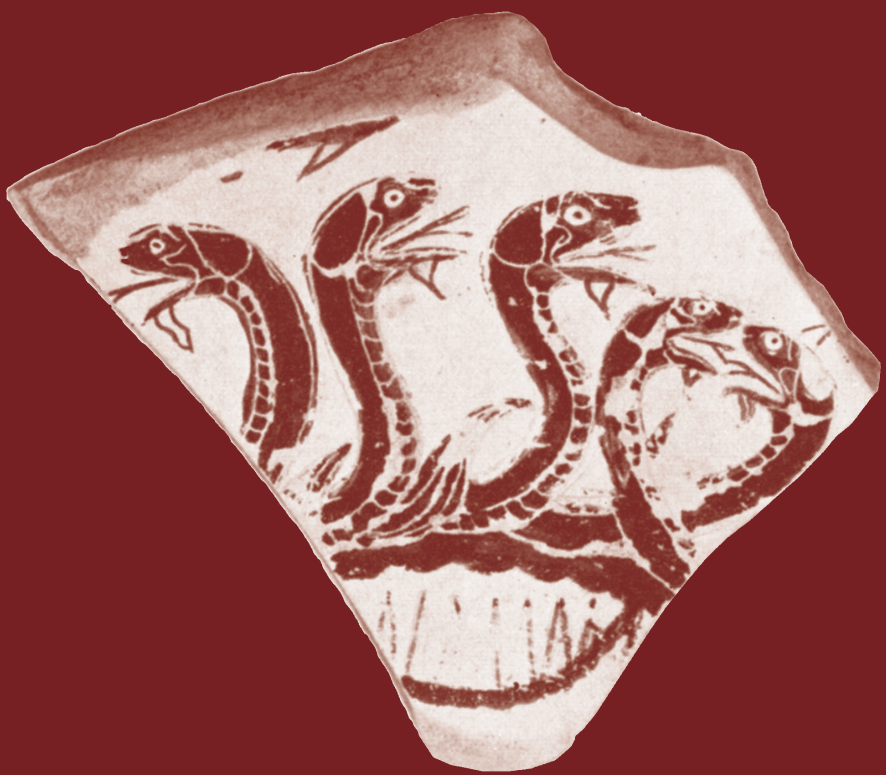
SPARTA

New Perspectives



Edited by

Stephen Hodkinson

and

Anton Powell

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with translations from the French by Emma Stafford



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To
Geoffrey de Ste. Croix

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INTRODUCTION

Stephen Hodkinson

This volume represents the fruits of the international conference on Spartan history held in Hay-on-Wye on 8–10 September 1997, jointly organised by the University of Wales Institute of Classics and Ancient History and by the University of Manchester Ancient History Seminar. The conference included scholars from four different continents and twelve countries: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. It represents, to our knowledge, the first time that ancient historians from so many nationalities have gathered together for a conference devoted to Spartan history. Along with recent international conferences on Spartan and Lakonian art and archaeology (Palagia and Coulson (eds.) 1993; Cavanagh and Walker (eds.) 1998), it signals the notable resurgence of Spartan studies which has taken place around the world during the last generation.

It is in many respects appropriate that this first international conference on Spartan history should have been held in Britain. The preoccupation of British scholarship with ancient Sparta constitutes a notable sub-theme in the history of classical studies during the 20th century (cf. Cartledge 1998, 46–7). The efforts devoted by the British School at Athens from the 1900s onwards to excavation and survey within Sparta and Lakonia (Catling 1998) were matched, within the field of ancient history, by a remarkable dynasty of Oxford-based Sparta-watchers: Toynbee, Wade-Gery, Andrewes, Forrest, Jeffery, Holladay, and – above all – de Ste. Croix. It is a particular pleasure for us as editors to acknowledge the debt that the recent resurgence of Spartan historiography owes to Geoffrey de Ste. Croix, now in his 90th year, who gave his blessing to our conference but whose attendance was sadly prevented by ill-health. His penetrating analysis of the socio-economic basis of Spartan policy-making in *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (1972) revitalised the study of Spartan politics, which was then in danger of stagnating in the quagmire of controversy surrounding the infamous 'Great Rhētra', by demonstrating how much was to be gained from the underused classical evidence. On a more

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personal level, it was the breath of fresh air blown in by *OPW* that inspired Hodkinson as an undergraduate to turn to the study of Sparta. It was de Ste. Croix too who provided Powell in early career with much generous assistance and advice. Above all, however, his contribution has been tangible through his intellectual influence on the primary British historian of Sparta of the last twenty years, Paul Cartledge, whose own academic career began at Oxford.

However, to portray Spartan history-writing as a largely Oxford, or exclusively British, affair would be misleading. Powell's academic writing has been pursued from London and Wales. Hodkinson's study of Sparta began in the 'Manchester History School', from which Kathleen Chrimes' work on Sparta (1949) had emanated in an earlier generation. Most of Cartledge's career has been spent at Cambridge, for some years as colleague of Moses Finley, an American by birth and academic training, who supervised Hodkinson's early doctoral research. Finley's all-encompassing, revisionist essay on 'Sparta' (1968) continues to exercise a seminal influence over current approaches to classical Spartan society. Notably, it first appeared in a volume from a conference held in Paris. Indeed, modern Spartan studies have always been thoroughly international in character. The late 19th and early 20th centuries were marked by major contributions from Continental scholars: from Andreades, Stais and Tsountas in Greece; from Niccolini, Pareti and Solari in Italy; from Cavaignac, Jeanmaire, Ollier and Roussel in France; and from Ehrenberg, Kahrstedt, Niese and Wilamowitz in Germany. (I purposely omit works on Sparta distorted by their alignment with Nazi ideology.) As recent bibliographic surveys (Vagiakakos and Taïphakos 1975; Clauss 1983; Ducat 1983) amply attest, Spartan historiography in the second half of the twentieth century has extended well beyond the established Western European centres of classical learning to a truly world-wide academic community, with important works from scholars around the globe such as Andreev, Bockisch, Christou, Demakopoulou, Fuks, Furuyama, Hamilton, D.H. Kelly, Lotze, Oliva, Shimron, Starr, Steinhauer, Tigerstedt, Tsopanakis and Wolski.

It was in this internationalist context that we resolved to organise the present conference on Spartan history. Whereas Lakonian archaeologists are necessarily drawn together by collaborative enterprise and by the presence of their excavation sites, their survey areas and much of their study material in Greece itself, historians typically work solitarily and independently. The danger of pursuing our researches in parallel universes, of missing valuable interconnections, is ever-present. It therefore seemed to us important – and the time seemed ripe – to

attempt to arrange a first international gathering of Spartan historians. Inevitably, there were certain restrictions. For sake of coherence, we resolved to focus upon the archaic to hellenistic periods, upon which most recent historical research has concentrated. Even within this time-span, restrictions of timetable and space limited the number of invitations we could issue. Our imperfect knowledge of the academic communities of certain countries also meant that some historians of Sparta became known to us only after the conference. Others were prevented from attending by alternative commitments or considerations of expense. We have attempted to remedy these deficiencies by inviting contributions for this volume from certain scholars who could not attend and from those who attended as non-speaking participants. Nevertheless, the scholars whose papers we publish here should not be regarded as representing an exhaustive list of important current historians of Sparta. We cordially invite communication from other interested scholars with a view to their inclusion in future conferences.

Despite these restrictions, the historians who gathered together in Hay constituted a significant sample of present Spartan historiography. Many were eminent scholars who knew one another's work but had never previously met. Others were younger scholars or postgraduate students whose participation we were especially keen to encourage. Since the purpose of the conference was internationalist in inspiration – to enable colleagues from different academic backgrounds to discuss and learn from each other's diverse work – we judged it inappropriate as organisers to impose a common theme, which would inevitably reflect our personal agendas and constrain the independent input of other colleagues, especially the fresh insights of younger scholars. Our only stipulation was that contributions should attempt to develop new perspectives on Spartan history which would point the way towards future research.

Diverse as the subjects of the papers were, they clustered around certain key areas of interest or types of approach which are reflected – albeit with many fruitful cross-currents – in the thematic groupings outlined below.

Spartiate institutions and society. Historical discussion of the Spartan polis has long concentrated upon the elite ruling body of Spartiate citizens. As several papers in this volume indicate, their institutions and society remain a central focus of much current analysis, with considerable scope for the re-evaluation of older approaches. The opening three papers deal with central institutions of Spartiate life:

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political institutions, the public upbringing, and the common messes. Hans van Wees' contribution addresses an old problem involving the 'Great Rhētra', but applies a new perspective to free it from the quagmire mentioned above. His starting point is a text, the poem *Eunomia* ('Good Order') by the late-seventh-century poet Tyrtaios, which is usually thought to attest the Rhētra's creation of a new political order. Setting the poem within the context of popular discontent at the greed of leading citizens, he argues (through a new reconstruction of the text) that the *Eunomia* represents not a new politics but a conservative attempt to restore harmony by harnessing the religious power of Delphi to reassert the need for obedience to the established authorities. Taking the innovative step of disassociating poem and Rhētra, he suggests that their linkage arose only later in the context of fourth-century political controversies. The *Eunomia* and the Rhētra constituted two radically different responses to internal crisis, with the Rhētra representing a later, secular community agreement for political reform which would include the citizenry at large within the decision-making process. Tyrtaios' *Eunomia* is not the *eunomia* for which Sparta was famous in classical times (Hdt. 1.65). The Rhētra, in contrast, finds new life as part of the 'sixth-century revolution' (Finley 1968, 25) which created the classical Spartan social order.

Jean Ducat tackles a topic, the public upbringing, whose study is presently in a state of flux following Nigel Kennell's recent monograph (1995), which argued that observable transformations in its character in hellenistic and Roman times mean that much of the information in later sources does not constitute evidence for the upbringing of the classical period. Accepting and extending Kennell's argument through the observation that all our evidence takes the form not of descriptive accounts but of a succession of discourses, Ducat emphasises the 'private' aspects of the upbringing typically neglected in ancient accounts: the significant role of the family, its economic expense, and the features shared with Greek *paideia* elsewhere. Ducat's main subject, however, is the long-standing controversy regarding whether the upbringing – with all its associated elements, such as the age classes, pederasty and the upbringing of girls – derived from a set of tribal initiation rites or can be explained in terms of its contemporary pedagogical function of forming future citizens of a political community. Eschewing the frequently polarised character of past debate, he affirms the need to combine both anthropological and historical approaches. The classical upbringing, though thoroughly coherent, was an amalgam of both functional and 'non-functional' inherited elements.

