

# SPARTAN EDUCATION

*Youth and Society in  
the Classical Period*

Jean Ducat

Translated by  
Emma Stafford, P.-J. Shaw and Anton Powell

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## INTRODUCTION

### SPARTAN EDUCATION HAS A HISTORY

In the Roman period, the only reality of the ancient Spartan order (*kosmos*) which survived as a whole was the education system. The Spartans believed that this had remained unchanged since Lycurgus, and visitors were convinced that the festivals and ceremonies which they attended dated back to the earliest times.<sup>1</sup> This was, in antiquity, one of the fundamentals of the Spartan myth. Modern historians do not make the same mistake. They have said for a long time that Spartan education has a history, that it was restored by Cleomenes III around 226, after having more or less fallen into disuse, that it was abolished by Philopoimen in 188, and re-established some years later, and that the form in which it was resurrected in the imperial period was certainly very different from what it was in the classical period. But one of the main objectives of Kennell's study (1995) has been to denounce scholars' lack of logic in this respect, because, according to him, they have not drawn the methodological conclusions which follow from these observations. In their study of Spartan education, Kennell accuses them of using what he calls 'a synchronistic approach' (p. 7), to the extent of exhibiting what Cartledge has rightly called 'methodological holism'.<sup>2</sup> This cruel remark is largely justified by the way in which, before Kennell, accounts of Spartan education have made use of the sources. Whether these date from the fourth century BC, like Xenophon and Plato, or from the second century AD, like Plutarch and Pausanias, or whether their content is practically undatable, like most of the glosses, scholia and lexicographical notices, scholars combine and use them as a whole, as though the reality to which they refer had remained identical through the centuries. This is because people readily believe that, over and above any changes the educational system might have undergone as an institution, there shines an eternal education, like a Platonic idea, an original model (unconscious avatar of the myth of Lycurgus) to which all the texts would refer. This is to forget that the model itself could have changed: an 'eternal' education is as every century envisages it. Plutarch is the most deeply implicated: it is on the account which he gave of Spartan education in the *Life of Lycurgus* that historians' reconstructions are for the most part based, to the extent that often Xenophon, less articulate and less picturesque,

is practically forgotten. Den Boer's study (1954) provides a typical example: chapter 2, 'The Spartan *agōgē*' (233–98), consists solely of a discussion, interesting in itself, of various passages of Plutarch; but it has to be conceded to Kennell that everyone has fallen into this error to a greater or lesser degree.<sup>3</sup>

Kennell presents himself, in opposition to this traditional approach, as the intransigent defender of a diachronic orthodoxy, something of which one can but approve. But what is striking in his vision of the history of Spartan education is that it rests on the idea of discontinuity. Twice, according to him (Kennell 1995, 9–14), there must have been a complete break in the functioning of the education system, and for quite a long period: once in the third century BC, once in the second; moreover, its reinstatement must have been accompanied by profound modifications. Thus the later history of the system would have been radically divorced from its roots in the classical period. To pick up the archaeological metaphor by which Kennell characterizes his method, for him, everything happens as though sterile strata of abandonment lie in between the classical education system and that of the end of the third century BC, then again between this and the system of the Roman period, completely isolating the periods. It is this hypothesis of discontinuity that I wish to examine to begin with.<sup>4</sup>

### The problem of interruptions

According to Kennell, when, around 226, Cleomenes dealt with the education system, it had ceased to function since a date which, without being able to be more precise, he places between 270 and 250, so during the twenty-five to forty-five years which correspond to one or two generations.<sup>5</sup> This is not a new idea. Porter (1935, 13) too talks about one or two generations; Shimron (1972, 8 n. 9) found this excessive, while estimating that, without having been abolished as such (p. 20), the system 'had fallen into disuse by neglect' (p. 26). In the same way, Piper (1986, 54) declares: 'it had been in disuse for so many years'. This then is the common opinion of specialists in the period. But all this is simply deduced from the fact that, according to what Plutarch tells us, Cleomenes had to restore the educational system. This does not necessarily imply that it had ceased to function, but only that, like the *sysitia*,<sup>6</sup> it was not functioning well, perhaps, for example, for lack of citizens with the means to have their sons brought up in this way; in which case the remedy would have been to rebuild a true civic community – which is what Cleomenes tried to do. A passage in a dialogue by Teles of Megara,<sup>7</sup> datable between 240 and 229, which uses the present tense in connection with the *agōgē*, seems indeed to confirm that it was still functioning at this date. Without proof, the interruption is unlikely: every society considers its educational system as something fundamental, as the

very vehicle of its identity; there would have to be some compulsion for it to have been given up.

This is what happened in 189/8, for here the reality of an interruption seems to be indisputable. Livy (38.34.1–3) reports only that Philopoimen made the Spartans give up the laws of Lycurgus and adopt Achaean institutions (which is partially confirmed by two inscriptions, *IG* 5.1.4 and 5); Pausanias (8.51.3) and Plutarch (*Philopoimen* 16.8) state clearly that the training of the young was included in this measure (Pausanias is in fact talking solely about training). What is more doubtful is the duration which Kennell attributes to this interruption. For him, the traditional education system could not have been re-established until Sparta had become a *civitas libera*, in 146; this duration, of more than 40 years, allows him to hypothesize some profound modifications for the restoration. Before Kennell, people generally accepted that this restoration had taken place much earlier, in 184/3 or in 179/8.<sup>8</sup> I believe that this traditional view is preferable, not so much because of a passage of Livy (45.28.4) often adduced in this connection, but which in fact is rather vague and rhetorical, as in accordance with an argument put forward by Lévy (1997, 153): Plutarch (*Philopoimen* 16.9) specifies that it was following a request made to the Romans, and accepted by them, that the Spartans were able to recover their own institutions; whereas in 146 they would not have needed Roman support for this. So the interruption may only have lasted a dozen or so years at the most, which would not in itself have meant upheavals.

### **The problem of reform**

It seems natural to assume that resumption after an interruption is a favourable moment to effect change, but, on reflection, this is not at all self-evident. Change requires society to feel the necessity for this reform, and that there should be someone to see it through. We do not hear anything of the sort in connection with the restoration which followed the interruption caused by Philopoimen, and Kennell himself (1995, 101), although he deliberately prolongs the duration, does not seem to think that there was an important modification of the educational system at this point, since he presents the *ephēbeia* of the Roman period as the direct descendant of the hellenistic *agōgē*. It is to Cleomenes, therefore, that he attributes the decisive reform, the reform which cuts the history of Spartan education into two separate parts.

Here too it is not a case of a new idea, and Kennell refers at length to Ollier's study (1936) of Sphairos' role in Cleomenes' reform.<sup>9</sup> Shimron (1972, 44) too, for the same reason, the presence of Sphairos, suggests that the education system was fundamentally changed at this period. For Kennell, we have better documentation than one might think for Cleomenes' education

system: not only does he relate the scholia to Herodotos and Strabo on the age classes to Cleomenes, as well as Hesychius' gloss on *boua*, but he believes that in entries 1 to 17 of the *Instituta Laconica* we possess nothing less than extracts, cited verbatim, from Sphairos' treatise on the institutions of Sparta. These texts will be examined later; for the moment let us be content with a preliminary question: was there a 'Cleomenean education system' entirely different from the classical system? The question is important for us, because a positive reply entails refraining from using any later source (including, of course, the texts which Kennell attributes to Sphairos) in a reconstruction of the classical education system.

A few texts seem to state clearly that the reforming kings of the third century accorded a very special place to education in their concerns and in their deeds. It is generally accepted that Agis, in 242, did not have time to carry out his intentions; but, according to Plutarch (*Agis* 4.2), 'he used to say that he had no time for royalty if he could not use it to restore the laws and the ancestral *agōgē* (εἰ μὴ δι' αὐτὴν ἀναλήψουτο τοὺς νόμους καὶ τὴν πάτριον ἀγωγὴν).' Cleomenes, on the other hand, was able to progress to action (around 226). Plutarch first describes his procedure (*Cleomenes* 11.3–4): 'He turned to the education of the young and what is called the *agōgē*, on most aspects of which Sphairos, who was there, worked with him' (ἐπὶ τὴν παιδείαν τῶν νέων ἐτρόπη καὶ τὴν λεγομένην ἀγωγὴν, ἧς τὰ πλεῖστα παρῶν ὁ Σφαῖρος αὐτῷ συγκαθίστη). The last phrase is especially important, as it is this which alludes to Sphairos' role. At *Cleomenes* 18.4, Plutarch describes how the Spartans greeted the reform: 'A little while later, when they had just taken up their ancestral customs again and were following the tracks of this *agōgē*, they showed as much courage and obedience as if Lycurgus was there directing the city with them' (ὀλίγου δὲ χρόνου διελθόντος, ἀψάμενοι μόνον τῶν πατρίων ἔθων καὶ καταστάντες εἰς ἕχνος ἐκείνης τῆς αγωγῆς, ὥσπερ παρόντι καὶ συμπολιτευομένῳ τῷ Λυκούργῳ πολλὴν ἐπίδειξιν ἀνδρείας ἐποιούντο καὶ πειθαρχίας). In these three passages education is certainly present (11.3: 'he turned to the education of the young'), and this is natural: any restoration of the Lycurgan order which neglected education would be bound to fail, and Sphairos, who had read Plato and Aristotle (as Cleomenes certainly had too), understood that here was the beginning of everything. But education is only mentioned in passing, as an element included in the whole. In fact it would be wrong to accept without discussion that in these texts the term ἀγωγή always means education. This depends on our accepting that the Spartan education system was in fact called this. However, as we shall see later (p. 69), *agōgē* is not a local term, but a common Greek word which is widely polysemic. It can designate education, but also, more vaguely, the collection of 'Lycurgan' customs and institutions which we can only really

render as Spartan ‘discipline’. The only determinative which allows us to be sure that it really means education is ‘of children’, ἡ τῶν παίδων ἀγωγή; none of the others (πάτριος, λεγομένη, Λακωνική, Λυκουργεία) is decisive and, as in the case of the substantive used alone, it is the context which indicates the meaning. In the case of Agis’ projects, ἀγωγή is coupled with οἱ νόμοι: it would be very surprising if in such a general context the word referred to the precise reality of the education system. At *Cleomenes* 11.3–4, *agōgē* is the second term in a list where the first is education (*paideia*). Certainly καί, which links the two, can in some cases mark equivalence (with a sense close to ‘i.e., that is’), but this usage is relatively rare, and it is much more natural for the copulative to link two different things, ‘education’ (a detail) and ‘discipline’ (the whole of which this detail is part). This passage is important, because it is here that Sphairos appears; moreover the phrase clearly indicates that it is in the re-establishment of ‘discipline’ that Sphairos collaborated, and not specifically in that of the education system.<sup>10</sup> The remainder of the phrase, which is the first evocation (before 18.4) of the Spartans’ reaction to the proposed reform, confirms that *agōgē* does indeed have its wider sense: ‘they re-established for them, as was vital, the organization of the gymnasia and of the common meals, and applied themselves, some under compulsion and force, but the majority voluntarily, to the simplicity of the Laconian way of life’; εἰς τὴν εὐτελή καὶ Λακωνικὴν ἐκείνην δίαιταν is a developed reprise of τὴν λεγομένην ἀγωγήν.

