrates’ comment to Callicles, “I once overheard you (pl.) debating (ὑμῶν βουλευομένων) how far you ought to practice wisdom” (Gorgias 487c), and in the Critias: ten kings “took counsel (ἐβουλεύοντο) about common affairs,” agreeing that “if anyone should attempt to overthrow any city...they should all lend aid, taking counsel in common” (κοινῇ...βουλευόμενοι, 119d, 120c-d).

ΒΟΥΛΕΥΟΜΑΙ was also used by Xenophon and Lysias to describe the decision-making discussions of Athens’ Thirty Tyrants. A later example is from Demosthenes: following a meeting of the assembly, “the envoys met and discussed (ἐβουλεύουσα) which of them should be left behind” (19.122, tr. Vince).

What can we say about these cases and others like them? To begin with, each involves small numbers of participants. Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are two, the senior Trojans in Rhesus not many more, the Persian noblemen seven, the Athenian generals three, Callicles and friends four, the kings in the Critias ten, the Athenian oligarchs thirty, and the envoys in Demosthenes nine. The number of allies in Thucydides is unknown, but probably fell within this range.

Next, though ΒΟΥΛΕΥΟΜΑΙ in these examples certainly indicated discussion, so could other verbs. One, encountered above in Aristotle’s report of the ban on discussion among judges, was κοινολογέομαι, “speak together” (Politics

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56 Cf. 6.1, 46, 93, 7.1, 50, 8.8, 54; Xen. Hell. 2.1.6, 31, 6.4.15.
58 Xen. Hell. 2.3.13 with 3.27-50; Lys 12.25, 50.
1268b5-10; cf. Thucydides 8.63, 98). Others include διδωμὶ αὐτοῦς λόγους, “give each other speeches,” as seen in Herodotus, ἀνακοινώ, “communicate,” found in Lysistrata’s demand, “get your allies’ heads together (ἀνακοινώσατε) and come to some decision (βουλεύσασθε)”; διαλέγω, “converse,” source of the English “dialogue.” διαλέγω often appeared in philosophical contexts, and “dialectic” was conventionally contrasted with political speech, as in Plato’s Gorgias and the opening of Aristotle’s Rhetoric. An example from a political context appears in a decree quoted in Demosthenes 18, which directed envoys to visit Philip of Macedon and “confer” (διαλέξουται) with him (164).

Another option was κοινώ, “make common” (middle κοινώμαι, “make common to each other”). An important use appears in Aeschylus’ Agamemnon. Hearing Agamemnon’s groans, the chorus of elders suspects he has been killed and, in Sommerstein’s translation, declares “Let us deliberate (κοινωσόμεθα) and see if there might be any safe plan to follow” (1346-7). What happens next looks like ideal deliberative practice on the Habermasian model. A small number of speakers (between six and twelve) discuss what the group should do, responding to each other and giving reasons for their positions. Three proposals are advanced: to call for help, to apprehend the murderers on the spot, and to ascertain the facts before proceeding. The last secures general assent and the entire group acts accordingly. This is probably the best ancient Greek example of what many contemporary deliberative democrats mean by deliberation, but it is represented not by βουλεύσομαι but by κοινώμαι.

What distinguished cases where βουλεύσομαι was used from those where it was not? The main difference is exactly what Aristotle led us to expect. βουλεύσομαι appeared only when what was reported was not merely discussion but decision-making. Herodotus’ constitutional debate is known for its theoretical content, but the reported context was practical. The future government of the Persians lay in its participants’ hands, and after three speeches, they voted, with four out of seven favoring monarchy (3.83). The discussion of Callicles and friends also had a practical purpose: they were deciding what style of life to pursue (Gorgias 487d). The allies’ and generals’ next steps, the ten kings’ policymaking, the oligarchs’ decrees and the envoys’ plans also fall into this category. Conversely, when only discussion, not decision-making, is implied—as in the decree ordering the conference with Philip—a different verb was used.

Most significantly, when βουλεύσομαι denotes group discussion, every member of the group participates in the decision. This is clearest in the Persian “constitutional debate,” since the speeches culminate in a formal vote. The Thirty Tyrants, too, typically voted on their actions. Majoritarianism is implied in the

