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Spartan courage and the social function of Plutarch's Laconian apophthegms

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Abstract: Plutarch's Laconian apophthegms present an image of Spartan courage that can be traced to fifth century Sparta. This ideology of courage has four main aspects: willingness to die in battle; the interchangeability of Spartan citizens; the role of Spartan women as the arbiters of masculine behavior; and the role of Spartan education in developing courage. Contrary to the general view of Plutarch's Laconian apophthegms, this theme has not been heavily distorted by fourth and third century philosophy. It is likely that the Spartans were the developers of these aphorisms and that the *syssition* provided a venue for their development.

1. Introduction

Several recent studies of courage have dealt, at least in part, with the issue of Spartan courage.[1] That Spartan bravery is seen as fundamental to such studies, both in a general sense and with specific comparison to the Athenian manifestation, suggests that there is something unique about Spartan valor, a view that is buttressed even by popular perceptions of Spartans as the hyper-masculine warriors *par excellence*.[2] Much of this perception is founded upon the reports of Spartan bravery at Thermopylae (and similar depictions of Spartan behavior in subsequent battles) as unwilling to flee in the face of danger, preferring to suffer death unless victory were gained. In this paper I wish to examine a particular set of evidence, namely Plutarch's *Sayings of Spartans*, in order to gain insight into the depiction of Spartan courage.[3] I have chosen to focus on these aphorisms be-

* I would like to thank Tom Figueira for reading an earlier version of this paper and offering many insightful comments and criticisms. I should also like to extend my gratitude to the National Endowment for the Humanities for my participation in the 2014 Summer Institute, "Mortality: facing death in ancient Greece", and especially to its director, Karen Bassi, and my fellow participants in the program, from whom I learned much and had many fruitful discussions on the issues considered in this paper.

1 W.I. Miller, *The Mystery of Courage* (Cambridge, MA 2000) 15–28; R. Avramenko, *Courage: the Politics of Life and Limb* (Notre Dame, IN 2011) 23–59; R. Balot, *Courage in the Democratic Polis: Ideology and Critique in Classical Athens* (Oxford 2014) 198–211.

2 See especially N. Loraux, "La 'belle mort' spartiate", *Ktéma* 2 (1977) 105–120 (= N. Loraux, "The Spartans' 'beautiful death'", in: N. Loraux, *The Experiences of Tiresias* (trans. P. Wissing) (Princeton 1995) 63–74. The most well known modern depiction of Spartans in this manner is the 2006 film *300*.

3 *Apophthegmata Laconica* = Plut. *Mor.* 208b–242d. The *Apophthegmata Laconica* are frequently divided into three sections: *Apophthegmata Laconica*, *Instituta Laconica*, and *Lacaenarum Apophthegmata*. This paper analyzes selections from the *Apophthegmata Laconica* and *Lacaenarum Apophthegmata*. For the apophthegms quoted in this paper, the text is that

cause, for various reasons, they are generally relegated to position of secondary importance, considered to be contaminated by fourth and third century philosophical thought and its idealization of Spartan society. I will tentatively propose a more nuanced understanding which suggests that, for at least a portion of the aphorisms which deal with Spartan courage, there exists a continuity of theme and thought that originated at the latest during the period after the Persian Wars. In addition, I wish to assess the form and function of these aphorisms, a point which is directly related to the issue of the origin and possible contamination of the aphorisms, as we possess them. Beginning at least by the fifth century (and perhaps earlier) the Spartans were developing a body of aphorisms for use at home and abroad by means of which they might cultivate an image of themselves as a collection of brave, courageous men willing to die for their *polis* at any time. Internal to Sparta, these aphorisms served as a means of education and acculturation, while externally they were meant to advertise their superiority to other *poleis*, specifically Athens.

Before turning to the apophthegms themselves, it will be necessary to discuss the collection and current scholarly views of the material contained therein. It has been shown that Plutarch made his own collection of sayings,[4] and he appears to have culled sayings from collections of apophthegms that were assembled prior to the Spartan revolution of the late third century.[5] Debate still exists about whether Plutarch made the collection as a sort of trove of source material and then wrote the lives or arranged the sayings after having written up the lives first.[6] The answer to this question is not of great importance here; the relevant

of W. Nachstädt, *Plutarchi moralia*, vol. 2.1 (Leipzig 1935). All translations are my own. I have limited the study to this collection because, as E.N. Tigerstedt, *The Legend of Sparta in Classical Antiquity*, vol. 2 (Stockholm 1974) 17 has pointed out, they have been edited in a critical edition and because the use of apophthegms found elsewhere generally only provide repetition of those already in the Plutarchan collection.