Τὴν...ἐκείνην δίαιταν is echoed, at 18.4, by the formula καταστάντες εἰς ἕχθος ἐκείνης τῆς ἀγωγῆς, to which Kennell accorded such importance that he made it the title of his first chapter. It does not mean ‘in the track of the famous *agōgē*’ (in the sense of ‘education’). As at 11.4, ἐκείνη simply refers to what precedes, and ἀγωγή here refers to πάτρια ἔθθη; it is, once again, ‘discipline’. The expression ἐπὶ τὴν παιδείαν ἐτρέπη at 11.3 is, then, the only one which definitely designates education. It is clear that Cleomenes took an interest in education, but only as one of the instruments allowing him to restore the traditional way of life (as well as a powerful symbol of that way of life). As for Sphairos, I am entirely in agreement with Powell’s comment<sup>11</sup> that Kennell, following Ollier, surely overestimated his role. He could have been an inspiration and an adviser for Cleomenes, but the king’s aim (at least his advertised aim) was not to put a new system into place; he wanted to restore the ‘Lycurgan customs’. For Kennell (1995, 102), proof that the philosopher took a particular interest in the training of the young is that, already during Cleomenes’ own youth, ‘Sphaerus had lectured extensively at Sparta on education’. But the text (Plutarch, *Cleomenes* 2.2) on which this statement rests does not say this; it says that Sphairos ‘conversed passionately with the youths and the ephebes’. Sphairos’ role, then, was at the same time

wider and more limited than people say: wider, because he was interested in the whole collection of 'Lycurgan customs', and more limited because he was only an adviser and because it was only a matter of a restoration. So his work consisted above all of collecting information, as much oral as written, on what society could have been like according to Lycurgus, and in order to do this he certainly used works which we do not possess, starting with those of Critias and of king Pausanias. That said, under the camouflage of restoration real novelties can be introduced, and there are multiple ways of reconstructing the past; so it is possible that Sphairos used the occasion to put some of his own ideas into practice. I am not then denying that the Cleomenean restoration could have brought about some modifications in the education system relative to the classical period; but I do not believe in a systematic rupture in its essentials.

### **Change and continuity**

The period when the Spartan education system could have been most profoundly modified is rather the second century BC. Between about 188 and 178 there was an interruption, the existence of which is assured, as we have seen; but I am not persuaded that the re-establishment which followed is the best context for change; in such an emergency, a return to what existed before is more likely. If we take the *corpus* of dedications made by the victors in the ephobic games, we can note that the earliest references to what are called *moa* and *keloia* date to the second half of the second century. As for the word *kynagetas*, designating another contest (which would, from the Flavian period, be called *kattheratorion*), Kennell has demonstrated that it is a creation based on the model of the common Greek *kunēgetēs* ('the hunter') and probably dating to the late hellenistic period. The most convincing document seems to me to be the stele of Xenokles (*Artemis Orthia* no. 2). This dedication, which is dated to the second half (probably the end) of the second century BC, shows the existence at this period, in addition to the contest called the *moa*, of two characteristic traits of the *ephēbeia* of the Roman period, the system of *kasen* and, in the annual classes, the year of *prat[opam]pais*. This is why I think that it is in the second half of the second century BC that, having become a *civitas libera* in 146, and living in a now more peaceful world, Sparta reorganized her education system, instituting an *ephēbeia* as in other cities; this is not far from the date, 146, adopted by Kennell.

It remains to assess the extent of this transformation, and this is not easy. At first we might be tempted to judge it a complete metamorphosis. What the inscriptions show us in the Roman period (republican and especially imperial) is no longer a *paideia* but an *ephēbeia*.<sup>12</sup> Compared to what they

were before, the names of the annual age classes are (slightly) modified, and the *cursus* is shortened by the first two years. A new type of group, the *boua*, appears; its leader, the *bouagos*, is a member of the group. The agonistic aspect is very pronounced, with numerous contests, organized either by age categories or for all. The games and exercises have a brutal, even savage, character: at the altar of Orthia, the theft of cheeses has become a regulated flagellation, capable, Cicero and Plutarch tell us, of bringing about death; the game of Platanistas, as Pausanias describes it, includes several important elements which can hardly be earlier than the late hellenistic period, and must therefore have been radically transformed, at the least; the game of ball has become an official test, a test which Kennell thinks qualified ephebes to enter adult status.

We should not, however, minimize the continuity which links this *ephebeia* to the *paideia* of preceding centuries. It lasts five years, which makes it much closer to the system described by the glosses on the annual classes than to what happened in other cities at this period. Moreover, there is nothing to preclude its having been preceded by a period of public training for children. This is in any case what a passage of Dion of Prusa suggests (*Discourse 25.3*): 'As he (Lycurgus) prescribed, even now the Lacedaemonians are whipped, live out of doors, go naked, and endure much other treatment which would seem harsh to anyone else.' Of course, fidelity to the laws of Lycurgus is just a commonplace, but the text evokes precise customs as still real. That the ephebes of the imperial period underwent 'training periods' outside the city is very possible; that they went naked is clearly less so, and it is rather during childhood, as is described by Xenophon, that such conduct is envisageable. In the classical period, too, children were organized into 'teams': since no text gives us their local name, it is not impossible that these were already the *boua*. The dedication of Arexippos<sup>13</sup> shows that already in the fourth century contests were organized amongst the *paides*; but we do not know their names. Likewise, Xenophon<sup>14</sup> shows that the game of ball was already very popular in his time, and in the *Laws* (1.633b) Plato makes a fairly obscure allusion to what could be the classical period's counterpart of the Platanistas combat. Altogether, one gets the impression that, more than the education system itself, it is its environment, in other words society as a whole, which was transformed between the classical and the imperial periods. In this transformation the Spartans used all means, including an artificial and archaizing re-creation (being very sensitive in vocabulary, for example, according to Kennell's analyses), to ensure that the education system would give the impression of remaining unchanged. This was not in the least, as has been too often claimed, to attract foreign visitors (even if, effectively, it did attract them), but, as Kennell has very rightly said, because

the Spartans thought of their education as an inheritance, fundamental to their identity.<sup>15</sup> My opinion is, then, that up to and including the imperial period it is continuity which prevails in the history of Spartan education; this seems to me to be normal for an area which is in every society essentially dedicated to permanence.

The reader will doubtless be convinced that the considerations which have just been expounded are intended as advance justification for a study of Spartan education in the classical period based on the use of all existing sources, without consideration of date, and conducted as if their object were an immutable ideal and not a historical reality, and so subject to change. This is not the case. To me, Kennell's work marks a turning and provides a lesson which is essential even to those who accept neither his cutting into slices of the history of Spartan education, nor his often rash theses on such and such a point of this history or on such and such a source. Neither is it certain that the Spartan education system was completely transformed over the centuries, nor that an author of the Roman imperial period like Plutarch describes, as Kennell maintains on several occasions,<sup>16</sup> what existed in his own time; thus presented, these hypotheses seem improbable. They nonetheless show the necessity of the greatest prudence in the handling of the sources. This is why I have decided to confine my discussion to the education of a particular period, the classical one (basically the fourth century), using, for important points, only contemporary sources (especially Xenophon). However this does not mean, in my opinion, that I have to dismiss out of hand all other sources on principle; it is possible, for example, that there may be information in Plutarch which goes back to fourth-century authors in the final analysis, and which it would be a pity to deny oneself. A careful examination, case by case, will be necessary in order to sift out what can be used, by means of constant confrontation with sources from the classical period.

I have chosen the classical period, first because it is what interests me, and also because, despite everything which today's historian may be able to reproach him with, Xenophon's account provides a basis for which one would be hard put to find an equivalent in the third century, for example. Spartan education has indeed recently given rise to two valuable books. That of Birgalias<sup>17</sup> employs the global approach rightly criticized by Kennell and, what is more important to my eyes, is principally interested in the history of the image of Sparta through the ages. As for that of Kennell, since he considers Xenophon to be worthy of little credence, and takes History back-to-front, he is led to consign most of his development to later periods, and has nothing much to say when, at the end of his perilous enterprise, he finally reaches the classical period (1995, 115–42). This is why I think there is room for a third work.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 63, for whom the Spartans are ‘the only people in the world who have lived now for more than seven hundred years with one and the same set of customs and unchanging laws’ (tr. Kennell 1995, 6). Some inscriptions call the education system τὰ Λυκούργεια ἔθνη.

<sup>2</sup> Review of Kennell’s book, Cartledge 1997, 100.

<sup>3</sup> There are of course exceptions; most notable is the lucid warning in Powell 2001, 223.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed critique of Kennell’s theories, cf. Lévy 1997, whose opinion I entirely share.

<sup>5</sup> This idea of an interruption to education in the 3rd century is accepted by Hodkinson 2000, especially 434.

<sup>6</sup> Phylarchos, in Athenaeus 4.141f–142b.

<sup>7</sup> Teles, ed. Hense (1909), 28. Kennell’s argument (1995, 12) is not concerned with the use of the present tense in this text.

<sup>8</sup> References in Kennell 1995, 173, n. 24.

<sup>9</sup> On Sphairos, see Kennell’s exposition (1995, 98–102).

<sup>10</sup> The antecedent of ἧς is ἀγωγῆ.

<sup>11</sup> Powell 1998, 173–4, reviewing Kennell’s work. Similarly Lupi 2000, 45 n. 56.

<sup>12</sup> Description in Kennell 1995, chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>13</sup> *Artemis Orthia* 206 no. 1; see below, pp. 210–12.

<sup>14</sup> *Lak. Pol.* 9.5.

<sup>15</sup> Kennell 1995, 48: ‘Through all the cataclysmic changes the city had suffered, the *agōgē* had been preserved as a link with Sparta’s heritage.’

<sup>16</sup> For example 1995, 31, 33, 38, 42. He does not always say this, either. Thus he affirms (205 n. 81) that when Plutarch makes education begin at 7 years old, he is talking about the classical period, hellenistic education beginning (according to him) at 14, and the *ephēbeia* at 16. Fair enough, but it seems to me that from this remark Kennell should have drawn the conclusion that *everything* Plutarch reports about education before the age of 14 relates to the classical period.

<sup>17</sup> Birgalias 1999 – but for the most part the text is that of a thesis submitted in 1993, and the bibliography does not really go beyond around 1988.

## DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

By 'documentary sources' I mean those which are capable (although this hope may be disappointed) of giving us information on the functioning and the content of Spartan education in the classical period.

## XENOPHON

The chapters of the *Lakedaimonion Politeia* devoted to education are an exceptionally important source for us, because they constitute the only systematic account of this period. It has been equally possible to describe them either as a remarkably substantial account, or as an essentially idealistic discourse, lacking in real information, especially on the subject of organization. Each to his own; both these visions are true. The first is relatively true: in relation to the state of documentation on Sparta, an account of education in the classical period running to several pages, by a contemporary author, is a rarity of inestimable value. The second is absolutely true, that is in relation to what, in our opinion, a historical document ought to be. Now, the historian is a professional doubter of absolute truths, because he knows that truth is only a word, and that absolute truths, without confessing it, are in reality relative.