The diversity of current approaches to Spartiate institutions is illustrated by Henk Singor's paper on another topic which has received much attention in recent years (Fisher 1989; Lavrencic 1993; Link 1998), the common messes or *syssitia*. Where Ducat analyses the underlying character of the upbringing, Singor's concern is to explore how recruitment to the messes operated in practice in the fifth century BC. Essential to such exploration, in the absence of clear evidence in the sources, is the exercise of thinking through the logic of the 'system'. Speculative though such exercises inevitably are, their great merit is their very specificity in making explicit assumptions about the working of institutions and their mutual interconnections which would otherwise remain clouded in generalities. In the case of the messes, the two key factors are their connection with the organisation of the basic unit of the army, the *enōmotia*, and the demographic constraints upon levels of recruitment, in so far as they can plausibly be deduced from the comparative evidence of Model Life Tables. Working from these starting-points, Singor detects the existence of a closely-regulated system whereby recruitment into specific *enōmotiai* and into larger regiments (*lochoi*) operated according to membership of Sparta's three Dorian 'tribes' (*phylai*) and five villages. A significant implication regarding the all-important pederastic relationships, which probably served as the basis for mess recruitment, is that a youth's choice in his selection of a boy was severely circumscribed and controlled. The image of a society which exercised quasi-totalitarian control over its citizens is thus brought sharply into focus.

The following two chapters treat aspects of this control which extended across diverse institutional contexts. Ten years ago an important study by Robert Parker (1989) outlined distinctive aspects of Sparta's religious practice and their relation to her society. Nicolas Richer's essay in this volume draws attention to one distinctive sphere of Spartan piety simply touched on by Parker: the various cults accorded to *pathēmata* – abstractions of physical states or dispositions which seize the body (such as Fear, Death, Laughter and Love) – which he suggests were significant religious manifestations of the innovatory spirit of archaic Sparta. Focusing upon the cult of *Aidōs* (deference), he examines the multiple guises in which it appears in Spartiate life and – in line with current approaches which view Greek religious phenomena not in isolation but as a system – its relation to the other *pathēmata* of *Phobos* (Fear) and *Gelōs* (Laughter). In some contexts *Aidōs* appears as a model for female behaviour as counterpart to the *Phobos* which governed male behaviour. More frequently, however, it is a characteristic

virtue of Spartiate men: especially in military contexts, where it often distinguishes their behaviour from the *Phobos* felt by non-Spartiates, and in the upbringing where Spartiate teenage youths are said to possess more *Aidōs* than even virgins in the bridal chamber! In all these roles it formed part of the extensive psychological buttressing which the Spartan polis employed in support of the social order.

In the latest of a series of articles exploring the semiotics of communication in classical Sparta (David 1989a; 1989b; 1992) Ephraim David examines a further psychological buttress often ignored by historians: the polis' extensive use of silence as a mode of control, 'reducing…the communication process to the realm of the predictable'. Silence, he notes, was the essential complement to the Spartiates' famed laconic speech. It was enjoined on them in a variety of contexts: as part of the *Aidōs* expected of teenagers; by way of deference to the stated opinions of elders; to enforce secrecy and censorship; to stifle popular involvement in assembly debates; to restrict displays of grief during family bereavement. In these contexts silence reinforced the established hierarchy within the citizen body, privileging those (such as adults, elders, magistrates) to whom speech was permitted or those (such as deceased kings) for whom public lamentation was expected. In other contexts, as during the enforced intoxication of helots at the mess or through laconic responses to garrulous foreign ambassadors, it defined and distinguished Spartiates from non-Spartiates. More generally, the minimisation of speech enhanced the persuasive power of the striking visual images regularly employed by the Spartan authorities (cf. Powell 1989).

Spartans and the Outside World. The contrast drawn in certain classical writers between Spartan laconic speech and Athenian love of rhetoric reminds us that for contemporaries the relationship of Spartan praxis to that of other Greek poleis was a problematic issue. (Note in this volume Ellen Millender's discussion of Athenian ideological representations of empowered Spartan women.) Modern scholarship has often followed contemporaries in portraying Sparta as somewhat peculiar or exceptional, a polis isolated from wider Greek trends. Other recent studies, in contrast, have emphasised Sparta's thorough implication in broader Greek affairs (e.g. Herman 1987; Mitchell 1997, esp. 73–89) neatly encapsulated in Irad Malkin's telling phrase 'the Spartan Mediterranean' (1994). Several papers at the conference addressed, from various standpoints, questions relating to the relationship between the Spartiates and other Greeks, both inside and outside Spartan territory.

Hodkinson's investigation of how far Spartiates shared the general

Greek passion for engagement in the athletic *agōn* continues a long-term project (Hodkinson 1986; 1997a; 1998a; 1998b) to explore the complex manner in which apparently distinctive Spartan practices frequently reflect and exemplify trends observable elsewhere. Within their home territory Spartiate idiosyncrasy is evident in the prominence of team contests, in public athletics for girls, and in a certain disdain for boxing and the *pankration*. The evidence of private victory monuments and public victor lists shows, however, that Spartan citizens, both individually and collectively, accorded a high valuation to most forms of individual athletic competition. As regards participation in contests abroad, the much-highlighted decline of Spartiate athletic victories in the Olympic games was not the dramatic phenomenon normally assumed and was not unique to Sparta. Far from displaying a hostility to foreign athletics, the polis publicly commemorated the achievements of past victors. Policy towards contemporary victors was more circumspect: there were no material rewards, no public statues, no epinician odes; but victors were given a special military role in the king's bodyguard. Private Spartiate victory dedications at Olympia, though restrained in terms of monumentality, were advanced in the boastfulness of their commemorative inscriptions. In general, the well-known literary evidence – much of it late – consistently exaggerates Sparta's abstention from the athletic *agōn*. In contrast, the hitherto underexploited epigraphic evidence from both Sparta and Olympia displays the Spartiates' overt celebration of agonistic success.

One notable feature of this epigraphic record is the similarity between athletic inscriptions from Sparta itself and those from areas inhabited by the other free members of the Lakedaimonian polis, the *perioikoi*. This cultural *koinē* is apparent with other material artefacts too, such as the famous hero-reliefs (Hibler 1993; Salapata 1993) and the ΕΝ ΠΟΛΕΜΟΙ memorials for fallen warriors (*IG* V.i.701–10, 918, 921, 1124–5, 1320, 1591). Often neglected in past scholarship, the crucial role of the *perioikoi* in the classical period has recently received renewed attention from both archaeologists and historians through the Anglo-Dutch *Laconia Survey* and the work of the Copenhagen Polis Centre.[1] Nigel Kennell's paper in this volume extends this attention to a less well-known era, the second and first centuries BC, when the former perioikic communities were no longer dependent on Sparta but were independent poleis and had formed their own separate League of the Lakedaimonians. Inscriptions, especially from proxeny and other forms of honorific decrees, also form the backbone of Kennell's source material. They reveal that political life revolved

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largely around the individual poleis rather than the Lakedaimonian League, with the poleis maintaining their separate citizenships and levying import and export duties even on one another's citizens. Connected with this minimal degree of unity were the close ties which the poleis maintained with Sparta, adhering to her calendar and using her coins. This cultural influence, presumably an ongoing legacy of the classical cultural *koinē*, was augmented by informal socio-political influence. Frequent grants of proxeny decrees to Spartan citizens indicate the Lakedaimonian poleis' need for patrons in the region's most powerful city. One recalls the ties of clientship which wealthy classical Spartiate families probably established with aspiring protégés among the *perioikoi* (Hodkinson 1997b, 65).

Scholarly neglect of the *perioikoi* contrasts strongly with the controversies which, in modern times as in antiquity, have surrounded Sparta's servile population, the helots.[2] One vigorous debate concerns the extent of the threat posed to the Spartiate elite by the numerically superior helots. Were the helots mostly docile towards their Spartiate masters (Talbert 1989), 'a desirable commodity of which they wanted more' (Whitby 1994, 110)? Or a wolf held by the throat (Grundy 1911, 219), 'a potentially active human volcano' (de Ste. Croix 1972, 90) ever liable to erupt? If the latter, should helot efforts against their Spartiate masters be viewed as a class struggle (Cartledge 1987, 1991) or as a struggle for 'national' liberation? The prime obstacle to answering these questions is, as with all servile groups in antiquity, the extreme paucity of evidence from the helots' viewpoint – an issue especially acute with regard to the helots of Messenia, who successfully separated from Spartan control in 370/69 and thereafter maintained their independence. This Messenian perspective is currently the subject of specific archaeological focus through the work of the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project.[3]

Thomas Figueira's paper illuminates the questions of Messenian and helot identity via a new, historiographical approach which views the evidence of writers like Thucydides as testimony to contemporary ideological representations. He contextualises the emergence of Messenian ethnicity in the self-representations of the former rebels (from Lakonia as well as Messenia) of the great mid-fifth-century revolt, who were established by the Athenians as a free and autonomous community at Naupaktos and depicted themselves as the authentic citizens of a Messenian state. These self-representations received support from the official position of the Athenians in their imperial conflict with Sparta, which portrayed disaffected helots as

a subjugated people fighting for their 'national' freedom rather than as a suppressed *dēmos* engaged in class struggle. The crucial obstacle to this latter approach was – as so often – the loyal support for Sparta provided by the bulk of the Lakedaimonian *dēmos*, the *perioikoi*. In contrast, Spartiate representations denied the existence of ethnic distinctions, portraying all helots as inhabitants of Lakōnikē. Helots who collaborated and received their freedom were treated, and viewed themselves – as the term *neodamōdeis* implies – as perioikic members of the *dēmos* of the Lakedaimonian polis. Both sets of representations were reflected in rival depictions of the events of 370/69, Messenian propaganda portraying them as a return from exile to refound the Messenian state, the Spartans as the liberation of their former slaves. What, however, of the existing helot inhabitants whose contribution was marginalised by both depictions? There are signs that already under Spartiate rule, faced with resistance to moves to grant them political rights, the region's inhabitants were themselves developing some sense of separate identity, based upon local cult and drawing upon folk memories of Messenian resistance to the Spartan conquest, which provided the basis for their subsequent participation in the independent polis of Messene.

