LYKOURGAN SPARTA AND THE CLASSICAL WRITERS THAT DESCRIBED IT

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PREFACE

Only six of the primary sources discussing Lykourgan Sparta are contemporary to that culture. Herein, these sources are reviewed and compared both to each other and to the history of Sparta as it is understood to modern historians, thanks to archeology and other more modern sources. In the end, it is hoped that a greater appreciation of these figures' opinions may be generated. In addition, it is hoped that by comparing the opinions of these figures concerning Sparta to their opinions concerning the struggle between the aristocratic and democratic factions in Athens over control of that city, some correlation between the two might be uncovered, explaining why each figure expressed the opinions that he did.

There are several problems that present themselves to one making such a review. First of all, few of the figures reviewed herein actually wrote histories as such. The majority of the sources consist of philosophical tracts, plays, and political pamphlets. An objective review of the history, merits, and flaws of Sparta was not the motive of Plato, nor was it the goal of Aristophanes, and yet it is with such figures as these that one is left. As these

figures do not write with intent to politicize, sometimes their political positions are hidden from the reader's examination.

Furthermore, the status of Sparta and its relationship with Athens had an effect upon the Athenian writers irregardless of their opinions regarding aristocracy and democracy. So, something more complex than a simply partisan approach to Sparta's history shall be found. Still, party politics shall bee seen to have had some role to play in the formation and promulgation of these theories.

In my studies, I was assisted greatly by my parents, Glenn and Charlette Richards, who helped me type and edit this thesis, as well as run down the stray source. I would like to thank Dr. Neil Hackett for his inspiration and encouragement; Dr. Richard Rohrs for his invaluable advice, and for pinch-hitting for Dr. Hackett while he was in Japan; and Dr. Walter Scott for his advice regarding Plato and Xenophon, as well as his knowledge of the University's technical requirements for this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	HISTORIA	9
III.	HERODOTUS	38
IV.	THUCYDIDES	50
V.	ARISTOPHANES	61
VI.	PLATO	66
VII.	XENOPHON	83
VIII.	ISOCRATES	100
IX.	SURVIVAL IN A CHANGING WORLD	107
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY		122

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For many years, Sparta was the most important city in Greece, but it left no histories of itself behind for modern scholars to study. Of all the things written about Sparta during the years between 708 and 371,[1] when the city's "classical" institutions still operated, only the writings of six authors remain. These writers are Herodotus, Thucydides, Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon, and Isocrates. The majority of them were Athenians, and all of their works come to the modern day through Athens. However, Athens was the chief rival of Sparta. As a result, objectivity and favor towards Sparta are not things one would expect to find in these writings. Nevertheless, some of these writers actually seem to prefer Sparta to Athens.

The opinions and motivations of those who favorably compared Sparta to Athens are intriguing, because having and stating such opinions might have been considered treason in Athens. This would especially have been true during the decades of the Pelopennesian Wars, which were fought between

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[1] All dates given will be in the years B. C. unless the text states otherwise.

these two powers. Eventually, Sparta conquered Athens. In the aftermath of this defeat, Socrates, a friend to four of these writers, was executed. Several of Socrates's old students had become a part of Sparta's puppet government over Athens after the war. This treason was later understood as the result of Socrates's corruptive influence over these ex-students. Thus, when Athenian democrats returned to power, Socrates became a scapegoat because of his pro-Spartan sentiments. Within so passionate a city, why did Plato, for example, come to praise the object of so much hate?

One possible answer is that Sparta was seen as an anti-Athens. It was a symbol of all that Athens was not. This contrast might have been an illusion caused by the political and military conflicts between these two city-states, but, in many cases, the observation seems legitimate. Athens was an open, port town; Sparta was a closed, inland town. Athens was a democracy; Sparta, an oligarchy. One was a naval power, the other a land power. Attic Greeks populated Athens, but their Dorian enemies conquered Sparta and used it as a base, thereafter. Athens was extroverted, with an aggressive foreign policy; Sparta was introverted, and feared other cities and cultures. In almost every way these two were opposed. As a result, if someone disagreed with the ways of Athens, one would naturally look to Sparta as an alternative.

Within Athens, there was a faction well disposed to do this. There, the conflict between two social factions defined internal politics.[2] One faction supported the democratic system dominant in Athens, the other wanted an aristocracy to replace it.[3] The presence of such factions was common to Greek cities, or poleis, as they were called.[4]

From one perspective, the apocalyptic Peloponnesian War might be seen as a metaphor for these political and social tensions, with Athens representing the democratic faction, and Sparta representing the aristocrats. Until the very end of the war, no army ever conquered a city.[5] Instead, the presence of a nearby army often prompted the native faction that agreed with the army's political alignment to attempt a coup within the city.[6] The new regime then invited the army into the city, and the army enforced the new regime's form of government.[7]

When a polis did take another by force, the first thing that the invading army did, whether it was Athenian or

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[2] Pseudo-Xenophon, The Constitution of the Athenians, Section 1, Line 3.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Plato, The Republic, Book 4: Segment 422e-423a; Book 8: Segment 551d.

[5] Luis A. Losada, The Fifth Column in the Pelopennesian War in Mnemosyne Bibliotheco Classica Batava (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1972), 23-29.

[6] Ibid., 31.

[7] Ibid.

Spartan, was to establish a new government of the "proper" form there. Athens always forced a democratic government upon the citizens of the captured polis.[8] Sparta always established a puppet aristocracy.[9]

Thus, it should not be surprising that members of the aristocratic faction in Athens looked to Sparta as an example to emulate as well as something of a patron. In praising Sparta, they were praising aristocracy. They were, to some extent, praising themselves. Sparta's mysterious nature made for a perfect screen on which these Athenians might project their hopes and beliefs.

This theory might explain why such figures as Plato and Socrates seemed to prefer Sparta's ways to those of Athens. They praised Sparta as a commentary on Athens. What exactly did these proponents of Sparta say?

There are two interlocking themes that run through these figures' commentaries. They involve the Spartan system of education, known as the agoge, and Sparta's political system. Almost universally, commentators admit that Sparta's political system and policies were more orderly and consistent than those of Athens.[10] Aristocrats could point to this harmony as evidence of Sparta's

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[8] Thucydides, The History of the Peloponnesian War, Book 1: Section 4, Lines 1-3; Section 5, Lines 108-112.

[9] Xenophon, Hellenica, Book 2: Section 4, Lines 28-38.

[10] Isocrates, On The Peace, Lines 93-95.

"superiority" over the Athenians' democratic, seemingly anarchic, government. Such consistency is often attributed to agoge indoctrination, which taught the future leaders of Sparta "virtue," at least as the Spartans defined it.

While supporters of Sparta often disagreed with the exact program used there, or with the specific "virtues" towards which the training was directed, the idea of having an agoge to generate virtue, instead of leaving the indoctrination of children to chance and sophistry, was often praised.[11] Athenian leaders were usually chosen on the basis of their popularity, which led policy to change with the momentary whims of the people, but Sparta spent decades preparing its leadership caste to lead according to a fixed set of principles. This was, in the eyes of some, an excellent model of the difference between a democracy and an aristocracy. In one system, the leadership principle was based upon popularity, which led to chaos. In the other, leadership was based upon tradition, which led to consistency and "virtue."

This paper intends to answer several questions about Sparta, and those who wrote about it. Did praise for Sparta and her institutions really follow class lines? How could these Athenian writers get away with their praise for Sparta? Was Sparta actually as consistent, coherent, and "virtuous" as its Athenian supporters said that it was?

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[11] Ibid; Plato, Republic, Book 8: Segments 562e-563d.

What role did the agoge have in this supposed order? Finally, did Sparta's history justify the aristocrats' faith in it, or did the city fail its supporters? To answer these questions, one must study the lives and the opinions, of each of these six authors to establish their views. Then, one must examine the history, institutions, and the education system of Sparta to determine where the opinions of the Athenians agreed with the those of modern scholars. That shall be the order followed in this thesis.

In the end, class differences between the supporters of Athens and the supporters of Sparta seem less clear than one might suspect, at least among the writers reviewed here. Each author had his own particular agenda in writing his work, and this sometimes took precedent over class pressures. Furthermore, almost all of the writers considered herein grant that there was more internal order in Sparta than in Athens, regardless of the author's political sympathies. Finally, whenever the agoge is discussed, it is seen as the source of Sparta's order. This level of agreement might be the cause for some of the tolerance shown towards the friends of Sparta. Though their views were not popular, they were not completely alien to Athens.

It was the attitude of citizens toward the Spartan form of order itself that seems to have divided the factions. While all value consistency and coherency, the democrats

seemed to think that the price Sparta paid for them was too high.[12] Sparta eventually fell, and its orderly system might have hastened its decline. Aristocrats claimed that this was a failing of the people of Sparta,[13] or of the "virtues" that Sparta promulgated using the agoge.[14] However, to democrats it was the system itself that was suspicious.

It is on this level that the debate seems to exist. This may be another reason that the aristocratic position on Sparta was tolerable within Athens. The aristocrats did not blindly agree with the Spartans, and certainly did not engage in a Peloponnesian War-style coup. Instead, they simply drew attention to the popularly-accepted virtues of Sparta's aristocratic system, and, admitting Sparta's faults, proposed Athenian adaptations and improvements upon it. Because of this, the debate was kept on a cerebral level that was acceptable in Athens, where free speech was usually treasured.

All in all, one may conclude that Sparta's institutions, at least, were usually as stable, and as consistent as its reviewers claimed that they were; Sparta's

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[12] Thucydides, History, Book 2: Section 6, Lines 37-42.

[13] Xenophon, The Constitution of The Lakedaemonians, Section 14, Line 1.

[14] Plato, Republic, Book 8: Segments 544a-545a; Segments 547c-548c.

reverence for conformity and tradition was real, but that was not enough to save it, as authors who supported Athenian democracy pointed out, and as authors who wanted an Athenian aristocracy tried to explain away. As stable as these institutions were they were sometimes used to propagate shifting and unstable policies that would harm the polis. These flaws might have caused Sparta to degenerate into a corrupt state, and when that happened, the obsession with conformity and sublimation that the agoge generated might have hastened this corruption.

The aristocrats might have been just when they observed that Sparta knew more kosmos, meaning order, and harmonia, meaning inner peace, for a longer time, than did any other polis.[15] Were these elements enough to preserve Sparta and its culture? No, they were not.[16] Does this invalidate the arguments of those who turned to Sparta as an example of the virtues of an aristocracy? That question shall be considered hereafter.

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[15] Isocrates, Peace, Lines 93-95.

[16] Xenophon, Hellenica, Book 6: Section 5, Lines 10-21.

CHAPTER II

HISTORIA

As William Forrest indicated in his book A History of Sparta, the world's image of Athens would not significantly change, even if we found a million more pot shards and another Parthenon, because one knows what the Greeks themselves thought about Athens. However, Sparta remains a great mystery. It was "seen by way of so many distorting mirrors that the modern historian cannot easily arrive at the original reflection...despite the fact that Sparta for long was...the most important state in Greece."[1] Only shadows of its history may be discerned.

It is known that in the early 700s, just as the Classical Age was beginning, Sparta was a great center for culture and the arts. Spartan poetry and pottery were especially famous. The foreign policy of Sparta was blatantly imperialistic. For example, it was probably involved in the Lelantine War between Kalkis and Eretria.[2] Over the course of several military actions and two major wars that occurred between 735 and 715, it gained control of

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[1] W. G. Forrest, A History of Sparta: 950-192 B.C. (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1968), 15.

[2] Forrest, History, 35.

Lakonia, Messenia, and Amyklai--essentially the entire southern Peloponnese.[3]

The results of these wars produced a major change in the Spartan character. The classical Greeks traditionally took enemy prisoners of war to their homeland to serve as slaves. In Sparta, these slaves were called helots.[4] In these Spartan wars, however, the number of slaves taken exceeded those of any other known conflict. As a result, the slave population outnumbered the Spartan population.[5] This would remain the case until 371 when the Thebans liberated the helots.

Fear that the helots would rebel was probably the cause of the reforms that occurred soon thereafter. By 676, a major restructuring of Spartan society had begun.[6] These changes were called the Lykourgan Reforms after the man who is responsible for their establishment.

The truth concerning the legend of Lykourgos, the god-like Founding Father, will never be known. As Plutarch indicated, the true facts have long since been lost, largely due to the reticence of the Spartans themselves.[7] In the

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[3] J. T. Hooker, The Ancient Spartans, (Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1980), 100-102.

[4] Forrest, History, 31.

[5] Hooker, Ancient, 100-102.

[6] Ibid., 101.

[7] Plutarch, Lykourgos, Section 35.

most general outline, Lykourgos is said to have been the regent for one of the Spartan kings. At a time of great trouble within the city he traveled abroad to study the governments of other cities. Eventually, he went to Delphi where Apollo is supposed to have either dictated or given approval to the Reforms. Then Lykourgos returned home to Sparta to announce the changes.[8]

The political branch of the Reform was the Great Rhetra. The Rhetra, or "compact," acted as the Supreme Law of the land. With allowances for translation, it said:

> After a sanctuary of Zeus Sullanios and Athena Sullania has been established, the people shall be divided into tribes and obai[9], and thirty men, including the kings, shall be appointed as a Gerousia. The feast of Apollo shall be celebrated from time to time between Babyka bridge and the river Knakion. At this time, questions shall be introduced to the Assembly and withdrawals made. To the Assembly of the citizens shall be given the final authority. However, if the people should speak crookedly, the Gerousia shall set the matter aside.[10]

In other words, after seeking the blessings of the gods, the citizenry shall be divided into these units, and a Senate of thirty members shall be founded, with the kings having a permanent seat therein. Regular meetings of the popular assembly are assured, and that assembly shall have the power

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[8] Ibid., Sections 40-41.

[9] Obai: villages. Sparta was never one cosmopolitan unit it was a group of neighboring villages living under a single government.

[10] Plutarch, The Life of Lykourgos, Section 6.

to pass and retract laws,[11] but the Gerousia shall have some sort of veto power over these acts of the Assembly.[12]

According to legend, Lykourgos appointed the first Gerousia[13] but in historic times a peculiar form of election was used to fill a seat amongst the thirty. A hidden panel would choose from among the candidates, based upon the volume of the applause given to each when he was introduced to the Assembly.[14] Membership in the Gerousia was life-long. The Gerousia seems to have tried the most serious criminal cases and set the agenda for the popular Assembly, amongst other things.[15] The final provision, which indicates that the Assembly had the power to amend proposals, but the Gerousia had the right to veto the ammendation,[16] was a later addition to the Rhetra.[17]

Some of the offices of Sparta's government remain undefined by the Rhetra, because they already existed at the time of Lykourgos. For example, Sparta had two simultaneously ruling kings. The kings were the leaders of

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[11] Ibid., Sections 47-48.

[12] Forrest, History, 47-48.

[13] Plutarch, Lykourgos, Section 32.

[14] Ibid., Section 26.

[15] Ibid; Xenophon, Constitution, Section 10, Line 2; Aristotle, The Politics, Book 2: Chapter 9, Page 25, Segment 1271a.

[16] Forrest, History, 49-50.

[17] Plutarch, Lykourgos, Section 26, Lines 1-3.

the Agate and the Eurypontid clans, and were often rivals.[18] Thus, each prevented the other from becoming too powerful.

Despite this rivalry, the powers of the kings were extensive. Besides having seats within the Gerousia, they were also high priests of Zeus, and no religious function could occur without the presence of at least one king.[19] As a corollary to this, they were the ones who nominated the Pythii, or ambassadors to Delphi, where the priestess regularly informed Sparta of Apollo's wishes.[20]

When Sparta was at war, one of the kings went onto the field, acting as Supreme Commander.[21] However, despite their military rank, neither king could declare war, nor could they levy the troops.[22] A declaration of war had to come from the Assembly.[23] The ephors, who shall be discussed later, levied the troops.[24] In a sense, the

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[18] Ibid., Sections 21-22.

[19] Herodotus, Historia, Book 6: Lines 56-60.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] A. H. M. Jones, Sparta (Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Matt Ltd. and A. R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd., 1967), 15.

[23] Thucydides, History, Book 1: Line 87; Xenophon, Hellenica, Book 3: Section 2, Line 23; Book 4: Section 6, Line 3; Book 6: Section 4, Lines 2-3.

[24] Xenophon, Hellenica, Book 3: Section 2, Line 23; Line 25; Section 5, Line 6; Book 4: Section 2, Line 9; Book 5: Section 3, Line 13; Section 4, Line 47; Book 6: Section 4, Line 17; Section 5, Line 10.

kings' only real political power was the influence that they could wield as the heads of Sparta's most prestigious families, but this was enough to give such figures as Kleomenes the power to shake Sparta's society with their designs and eccentricities. As time passed, the power of the kings deteriorated, and the ephors took over.