It would not be useful to provide yet another note here on the *Lak. Pol.* Suffice it to note that the attribution to Xenophon is now no longer doubted; on its date, discussion continues, with answers ranging between *c.* 390, date of Xenophon's installation at Skillous, and 378; for present purposes, this uncertainty is not too much of a problem.<sup>1</sup> The account of the education system occupies chapters 2 to 4, with an appendix in chapter 6.1–2. Below will be found, chapter by chapter, the text (following Dindorf's edition, Leipzig 1883, which I find preferable to that of Rühl, which replaced it in 1912 in the Teubner), a new translation, and what I shall call an analysis. This is not a commentary: that can be found in the body of this work; for the time being, my aim is simply to render intelligible the flow of the text, its intentions, the articulation of ideas and arguments.

The beginning of chapter 1 (§§1 and 2) provides a kind of Introduction, where the general idea of the treatise is explained. The author's point of

## Chapter 1

departure is the paradox of Sparta, which, despite being a city with ‘the lowest population’, is nevertheless the most powerful and glorious of Greece, something which demonstrates that there are efficiencies other than that of number. The reason for this superiority: τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα τῶν Σπαρτιατῶν (‘the Spartans’ customs’, ‘their rules of conduct’). It is very probable that Xenophon indicates here, in accordance with the custom of the period, what constitutes the ‘title’ of his treatise; it is also the Greek title given to Plutarch’s *Instituta Laconica*. All the merit is attributed to Lycurgus, ‘who established for them the laws, respect for which has ensured their prosperity’ (θέντα αὐτοῖς τοὺς νόμους οἷς πειθόμενοι ἠὺδαμόνησαν).<sup>2</sup> Lycurgus was supremely σόφος, says Xenophon, who thus approaches the institutions of Sparta from a philosophical point of view, and with an eye to permanence. He demonstrated his σοφία by making laws not only different, but even opposite to those of other cities. This opposition is the major theme of the work. Sparta’s individuality was an argument in propaganda against the city from the fifth century on; Xenophon turns this on its head and makes it into a eulogistic motif: Lycurgus did the opposite, *and he was right*. The rest of chapter 1 (§§3–10) treats the *teknopoia* (production of children), first illustration of Sparta’s originality, as §10 notes.

## Chapter 2

1. ἐγὼ μέντοι, ἐπεὶ καὶ περὶ γενέσεως ἐξηγήμαι, βούλομαι καὶ τὴν παιδείαν ἑκατέρων σαφηνίσαι. τῶν μὲν τοίνυν ἄλλων Ἑλλήνων οἱ φράσκοντες κάλλιστα τοὺς υἱεῖς παιδεύειν, ἐπειδὴν τάχιστα αὐτοῖς οἱ παῖδες τὰ λεγόμενα ξυνιῶσιν, εὐθύς μὲν ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς παιδαγωγούς θεράποντας ἐφιστᾶσιν, εὐθύς δὲ πέμπουσιν εἰς διδασκάλων μαθησομένους καὶ γράμματα καὶ μουσικὴν καὶ τὰ ἐν παλαιστρᾷ. πρὸς δὲ τούτοις τῶν παίδων πόδας μὲν ὑποδήμασιν ἀπαλύνουσι, σώματα δὲ ἱματίων μεταβολαῖς διαθρύπτουσιν σίτου γε μὴν αὐτοῖς γαστέρα μέτρον νομίζουσιν. 2. ὁ δὲ Λυκοῦργος ἀντὶ μὲν τοῦ ἰδίου ἑκάστον παιδαγωγούς δούλους ἐφιστᾶναι ἄνδρα ἐπέστησε κρατεῖν αὐτῶν ἐξ ὧν περ αἱ μέγιστα ἀρχαὶ καθίστανται, ὃς δὴ καὶ παιδονόμος καλεῖται. τοῦτον δὲ κύριον ἐποίησε καὶ ἀθροίζειν τοὺς παῖδας, καὶ ἐπισκοποῦντα, εἴ τις ῥαδιουργοίη, ἰσχυρῶς κολάζειν. ἔδωκε δ’ αὐτῷ καὶ τῶν ἡβόντων μαστιγοφόρους, ὅπως τιμωροῖεν ὅτε δέοι. ὥστε πολλὴν μὲν αἰδῶ, πολλὴν δὲ πειθῶ ἐκεῖ συμπαρεῖναι. 3. ἀντὶ γε μὴν τοῦ ἀπαλύνειν τοὺς πόδας ὑποδήμασιν ἔταξεν ἀνυποδησίᾳ κρατύνειν, νομίζων, εἰ τοῦτ’ ἀσκήσειαν, πολλὴ μὲν ῥῆον ἂν ὀρθιάδε βαίνειν, ἀσφαλέστερον δὲ πρηνῆ καταβαίνειν, καὶ πηδησαι δὲ καὶ ἀναθορεῖν καὶ δραμεῖν θάπτον ἀνυπόδητον, εἰ ἡσκηκῶς εἴη τοὺς πόδας, ἢ ὑποδεδεμένον. 4. καὶ ἀντὶ γε τοῦ ἱματίους διαθρύπτεσθαι ἐνόμισεν ἐνὶ ἱματίῳ δι’ ἔτους προσεθίξεσθαι, νομίζων οὕτως καὶ πρὸς ψύχη καὶ πρὸς θάλπη ἄμεινον ἂν παρεσκευάσθαι. 5. σίτον γε μὴν ἔταξε τοσοῦτον ἔχοντα συμβολεύειν τὸν εἶρενα ὡς ὑπὸ πλημονῆς μὲν μήποτε βαρύνεσθαι, τοῦ δὲ ἐνδεεστέρωσ διάγειν μὴ ἀπείρωσ ἔχειν, νομίζων τοὺς οὕτω παιδευομένους μᾶλλον μὲν ἂν δύνασθαι, εἰ δεήσειεν, ἀσιτήσαντας

ἐπιπονήσαι, μᾶλλον δ' ἄν, εἰ παραγγελθεῖη, ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ σίτου πλείω χρόνον ἐπιταθῆναι, ἥττον δ' ἄν ὄψου δεῖσθαι, εὐχερέστερον δὲ πρὸς πᾶν ἔχειν βρώμα, καὶ ὑγιεινότερως δ' ἄν διάγειν, καὶ εἰς μήκος ἄν αὐξάνεσθαι τὴν ραδιῖνὰ τὰ σώματα ποιοῦσαν τροφήν μᾶλλον συλλαμβάνειν ἡγήσατο ἢ τὴν διαπλατύνουσαν τῷ σίτῳ. 6. ὡς δὲ μὴ ὑπὸ λιμοῦ ἄγαν αὐ πιέζονται, ἀπραγμόνως μὲν αὐτοῖς οὐκ ἔδωκε λαμβάνειν ὧν ἄν προσδέωνται, κλέπτειν δ' ἐφήκεν ἔστιν ἂ τῷ λιμῷ ἐπικουροῦντας. 7. καὶ ὡς μὲν οὐκ ἀπορῶν ὅ,τι δοίη ἐφήκεν αὐτοῖς γε μηχανᾶσθαι τὴν τροφήν οὐδένα οἶμαι τοῦτο ἀγνοεῖν· δηλον δ' ὅτι τὸν μέλλοντα κλωπεύειν καὶ νυκτὸς ἀγρυπνεῖν δεῖ καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν ἀπατᾶν καὶ ἐνεδρεῦειν, καὶ κατασκοπούς δὲ ἐτοιμάζειν τὸν μέλλοντά τι λήψεσθαι. ταῦτα οὖν δὴ πάντα δηλον ὅτι μηχανικωτέρους τῶν ἐπιτηδείων βουλόμενος τοὺς παῖδας ποιεῖν καὶ πολεμικωτέρους οὕτως ἐπαίδευσεν. 8. εἴποι δ' ἄν οὖν τις, τί δήτα, εἶπερ τὸ κλέπτειν ἀγαθὸν ἐνόμιζε, πολλὰς πληγὰς ἐπέβαλε τῷ ἀλικομένῳ; ὅτι, φημί ἐγώ, καὶ τᾶλλα ὅσα ἄνθρωποι διδάσκουσι κολάζουσι τὸν μὴ καλῶς ὑπηρετοῦντα. κάκεινοι οὖν τοὺς ἀλικομένους ὡς κακῶς κλέπτοντας τιμωροῦνται. 9. καὶ ὡς πλείστους δὴ ἀρπάσαι τυροὺς παρ' Ὀρθίας καλὸν θεῖς, μαστιγοῦν τούτους ἄλλοις ἐπέταξε, τοῦτο δὴ δηλῶσαι καὶ ἐν τούτῳ βουλόμενος ὅτι ἔστιν ὀλίγον χρόνον ἀλήσαντα πολὺν χρόνον εὐδοκιμοῦντα εὐφραίνεισθαι. δηλοῦται δὲ ἐν τούτῳ ὅτι καὶ ὅπου τάχους δεῖ ὁ βλακεύων ἐλάχιστα μὲν ὠφελείται, πλείστα δὲ πράγματα λαμβάνει. 10. ὅπως δὲ μὴδ' εἰ ὁ παιδονόμος ἀπέλθοι, ἔρημοί ποτε οἱ παῖδες εἶεν ἄρχοντος, ἐποίησε τὸν ἀεὶ παρόντα τῶν πολιτῶν κύριον εἶναι καὶ ἐπιτάττειν τοῖς παισὶν ὅ,τι [ἄν] ἀγαθὸν δοκοῖη εἶναι, καὶ κολάζειν, εἴ τι ἁμαρτάνοιεν. τοῦτο δὲ ποιήσας διέπραξε καὶ αἰδημονεστέρους εἶναι τοὺς παῖδας· οὐδὲν γὰρ οὕτως αἰδοῦνται οὔτε παῖδες οὔτε ἄνδρες ὡς τοὺς ἄρχοντας. 11. ὡς δὲ καὶ εἴ ποτε μὴδεῖς τύχοι ἀνήρ παρῶν, μὴδ' ὡς ἔρημοι οἱ παῖδες ἄρχοντος εἶεν, ἔθηκε τῆς ἴλης ἐκάστης τὸν τορώτατον τῶν εἰρένων ἄρχειν· ὥστε οὐδέποτε ἐκεῖ οἱ παῖδες ἔρημοι ἄρχοντός εἰσι. 12. Λεκτέον δέ μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι καὶ περὶ τῶν παιδικῶν ἐρώτων· ἔστι γάρ τι καὶ τοῦτο πρὸς παιδείαν. οἱ μὲν τοίνυν ἄλλοι Ἕλληνες ἢ ὡσπερ Βοιωτοὶ ἀνὴρ καὶ παῖς συζυγέστες ὁμιλοῦσιν, ἢ ὡσπερ Ἡλεῖοι διὰ χαρίτων τῇ ὥρᾳ χρώνται· εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ οἱ παντάπασι τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι τοὺς ἐραστάς εἵργουσι ἀπὸ τῶν παίδων. 13. ὁ δὲ Λυκοῦργος ἐναντία καὶ τούτοις πᾶσι γνοῦς, εἰ μὲν τις αὐτὸς ὧν οἶον δεῖ ἀγασθεῖς ψυχὴν παιδὸς πειρῶτο ἄμεμπτον φίλον ἀποτελέσασθαι καὶ συνεῖναι, ἐπήνει καὶ καλλίστην παιδείαν ταύτην ἐνόμιζεν· εἰ δὲ τις παιδὸς σώματος ὀρεγόμενος φανεῖη, αἰσχιστον τοῦτο θεῖς ἐποίησεν ἐν Λακεδαιμόνι μὴδὲν ἥττον ἐραστάς παιδικῶν ἀπέχεσθαι ἢ γονεῖς παίδων ἢ καὶ ἀδελφοὶ ἀδελφῶν εἰς ἀφροδίσια ἀπέχονται. 14. τὸ μὲντοι ταῦτα ἀπιστεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τινῶν οὐ θαυμάζω· ἐν πολλαῖς γὰρ τῶν πόλεων οἱ νόμοι οὐκ ἐναντιοῦνται ταῖς πρὸς τοὺς παῖδας ἐπιθυμίαις. ἢ μὲν δὴ παιδεία εἴρηται ἢ τε Λακωνικὴ καὶ ἢ τῶν ἄλλων Ἑλλήνων· ἔξ ὀποτέρας δ' αὐτῶν καὶ εὐπειθέστεροι καὶ αἰδημονέστεροι καὶ ὧν δεῖ ἐγκρατέστεροι ἄνδρες ἀποτελοῦνται, ὁ βουλόμενος καὶ ταῦτα ἐπισκοπεῖσθω.