The phenomenon of self-representation, including a purported helot connection, is also at issue in Massimo Nafissi's study of relations between Sparta and her colony, Taras, in southern Italy. The nature of that relationship was complex. Despite the contrasts drawn by some ancient writers between sober, austere Sparta and drunken, luxurious Taras, the two poleis maintained close political connections from the sixth to the late fourth centuries. Several of Taras' institutions bore a strong Spartan flavour, but it would be rash to assume that these resemblances shared a common chronological origin, still less that historically-attested Tarentine customs can be used to fill in gaps in our knowledge of early Sparta. The cult of Dionysos and the place-name Satyrion for the Tarentine acropolis may suggest the importance of wine and banqueting in Spartan society at the time of the colony's foundation. But cults which hint more overtly at a Spartan connection are probably later creations designed to establish or reinforce contemporary links, as was the introduction of the ephorate attested at Taras and her colony Herakleia Lucana. Similarly, the divergent stories of Taras' foundation by the Spartan Partheniai are not reflections of the historical settlement, but later fictions which derive from classical political circumstances and present contrasting relations between the poleis. The account of Antiochos depicts the Partheniai as cowardly

helots, implying the absence of ongoing ties; Ephorus' account highlights the Partheniai's courage and Spartan goodwill, implying a close contemporary relationship. The topic of her colonial relations – which, as Nafissi notes, were also claimed by other poleis – thus takes us to the heart of Sparta's thoroughgoing implication in the affairs of the classical Mediterranean world.

The final paper in this section, by P.-J. Shaw, also considers Spartan intervention abroad (against her arch-rival Argos) and returns us to Spartiate involvement in Messenia and the Olympic games – but from an even more unsettling historiographical perspective through which she questions the absolute dating conventionally assigned to archaic Greek history. The chronology of events in early Peloponnesian history is critically dependent upon post-classical Olympiad chronography. Yet clear discrepancies in Pausanias' account of Messenian history suggest the need for radical revision of established scholarly attributions of chronological values to numbered Olympiads. Evidence for the upward displacement of certain key events by some 43 Olympiads, or 172 years, prompts a substantial experiment in the global downward recalibration of early Olympiad 'dates'. The exercise produces some plausible synchronisms, including the resolution of several notorious Doppelgängers, and calls for a root-and-branch reconsideration of Sparta's historical development, with the Second Messenian war as an affair of the late archaic period and the infamous battle of Hysiai located *c*. 497 as a prelude to Sepeia. The potential implications are immense, including for several papers in the present volume: Nafissi's account of Spartan-Tarentine relations and Van Wees' account of political development would look very different with the foundation of Taras and Tyrtaios' *Eunomia* placed in the later sixth and early fifth centuries. A late archaic Chionis, dedicating his own victory monuments at Olympia and Sparta, would substantially revise Hodkinson's discussion of official attitudes and private behaviour regarding the celebration of athletic success. Complete exposition of this radical thesis in the author's Cardiff doctoral dissertation is keenly awaited.

Representations of Spartan society. As several of the above essays indicate, the study of Sparta is thoroughly complicated by the fact that the literary sources (almost all of them non-Spartan) were rarely, if ever, concerned to provide information about Sparta for its own sake. In the words of Oswyn Murray (1990, 9), 'it is portrayed by a succession of non-Spartan observers as an ideal construct, heavily contaminated with the usual anthropological failings, of emphasis on its otherness, its

difference from the norm, and of its conformity to a system'. Indeed, several of the literary accounts are embedded in discourses marked by a high degree of ideological colouring which represent the character of Spartan society in ways which frequently involve considerable distortion or even invention, mostly with an overtly or implicitly idealising tendency. This phenomenon – known since François Ollier's epoch-making study (1933–43) as *le mirage spartiate* – creates, as Paul Cartledge notes, the major historiographical problem of how, from distorted evidence, we can assess the 'reality' under distortion. On the other hand, as he stresses, the mirage constitutes a significant historical phenomenon in its own right, a phenomenon which has left the enduring legacy in medieval and modern intellectual consciousness highlighted in Elizabeth Rawson's study of *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (1969).

In his chapter Cartledge undertakes a comparative examination of contemporary mirage and European tradition in the sphere of political thought, juxtaposing the intellectual idealisation of Sparta that arose within the circle of Socrates, which contained many upper-class Athenians disenchanted with their democratic system, with the laconism of the major modern political philosopher and advocate of direct participatory democracy, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In discussing the Socratics, Cartledge acknowledges modern debate about their approach to Sparta. In the absence of any writings, the political views of Socrates himself must remain conjectural; but he was associated by Aristophanes with 'social laconism' and his remaining in Athens during the tyranny of the Thirty suggests his sympathy with a laconising oligarchy. Certainly, his pupil Xenophon has Socrates present Sparta as better than any other city. As for Xenophon's own views, despite his criticism of contemporary Sparta, Cartledge asserts a straightforward reading of his *Polity of the Lakedaimonians* as praise of the traditional Lykourgan system against those – most notably the followers of Leo Strauss – who interpret it as subtle criticism.[4] Similarly, he argues, although Plato was alert to Sparta's failings and open to other influences, many of the recommendations in his *Laws* resemble Spartan practice (cf. also Powell 1994). It is Rousseau, however, despite his proto-democratic stance, who emerges as the least critical advocate of the Spartan regime. Significantly, his knowledge of Sparta was derived not from the Socratics but from the moralising biographies of Plutarch, whose version is readily evident in Rousseau's emphasis upon Spartan austerity, civic morality and collectivising spirit, all stemming from the semi-divine lawgiver Lykourgos. For Rousseau Sparta

served an essential function as affirmation of the practical possibility of his ideas of republican citizenship and the General Will. Between them the Socratics and Rousseau attest the critical importance of the Spartan mirage in the history of Utopian political thought.

One of the controversies discussed by Cartledge is taken up from a contrasting perspective by Noreen Humble in an essay which challenges scholarly readings of one particular aspect of the Spartan mirage: the view that classical writers regarded the quality of *sōphrosynē* (self-control, moderation) as a pre-eminently Spartan virtue. Focusing upon the writings of Xenophon, she argues that *sōphrosynē* is marginal to his account of Spartan education in the much-debated *Lak.Pol.*, a marginality that contrasts sharply with the virtue's centrality in his account of Persian education in the *Cyropaedia*. Indeed, throughout his writings Xenophon's sole unequivocal attribution of *sōphrosynē* to a Spartan is in his encomium of Agesilaos, where it was dictated by the genre; in so far as the association appears elsewhere he seems to distance himself from personal endorsement. In the *Lak.Pol.* the prime Spartan characteristic was the quality of *aidōs* (deference), which was instilled not by self-control but by fear of punishment – a conclusion which parallels Richer's account of the important roles played by the cults of *Aidōs* and *Phobos* (Fear). She, consequently, urges caution in regarding the *Lak.Pol.* as an uncritical idealisation of Spartan society, a thesis to be pursued across the breadth of Xenophon's writings in the forthcoming publication of her recent McMaster doctoral dissertation (1997). Her account thus forms part of a broader scholarly re-evaluation of Xenophon's *oeuvre* and political affiliations which is currently in progress.[5]

The final two papers in the volume examine, again from contrasting perspectives, ancient representations of another group of persons who, like the helots, were a source of ancient controversy: Spartan women. Here our source problems are multiplied by the fact that not only are the literary sources non-Spartan, they are also exclusively male. In the case of *classical* Spartan women there is the further problem – again as with the helots discussed by Figueira – that the sources largely derive from, or were influenced by, Sparta's imperial rival, Athens. In her recent Pennsylvania doctoral dissertation (1996) Ellen Millender drew attention to a major feature of the Spartan mirage which runs counter to the idealising tendencies discussed above: the negative 'barbarization' of Sparta in Athenian democratic ideology. Here she focuses on the role played by representations of Spartan women in the process of barbarization. The modern context

for her study is the current vigorous debate about the position of women in Spartiate society. Scholars who portray Spartan women as unusually liberated or influential, Millender contends, pay insufficient attention to the bias of the fifth-century Athenocentric sources upon whom their views depend. These sources consistently portray Sparta (historical or mythical) in terms otherwise reserved for depictions of non-Greek societies, as a topsy-turvy world in which the women live free from normal restraints and dominate their menfolk. This was not simply a negative Athenian response to a somewhat freer female lifestyle and sexual mores. Other evidence attests male control over female marriage and other sexual relationships and indicates that female (semi-) nudity was part not of a liberated lifestyle but of a eugenic process of socialisation towards marriage; women's property rights probably gave them a measure of leverage in family affairs, but it is unlikely that men relinquished control. Athenian depictions of sexuality and gender roles played an essential role in Athens' self-definition vis-à-vis other poleis. The social order of the Athenian polis rested upon male control over female sexuality within the *oikos*, especially after the enactment of the citizenship law of 451/50 made citizenship rights dependent upon the status of both parents. Democratic ideology responded to consequent concerns about female transgressions by constructing women as secluded and quiescent. Conversely, and simultaneously, Sparta's replacement of Persia as Athens' main enemy stimulated the projection of barbarian-style images of the powerful Spartan woman which, in questioning the masculinity of Spartan men, bolstered Athens' claims to imperial hegemony.

Anton Powell's subject is the women of hellenistic Sparta who appear in prominent personal and political roles in Plutarch's account of the third-century revolution in his Lives of Agis and Kleomenes. Here the source material provides, not globalising claims about women in general or dramatised representations of archetypal Spartan females in tragedy and comedy, but purportedly historical accounts of the influence and actions of precise personages. Certainly, these stories require scrutiny for signs of distortion and invention. Plutarch, who has a taste for *exempla* of female virtue, has structured the lives to highlight the women in question, but is not known to invent entire episodes. The failings of his source, Phylarchos, are well known from the fierce, though probably biased, strictures of Polybius. His attested penchant for titillating tales of female assertiveness and death, his anti-Macedonian sympathies, not to mention the impossibility of first-hand reports of several incidents, argue for a sizeable fictional element. Yet

certain events – the executions of two royal women – cannot be invention and Phylarchos also includes much plausible local detail. Could these tales of prominent female involvement derive from Spartan sources and reflect authentic local, perhaps even female-influenced, representations? Spartan precedents are suggestive: a tradition of moralising story-telling, including tales of (homo)sexual attachment and noble death; fourth-century accounts of feminine influence, including a politically-motivated female execution; sober evidence for increasing female property-ownership; the increasing exclusiveness of a wealthy (royal) elite, who were more likely to invest influence in their kinswomen than in impoverished male citizens. The immediate aftermath of the events related – post-Sellasian Sparta, denuded of male citizens, with a numerically-dominant but divided female population – would constitute a plausible context for dramatised self-representations of female political engagement.