4 The ordering of the apophthegms in the collection generally mirrors their usage in Plutarch's Spartan lives. Nachstädt, *loc. cit.* (n. 3 above) 3–5 noted the similarity in order in Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus*, K. Ziegler, *Plutarchos von Chaironeia* (Stuttgart 1949) 229 in the lives of Lysander and Agesilaus. P.A. Stadter, "Plutarch's compositional technique: the anecdote collections and the *Parallel Lives*", *GRBS* 54 (2014) 667: "We can assert confidently that if the anecdotes of the persons in *Ap.Lac.* follow the order of those in the respective *Lives*, it must mean that this order derives from Plutarch himself." See also M. Beck, "Plutarch to Trajan: the dedicatory letter and the apophthegm collection", in: P.A. Stadter/L. Van der Stockt (eds.), *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98–117 A.D.)* (Leuven 2002) 167–168.

5 On the circulation and collection of apophthegms, see E. Rawson, *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (Oxford 1969) 87–89; Tigerstedt, *loc. cit.* (n. 3 above) 24; C. Santaniello, *Detti dei Lacedemoni* (Naples 1995) 8–9; S. Hodkinson, *Property and Wealth in Classical Sparta* (Swansea 2000) 40–41; T.J. Figueira, "Gynecocracy: how women policed masculine behavior in Archaic and Classical Sparta", in: A. Powell/S. Hodkinson (eds.), *Sparta: the body politic* (Swansea 2010) 274–275.

6 Stadter, *loc. cit.* (n. 4 above) 669 argues that Plutarch made this collection first, C. Pelling, *Plutarch and History* (Swansea 2002) 65–90 that it was done afterwards.

points are that Plutarch made and arranged the collection himself; that this collection was not assembled by Plutarch's excerpting the aphorisms from other source material but more likely was culled from earlier collections; and that the apophthegms all seem to have been constructed prior to the third century Spartan revolution.[7]

But what type of collection existed, and at what time? Suggestions have varied. Perhaps the first collection was made in the fifth century by Spartans,[8] or perhaps this was impossible because of Spartan illiteracy.[9] The first of these seems unlikely, due to the still largely oral nature of Greek society at that time.[10] The second should give us pause because of current views about Spartan literacy.[11] It seems most likely that the aphorisms existed in oral form perhaps even down to the fourth or third century, when scholarly undertakings would have consigned them to writing, and perhaps to a collection.[12] In any case, prior to their being recorded in written form, it seems that the body of aphorisms was an undefined mass, so to speak, that was continually augmented, and that there were a number of free floating sayings that might be assigned to different individuals at different times.[13]

The consensus view of the apophthegms states that the influence of fourth and third century philosophy is so strong on Plutarch's aphorisms that the sayings are distorted in their idealization of Spartan society.[14] This suggests that the image of Sparta that we receive from Plutarch's collection of apophthegms is one that should be placed in the period between Sparta's collapse in the mid-fourth century and the revolution of the late third century, and that they have been so contaminated as not to be useful as evidence for our understanding of ancient Sparta in any significant way. For many of these apophthegms this is surely correct, as Hodkinson has shown, in the pages cited above, through several illustrations, which primarily relate to issues of wealth, the topic of his study.

There seems to be some basis, however, for arguing that the apophthegms that deal directly with issues of courage have been much less contaminated and

7 On the final point, see Tigerstedt, *loc. cit.* (n. 3 above) 26.

8 F. Ollier, *Le mirage Spartiate: étude sur l'idéalisation de Sparte dans l'antiquité grecque du début de l'école cynique jusqu'à la fin de la cité* (Paris 1943) 44–46.

9 Tigerstedt, *loc. cit.* (n. 3 above) 28.

10 Evidence of oral transmission can be gleaned from Herodotus, who records several apophthegms and likely employed oral sources for the most part; see R. Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 1989) 3–4, with citations.

11 P. Cartledge, "Literacy in the Spartan oligarchy", *JHS* 98 (1978) 25–37; T.A. Boring, *Literacy in Ancient Sparta* (Leiden 1979); E.G. Millender, "Spartan literacy revisited", *ClA* 20 (2001) 121–164.