The ephorate was added to the Spartan government after the Rhetra. The ephors were five magistrates who administered the Spartan government. Two ephors were required to go with a king whenever he left Sparta.[25] Furthermore, as a corollary to their powers as judges and police, each ephor could arrest and imprison one, or both, of the kings.[26] It is reasonable to assume that the office of the ephor was added to the Spartan system of government to curb the executive power of the kings.[27] However, the ephors eventually took that power themselves.[28]

By the fifth century, the ephors had incredible powers. They could fine citizens, banish foreigners, and kill resident aliens for any violation of Spartan law without trial or appeal. They could also remove any official, including the king, from office. The ephors formulated

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[25] Xenophon, Constitution, Section 13, Line 5; Hellenica, Book 2: Section 4, Line 36.

[26] Xenophon, Constitution, Section 8, Line 4; Aristotle, Politics, Book 2: Chapter 8, Page 26, Segment 1271a.

[27] Hooker, Ancient, 123.

[28] Ibid.

capital charges against most citizens and the Gerousia tried them. The ephors shared with the Gerousia the power to propose legislation, but they could not veto amended legislation.[29] So great were the powers of the ephors that no one was allowed to hold the office for more than a single, one-year term in his lifetime.[30] The Assembly elected these figures.[31]

Every Spartan citizen over the age of twenty-nine was allowed a seat in the Assembly, and thus a chance to become ephor.[32] However, before a Lakedaemonian could become a Spartan citizen, he had to have spent the first twenty years of his life participating in the tortuous agoge. The agoge was the educational system of Sparta. It was also one of the major social reforms Lykourgos instituted.[33]

From birth, the young Spartan was prepared for a military life. At birth, the triers, members of an ephor-appointed committee without any other known function, examined them to see if they were physically sound.[34]

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[29] Ibid., 122.

[30] Aristotle, Politics, Book 2: Chapter 9, Page 19; Page 23, Segment 1270b.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Hooker, Ancient, 124.

[33] Xenophon, Constitution, Section 2, Line 2.

[34] Plutarch, Lykourgos, Section 16.

Unhealthy infants were thrown over a cliff.[35] If the child passed this examination, he received an allotment of land, called a kleros, to support his standard of living.[36] This kleros could not be sold, though it could be given away.[37] In many ways, it was the material acknowledgement of a Spartan's citizenship. Helots tended each citizen's kleros. Thus, all citizens were born with a stake in the slave-holding system of helotage.[38] Each of kleros was equal in size, if not necessarily in agricultural quality, to that of every other citizen. Meanwhile, the Spartan owner of the kleros lived in one of the city's many outwardly-identical cottages.[39]

Parents were only given temporary custody of their children. At the age of seven, children were given over to the state, which selected a teacher, called a paedonomes, to prepare them for military training. This began the agoge.[40]

The conditions in which the young citizen lived when he began his agoge were made to be as difficult as possible, to toughen the child. For example, the young Spartan was given

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[35] Ibid; Jones, Sparta, 34-35.

[36] Plutarch, Lykourgos, Section 16.

[37] Aristotle, Politics, Book 2: Chapter 6, Pages 10-13.

[38] Hooker, Ancient, 118.

[39] Plutarch, Lykourgos, Section 13, Lines 5-7; Plato, Republic, Book 8: Lines 548a-b.

[40] Xenophon, Constitution, Section 2, Line 2.

only one garment to wear per year, for all weather. He was allowed no shoes.[41] His diet was strictly controlled, and if he was still hungry, he was encouraged to steal more food. Those Spartans who were caught stealing were punished--for being caught.[42] This was supposed to have encouraged self-reliance and cunning. Harsh beatings were administered for any and all infractions of the rules to teach one a strict obedience to one's superiors, and all elders had the right to administer this punishment, on the spot, and without explanation or justification, if they saw such an infraction.[43]

Upon reaching adolescence, added restrictions were placed upon the young man to break his spirit. He was obliged to walk with his hands in his cloak, and his eyes to the ground at all times to teach him modesty.[44] When the young Spartan left adolescence, he graduated to a new level of learning--actual military training. By this time, he was also expected to have at least one homosexual lover, usually amongst the older generation.[45] This lover, usually procured at the age of twelve, also served as a mentor,

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[41] Ibid., Section 3.

[42] Ibid., Section 8.

[43] Ibid., Sections 11-12.

[44] Ibid., Section 3, Line 4.

[45] Plutarch, Lykourgos, Section 16, Line 9; Lines 12-18; Moralia, Lines 237b-c.

refining the young man's martial skills and introducing him to a phratry.[46] This figure was considered so important that sometimes young men were punished for having no lover, or for having an "unworthy" lover.[47]

Upon reaching the age of nineteen, the young Spartan spent a year in the wilderness of Messenia surviving without outside aid, and competing with his fellows to kill the greatest number of free Messenians. This ritual, called the krypteia, represented his "final examination."[48] When it was over, a sussutia, which combined the functions of a barracks and a mess hall judged the young man. If he was acceptable to all members of that sussutia, he joined it, lived there, fought with its members, and was acknowledged as a full citizen.[49]

The life of the adult Spartan was as regimented as that of the youth. At the age of thirty, he could vote in the Assembly.[50] The citizen retired from active military service in his fifties, and at sixty he might run for a seat

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[46] Paul Rahe, Republics Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution (Tulsa: The University of Tulsa Press, 1988), 115.

[47] Plutarch, Lykourgos, Section 18, Lines 8-9.

[48] Plato, Laws, Book 1: Segments 633b-c; Plutarch, Lykourgos, Section 28, Lines 2-4; The Life of Kleomenes, Section 28, Lines 2-4.

[49] Hooker, Ancient, 134.

[50] Ibid., 124.

in the Gerousia, should one be open.[51] In the interim, he was obliged to be wed, and expected to have many children to swell the armies of the next generation.[52]

When a Spartan died, his land and his wife, if she was of child-bearing age, would be assigned to another Spartan by one of the kings.[53] Very strict sumptuary laws combated economic imbalance and soft-living amongst the Spartans, but sometimes this was not enough, so the royal assignments of wives and their inheritance from previous husbands were used to further insure economic equality.[54]

Under the Lykourgan Reforms everything in a Spartan's life was subordinated to the goal of producing the perfect military machine. Each citizen was raised to become an ideal soldier, who would do his duty without the distractions of individuality to leaven his obedience.[55] Even the most important personal relationships were reduced to secondary importance. For example, marriage customs of some sort were necessary to provide the city with new soldiers, and, at the same time, maintain clear paternal links for the sake of inheritance, but the emotive content

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[51] Plutarch, Lykourgos, Section 26.

[52] Aristotle, Politics, Book 2: Chapter 6, Section 13.

[53] Hooker, Ancient, 134.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Aristotle, Politics, Book 7: Chapter 2, Page 9, Segment 1324a; Sections 19b-34a.

of this relationship was consciously minimized. In its place, a homosexual relationship was institutionalized so that a soldier's primary emotional bond was to another soldier.[56]

Effectively, the garrison raised the Spartan. When the Spartan became an adult, he was married to the garrison, gave his children to the garrison, and was encouraged to treat all of the garrison's children as his own. He had no real existence separate from that of the garrison. This was the product of the agoge. No other form of education was allowed in Sparta.[57] Very strict transportation laws also regulated access to the city in an attempt to regulate the ideas to which both citizens and non-citizens were exposed.[58] Through strict control of education, Sparta controlled its people, or at least it tried to do so.

Spartan citizens called themselves Homoioi, meaning "Equals."[59] The use of this term has great significance in one's understanding of Sparta and its social system. For one thing, this term made it fairly obvious to the non-homoioi that he was not considered equal to the nobility. This idea of equality within the class of nobles was the essence of Spartan kosmos. For another, the use of the term

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[56] Rahe, Republics, 115.

[57] Xenophon, Constitution, Section 2, Line 1.

[58] Ibid., Line 14.

[59] Hooker, Ancient, 117.

stressed the need for Spartans to stand together as equals, instead of fighting each other for pre-eminence within the class. The term homoioi can also mean "similar," and is the basis for the modern word "homogenous." That too describes the Spartan ideal. If someone was not exactly the same as the other homoioi there was something wrong with him.

As a result of this sort of pressure, this culture, fairly obviously, raised peer pressure to an incredible height of power. All that a man was or did existed only in terms of his community and when he deviated from the dictates of this community, it punished him no matter what the cause. Isocrates tells his readers that "the Spartans think nothing is as capable of inspiring terror as the prospect of being reproached by their fellow citizens."[60]

Take, for example, the story of Orthrydes, who survived the Battle of Thyreae. The general opinion of the Spartans was that being the only survivor of his army was somehow shameful, despite the fact that it was upon his survival that they based their claim to have won the battle. Their disappointment was made known to him through a campaign of social snubs. He quickly chose to kill himself in obedience to the city's decree.[61]

Every major force that went into defining the life of the polis citizen was accounted for in the Lykourgan Code.

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[60] Isocrates, Archidamus, Line 59.

[61] Herodotus, Historia, Book 1: Line 83.

They were all either redirected toward the goal of creating the perfect hoplite state or were eliminated. It was when this code was instituted that the history of classical Sparta truly began.

The exact date when the Reforms turned Sparta into the militaristic polis known to the ancients remains a mystery. However, several events are still remembered from that era. They supply one with a general appreciation of the challenges Sparta faced, at that time.

Sparta fought many wars of conquest in the first centuries of the Classical age, but until 550, Sparta's worst enemies had been its own policies. Until that time, Sparta dealt with internal enemies by means of repression, and external enemies by means of conquest. If a nearby polis looked like it would try to ally itself with the helots and the free Messenians to conquer Sparta, then the Spartans conquered it. If the Spartans won, even more helots were captured. This made the situation at home even more unstable. The new territorial gains also made Sparta more of a target to foreign foes, who feared Sparta's growing power.[62] If the Spartans lost, the helots would rebel.

In response to this problem, when Sparta conquered Tegea in 550, it did not carry its citizens off to become helots. Instead it forced a treaty of alliance of the

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[62] Forrest, History, 73.

Tegeans. The treaties with Tegea and, later, Lydia, marked the beginning of a new foreign policy for Sparta. Alliances of these sorts became Sparta's answer to her exterior foes. As no one had the power to face all three of these poleis, Sparta's power and safety was assured. After a century of increasing instability and hardship, Sparta was, once again, a force to be respected.[63]

When the friendship between Argos and Arkadia ended, Sparta was left with an opening to split Messenia's remaining allies permanently by forming an alliance with the Arkadians, just as it had with Lyssa. The Delphic Oracle confirmed that this was Apollo's desire as well. One of the kings named his son Philocharas, "Friend of the Arkadians," and the alliance was finalized in 540.[64]

The formal unification of all of these alliances into the Peloponnesian League in 505 made Sparta, the league's leader, into a major power in the Mediterranean. Due to Sparta's broadening interests, it came into contact with many of the powers and problems that would come to define its later history. For example, it was at this time that trouble with the Persian Empire began.

Persia was at the height of its power in the seventh century, and would begin its decline in the sixth century. However, it remained very powerful during the Classical Age,

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[63] Jones, Sparta, 47.

[64] Forrest, History, 76.

and several of its emperors evidently tried to reverse its decline by conquering new lands. Greece and the islands on its periphery became the targets for this expansion. Requests for aid against the Persians came to Sparta more and more often, but the Spartans did not feel capable of successfully confronting this giant, and the requests were rejected on all occasions.[65] Still, some sort of confrontation between these powers was inevitable as Sparta grew in prominence.

The single most colorful figure of this era of Sparta's expansion was Kleomenes. The peculiarity of Kleomenes's life was evident from the beginning. His father had two wives simultaneously, one to solidify a treaty with Arkadia.[66] This produced an immediate quarrel over the royal succession. As the firstborn and the child of the Spartan wife, Kleomenes won the conflict.[67] Dorieus, Kleomenes' half-brother left to start the North African apoikia, or colony, of Kynpis in 512.[68]

Carthage wiped out Kynpis in 510.[69] Dorieus tried to begin a second apoikia in Italy, but the natives also

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[65] Ibid., 81.

[66] Herodotus, Historia, Book 5: Lines 39-41.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid. The life of Dorieus is related in: Herodotus, Historia Book 5: Lines 39-48.

[69] Herodotus, Historia, Book 5, Line 44.

destroyed this colony, and Dorieus died in this battle.[70] Kleomenes refused to send help to his half-brother when the hostilities began, and beat to death the messenger who asked for aid.[71]

Kleomenes's next adventure involved a strategy that Sparta had developed for expanding its power in this later era without committing its entire army to further military adventures. It backed coups that ousted local tyrants who had taken over other poleis. When the new government was in place, it joined the Peloponnesian League. The treaties by which they did so always contained provisions that the new member would "follow Sparta's lead" in all matters.[72] The League was becoming an empire.

Athens was one of the cities that Sparta "liberated" during this time. For some time, the descendants of Peisistratos, who were allied with the government of Argos, controlled Athens. The Alkmeonids, who were allies of Sparta, had been banished to Delphi by their enemies the Peisistratids. From there they invited the Lakedaemonians to end the tyranny of the Peisistratids. After a failed naval expedition in 514, the Spartans launched their first land invasion of Attika in 510. The Peisistratids fled to

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[70] Ibid., Line 46.

[71] Forrest, History, 86.

[72] Ibid., 88. Xenophon, Hellenica, Book 2: Section 2, Line 20.

Persia, where one of their number became a satrap, or "Governor" of one of the Emperor's outlying provinces. Kleomenes commanded the victorious army.[73]

Whatever the settlement that occurred between the cities at this time was, it was apparently not acceptable to Kleomenes, because in 508 he returned to expel seven hundred Athenian families from Attika and re-write the Athenian constitution.[74] The Athenians refused to accept this behavior, and besieged the king and all of his allies in the Akropolis. When the siege was over, all Athenians who aided the king were killed, while the Spartans were forced out of Attika.[75]

Kleomenes raised an army for a second invasion of Attika, but Korinth refused to help him in this effort.[76] The result was a great deal of tension and discord within the League. Then, Athens defeated Kleomenes's army at Eleusis.[77]

Kleomenes persuaded the Boeotians to attempt such an expedition, but they failed to conquer Attika, which humiliated him even further.[78] As a final measure, he

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[73] Ibid., Lines 86-87.

[74] Ibid., Line 87.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., Lines 87-88; Hooker, Ancient, 153.

[77] Herodotus, Historia, Book 5: Line 76.

[78] Ibid., Line 77.

agreed to back Hippias, the Peisistratid, in his attempt to take Athens back under his control. However, he was unable to garner enough support for this action either in the Assembly or in the League, so this effort failed also.[79]

Kleomenes tried to recoup his prestige in 494 by conquering Argos. However, due to the strains he had placed upon the League, he went outside of the League to Boeotia, Aigina, Delphi, and Thessaly for allies in this venture.[80] This might have further insulted the League. He broke Argos's power for a generation, but he did not take the city itself. Instead, he burnt down the sacred forest of Argos, and, as a result, was denounced throughout Greece as a heretic.[81] Some claimed that he went mad as a result of this sacrilege.[82] The Spartans, who believed that all evil began outside of their home, claimed that Kleomenes picked up the foreign habit of drinking wine undiluted by water, and went mad as a result of that addiction.[83]

When Kleomenes's co-ruler died, he arranged for Delphi to discredit the direct heir to the empty throne in favor of his ally, Leotykidas II.[84] This was to be his last victory

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[79] Forrest, History, 89.

[80] Herodotus, Historia Book 6: Section 77, Line 2.

[81] Hooker, Ancient, 154.

[82] Forrest, History, 86.

[83] Herodotus, Historia, Book 3: Section 148.

[84] Ibid., Section 197.

and it was not an enduring one. The king's forgery of Delphi's edict in favor of Leotykidas was eventually discovered, and Kleomenes was forced to flee the Peloponnese to escape the wrath of his vengeful countrymen.[85] While abroad, he helped Sparta's old rivals, the Arkadians, form an anti-Spartan Arkadian League, and incited violence against Sparta.[86] Kleomenes evidently hoped that this alliance would protect him from his enemies, and provide him with a vehicle by which he could gain even more power over Greece. This did not happen, but the Arkadian League continued to exist after his death, much to Sparta's consternation and chagrin.[87]

Eventually, Kleomenes returned to Sparta. The circumstances by which he returned are unknown. After his return, he had a nervous breakdown. He went about striking random citizens on their heads and shoulders in the fashion by which Sparta's children were punished during their agoge.[88] He was captured and put in chains. In 490, he died of slow self-mutilation.[89]

The Greece that Kleomenes left had a new power,

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[85] Ibid., Section 119.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Forrest, History, 91.

[88] Herodotus, Historia, Book 5: Line 91.

[89] Ibid.

Athens.[90] Furthermore, Athens hated Sparta, thanks to Kleomenes. His actions also alienated Korinth, Arkadia, and other members of the Peloponnesian League.[91] The internal confusion and conflict Kleomenes caused within Sparta, was so great that the polis was unable to field an army at Marathon when the Persians made their first attempt to conquer Greece in 490.[92] Instead, Athens single-handedly saved Greece, solidifying its reputation at Sparta's expense.[93] Sparta, bearing this heritage, would be forced to face an even greater Persian invasion in just ten years.