60 Ar. Lys. 1176, tr. Lindsay. Cf. Xen. Hell. 6.3.8; Isoc. 1.34, 5.19, 235, 12.235; Plat. Prot. 314b, 349a; Aeschin. 2.64, 68.
61 Plat. Gorg. 448c-49b, 500c; Aristot. Rh. 1354a1. Cf. Isoc. 5.18, 234, 9.34; Plat. Prot. 314c-d, 335d-36a; Chambers 2009; Garsten 2006. Xen. Mem. 4.5.12 links διαλέγω to βουλεύσομαι.
62 Dem. 18.164, cf. 28, 73; Isoc. 2.46, 15.256; Aeschin. 2.18, 103.
63 Aesch. Ag. 1347-71, cf. Lib. 673, 716-18; Aristoph. Cl. 197; Thuc. 4.4.
64 See also the soldiers’ assembly at Thuc. 8.76-7, where again, βουλεύσομαι does not appear.
65 The attack on Theramenes described at Xen. Hell. 2.3.50 is a notable exception.
Thucydidean case: the Mantineans’ plan is adopted because it is supported by the Argives and Athenians, leaving the Eleans in a minority. How the kings in the *Critias* reach their decisions is not specified, but we can assume that none attended the meeting simply to air his opinion.66 The same seems true of Callicles and friends and the envoys in Demosthenes. The decisions they are making are ones in which all can be expected to have a say, not only through their voices but also through their votes.

βουλεύομαι, then, was used to describe group discussion only when every member of the group was a decision-maker. As we have seen, the final decision could be taken by a vote; establishing a consensus verbally would also have been possible. Either way, the deliberative process culminated in the choice of an action for which the group as a whole would be responsible.

*Guided deliberation: decision-making with advice*

The third model of deliberation found in the ancient sources is a partial combination of the first two. It involved both communication and (typically) internal decision-making. Several people might offer opinions or advice, but only one agent—either a single person or a collective body—made the decision, and that agent only was the grammatical subject of βουλεύομαι. I shall call this model “guided deliberation,” since those who deliberated were guided by the input of others.

The simplest form of guided deliberation involves a single decision-maker and his advisers, such as a monarch and counsellors. The exiled Athenian tyrant Pisistratus “deliberated alongside his sons” (ἐβουλεύεσθαι ἄμα τοῖς παισί, 1.61), the Milesian tyrant Aristagoras “deliberated with those of his faction” (ἐβουλεύεσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν στασιωτέων, 5.36), and the Persian emperor Xerxes deliberated with those he summoned (ἐβουλεύεσθαι ἄμα Περσῶν τοῖς ἐπικλήτοις, 8.101). Other Herodotean examples include a father taking advice from his sons and a husband from his wife (2.107, 9.133). This form of deliberation also appears in the writings of Isocrates, as in his address to Philip of Macedon (L5.18; cf. L1.5, 34-5, L2.51-2). In each case the decision-maker receives input from others, but the final decision is his alone.

Two consecutive speeches in the Demosthenic corpus illustrate the difference between guided and dialogical deliberation. In “Against Olympiodorus,” two men swear to proceed by mutual agreement and take counsel together several times before relations go sour. Here βουλεύομαι appears in the plural and κοινῆ, “in common,” is added for clarity. “Mutual agreement” is κοινῆ βουλεύομενοι and the two men’s discussions are described by ἐβουλεύομεθα…κοινῇ, “we came to a decision together” (Dem. 48.9, 10, 22, 28).67 This is a clear case of dialogical deliberation: joint decision-making through discussion. In “Against Evergus,” however, though discussion takes place, the decision, and thus the attribution of βουλεύομαι, falls to one man only. The speaker deliberated with his friends, but, crucially, βουλεύομαι appears in the singular, not the plural: ἐβουλεύομην μετὰ

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66 See further Schwartzberg 2010.
67 Cf. Lys. 13.24; Isoc. 17.7; Hyp. 3.12.
τῶν φίλων, “I deliberated with my friends” (47.71). Though others spoke, only one deliberated, because only one decided—a clear case of guided deliberation.

What verb, if not βουλεύομαι, represented the activity of those who spoke but did not decide? The answer is συμβουλεύω, “advise,” or sometimes a synonym. While the speaker in “Against Evergus” deliberated, ἐβουλεύόμην, his friends advised, συμβουλεύοντας (71). Xerxes asked Artemisia to “advise (συμβουλεύον) me as to which of these things I shall best decide (βουλευσάμενος) to do” (Herodotus 8.101), and Isocrates’ friends warned him, “You are about to send something offering counsel (συμβουλεύσοντα) to Philip, a man who...surely believes that he more than anyone is able to take counsel (βουλευΣθαί) by himself!” (5.18).

That βουλεύομαι and συμβουλεύω often appeared together is no surprise. They represented complementary strands of a single advising/deciding dyad, both parts of which, as we saw above, had been previously expressed by βουλεύω. Their connection is reinforced by the fact that the middle and passive forms of the Greek verb look the same. βουλεύομαι could mean either “come to a decision” or “be advised.” The English equivalent is “take counsel”: one may take counsel either alone or more literally from others. βουλεύομαι appears in the latter sense in Aeschylius’ Libation-bearers: “Since we are not short of friends,” Clytemnestra announces, “we will take counsel” (βουλευσόμεσθα, 718). The mention of friends makes it clear that advice is expected. This situation could also have been expressed by the middle voice of συμβουλεύω, i.e. συμβουλεύομαι, “consult,” as seen in Herodotus. When Sesostris’ house is set on fire, “he at once consulted his wife” (συμβουλευσάμενος τῇ γυναικί), that is, “took advice from his wife” (2.107). Similarly, Masistes, in a moment of uncertainty, συμβουλευσάμενος τοῖς παισί, “consulted his children” (9.113). These cases are equivalent to that seen in “Against Evergus.” Though discussion took place, the singular verb shows that Sesostris and Masistes decided alone. They were the rulers in these contexts, their wives or children their counsellors.