12 Hodkinson, *loc. cit.* (n. 5 above) 40.

13 See section 4 below.

14 Primarily expounded by Hodkinson, *loc. cit.* (n. 5 above) 41–43, though, as he notes, conjectures as to what specific influence is the strongest include the Peripatetic, Cynic, and Stoic schools of philosophy; no single consensus has emerged. See also Ollier, *loc. cit.* (n. 8 above) 21–24.

present a consistent image of Spartan valor over several centuries. We should see them as part of an enduring ideology of courage that was developed by the Spartans themselves, for both internal and external purposes. Aside from consistency of message, which will be addressed below, there are other reasons to believe that Spartans themselves were responsible for creating aphorisms on this subject. First, the reputation for Spartan pithiness was well established by the end of the classical period. Second, the earliest aphorisms that we possess, while not all in Plutarch's collection, are passed down by Herodotus and Thucydides, who were likely employing Spartan sources. Third, the *syssition* provided a venue for the development and transmission of these sayings. It seems both that the Spartans were creators of aphorisms and that the image of Spartan courage that we get from the sayings in Plutarch's collection matches closely with the version we get from other evidence, both literary and material, from the classical period. The picture that therefore emerges from the apophthegms is a view of Spartan courage that reflects actual Spartan ideals rather than non-Spartan and/or later idealization.

2. The image of Spartan courage in the apophthegms

It would not be an overstatement to say that the Plutarch's Laconian apophthegms are dominated by images of bravery or cowardice in battle. Such prominence is not surprising, as it seems to reflect the emphases of Spartan society itself.[15] In this section, I will develop the main aspects of Spartan courage, as portrayed in the apophthegms. A reading of the aphorisms suggests that there are four major aspects of this portrayal: the willingness to die in battle; the interchangeability of Spartan citizens; the role of Spartan women in maintaining standards of courage; and the role of Spartan education in developing courage.

Two apophthegms that report the death of Brasidas can serve as an introduction to these themes. These sayings provide an appropriate starting point for this examination because of the range of issues covered and the repetition of similar material within the collection.

> When it happened that he fell as he was liberating the Greeks in Thrace, the ambassadors who were sent to Sparta came to his mother Archileonis. She first asked if Brasidas died nobly, and the Thracians praised him and said that there was none other such as him. "You are mistaken, o foreigners", she replied. "For Brasidas was a courageous man, but Sparta has many men better than him."[16]

15 E.g. Loraux, *loc. cit.* (n. 2 above) 105–106; J. Redfield, "The women of Sparta", *CJ* 73 (1977–1978) 161.

16 Plut. *Mor.* 219d: Ἐπεὶ δὲ συνέβη πεσεῖν αὐτὸν ἐλευθεροῦντα τοὺς ἐπὶ Θρᾴκης Ἕλληνας, οἱ δὲ πεμφθέντες εἰς Λακεδαίμονα πρέσβεις τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ Ἀρχιλεωνίδι προσῆλθον, πρῶτον μὲν ἠρώτησεν εἰ καλῶς ὁ Βρασίδας ἐτελεύτησεν, ἐγκωμιαζόντων δὲ τῶν Θρᾳκῶν καὶ λεγόντων ὡς οὐδεὶς ἄλλος ἐστὶ τοιοῦτος, "ἀγνοεῖτε" εἶπεν "ὦ ξένοι· Βρασίδας γὰρ ἦν μὲν ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός, πολλοὺς δ' ἐκείνου κρείσσονας ἔχει ἡ Σπάρτη."

> When her son died, Archileonis, the mother of Brasidas, when some of the Amphipolitans had come to her in Sparta, asked if her son had died nobly and worthy of Sparta. When they praised him and said that he was the best of all the Spartans in such endeavors, she said, "O foreigners, my child was a noble and brave man, but Sparta has many men better than him."[17]

This pair of Brasidan apophthegms reflects the major aspects of Spartan courage. Brasidas met his end excelling in battle, the finest way for a Spartan to die. In consequence of this type of death, Brasidas' demise was considered noble and worthy of Sparta, and it was approved of by his mother, who stands as the authority on bravery or cowardice.[18] Indeed, Brasidas is known as a brave man (ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός), suggesting that the highest form of courage had to come through proper comportment in battle.[19] Finally, the concept of interchangeability among the Spartiates is envisioned in the final statements of each apophthegm; bravery and fighting to the death could be expected because a replacement was always at the ready.[20]