Sparta was technically the leader of the forces defending Greece during the Persian War that began in 480, but Athens, the only defender who was not a member of the Peloponnesian League, was the real power of the campaign. At Salamis, it cut the invading army off from its home base and destroyed its navy. Later it would cripple the Persian army, effectively ending the conflict. Sparta's great contribution to the fighting consisted of one battle, where its army was devastated while turning the invader's advance into the Peloponnese. After the war, Athens founded its own league, as a rival to the Peloponnesian League, using its

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[90] Forrest, History, 92.

[91] Ibid., 92-93.

[92] Hooker, Ancient, 158; Herodotus, Historia, Book 5: Line 106.

[93] Ibid.

newly-won fame as its cornerstone.

The history of the Athenian League is one of gradual corruption, and of the exploitation of Athens's allies, fueled by ambition and a desire for power.[94] The growing fear that Sparta held for this new power punctuated this era of its history. Actually, these two poleis rarely came into direct conflict at this time, but when Athens's growing empire abutted the territories of other members of the Peloponnesian League, those members turned to Sparta for help.[95]

Initially, Sparta refused to assist or protect its allies, as it was still reluctant to engage in long-term military ventures for fear that the helots might take advantage of this opportunity to throw off their slavery.[96] As if to punctuate this fear, an earthquake in 646 prompted the best documented of the helot uprisings.[97] Sparta's refusal to aid them angered the other members of the League, endangering it. This further weakened Sparta's defense posture, while its old enemy, Argos, rebuilt its power with the help of their Athenian allies.[98]

Eventually, the unceasing pressure of Sparta's allies

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[94] Hooker, Ancient, 174-175.

[95] Thucydides, History, Book 1: Section 3, Line 66.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Hooker, Ancient, 199-201; Forrest, History, 105.

yielded a series of Spartan demands against Athens.[99] Athens rejected these demands, stating that it preferred leaving the matter of their differences in the hands of a neutral arbiter.[100] Sparta responded with a declaration of war.[101]

Sparta's basic strategy, at this time, was defined more by its desire to maintain internal security during the war than it was by the desire to make a continuing effort to wipe out their enemies. The Spartans' hope was to end matters with a quick thrust against Athens during a time of relative peace and security within their own borders.[102] Unfortunately, the various land campaigns yielded no result.

In the meantime, the Athenian Navy captured the ports of Gytheion, Megara, Achaia, Troizen, and Aigina.[103] Pressure from the lower classes of Sparta, as well as from Sparta's allies, obliged the king to sign a thirty-year peace treaty with Athens.[104] Athens gave up some of the captured ports, but it won an acknowledgement of its

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[99] Hooker, Ancient, 179-181.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid., 106-107.

[103] Thucydides, History, Book 1: Section 4, Lines 100-108.

[104] Ibid., Lines 112-115.

hegemony over Attika.[105] Sparta would not forget the scars of this loss, which foolish leadership and internal discord had caused.

In 431, Sparta broke the treaty.[106] Officially, Sparta fought this war in response to Athens's attempt to return the straying polis of Plataia to its league.[107] At the same time, Sparta claimed that it would "liberate Greece from the tyranny of Athens."[108]

The strategy used by Sparta in this phase of the Peloponnesian War was more logical than that used in the first phase. This strategy was, however, just as effective as its predecessor. Between 432 and 421, Sparta tried to wear down its opponent by encouraging Athens's allies to defect, while also striving to cut it off from its food supply.[109] Argos was technically neutral until 420, due to a separate peace treaty between it and Sparta.[110] It would be watched, and with luck the war would be over before it became involved.[111] Unfortunately, the end result of this

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[105] Forrest, History, 107.

[106] Ibid., 108-109; Thucydides, History, Book 1: Section 5, Line 118.

[107] Ibid; Hooker, Ancient, 184-185.

[108] Thucydides, History Book 1: Section 139, Line 3.

[109] Forrest, History, 111.

[110] Hooker, Ancient, 189; Thucydides, History, Book 2: Section 1, Line 9.

[111] Forrest, History, 111.

policy was yet another series of stalemates, with the Spartan armies causing a great deal of destruction in Attika, and the Athenians supplying themselves and their allies from the sea.[112]

In 420, as the possibility of Argos joining the war approached, Sparta was no closer to victory than it had been before, a major plague in Athens notwithstanding. Both sides were simply exhausting themselves with no result.[113] So, despite the fact that Greece had not been "liberated" to any extent, a second treaty was signed, ending this second phase of the war.[114]

In the years between 421 and 415, Sparta concentrated on shoring up its League and securing the Peloponnese. In 418, at the Battle of Mantinea, Sparta finally defeated its old enemy, Argos, despite the fact that Argos was receiving covert support from Athens.[115] A year later, as Thucydides said, "the Spartans settled affairs in Achaia which had not been previously to their taste."[116] Lesser battles dealt with straying allies such as Elis.[117] A treaty of alliance

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[112] Hooker, Ancient, 188.

[113] Ibid., 198; Forrest, History, 113-114.

[114] Thucydides, History, Book 5: Section 1, Line 18.

[115] Ibid., Section 16, Line 73.

[116] Forrest, History, 117; The complete record of Spartan doings during this time is recorded in: Thucydides, History, Book 5: Sections 20-83.

[117] Forrest, History, 116.

between Athens and Sparta was signed, making it look like they were settling their differences.[118]

In 415, Athens attacked the Korinthian colony of Syracuse, seeking access to the riches of Sicily.[119] An Athenian traitor named Alkibiades advised Sparta to retaliate.[120] Instead, Sparta waited until Athens raided Lakedaemonia, itself, before it resorted to violence.[121] The war had begun again. In 413, the Athenian Navy was destroyed off the coast of Sicily.[122] By 412, Athens began to lose its allies.[123] Though the claim that Sparta was liberating Greece was no longer a part of the city's official propaganda, Athens's behavior had alienated almost everyone.[124]

Still, Athens kept some allies and built a small new navy. It would be 404 before its internal squabbling, combined with its weakened state, gave Sparta its final

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[118] Thucydides, History, Book 1: Section 15, Line 23.

[119] Hooker, Ancient, 202-203.

[120] Forrest, History, 117-118.

[121] Ibid., 118.

[122] Thucydides, History, Book 6: Section 1, Lines 8-23; Section 7, Lines 94-103.

[123] Hooker, Ancient, 204-205; Thucydides, History, Book 5: Section 16, Lines 69-72.

[124] Thucydides, History, Book 2: Section 1, Line 8.

victory.[125] Athens lost its walls, most of its navy, and its democracy. Several of its leaders went into exile. A garrison was established to observe things in Athens.[126] Rather than destroy the city as the Korinthians had suggested, Sparta tried to establish a puppet oligarchy over Athens, called the Thirty,[127] and then sat back to enjoy its hard-won hegemony over all Greece.[128]

It had been prophesied that love of wealth would be Sparta's undoing,[129] and after 404 there was a great deal of wealth in Sparta. The Lakedaemonians' constant desire to expand their power abroad indicated that greed had always been present, but occasional military defeats provided the Spartans with an appreciation of their limits. However, after 404 their ambition to expand knew no limit. Between the years 404 and 371, Sparta only knew one year of peace.[130] The rest of the time it was either dealing with internal violence, re-enforcing its will upon Greece, or

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[125] Xenophon, Hellenica, Book 2: Section 2, Lines 2-23.

[126] Forrest, History, 121.

[127] Xenophon, Hellenica, Book 2: Section 3, Lines 11-14; Line 24.

[128] Ibid., Book 7: Section 1, Line 33.

[129] Forrest, History, 127.

[130] Hooker, Ancient, 243-244.

engaging in military adventures against Persia.[131]

The first effort by someone other than the helots to wield power over the policies of Sparta, over the heads of the homoioi, resulted in the Thirty Year Peace Treaty that ended the Korinthian War.[132] That uprising should have warned the homoioi of troubles to come. In 398, members of the lower classes of Sparta worked together to take over the city in a coup against the homoioi;[133] the coup failed.[134] Still, this was the first time that someone other than the helots threatened Sparta's internal kosmos.

Meanwhile, other poleis both within and without the Peloponnesian League began to prepare for a confrontation with Sparta. Athens quickly restored its democracy, and rebuilt its defensive walls.[135] This was in direct contradiction to the treaty with Sparta. Korinth forged a new alliance with Argos.[136] Sparta invaded the Thebans in

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[131] Xenophon, Hellenica, Book 3: Section 2, Lines 21-31; Section 5, Lines 3-7; Book 4: Section 2, Line 9; Section 6, Line 1 - Section 7, Line 7; Book 5: Section 2, Lines 1-7; Lines 20-24; Lines 37-43; Section 3, Lines 1-10; Line 18; Line 19; Lines 21-25; Book 5: Section 4, Lines 13-62; Book 6: Section 1; Section 2, Lines 3-38; Line 34; Lines 60-66.

[132] Ibid., Line 107.

[133] Ibid., Line 125.

[134] Ibid.

[135] Xenophon, Hellenica, Book 2: Section 4, Lines 24-43.

[136] Ibid., Book 7: Section 4, Lines 29-30.

383, and the Thebans formed an army against its one-time ally.[137] Finally, Athens established a second league called the Athenian Confederacy in 377.[138]

Eventually, two major campaigns ended in total defeat for Sparta. In 373, the entire Spartan Navy was destroyed,[139] and in 371, at Leuktra, the Thebans destroyed the invading Spartan Army in a hoplite to hoplite battle.[140] The Thebans then moved on to capture Sparta itself and Sparta's power was broken forever.[141]

A Theban-led Arkadian League replaced the Peloponnesian League, which had disintegrated with Sparta's loss.[142] Messenia was liberated, and the helots returned to found their own state with Theban help.[143] Thebes, however, did not go so far as to establish an empire itself. It concentrated on maintaining its internal order, and so, no power took Sparta's place as lord of Greece until Philip of Macedonia conquered it.[144] The Classical Age had ended.

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[137] Ibid., Book 5: Section 4, Lines 13-59.

[138] Hooker, Ancient, 225.

[139] Xenophon, Hellenica, Book 4: Section 7, Lines 2-7; Section 8, Lines 1-11.

[140] Ibid., Book 6: Section 4, Lines 1-15.

[141] Ibid., Section 5, Lines 23-52.

[142] Forrest, History, 228.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Ibid., Lines 138-139.

CHAPTER III

HERODOTUS

The earliest extant work of history to discuss classical Sparta in any depth is the Historia by Herodotus of Halicarnassus. Little is known about the life of Herodotus. He was born sometime around the year 484. In the Historia, he claims to have traveled extensively in the eastern Mediterranean, where he heard many of the stories that are related in his book.[1] It is believed that he eventually settled in Samos.

According to the Alexandrian historian Suidas, Herodotus's voyages were not altogether voluntary. Lygdamis, an ally of Persia, ruled Halicarnassus. By the year 464, several pro-Athenian families, including Herodotus's own, had tried to take over the government. The coup failed, and the families were banished. At least one of the historian's relatives was killed. A second attempted coup, occurring several years later, was successful, and, as a result, Halicarnassus became a part of the Athenian Empire. Herodotus returned to Halicarnassus for a short

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[1] Herodotus, Historia, Book 1: Line 194; Book 2: Line 49; Line 150; Book 4: Lines 18-117.

time, but he did not remain there.[2]

Herodotus spent his final years in Thuria, an Italian colony of Athens's. He might have gone to Athens on occasion, because legend has it that he once won ten gold talents there for a reading of his history.[3] He seems to have lived to see the first years of the Peloponnesian War, dying in 425.

Given this short biography, it might be justly assumed that Herodotus would take the Athenian/democratic side of things when he discusses history, and, indeed, he does. At one point, he attributes Athens's victories to her democratic institutions, and his story of at least one major battle is based more upon Athenian propaganda than upon the facts, as archeological studies of the battle site have proven.[4] However, Herodotus does try to be objective, and he often transcribes each side's version of a contested event.

Despite the fact that his lifetime witnessed a gradual buildup in hostilities between Athens and Sparta, there is little anti-Spartan rhetoric in the Historia. Herodotus admittedly attacks individual Spartans, such as Kleomenes, but his general attitude towards Sparta itself seems to be

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[2] A. R. Burn, "Introduction" in Herodotus: The Histories (New York: Viking Penguin inc., 1986), 11.

[3] Ibid., i.

[4] Ibid., 33-34.

favorable. This attitude is, in part, a function of the author's general goals. He intends to relate in his Historia the battle of the noble Greeks against the Persian invaders. Sparta fought against Persia; thus, Sparta is a protagonist in these writings.

The character of Sparta and its institutions is implied in a manner typical for Herodotus. In the Historia, individual characters often seem more like "voices," representing one aspect of a national or local character, than they do people. They each act as a tool by which the author may express some truth about the people, or the situations, being discussed. Sparta is represented by three such figures: Leonidas, a king; Pausanias, a regent; and Demaratus, a Spartan who defected to Persia. So it is to these three characters that one must look to discover what Herodotus thought about Sparta.

Leonidas was one of the kings of Sparta. Sparta was a dyarchy, and had two kings serving at all times. Leonidas portrays the Spartan ideal in the Historia. There he is depicted as saying little, and what little he does say has the feel of being proverbs that he learned by rote. To him, the greatest of crimes are cowardice and disloyalty. He is inflexibly disciplined and invincible in battle. The primary forces defining his life are an unshakable religious

scruple and unalloyed, unconditional patriotism.[5] When the Delphic priestess indicates that Sparta would have to lose a king if the Persian invaders are to be defeated, he allows himself to be killed in battle.[6] At least that is what Herodotus says. When Leonidas dies, it is with honor, at the Battle of Thermopylae.[7]

Pausanias is depicted as being noble, and even heroic at first, while he remains in Sparta. However, when he is outside of Sparta he comes into contact with the material wealth of decadent Persia and is fascinated even as it disgusts him.[8] When he is exposed to the luxuries of Persia while acting as Lord of Byzantium, desire for wealth corrupts him. Eventually, he turns against his city for his own personal gain. He even goes so far as to wear Persian-style clothing. Eventually, the Asiatic Greeks become so disgusted with this behavior that they replace Sparta with Athens as head of their alliance against Persia just to be rid of the Spartan leader.[9] The reputation of Spartans in general is tarnished.

Eventually, Pausanias began to negotiate with Xerxes to

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[5] The story of Leonidas is related in: Herodotus, Historia, Book 5: Line 42; Book 7: Lines 203-209; Book 7: Lines 220-227.

[6] Ibid., Book 7: Line 220.

[7] Ibid., Line 227.

[8] Ibid., Book 9: Line 83.

[9] Ibid., Book 8: Line 2.

conquer all of Greece in the Emperor's name. In return, the Spartan would receive satrapy over the conquered territories. When news of this negotiation reached Greece, the Spartans tried Pausanias for treason, but was acquitted for lack of evidence. Then he seized a Spartan ship and sailed back to Byzantium illegally to recommence negotiations with the Emperor. Pausanias was immediately summoned back to Sparta, and a second trial was held. When it became obvious that this time he will be found guilty, he fled to the temple of Athena. Eventually, he was starved out of his sanctuary. Just as Pausanias acts as a king without really being a king, he acts the part of a Spartan without actually being loyal to the Spartan way.[10]

Demaratus, another king of Sparta, straddles the perfection of Leonidas and the corruption of Pausanias. He is generally depicted as a noble, even heroic, individual. The story of his conception is made to mirror that of Heracles, the legendary father of the Dorians, which implies that Demaratus is something of a demi-god himself.[11] Yet he fights for the Persians against Sparta and takes great joy in informing Sparta of its defeats.[12] This is because the Spartans unjustly depose him, due to the machinations of his

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[10] The story of Pausanias is related in: Herodotus, Historia, Book 4: Line 8; Book 5: Line 34; Book 8: Line 103; Book 9: Line 11; Lines 15-16; Line 29; Lines 45-88.

[11] Ibid., Book 6: Lines 68-69.

[12] Ibid., Book 7: Line 239.

enemies: Kleomenes, a favorite whipping-post of Herodotus's, and Leotychides, who replaced Demaratus upon the throne.[13] The Persians give Demaratus sanctuary and so he serves their emperor, Xerxes, loyally.[14]

As the only Greek amongst the Persian generals who form Xerxes's inner circle, Demaratus acts as Xerxes's guide in Greece, discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the various poleis. He naturally has quite a lot to say about his old home. In fact, given the fact that none of the other characters in the Historia speak so often, and so directly about Sparta, he might even be a mouth-piece for Herodotus through whom the historian's own opinions might be expressed.

In the words of Demaratus, Sparta is "the finest kingdom in Greece, and with the bravest men."[15] This is because "they have a master, and that master is Law, which they fear much more than your subjects fear you."[16] This Spartan Law binds them to Spartan "virtues," commanding them "never to retreat in battle, however great the odds, but always to stand firm, and to conquer or die."[17] This Law also stresses the need for communal action. "[F]ighting

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[13] Ibid., Book 6: Lines 64-67.

[14] Ibid., Line 74.

[15] Ibid., Book 7: Line 210.

[16] Ibid., Line 107.