1. Having finished my account of procreation, I want to explain too how children on both sides are educated. Those other Greeks who claim to give their sons the best education, as soon as they are of an age to understand what people say to them, immediately submit them to pedagogues of servile status, and immediately send them to teachers to learn their letters, *mousikē* and

gymnastic exercises. Moreover, they soften the boys' feet by putting shoes on them, and make their bodies effeminate by having them change their cloaks; as for food, their measure is the capacity of their stomachs. 2. Lycurgus, on the contrary, instead of letting each one assign slaves on a private basis as pedagogues, put in command of the boys a citizen from amongst those who occupied the highest magistracies; he is called the *paidonomos*. He gave this man the power to assemble the boys, to supervise them, and to punish severely those who misbehaved. He also appointed as his assistants whip-bearers taken from among the *hēbōntes*, to administer the necessary punishments; as a result, there is as much respect as obedience at Sparta. 3. Instead of softening their feet by putting shoes on them, he prescribed that the boys should harden them by making them go bare-foot, thinking that if they endured this training, they would climb steep slopes more quickly and would be safer in their descents, and that, with training, they would jump, dash and run more quickly bare-foot than with shoes. 4. Instead of making them effeminate by giving them several cloaks, he made it a rule that they should be accustomed to have only one throughout the whole year, thinking that in this way they would be better prepared to endure the cold as well as the heat. 5. As for food, Lycurgus prescribed that the *eirēn* should gather the quantity necessary so that they would never be weighed down by satiety, and so that they might be accustomed to a certain lack; he thought that those who were brought up like this would be more capable, at need, of making an effort without eating, could, if they were ordered to, last longer on the same rations, would have less need of eating well, would be more easily satisfied with any kind of food, and would only be the better for it. He also considered that a diet which makes the body slim would further a growth in height more than one which fattened them with food. 6. However, so that they might not be too gnawed by hunger, without authorizing them to take what they lacked without worrying, Lycurgus permitted them to steal the wherewithal to ward hunger off. 7. I think everyone realizes that it was not because he did not know what to give them to eat that he allowed them to manage in this way. It is clear that someone who wants to steal must stay awake at night, and must scheme and remain on the look-out during the day; and that anyone who wants to help himself to something must also post spies. In any case, clearly, his intention was to make the boys more astute in procuring necessities, and thus he trained them to be better warriors. 8. Why, then, someone might ask, if he considered stealing to be a good thing, did he give a sound beating to anyone who was caught? My reply is that in all kinds of education the disobedient pupil is punished. So it is at Sparta: those who are caught because they have stolen badly are punished. 9. In the same way, while deciding that it would be fine to snatch as many cheeses as possible at the sanctuary of Orthia, Lycurgus prescribed that others should whip the thieves; by this, too, he wished to demonstrate that a short period of suffering can bring about long-lasting glory. This also demonstrates that when speed is absolutely necessary, he who acts sluggishly, far from gaining advantage by it, on the contrary incurs the maximum difficulties. 10. So that, even if the *paidonomos* was absent, the boys would never be without a leader, he granted any citizen who found himself

there the authority to give any order he judged appropriate, and to punish the disobedient. By doing this he made the boys even more respectful: for at Sparta there is nothing that all, boys and men alike, respect as much as the magistrates. 11. And in order that, should it happen that no man was present, even so the boys should never be without a leader, he laid down that the most intelligent of the *eirenes* should command each *ilē*: thus the boys there are never without a leader. 12. I think I must also say something about the love of boys, because this too is relevant to education. Amongst other Greeks, either, as in Boeotia, a mature man and a boy live together as a couple, or, as amongst the Eleans, possession of a young body is bought with presents; but there are also cities where it is absolutely forbidden for lovers to talk to boys. 13. Lycurgus, though, adopted a position different from that of all these people, too. When a man who was himself completely respectable was seized with admiration for a boy's soul and tried to befriend him without dishonour and to keep company with him, Lycurgus approved this and considered it to be the finest education; but if it was clearly the boy's body which interested him, Lycurgus condemned this as a terrible disgrace; so much so that at Sparta lovers abstain from physical relations with their beloveds as rigorously as do parents with their children, brothers with their brothers. 14. Some people, indeed, do not believe this, and this does not surprise me: for in many other cities the laws do not oppose lust for boys. Such is my account of education amongst the Spartans and amongst other Greeks. Which of the two creates the more obedient and respectful men, and the more capable of control whenever circumstance demands, is for each to form his opinion on, if he wants to.

### *Structure of the account*

There are two underlying principles. The first, and most obvious, is none other than the central idea of the whole of the first part of the treatise (up to and including chapter 10), the *contrast* between Sparta and the rest of the Greeks; this principle is emphasized at the beginning and the end of the chapter, using the technique of 'ring composition'. Xenophon has therefore to contrast Spartan education to a normal education point by point. §1 is devoted to an account of this normal education, which is already in itself implicitly critical. ἐπειδὴν τάχιστα, εὐθύς place repeated emphasis on the haste of the 'other Greeks' to rid themselves of the responsibility of educating their children. It would seem that this is done a little dishonestly, because a normal education usually begins at around seven years of age, not 'as soon as children understand what is being said to them' (which would be about three years old); and education seems not to start any later at Sparta. This insistence on 'haste', then, is not immediately understandable. On the other hand, the implicit criticism of the fact that the *paidagōgoi* are slaves is much better founded, and, feeling himself to be on firm ground, Xenophon returns to it, not without complaisance, at the beginning of §2, where he will

add a supplementary criticism to the passage, the fact that the pedagogues are a purely private affair (ἰδίᾳ ἕκαστον). Criticism is much less evident in the phrase ‘they send them to teachers to learn their letters, *mousikē* and gymnastic exercises’. It cannot be about the list of subjects, unless Xenophon means to suggest the absence of ‘civic’ education; perhaps he is also aiming at the *didaskaloi*, inasmuch as they are salaried, but it does not appear that this is any different at Sparta. The author next attacks the laxity and luxury of a normal education. It is not immediately apparent in what respect giving children shoes and several cloaks is blameworthy; this will only become clear in the comparison with Sparta. On the other hand, we understand straightaway that their diet is too plentiful.

Each of these points is taken up again in what follows, with contrasts and repetition of terms. In §2, παιδαγωγοὺς δούλους ἐφιστάναι recalls παιδαγωγοὺς θεράποντας ἐφιστᾶσιν. In §3, ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀπαλύνειν τοὺς πόδας recalls πόδας ὑποδήμασιν ἀπαλύνουσι. In §4, ἀντὶ τοῦ ἱματίους διαθρύπτεσθαι recalls (and is explained by) σώματα ἱματίων μεταβολαῖς διαθρύπτουσι. Such an echo technique is not used after this.

The second principle of the account is that of *justification*. To demonstrate point by point that the Spartans do the opposite to others would not be sufficient and could even be used against them; it is also necessary to show that they are right in doing so. The attribution, repeated every time, of each custom to Lycurgus already functions as a justification in itself, by presenting it as an element in a planned and considered work, and not as a bizarre anonymous custom. This is the purpose served by the technique of ‘interior deliberation’ attributed to Lycurgus on a whole series of points (νομίζων in §§3, 4, 5, ἠγήσατο and βουλόμενος in §§7 and 9).<sup>3</sup> But this is not enough, and, on each point, Xenophon gives an explanation and shows what the aim, the *good* aim, of the measure presented is. From the second point (the absence of shoes) onwards the explanation, which was very brief for the *paidonomos* because this institution hardly needed justifying, begins to exceed the account of the facts in length. Thus presented and repeated, the explanation appears not so much as a eulogy (which the effect of the refrain might suggest) but as an apology, that is a *defence speech*. This defensive aspect is striking throughout the chapter. Xenophon’s real intention is to reply to the detractors of Spartan education by tackling them on their own ground, taking up their argumentation point by point. This can be found in the text’s counterpoint: the young Spartans are badly dressed, they are bare-foot and starving; they are taught to steal; the authority of fathers is destroyed; physical pederasty is practised. To answer all these points successfully was no easy thing.

§2 *The paidonomos*

It is logical to begin by saying who is in charge of the Spartan education system; moreover, this allows Xenophon to start on solid ground. Instead of pedagogues of servile status, it is to one of the most important magistrates that the children are entrusted. His role is to ‘assemble the boys’ (recalling the Cretan *agretas*), which indirectly evokes the fact that they are organized in ‘teams’; also to supervise them, and punish the disobedient. Like the *agōnothetēs*, he has assistants equipped with whips. The result is obedience, which is easily understood, and ‘reserve’, *aidōs*, which is more the product of the whole system than of the particular action of the *paidonomos*.

§3 *Absence of shoes*

Here justification suddenly becomes difficult, and it occupies the whole exposition. The idea is that it is good to harden the boys’ feet so that later, during their adult life, they can, when this might be useful, go bare-foot. This end is apparently athletic, but its application must surely be understood as military: thus it would be for forest and mountain warfare that the youths were being prepared (Xenophon emphasizes the steepness of the slopes), which, at first sight, does not at all resemble traditional hoplite combat. It is generally agreed amongst the Greeks that in difficult terrain men are more sure-footed without shoes, as demonstrated by the Plataeans’ escape in Thucydides (3.22.2).

§4 *Sparsity of clothes*

According to Kennell, Plutarch,<sup>4</sup> or his source, wrongly interpreted this piece of information as meaning only one cloak for the whole year, without any other garment, so no *chitōn*.<sup>5</sup> Sure enough; but does Xenophon really mean to speak of a single cloak for the year, as Kennell believes? It is not clear what sense there would be in this, and it does not accord with the justification presented by Xenophon, which is training to endure the heat and the cold. The expression ‘a single cloak’ is contrasted to ‘changes of cloak’ (ἱματίων μεταβολαί) practised in other cities (§1). This means, then: a single *type* of cloak, which would be at once too hot in summer and too cold in winter; in this way the desired training would be achieved. Of course, for the poorest a single type of cloak would in fact be equivalent to a single cloak.