The *Sayings* elsewhere stress the importance of death in battle. Callicratidas meets his end in battle in an unsuccessful naval engagement.[21] Anaxibius, after his own failures as a general, urges his men to abandon him so that he can die fighting.[22] Astycratidas asks rhetorically whether Antipater can keep them from

17 Plut. *Mor.* 240c: Ἀρχιλεωνὶς ἡ Βρασίδου μήτηρ, τελευτήσαντος αὐτῇ τοῦ υἱοῦ, ὡς παραγενόμενοί τινες τῶν Ἀμφιπολιτῶν εἰς Σπάρτην ἦκον πρὸς αὐτήν, ἠρώτησεν εἰ καλῶς καὶ ἀξίως τῆς Σπάρτης ὁ υἱὸς ἐτελεύτα· μεγαλυνόντων δ' ἐκείνων καὶ λεγόντων ἄριστον ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις ἁπάντων Λακεδαιμονίων εἶναι, εἶπεν· "ὦ ξένοι, καλὸς μὲν ἦν κἀγαθὸς ὁ παῖς μου, πολλοὺς δ' ἄνδρας Λακεδαίμων ἔχει τήνου κάρρονας." The anecdote is also related at Plut. *Lyc.* 25.5 and *Mor.* 190b–c; see also Santaniello, *loc. cit.* (n. 5 above) 426. The basic content is reported by Diodorus Siculus (12.74.3–4).

18 Cf. Figueira, *loc. cit.* (n. 5 above) 280. In general, Sparta's social system was structured so that masculine behavior was monitored at all stages and by various groups or individuals; cf. Xen. *Lac.* 2–4.

19 It should be noted that in the second apophthegm, Brasidas is identified as one of the καλοὶ κἀγαθοί. F. Bourriott, "Kaloi kagathoi, kalokagathia à Sparte aux époques archaïque et classique", *Historia* 45 (1996) 131–132 understands this phrase, in Spartan terms, to identify a class of individuals who have been picked out for their bravery on the battlefield; cf. A.W. Gomme, "The Interpretation of ΚΑΛΟΙ ΚΑΓΑΘΟΙ in Thucydides 4.40.2", *CQ* n.s. 3 (1953) 65–68 for a less rigid interpretation, though one equally imbued with the sense of bravery. The issue is also surveyed, with references, by M. Nafissi, *La Nascita del Kosmos* (Collana 1991) 111–114.

20 Indeed, this idea is taken to the extreme in this instance, in which the living Spartans will incrementally improve upon the actions of their predecessors.

21 Plut. *Mor.* 222f: μαχόμενος ἐτελεύτα. Elsewhere, Callicratidas explains to his pilot that option is death or victory (Plut. *Mor.* 222e: ἢ ἀποθανεῖν ἢ νικᾶν ἄριστον). Similarly, Leonidas explains to his men that the choice was to kill the barbarians or be willing to die (Plut. *Mor.* 225b: ἤδη γὰρ ἢ κτάμεν τὼς βαρβάρως ἢ αὐτοὶ τεθνάμεν θέλομες), just as he is also purported to have led his men as if they were going to die (Plut. *Mor.* 225c: πολλοὺς ἐπάγομαι ὡς ἀποθανουμένους). Callicratidas' death is also recorded by both Xenophon (*HG* 1.6.33) and Diodorus Siculus (13.97–99).

22 Plut. *Mor.* 219c: ἐμὲ δὲ μαχόμενον ἀποθανεῖν. The story is also reported by Xenophon (*HG* 4.8.39), and in this instance Xenophon employs language similar to the apophthegm in Plu-

dying in battle after Agis had been killed.[23] In another, Hippodamus refuses Agis' orders to abandon his position and so give up his chance to die fighting.[24] In a similar vein, several apophthegms attest to the well-known trope of the noble death, also referred to in the apophthegms dealing with Brasidas' death. For example, when Leonidas is asked why the best men prefer glorious death to inglorious life, he responds that they think life comes from nature as a gift, while death is in their control (Plut. *Mor.* 225d: ἔνδοξον θάνατον). When a son tells his mother of the noble death of his brother, the mother scorns the living brother for not having taken part in this death in battle (Plut. *Mor.* 214b: γενναῖον θάνατον). Similarly, a sister tells her brother of her son's noble death and chides her brother for not sharing in it (Plut. *Mor.* 242b: γενναῖον θάνατον).[25]

There is significant overlap between the ideas of dying in battle and of Spartan interchangeability, as already witnessed in the two apophthegms on the death of Brasidas. Likewise, in the same apophthegm of Callicratidas cited above, the Spartan commander specifically states that the affairs of Sparta do not rest with one man and appoints Cleander as his replacement before dying in battle (Plut. *Mor.* 222f). At the heart of this interchangeability is the belief that the Spartan citizen body was full of excellent men, embodied in Archileonis' comment that Sparta had many better men than Brasidas, and echoed in the sentiment of Paedaretus, who was not chosen among the 300 for Thermopylae and rejoiced that Sparta had that many men better than him (*Mor.* 231b).