[17] Ibid.

singly, they are as good as any," he says, "but fighting together they are the best soldiers in the world.... [T]hey will not under any circumstances accept terms from you which would mean slavery for Greece.... [T]hey will fight you even if the rest of Greece submits."[18] They could, he implied, defeat a force ten times as powerful.[19]

Xerxes pays no heed to what Demaratus says, but later he learns that the Spartan was right. All of Demaratus's predictions concerning the result of Xerxes's invasion of Greece are fulfilled. This seems to vindicate them.

The difference between Leonidas and Pausanias seems to have been centered around Pausanias's reaction to Persian wealth.[20] Sparta's character always held a fatal vulnerability to greed. Furthermore, people seem to have known of that flaw for some time before the Peloponnesian War yielded proof of this observation.[21] Despite this fact, however, Sparta is not described as being corrupt, a breeding ground for vice. In the Historia, it is "the finest kingdom in Greece."[22]

Why would such a status have been given to a people noted for their vulnerability to corruption? Are not the

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[18] Ibid., Line 103.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Forrest, History, 127.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Herodotus, Book 7: Line 209.

two images contradictory? Perhaps they may be reconciled.

In Sparta the children were taught to steal, fearing only failure, and to compete with their fellows for everything.[23] However, this ruthlessness, which is so necessary in war, may destroy a city by causing one to see one's fellow citizens only as rivals or as victims. The Spartans compensated for this by also teaching their children to fear public disgrace above all else, even death.[24] However, this apparent contradiction between being encouraged towards both ruthlessness and public spiritedness produced a "shame culture," where such disciplines are not internalized.

Nevertheless, Leonidas evidently had the strength of character to internalize his agoge-generated loyalty to Sparta while Pausanias did not. As a result, the king could leave Sparta geographically without leaving it psychologically, while the regent could not. The agoge taught Leonidas to be virtuous. On the other hand, it merely disciplined and regulated Pausanias. When the discipline was removed all of Pausanias's repressed appetites took control, and once loosened they could not be reigned in again. The same system can create both saints and savages.

The story of Demaratus underscores this idea. Sparta

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[23] Xenophon, Constitution, Section 2, Lines 6-7.

[24] Isocrates, Archidamus, Line 59.

may teach its citizens "virtue" as the Spartans defined the term--military effectiveness and cohesiveness. In such matters, they might have been the best in the world. However, it takes more than this to run a country. The corrupt machinations of Kleomenes and Leotychides disrupted the workings of the polis, and robbed it of a noble leader when it needed one.[25] However coherent, orderly, and "virtuous" these men were in battle, they, like Pausanias, did not have virtue in the modern sense, and, as a result, they disrupted Sparta on a political level that eventually affected the military affairs of the state. In assuring the military superiority of their state by means of Law, the Spartans may have sacrificed moral excellence. Perhaps they were overspecialized, and were especially open to non-military failures as a result.

Another side to the order of Sparta that is revealed in the story of Demaratus involves the unanimity with which the Spartans rejected him when he was deposed. Accustomed to acting as a unit, the Spartans apparently did not question their leaders when Kleomenes and Leotychides told them to get rid of Demaratus.[26] They just obeyed, like good soldiers. Sparta may have been orderly and its people loyal, but, as there was no science of ends in their study of the military, no questioning of what Sparta should fight

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[25] Herodotus, Book 6: Lines 64-67.

[26] Ibid.

for, the people simply did what their leaders told them to do, for good or ill.

So, the three representatives of Sparta speak well of its ability to create and preserve a crack military that can defeat any army in the world. This indicates that the Spartan ideal of virtue was achieved. This ideal involves the idea of Spartans cohering together as a single unit, and acting together to protect their city from all dangers. This part of the ideal seems to have been fulfilled as well, at least in regard to military operations. As a result of these successes, Sparta was able to produce such heroes as Leonidas, but Herodotus seems to find a dark side to Sparta's military virtue.

Sparta's stress on unity made her people dependent upon their community for moral guidance and support. It also made them vulnerable to manipulation by their leaders. Though these leaders were fully trained by the Spartan agoge in the customs and traditions of Sparta, they were not immune to corruption. Foreign ideas would contaminate some when they went abroad, because the shame-based agoge morality left them with low resistances to foreign ideas when strangers surrounded them. Others simply did not apply the strict standard of military kosmos to political matters, and thereby disrupted the polis in affairs that did not directly affect the military. It is, perhaps, significant that Herodotus never depicted the Spartan paragon, Leonidas,

operating away from fellow Spartans. Instead, Leonidas was always seen leading military operations. Perhaps, like Sparta, his excellence faded when he left the strict confines of army life in Sparta. Herodotus praised Sparta, but his praise, like Sparta's virtue, seems to have been conditional.

In a sense, Herodotus has just the opposite problem. Like Plato, he provides good analysis of several aspects of Sparta's culture, but only by sacrificing an objective discussion of all the facts. His history does not simply list the facts of Greek history and draw them together with analysis and interpretation. Herodotus provides a series of interspaced anecdotes that invites analysis from the reader. The historian might favor one particular interpretation, but he rarely describes this theory directly, supposedly leaving the reader free to make his own opinion.

This is both a strength and a weakness. Herodotus inspires thought, but he only provides the facts that fit into his little stories. Who knows what one may learn from having another perspective on the events discussed? Who knows what facts might have been suppressed to guide the reader to one particular interpretation of the facts? Herodotus does not help the critical reader to separate the facts from the theories in his text as does Xenophon.

Herodotus, though a historian, falls somewhere between these two general classes. He gives a great number of

facts, but sometimes one cannot separate facts from interpretations. Herodotus was the first great historian, and as such his methods might reasonably be assumed to be more primitive than his successors. Perhaps that is why his interpretation is harder to separate from his history.

Ironically, that part of Herodotus's interpretations, which the reader may extract, comes closer to resembling the conclusions that have been derived concerning Sparta's fall than does any of the other professionals. Perhaps this is because he wrote before the Peloponnesian War skewed Athenian perceptions of Sparta, or perhaps he was simply more insightful than either Thucydides or Xenophon. Maybe Herodotus simply left so many possible interpretations open to the readers, in the hopes that each one might reach his own conclusion about the events described in his anecdotes; someone with fore-knowledge of Sparta's history can always find evidence for the interpretation that his knowledge already suggests in the story provided. Whatever the reason, while one is never certain of the truth of the stories reported by this figure, the conclusions that he draws from these tales ring true throughout one's studies of all the other sources.

CHAPTER IV

THUCYDIDES

Thucydides was a younger contemporary of Herodotus. He was born sometime around the year 460, in Athens, to a prominent family. Pericles, who would become the great protagonist of The History of the Peloponnesian War was a cousin. Through his father, Olorus, Thucydides was also related to Kimon, son of Miltides, Prince of Thrace. As a result, Thucydides also had a Thracian estate. His connections with Thrace would be of great significance to him in the future. This historian also owned a gold mine near Thasos that made him independently wealthy.[1]

According to ancient biographers, Thucydides was a student of the philosopher Anaxagoras, and of the great orator Antiphon the Oligarch, whom Thucydides considered one of the greatest men of his time.[2] According to Thucydides, he was "of an age to comprehend the meaning of the events surrounding him" when the Peloponnesian War broke out in 431, and "at the very moment" that the war began he began to

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[1] Thucydides, History, Book 4: Section 14, Lines 103-107.

[2] Ibid., Book 8: Section 25, Line 68.

write a history of it.[3] In the following year he contracted, but survived, the Great Plague that struck Athens at that time.[4]

Seven years into the war, Thucydides was commissioned as an Athenian general, and was given responsibility for the naval defense of Thrace. A man named Eucles ran the army's defense of the city from a command center at Amphipolis. Brasidas, the greatest of the Spartan generals, defeated the army there. Thucydides and Eucles were both exiled for this failure, though the historian indicated that he had nothing to do with the loss, being at Thasos, at that time.[5]

History gained from this personal disaster. Sparta had a policy of allowing Athenian exiles to travel behind their lines, perhaps in the hopes that these exiles might be induced to take the Spartan side, as Alkibiades eventually did.[6] Using this provision to his advantage, Thucydides proceeded to travel the Peloponnese, and gain as much information as he could about the war, from the enemy's perspective.[7]

Thucydides eventually returned to Athens in 404, twenty years after his banishment, perhaps under the general

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[3] Ibid., Book 1: Section 1, Line 1.

[4] Ibid., Book 2: Section 7, Line 47.

[5] Ibid., Book 4: Section 14, Line 107.

[6] Ibid., Book 5: Section 16, Line 26.

[7] Ibid.

amnesty. Some have said that he was given a special pardon.[8] Shortly thereafter, he was assassinated in his Thracian home.[9] No one knows why. He was buried at Athens, in the vault of Kimon's family.[10] His history was never completed.

Like Herodotus, Thucydides has a clear preference for the Athenians in his book, and for good reason. Because of the war of which he wrote, he saw Sparta more as an adversary than did any of the other writers. Those other writers tended to write either after the war, or against it. Thucydides wanted to justify and explain the war and its conclusion. Thus, when he looked at Sparta, he saw the enemy. Still a consistent and comprehensible characterization of Sparta is presented in the History.

The most important quality of the Spartan character, according to Thucydides, was fear. When the reader is introduced to Sparta in a series of three speeches, this idea is introduced from the perspective of Sparta's allies, its enemies, and, finally, from the perspective of Sparta itself. The Korinthians state that Sparta foolishly avoided

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[8] R. Feetham, "Biographical Note: Thucydides c460-c400 B. C." in Herodotus & Thucydides in the series Great Books of The Western World, ed. Mortimer Adler, trans. Richard Crowley (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1990), 349.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

war with Athens for fear that they would lose.[11] The Athenians, not surprisingly, say that this fear is simply wise restraint.[12] The Spartan ephor, or magistrate, however, calls for and receives a declaration of war from the Assembly, soon after the Athenian speech.[13] The ephor does not discuss fear when he speaks, but Thucydides is moved to provide an editorial explanation to the effect that Sparta's only real cause for going to war is their fear of Athenian power.[14] Why did the ephor not say this? Perhaps he was afraid to admit the truth in public.

The source of a great deal of Spartan fear was the presence within Sparta of a slave population called the helots, which outnumbered the free Spartans. The majority of the helots were natives of Messenia, a nation conquered by Sparta at the very beginning of its classical era, while it was winning control of the Peloponnese. These helots were probably the single largest force shaping the policies and the general character of Sparta. Thucydides was the first of the sources discussed here to consider the importance of this slave-class.

Whenever the Spartan leadership showed signs of

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[11] Thucydides, History, Book 1: Section 15, Lines 68-71.

[12] Ibid., Lines 73-78.

[13] Ibid., Lines 86-87.

[14] Ibid., Line 88.

weakness, or a crisis of some sort arose to direct the government's attention elsewhere, the helots revolted.[15] As a result, the Spartans could not afford to go to war without being very certain that they could both keep control of the situation at home, and attain the objectives of the war without taking enough casualties to weaken their defense against the helots. At some points during the war it looked as if this was becoming impossible, and extraordinary measures needed to be taken either to put down the helots or to make a short truce with the Athenians.[16] Fortunately for the Spartans, they are usually successful in doing both of these things.

Soon after the declaration of war is discussed, as if to underscore the significance of fear to Spartan society, Thucydides puts this into the mouth of a Spartan king: "often the smaller army, animated by a proper fear, has been more than a match for a larger force."[17] The king goes so far as to warn his armies to be more afraid, saying those who are afraid, "shall be at once most valorous in attack and impregnable in defense."[18] The portrait depicted by these statements, describing how a small army many become impregnable in defense through fear, is an excellent

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[15] Ibid., Book 5: Section 15, Line 14.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., Book 2: Section 11.

[18] Ibid.

description of the relationship between the homoioi and the helots.

The Athenians feel differently about this matter. One Athenian says that "those who go into battle against far superior forces and are **under no constraint**[19] must be inspired by some extraordinary resolve."[20] Evidently, Sparta's allies agree with the Athenians on this matter. The Kretians warn the Spartans that "Victory is generally on the side of those who are more numerous and better equipped."[21] They also say that "fear makes a man forget, and skill which cannot fight is useless."[22] Perhaps the Kretian is referring to the agoge's war-training as the skill in question.

An Athenian general says that the Spartans are more afraid of the Athenians than the Athenians are of the Spartans. At the same time, the Korinthian general facing him confirms this by admitting to his men that "The skill of your enemies is something that you greatly dread."[23] Even some Spartans, such as General Brasidas, find it necessary to stave off his people's fear as he does just before the

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[19] Boldface is mine.

[20] Ibid., Book 3: Section 89.

[21] Ibid., Line 87.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

battle that would end in his death.[24]

This obsession with fear that Thucydides attributes to the Spartans through these speeches should remind one of Demaratus's statements to Xerxes. In that speech, he says that the people of Sparta are the best warriors in the world, because they fear the Law more than the Persians fear their emperors. Herodotus goes so far as to capitalize the word Nomos, meaning "Law," in his original text, making it seem as if Demaratus were talking about a god, and not a series of legal enactments.[25]

In The History of The Peloponnesian War, Spartans are similarly described as fighting out of fear for their polis, and, furthermore, out of fear that if they did not fight magnificently, they might make a shameful display of disloyalty and cowardice before their fellow Spartans. The Spartans could play the part of "the most valorous people in the world" when facing the enemy, but this is only because they feared their own people and institutions much more than they could fear any external enemy.

That is the "constraint" of which Thucydides wrote. It renders true "resolution" and courage impossible, but it insures kosmos. It is for this reason that the Roman historian Plutarch would comment that the Spartans worshiped Phobos, the god of fear, as the force that held their city

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[24] Ibid., Book 4: Section 86.

[25] Herodotus, Book 7: Line 107.

together.[26]

Another Spartan quality that Thucydides describes is constancy. In one of the first speeches Thucydides records as having been given before the Spartan Assembly, an ephor speaks proudly of Sparta having known no significant change since the Persian War.[27] Later, when negotiating a treaty, the Spartans reveal a vulnerability inherent in this approach. They confidently offer Athens a peace treaty based upon what Pericles of Athens requested nearly a decade ago, despite the fact that he is dead by that time, and his enemies are presently in charge of Athens.[28]

A third element of Thucydides's commentary on Sparta, which does not directly relate to one's study of Sparta's character as a culture, but does have a bearing, is contained in Pericles's famous Funeral Oration. It is in this speech that Thucydides relates the first clear contrast between Athens and Sparta, depicting them as the opposing poles of Greek society.

What does Pericles and, by logical extension, Thucydides say about Athens, as compared to Sparta? First, Pericles discusses the originality and social equity of the Athenian government. This social equity, he stresses, does

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[26] Plutarch, The Life of Kleomenes, Section 9, Lines 1-2.

[27] Ibid., Section 1, Lines 79-88.

[28] Ibid., Section 4, Lines 117-120.

not involve the sacrifice of one's private life, as it might in Sparta.

> [F]ar from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbor for doing what he likes, or even to indulge in those injurious looks which cannot fail to be offensive, although they inflict no positive penalty. But all this ease in our private relations does not make us lawless as citizens.[29]

Sparta's system, however, is founded upon the belief that constant surveillance is the only means of protecting internal security. As far as external security is concerned, Pericles says:

> there also we differ from our antagonists. We throw open our city to the world, and never by alien acts exclude foreigners from any opportunity of learning or observing, although the eyes of an enemy may occasionally profit by our liberality; trusting less in system and policy than to the native spirit of our citizens.[30]

This belief in a "native spirit" of loyalty is important to Pericles, and to democracy in general. It is the democrats' response to the aristocrats' charge that Sparta's system of education is superior because such a method of indoctrination is needed to teach the citizens virtue. Pericles assures his audience that:

> where our rivals from their very cradles by a painful discipline seek after manliness, at Athens we live exactly as we please, and yet are just as

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[29] Thucydides, Book 2: Section 37.

[30] Ibid., Section 39.

ready to encounter every legitimate danger.[31]

As a result, to the Athenians, "courage [is] not of art but of nature,"[32] and they

> have the double advantage of escaping the experience of hardships in anticipation and of facing them in the hour of need as fearlessly as those who are never free from them.[33]

It is indeed, only the Athenians who are capable of true courage, because

> it is not the miserable that would most justly be unsparing of their lives; these have nothing to hope for: it is rather they to whom continued life may bring reverses as yet unknown, and to whom a fall, if it came, would be most tremendous in its consequences.[34]

The remainder of Pericles's speech discusses the justice of the Athenian cause. He also indicates that while the Athenians fight alone on behalf of their friends and neighbors, Sparta has felt the need to pull its "allies" in the Peloponnesian League, to fight Athens.[35] This might have all been true at the time that Pericles spoke, but it was not to be true at a later point. That brings one to a final consideration regarding how Thucydides saw Sparta.

As has been said before, Thucydides's primary motive in

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., Section 43.

[35] Ibid., Section 39.

writing his History in the form that exists today seems to be to explain the defeat of Athens. His conclusion is that Athens defeated itself by allowing the Periclean faction to lose power after the death of its leader. Instead, Kleon, and later Alkibiades, took over. These ambitious figures alienated Athens's allies by treating them as vassals while using the war as an excuse to expand the Athenian Empire. Sparta remained characteristically constant in its policies. Athens's hunger for power corrupted the city. Sparta, at least at this time, held fast to its principles, and was victorious. So, whatever else one might say about Sparta, its consistency and coherency more than its military virtues gave it victory, while Athens, which seems in the History to be, in the modern sense, the more virtuous state, is defeated because of its fickle shifting in policy, and not because of a lack of military skill.