The last paper thus brings us full-circle back to the realm of politics treated in the opening essay, but to a very different type of Spartan world. This introduction has attempted to convey a few of the common trends and themes which emerged from the various contributions, and also some of the contrasting approaches and points of disagreement which make Spartan historical studies a continuing source of lively and stimulating debate. Detailed reading of the contributions themselves will of course reveal many more parallels, nuances and divergences than can be touched on here. We should like, as organisers, to thank all the conference participants – whether represented in this volume or not – for the constructive and co-operative spirit of the conference which bore fruit, especially, in one session specifically set aside for an open forum on the future directions of Spartan studies. Underlying the many diverse ideas expressed was one common theme, the desire for increased future co-operation and communication: through future international Sparta conferences; through closer interaction with our colleagues in Lakonian archaeology, especially with colleagues in Greece; and through a proposal to establish a site devoted specifically to Sparta and Lakonia on the World Wide Web. On this last proposal, consultations are currently being extended to interested colleagues outside the conference and in other disciplines, with a view to the possible development of a network of websites within which – in keeping with the spirit of internationalism – colleagues could participate on an equal footing and communicate their research and/or teaching materials in the manner each person or institution chooses.[6]

Finally, this introduction would be incomplete without our expression

of sincere thanks to certain specific persons and institutions who helped make the conference and this volume possible. We are especially grateful for generous financial assistance from the A.G. Leventis Foundation and from the University of Manchester Research Support Fund and Faculty of Arts Recurrent Grant for Research. Particular thanks are also due to Emma Stafford for her translation into English of the papers by Ducat and Richer.

Notes

[1] Cavanagh *et al.* 1996; Shipley 1992; 1997. The title of the 1995 British Museum conference, 'Sparta in Laconia' (Cavanagh and Walker (eds.) 1998), speaks volumes about current approaches.

[2] Cf., within recent years, disagreement over appropriate comparanda for helot economic exploitation (Hodkinson 1992; 2000; Cartledge 1993), and radical questioning of standard ideas concerning the collective character of helot servitude (Ducat 1990).

[3] Davis (ed.) 1998; Alcock forthcoming; Alcock *et al.* in prep.

[4] Strauss 1939; Higgins 1977; Proietti 1987.

[5] The thesis of Xenophon's partiality to Sparta in his *Hellenika* is challenged in Tuplin (1993); cf. his organisation of the first international conference on Xenophon ('The World of Xenophon') in Liverpool in July 1999.

[6] Any colleague who would be interested in participating in such a network and who has not yet been approached is cordially invited to contact the first-named editor by e-mail at:*Stephen.Hodkinson@man.ac.uk*

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Chapter 1

TYRTAEUS' *EUNOMIA*
Nothing to do with the Great Rhetra

Hans van Wees

Sparta was brought to the brink of civil war in the seventh century BC, during the Messenian revolt. 'This is clear from the poem by Tyrtaeus called *Eunomia*,' said Aristotle (*Politics* 1307a1; F 1 West). The fragments of this poem offer a rare glimpse of the politics and government of early Sparta, and are an invaluable corrective to the ancient myth that Sparta, ever since the reforms of Lycurgus in the early eighth century at the latest, had been the most stable and well-ordered city in Greece. Yet the evidence of *Eunomia* has not been exploited to the full.

With the exception of a scanty papyrus fragment, all we know of the poem comes from quotations in later authors, whose interpretations of the text have continued to dominate modern discussions. Since *Eunomia*'s ancient readers believed that Sparta's constitution had been created by Lycurgus long before Tyrtaeus' time, they were mainly interested in the poem as evidence for Lycurgus' legislation. Modern scholars, despite viewing stories about the deified lawgiver with all due scepticism, have followed suit. They have accepted the sources' claim that *Eunomia* made reference to Sparta's chief constitutional law, the Great Rhetra, and have concentrated on the question of what the poem tells us about the date of the law.[1] In doing so, scholars have drawn quite heavily on ancient conjectures about what Tyrtaeus implied in parts of the poem now lost.

In order to make fuller and better use of *Eunomia*, we need to deconstruct the interpretations imposed upon it in antiquity, and reconstruct what it meant to its original audience. A reassessment of the fragments in their contemporary context will show that the poem did not cite the Rhetra, and is likely to be older than this law. *Eunomia* will emerge, not as an appeal to keep faith with a formal constitution established by secular and political means, but as an example of a common seventh-century response to internal crisis: an attempt to

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restore harmony by reasserting the order sanctioned by the gods, through rituals, oracles, and songs.

Spartan greed and the seventh-century crisis

Aristotle cited Tyrtaeus' elegy as evidence for his thesis that civil wars break out 'when some are in great need while others enjoy affluence'. 'This happens especially in times of war,' he explained, 'and also occurred in Sparta during the Messenian War… Some people, crushed by the war, called for a redistribution of the land' (*Politics* 1306b36–7b2). Pausanias' travel guide informs us that the Spartans resolved to leave large tracts of land uncultivated so that the Messenians would not profit from their raids; that this caused a shortage of grain, and resentment among the owners of the abandoned land; and that Tyrtaeus managed to avert a civil war (4.18.2–3).

How much of this information came from *Eunomia* itself? Judging by what survives of other poetry in the same genre – especially the work of Solon, which also included an elegy on the subject of *eunomia*, 'good order' – Tyrtaeus' poem probably offered merely allusions to, rather than a full account of, the current situation. The details of Pausanias' scenario are thus likely to be later invention, stemming from an attempt to reconcile the evidence of Tyrtaeus with the legend of Lycurgus. Those who believed that Lycurgus had made a strictly equal division of land among all citizens[2] could only account for the inequality evident in Tyrtaeus by positing some such set of peculiar circumstances, unparalleled in the history of Greek warfare. Aristotle, too, may well have played up the effects of war to explain how Sparta's order could have suffered such disruption. All we can safely say is that *Eunomia* must have contained at least one allusion to demands for the redistribution of land. Even if it was no more explicit than Solon's remark that 'it did not please me that fine men should have the same share of the fertile soil of our country as the lower classes' (F 34.8–9 West), it must have been clear evidence of popular discontent at the inequality of wealth in Sparta.

Seventh- and sixth-century Laconian art reveals a society in which the elite engaged in all the forms of conspicuous consumption of wealth and leisure characteristic of archaic Greece. The poetry of Alcman reinforces that picture: a telling comment about the degree of social inequality in Sparta is the poet's description of himself as 'an omnivore' who needs no 'sweet confections' but loves pea-soup and 'looks for ordinary food, *like the common people*' (*damos*; F 17 Page).[3] Indeed, in Alcman's time Sparta appears to have had a reputation for

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attaching overriding importance to wealth. When Pindar, in the early fifth century, used the proverb 'a man is what he owns', [4] he called it 'the saying of the Argive' (*Isthmian* 2.9–11), but around 600 BC the same proverb was regarded as a saying of *Spartan* origin: 'Aristodemos, they say, once put it very effectively in Sparta: "A man is what he owns, and not a single poor man is noble or respected" ' (Alcaeus F 360 L–P). The earlier tradition of a Spartan society much concerned with the accumulation of wealth had, by Pindar's day, evidently given way to the legend of Lycurgan equality, so that a Spartan origin for the expression no longer seemed likely.[5]

Another proverb offers even better evidence for Spartan acquisitiveness:

> Greed will destroy Sparta, but nothing else
>
> ᾽Α φιλοχρηματία Σπάρταν ὀλεῖ, ἄλλο δὲ οὐδέν

Most scholars agree that this hexameter verse is a proverb of classical date and irrelevant to archaic Sparta.[6] Yet it cannot be dismissed so easily.

Our sources all say that the proverb originated from a Delphic oracle, and they claim to know that the god delivered this oracle 'spontaneously' (Aristotle F 544 Rose), either to Lycurgus (Diodorus 7.12.6), or to the kings Alcamenes and Theopompus (Plutarch, *Moralia* 239f). A Delphic origin is possible in principle, since some famous oracular phrases did become proverbial,[7] but in practice it is excluded by the use of dialect in our verse. All of the several hundred preserved Delphic verse oracles, whether genuine or false, use a mixture of epic and Ionic language. Our verse is the only one to employ the long alpha of most other Greek dialects: it has the article *ha* (ἁ) instead of *hê* (ἡ) and speaks of *Sparta* (Σπάρτα) rather than *Spartē* (Σπάρτη).[8] An oracular response from Delphi – even a forged response – simply would not have been expressed in this way.

Given that our proverb takes the form of a complete hexameter line, it is unlikely that it was spontaneously generated by popular wisdom. Like so many other Greek proverbs, it must have been a snatch of archaic or classical poetry which entered the language in much the same way that phrases coined by Shakespeare became proverbial in English. Theognis' hexameter 'All excellence is contained in righteousness' (147), for instance, was cited as a proverb by Aristotle.[9] The question is: who could have composed hexameter poetry in this particular dialect? There are few candidates, since the language of epic or elegiac hexameter poetry did not normally feature the long alpha any

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more than Delphic responses did.[10] One select group of poets, however, could very well have composed our verse: Terpander and the other cithara-singers from Lesbos who are said to have been the most highly respected musical performers in seventh-century Sparta. We are told that they composed in hexameters, and the few lines which are cited – all attributed to Terpander – were written in a mixed dialect of which the long alpha is indeed a significant feature.[11]

The best way of explaining the language, metre, and content of the proverb, then, is to assume that it was originally composed by one of these cithara-singers as part of a poem warning a Spartan audience of the potentially destructive effects of greed. Since later sources insisted that the proverb was of oracular origin, one may further assume that the singer did not issue the warning in his own voice, but attributed it to a 'spontaneous' Delphic oracle. The attribution will have been vague enough to leave room for argument about whether this prophecy had been delivered to the lawgiver or to the kings. A very similar appeal to oracular authority appears in *Eunomia*, as we shall see, and the sentiment that a community might be destroyed by 'greed, but nothing else' is exactly paralleled in the opening lines of Solon's elegy on 'good order': 'Our polis, by Zeus' destiny and the will of the blessed immortal gods, will never be destroyed (οὔποτ᾽ ὀλεῖται) …but the townsmen themselves, in their folly, wish to ruin the great city for the sake of wealth (χρήμασι πειθόμενοι)' (F 4.1–6 West). In short, there is every reason to think that our line, long before it became a proverb, reflected tensions within archaic Sparta.