The same pattern appears in cases of what we may call participatory oligarchy, where a group of rulers takes advice from its subjects, except that here, the decision-maker is collective body rather than a single person. The pseudo-Platonic Sisyphus opens with just this scenario. The previous day, the rulers of the Pharsalians had been deliberating (ἐβουλεύοντο), and had “compelled” Sisyphus to advise them (συμβουλεύειν οὖν αὐτοῖς ἡμαρκαζόν με, 387c). That Sisyphus is not himself a deliberator is indicated both by the βουλεύομαι/συμβουλεύω dyad and by the report of compulsion, and is underscored by the line that follows: “Now with us Pharsalians it is a law to obey the rulers, should they order one of us to advise them” (ἀν κελεύσωσι συμβουλεύειν τινὰ ἡμᾶς αὐτοῖς, 387c).

68 Cf. Thuc. 1.128; Isoc. 5.69, 12.233; Plat. Rep. 400b.
69 E.g. πείθομαι, “be persuaded,” Hdt. 1.124; παραίνεω, “exhort, recommend, advise,” Hdt. 9.79, Isoc. 2.46, L3.3.
71 A future middle used passively; cf. Ag. 844.
72 Cf. Aristoph. Cl. 457; Thuc. 8.68; Xen. Cyrop. 2.1.7; Plat. Theag. 122a; Isoc. 9.44.
other form of participatory oligarchy appears in Plato’s Laws: the elder guardians
are to deliberate (བੌਲੇਯੇਸਾਈ) while the younger ones give advice (ਸੰਮੰਬੋਲਿਆਸ, 964e-5a). Aristotle, too, mentions a form of oligarchy in which “the function of
advising is given to all, but only the rulers deliberate” (ਤਿਸਸ ਸੰਮੰਬੋਲਿਹ ਮੇਵ
ਮੇਤਾਦੀਦੋਨਾ ਪਾਈ, ਬੌਲੇਯੇਸਾਈ ਦੇ ਤੋਂ ਅਰ੍ਹੋਤਾਸ, Politics 1298b28). If the
deliberation of the rulers in these cases includes discussion, then what is portrayed
is a combination of guided and dialogical deliberation; if not, then it constituted
guided deliberation alone.

Deliberation in ancient Greek assemblies
Three models of deliberation thus appear in the ancient Greek sources. Internal, in
which one person makes up his or her mind alone; dialogical, in which a group
comes to a decision through discussion; and guided, in which a decision-maker
(either single or collective) comes to a decision on the basis of external advice.
This three-way categorization is interesting in itself, since deliberation is not nor-
manly analyzed in this way. But the issue of immediate interest concerns its repre-
sentation in assemblies. How far did deliberation in ancient Greek assemblies, as
represented in our texts, conform to any one of these models?

As discussed above, assembly deliberation has long been interpreted dia-
logically, though the evidence is surprisingly weak. Nonetheless, there is some
support for it. Several examples appear in Thucydides. Having argued against
embarking hastily on war, the Athenian envoys exhort the assembled Lacedae-
omians to “deliberate (ਬੌਲੇਯੇਸਾਠੇ) slowly,” (1.78), after which the Lacedaemoni-
ans “deliberated among themselves” (ਐਵ ਬੌਲੇਯੋਨਟੋ ਕਾਤਾ ਸਫਅਸ ਅੁਤੋਂਸ, 1.79).
This deliberation certainly involved speech. “And the opinions (ਯੰਵੋਮਾਈ) of the
majority agreed in this, that the Athenians…ought speedily to be warred on. But
Archidamus their king…spoke (ਐਲੇੰਜੇ) as follows” (1.79). The impression of dia-
logical deliberation is strengthened by Archidamus’ use of ਡੌਲੇਯੋਮਾਈ in the
first person plural: “Let us not, in so short a part of a day, decide on
(ਬੌਲੇਯੋਸੋਵੇਂਗਵ) so many lives…but at our leisure” (1.85). The first person plural
reappears in the response of the ephor Sthenelaïdes, “Let no one tell me that we
ought to deliberate (ਹਮਾਸ… ਡੌਲੇਯੇਸਾਈ) only once we have been wronged”
(1.86), and the speech of the Athenian Diodotus later in the work: “We are deli-
berating (ਹਮਾਸ… ਡੌਲੇਯੇਸਾਈ) not about the present but about the future…we are
not litigating with the Mytilenaens…but deliberating (ਬੌਲੇਯੋਮੇਠਾ) about
them” (3.44; cf. 6.21, 23).