I think that in these two paragraphs Xenophon has in mind his memory of the expedition of the Ten Thousand, during which the Greek warriors had to advance and fight in difficult terrain, and to endure intensely cold temperatures. He knew from experience that it was *also* necessary to prepare oneself for this. The characteristics described in §§3 and 4 are likewise found in Cretan education as expounded by Ephoros (70F149), quoted by Strabo (10.4): walking on sloping terrain in §16; the single cloak in §20.

§5 *Diet*

'He prescribed that the *eirēn* should gather...': I have adopted the most commonly agreed text (that of Dindorf 1883, Ollier 1934, and Marchant 1968), which includes two corrections; I shall return to this point later (p. 83). The justification for this paradoxical practice, an intentionally insufficient supply of food, is multiple and infiltrates the whole exposition. In the first place, it takes the form of a consecutive double proposition defining the quantity of food provided by the desired result: what is necessary for them not to be weighed down (is this in order to encourage growth, as at the end of the section, or activity, a theme which is taken up again a little later?) and to accustom them to lack of food.

This justification is given new impetus by a reflection (νομίζων) attributed to Lycurgus. An insufficient diet first develops specific abilities in the boys, that is ones linked to the training they are pursuing: the ability to make an effort even without having eaten; the ability to hold out longer (than others) on a specified ration. We find here, and up to the end of the exposition, a whole series of comparatives,<sup>6</sup> which express the idea of a kind of competition between Spartan boys and others, where the Spartans, thanks to their education, prevail on every point. The Spartan *boys*: because, contrary to what one might think, Xenophon seems to keep strictly to the chronological framework of the education system; the *present* participle τοὺς οὕτως παιδευόμενους shows, I think, that he is not looking forward to an age when the adult will reap the benefits of the regimen. It is indeed already at the stage of training during childhood that the results are apparent. But it is of course impossible for the mind not to jump from the present to the military end; the vocabulary suggests it, σίτος, πόνος (contained in ἐπιπονῆσαι), παραγγέλλω (which frequently has a military sense). Furthermore, *Inst. Lac.* 13, which is inspired on the subject by this passage to the point of literally reproducing an expression from it, clearly exposes this military end.<sup>7</sup> But, continues Xenophon, a controlled diet also has benefits which become apparent in a more general way, throughout life: ability to eat less, ability to adapt to any kind of diet, with better health as a bonus. These general advantages strongly recall the praise of temperance by Socrates in the *Memorabilia* (1.5); but we may detect there too, as before, the memory of his experience in the Ten Thousand: to the extent that we might ask whether it was not this which 'converted' Xenophon to Spartan education.

It is noticeable that all these benefits, while including the psychological dimension of endurance, are essentially physical and even physiological. So it is not surprising to find this paragraph ending with a medical remark which is indeed introduced by ὑγιεινότερως. Hippocrates was a contemporary of Xenophon, and the treatise *On Regimen* (whether or not it is by him) is

usually dated to the end of the fifth century or the beginning of the fourth; the regimen, which has to be adapted for each individual, is a result of the combination of diet and exercises. In recommending a restricted diet and numerous harsh exercises *at the same time*, Xenophon is applying the master's teachings in a rather strange manner. What he says here is considerably developed in *Inst. Lac.* 13 and in Plutarch, *Lyc.* 17.8; but if these texts add some jargon, they do not provide any supplementary ideas.<sup>8</sup>

### §§6–9 *Stealing*

Xenophon seems to think that Lycurgus, with extreme skill, killed two birds with one stone: not only did he force the young Spartans to profit from the benefits of a restricted diet, but in doing this he pushed them to practise an occupation which is no less educational: stealing. This is indeed presented as the young people's defence against hunger; so as a rule it is food which they steal. We might be tempted to charge Xenophon with illogicality, insofar as these larcenies are a means of escaping from the much-vaunted diet; but there is no real contradiction, so evident is it that the author thinks that the few food supplements thus acquired do not change the essential in any way, no more than the supplements brought to the common meals by hunting, where the 'extras' (*epaikla*) do not compromise the austerity. In fact, since hunger and stealing are *a priori* equally incomprehensible forms of behaviour for us in an educational context, it seems to me impossible to shed light on the one by the other.

For Xenophon, stealing is a consequence of hunger, but it also has its own justification: this is, once again, the military end. For him, the good soldier is one who can combine individual initiative with discipline and team spirit. Likewise, the young thief must both act by himself, to conceive the theft, put the plan into action, participate in its realization, and at the same time command the team who are helping him; thus will he serve his apprenticeship in command. If the skill with which Xenophon (alone against all, it is true) defends the educational value of children's theft at Sparta is indisputable,<sup>9</sup> we cannot say as much of his sincerity.<sup>10</sup> What makes me think this is not so much the discussion in the *Anabasis* (4.6.14–15) between Xenophon and the Spartan Cheirisophos, *à propos* a military position which they have to capture, concerning the respective aptitudes of the Spartans and the Athenians for stealing: for this clearly develops in a joking tone, between two men who know each other well and respect each other; it remains on the surface of things and does not provide any real criticism. On the other hand, in a passage of the *Cyropaedia* (1.6.31 ff.), where the question of whether the teaching of deceit and cunning should be part of education is very seriously posed and discussed, the answer is clearly negative. The position which

he adopts here, then, does not correspond with his personal opinion; it is dictated to him both by his apologetic aim and by the anxiety, common amongst all writers, that his argument be coherent, an argument which maintains that, wherever it departs from the common Greek way of doing things, Spartan practice is right.

In §8, the exposition takes the form (very common in the ‘Old Oligarch’) of a discussion with an imaginary interlocutor. The paradox of the punishment of thieves (they are compelled to steal, then they are punished for so doing) is explained with ease. It is in this connection that the allusion to the theft of cheeses ‘at the sanctuary of Orthia’ occurs in §9. The juxtaposition shows that Lycurgus acted in a coherent manner: there too it is compulsory to steal, and there too one is ‘punished’ (with the difference that *all* definitely receive blows, as is shown later by the reference to suffering). Having been explained by its classification under the rubric of prescribed and punished theft, the rite is also justified in itself: it is a test. Whoever passes it best gains a double benefit: he acquires lasting glory (which makes it possible that the title ‘victor at the altar’, *bōmonikas*, already existed and was highly valued in the classical period), and, in proving his agility and determination, he succeeds both in taking more cheeses and in receiving fewer lashes. We find the same idea again in connection with war, in 9.2, and earlier in Tyrtaios (fr. 11.11–13 W): those who fight the best have the best chances of survival.

### §§10–11 *The delegation of authority*

This theme is introduced by what looks like a return to §2, on the *paidonomos*. Xenophon indicated there that the *paidonomos* was accompanied by assistants carrying whips; he seems here to pursue this account by adding that he also had other deputies, which all citizens are, matters being presented as if, as a rule, the *paidonomos* was supposed to be present wherever there were boys. Thus any citizen who finds himself present automatically becomes the magistrate’s delegate: this is what is meant by the phrase at the end of §10 about respect for magistrates at Sparta (a theme which will be developed in chapter 8).

Here Xenophon might appear to diverge from his main theme, which is, we must remember, Sparta’s originality. But there is another exposition of the delegation of authority, in 6.1–2, and this is clearly subordinated to the theme.

6.1. ἐναντία γε μὴν ἔγνω καὶ τάδε τοῖς πλείστοις. ἐν μὲν γὰρ ταῖς ἄλλαις πόλεσι τῶν ἑαυτοῦ ἕκαστος καὶ παίδων καὶ οἰκετῶν καὶ χρημάτων ἄρχουσιν· ὁ δὲ Λυκοῦργος, κατασκευάσαι βουλόμενος ὡς ἂν μηδὲν βλάπτοντες ἀπολαύοιεν τι οἱ πολῖται ἀλλήλων ἀγαθόν, ἐποίησε παίδων ἕκαστον ὁμοίως τῶν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν ἀλλοτριῶν ἄρχειν. 2. ὅταν δὲ τις εἰδῆ ὅτι οὗτοι πατέρες εἰσι τῶν

παίδων, ὧν αὐτὸς ἄρχει, ἀνάγκη οὕτως ἄρχειν ὡσπερ ἂν καὶ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ ἄρχεσθαι βούλοιο. ἦν δέ τις παῖς ποτε πληγὰς λαβὼν ὑπ' ἄλλου κατέειπε πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, αἰσχρὸν ἔστι μὴ οὐκ ἄλλας πληγὰς ἐμβάλλειν τῷ υἱεῖ. οὕτω πιστεύουσιν ἀλλήλοις μηδὲν αἰσχρὸν προστάπτειν τοῖς παισίν.

6.1. Here are some more points where Lycurgus decided the opposite to most people. For in other cities, each is master of his own children and slaves and possessions; but Lycurgus, wanting to arrange things so that citizens, without doing any harm, might to some extent gain mutual enjoyment from their possessions, decided that each man would have control over other men's children just as over his own. 2. Nonetheless, when someone knows that the children over whom he has control themselves have fathers who have the same right, he is obliged to control them as he would want others to control his own. If a child who has been beaten by another father reports this to his own, the latter is obliged, on pain of dishonour, to give him further blows; so great is their confidence in one another that no one will ever give any dishonourable order to the children.

What we have here is another facet of the subject treated in 2.10: it is no longer the delegation to every citizen of the *paidonomos*' authority (and so that of the city), but the communization of paternal authority. The context is, moreover, what we might call 'communal practices' in regard to certain categories of owned property (slaves, dogs, horses, provisions), possessions which children are thus considered to be part of.<sup>11</sup> The frame of reference, then, is not the same: in 2.10 the scene is necessarily set out of doors, while in 6.1 it is rather inside the *oikos*. In 6.2, Xenophon carefully lays out how the reversibility of the community relationship automatically works against any abuse of authority. This custom is evidently a striking novelty in relation to the norm in Greek cities. The delegation of the *paidonomos*' authority seems less peculiar, but what it suggests is less a communization of children than anxiety for constant surveillance, which is indeed a distinctive feature of Spartan education. This is so true that Xenophon seems to explain the organization of the boys into groups (the *ilai*), placed under the authority of the *eirenes*, exclusively by this same anxiety.<sup>12</sup> In reality, anxiety for permanent authority explains neither the existence of these groups nor the *eirēn*'s command: they are teams which have a certain autonomy, the absence of adults is not occasional but structural, and they do indeed need a leader. What might need explaining is the fact that this leader is not an adult, nor a member of the group; there is something here which stems from the very status of the *eirēn* in society.