The mother frequently plays a role in accepting or rejecting her son's behavior as properly courageous.[26] For example, a mother claims as her own the one son who she hears had died while acting bravely, while denying that she is the mother of the son who is said to have survived because he acted cowardly.[27] In a

tarch (μαχόμενος ἀποθνήσκει). Cf. also Polyaenus (*Strat.* 3.9.33) and Frontinus (*Str.* 1.4.7; 2.5.42).

23 Plut. *Mor.* 219b: μαχομένους ἡμᾶς ἀποθανεῖν. This apophthegm is set after the battle of Megalopolis in 331, in which Sparta suffered a defeat at the hands of Antipater; see also Diodorus Siculus (17.62.8). At Megalopolis, Sparta sent out her entire military contingent, and large numbers of Spartans perished (more than 5,300, DS 17.63.3). Even king Agis III died, with many frontal wounds, after dismissing the Spartiates in order that they might save themselves for the defense of their city (17.63.4).

24 Plut. *Mor.* 222a: μαχόμενος ἀποθνήσκει. These sayings are mirrored by the mother of the Spartan who won in battle and later died from his wounds; she expresses her happiness by stating it is better to die conquering in a battle-line than to win at the Olympics and live (ἐν παρατάξει νικῶντα τελευτᾶν ἢ τὰ Ὀλύμπια περιγενόμενον ζῆν, Plut. *Mor.* 242a–b).

25 In a related apophthegms, Gyrtias, the grandmother of Acrotatus (king of Sparta), preferred her grandson to have died worthy of herself and of Sparta (ἀπέθανε καὶ ἑαυτῆς καὶ τῆς πόλεως ἀξίως) rather than to be known as a coward (κακὸς ὤν) (Plut. *Mor.* 240f). Dying worthy of her and of Sparta is likely a stand in for dying nobly. Cf. also the saying of Damatria (Plut. *Mor.* 240f) above.

26 S.B. Pomeroy, *Spartan Women* (Oxford 2002) 57–62; Figueira, *loc. cit.* (n. 5 above) *passim*, esp. 283–284.

27 Plut. *Mor.* 242a: ἀνδραγαθήσας ἀπέθανεν ... ἀποδειλιάσας σῴζεται; cf. Plut. *Lyc.* 25.4. In this apophthegm, the combination of bravery and death are contrasted with, and reinforced by, the

similar saying, Damatria, hearing that her son had been a coward and unworthy of her, killed him when he returned from battle.[28] When a Spartan mother learns that her son died in battle, she states (in an epigram) that she will not cry over her dead son but requests that the cowards be mourned (*Mor.* 241a). The judgment of the mother plays a similar role in two other passages that record the admonitions of the mother to her son in the context of battle (*Mor.* 241e). In the first, a mother escorts her lame son to battle, urging him to remember his valor (τῆς ἀρετῆς μέμνησο). In the next, a mother also advises her son, returning from battle with a wounded foot, to be mindful of his valor (τῆς ἀρετῆς … μέμνῃ); doing so will make him free of pain (ἄπονος) and bold (θαρρήσεις). These apophthegms suggest that the mothers are implicitly urging their sons to either conquer or die, and thus conform to the idealized notion of Spartan valor.