The calls for a redistribution of land alluded to in *Eunomia* must be seen in this light. The Messenian revolt may have aggravated the situation, but the main problem was surely the acquisitiveness hinted at in the warning of the 'oracle' and in the lament of Aristodemos. Intense competition for property, above all land, will have led to the concentration of resources 'in the hands of a few' (as Aristotle said about Athens, *Ath.Pol.* 2.2; 4.5), reducing the common people to such desperate straits that they rebelled.

According to tradition, poets played a remarkable role in containing the crisis. A story first mentioned obliquely by Plato claimed that Tyrtaeus was an Athenian who had been invited to Sparta at the command of an oracle, so that his songs might help the Spartans defeat the Messenians. The story goes on to say that Tyrtaeus had been lame and either mad or a schoolteacher, and had been picked as the man least likely to be of use to the Spartans. It has been argued that this tale was a fourth-century Athenian concoction aimed at undermining

Sparta's reputation.[12] However, if the Athenians had made up a story out of whole cloth, they would surely have dreamt up a less oblique way of embarrassing the Spartans; moreover, Tyrtaeus was not the only poet said to have come from abroad to play a prominent political role in Sparta. It is therefore likely that fourth-century Athenians merely elaborated an existing tradition that Tyrtaeus was an Athenian, adding some unflattering details about the poet so as to suggest that they had done everything possible to sabotage Sparta's conquest of Messenia. The basic story of a foreign singer brought in to deal with Sparta's problems must have originated in Sparta itself.

It was said that Terpander, too, had been invited to Sparta at the command of an oracle, in order to put an end to civil strife among the Spartans by means of his songs. The Spartan origin of this tradition seems guaranteed by the fact that the songs of Terpander were highly regarded and regularly performed in classical Sparta.[13] The same is true of a third poet, Thales (or Thaletas) from Gortyn in Crete, again invited to Sparta at the command of an oracle, and credited with ridding the city of the divisions created by civil war, through songs with 'texts encouraging obedience and harmony' and 'very orderly and soothing melodies and rhythms' (Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 4.2–3). Thales was known not only as a poet and inventor of the so-called 'Cretan rhythms' used in Spartan music, but also as an early lawgiver.[14] The classical native tradition, that Sparta's constitution was modelled on those of the Cretan cities, was probably based not only on general similarities, but also on the stories of Thales' visit. The early origin and importance of this tradition is put beyond doubt by the fact that another seventh-century poet, Polymnestus of Colophon, mentioned Thales of Gortyn' in 'verses about him composed for the Spartans'.[15]

The earliest Greek chronographical studies, which reconstructed the relative dates of famous poets, placed Terpander and Thales, like Tyrtaeus, in the seventh century BC. In the late fifth century, Hellanicus' *Victors at the Karneia* called Terpander the first such victor 'in the time of Midas', while Glaucus of Rhegium's *On the Ancient Poets and Musicians* placed Terpander before, and Thales after, Archilochus, but apparently close together in time. Terpander was given a range of seventh-century dates by subsequent generations of scholars.[16] One or two authors, however, moved him back to the time of Lycurgus, and credited him with 'setting to music the laws of the Spartans'.[17] Some later accounts of Thales, too, put his date back to make him a contemporary and associate of the lawgiver, while others denied that he had made laws, but credited him with ridding Sparta of a plague.[18] Once

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again, it seems, earlier tradition was transformed as the legend of Lycurgus took hold: surviving seventh-century songs urging the Spartans to restore order did not fit with the idea of a constitution which established perfect harmony at a much earlier date, so they were moved back in time or otherwise explained away.[19]

Originally, then, the Spartans believed that all three poets had come to their city at the behest of an oracle in the seventh century BC. From what we hear about the lost songs of Terpander and Thales, and from what we have of Tyrtaeus' *Eunomia*, the oracle about greed, and the proverbial wisdom of Aristodemos, we may conclude that at this time intense competition for land created in Sparta chronic civil unrest. Indeed, only such a history of conflict far into the seventh century can explain how Sparta acquired a reputation for having been 'most disorderly' (Herodotus 1.65) for a longer time than any other Greek state (Thucydides 1.18.1).

Kings and oracles: the fragments of *Eunomia*

What did Tyrtaeus tell the Spartans who demanded a redistribution of land? The first intelligible word in the first surviving fragment is 'prophe[cies]' (F 2.2 West) and the next is 'oracles' (F 2.4); a few lines later we have 'de[ar] to the gods…let us obey…closer in ori[gin]… since the son of Kronos, the husband of fair-garlanded Hera, Zeus himself gave this city to the Heraclids, with whom we came to the wide island of Pelops when we left behind windy Erineos' (F 2.9–15). Despite the gaps, the sense is fairly clear. The Spartans must obey their kings, the Heraclids, since their power is divinely sanctioned: not only are they 'closer in origin' and 'dear' to the gods, but Zeus himself gave them control over Sparta.[20] In this context, it seems likely that the 'oracles' referred to earlier also in some way supported the kings' right to rule.

The other fragment, which we know from quotations in Diodorus (7.12.6) and Plutarch (*Lycurgus* 6.10),[21] quotes the text of an oracle, presumably one of those already alluded to. The differences between the two quotations and interpretations, and the garbling of one of the verses, have inspired much debate and make it necessary to examine these texts in detail. In Diodorus, the oracle is introduced as follows:

> For thus spoke Apollo of the silver bow and golden hair,
> the lord who works from afar, from his rich shrine:
>
> Ὧδε γὰρ ἀργυρότοξος ἄναξ ἑκάεργος Ἀπόλλων
> χρυσοκόμης ἔχρη πίονος ἐξ ἀδύτου·

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In Plutarch, however, the introductory couplet runs:

> Having listened to Phoebus, they brought home from Delphi
> prophecies of the god and words that will come true.
>
> Φοίβου ἀκούσαντες Πυθωνόθεν οἴκαδ' ἔνεικαν
> μαντείας τε θεοῦ καὶ τελέεντ' ἔπεα.

The two versions are linked to two different interpretations: according to Diodorus the oracle was received by Lycurgus,[22] but Plutarch thought that 'perhaps' the recipients were the kings Theopompus and Polydorus (6.9).

The majority of scholars prefer Plutarch's version, primarily because he drew on a reputable, scholarly authority, whereas Diodorus' ultimate source was a work of political propaganda which has been suspected of forging evidence. However, as I hope to show in the next section, these sources were not, after all, very different in their methods and reliability, despite having very different motives. When we judge the two versions without preconceptions about the trustworthiness of the sources from which they come, we find that there is no good reason to reject the authenticity of Diodorus' lines. Indeed, if any version is to be regarded as suspect, it ought to be Plutarch's.

It has been said that the verses in Diodorus, which use a string of epithets to describe Apollo, are too wordy and conventional to be genuine Tyrtaeus, and that they must have been made up by someone keen to remove the plural subject ('*they* brought home') in order to make the attribution to a single lawgiver, Lycurgus, more plausible.[23] But objections to the literary quality of the verses cannot stand, when an undisputed line of *Eunomia* is equally long-winded and conventional in speaking of 'the son of Kronos, husband of fair-garlanded Hera, Zeus' (F 2.12–13 West), while a forger would hardly have missed the opportunity to clinch his case by composing a couplet that actually *named* Lycurgus. A famous Delphic oracle cited by Herodotus (1.65) and two verses from the *Iliad* (6.130; 7.144) show four different ways of working 'Lykoörgos' into a hexameter. Since Diodorus' lines prove nothing either way concerning the oracle's recipient(s), and otherwise provide a perfectly suitable introduction to the oracle's text, we have no grounds for suspecting their authenticity.

Plutarch's version, on the other hand, with its plural subject, is exactly tailored to his argument that the oracle was given to two kings.[24] It is also worth noting that the transition between the statement that 'they brought back oracles' and the words of the oracle itself is quite abrupt. But there is no need to accuse Plutarch, or rather his

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sources, of forging these lines. It is much more likely that the couplet featured elsewhere in *Eunomia* and was linked directly with the oracle by a process of selective quotation. That is to say, Plutarch or his sources quoted a couplet which seemed to provide evidence that the kings, rather than Lycurgus, were its recipients, then skipped straight to the text of the oracle itself, omitting several intervening verses, including the actual, uninformative, introductory formula as given in Diodorus. The process is no different from the modern practice of editing quotations for brevity and relevance, except that ancient scholars did not use three dots (…) to mark the omissions. [25]

As it happens, the fragments of Solon reveal a couple of cases in which Plutarch does indeed present edited quotations while Diodorus offers fuller extracts. The correct texts of Solon's fragments 9 and 11 (West), it is generally accepted, are the six and eight lines, respectively, which appear in Diodorus (9.20.2). Each passage is coherent in itself, and each is confirmed by quotations in Diogenes Laertius (1.50, 51). Plutarch's *Solon*, by contrast, begins its version of fragment 11 with what in Diodorus is line 7 and continues with lines 5 and 6 (30.3), although the resulting text makes less sense and spoils the metre by juxtaposing two hexameters. Lines 1–4 are not cited until much later in the chapter (30.8). Even more cavalier is Plutarch's treatment of fragment 9. In Diodorus, the passage begins: 'Driving snow and hail come from a cloud, thunder comes from a bright bolt of lightning, and the ruin of a city comes from great men.' It continues with further warnings against 'monarchy'. In Plutarch (*Solon* 3.6), the same quotation purports to show that Solon's understanding of natural phenomena was 'simple and archaic', and runs as follows: 'Driving snow and hail come from a cloud, thunder comes from a bright bolt of lightning, and the sea is disturbed by the winds, but if no-one sets her in motion, she is the most righteous of all things' (F 12 West). Clearly, Plutarch or his source took out of context a passage in which images from the natural world served as political metaphors, and unscrupulously bolted it to another passage with a similar image – almost certainly also part of a political metaphor – in order to create the impression that Solon discoursed on physics in an amusingly quaint manner.