CHAPTER V

ARISTOPHANES

Aristophanes wrote about one play per year for a period of forty years beginning in 425, including the time of the Peloponnesian War, and ending in 385, with the playwright's death. Of all these plays, only eleven remain.[1] From these extant plays, some idea of the playwright's personality may be drawn. He was critical of democracy, and was against the Peloponnesian War. Often, he portrayed contemporary politicians, such as Kleon, as sycophants serving the flighty whims of "The People."[2] As a result of the unfavorable comments that he made about the archon Kleon in The Babylonians, he was fined for "saying ill of the city in the presence of foreigners."[3]

During the wars, Aristophanes wrote three "peace plays" criticizing the Athenians. In these, he indicates that he

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[1] Allen H. Sommerstein, "Introduction" in Lysistrata and other Plays, ed. Betty Radice, trans. Allen H. Sommerstein (London: Penguin Books, 1973), 9-10.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Allen H. Sommerstein, "Introduction to the Acharnians" in Lysistrata and Other Plays, ed. Betty Radice, trans. Allen H. Sommerstein (London: Penguin Books, 1973), 42.

believes that the Athenians had started the whole affair, and that they should take responsibility for ending it.[4] The writer never suggests that Athens should surrender, but he continually calls for the negotiation of an honorable peace between these poleis.

From this circumstantial evidence, it might be concluded that Aristophanes favored the aristocratic faction. He certainly had more friends among the anti-democrats than he did among the rest. For example, two of Aristophanes's more famous friends were the anti-democrats Socrates and Plato. This, however, presented them with no defense against the playwright's wit. Both philosophers were satirized in Aristophanes's plays. Socrates appears in The Clouds, and Plato's ideal republic is satirized in The Ecclesiazusae. Neither seems to have minded. Socrates is seen treating him as a friend in The Symposium, and Plato may have written a poetic eulogy for Aristophanes when he died.

However, it is, perhaps, more fitting to say that Aristophanes was critical of the Athenian status quo, whatever it was at the moment, than to say that he was a staunch anti-democrat. He never seems to have praised the aristocrats of Athens. Aristophanes just poked a little fun at whomever was in charge at the time, like a modern political satirist.

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[4] Aristophanes, The Acharnians, Act 1: Lines 500-550.

In Aristophanes's plays, the Spartans are usually depicted as speaking in a rustic accent, implying that they are an uncultured, simple folk, but they are usually shown having more common sense than do their city-dwelling opposite numbers.[5] This reflects an attitude toward the Spartans that is simultaneously respectful and amused. In the end, that is really the most that we get from Aristophanes about the Spartans. He does not really dwell on them very much. Aristophanes is an Athenian, and he writes his plays as a commentary on Athens. Thus, he only brings the Spartans into a play to play a role in his analysis of Athens.

Perhaps the best representative of Aristophanes's use of Sparta comes in The Birds, where he makes fun of the young Athenians who mimic Spartan customs in an attempt to learn Spartan virtue. What these "Sparta-happy" young men need to remember, he tells us, is that the city of their dreams would not let them in to practice the real Spartan disciplines, because it has a law refusing the entry of unsavory characters.[6] Curiously, these misguided young men are also referred to as being "Socrified," indicating that Socrates had taught them all this folly.[7]

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[5] For an example see the playwright's use of the character Lemphito in the Lysistrata.

[6] Aristophanes, The Birds, Act 1: Line 1282.

[7] Ibid.

The few direct commentaries by Aristophanes about Sparta come in the peace plays. In the Acharnians, Aristophanes's representative, Dikaiopolis, whose name means "Just-City," gives a speech wherein he claims that the war was Athens's fault.[8] He hates Sparta just as much as anyone else in the audience does, he says, but Athens started the conflict. Sparta was simply reacting to the situation as well as it could.[9] Almost everything in this play underscores his plea for peace and understanding between the two cities, though the war is only directly mentioned in this one place.

The Lysistrata, another peace play, was written during the desperate time when Athens was trying to rebuild its navy after the disastrous Sicilian Expedition.[10] As this play was being performed, most of its viewers expected invading armies to appear on the horizon at any moment. Yet the play ends with two songs praising Sparta, and describing its victories in the war against Persia.[11] That must have been an unpleasant thing to hear or to perform. Somehow, Aristophanes got away with this open praise of the enemy's

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[8] Aristophanes, The Acharnians, Act 1: Lines 500-550.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Allen H. Sommerstein, "Introduction to the Lysistrata" in Lysistrata and other Plays, ed. Betty Radice, trans. Allen H. Sommerstein (London: Penguin Books, 1973), 177.

[11] Aristophanes, The Lysistrata, Act 2: Lines 1245-1321.

military powers.

Like all peace activists, Aristophanes's basic thesis was that the Spartans were people just like those of any polis, with their own virtues and vices. Like all comedians, Aristophanes advanced his ideas by striving to reveal his subjects' foibles and laugh at their pretensions, whoever those subjects happened to be at the moment. He did not concern himself very much with grand military virtues, or with idealistic visions of social order, except to laugh at them. When ideals, or rather the personifications of ideals, are involved in his work, such as "Just Argument" in The Clouds, they usually turn out to be flawed creatures who are a bit too self-important for their own good.[12]

Occasionally, Aristophanes shows that he is capable of reverence. However, it is the Spartans, not the Athenians, who seem to be the primary mortal recipients of this reverence in the peace plays. Free from the fickle whims of the masses, which lead to futile wars, Sparta finds favor in the eyes of Aristophanes.

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[12] Aristophanes, The Clouds, Act 2: Lines 905-1114.

CHAPTER VI

PLATO

Born in Athens, probably in the year 428, the philosopher Plato was an aristocrat, related to some of the most vocal anti-democrats of his day. Certainly, Plato himself also felt such sentiments. In The Republic, he, or at least his representative character, Socrates, described a democracy as being a form of government which is extremely vulnerable to disasters caused by choosing bad leaders. He says:

> when a democratic city athirst for liberty gets bad cup-bearers for its leaders and is intoxicated by drinking too deep of that unmixed wine....those who obey the rulers...it reviles as willing slaves and men of nought, but it commends and honors in public and private rulers who resemble subjects and subjects who are like rulers. Is it not inevitable that in such a state the spirit of liberty should go to all lengths?....The father habitually tries to resemble the child and is afraid of his sons, and the son likens himself to the father and feels no awe or fear of his parents, so that he may be forsooth a free man. And the resident alien feels himself equal to the citizen and the citizen to him, and the foreigner likewise.... The teacher in such case fears and fawns upon the pupils, and the pupils pay no heed to the teacher or to their overseers either. And in general the young ape their elders and vie with them in speech and action, while the old, accommodating themselves to the young, are full of pleasantry and graciousness, imitating the young for fear they may be thought disagreeable and authoritative....[N]o one would believe how much

> freer the very beasts subject to men are in such a city than elsewhere. The dogs literally verify the adage and 'like their mistresses become.' And likewise the horses and asses are wont to hold on their way with the utmost freedom and dignity, bumping into everyone who meets them and who does not step aside. And so all things everywhere are just bursting with the spirit of liberty.[1]

Still, Plato probably served loyally as a cavalryman during the Peloponnesian War.[2] He was a loyal Athenian, even though he did not like democracy.

The turning point of Plato's life came when his friend Socrates was executed for heresy and the corruption of the young in 399. It is generally supposed that Plato began to write his philosophical dialogues immediately thereafter, as a defense of Socrates's memory. This, however, cannot be confirmed.

In the aftermath of the execution of their mentor, several of Socrates's friends fled to Megara.[3] It is uncertain whether Plato was among this group. However, it is certain that, in the years following Socrates's death, Plato traveled, perhaps to escape Socrates's fate.[4] He may have gone as far away as Egypt. In time, he returned to Athens and founded his Academy. He remained in Athens until

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[1] Plato, Republic, Book 8: Segments 562e-563d.

[2] Gilbert Ryle, "Plato," in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 6 Vols., ed. Paul Edwards (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co. & Free Press), 315.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

his death at the age of eighty-one.[5]

Plato is an especially difficult author to review. This philosopher wrote for a period of forty or fifty years. In that time, his opinions varied a great deal. Indeed, they changed so much that some later texts were evidently written to refute some of his earlier theories. As a result, one must always ask which Plato is speaking through the writings, the younger or the elder.

There is also a second related problem. The dialogues were originally meant to be a tribute to, and a preservation of, Socrates's wisdom. Only later did they become a means by which Plato's own ideas could be promulgated. It is not certain when Plato changed his thinking. As a result, one is never quite certain whose ideas are being expressed, Plato's or Socrates's. One must not only ask oneself which Plato speaks through a particular dialogue, but also whether the thoughts that Plato is expressing at any particular time are really his at all.

Furthermore, one must always remember that Plato was a philosopher whose goal was the development of his own thought. He was not a historian. So, while there might be some profit in searching for the stray references that he might have made in passing concerning the history of Sparta, and then working backwards to try and discover what he might have thought about it, one must never forget that one is

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[5] Ibid., 316.

indeed working backwards when one is doing this. It is unlikely that any of the philosopher's thoughts shall come through such a process undistorted. Like Aristophanes, however helpful Plato's perspective might be to one's understanding of Sparta, he had his own agenda, and he would use what he knew about Sparta to support the idea that he was trying to explain, not to improve the reader's understanding of this polis.

By comparing the Socrates of Plato's writings to the Socrates portrayed in Xenophon's or Aristophanes's works, one may develop some idea of what the historical Socrates thought on various subjects. For example, the historical Socrates's opinions concerning Sparta seem to be universally acknowledged as favorable. As has been noted previously, Aristophanes referred to the young people who tried to emulate Spartan ways and virtues as having been "Socrified," as if Socrates was the guru of this clique.[6] Similarly, in The Crito, one of Plato's earlier, presumably more "historical," works, it is said that Socrates favored the Spartan form of government.[7] As shall be seen, Xenophon's Socrates feels similarly. At one point, this version of Socrates lectures Pericles, the son of the famous Pericles,

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[6] Aristophanes, The Birds, Act 1: Line 1282.

[7] Plato, The Crito, Segment 52e.

on the failings of democracy, and the virtues of Sparta.[8] All of the sources available on Socrates agree that he spoke well of Sparta, and many of its institutions.

However, the specific arguments presented in the various texts are probably more the work of Plato, Aristophanes and Xenophon, than the work of Socrates. First of all, the two authors in question agreed with Socrates in his favor for Sparta. The majority of Xenophon's works were written in the author's own voice, and not through a representative character, and in these writings, the opinions voiced concerning Sparta were just as affirmative as those expressed by the Xenophonic Socrates. In The Laws, the one Platonic work where Socrates does not appear, an Athenian Stranger, who may represent Plato, himself, similarly praises Sparta; and, the two individuals with whom he discusses politics are a Kretian and a Spartan, representatives of Socrates's two favorite governments. Though Sparta is criticized in this work, no supporter of democracy is ever brought in to express his opinion on the matter of government. This underscores Plato's preference for the aristocratic states.

Secondly, it should be remembered that the ancients had different standards of accuracy than exist today. As long as the general trend in a figure's thought was well

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[8] Xenophon, The Memorabilia, Book 3: Section 5, Lines 15-17.

represented, the speech was considered accurate. Utilizing this freedom, authors often shaped these speeches to their own ends. It has already been noted that Thucydides did this, and there is no reason to suppose that Plato and Xenophon did not. So, for the sake of this review, it will be presumed that the substance of all the material discussed shall voice the ideas and arguments of the authors, at least as much as it did the people speaking.

Whatever solutions one may find to these problems, there seem to be common themes in the dialogues upon which one may comment, even though Plato's opinions changed over the years. The changes reveal the progress of Plato's personal intellectual evolution. It stretches from a youthful echoing of his teacher to the adolescent proclamation that he has found the truth. From there, it progresses into a more hesitant, mature inquiry based partially upon the knowledge that old certainties may crumble with time, and that the most cherished ideas of yesteryear might be as hard to defend as the theories of his old rivals. If there is no final certainty as to who is speaking through the dialogues, or no ultimate philosophical theory that one might find there, then at least there are continual and developing themes that may be discussed.

The only Platonic work that is manifestly anti-Spartan is the patriotic Menexenus, which many suspect is a satire,

or a forgery.[9] In all other dialogues Sparta is an object of admiration. However, this admiration is neither blind nor absolute.

Plato often derides the Spartan agoge for paying no heed to the intellectual and moral development of its citizens.[10] However, the philosopher is so prejudiced in favor of the Spartan system that, at one point, he claims that this apparent lack of intellectual development is an illusion generated by the Spartans to lead their foreign emulators astray, and assure its continuing supremacy--a truly absurd notion. Socrates says: "The most ancient and fertile homes of philosophy among the Greeks are Crete and Sparta, where are to be found more sophists than anywhere on earth."[11]

Note that here Plato, the great enemy of the sophists, nevertheless equates the presence of sophists with philosophic "fertility." To continue:

> But they [Spartan sophists] conceal their wisdom...and pretend to be fools, so that [Spartan] superiority over the rest of Greece may not be known to lie in wisdom, but seem to consist in fighting and courage. Their idea is that if their real excellence became known, everyone would set to work to

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[9] Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, "Introduction to Memorabilia," in Plato: The Collected Dialogues, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 186.

[10] A. E. Taylor, Plato: The Man And His Work, (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), 466.

[11] Plato, The Protagoras, Segments 342b-c.

> become wise. By this disguise they have taken in the pro-Spartans in other cities, who to emulate them go about with bruised ears, bind their hands with thongs, take to physical training, and wear short cloaks, under the impression that these are the practices which have made the Spartans a great power in Greece; when [The Spartans] want to resort freely to their wise men and are tired of meeting them in secret, expel all resident aliens, whether they be sympathizers with the Spartan way of life or not, and converse with the Sophists unbeknown to any foreigners.[12]

In the rest of the Socratic dialogues, this fiction is forgotten, and Sparta's obsession with the military is accepted as the tragic flaw that keeps Socrates's favorite polis from being perfect.[13] This point is underscored in the first of two books in which Sparta is given special attention. The first of these books is The Republic, where the Platonic ideal city is described. There, "Socrates" rates the various forms of government from best to worst. The best form of government possible is, of course, a republic such as he describes in the text, but he cannot provide his audience with an example of such a city in the real world. The second best form of government is a timocracy, corresponding to the Lakedaemonian constitution.[14]

Further examination of The Republic reveals why Sparta

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Plato, The Laws, Book 1: Segment 631c.

[14] Plato, Republic, Book 8: Segment 545b.

was held in such favor. In the ideal state of The Republic, a person's character and talents determines his place in society.[15] Intellectuals, who have what one might call "golden souls" to use Plato's metaphor, govern society as "Guardians."[16] Individuals with "bronze" souls, meaning that they are without the will to subordinate lower appetites to the greater good, are "Artisans."[17] Persons with average intelligence, superior self-control, and thus, "silver souls" are soldiers. They mediate between the other two classes by enforcing the law.[18]

The society described is supposed to be ideal because in it everyone is put in their proper place. This is Platonic justice. This allows everyone with the capacity to do so to pursue "The Good" in their own manner. To Plato that is all that is really important. In the metaphor of the cave, this Good is described as being the fundamental knowledge upon which all other knowledges, judgments, and virtues rest.[19] Courage in war is not an end in itself in this state, though such bravery can serve a practical value for a city striving towards the Good.

Platonic justice is treated in this text in the same

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[15] Ibid., Segment 369.

[16] Ibid., Book 3: Segments 413e-414d.

[17] Ibid., Segment 415.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., Book 6: Segment 508.

way as courage. It is a virtue that is useful in the pursuit of the Good. It is not, in and of itself, The Good. A city, one is told, is just when all of its citizens operate in their proper place in society, with their efforts wholly directed toward the benefit of the whole. In other words, a just society is one where kosmos and harmonia are absolute and unquestioned,[20] but a city can be harmonious and orderly without being "good."

The idea of having a society based upon unchanging principles, with a rigid class structure where the only class with political powers is the one at the top, is very Spartan. However, the Spartans instituted their system to have the military advantage necessary for them to survive and dominate in a state with such an incredible slave population. Thus, in Sparta, survival and supremacy, not just a place where everyone may seek The Good, is the goal of their institutions. Warriors, and not intellectuals, run the government. Still, there is a goal toward which all of the city's efforts are directed, and there is a strict ordering of society, which obliges the citizen to serve that end whether he knows it or not. Thus, Sparta approaches Platonic justice in its structuring of society, or at least it comes closer to this justice than does Athens with its looser society that has no real goal to pursue. That may be the cause for Plato's admiration of Sparta.

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[20] Ibid., Book 8: Segment 421b.