#### §§12–14 Pederasty

It is not by chance that this point is approached last and rather reluctantly by Xenophon. This is, I would say, the author's most serious difficulty. It is

not the greatest, because justifying the fact that theft was included in the 'compulsory subjects' was technically more difficult, while for pederasty there existed an obvious answer, the very one which Xenophon gives. But it is the most serious, because if theft might look like a rather outlandish side-issue, pederasty matters a great deal more. A pederastic relationship (that is, between a boy between, say, twelve and eighteen years old and an adult) could only be approved, by a philosophical disciple of Socrates, as a kind of crowning of the educational process, on the imperative condition that it remained chaste: this is precisely, he says, what happened at Sparta.<sup>13</sup> He qualifies it as 'the finest education' (καλλίστη παιδεία, §13): that is, for him it played an essential role in education. However, *in fine* he shows himself rather defeatist about his ability to convey his convictions concerning chastity at Sparta, doubtless because he was very aware of going against the tide.

Here, Xenophon cannot easily maintain that the Spartans' practice (as he presents it) was the opposite of other Greeks'. Indeed he says himself, with supporting examples, that cities' approaches to the subject were extremely diverse. What the Spartans do is rather exactly in the middle: neither absolute prohibition nor complete licence. On the other hand, the pederastic relationship is not presented here as compulsory, nor as institutionalized, which obviously would make it more difficult to justify. It is described as the result of free choice – and this being, apparently, the act of the single adult: this last point surely corresponds to reality.

The concluding formula 'such is my account of education amongst the Spartans and amongst other Greeks' seems to indicate the *end* of the discussion of education in the *Lak. Pol.*; the discussion is all the more firmly closed because this phrase makes a 'ring' with that of the beginning: 'I want to explain too how children on both sides are educated.' However, the most widespread view is that we only have here the account of the education of *paides*, and that chapters 3 and 4 provide the sequel concerning the other age categories. We must then ask ourselves about the status of this chapter 2 and its function in the treatise.

There is no doubt that, although there may be no (or little) further mention of them later, some of the aspects of education described and justified here are again present at later stages: the authority of the *paidonomos*, the delegation of authority, and above all the pederastic relationship.<sup>14</sup> On other points, at least as far as the *paidiskoi* are concerned, the case ranges from doubtful to probable, without being confirmed: belonging to a 'team', sparsity of clothing, practice of theft (at least in the form of the theft of cheeses). It is tempting to say, then, that in chapter 2, rather than simply the education of *paides* (a term which can indeed, taken in its wider sense, include *paidiskoi*), it is either the most striking features<sup>15</sup> or, perhaps rather,

the most criticized aspects of the education system *as a whole* which are explained and justified; and that the discussion of education is pursued later in the exposition of features particular to each age in turn. But why, then, this concluding formula at the end of chapter 2? Do we have here something like hesitation on Xenophon's part in the conduct of his account? It is not necessary to posit such a thing: we can rather say that at the end of chapter 2 'properly so-called' (or rather 'commonly so-called') *paideia* finishes, that of *paides*. At the age reached at the beginning of chapter 3 *paideia* amongst other Greeks finishes, as §1 of this chapter strongly emphasizes. From here on, therefore, it becomes impossible to make a systematic comparison between Spartan education and the systems of other cities, because in them past this age there is no longer any education at all.

### Chapter 3

1. ὅταν γε μὴν ἐκ παίδων εἰς τὸ μειρακιούσθαι ἐκβαίνωσι, τῆνικαῦτα οἱ μὲν ἄλλοι παύουσι μὲν ἀπὸ παιδαγωγῶν, παύουσι δὲ ἀπὸ διδασκάλων, ἄρχουσι δὲ οὐδένες ἔτι αὐτῶν, ἀλλ' αὐτονόμους ἀφιάσιν· ὁ δὲ Λυκούργος καὶ τούτων τάναντία ἔγνω. 2. καταμαθὼν γὰρ τοῖς τῆλικούτοις μέγιστον μὲν φρόνημα ἐμφυόμενον, μάλιστα δὲ ὕβριν ἐπιπολάζουσαν, ἰσχυροτάτας δὲ ἐπιθυμίας τῶν ἡδονῶν παρισταμένας, τῆνικαῦτα πλείστους μὲν πόνους αὐτοῖς ἐπέβαλε, πλείστην δὲ ἀσχολίαν ἐμηχανήσατο. 3. ἐπιθείς δὲ καὶ εἴ τις ταῦτα φύγοι, μηδενὸς ἔτι τῶν καλῶν τυγχάνειν, ἐποίησε μὴ μόνον τοὺς ἐκ δημοσίου ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς κηδομένους ἐκάστων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ὡς μὴ ἀποδειλιάσαντες ἀδόκιμοι παντάπασιν ἐν τῇ πόλει γένοιτο. 4. πρὸς δὲ τούτοις τὸ αἰδεῖσθαι ἰσχυρῶς ἐμφυσιῶσαι βουλόμενος αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς ἐπέταξεν ἐντὸς μὲν τοῦ ἱματίου τῷ χεῖρε ἔχειν, σιγῇ δὲ πορεύεσθαι, περιβλέπειν δὲ μηδαμοῖ, ἀλλ' αὐτὰ τὰ πρὸ τῶν ποδῶν ὄραν. ἐνθα δὴ καὶ δῆλον γεγένηται ὅτι τὸ ἄρρεν φύλον καὶ εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν ἰσχυρότερόν ἐστι τῆς θηλείας φύσεως. 5. ἐκείνων γοῦν ἦττον μὲν ἂν φωνὴν ἀκούσας ἢ τῶν λιθίνων, ἦττον δ' ἂν ὄμματα μεταστρέψαις ἢ τῶν χαλκῶν, αἰδημονεστέρους δ' ἂν αὐτοὺς ἠγήσαιο καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν ἐν τοῖς θαλάμοις παρθένων. καὶ ἐπειδὴν εἰς τὸ φιλίτιόν γε ἀφίκωνται, ἀγαπητὸν αὐτῶν καὶ τὸ ἐρωτηθὲν ἀκούσαι. καὶ τῶν μὲν αὖ παιδίσκων οὕτως ἐπεμελήθη.

1. When they leave the category of children and enter adolescence, this is, amongst other Greeks, the end of pedagogues, the end of teachers; no one is in charge of them any more, they are left free. On this point too Lycurgus took the opposite decision. 2. For having noticed that it is at this age that the temperament is the most arrogant, insolence the most frequent, and desires the most violent, it is on these that he most imposed harsh exercises, for these that he organized the most complete absence of respite. 3. In prescribing also that anyone who shirked these obligations would have no further share in the 'good things', he contrived that not only the city representatives but also those responsible for each boy would see to it that he avoided bringing complete dishonour on himself in the city by cowardice. 4. Furthermore, wishing firmly

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to inculcate reserve, he prescribed that even in the street they should keep their hands under their cloak, walk in silence, and, instead of looking around them, they should keep their gaze fixed in front of their feet. In this way he proved that the masculine sex prevails over the feminine sex even in modesty. 5. In any case, you would hear stone statues talking sooner than these youths, and see bronze statues turning their eyes; you would judge them even more reserved than virgins in their wedding chamber. And when they come to the common meals, they confine themselves to answering the questions put to them. This then is the way in which Lycurgus dealt with *paidiskoi*.

Like the one before, this chapter is clearly delineated by ring composition: ‘when they leave the category of children and enter adolescence...this then is the way in which Lycurgus dealt with *paidiskoi*’. This chapter too is constructed on the contrast between Sparta and other cities, but this contrast changes in nature: it no longer operates separately on each point, but concerns the chapter as a whole, for, says Xenophon, outside Sparta there would be nothing to say about the education of adolescents, because there is none. Thus formulated the declaration is perhaps surprising: Xenophon knew very well that at Athens, for example, education extended through adolescence for some young men. However, what the author has in mind is not simply education but the fact that the city deals with these youths, that it is compulsory and that strict discipline is imposed on them. As in chapter 2, it is not a matter of instruction but of real education.

The structure of the exposition is simple: §1, the contrast between Sparta and other cities; §2, the severity of discipline and its motives; §3, punishments (the nature of these shows that at this age things become serious, and that this period already has implications for the whole future of the citizen-to-be); §§4–5, the *eukosmia* of *paidiskoi*, first in the street (a long exposition), then at the *sysition*.

At the beginning I have, like Ollier, kept the text of the manuscripts, ἐκ παίδων εἰς τὸ μειρακιοῦσθαι ἐκβαίνωσι, although Cobet, who has been followed by many others, athetises εἰς τὸ μειρακιοῦσθαι; I shall explain myself below (p. 89). I also keep, further on, the manuscript reading τῶν ἐν τοῖς θαλάμοις παρθένων. Ollier argued in favour of the text quoted by Stobaeus and by Pseudo-Longinus, τῶν ἐν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς παρθένων,<sup>16</sup> but his reasoning seems to me to come up against two objections: first, the pupil of the eye is designated by κορή and not by παρθένος, and we would have to posit that Xenophon had superimposed a play on words on top of a metaphor; second, and most importantly, he is here simply picking up the idea expressed in §4, that the masculine sex prevails over the feminine sex even in modesty, which shows that young girls are indeed relevant here. As we shall see later, Ollier misunderstood the exact tone of the text.

On the level of content, this chapter is even more disappointing than the previous for those who are in search of information. In §2, the intemperance of adolescents is a commonplace. It would be interesting to know what the ‘harsh exercises’ (πόννοι) consisted of, the ‘ceaseless occupations’ (ἀσχολία) of the *paidiskoi*; should we understand them to be more or less the same as for the *paides*? Every commentator has picked up on the extremely rhetorical character of §§4 and 5. The tone is that of a eulogy: 5 simply reprises 4, despite the variety introduced by the address to the reader and the statue metaphor. The portrait of the reserved adolescent is itself also a commonplace, which reappears in every period: hands held under the cloak can be found in Dion of Prusa and Artemidoros;<sup>17</sup> eyes lowered, in a fragment of an anonymous comic writer quoted by Lucian;<sup>18</sup> silence<sup>19</sup> is already in Aristophanes.<sup>20</sup> This is nothing other than the stereotype of the perfectly educated young boy, like Plato’s Charmides. What, for Xenophon, is particular to Sparta is that this model is imposed by law, and that everyone conforms to it, and not just a few members of the elite as elsewhere.<sup>21</sup>

What gives this very conventional portrait a certain evocative power is its discretely erotic atmosphere. Xenophon, who in the previous chapter pleads the cause of chastity, surely has not done this on purpose; but the simple act of sketching the portrait of modest and reserved young boys, as produced by a very strict education, necessarily had erotic resonances, the Greeks being what they were, as much in the author’s unconscious as for his readers or listeners. It is to such boys, timid and blushing, like Charmides in Plato’s dialogue, that men wanted to pay court, this virginal modesty that men wanted to force; such a conquest alone brought the prize. This latent eroticism is also contributed to by the heterosexual comparisons and allusions (it is not by chance that the virgins are evoked ‘in their wedding chambers’, ἐν τοῖς θαλάμοις, something Ollier did not understand), by means of which the boys are appreciated, according to their virtue, as objects of desire just as much, and even more (end of §4), than girls. If this commentary arouses some scepticism, refer to the words of the Just Argument in the *Clouds* (961–83); this portrait of well brought up boys produced by the old education is strewn with erotic allusions which are completely intentional and not in the least bit veiled. So this ending to chapter 3, like that of chapter 2, is placed under the sign of Eros.