It is possible, then, that Plutarch and Diodorus do not offer one false and one genuine version of Tyrtaeus, but two different selections of genuine material from the same poem. Judged by his record in dealing with Solon's elegies, Plutarch is perhaps more likely than Diodorus to have given selective quotations. The contents of his opening lines – more abrupt and more geared towards the argument being pursued –

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tend to confirm this. If both passages are genuine, the likelihood is, on balance, that Diodorus cited the actual verses introducing the oracle, and that Plutarch quoted his lines from another, earlier part of the poem.

Of the oracle itself, the first four verses appear in both sources, but the remaining four verses occur in Diodorus alone. They contain one line which has become garbled in transmission, and is here given in the corrupt, unmetrical version of the manuscript.

> 'Counsel is to begin with the divinely honoured kings,
> who have the lovely city of Sparta in their care,
> and with the ancient elders. Then the men of the people,
> responding in turn to straight *rhētrai*
> must say what is noble and do all that is just,
> but no longer [?] plot [?] against this city [?].
> Victory and power will attend the multitude of the people.'
> For thus Phoebus declared to the city in these matters.

> 'ἄρχειν μὲν βουλῆς θεοτιμήτους βασιλῆας,
> οἷσι μέλει Σπάρτης ἱμερόεσσα πόλις,
> πρεσβυγενέας τε γέροντας· ἔπειτα δὲ δημότας ἄνδρας
> εὐθείαις ῥήτραις ἀνταπαμειβομένους
> μυθεῖσθαί τε τὰ καλὰ καὶ ἔρδειν πάντα δίκαια,
> [?] μηδέ τι ἐπιβουλεύειν τῆιδε πόλει [?]
> δήμου τε πλήθει νίκην καὶ κάρτος ἕπεσθαι.'
> Φοῖβος γὰρ περὶ τῶν ὧδ' ἀνέφηνε πόλει.

Although some have wanted to reject the last four lines as another forgery, no real arguments against their authenticity have been adduced, and it is not at all clear in what way these lines would have served the purposes of a hypothetical forger. The most authoritative edition of the fragments accepts all four lines as genuine and is surely right to do so.[26]

In their attempts to interpret this oracle, and above all in restoring the garbled line, scholars have always looked at it in the light of the Great Rhetra. Since the Rhetra gives an active, if limited, political role to the popular assembly (see below), a similar role for the common people has been read into Tyrtaeus' poem. If one tries to understand and reconstruct *Eunomia* on its own terms, however, a different picture emerges.

The first question concerning the role of the popular assembly in the oracle is whether the people are supposed to 'respond in turn *to* straight *rhētrai*',[27] as the verse is translated here, which would mean that they respond to 'straight' decisions or proposals put before them by the kings and elders, or whether they are meant to 'respond in turn

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with straight *rhētrai*', as the verse is more commonly translated, which would mean that the people, in response to proposals, formulate 'straight' decisions. Both readings are grammatically possible, but the latter has been most widely adopted because it suggests a more active role for the assembly.[28]

Yet it would have been redundant for the oracle to say that the people's response should consist of formulating straight decisions, since it goes on to urge, in the next line, that their response must consist of saying and doing what is just and noble. The alternative interpretation, that it is the *rhētrai* put forward by the kings and elders which are 'straight', and that the people respond 'to' these, makes better sense. For one thing, instead of being redundant, the phrase would add something significant to the oracle. Secondly, the unique verb used for 'to respond *in turn*' (ἀνταπαμείβομαι) strongly suggests the idea that the people's response should match what has been presented to them, and this fits best if the oracle speaks of 'straight' proposals or decisions by the authorities, in response to which the assembly's words and deeds must be equally 'noble' and 'just'. Finally, in later Sparta, *rhētra* was indeed the technical term for a proposal put to an assembly or council.[29]

The oracle, then, not only says that the kings and elders must 'begin counsel', but assumes that the proposals which they bring before the assembly are always 'straight'. Since the people must reciprocate with words and deeds which are noble and just and therefore also 'straight', it follows that they are bound to agree with everything put to them. Tyrtaeus' point is, surely, that the authorities' proposals are *by definition* 'straight' and that the assembly must simply *accept* them: the people must speak and act as their rulers tell them to.[30]

This reading seriously affects our understanding of the next, corrupt line. The most widely accepted emendation reads: 'and not to give this city counsel [which is crooked]' (μηδέ τι βουλεύειν τῆιδε πόλει <σκολιόν>).[31] The addition of the word 'crooked' is based on Plutarch's opinion that the oracle cited by Tyrtaeus 'perhaps' echoed the so-called 'rider' to the Great Rhetra, which said 'If the people ask for something crooked (σκολιὰν) the elders and kings are to be rejecters' (*Lyc*. 6.7–10).[32] However, if Tyrtaeus' verse actually used the word 'crooked' just as the Rhetra did, one would expect Plutarch to have cited this line, which would have strongly supported his suggestion. Instead, his quotation stops abruptly, in mid-sentence, with the verse about 'responding to straight *rhētrai*'. Unless Plutarch, or his source, was quite inept in his use of evidence, he must have felt that the

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emphasis on 'straight' proposals was the clearest hint in Tyrtaeus' poem at the power to overrule 'crooked' decisions, and that the verses which followed added nothing more explicit. In other words, our corrupt line could hardly have contained a specific warning against 'crooked' decision-making.[33]

The context of the garbled verse suggests that it may have had a quite different meaning. Since the first five lines of the oracle said, politely, that the common people should simply *obey* their rulers, the first half of the next line may have reinforced this message in no uncertain terms: '*and not to counsel further*' (μηδ' ἔτι βουλεύειν).[34]

The second half of the line may have been connected with the next verse, promising 'victory and power' for 'the multitude of the people'. This promise has usually been understood in the light of a phrase in the Great Rhetra, itself garbled, which is restored to read: 'the people are to have the right to criticize, and power' (Plut. *Lyc*. 6.2). However, the combination '*victory* and power' suggests military success rather than political sovereignty. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, for example, Zeus says that the gods 'fight every day for victory and power' in the war against the Titans (647). Even better, an oracle which was supposed to have been delivered to the Messenians during their first war against Sparta promised them 'victory in the war, and power' (νίκην τοῦ πολέμου καὶ κράτος), if they sacrificed a virgin (Myron of Priene *FGrH* 106 F 9). It is admittedly possible to talk of 'victory' in assembly or debate, when one party 'defeats' a rival, but in the context of this poem, the implicit rivalry would be, not between peers, but between the people and their leaders. It is highly unlikely that the relation between the authorities and their subjects would be conceived of as antagonistic, especially in a poem which otherwise asserts the legitimacy of the kings, and in an oracle which emphasizes the need for obedience.

'Victory and power' must thus be taken in a military sense,[35] but it remains odd that they should be said to 'attend the multitude of the people'. I would suggest, therefore, that the last two words of the previous, corrupt line, 'this city', are to be taken as part of this clause, which then reads: 'Victory and power will attend this city and the multitude of the people'.[36] Tyrtaeus elsewhere uses a similar phrase connecting 'the city and the entire people'.[37] On this interpretation, the oracle promises that, for the common people, the reward for obedience to their leaders will be a share in the military success and power which the city as a whole will enjoy. In a poem addressing civil unrest at a time of war, Tyrtaeus could not have cited a more appropriate or convenient oracular pronouncement.

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It may indeed have been the bluntness of these verses, in announcing that Sparta would enjoy power only if its citizens unquestioningly obeyed the authorities, which caused the corruption of the line. To later readers, a warning against conspiracy ('not to plot against this city') will have seemed more acceptable than a complete ban on discussion in the assembly for the sake of military success.[38]

If this interpretation is correct, the corrupt line would be most easily completed by inserting something before 'this city'. There is more than one way of producing a metrical verse, but among the possible supplements are ὥσθ' ἅμα, which would produce 'and not to counsel further, *so that* victory and power will attend [*both*] this city and the multitude of the people', and ἀλλ' αἰεὶ, 'and not to counsel further; *but always* victory and power will attend the city'. The latter would neatly mirror the prediction that the city would *never* be destroyed, so long as greed did not prevail.[39]

Eunomia thus included a ten-line passage, quoted by Diodorus, which paraphrased an oracle promising victory for Sparta if the common people obeyed their kings and Elders. This was preceded by two lines, quoted by Plutarch, stating that 'they' received 'oracles' from Delphi.

Did Tyrtaeus say who 'they' were? It is widely believed that he named Theopompus and Polydorus, on the assumption that Plutarch could have had no reason to link these kings with the oracle unless their names had been explicitly mentioned.[40] While it is true that Tyrtaeus referred to Theopompus by name elsewhere in his poetry (F 5.1 West), it is unlikely that he did so in *Eunomia*. If the oracle had been explicitly attributed to these kings, Plutarch and his sources would surely have wanted to strengthen their case by citing the relevant verse(s), as well as, or instead of, the vague lines which we now have. Not only that, but if Tyrtaeus had given the kings' names, Plutarch would hardly have been so cautious as to say that 'perhaps' (που) the oracle had something to do with them.

The uncertainty surrounding the recipients of the oracle is more easily understood if *Eunomia* expressed their identity quite vaguely. As we have seen, the other fragment of the poem exhorts the people to obey 'the Heraclids' as the legitimate rulers of Sparta (F 2.13 West), and there are several advantages in assuming that those who brought the oracles from Delphi were also identified only as 'the Heraclids'.[41] If so, one can see how it was feasible for some to argue that the Heraclids who received the oracle must have been two ruling kings, while others could claim that the phrase referred to Lycurgus, as a prominent

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member of one of the Heraclid dynasties. Neither side resorted to deliberate falsification: 'Heraclids' was simply vague enough to accommodate both views, and too vague to be worth quoting in support of either.