ਬੌਲੇਯੋਮਾਈ also appears in the first person plural in the oratorical canon.
“We imagined…that with Boeotia on our side we could take on the whole world,”
declared Andocides to the Athenian assembly in 391, “but here we are consider-
ing (ਬੌਲੇਯੋਮੇਠਾ) how to keep fighting the Lacedaemonians now Boeotia is
making peace” (3.25, cf. 29). Isocrates, writing in the person of the younger Ar-
chidamus, claimed that “Never…has so much has been at stake as in this question
which we are now assembled to decide” (ਬੌਲੇਯੋਸੋਵੇਂਗਵੀ, 6.7, tr. Norlin; cf. 51,
56), while elsewhere, in his own person, he argued that “no good will come of the
resolutions made so far…unless we determine (ਬੌਲੇਯੋਸੋਵੇਂਗਵੀ) well on the rest”
(8.15, cf. 18, 25, 57, 7.78). Aeschines celebrated Athens’ lawgiver for laying
down “the proper manner of deliberating (βουλεύομαι)…when we (ήμας) gather at meetings” (1.22), and praised attempts to maintain order lest “we not even be able to deliberate” (βουλεύομαι…ήμας, 1.33). Demosthenes, too, used these forms. “Let us…make a plan (βουλευόμεθα) for dealing with these men” (17.17, cf. 9.7); “The really shocking thing is not that we deliberate (βουλευόμεθα) worse than our ancestors…but that we do it worse than all other men” (23.21); “Are we never to meet and deliberate (βουλευόμεθα)?” (24.99); and “You would rightly pay attention if anyone promised that in the matters we are considering (βουλευόμεθα) justice and expediency coincide” (Ex. 18).

In each of these examples, the speaker is represented as deliberating, just as in dialogical deliberation. Yet caution is needed, for this representation consistently appeared when the speaker had a special reason to emphasize his identification with his audience, as when discussing an external threat to the polis (Archidamus, Andocides, Demosthenes, Isocrates), when distinguishing himself from a rival speaker (Sthenelaïdes, Diodotus, Demosthenes), or when showing respect to a founding hero (Aeschines). Elsewhere, speakers as often used the first person plural to refer to themselves and other speakers, rather than to themselves and their audience. Diodotus, for example, distinguished between “we who advise” and “you who give matters only brief consideration” (Thucydides 3.44), Demosthenes referred to “all of us who address you” (14.2) and Hypereides, addressing a panel of judges, referred to the assembly (demos) as “it” and those who spoke before it as “us” (5, cols. 28-9).

Still more important, the examples given above are, to the best of my knowledge, the only extant cases where assembly speakers are represented as deliberators. Every other time βουλεύομαι appears in connection with an assembly, the grammatical subject is the audience alone (usually in the second person plural), while the actions of speakers are represented by another verb such as λέγω, “speak,” δημηγορέω, “address the demos,” or συμβουλεύω, “advise”—just as in guided deliberation.

That assembly audiences deliberated is clear. In Thucydides, Cleon accuses his listeners (ὑμεῖς, “you”) of behaving “more like spectators…than deliberators (βουλευόμενος)” (3.38), while other speakers exhort their hearers to “deliberate well” (εὖ βουλευομένος, e.g. 4.87, 6.17, 36).73 Andocides notes to the Athenian assembly that “today you are considering (βουλευομένα) a peace” (3.12), Aeschines wishes “to recall to you the time and circumstances of your deliberations” (ἐβουλευομένα, 2.70), Demosthenes argues that other speakers had “made the mistake of submitting to you the wrong subject for deliberation (βουλευομένα)” (3.1), Dinarchus describes the herald praying “before he hands over to you the task of deliberation” (ὑμῖν τὸ βουλευομένα, 2.14), and so on.74 The representation of public speakers as advisers is equally obvious.75 What the would-be orator must

73 Cf. Thuc. 1.36, 43, 71, 73, 78, 80, 6.92, 7.14, 15.
know in order to advise (συμβουλεύω) is the topic of the pseudo-Platonic Aelcibiades I, Xenophon’s Memorabilia 3.6 and Aristotle’s Rhetoric 1.4. Aeschines prosecuted Timarchus for failing to live up to the moral standards expected of an Athenian σύμβουλος (1.185); Demosthenes asks his audience to “show yourselves willing hearers of those who wish to counsel (συμβουλεύειν) you” (Ex. 3); and Dinarchus identifies advising (συμβουλεύειν) as the special duty of public speakers and attacks Demosthenes for occasionally failing to do so (1.35), among other examples.76