*Stricto sensu*, as we have seen, this chapter is not about education, a subject which Xenophon says he has exhausted in chapter 2. Here it is ‘how Lycurgus dealt with’ youths, who at the beginning are implicitly called *meirakia* and at the end explicitly *paidiskoi*.<sup>22</sup> However, several details show that this chapter is indeed part of the account of education in a broad sense. First, there is the contrast between Sparta and other cities. Amongst other Greeks, says

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Xenophon, *paideia* stops at adolescence; whereas, he continues, Lyncurgus did the opposite. In other words, then, the lawgiver, according to him, *prolonged paideia* throughout this age range (at least). Next there are, as we have seen, the features described in chapter 2 which surely lasted (even if this is not said) throughout adolescence. Finally, there is this ‘programme’ of ‘harsh exercises’ imposed on adolescents by the city, which Xenophon says left them no leisure time: here is something which very much resembles education.

## Chapter 4

1. περί γε μὴν τῶν ἡβώντων πολὺ μάλιστα ἐσπούδασε, νομίζων τούτους, εἰ γένοιτο οἷους δεῖ, πλείστον ῥέπειν ἐπὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν τῇ πόλει. 2. ὁρῶν οὖν, οἷς ἂν μάλιστα φιλονικία ἐγγένηται, τούτων καὶ χοροὺς ἀξιακροατοτάτους γυνομένους, καὶ γυμνικοὺς ἀγῶνας ἀξιοθεατοτάτους, ἐνόμιζεν, εἰ καὶ τοὺς ἡβώντας συμβάλλοι εἰς ἔριν περὶ ἀρετῆς, οὕτως ἂν καὶ τούτους ἐπὶ πλείστον ἀφικνεῖσθαι ἀνδραγαθίας. ὡς οὖν τούτους αὐτὸ συνέβαλεν, ἐξηγήσομαι. 3. αἰροῦνται τοῖνυν αὐτῶν οἱ ἔφοροι ἐκ τῶν ἀκμαζόντων τρεῖς ἄνδρας· οὗτοι δὲ ἵππαγρέται καλοῦνται. τούτων δ’ ἕκαστος ἄνδρας ἑκατὸν καταλέγει, διασαφηνίζων ὅτου ἕνεκα τοὺς μὲν προτιμᾷ, τοὺς δὲ ἀποδοκιμάζει. 4. οἱ οὖν μὴ τυγχάνοντες τῶν καλῶν πολεμοῦσι τοῖς τε ἀποστείλαισιν αὐτοὺς καὶ τοῖς αἰρεθείσιν ἀνθ’ αὐτῶν καὶ παραφυλάττουσιν ἀλλήλους, ἐὰν τι παρὰ τὰ καλά νομιζόμενα ῥαδιουργῶσι. 5. καὶ αὕτη δὴ γίγνεται ἡ θεοφιλεστάτη τε καὶ πολιτικωτάτη ἔρις, ἐν ἣ ἀποδέδεται μὲν ἂ δεῖ ποιεῖν τὸν ἀγαθόν, χωρὶς δ’ ἑκάτεροι ἀσκοῦσιν ὅπως αἰεὶ κράτιστοι ἔσονται, ἐὰν δέ τι δέη, καθ’ ἕνα ἀρήξουσι τῇ πόλει παντὶ σθένει. 6. ἀνάγκη δ’ αὐτοῖς καὶ εὐεξίας ἐπιμελεῖσθαι. καὶ γὰρ πυκτεύουσι διὰ τὴν ἔριν ὅπου ἂν συμβάλωσι· διαλύειν μέντοι τοὺς μαχομένους πᾶς ὁ παραγενόμενος κύριος. ἦν δέ τις ἀπειθῆ τῷ διαλύοντι, ἄγει αὐτὸν ὁ παιδονόμος ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐφόρους· οἱ δὲ ζημιόσι μεγαλείως, καθιστάνασι βουλόμενοι εἰς τὸ μήποτε ὀργὴν τοῦ μὴ πειθεσθαι τοῖς νόμοις κρατήσαι. 7. τοῖς γε μὴν τὴν ἡβητικὴν ἡλικίαν πεπερακόσιν, ἐξ ὧν ἤδη καὶ αἱ μέγιστα ἀρχαὶ καθίστανται, οἱ μὲν ἄλλοι Ἑλληνες ἀφελόντες αὐτῶν τὸ ἰσχύος ἔτι ἐπιμελεῖσθαι στρατεύεσθαι ὁμῶς αὐτοῖς ἐπιτάττουσιν, ὁ δὲ Λυκούργος τοῖς τηλικούτοις νόμιμον ἐποίησε κάλλιστον εἶναι τὸ θηρᾶν, εἰ μὴ τι δημόσιον κωλύει, ὅπως δύναιντο καὶ οὗτοι μηδὲν ἦττον τῶν ἡβώντων στρατιωτικὸς πόνους ὑποφέρειν.

1. The *hēbōntes* were the object of his greatest concern, on the principle that if they were to become what they should, they would clearly incline the city towards good. 2. So, seeing that it is when the strongest competitive spirit exists that choirs are most worth listening to and gymnastic competitions most worth watching, he thought that if he made the *hēbōntes* also compete in virtue, they would achieve the height of valour. I shall explain how he achieved this. 3. Amongst those of them who are at the height of their development, the ephors chose three men; these are called *hippagretai*. Each of them draws up a list of a hundred men, explaining why he is choosing some and leaving others aside. 4. Those who do not win this honour think of both those who have left

them aside and those who have been chosen in their stead as their enemies; because of this, they mutually spy on each other, in order to see if they are committing some act contrary to what is considered good. 5. This is how the rivalry dearest to the gods and most worthy of citizens is instilled; it makes clear what a good man must do; each of the two groups trains independently to be as good as possible and to defend the city, if the need arises, with all their might. 6. They also have to watch their physical fitness. Indeed, their rivalry pushes them to fist-fights wherever they encounter one another. However, anyone who comes upon them has the right to separate the combatants. If one of them refuses to obey this arbiter, the *paidonomos* brings him before the ephors; they punish him with a heavy fine, with the intention of inducing him never to let anger prevent him from obeying the laws.

In §1, Xenophon announces an account of the way in which Lycurgus organized the category of *hēbōntes*. The content of the chapter does not match this programme. The account really just develops one theme, that of rivalry between the young people.<sup>23</sup> Everything we know about Spartan society shows that competition was a permanent feature from childhood to election to the *Gerousia*; but Xenophon thinks that it is at the age of the *hēbōntes* that it is the most pitiless, because it is then that the ‘career’ of those who are only future citizens becomes apparent (something which is entirely possible). It is probable that what struck him most about the *hēbōntes* was the extreme tension which ruled amongst them, and he wants to show that this tension is not a result of the young men’s temperament, but that it is intended and organized by the laws themselves. This is a paradox, for the laws generally organize order and concord rather, and Sparta built her reputation on precisely this (*eunomia*). That is why Xenophon insists so much on the fact that it is a ‘good rivalry’, the best for the gods and for the city (ἡ θεοφιλεστάτη τε καὶ πολιτικωτάτη ἔρις) because its object is the city’s good, and because of this it points the city towards good. It is not enough to say, as Ollier does,<sup>24</sup> that Xenophon here ‘recalls’ a passage of Hesiod (*Works and Days* 17–26): it is a *reference*; he borrows the idea from it by transposing to the political sphere what the poet applied to the sphere of work and the craftsman.<sup>25</sup> It remains for Xenophon to demonstrate that this rivalry results from love for the city and not from individual ambition, and that it is a good thing to direct all the energy of both those who are recruited as *hippeis* and those who are rejected (because he strongly emphasizes this reciprocity) towards the preparation and execution of apparently pointless confrontations.

This theme is implemented in a particularly rigorous fashion in a structure which alternates theoretical considerations on the good civic *eris* and concrete facts – for there is in this chapter some real information, as much about the selection of the *hippeis* as about the brawls amongst the youths.

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§2, theoretical: the usefulness of emulation, familiar in the case of choirs and sporting contests, less so in the case of the good of the city. In each case, it results in a raising of the level of performance.

§§3–4, application to Sparta: the recruitment of *hippeis* and the rivalries which ensue.

§5, theoretical: these rivalries benefit the city, because they make everyone aspire to excellence, especially in combat.

§6, application to Sparta: the physical aspect and its limitations.

This to-ing and fro-ing between theory and practice is effective, and, if you accept the author's presuppositions, convincing.

The choice of the theme, and the fact that Xenophon sticks to it rigorously, have curious consequences. The *hēbōntes* surely did have numerous and important activities; but Xenophon chooses only to mention these rivalries and brawls, as if these were their only occupation. Because of this, the *hippeis'* tasks and the importance of their role in the functioning of the state are completely obscured. Not only does the author suppress everything but the fact, the process, and above all the consequences of selection, but the institution is presented in such a way that we might think the setting of the youths in competition was its only aim. To the unsuspecting reader, the *hippeis* are thus in danger of appearing to be a pseudo-institution, a 'joke' institution – which is evidently not what Xenophon thinks, who knew it and understood its importance, as is shown by his account of the way in which the conspiracy of Cinadon was put down (*Hell.* 3.3.9). Such is the distortion produced by the fact that here, as throughout the treatise but perhaps even more clearly here, his discussion is entirely governed by ideology. The *hippeis* are not even named (as in *Hell.* 3.3.9, their name has to be deduced from that of the *hippagretai*), a typical example of the author's intellectual attitude, which is not at all concerned with transmitting information: this is assumed to be familiar.

Why has he chosen this theme of rivalry? Doubtless, as I have said, he was really struck by the tension prevalent amongst the *hēbōntes* – we can credit him with this. But he had other reasons, connected to the logic of his account. First, this theme fits perfectly with his general idea, which is that Lycurgus did completely the opposite to other Greeks. In other cities, the ideal is harmony amongst citizens and submission to the authorities: here we see the young vowing surely fierce and durable hatreds against one another, and rebelling against the choice made by the authorities. The other reason for this choice, less evident but undoubtedly decisive, is Xenophon's desire to reply, without saying so, as he does elsewhere, to the critics.<sup>26</sup> It is easy to imagine how Sparta's adversaries who were familiar with these customs might have exploited them, protesting against the perversion represented by

the obligation placed on the youths, including those who had been chosen, to devote all their energy to these quarrels; against the spying and, absolutely without doubt, the informing which it entailed;<sup>27</sup> against the physical brutality which was deployed therein.<sup>28</sup> He is particularly careful to reply to this last point, by showing that this use of force was beneficial to the physical condition of those concerned, and that it was limited by very precise rules, so that it could not entail serious consequences.

In the end, Xenophon comes out rather well from this dangerous exercise, but he cannot remedy the weakness of his thesis itself, that the behaviour imposed on the *hēbōntes* by custom is an example par excellence of the good *eris*. As Birgalias has shown,<sup>29</sup> there is not a great deal in common between the agonistic spirit cited as a model in §2 and the rivalries of the Spartan youths. The *agōn* takes place between two men placed on an equal footing in which the better man wins; here there is no equality, because the choice of the better man is made *beforehand*. To be sound, rivalry has to take place before the decision, and this, taken under conditions accepted by all, puts an end to the competition; here, on the contrary, competition is *born of the decision* and takes place in a ghastly context, in a spirit of revenge and jealousy. Informing, ambushes and evil blows of all kinds take the place of rules of the game. These practices, which Xenophon wants to make us accept as bouts of virtue, in reality show Spartan education in its worst light. Transposed to the political sphere, such behaviour would make of each election to a post of responsibility the start of an endless struggle where anything, or almost anything, would go.