If the recipients of the oracles were identified merely as the Heraclids, two other puzzles may be solved as well. When Tyrtaeus told the Spartans to obey 'the Heraclids, with whom…we came to the broad island of Pelops' (F 2.13–15 West), he meant, no doubt, the kings whose *ancestors* brought them to the Peloponnese, but he could easily be misinterpreted as referring literally to the first descendants of Heracles to rule Sparta. If the poet then proceeded to speak of 'Heraclids' who received oracles, it would have seemed only logical to assume that these were the same first rulers. This misunderstanding would account for Hellanicus' unique view that the Spartan constitution was created, not by Lycurgus, but by Sparta's first kings, Eurysthenes and Procles (*FGrH* 4 F 116). He will have imagined that these were the recipients of this oracle describing the roles of the kings and the elders, key features of Sparta's constitution.[42]

The same misunderstanding would also account for the peculiar claims in Xenophon's *The Spartan Constitution* that Lycurgus lived at the time of the first kings (10.8), and went to Delphi, not alone, but 'with the most powerful men' (8.5). This will have been Xenophon's way of reconciling his belief that Lycurgus was the founder of all Sparta's institutions with the supposed evidence in Tyrtaeus that some of the most important of these institutions featured in an oracle given to a number of anonymous Heraclids of the first generation in Sparta.[43] In sum, it is most likely that *Eunomia* did indeed confine itself to vague references to 'the Heraclids': it is hard to see how such a wide variety of interpretations could have emerged if the poem had been any more explicit.

Tyrtaeus' poem thus exhorted the Spartans to be obedient to their rulers, because (a) the kings derived their legitimate authority from the gods, and (b) the kings had brought from Delphi oracles, one of which promised that obedience would ensure military success and power for the city.

This leaves us with two problems. If *Eunomia* merely attributed our oracle to 'the Heraclids', where did some ancient scholars get the idea that it had been given to Lycurgus, while others thought that it had been given to Theopompus and Polydorus? And if our oracle merely insisted on obedience to the established authorities, how did it come to be identified with the constitutional legislation of the Great Rhetra?

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The answer to these questions lies in a long and heated political and scholarly controversy which began in the fourth century BC.

Kings and ephors: the use and abuse of *Eunomia*

The institution of the ephorate, classical Sparta's most powerful office, has in common with Tyrtaeus' oracle that it was variously attributed to Lycurgus and to Theopompus. This is no coincidence. It was the debate about the origins and legitimacy of the ephorate which led to divergent interpretations of *Eunomia* when the poem was dragged into the controversy as a supposedly key piece of evidence.

Sometime after being exiled in 395 BC for mishandling a military expedition (Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.25), the Spartan king Pausanias published a remarkable pamphlet on the constitution of his city. We know about this work because it was cited in Ephorus' *Histories*, in a passage paraphrased by Strabo. Amazed at Hellanicus' notion that the Spartan constitution was the creation of Eurysthenes and Procles rather than Lycurgus (see above), Ephorus countered, firstly, that it was Lycurgus, not these kings, who was worshipped as a god at Sparta, and, secondly, that

> Pausanias, having been driven out by the other [royal] family, the Eurypontids, in exile composed a discourse against the laws of Lycurgus, who belonged to the family which had deposed him, in which he also recounts the oracles which were given to him, contrary to the eulogies of most people.[44]

The precise text and the accuracy of Strabo's synopsis have been much debated; in particular, it has been argued that Pausanias' pamphlet was not 'a discourse against the laws of Lycurgus', but a discourse with the ironic title *Against the Laws of Lycurgus*, in which the author claimed that his *enemies* had offended against these (unimpeachable) laws. I shall follow Strabo in taking Pausanias as a rare critic of Lycurgus who disagreed with the standard eulogies – not only because this is a more straightforward reading of the text, but also because it makes better sense of the subsequent evolution of the debate in antiquity.[45] The details of interpretation, in any case, matter less than the general point, compatible with either view, that Pausanias adduced several 'oracles', among them both the oracle from *Eunomia* and the Great Rhetra, as evidence for Lycurgus' legislation, thereby sparking off a long controversy about the nature, meaning, and interrelation of these two texts.

Pausanias' pamphlet was a radical departure from classical Spartan tradition – and not only in being hostile to a lawgiver who was literally an object of worship. The king's account of Lycurgus differed on two

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points of fact from what Herodotus, only a generation earlier, presented as the view of 'the Spartans themselves': that the lawgiver was a member of the Agiad dynasty, i.e. Pausanias' *own* family, and that he had modelled his laws on those of Crete (1.65.6). Herodotus deserves to be taken seriously: he visited Sparta and was able to give distinct Spartan versions of several stories.[46] Pausanias thus abandoned native tradition when he dissociated his family from Lycurgus and argued that Sparta's constitution had been dictated by Delphic oracles, not Cretan models. In doing so, he did not simply re-invent history, but drew on an alternative tradition current outside Sparta (and conceivably among a minority within Sparta). Already in Herodotus' day, 'some' believed that Lycurgus derived his legislation from Delphic oracles (1.65.6), and earlier still the poet Simonides had spoken of Lycurgus as a member of the Eurypontid family (F 628 Page).

What could have driven Pausanias to take such an extreme, un-Spartan line? Aristotle tells us that 'Pausanias tried to abolish the ephorate' (*Politics* 1301b17–19), and the institution of 'the Elders and the ephors' is listed by Herodotus among Lycurgus' achievements (1.65.7). The simplest, most plausible inference is that a strong hostility to the ephorate, and an equally strong belief that Lycurgus created this institution, led Pausanias to disown the lawgiver by assigning him to the rival royal family, and to denounce the laws. In support of his rejection of the ephorate, Pausanias needed to appeal to an authority still higher than Lycurgus. Not even a king would have stood much chance of winning supporters for such a revolutionary cause if all he had to offer was his personal opinion. Hence Pausanias' recitation of oracles, remarked upon by Ephorus: he capitalized on the non-Spartan tradition that the ultimate source of Sparta's laws was the Delphic oracle, which allowed him to argue that the lawgiver had erred in not following Delphi's instructions to the letter and introducing the ephorate on his own initiative, without divine sanction.

It is highly probable that the excerpt from Diodorus' account of Lycurgus (7.12.1–8) includes the main evidence adduced by Pausanias. Diodorus was clearly drawing on Ephorus here, as so often,[47] and Ephorus, as we have seen, drew on Pausanias' pamphlet. Certainly, the oracular responses given by Diodorus, including the proverbial oracle about greed and the oracle from Tyrtaeus' *Eunomia*, would have supported Pausanias' case very nicely.

A first hexameter oracle served to establish that Lycurgus was indeed instructed by Delphi: it mentioned his name twice and said 'you have come searching for *eunomia*, and I will give you such as no other

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city on earth shall possess'. At least part of this oracle was current in the non-Spartan tradition before Pausanias wrote, and it suited his purposes admirably.[48]

The priestess allegedly proceeded to tell Lycurgus that the main aim of his legislation should be to ensure that 'some provide good leadership, and others obey' (Diod. 7.12.2; no. 217 Parke-Wormell). Asked for clarification, she uttered a second verse oracle, so vague that it would have been applicable to any state at any time, proclaiming that bravery and unity ensure a city's freedom, while cowardice and strife result in slavery (Diodorus, ibid.; no. 218 Parke-Wormell). By presenting this all-purpose oracle as an answer to the question *how* one should rule and obey, Pausanias may have used it to introduce his main concern: *who* should rule and *who* should obey. This is the question broached by a third hexameter oracle, not found in the excerpt, but closely linked with the previous oracular responses by a later source.

> For as long as you, abiding by the oracles, keep your promises and oaths and render justice to one another and to outsiders, behaving with respect for the elders in a holy and pure manner, and treating with reverence the sons of Tyndareus, Menelaos, and the other immortal heroes who in divine Sparta…[lacuna]…Thus far-seeing Zeus will take care of you.[49]

In itself, this oracle was little more specific than the previous one, except that it explicitly addressed Spartans: it simply encouraged decent behaviour, respect for authority, and piety towards local divinities. But it is easy to see how Pausanias might have used it to make a political point. The oracle demanded respect for the Elders and for the heroic predecessors of the kings (themselves heroized after death), yet it says nothing about Sparta's third great power, the board of ephors.[50]

Thus the ground would have been prepared for Pausanias' strongest evidence: the oracle from Tyrtaeus. As we have seen, Hellanicus appears already to have used Tyrtaeus' oracle in his discussion of the Spartan constitution. Pausanias' contribution to the debate will have been to insist that the poet's reference to 'the Heraclids' meant Lycurgus, and to point out that the oracle demanded obedience to the kings and elders alone. It made no mention of ephors, and its command that the people were 'not to counsel further' could be taken to deny any legitimacy to the ephors, who, unlike the Elders, were seen as representatives of the people.

The proverbial oracle about greed, which immediately preceded the quotation from Tyrtaeus in Diodorus, is not likely to have provided Pausanias with ammunition against Lycurgus or against the ephorate as an institution, but may have been fielded against the exiled king's

personal enemies. It was claimed that overseas expansion after the Peloponnesian War brought an influx of wealth which ruined Sparta's unity and high moral standards. Pausanias may well have done much to propagate this view, since Spartan imperialism was associated particularly with his rivals, Lysander and Agesilaos.[51] By invoking an oracle against greed, the exiled king could suggest a parallel between his personal enemies and the lawgiver: just as Lycurgus had set up the ephorate in defiance of the Delphic oracle, so his descendant Agesilaos and others had defied the oracle in opening the floodgates to wealth; each time, Sparta had suffered.[52]

The pamphlet may have concluded with the same sentiment as the excerpt from Diodorus: 'Those who do not observe piety towards the divine are still less likely to observe justice towards men' (7.12.7).

The Great Rhetra does not feature in Diodorus, but it is tempting to assume that Pausanias did adduce it, too, in support of his arguments.[53] A Spartan king is more likely than most to have known the text of this archaic and obscure document, and the last sentence of the Rhetra ('if the people ask for something crooked, the elders and kings are to be rejecters') suited his polemic perfectly. It would have been odd if the king had *failed* to cite a law which granted him and the elders the authority to override decisions of the people, including the ephors. The Rhetra's absence from the excerpt and perhaps also from Diodorus' original, or even from Ephorus, on the other hand, is easily explained: much of the law was more difficult to understand and less relevant to the debate than Tyrtaeus' poem.