Most important for our purposes are cases where assembly speakers and listeners are represented as, respectively, advising and deliberating at the same time, and again, examples are plentiful. Some, such as Protagoras 319d (“When the Athenians have to decide (bouleusasthai)...the man who rises to advise them (συμβουλεύει)...”), have already been encountered.77 Many others appear in Alcibiades I, in such lines as “on what subject do the Athenians propose to deliberate (βουλευσθαι), that you should stand up to advise (συμβουλεύσων) them?” (106c, cf. 107a-e). But, as usual, the orators are the richest resource. Lysias mentions how Diocles had “advised you while you were deliberating” (συνεβούλευε...βουλευσθαι, 4.1); “If you will listen with the attention appropriate to men deliberating (βουλευσιν)...I shall be able to offer advice” (συμβουλεύειν, 5.3); “It is your duty when deliberating (βουλευσιν)...to allow freedom of speech to all your advisers (τῶν συμβουλεύων), 15.1); and so on.78

The Demosthenic Exordia, a collection of fifty-six stock openings to assembly speeches, shows the general pattern. Out of thirty uses of βουλευμένοι, one, in the first person plural, denotes an action undertaken by both speaker and audience (18.1, noted above); one is first person singular and refers to the speaker making up his mind about whether or not to speak (19.1); one is first person plural and refers to the deliberations undertaken by all assembly speakers prior to speaking (50.1); and one is third person plural and refers to the deliberations undertaken by all men in adversity (43.1). The remaining twenty-six cases are second person plural and denote the action of the audience in contradistinction from that of the speaker.79

76 Xen. Hell. 1.7.16, 19, 2.2.15, 2.4.40; Andoc. 4.12; Lys. 10.1, 14.45, 25.27, 33.3; Isoc. 4.3, 19, 170-1, 5.88, 143, 8.1-2, 27, 52-55, 75, 12.170-1; Aeschin. 1.1-3, 1.26, 64, 110-11, 120, 180, 186, 2.29, 49, 65, 79, 157, 165, 158, 225-6, 3.71; Dem. 4.1, 8.1, 4, 73-4, 9.19-20, 10.17, 75, 14.8, 15.1, 18.86, 236. Ex. 1, 3, 6, 11, 20, 26-7, 30, 33, 35-6, 56; Din. 1.31, 35-6, 40, 72, 76-8, 81, 93, 2.14, 15; Hyp. 5 col. 28; Plat. Prot. 322d-24c; Gorg. 455b-56a; Ps. Aristot. Ath. Pol. 23-4, 29.

77 Dem. 19.13-14 with Aeschin. 2.65-7; Arist. Rhet. 1359a.


We have thus arrived at an answer to the question posed earlier: Who deliberated when orators orated? Not, it seems, the orators themselves (at least on the usual representation), but their audience. Yet this answer raises further questions. What did the deliberation of the audience involve? Evidently not public speech, but it does not follow that it was not communicative at all. And why should public speakers have been so ready to represent themselves as advisers rather than deliberators? Were not they, too, part of the decision-making démos? Let us begin with the first question, turning to the others by way of conclusion.

As has been widely discussed, ancient Greek assembly audiences did not sit in silence. 80 θόρυβος, “clamour,” was commonplace and could have significant effects, as in the cases of Cleon’s generalship (Thucydides 4.28) and the trial of the ten Arginusae generals (Xenophon, Hellenica 1.7). An extended example of speaker-audience interaction appears in Aeschines’ speech against Timarchus. Autolycus, speaking on behalf of the council of the Areopagos, had let slip a number of double entendres in a speech concerning Timarchus and the result was much laughter and shouting (μετὰ γέλωτος θόρυβος, 1.83). Then, “Pyrrandrus came forward to censure you, and he asked the démos if they were not ashamed of themselves for laughing in the presence of the Areopagos. But you drove him off the platform, replying, ‘We know, Pyrrhandrus, that we ought not to laugh in their presence, but so strong is the truth that it prevails—over all the calculations of men’” (1.84, tr. Adams). Even if this “reply” was an over-interpretation, it is clear that communication in the assembly was not one-way. Audience members often talked or shouted back to those who addressed them. Presumably still more frequently, they also spoke to one another.

Yet how far was such activity regarded as intrinsic to deliberation in assemblies, and how far did it merely accompany it? The distinction is significant. Many actions performed alongside deliberation were not essential to it: sitting, eating, and waiting, for example. To what extent was communication by or among the audience regarded as integral to the deliberative process?

It was surely not necessary to it. Even when θόρυβος took place, participation in it was hardly mandatory. Citizens’ votes might still be affected by others’ reactions—perhaps encouraging voting with a given speaker if they seemed positive, or against him if not—but then again, they might not be. It is worth noting that there was nothing essentially verbal about θόρυβος, still less any connotation of reasoned argument. The word often appeared in violent contexts denoting simply “hullabaloo” or “commotion.” 81 Consequently, it is difficult to infer what its effect on individuals’ thought processes might be.