## Conclusion

Is it legitimate to make chapters 2–4 (with 6.1–2), thought of as a whole, into an account of the Spartan education system? If this was the case, it would be the longest section of the treatise after that on military matters, and this length would have to be explained either by Xenophon's early awareness (before Plato and Aristotle) of the importance of the role of education in the city's system, or (perhaps rather) by the number of criticisms which were current on the subject. We have seen that the concluding formula of chapter 2 announces the end of the account of *paideia*; on the other hand, the introductory phrase of chapter 5, 'I have explained in outline the measures enacted by Lycurgus concerning each age-group (ἃ μὲν οὖν ἐκάστη ἡλικία ἐνομοτέθησεν σχεδὸν εἴρηται)', indicates that for the author, if chapters 2–4 do indeed form a whole, its subject is not exactly education, but the regulation specific to each age-group,<sup>30</sup> chapter 2 alone treating of *paideia* proper. In practice, it seems to me that this comes to the same thing. Certain features, as we have seen, link chapter 3 to this account of *paideia*, and do so even in the

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author's mind. The same goes for the *hēbōntes*: of course, they are physically adults and fight in the army, so much so that it might seem strange to talk of *paideia* in connection with them; but they still do not lead an independent life, they are closely supervised and they undergo a 'breaking in'. The most significant thing, as far as they are concerned, is the role of the *paidonomos* in §6: for Xenophon, it goes without saying that the *hēbōntes* are his responsibility, even if he does not have the power to punish them and for that he has to transfer them to the ephors. All in all, then, I believe that it is legitimate to think that, for Xenophon, final departure from the education system only took place on departure from the category of *hēbōntes*; but this departure was progressive, as their introduction into the life of the city was progressive.

### *The apologetic aspect*

Xenophon's aim was certainly not to *describe* the Spartan education system, even summarily. There is no information in his text on the annual age classes, on the age of entry into his categories, on the way time was spent and the subjects taught.<sup>31</sup> He keeps to the programme announced at the beginning: to show the singularity and the excellence of Lycurgus' laws, only possible cause of Sparta's greatness. This theme structures the treatise until 10.8, where his account seems to be closed by the phrase 'however ancient they may be, [these laws] are still at present completely novel for other Greeks; the most surprising thing of all, everyone praises such customs, but no city can imitate them'.<sup>32</sup> In fact, this theme is absent from chapters 11–14, but it reappears briefly in 15.1. Up until the end of chapter 10, then, the account is conducted with the rigour of a demonstration, in which chapters 2–4 are just a step.

This theme is a theme of praise, and, in fact, the tone is sometimes the eloquent one of the *enkōmion*; for example, on the discipline of the *paidiskoi*. But the discussion is most often a defence plea, the organization of which seems to be dictated less by the logic of a plan than by the argumentation, in the form of a list of critical points, of Sparta's detractors; whence the often enumerative pace of the exposition. Is this defensive character specific to the account of education? It is difficult to say, because we do not have any other criteria for judging it than what we gauge to be the *tone* of each passage. It seems to me that the defensive tone can be found in other places in the whole made up by the ten first chapters: in 1.3–4 (physical exercises for girls and women; justification – *teknopoiia*); 1.7–9 (sharing of women; same justification); 5.7 (absence of torches; justification – it makes temperance indispensable); 7.5–6 (nature of coinage; justification – to prevent secret enrichment); 10.1 (gerontocracy; justification – it encourages the practice of virtue right up to old age). But it also seems to me that it is in the account of education, especially in chapters 2 and 4, that the defensive attitude is the

most frequent. This might correspond to the fact that Sparta's adversaries in the fourth century particularly concentrated their fire on her education system: this is a point we shall have to verify.

On reflection, this defensive discourse of Xenophon's has some strange aspects. We might expect that, against arguments which were for the most part received wisdom, when they were not pure myths, he would re-establish 'the truth about Sparta', by explaining that in reality things were not such as were believed, or at least that they were not so clear-cut. For example, *à propos* theft, he could have said that the boys did not steal all the time, but only on particular occasions; and (for he knew this, since he says it at *Anabasis* 4.6.14) that they could only steal a certain category of objects. Not at all; he takes generally accepted ideas just as they are, and tries to turn them around by making their contents into stages of a eulogistic argument. Yes, the boys are poorly dressed, and malnourished; yes, they steal all the time, and have a pederastic relationship forced upon them; yes, the young men spend their time spying on and fighting against each other; but it is precisely this which is excellent.

#### *Documentary value*

As a consequence of this choice, the *Lak. Pol.* is often very disappointing as a documentary source. This is not *always* the case. In chapter 2 we find some precise but allusive information, given as if unintentionally, for example on the *paidonomos* and his assistants, on the ritual at Orthia's sanctuary, on the role of the *eirenes*, on the delegation of authority; the same in chapter 4, on the selection of the *hippeis* and on the limits imposed on the brawls. But, alongside this, chapter 3 is almost pure rhetoric, the only information worthy of mention being the introduction to the *syssition*. In chapter 2 we find quite an alarming catalogue of generally accepted ideas reproduced wholesale, which might make us doubt whether the author had ever actually been to Sparta and was really familiar with Spartan education.<sup>33</sup> It is not that I really doubt that Xenophon is the author of the *Lak. Pol.*, far from it; but he believes that it is possible to convince without informing.

Insofar as Xenophon does so, what sort of Sparta does he describe? It is generally thought that, beyond the Lycurgan fiction, it is the Sparta that he knows, the Sparta of his time. The beginning of the treatise clearly indicates this: the situation he is reflecting upon is the *current* situation, that of a city very poor in citizens. Chapters 11–13 and 14, on the kings and the army, manifestly describe contemporary reality. In the chapters on education, the tense employed is the present, but this is fairly rare when it comes down to it (2.8 and 10; 3.5), except in chapter 4, where, in §§3–6, it is systematic. Xenophon most frequently adopts 'Lycurgus' point of view', which leads

him to use a past tense; this interweaving of tenses clearly demonstrates that for him there is no difference between the Sparta he knows and that of Lycurgus.<sup>34</sup>

Such is our principal, and almost sole, source.

#### ARISTOTLE

##### *Lakedaimonion Politeia*

All that is left of the exposition which Aristotle, in his *Lakedaimonion Politeia*, devoted to education is the very brief extract-summary preserved by a second-century BC epitomizer, Herakleides Lembos (fr. 13 Dilts = fr. 611.13 Rose).

τρέφουσι δὲ τὰ τέκνα ὥστε μηδέποτε πληροῦν, ἵνα ἐθίζωνται δύνασθαι πεινῆν. ἐθίζουσι δὲ αὐτοὺς καὶ κλέπτειν, καὶ τὸν ἄλοντα κολάζουσι πληγαῖς, ἵν' ἐκ τούτου πονεῖν καὶ ἀγρυπνεῖν δύνωνται ἐν τοῖς πολεμίοις· μελετῶσι δὲ εὐθὺς ἐκ παιδῶν βραχυλογεῖν, εἴτα ἐμμελῶς καὶ σκώπτειν καὶ σκώπτεσθαι.

They feed the children in such a way that they are never full, so that they learn to endure hunger. They also teach them to steal, and punish with blows anyone who lets himself be caught, to make them better able to endure fatigue and lack of sleep in the face of the enemy. From childhood they learn to speak briefly, and then both to joke and be the subject of jokes.

This fragment is rather disappointing, both in its brevity and because it does not add any (for us) new information. It is divided into two parts. The first, on diet and theft, is directly inspired by Xenophon, both in its meaning and, partly, its formulation.

μηδέποτε πληροῦν, cf. ὡς ὑπὸ πλῆσμονῆς μήποτε βαρύνεσθαι (2.5);

ἀγρυπνεῖν, cf. καὶ νυκτὸς ἀγρυπνεῖν (2.7);

ἐν τοῖς πολεμίοις, cf. πολεμικωτέρους (2.7);

τὸν ἄλοντα κολάζουσι πληγαῖς, cf. πολλὰς πληγὰς ἐπέβαλε τῷ ἀλίσκομένῳ (2.8).

The second part treats a subject which is not tackled by Xenophon, and which we might be tempted to say only appears for us in Plutarch; but this would be to forget Plato's eulogy of the teaching of 'laconism', which he considers to be Sparta's great success (*Protagoras* 342d–343c). Plato also speaks of joking words, but not jokes made *ad hominem*. Plutarch will recapitulate the two themes of brief speech and joking.

The main interest of this extract is to attest that Aristotle devoted an exposition to education in his *Lak. Pol.*; the opposite would indeed be surprising, Spartan education being the subject of eulogies in the fourth century, but also of criticisms, and Aristotle, following Plato, being persuaded of the importance of education for anyone who wants to build a stable society.

These few phrases do not allow us to construct a precise idea of what this exposition looked like. We can see that it was not solely devoted to customs linked to education, but also evoked, at least in part, related teachings. Did it also tackle its structures and organization? Herakleides' inadequate extracts do not tell us. It is probable, in any case, that Aristotle's account was used by hellenistic authors, and perhaps also by Plutarch.

## PLUTARCH

### *Life of Lycurgus*

The problem which concerns us here is establishing whether Plutarch's text transmits, at least on certain points, information dating back to the fourth century, and can because of this be used as a complement to Xenophon to reconstruct a picture of the classical education system. It is in any case evident that in *Lycurgus* he is following Xenophon very closely on the subject, especially borrowing his plan, to the extent that we get the impression that while writing he had Xenophon's treatise if not before his eyes, at least in his memory. But he adds a great deal, especially on the subject of organization, and nowhere is he content simply to copy. A significant example is given by what he says about the rite at Orthia's altar (18.2). He talks about it because Xenophon talks about it, but there the resemblance ceases. He cannot say the same thing, he cannot use it in the same way, because, in the meantime, the ritual has been profoundly modified (so much so that what Xenophon says about it must have seemed enigmatic to him). He does not talk about it in connection with theft, but in connection with hardening to suffering – a theme which Xenophon also develops, but in the commentary which follows the reference to the ceremony. Nothing could better show how far Plutarch is from being a servile imitator.

### *The gap between Plutarch and Xenophon*

This gap is immediately obvious: a difference, first, between the literary genres used, each with very strong constraints; a difference of period too, which means different points of view – on the one hand, that of the involved theorist, on the other, that of the antiquarian. The two authors have in common, however, an important characteristic: admiration for Lycurgus' Sparta. But what Plutarch says about education is much closer to a description. Information is not assumed to be known, it is supplied, if necessary by means of autopsy.<sup>35</sup> A few fragments of justification are present, and come from Xenophon: on theft (17.6); on the dietary regime, but with a developed and updated medical commentary (17.7–8). Naturally, Plutarch's text does not have the defensive tone of Xenophon's, since the Spartan education system was no longer under attack in his time.