Though Sparta may be the best extant government in the eyes of Socrates and Plato, The Republic admits that it is flawed, and that it does degenerate through the corruption and failure of its institutions. This is shown in Plato's description of what happens to his ideal state when the soldiers and the Guardians share equal political power.[21] Supposedly equal land shares, he says, replace communal property.[22] Violence, not cunning, becomes the traditional method of dealing with unrest. War becomes both its supreme craft, and the cornerstone of its foreign policy.[23] Imperial drives produce a general lust for gold because imperialism is based upon the belief that the worth of an entity, whether it be a state or a man, is judged upon the amount of property that he controls. However, as it is illegal to possess private wealth, the citizens enjoy their goods in secret, setting them against their own city, which becomes even more repressive in response to this undercurrent of rebellion.[24] This was the state of things in Sparta.

When Plato constructs a second model for the ideal polis in The Laws, he does so in the voice of a nameless

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[21] Ibid., Segments 544-545.

[22] Ibid., Segment 547c.

[23] Ibid., Segment 548a.

[24] Ibid., Segments 548b-c.

Athenian Stranger, who may be Plato himself.[25] There also the reader is introduced to a Spartan who may directly put forward and defend his city's ways, making it easier for Plato to express, clearly and directly, his opinions concerning the contemporary polis. Furthermore, as this is the last text that Plato is known with certainty to have written, it is fairly clear that this is the later Plato speaking. Many of the interpretational problems that one has with The Republic vanish in The Laws.

In The Laws, Plato claims that there are three forms of constitution. The first two are the aristocratic and monarchical forms. However, the best constitution of all mixes these two forms.[26] Sparta's constitution does this with the kings and the Gerousia balancing each other.[27] Furthermore, the presence of ephors and the Assembly are acknowledged to bring the despotic and democratic elements into the mixture.[28]

However, Plato does not use Sparta's Rhetra as the basis for this second ideal's constitution. He uses Athens's constitution as his model.[29] Then, he includes a few amendments to this hypothetical document, which subsume

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[25] Plato, Laws, Book 4: Segment 711a.

[26] Ibid., Segment 693d.

[27] Plato, Laws, Book 3: Segments 693d-e.

[28] Ibid., Book 4: Segments 712d-e.

[29] Hooker, Spartans, 235.

the virtues of Sparta. For example, Plato does not allow the existence of coined money within the polis.[30] Self-sufficiency is encouraged within this ideal state, to limit the amount of contact between the ideal state and the rest of the world.[31] Sparta encouraged isolation as well, for the same reason. As a further obstacle, he sets his city some distance away from the sea, so that trading ships cannot reach it. Sparta was similarly isolated.[32] Technically, Athens was a land-locked polis itself, but it had a port-suburb called the Peiraeus to mitigate these effects. Plato forbids the development of such a port from his polis.[33]

As in Sparta, the land about this polis is divided into equal lots and given to the citizens. A minimum amount of property is thus assured for each citizen.[34] Sumptuary laws provide for a maximum amount of property belonging to each citizen.[35] Thus, great disparities in wealth are prevented.

Citizens of both Sparta and Plato's theoretical polis eat in communal messes. In Plato's polis, girls and boys both undergo agoge style training that stresses gymnastics and

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[30] Plato, Laws, Book 5: Segment 742a.

[31] Ibid., Book 4: Segment 705a.

[32] Ibid., Book 5: Segments 743d-745c.

[33] Taylor, Plato, 473.

[34] Plato, Laws Book 6: Segments 762c-766b.

[35] Ibid.

respect for one's elders.[36] For various reasons, a limit of 5,040 citizens are allowed within the philosopher's city;[37] this assures that a population too great to allow for Spartan-style peer pressure would not be permitted to develop.[38]

Finally, just as the Spartan reformer Lykourgos is supposed to have gone off to Delphi either to write the Rhetra or to receive it from the gods, his fellow citizens never being allowed to ponder which origin was true, so did the legislators of this ideal polis meet secretly outside of their city. They too are never allowed to reveal the means by which they came to their decisions.[39] Plato remains an ardent foe of rule by the masses, and by controlling the data he hopes to control the people.

The Laws does not pay blind homage to Sparta. The Athenian Stranger, like the Socrates of The Republic, would improve on it. One particular flaw that greatly disturbs him is Spartan overspecialization. Where Spartans are given great training in war, and are enured to its harshness, they are not taught how to deal with pleasure for fear that exposure to it will distract them from war.[40] As a result,

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[36] Ibid., Book 2: Segments 666e-667a.

[37] Ibid., Segment 737e.

[38] Ibid., Book 6: Segments 762c-766b.

[39] Ibid., Book 10: Segment 908a.

[40] Plato, Laws, Book 1: Segment 634b.

the Stranger says they have no experience with, nor in-built defense against the lures of pleasure.[41] Indeed, they are falling inexorably under the spell of such pleasures.[42] A jaded man is less likely to be seduced, just as a man who knows pain is less afraid of feeling it, but the Spartans are only taught to deal with pain. Pleasure easily defeats them. Thus, Plato subtly explains the corruption that eventually resulted in Sparta's fall.[43]

Elsewhere in the dialogues, other flaws are mentioned. They too are flaws of overspecialization. For example, in the Laches, the Spartans are eager for war because of their training. They do not know what to do with themselves when they are not in the midst of a death-struggle.[44] Furthermore, as is said in the Hippias Major, the Spartans are ignorant of almost anything except war. Some cannot even count.[45]

Despite all of this, however, Plato treats Sparta as the most favored of the poleis. Its institutions were divine[46] and its people the most law-abiding in Greece.[47]

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41 Ibid., Book 1: Segment 634a.

42 Ibid., Segments 636b-637c.

43 Ibid.

44 Plato, The Laches, Segment 183a.

45 Plato, The Hippias Major, Segment 285c.

46 Plato, Laws, Book 1: Segment 624a.

47 Plato, Hippias Major, Segment 285b.

It was the "protector of Greece."[48] Sometimes the philosopher goes out of his way to shield them from criticism. For example, Plato is the only figure to provide the Spartans with a decent excuse for their absence from the Battle of Marathon.[49]

So, while individual aspects of Plato's opinions on Sparta changed, his general view of it remained constant. This view is very similar to the opinions already expressed by Herodotus and Thucydides. Plato, and his version of Socrates, see Sparta as a state of unparalleled kosmos and harmonia directed wholly towards the preservation of military supremacy through the generation of military excellence. He also sees this concentration upon military virtue as causing a tragic overspecialization, which eventually results in the decline of the timocracy through non-military dangers.

Sparta's tragic flaw, in Plato's eyes, was the goal towards which all of its efforts were directed and this is significant. Militarism was the defining goal that made Lykourgan Sparta what it was. While it might have been possible for a second reformer to have adapted some of Sparta's institutions to Plato's goals and thereby, according to Plato, have assured Sparta's survival, the product of this change would not have been the city of

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[48] Plato, Laws, Book 3: Segment 692a.

[49] Ibid., Book 3: Segment 698e.

Lykourgos. That city, it seems, was fated to fall, at least according to Plato's critique of it.

That makes Plato, an aristocrat, sound like the democrats. How could this be so? Sparta might have been the Greek champion of aristocracies, but there are other ways to have aristocratic governments. As a result, an aristocrat could oppose Sparta, while supporting aristocracy, just as Plato could appreciate the capacity of the Lykourgan Reforms to discipline and focus the efforts of the individual on a single goal, while disagreeing with the goal, itself. There is no hypocrisy or contradiction in Plato's comments.

Sparta might very well have been the most orderly and focused polis in Greece. Plato and Socrates might have thought it the best polis in Greece as a result, but that was not enough. Thus, it fell. It fell through its decreased resistance to corrupting influences, and as a result of its lust for gold. It also fell because of its fear of rebellion amongst the lower "artisan" class of helots. This fear forced Sparta to become more militaristic and more brutal as time passed, and it was this militarism that was the source of its flaws. At least that is what this interpretation of The Republic and The Laws implies.

CHAPTER VII

XENOPHON

Xenophon was born in Athens sometime between the years 430 and 423 to a family that was well-connected, but not necessarily rich. He was raised in the southern Athenian deme of Erchia during the Peace of Nicias, which separated the first and second halves of the Peloponnesian War.[1] This peaceful, secure way of life ended when the return to hostilities between Sparta and Athens once again made the Ionian outlands unsafe. Xenophon returned to Athens, and there he met Socrates, whom he would later remember in his writings as a great friend and teacher. Xenophon may have served in the cavalry and the navy during the Second Peloponnesian War. While he was serving in the war, Spartans captured him.[2] A Boeotian friend had him ransomed and Xenophon was back in Athens when the war finally ended.[3]

In 401, Xenophon joined an expedition under the Persian Prince Kyrus that attempted to take Persia's Imperial

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[1] J. K. Anderson, Xenophon, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 14.

[2] Ibid., 18.

[3] Ibid.

Throne. The attempt, and Xenophon, along with the generally Spartan mercenaries who made up part of the army, was trapped deep in hostile territory. By a circuitous path the Spartans made it back to Greece only to find that Sparta was launching its own expedition against Persia. The Spartan troops turned back east, but at this point Xenophon left them and returned to Athens.[4] There he found that his mentor had been executed, and he had been banished, in absentia. He left, and would never see Athens again.[5]

Xenophon spent much of the remainder of his life in Sparta, where he wrote the majority of his books. They included several reminiscences of Socrates, a history of Kyrus's expedition, several "How-To" books, a history of Greece during his lifetime, and a study of Spartan society. His sons would return to aid Athens at the battle of Mantinea in 362, and would be accepted there as heroes,[6] but Xenophon himself remained in Krete to which the Spartans exiled him in 371.[7] He died there sometime after 356.[8]

Of all the figures whose views of Sparta are reported herein, Xenophon certainly had the greatest opportunity to study the Spartans, having lived with them and been a friend

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[4] The story is related in Xenophon's book The Anabasis.

[5] Anderson, Xenophon, 148-149.

[6] Ibid., 194-195.

[7] Ibid., 166.

[8] Ibid., 192.

of one of their kings for thirty years.[9] Indeed, Xenophon's two sons were both raised in the Spartan agoge system that he outlined in his essay, The Constitution of the Lakedaemonians.[10] With this in mind, it does not seem too surprising to discover that in his works, Xenophon, like Plato, praised Sparta and the Spartan way, comparing it favorably to that of Athens, even though he might have fought against Sparta in the Peloponnesian War.

Despite all of this, however, the older Xenophon developed severe reservations about his new home as early as 382, when Sparta took Thebes.[11] He saw the seizure of the Theban akropolis as a betrayal of Sparta's treaty obligations, a heresy against the gods, and as a harbinger of doom.[12] Surely, he warned in his Hellenica, the gods would exact a terrible revenge for this crime.[13] So, in those later years, Xenophon, like Plato, found himself reduced to explaining the reasons for Sparta's fall while praising it, or at least its culture, above all others. Oddly enough, the work in which Xenophon says the most about the activities of Sparta is also the one in which he

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[9] Hooker, Ancient, 14-15.

[10] Anderson, Xenophon, 165.

[11] Ibid., 169-171.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Xenophon, Hellenica, Book 5: Section 2, Lines 25-36.

tells us the least about them. Thucydides died before he could complete his History of the Pelopennesian War, but Xenophon concluded the story of the war in the seven books of his Hellenica, possibly working off of Thucydides's notes. Tellingly, the Hellenica begins by relating the events of 411 using the phrase "Not many days after this." As Xenophon is trying to finish another man's work, and trying to write a history of the war, not a commentary on it, he holds his own personality in check, and merely relates facts about who did what, when, where and why.

Then, the Hellenica continues beyond the war to the year 362, when the author was seventy years old. When the story of the war ends, Xenophon slips out of the objective narrative mode, and some of his prejudices become more easily apparent in the remainder of the work. He devoted Book Two of the Hellenica to the short "Golden Age" of Spartan power, when it was the supreme power in Greece. This era represents the high point of Spartan power and virtue, much as Pericles's Funeral Oration is, for Thucydides, the apex of Athenian history. Things turn for the worse thereafter. Book Three details the beginning of the end.

Interestingly, the turning point in Xenophon's history of Sparta is Kyrus's attempt to win the Persian throne. As has already been noted, Xenophon was present during the first failed campaign to conquer Persia. This effort he

remembers as a great and noble struggle, in which the Spartans repaid Kyrus for his aid during the Peloponnesian War by supporting his attempt. Unfortunately, it failed, and the Greeks were forced to fight their way back home. Then, Sparta launched a second, all-Greek expedition to conquer Persia. By this time, however, Kyrus was dead. Why launch a second army?

The Spartans simply did not know how not to be at war with someone. Having conquered Greece, they simply moved on to the next great challenge--Persia. There was no noble cause to propel the Spartans this time. Sheer greed motivated them.[14] Xenophon left the expedition, just before the Persians destroyed it.[15] Then, everything began to go wrong. Several Ionian states rebelled and Sparta was forced to put these rebellions down with a diminished army. Sparta lost as often as it won, and its control over Greece crumbled.[16] Strategies to regain and retain power became more desperate and ruthless. Finally, a revived Athens made an alliance with Thebes, supposedly a member of the Peloponnesian League. Sparta completely over-reacted,

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[14] Xenophon, Hellenica, Book 3: Section 1, Lines 3 - Section 2, Line 20; Sections 4, Lines 1-29.

[15] Ibid., Section 4: Lines 1-2.

[16] Ibid., Book 3: Section 1, Line 3 - Section 2, Line 20; Section 2, Lines 21-31; Book 4: Section 2, Line 9; Section 6, Lines 1-7; Book 5: Section 1, Lines 1-28; Section 2, Lines 1-7; Lines 20-24; Lines 37-43; Section 3, Lines 25-36; Section 4, Lines 13-62; Line 64; Lines 60-66.

conquering the city and taking its akropolis, the hill-fortress/temple that was the city's most sacred ground.[17]

After relating the story of Sparta's conquest of Thebes, Xenophon announces his disillusion with Sparta, saying:

> Now one could mention many other incidents, both among Greeks and barbarians, to prove that the gods do not fail to take heed of the wicked or of those who do unrighteous things; but at present I will speak of the case which is before me. The Lakedaemonians, namely, who had sworn that they would leave the states independent, after seizing possession of the Acropolis of Thebes were punished by the very men, unaided, who had been thus wronged, although before that time they had not been conquered by any single one of all the peoples that ever existed; while as for those among the Theban citizens who had led them into the Acropolis and had wanted the state to be in subjection to the Lakedaemonians in order that they might rule despotically themselves, just seven of the exiles were enough to destroy the government of these men. How all this came to pass I will proceed to relate.[18]

After this point, the slow decline and defeat of Sparta takes on a feeling of inevitability. Nemesis is served. Through it all, however, it seems that Xenophon holds true to the idea that the Spartan regimen represented the greatest cultural accomplishment in Greek history. He seems to believe that it did not fail. It was, in his mind, the Spartan people who failed.[19] Other works by Xenophon seem to corroborate this interpretation.

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[17] Ibid., Book 5: Section 1.

[18] Ibid., Book 5: Section 4, Lines 1-4.

[19] Xenophon, Constitution, Section 14, Lines 1-4.

While he was writing the Hellenica, Xenophon also wrote several Socratic dialogues, an autobiography of Kyrus, and a review of the Spartan state called The Constitution of the Lakedaemonians. In the Constitution, Xenophon heaps his greatest praise upon the Spartan culture, and at the same time, writes his harshest judgment on contemporary Spartans, saying:

> If anyone were to ask me whether I think the laws of Lykourgos remain unchanged, I certainly could not bring myself to assert that they do. I am aware that in former days the Spartans chose to live at home together on modest means and not to become harmosts[20] in other states, where they would be flattered and corrupted. I am aware also of their going in fear, at one time, of being found in possession of gold; but now there are some who actually boast of having it. I understand that previously there were regulations providing for the expulsion of foreigners and also that citizens were not permitted to live abroad, in case they acquired degenerate habits from foreigners; whereas now I conceive that the men who have the highest repute at Sparta set their hearts on becoming perpetual harmosts in foreign territory.[21]

Note the progression of Sparta from virtue to vice, as it is described in this passage. It is a familiar one. Once, the Spartans lived together, in a state of fear. They were kept in line by their fear of the scorn of their fellows. Then, they gained power. They lost their fear. They lost their unity. Soon, the forces to which they exposed themselves corrupted them.

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[20] Harmosts: War lords.

[21] Xenophon, Constitution, Section 14, Line 1-4.

Xenophon is obliged to believe something like this. His contemporary Sparta was in a miserable condition. It was certainly not one that he would attribute to Lykourgos, who "reached the utmost limit of wisdom...not by imitating other states, but by devising a system utterly different from that of most others."[22]

There is definitely evidence supporting Xenophon's claim that there was a degeneration of Sparta from its Lykourgan state. After one hundred and fifty years of functioning with apparently acceptable results, the ephors and the veto power of the Gerousia are added to the Rhetra, without any indication of Apollo's advise being consulted.[23] Already the "perfect" government of Sparta needed reforming, apparently because its god-like kings were not trustworthy enough to wield their great power.

Gradually, the kings lost power, and the ephors gained it.[24] Originally, the king had unrestricted power over Sparta's military, but Kleomenes's abuse of this power led to the power to levy troops and declare war being taken from him.[25] Once again, despite the aristocrats' claim that the agoge taught unshakable loyalty and military virtue, it

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[22] Ibid., Section 1, Line 2.