Another sign of the relationship of crowd noise to deliberation is the frequency with which forms of θόρυβος, or the related verb θορυβέω, and βουλεύομαι are jointly associated with an assembly in the sources: just three times. 82 Twice Demosthenes represents crowd noise as an unwelcome distraction

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80 Gish 2012; Hansen 1987, 70-2; Schwartzberg 2010; Tacon 2001; Villacèque 2012; Roisman 2004; Wallace 2004. Cf. Andoc. 1.69-70; Isoc. 15.272; Dem. 18.52, 23.19, 47.44, 50.3, Ex. 5, 21, 26; Lyc. 1.52, 58, 127; Hyp. 1.2, 20, 4.41; Thphr. Char. 7.
81 E.g. Hdt 3.80, Isoc. 4.97, Thuc. 1.49, 4.68, Aristot. Pol. 1269b39.
82 Dem. 5.3, 8.3, Aeschin. 2.50-1. TLG search to within 15 words, accessed April 24, 2018.
from the processes of deliberation and advice-giving taking place (5.3, quoted above, and 8.3). Only once is it represented neutrally (Aeschines 2.50-1). The association between assembly deliberation and discussion or conversation among the audience is even weaker. Though βουλεύομαι is associated with κοινόω, ἀνακοινώ and διαλέγω in other contexts, in relation to assemblies these verbs always denoted the communication of speakers to the audience, never communication among the audience itself. By contrast, other verbs show a much higher degree of association with βουλεύομαι across all contexts: ἀκουω, “listen” (89 cases); σκέπτομαι, “consider” (55 cases); σκοπέω, “examine” (35 cases); λογίζομαι, “calculate” (19 cases); ἐνθυμέομαι, “ponder” (10 cases); and δικέω, “decide” (188 cases). Of special interest with respect to assemblies is ψηφιζω, “vote” (18 cases). This evidence suggests that deliberation was not primarily associated with shouting, discussing or conversing, but with listening, thinking, and deciding—just as Aristotle led us to expect.

The connection between deliberation and listening is intrinsic to all cases of guided deliberation and perhaps does not need further attention. There is more to say about the relationship between considering, examining, calculating, pondering, and deliberating. These verbs frequently appear in the form of imperatives, such as σκέψασθε (Andoc. 1.144, 3.12, 17, Aeschin. 2.7, 51-2, 153), σκοπεῖτε (Aeschin. 2.69, 160. 3.120, 176, Dem. 13.2, 15.26, Ex. 10.1), λογιέσθε (Thuc. 6.36, quoted above, Dem. 4.31, cf. Exordia 21), and ἐνθυμέσθε (Thuc. 5.11, Dem. 4.31, cf. Exordia 12, 26). These injunctions parallel the exhortations to “deliberate well” already encountered, and strongly suggest an internal conceptualization of deliberation.

Still more striking is the association between βουλεύομαι and decision-making as represented by δικέω and ψηφιζω (on which I will concentrate here). In modern political discourse, deliberating and voting are more often counterposed than conflated, but the more one studies the ancient Greek evidence the more prominent voting appears to be, especially but not only when βουλεύομαι is in the aorist. We may begin by recalling the assembly mentioned in Demosthenes 19.13-14 and Aeschines 2.65-7, where the dēmos deliberated (ἐβουλεύετο) when the decrees were being put to the vote (ἐπεψηφίζετο, Aeschines 2.67). Other noteworthy passages include the announcement of Eteocles in Seven against Thebes that if anyone fails to obey his command, “a vote (ψήφος) of death will be decided” (βουλεύεσται, 198); Myrrhine’s appeal to her husband in Lysistrata, “But remember you’re going to vote (ψηφιεῖ) for peace,” and his rejoinder, “I’ll think about it (βουλεύομαι, 951-2); and the Spartans’ decision to put the war to the vote (ψήφον) of their allies, in order that it should be jointly decided (κοινή βουλευσάμενοι, Thucydides 1.87). Andocides’ discussion of the mood after the battle of Aigospotamoi, “You considered (ἐβουλεύσασθε) how to reunite the city, and decided (ἐδοξέν ύμῖν)...” “You called a meeting to consider (ἐβουλεύσασθε)

83 E.g. Aesch. Lib. 717 and Aristoph. Lys. 1176, both discussed above.
84 E.g. Thuc. 2.73, Dem. 24.48, 58.45, Aeschin. 1.25, 2.12, Hyp. 5, fr. 7.
85 All to within 15 words. TLG, accessed April 24, 2018.
86 Cf. Andoc. 2.19, 3.34; Dem. 24.32, Ex. 10, 12, 18, 30, 32, 35; Plat. Def. 414a.
the problems, and voted (ἦψηφίσασθε)...” (1.72, 82) is also significant, as is the fact that the Platonic *Demodocus*, which treats the relationship between advising, deliberating and voting, simply takes for granted that deliberation culminates in casting a vote.\textsuperscript{87}