Pausanias' argument would have had to be that Lycurgus had ignored the instructions of the Rhetra, although this law, too, had come from Delphi. In support of this argument he is likely to have claimed that it was the Rhetra to which Tyrtaeus referred when he cited the oracle about obedience. Thus the link between our two sources was probably first forged.

A clever piecing together[54] of three oracles, two poems, and a law was not enough to discredit Lycurgus. Many sprang to his defence, and it may have been no more than a couple of years before another Spartan exile, Thibron, published his account of the Spartan constitution, possibly written in direct response to the king's pamphlet, and singled out by Aristotle for its admiring approach to the lawgiver. Pausanias does, however, seem to have set the terms for all subsequent debate.[55]

In the face of the evidence of the oracles, Tyrtaeus, and the Rhetra, three lines of defence remained open to Lycurgus' admirers.[56] They

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could reason that Lycurgus' institution of the ephorate somehow was not in breach of the oracles' commands, or they could argue that Lycurgus had not in fact created the ephorate, or again they could try to demonstrate that Lycurgus had not, after all, been given these oracles. Within two generations, each of these lines of argument had been formulated, and all three found a place in the works of Aristotle.

The first tack was taken by Xenophon in *The Spartan Constitution*. As a close friend of Pausanias' rival Agesilaos and a keen student of Sparta, he must have been aware of the pamphlet, and he appears to have taken on board its argument that Tyrtaeus' oracles were delivered to Lycurgus. As we have seen, Xenophon's idea that Lycurgus had lived in the time of the first kings is likely to be based on his interpretation of 'the Heraclids' in *Eunomia*. *The Spartan Constitution* has a lengthy discussion in chapter eight which seems odd and incoherent unless it is understood as an oblique polemic against Pausanias' views.

Xenophon ventured as his personal opinion that Lycurgus would not have given such great authority to the Spartan magistrates if he had not had the support of 'the most powerful people in the city' (8.1–2). He went on to argue that 'it is probable that these same people helped him also to set up the power of the ephorate, because they recognized that obedience is of the greatest importance in a city, army, or household' (8.3). Finally, after listing the powers of the ephors, he concluded:

> Lycurgus had many fine devices to make the citizens willing to obey the laws, and among the very finest, to my mind, was that he did not issue his laws to the masses until he had visited Delphi with the most powerful men, and had asked the god whether it would be more advantageous and better for Sparta to obey the laws which he himself had drawn up. Only when the reply came that it would be better in every way did he issue the laws, making it not only unlawful but sacrilegious to disobey the laws, which came from the Pythian oracle (8.5).

Xenophon thus defended the lawgiver by speculating that the institution of the ephorate must have been supported by everyone in Sparta, and that the oracles delivered to Lycurgus signalled general approval of what he had done. Delphi did not exclude the ephors, and Lycurgus, so far from disobeying the oracle, used its authority to ensure the obedience of others.

The key elements of this account – that the ephors were an integral part of the original constitution, which had been essentially Lycurgus' own work but fully ratified by Delphi – appeared also in Ephorus

(*FGrH* 70 F 149.18–19), who, in opposition to Pausanias' work, re-emphasized the Spartan tradition that Lycurgus drew on Cretan models (F 148.1, 10; 149.16–18). When Aristotle left it open whether the ephors' role as representatives of the people had resulted 'from the lawgiver's intention or from chance' (*Politics* 1270b19–20), noted that Lycurgus had visited Crete, and remarked upon Cretan parallels to the ephorate (1271b20–1272b1), he was clearly accommodating this line of thought. Part of Plutarch's picture of Lycurgus, too, derives from it: the future lawgiver got his ideas from Crete (among other places: *Lyc*. 4.1–6), then received encouragement from Delphi (5.3), then drafted his laws, and finally consulted Delphi again for ratification (29.3–4).[57]

On this interpretation, the oracles attributed by Pausanias to Lycurgus were essentially an elaborate, versified form of the 'yes' or 'no' answers a fourth-century questioner could expect when consulting Delphi on any course of action. While this approach had the advantage of 'normalizing' Lycurgus' relation to the oracle, it will have been obvious to many that the oracle in Tyrtaeus and the Rhetra did not sound as if they merely meant to say 'yes' to a proposed constitution, let alone a constitution which included the ephorate. Further lines of explanation had to be explored.

We first find an alternative account in Plato's *Laws*, around the middle of the fourth century, but it is alluded to in such an oblique manner that the theory must by then have been well known. Plato emphatically asserted that Lycurgus' laws were dictated by the Delphic oracle: he claimed that the Spartans regarded Apollo as their lawgiver (624a), spoke of 'the laws of Pythian Apollo which…Lycurgus enacted' (632d), and coined the phrase 'the Pythian lawgiver' (634a). Those who, like Plato, saw the oracle as formulating, rather than merely ratifying, law, were bound to give great weight to the precise wording of the responses and to concede that these left no room for ephors. Their solution was to argue that the ephors were introduced by what Plato calls a 'third saviour', after Apollo and Lycurgus (691d–692a; *Eighth Letter* 354b). Aristotle adopted this view as well, and gave the saviour a name: king Theopompus (*Politics* 1313a25–33). By the time the story reached Plutarch, it had further acquired a name for the first ephor, Elatus, and a date, 130 years after Lycurgus (*Lyc*. 7.1–2).

This second interpretation regards the introduction of the ephorate as a good thing. The power of the kings and Elders was too absolute and needed to be 'reined in', 'moderated', by the ephors. The result was a kingship which was less powerful but was thereby all the more durable, as Theopompus, according to anecdote, explained to his

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complaining wife.[58] Theopompus may have been chosen almost by default as the author of this important and necessary change to the constitution: he was the only king mentioned by name in Tyrtaeus, and a national hero for his conquest of Messenia (F 5 West). Among early kings, he had no serious competition.[59]

While this school of thought neatly accounted for the absence of ephors from the oracles, it had one awkward implication: the Delphic oracle had evidently dictated an imperfect constitution and somehow failed to foresee that the power of the kings and Elders would need checking. The third, and most radical, interpretation of the oracular evidence dealt with this unfortunate notion by arguing that neither the oracle in Tyrtaeus nor the full text of the Great Rhetra had been delivered to Lycurgus at all. This theory is only found in Plutarch, but he cites a work of Aristotle's, presumaby the lost *Spartan Constitution*, as his source for at least part of it.

The main prop for this thesis was, apparently, the curious contradiction between the last two clauses of the Rhetra. The Rhetra stipulated that regular assemblies should be held, and that 'the people are to have the right to criticize, and power'; yet the last clause countered: 'if the people ask for something crooked, the elders and kings are to be rejecters'. This ambivalence on the matter of sovereignty made it possible to argue that the last clause was a later addition to the original Rhetra as delivered to Lycurgus by Delphi (Plut. *Lyc*. 6.1–2, 8).[60] The 'original' Rhetra thus intended a constitution in which all played a part, but the people were sovereign; in other words, the Delphic oracle *did* foresee a constitution which had room for the ephors. Lycurgus' original constitution, with or without ephors, allowed sufficient power to the people's assembly. Neither the oracle nor the lawgiver could be faulted.

The blame for subsequent meddling with an in principle perfect constitution was laid instead at the door of the common people. A 'rider' curtailing popular sovereignty was made necessary, according to Plutarch, because the assembly began to arrogate too much power to itself (Plut. *Lyc*. 6.7). The oracle in *Eunomia*, urging the people to obey their rulers, echoed the supposed 'rider' rather than the 'original' Rhetra, and the obvious conclusion seemed to be that Tyrtaeus reported, not an oracle given to Lycurgus, but a later oracle which legitimated the actions of those who modified the constitution: 'they, too, persuaded the city that the god had ordained these things, as perhaps Tyrtaeus mentions' (*Lyc*. 6.9).

Again these hypothetical reforms and the associated oracles were

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attributed to Theopompus, this time in conjunction with his fellow-ruler Polydorus in order to account for Tyrtaeus' plurals ('they' and 'the Heraclids'). There need have been no firmer evidence for this theory than for the attribution of the ephorate to Theopompus, but it is quite likely that *Eunomia* said that the oracle had been given in time of war, as indeed the emphasis on 'victory' in its final line implies. To a classical audience, this would immediately have suggested the First Messenian War and therefore Theopompus and his colleague. The attribution of the oracle about greed to Theopompus and Alcamenes, Polydorus' father, might have been similarly based on an indication in the original poem that it had been delivered at the outbreak of a war: note its assurance that Sparta would not be destroyed (unless greed got the better of it). Theopompus and Alcamenes were believed to have reigned at the start of the First Messenian War; a few years later Polydorus succeeded (Pausanias 4.4.4, 5.9, 7.7).

As for the ultimate origin of this most ingenious and most satisfactory of the arguments constructed in defence of Lycurgus, we know that Aristotle, in his *Spartan Constitution*, expressed his admiration for the lawgiver by claiming that divine worship was not good enough for him (F 534 Rose), insisted on the Delphic origin of the Spartan constitution (F 535), gave a detailed explanation of the meaning of the Great Rhetra (F 536), and quoted the oracle about greed (F 544). There is thus every chance that Plutarch's entire discussion of the Rhetra and *Eunomia* is borrowed from the work of this philosopher. Aristotle may in turn have borrowed elsewhere, but he is as likely as anyone, and more likely than most, to have been the first to formulate this sophisticated argument. One can certainly see how it would have fitted his approach to Theopompus, the ephorate, and constitutional theory in general. On the one hand, Aristotle praised Theopompus for 'moderating' the power of the kings 'by, among other things, setting up the office of ephor' (*Politics* 1313a25–7). On the other hand, he saw the ephorate as a deeply flawed institution, which tended to be 'tyranny-like' (1265b35–41; 1270b6–35), and he must have felt uneasy about attributing it to Theopompus. By crediting the king with curbing the power of the assembly as well, however, the balance could be restored: Theopompus had not made Sparta more democratic or oligarchic, but steered it towards Aristotle's ideal 'middle' and 'moderate' constitution.

Such, I would suggest, were the outlines of the fourth-century debate which inspired different interpretations of, and quotations from, *Eunomia*, which gave rise to the idea that the Great Rhetra had been tampered with by the addition of a 'rider', and which established

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