[23] Plutarch, The Life of Agesilaus, Section 11.

[24] Jones, Sparta, 27.

[25] Ibid., 15; Thucydides, History, Book 1: Line 87; Xenophon, Hellenica, Book 3: Section 2, Lines 23-25.

turned out that the kings who graduated from that process could not be trusted with the power that Lykourgos granted them. Eventually, the kings had become mere operatives of the Assembly and not a co-equal branch of government as the Reformer had intended.[26]

For a further example of this sort of degeneration consider the end result of the Spartans' quest for equity amongst its citizens. It ended in a highly unequal caste system. The homoioi represented the ruling class of Sparta, and theoretically was composed of its entire citizen body with each member having equal power, in the community. However, from the beginning the homoioi women were not treated as full citizens. Female citizens participated in an agoge of their own much like that of the men, and they were afforded more rights than women in any other polis, much to Aristotle's chagrin, but they were not treated as equals.[27]

Within the class of the homoioi men there was another level of inequity. The Spartans were given equal shares of land, but the shares, determined to be equal because they consisted of equal areas of land, did not have equal levels of production. The means by which economic equity was meant to be assured became the means of destroying that equity.

Then, as time passed and against the express wish of

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[26] Plato, Laws, Book 3: Segments 691e-692c.

[27] Aristotle, Politics, Book 2: Chapter 6, Pages 5-9.

Lykourgos, a landless citizen class was developed. The hypomeiones were the highest-ranking class of these landless citizens. They were the younger sons of citizens who could not receive land due to a land shortage.[28] If their elder brothers died childless they would advance to become homoioi. The Tresantes, or "tremblers," had homoioi ancestors who were disgraced either for showing fear in battle, or for being unable to pay their mess fees. In some way they had their full rights stripped from them.[29] Beneath them on the social scale were the mothakes.[30] They were helot children adopted by homoioi families and treated as members of that class, though they was always treated as the last amongst the equals.[31] All classes were required to go through the agoge.

Next on the class chain was an intermediary class of people who neither possessed land nor citizen rights, but were still taught in the agoge and were required to fight in the army. Favored helots or perioikoi could become neodamodeis.[32] Xenophon's two sons were members of this

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[28] Ibid., Segment 132, Segment 145.

[29] Ephraim David, "Laughter in Spartan Society," in Classical Sparta: Techniques Behind Her Success, ed. Anton Powell (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 14-16.

[30] Ibid., 37-38.

[31] H. Michell, Sparta, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1987), 69.

[32] Forrest, History, 124.

class.[33]

Below the neodamodeis on the social scale came a class of non-citizen males called the perioikoi. These perioikoi, or "outsiders" as the word meant, lived in outlying villages or komai of Lakedaemonia.[34] They had no rights and were given no favors, but at least they were not helots.[35]

The helots were simply slaves who worked the kleroi and performed the day to day menial tasks of the city. The "old helots" who were descendants of the conquered citizens of Lakonian poleis were generally considered the more loyal and less feared of the helots. The "new helots" were the descendants of Messenian prisoners of war. The Messenians were seen as being more dangerous because they had a stronger sense of national identity. Much that the homoioi did in the name of military excellence and unity was done in preparation for possible helot rebellions.[36]

Though Spartans claimed to be equals, they could only be equals within the bounds of their own class of Lakedaemonians, and even this equality was doubtful. This claim was intended to show how egalitarian Spartans were but really showed the incredible elitism of Sparta, because it

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[33] Diogenes Laertus, The Lives of the Eminent Philosophers, Book 2: Section 6, Line 53.

[34] Jones, Sparta, 8.

[35] Michell, Sparta, 72.

[36] Thucydides, Book 4: Section 41; Book 5: Section 14, Life 23.

indicated that the Spartans thought that only this class represented their society. The weakness of this hypocritical system was especially evident when the homoioi, like all closed aristocracies, began to shrink[37] while the other classes grew. This further centralized the power and the luxuries of the polis while increasing the burdens of the other classes. The idea of creating a society of equals so that these equals could retain absolute power within a larger society composed largely of inferiors was a paradox gnawing at the heart of the Spartan way of life.

This decline had an effect on every other aspect of the Spartan regimen. By the end of the Classical Age, the number of homoioi was so small that the army of Sparta was regularly drawn from the other classes. By the 371 the army was almost entirely made up of armed helots and perioikoi who had never undergone agoge training.[38] When this happened Sparta's justification for initiating the Reforms in the first place had vanished, and all of the goals that those Reforms had worked toward had been abandoned. Spartan homoioi were now dependant on their helots for the defense of their privileges. The Spartans had fallen very far from their fathers' ways.

The product of Sparta's original system was, in Xenophon's eyes, "virtue," which to him consisted primarily

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[37] Forrest, History, 136.

[38] Ibid., 132-134.

of excellence in war. In the Constitution, he breaks this concept of virtue down into different qualities, stretching from physical hardiness to obedience, to the ability to maneuver well in a drill. Then he shows how the agoge or the Rhetra addresses this need excellently, despite, and perhaps because of, the fact that they are unlike the institutions of other poleis.[39] They seem to be, in the author's eyes, the one sensible set of institutions in the world.[40]

Xenophon clearly and directly compares Athens and Sparta in his Socratic dialogues, where he uses Socrates to express his own opinion about the two. For example, in the Memorabilia, Socrates is seen lecturing Pericles, the son of the famous Pericles, in this fashion:

> when will the Athenians show the Lakedaemonian reverence for age, seeing that they despise all of their elders, beginning with their own fathers? When will they adopt the Lakedaemonian system of training, seeing that they not only neglect to make themselves fit, but mock at those who take the trouble to do so? When will they reach that standard of obedience to their rulers, seeing that they make contempt of their rulers a point of honor? Or when will they attain that harmony, seeing that, instead of working together for the general good, they are more envious and bitter against one another than against the rest of the world, are the most quarrelsome of men in public and private assemblies...? So it comes about that evil and mischief grow apace in the city, enmity and mutual hatred spring up among the people, so that I am always fearing some evil past bearing

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

may befall the city.[41]

Athens lost everything that was important to it in the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War. This included a good many illusions concerning the great power that they thought a democratic city would always have. The Athenian democrats thought that because the practice of democratically participating in the city's policy-making allowed each citizen to see himself in the city and to see the city in himself, each citizen would always serve his polis freely and to the best of his ability. This, they thought, would make such a city unbeatable.[42] Instead, all that Athens seems to have gained from its democracy was a fickle distemper amongst the citizens. This led to the bad decisions that defeated Athens, long before Sparta did. The Athenians had to find a way of dealing with this loss. This need motivated a great deal of the intellectual activity of the age.

Xenophon found solace in the fact that his old friend, Socrates, warned of the dangers of democracy long before the war began.[43] Banished from Athens for his views, Xenophon became a Lakedaemonian, one of the winners, and remained one for pretty much the rest of his life. However, this

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[41] Xenophon, Memorabilia, Book 3: Section 5, Lines 15-17.

[42] Herodotus, Line 5: Section 81.

[43] Ibid.

physical and psychological closeness to the Spartans also gave him a cruelly clear perspective of the fall of Sparta. How was he to reconcile these two facts?

An aristocrat by temperament, Xenophon chose to believe that the fall of Sparta was the result of the Lakedaemonians' inability to adhere to a perfect system.[44] In that way, he was at least able to stay loyal to the ideal of Sparta, if not to Sparta itself. It is uncertain why he thinks that the Spartans were unable to retain the discipline of their forefathers, but the most likely source of this corruption is the expansion of Spartan power through Greece, which forced the Spartans to come into contact with the rest of the world, exposing it to infection from foreign vices. At least, that is what the sections that have been quoted imply. Xenophon never seemed to address the subject directly.

Xenophon produced the greatest single mass of work devoted to Sparta and the Spartan legend to come out of the Classical Era. His writings are not as intellectually challenging, or as insightful as those of Plato, but they have their strengths. Through these works, the vision of Sparta that would remain with history to the present day was established. However, any objective review of Sparta's history indicates that Xenophon's interpretation of its degeneration is overly simplistic.

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[44] Xenophon, Constitution, Section 14, Lines 1-4.

Sparta was never really free of the flaws that eventually destroyed its empire. Herodotus showed that they were working before the Persian Wars, just as they would after the Peloponnesian Wars.[45] For example, the imperial drive that would eventually lead to the conquest of Athens and the invasion of Persia is just as manifest in the conquest of the Peloponnese while the Reforms were being established, as it is thereafter.[46]

All that really changed between these two eras is the amount of gold and power to which the Spartans came into contact. In the later wars at least twice the land area and many times the resources won in earlier conquests were in the offing as booty. Thus, flaws that were already present might have done greater damage to Sparta than was done before, because those flaws had more tools by which they could undermine Sparta's military power and way of life.

Furthermore, Sparta's agoge was intended, in part, to prepare the homoioi to deal with corrupting influences. One might, therefore, conclude that a Spartan only "fell away" from his city's institutions for one of two reasons. Either the city's indoctrination techniques were a failure in their own right, or, there exists a general indominability of the

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[45] Herodotus, Historia, Book 4: Line 8; Book 5: Line 34; Book 6: Lines 64-67; Book 8: Line 103; Book 9: Line 11; Lines 15-16; Line 29; Lines 49-88.

[46] Ibid., Book 1: Lines 64-59, Line 82; Book 3: Lines 48-49; Book 4: Lines 147-152.

human spirit, which would prevent any such system from taking hold.

In either case, Sparta was in trouble. If the first option is true, then Sparta might have been saved, if the changes needed to solve these problems were sufficiently superficial. However, no means of making such reforms has been put forward by any of the authors, except for Plato, whose reforms were so radical that the city that would have been produced would not have resembled Lykourgan Sparta sufficiently for one to say that Lykourgos's product survived in Plato's society. If the second option is true, then Sparta was doomed from the start.

Xenophon, is easily the most helpful of the aristocratic primary sources that survived to this day. His writings have flaws. For example, his analysis is less rigorous than that of Plato or Herodotus, perhaps as a result of his love of the Spartan way. Still, it is relatively easy to pick his analysis from the great mass of data that he supplies. There has been some criticism of Xenophon by those who point out his incompleteness in places, and his prejudices for Sparta;[47] but still, the things that he says about Sparta itself make him very useful to the student of that city's culture, if the student is willing to read critically.

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[47] Carleton L. Brownson, "Introduction to Xenophon," in Xenophon, (Harvard University Press Cambridge, Mass. 1968), ix-xi.

CHAPTER VIII

ISOCRATES

Isocrates was both the last great Classical author, and the first great Hellenic author. He straddles the ages of Pericles of Athens and Philip of Macedon in the length of his life, as well as in the development of his views. The majority of his speeches were delivered after the power of Sparta was finally broken in 371. However, Isocrates wrote several important speeches concerning Sparta during his lifetime, some of which were written within the era that is being studied here. These speeches should be examined together.

Isocrates was born in 436, one of five children of the wealthy flute maker, Theodorus. As a result of his father's great wealth, Isocrates studied under the greatest sophists of the age.[1] In time, he became Socrates's friend. Isocrates and his family lost their wealth in the Peloponnesian War, and he took up speech writing to earn a living.[2] Later, he opened a school in Athens. Despite its exorbitant tuition, it had the largest student body in the

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[1] Isocrates, The Antidosis, Lines 161.

[2] Ibid., Lines 161-162.

city.[3]

As a side-line, Isocrates wrote political pamphlets in the form of speeches. All but one of these have survived until today. In these writings one discovers a vain, but practical man with a sharp mind and a great love of Athens. One also finds a staunch democrat.[4] However, Isocrates was very critical of the people of contemporary Athens and its form of democracy, of which he said: "they looked upon insolence as democracy, lawlessness as liberty, impudence of speech as equality, and licence to do what they pleased as happiness."[5] This writer's desire was to help a new Athens, purged of its imperialist ambition, an ideal example of self-control, to take shape out of the remains left over from the Peloponnesian War. When this happened, he believed, Athens would once again take its proper place as the leader of Greece. Then he would be able to achieve his second goal--the formation of a united Greek state capable of battling Persia for control of both Europe and Asia.[6]

As to Sparta, Isocrates had ambiguous feelings. It came as close as any polis ever did to Isocrates's goal, but it failed spectacularly. The author eventually chose to see Sparta as being the symbolic twin of Athens. Like Athens,

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[3] Ibid., Lines 39-41.

[4] Isocrates, The Areopagiticus, Lines 20-27.

[5] Ibid., Line 20.

[6] Isocrates, The Panegyricus, Line 182.

he said, it was once a paragon of self-control and moderation.[7] Isocrates describes the agoge as a great teacher of these traits.[8] However, imperialist ambition corrupted Sparta. It conquered Greece for power's sake. It acted not to unite Greece, but to exploit it.[9] Like Athens, it fell to the effects of its own greed.[10]

Philip and Alexander of Macedonia, who, together, managed to fulfill Isocrates's dream, had a different stratagem. They always respected the customs and culture of the people they conquered, in contrast to the Spartans' method of fulfilling the Panhellenic goal. For example, after Philip gained power over Greece in the Battle of Chaeronea, he called for a meeting of the Hellenic League, which made him its Captain-General, legitimizing his authority. When Philip, and later, Alexander, exercised their power over Greece, they always acted through the authority that the title gave them. Sparta, on the other hand, used its armies as its only justification for its authority. In his last work, Isocrates showed how greatly he preferred this behavior.[11] Had Sparta exercised the tact of a Philip, it might have earned Isocrates's approval, and it

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[7] Ibid., Lines 80-81.

[8] Isocrates, The Panathenaicus, Lines 109-112.

[9] Isocrates, Peace, Lines 68-70.

[10] Isocrates, To Philip, Lines 47-50.

[11] Ibid., Lines 13-19.

might not have fallen, but such diplomacy was not taught in the agoge.

In such speeches as the Archidamus, The Nicocles, On the Peace and The Panegyricus, Isocrates explains that Sparta began as a most respectable and virtuous polis.[12] In the Archidamus, Isocrates defends the Spartan right to rule Messenia, but while doing so he reviews the history of Sparta and he praises Sparta's institutions in much the same tone and manner that Xenophon does in his Constitution. The traditional praise given to Sparta for the unchanging endurance of its institutions, and the military prowess of its citizens, punctuates even the most critical of the author's discussions of its ways.[13]

In 380 Isocrates wrote The Panegyricus. There he further expands upon the nature of this Spartan virtue, giving the reader a better idea of why it was so excellent. Both Athens and Sparta, he says, were once paragons of the virtue, sophrosyne, meaning both moderation and self-control.[14] This made both poleis perfect representatives of their different races, the Achaeans and the Dorians. Each of the two poleis had naturally defined spheres of interest. Athens had Ionia; Sparta had the Peloponnese. All was right

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[12] Isocrates, To Nicocles, Lines 24.

[13] Isocrates, Peace, Lines 95.

[14] Isocrates, Panegyricus, Line 182.

with the world.[15] Then, sometime after the Persian War, both got greedy and reverted to power-hungry conquerors.[16] The defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian War taught that polis moderation, and now it was ready to lead the Greeks once again in another campaign against Persia.[17] Sparta would also have a role to play in this campaign. It would be Athens's partner--its junior partner, that is--but first it would have to purify itself of its old vices and return to its proper ways.[18]

In his plea for a peace between these two powers, Isocrates tries to set the two on an equal footing in all things, including guilt, as the foundation for a new Pan-Hellenic alliance. Still, he cannot leave the old formula behind him. He too thinks of Sparta as an excellent polis brought low through its citizens' tragic flaw; in his mind this flaw was imperialistic greed.[19]

In Panegyricus, Isocrates calls for Athens to accept his interpretation of history, and so the speech was generally about Athens's fall from grace and its slow return to glory. The Panathenaicus, is the work of an ill man who is a year from his death, reviewing his life and era.

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[15] Ibid., Line 15.

[16] Ibid., Lines 52-54.

[17] Ibid., Line 99; Line 115.

[18] Ibid., Line 17.

[19] Isocrates, Peace, Lines 94-98.

Sparta had, by this time, fallen, and it looked as if his dreams of a unified Greek campaign had only led to the disastrous defeat of the Spartan army. Philip of Macedonia had yet to revive Isocrates's hopes. It looked as if the classical age had ended in the fall of Greek culture to its Persian enemy.

Isocrates blamed the Spartans for everything. Had Sparta thought of their new empire from Isocrates's Pan-Hellenic standpoint, he thinks, it could have meant the fulfillment of his dream of a unified Greek nation.[20] Instead, they took a tyrannical stance, and when it came time to move against Persia, the Spartans did not have the full loyalty of a united Greece. Indeed, many Greeks had sold their services to Persia as mercenaries. They had more interest in the defeat of the Spartans, who had mounted the invasion in an attempt at fulfilling their ever-increasing lust for power, than they had in the triumph of a Greek power over their culture's traditional arch-enemy.[21] If the invasion had been a truly Pan-Hellenic effort, for the sake of all, things would have been different.