Aristotle is also relevant here. It was noted above that although large groups deliberate in his work, the details of the process are left open. Yet a clue appears in *Politics* 4: “They will deliberate (βουλεύσονται) better when all are deliberating together (κοινῇ βουλευόμενοι), the démos with the notables and they when with the masses” (1298b20). That he was thinking of group discussion seems unlikely, given the lack of supporting evidence. An alternative interpretation is that he envisaged a joint meeting of démos and notables, in which all heard the same speeches and considered the same proposals (rather than working separately from one another like modern Houses of Commons and Lords, or the Cimmerian démos and notables in Herodotus 4.11). This seems plausible, but the rest of the passage suggests something more. Aristotle was discussing how to improve τὸ βουλεύσασθαι in communities where the démos is maximally powerful, and to this end he proposes increasing the number of elite citizens on the deliberative body; fining elite citizens for non-attendance (the immediate prompt for the line above); electing deliberators or choosing them equally by lot from each class; giving payment for attendance to no more than the number of non-elite citizens needed to balance those in the political class; and eliminating by lot any excess of the former over the latter (1298b10-28). In every case, the goal is to balance the number of notables and non-elite citizens who will take part in deliberation, which suggests that Aristotle was hoping to influence the outcome of votes.

The association between βουλεύσασθαι and decision-making is also supported by the language of decrees. In the decree of the allies quoted at Aeschines 2.60, βουλεύσασθαι in the present tense refers to the ongoing deliberations of the Athenian démos and in the aorist to the decision that will result. The aorist is also found throughout the decrees quoted at Aeschines 3.67-9, which concern Demosthenes’ attempt to hurry the Athenians into a decision on peace and an alliance (not to hurriedly begin deliberating about them).

The same pattern appears in the epigraphical evidence. βουλεύσασθαι in the present tense denotes incomplete or ongoing deliberation (*IG* II\textsuperscript{2} 1), but a final decision in the aorist (*IG* I\textsuperscript{3} 40). *IG* II\textsuperscript{1} 1 337, which records a decision made by the Athenian council in 333/2, is especially illuminating. The Kitians had asked for permission to found a sanctuary of Aphrodite, and the council agreed to introduce the Kitians at the next assembly, to place the matter on the agenda and to submit its opinion “that the démos, having heard (ἀκούσαντα) the Kitians...and any other Athenian who wishes, shall decide (βουλεύσασθαι) as seems to it best.” Once more public speaking is represented as distinct from deliberation, while deliberation and decision-making coincide. Deliberation will take place after hearing speeches: βουλεύσασθαι, here, can only refer to a vote. We may recall Athenagoras’ claim at Thucydides 6.39: “The many, having listened, judge the best” (κρίναν δὲ ἄν ἀκούσαντας ἄριστα τοὺς πολλοὺς).

\textsuperscript{87} Cf. Aristoph. *Lys.* 507-14, Thuc. 4.87-8, 6.14, Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.49, Aeschin. 2.60.
On this evidence, translating βουλεύομαι “discuss” in assembly contexts looks doubly misleading. The démos did not discuss proposals but, with assistance from its counsellors, considered and, more importantly, voted on them. βουλεύομαι denoted this two-stage process.

Conclusion: Deliberation and collective action
Although deliberation in ancient Greek assemblies is usually interpreted as group discussion or debate and associated above all with those who spoke publicly, this article has shown that βουλεύομαι, “deliberate,” was historically associated with internal decision-making and was typically ascribed to assembly audiences rather than to those who addressed them. Assembly deliberation was almost always represented as what I have called “guided deliberation”; those who spoke did not deliberate but advised those who did. Metaphorically at least, in coming forward to advise, speakers cast themselves outside the deliberating démos. They posed as counsellors (σύμβουλοι), analogous to the counsellors to kings found elsewhere in the ancient evidence.

Yet how persuasive is the strong distinction between public speakers and deliberators that this portrayal implies? Those who spoke before the démos did not, after all, lose their right to vote. At the end of their speeches they returned to their seats and, when the vote was called, raised their hands along with everyone else. Moreover, as we have seen, speakers did sometimes represent themselves as deliberators, by using βουλεύομαι in the first person plural. Contrast this with the situation of, say, Xerxes’ adviser Artemisia, who could never have represented herself as a decision-maker alongside the emperor. Why should assembly advisers, who had the same decision-making power as other citizens, have tended to emphasise the authority of the audience by contrast with their own?

One possibility is tact, or, less generously, flattery. As Josiah Ober has argued, those who spoke publicly in democracies trod a difficult path. On the one hand, in proposing and debating motions, orators provided structurally necessary leadership; on the other hand, their prominence sat awkwardly with democratic ideology, which stressed citizen equality (1989; cf. Finley 1985). Consequently, to gain their audience’s goodwill, speakers may have wished to play down their personal influence and to play up that of their listeners. By repeatedly representing their audience as the polis’ principal deliberators, they may have been tipping their hats, rhetorically, to the audience’s ultimate political power.