In the midst of this diatribe, the "Isocrates" character of the speech turns the floor over to one of his pupils who defends Sparta and praises it for its stable

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[20] Ibid., Lines 67-70.

[21] Isocrates, Philip, Lines 47-50.

institutions, just as Isocrates does in the Archidamus.[22] Why does the author make this awkward shift? Once again one sees the tension between two ideas concerning Sparta. On one hand, Sparta is seen as having been a noble, virtuous state that still lived according to institutions that were handed down from the gods. On the other hand, Sparta is also seen as having become an immoderate tyrant that has fallen from the grace of its noble institutions. Her fall was understood as an inevitable visitation of Nemesis upon the hubristic. While dreaming of Sparta's virtues, Isocrates looks at his contemporary Sparta with disappointment. In essence, the Archidamus, and the second section of the Panathenaicus, is a "before" portrait. The first section of the Panathenaicus is the corresponding "after" portrait. The Panegyricus ties the two together by describing the causes for Sparta's fall from its ideal state, which, the writer tells his audience, occurred at the end of the Persian War.

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[22] Isocrates, Panathenaicus, Line 233.

CHAPTER IX

SURVIVAL IN A CHANGING WORLD

The city of Sparta was the subject of a great deal of fascination among classical intellectuals. Perhaps this fascination was simply born of the fact that Sparta was, in many ways, the most successful and important of the Greek city-states for many years.[1] However, it must also have been the result of the city's bizarre institutions, which were different from those of the majority of Greek poleis. Indeed, as Xenophon said, Sparta's methods of operation were directly opposed to the methods of every other city in the Greek culture[2]--though Krete might be considered an exception to this observation. Why did Sparta choose such a peculiar set of institutions? If these institutions were so successful, why did other cities not emulate them? If the Spartans were so successful, why did the city, its army, empire, and institutions all collapse so quickly and so completely after Sparta won its hegemony over Greece? These are the basic questions that have defined the study of Classical Sparta from the Classical Age to the Modern Day.

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[1] Thucydides, History, Book 1: Section 18, Line 2.

[2] Xenophon, Constitution, Section 1, Line 2.

The contemporary authors who wrote about Classical Sparta may be divided into two social categories. Herodotus, Thucydides, and Isocrates were democrats, and democrats tended to see Sparta as a stronghold of aristocrats, and as such a philosophic, as well as military, rival. The members of the second group, Plato, Xenophon, and Aristophanes were supporters of aristocracy. Because Sparta was seen as the exemplar of aristocracy, aristocrats might be expected to look towards Sparta as an example of the aristocratic theory of government, and as such, as a philosophical ally.

These two opposing camps each produced theories of their own to answer these questions. However, the fact that each of the authors had his own agenda mitigated the political prejudices that were, to some extent, behind the formation of these theories. This might skew the conclusions at which these figures arrive from what one might expect based upon a study of the general political preferences of their social class.

Indeed, agreement among the six people whose works on Sparta survived to the present day is remarkable, especially when they are studied under the supposition that they represented two antagonistic cliques with conflicting opinions concerning the <u>polis</u>. Despite the differences among them, all six of these writers seem to agree with Herodotus's old formula regarding Sparta. According to

him, "The Law" was the ruler of Sparta.[3] Fear enforced this Law, and it served to push the citizens to military excellence at all costs.[4] As a result, Sparta produced the most militarily successful people in Greece, as well as the most stable and long-lasting government that the Greeks would ever know.[5] It would also produce a population that was uniquely vulnerable to corruption by means of greed, imperialistic power-lust, and the luxuries of other states.

Sparta became the unusual city that it was in a sudden revolutionary shift which did away with "the worst government in Greece."[6] The foundation of this new order was the Rhetra. Lykourgos established it with help from Apollo.[7] The primary motivations behind the development of the Rhetra were fear of the hoplites, fear of other poleis, and a need for regulation and moderation amongst the citizens.[8] By using agoge training to teach Sparta's leaders to lead well, its citizens to fight well, and its people to behave well, in complete accordance with the needs of the city, without taking into consideration their

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[3] Herodotus, Historia, Book 7: Line 107.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., Line 20.

[6] Herodotus, Historia, Book 1: Line 64.

[7] Ibid., Line 66.

[8] Plato, Laws, Book 1: Segments 625d-626b; Thucydides, History, Book 5: Section 15, Line 14; Plutarch, Lykourgos, Section 5.

personal needs and desires, these forces were dealt with.[9] The result was a citizen body that was perfectly trained to deal with the set of circumstances that Lykourgos foresaw as posing great danger to the stability of the state. However, the inculcation of such discipline in the citizens was required for the survival of any polis.[10] Why did the other poleis not emulate this successful system?

Thucydides has an explanation for why other cities did not imitate Sparta's culture. It was thoroughly unpleasant, and there were other, better ways that could apparently produce the same result.[11] That is one of the subjects discussed in Pericles's Funeral Oration.[12] The fact that, despite agoge training, Sparta was never really able to defeat Athens in the Peloponnesian Wars, supported this position. Sparta missed several opportunities to defeat its foe, and lost every segment of the war, except for the last one. Athens's defeat, at that time, was due more to its own drive for power, which led it to recommence the war needlessly and thereby alienate their allies, than it was to any victory of Sparta.[13] Given such a minimal return, why

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[9] Plutarch, Agesilaus, Section 26-27; Xenophon, Constitution, Section 11, Line 15; Isocrates, Antidosis, Lines 297-300.

[10] Xenophon, Memorabilia, Book 4: Section 4, Line 16.

[11] Thucydides, History, Book 2: Line 39.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Thucydides, History, Book 6: Section 1.

go through the trouble of the agoge?

Later historians chronicled how this corruption worked against Spartan discipline and excellence until even its incredible military power was lost. Aristophanes portrayed the individual citizens of Sparta, and Thucydides described Spartan discipline, military excellence, and fear in his work, much as Herodotus did.[14] Then, Thebes, the one time ally that Sparta had betrayed, conquered it.[15] Plato described and explained the flaws in its culture and government that caused it to degenerate so that it would fall.[16] Xenophon and Isocrates described the laws of Sparta with greater specificity. They also described the institutions that enforced these laws and chronicled their eventual failure.[17]

Disagreement on the basic facts of Sparta's history seems minimal. The points of disagreement among these figures exist in their interpretations and explanations of Sparta's fall. The democrats discussed the causes of Sparta's fall to a great extent. Herodotus showed how Sparta's overwhelming drive for military excellence left its citizens open to manipulation as a community, and vulnerable

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[14] Ibid., Book 2: Section 11.

[15] Xenophon, Hellenica, Book 4: Section 5, Line 23-52.

[16] Plato, Laws, Book 1: Segment 634a.

[17] Xenophon, Constitution, Section 14, Lines 1-4; Section 1, Line 2; Isocrates, Peace, Lines 94-98.

to corruption as individuals. Isocrates showed how this drive also fueled an imperialistic foreign policy but did not teach their leaders how to deal with an empire, thus leading to the empire's downfall.[18] Thucydides, like Herodotus, died before Sparta fell, but he too foresaw problems in the polis's future, and believed that the tragic flaw of the Spartan way was its obsession with fear.[19] He showed how this fear alienated Sparta's allies, and sometimes drove the polis to foolish actions.[20] The betrayal of Thebes by Sparta, which led to Sparta's fall, is foreseen in such depictions.

The common denominator in the democratic criticisms of Sparta is that its tragic flaws were inherent in the Spartan system. Each of the writers studied had his own agenda, and thus one could not expect them to conform closely to any set of parameters, but, for the democrats, at least, there seems to be a very clear agreement on one idea. If this is true, then its fall may be seen as the final judgment of that system. Sparta could not have been saved because any attempted reform that could have saved Sparta would have required such a fundamental change in its system that whatever would come out in the end would not have been

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[18] Isocrates, Peace, Line 67.

[19] Thucydides, History, Book 1: Line 68-71; Line 88; Book 2: Section 11; Book 3: Section 87; Book 4: Section 86.

[20] Ibid., Book 3: Line 89.

recognizable as being from Lykourgan Sparta. Either its goal or the most basic means by which that goal might be assured would have had to be changed.

The aristocrats were in a more awkward situation regarding Sparta. First of all, as they were aristocrats, they were expected to defend Sparta, the exemplar of aristocracies. It is possible that a non-Spartan aristocracy could exist, and so a condemnation of Sparta might not require a condemnation of aristocracy. All that the aristocrats really lost when Sparta failed was an example to which they could refer. However, Sparta was still the champion and the symbol of all aristocracies in many classical minds. The implication was there.

Secondly, Sparta proved itself to be a terrible tyrant when it came to power, and alienated everyone by the time of its fall, even its intellectual allies, Xenophon and Plato. How could these figures have supported Sparta if what it did disgusted them? Finally, Sparta fell. How could they support and praise such a spectacular failure?

Xenophon resolved the difference between his hopes and Sparta's history by blaming the citizens of Sparta for the downfall of its perfect Lykourgan system, and then praising the system in his works.[21] However, this is a somewhat simplistic response. Lykourgos initiated his system to shape the people of Sparta. If they had failed, he had

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[21] Xenophon, Constitution, Section 14, Lines 1-4.

failed, and the system had failed. Thus, Xenophon's "solution" really solves nothing.

Plato admitted that he greatly disliked what became of Sparta, and placed the blame on its institutions. Then, he outlined the reforms that he would make in Sparta's system to avoid these flaws. However, the resulting Platonic Sparta would have had little in common with Lykourgos's Sparta. Plato would have altered its very goals. And so, one might conclude that though Plato was aristocratic in temperament, he opinions on Sparta were more similar to that of the democrats than to those of Xenophon, leaving Sparta with one less champion.

Having written so little about the Spartans, Aristophanes represents no great aid to Xenophon in supporting Sparta. As has been said before, the playwright wrote about Sparta as a commentary on Athens, and not as the explanation of some private theory of political science. All that one really receives from him is the belief that Spartans were simple, unflappable rustics, whose common sense saw them through pretty much any problem. Given what eventually happened to them, this depiction of the Spartan seems incomplete at best.

It seems as if, with the exception of Xenophon, who lived in Sparta when he wrote, none of the sources really deviated very much from the standard Athenian beliefs regarding Sparta. This might explain how these sources were

able to write about Sparta as they did. They might have been aristocrats but they were not traitors.

There was never any real indication that any aristocrats' preference for Spartan political and social systems manifested itself in a desire to aid Sparta against Athens. Neither Thucydides nor Xenophon described the Spartan sympathizers as having a detrimental effect on the Athenian cause. Indeed, they both seem to think that it was the anarchistic, democratic element of Athens that ensured its defeat by causing it to fall under the sway of charismatic, but unworthy leaders, like Kleon.[22] Furthermore, some modern historians suspect that Xenophon and Plato both served in the Athenian cavalry against Sparta,[23] while it is known that Aristophanes indicated through a representative character that he "hates Sparta as much as anyone,"[24] even though he seemed to think the Spartans a more sensible people than the Athenians. So, there does not seem to be any reason to doubt that the aristocratic Athenians were loyal to their city. They simply disagreed with its system of government.

Athens was very proud of its tradition of free speech and, having such, it allowed those aristocrats to pursue

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[22] Thucydides, History, Book 3: Section 36, Line 6; Book 5: Section 59, Line 3.

[23] Ryle, 315; Anderson, Xenophon, 14, 18.

[24] Aristophanes, The Acharnians, Act 1: Lines 500-550.

their side of the dialogue regarding Sparta. This tolerance was probably easier to extend considering the theoretical nature of their praise for Sparta. Had the aristocrats threatened to force a Spartan system on Athens, they would have probably been eliminated immediately, as were the aristocratic Thirty who ruled Athens for a short time after the Peloponnesian War.[25]

So, the sum of this study of the six surviving authors shows that despite the different perspectives and approaches they took to their own city, they were actually fairly consistent in their depiction of Sparta. All seemed to respect the kosmos and harmonia toward which it strove, and all seemed to appreciate the extent to which these goals were achieved. However, all of these reviewers also appreciated the significance of the flaws that eventually led to Sparta's fall. In achieving complete control over a citizen's public life, Sparta rendered the Spartans as individuals exceptionally vulnerable to private vices.

This paradox might help scholars to understand the end of the polis system in general. All poleis strove to achieve one way or the other the great degree of kosmos and harmonia that Sparta knew. If they did not do so, they could not survive through the Dark and Classical Ages of Greece, because survival was so difficult in those times

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[25] Xenophon, Hellenica, Book 2: Section 3, Lines 11-14; Line 24.

that the cooperation of the citizens with one another was vital. Inner discord left a _polis_ unable to mount a defense against its enemies, and unlikely to cooperate in hard times. Because of the interdependence of allied soldiers in the _hoplite_ phalanx, which was the standard military unit of the day, this need for cooperation between the citizen-soldiers increased as time passed. But the very success of these tactics brought the _poleis_ power, and thus a broader range and diversity of experience. These diverse experiences generated diverse ideas, and _kosmos_ and _harmonia_ became harder to maintain by traditional methods. Eventually the idea of cosmopolitanism was born, and with it came the openness of the Hellenistic Age, which many diverse cultures came to exist as subsidiaries of Hellenism without reducing the cities into a state of anarchy. Thus, the culture survived.

There were those who feared this change, however. They did everything possible to avoid it, and the resulting failure of civilization and morality that they feared would be the inevitable product of cosmopolitan tolerance. For them, the fall of Sparta was a blow. Some, like Xenophon tried to deny the failure of _kosmos_, others, like Plato, tried to reform the ideas of _kosmos_ and _harmonia_ into forms by which they might survive the influences that toppled Sparta. However, none of these figures could divert the tide of history. Their attempt may be the one remaining

trait which marks both of them as members of the conservative aristocratic class.

Oskar Haeml, once wrote in Betrachtungen uber die menschliche Verlegenheit that:

> However bold, any achievement remains essentially an adaptation to reality; and the more excellent it is, the more it excludes other possibilities. But reality is ever-changing, not to be encompassed in a merely finite system, so that at last each adaptation must fail. Thus we live with the tragic paradox that all organizations, be they biological species or human societies, are ultimately destroyed by their own virtues.[26]

The sources reveal that Sparta was a perfect example of this principle. Lykourgos generated an incredibly efficient system that was perfectly adapted to deal with the problems Sparta faced in 708. There was little change either socially or economically, or in any other way, over the few centuries following Lykourgos's Reforms. Furthermore, change was inhibited within Sparta because it was cut off from the world geographically.[27] After the Reforms, it was also cut off socially.[28] When change did occur, the Spartans were indeed willing to adapt their system to some extent, in accordance with the needs of the time, as long as the basic ideals of the Reforms were never endangered. As a result, the Lykourgan Reforms persisted for four hundred

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[26] Oskar Haeml, Betrachtungen uber die menschliche Verlegenheit, trans. Pol Anderson (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), 348.

[27] Forrest, History, 14-15.

[28] Xenophon, Constitution, Section 14, Line 4.

years. Change of a more fundamental and revolutionary nature was inevitable, however, and as per Haeml's dictum the more perfectly Sparta could deal with the original problems for which it was founded, the less it could deal with the disappearance of those problems.

In that fact might be found the strength of the democratic system and the failure of the Spartan Reforms. The anarchistic democracies more closely resembled the unpredictable state of nature than the specialized, regulated conditions of Sparta. As a result, Athens was more capable of adapting to any circumstances that occurred. The city, and its democratic principles exist today, but Classical Sparta and its culture do not. Sparta went the way of the saber-toothed tiger, which was magnificently equipped for one task, but only one. Athens was less efficient than Sparta because it needed to accommodate a relatively great number of sub-cultures, perspectives, and positions, but for that very reason it was more likely that Athens would contain citizens capable of properly dealing with any situation that might arise. The Athenians were general practitioners of the art of being a civilized people, while the Spartans were specialists in <u>hoplite</u> warfare and <u>helot</u> repression.

However, moderns should not allow themselves to become smug about the survival of modernistic, democratic Athens in the face of the fall of backward, aristocratic Sparta.

Athens was simply better suited than Sparta to operating in the Hellenistic age that was coming into being at that time. Someday the situation could well be reversed. Democracy is a finite system, for all of its openness. In the fullness of time, society might come to require the regimentation and specialization of a Sparta if it is to survive.

What will happen then, when some Dark Age forces man to fight for survival and stability in the midst of a great, hostile force which threatens him just as the helots threatened the Spartans of old? In all likelihood, the citizens of that future state will be unwilling to give up their freedoms. They will be as entrenched in their way of thinking as the Spartans were after four hundred years of the Lykourgan culture. They might refuse to give up their "rights," confident that some way out of their predicament will be found that will not require the sacrifice of what they know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, to be their rights. That future culture might well fall, and thousands of years later leave a conundrum to those who follow.

Such may be the fate of all civilizations. They fall due to a fundamental change in the relationship between the citizen and his environment to which that civilization cannot adapt, and, as a result, they leave mysteries behind to serve as their gravestones. Whatever these mysteries

concern, it is very possible that they are necessarily insoluble to the student of history, as these enigmas are inevitably the product of a world view that cannot exist in the student's culture or environment.

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