This interpretation is plausible, but another is still more so, and points towards an idea at the heart of ancient Greek democracy: collective action. Those who offered advice in assemblies were being perfectly accurate when they excluded themselves from the ranks of deliberators, not because they had given up their decision-making power, but because they had already made their decision. Audiences were supposed to keep an open mind during meetings: as Demosthenes argued, “surely the first step in correct examination (τοῦ σκοτειν ὅρθως) is not to have decided (βεβουλεύσαθαι) before you have heard that upon which you should base your decision” (βουλεύσασθαι, Exordium 18, cf. Exordia 10, 47, 56). But public speakers completed their deliberations in advance. Aeschines attributed both his speeches and his silences to “having deliberated” (βουλευσάμενος),
while Demosthenes claimed that “it is difficult…not only to say before you what must be done, but even to have found it out by solitary reflection” (καθ’ αὐτὸν σκοτοῦμενον, Exordium 33). Even those (few, Demosthenes implies) speakers who came forward on the spur of the moment did so because a “timely suggestion” had already occurred to them (1.1, Exordium 3.1). Still more importantly, speakers revealed which way they would vote through their arguments. As noted above, ancient orators—both Greek and Roman—did not simply comment on political issues, but advocated voting for or against specific motions. Nor did they aim to change one another’s minds, but that of the audience. For a speaker to vote against the position he had just recommended would have been as incredible as a candidate for office today to publicly endorse his opponent. It follows that in offering advice, speakers were effectively casting their votes ahead of time.

This is significant, because it implies that by the very fact that they spoke publicly, speakers distanced themselves from the collective actions performed in the assembly. Though numerous actions were performed by attendees distributively, truly collective actions, that is actions ascribed to the démos by name and represented by singular verbs, were relatively few. In fact, démos was primarily associated with just four verbs: ἀκούω, “listen”,89 βουλεύωμαι, “deliberate”,90 δοκεώ, “decide”,91 and ψηφίζω, “vote.”92 Public speakers also performed these actions, but crucially, not at the same time as their audiences. They listened only when they were not themselves speaking; they concluded their deliberations before they came forward to speak; their speeches revealed the decision they had made; and their votes merely repeated what had already been revealed. Public speakers were thus importantly distinct from the démos—and that is precisely how they are represented in our texts.

The distinction between speakers who advised and audiences which deliberated is only one aspect of the difference between those who performed individual political roles in ancient Greek poleis and those who participated in politics through collective action—a difference that I have begun to elaborate elsewhere.93 But it is important for our conceptualization of ancient Greek democracy. On the dialogical model of assembly deliberation, deliberation was performed by speakers and listeners alike and both groups comprised the démos. On the guided model advanced here, only those who listened, deliberated, and voted collectively consti-

88 Cf. Xen. Hell. 1.1.30; Lys. 14.45; Isoc. L.3.8, 15.256, Dem. 21.74, 130, 191; Aeschin. 2.35.
93 Cammack 2013a, 2013b, forthcoming 2019 (a).
tuted the démos—and thus, in democracies, ruled over the rest of the polis, including over their own advisers.94

The claim that those who listened and voted in assemblies were politically supreme may seem strange. As discussed above, these actions are normally represented by scholars as more or less “passive,” while public speaking constituted “active” political participation. A better understanding of βουλεύομαι suggests that that representation is misleading. It was not those who spoke who were conceived as having political agency (in the sense of acting for the polis) but those who deliberated. Demosthenes made this clear. “The right course for you is first to hear the facts, next to decide (βουλεύσασθαι), and finally to carry out your decision” (19.34). “Who sent reinforcements to Byzantium and prevented the entrapment of the Hellespont? You, and when I say you I mean the polis. Who advised, proposed resolutions, took action? I did” (18.88).95 The fact that the audience did not engage in public discussion did not make it passive, any more than a king, brooding in silence over the recommendations of his counsellors, is a passive figure. In that scenario, speaking is a supplicatory act; I suggest that the offerings of Greek orators, in democracies, may be interpreted in the same light. Isocrates, Aeschines and Aristotle all likened the démos in democracies of their day to a collective monarch, and they were not wrong.96 Listening to speeches, considering the issues internally and voting en masse was exactly what deliberation—and thus, more importantly, rule—by an ancient Greek démos looked like.

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94 In Athens, a crucial feature of this rule was the fact that speakers were legally accountable for their proposals, with severe penalties for misconduct. See e.g. Thucydides 3.43; Sinclair 1988, 136-62; Cammack 2013c.
95 Cf. Thuc. 2.60.7, 3.43.5, Exordia 4, 8, 33, Aeschin. 2.160. On démos and polis, see Cammack forthcoming 2019 (a).
96 Isoc. 15.170, Aeschin. 3.233, Aristot. Pol. 1292a15.


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