Several apophthegms mention the Spartan educational system. When asked what free boys should learn, Leotychidas (king of Sparta in the seventh century) answered that they learn whatever will help them become men.[29] In the famous story of the boy who was clawed while hiding a fox in his cloak, rather than be discovered in his pilfering, the boy responds to his peers, who questioned why he would endure such pain, that it was better to die enduring the pain than to be discovered through weakness (διὰ μαλακίαν) and to procure for himself a life of disgrace (τὸ ζῆν αἰσχρῶς περιποιήσασθαι).[30] As part of a young man's education, theft was both encouraged and congratulated, and it functioned as a precedent for the brave deeds expected of him as an adult.[31] Similarly, when as a boy he was almost beaten to death by his peers, Acrotatus was received at home by his grandmother Gyrtias, who urged the other women not to bewail his possible death.[32] These apophthegms reinforce the early development of courage along the same lines as it was maintained among adult Spartans.

combination of cowardice and survival. This concept is strengthened by other aphorisms, such as the famous "either this or on it", as the mother hands the shield to her son (Plut. *Mor.* 241f; attributed to Gorgo at Stob. *Flor.* 3.7.30).

28 Plut. *Mor.* 240f: δειλὸν καὶ ἀνάξιον ἑαυτῆς. The son who deserted his post (Plut. *Mor.* 241a) and another who returns home bearing the news that all have died in battle (Plut. *Mor.* 214b) are both also killed by their mothers.

29 Plut. *Mor.* 224d: ἄνδρας γενομένους. The sense of "free" in this passage is meant to contrast those boys destined to become Spartan citizens with either the perioecic or, more likely, unfree helot population. This freedom would allow them to pass through the system of education at Sparta and develop the proper type of courage.

30 Plut. *Mor.* 234a–b; cf. Plut. *Lyc.* 18.1. N. Kennell, *The Gymnasium of Virtue* (Chapel Hill, NC 1995) 122 has argued that this apophthegm likely derives from a Spartan source. Spartans could be charged and punished for μαλακία; cf. Thuc. 5.72, with W.K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War, Part II* (Berkeley 1974) 6, 11.

31 J. Ducat, *Spartan Education* (trans. E. Stafford, P.-J. Shaw, and A. Powell) (Swansea 2006) 204–206. For the role of theft in Spartan education see Xen. *Lac.* 2.6–9 and Plut. *Lyc.* 17.3–4.

32 Plut. *Mor.* 240e. Xenophon (*Lac.* 4.6) describes the fights among Spartan youth.

3. Tracing Spartan valor

An important question is whether the composite image of Spartan courage that is found in the apophthegms can be discovered in earlier texts that might be shown to reflect Spartan thought, rather than the idealized notions of outsiders. My main contention is that the Spartan ideology contained in the sayings goes beyond the concept of the "Spartan mirage", which earlier studies held to be the positive and negative portrayal of Sparta by outsiders. There is evidence, however, which suggests that the image of Sparta courage was developed in Sparta itself.[33] While the idealized nature of the sayings is indisputable, a number of underlying concepts presented in the *Apophthegmata Laconica* can be traced in works from the classical period, whose sources appear to be Spartans themselves. As the foregoing analysis has demonstrated, Spartan courage in the apophthegms is defined almost entirely through tenets of military virtue. Sources from the classical period indicate that Sparta was cultivating this self-image in the aftermath of the Persian Wars.

3.1. Death in battle

The Spartan death in battle is elevated in texts from the classical period, where it is presented as the expected, normative behavior of the Spartan. This aspect of "Spartan-ness" is central to civic and Hellenic identity and holds the key to understanding the other aspects of Spartan courage. The directive went beyond normative Greek behavior, which celebrated death in battle but did not require it. The concept was developed from within Sparta during the classical period, either as a result of Thermopylae or galvanized by that historic defeat. Because Herodotus' account is essentially the *locus classicus* for understanding Spartan courage, a somewhat extended analysis of the passage will be necessary.

The Spartan noble death, and its connection to Thermopylae, is first introduced by the conversation between Demaratus and Xerxes (7.104), where it is presented as a Spartan *nomos*.[34] In this passage, Demaratus famously claims that the Spartan were charged either with conquering or with dying; flight was not an option for them. This ideal is reflected in the later account of the battle at several points. The Spartan behavior prior to battle was shocking to the Persian scout sent to observe them; the Spartans were exercising and tending to their hair

33 Such a view, in general, has been neatly expounded by Redfield, *loc. cit.* (n. 15 above) 146–147: "The problem becomes more complicated when we realize that the gap between ideal and actuality must have been part of the reality of life for the Spartans themselves. The Spartans, if only because they had to explain to each other why they were different from other Greeks, became their own ideologists. All accounts, ultimately, go back to these self-descriptions. But a people's self-descriptions are themselves somewhat utopian or idealised."

34 R.W. Macan, *Herodotus, the seventh, eighth, & ninth books, with introduction, text, apparatus, commentary, appendices, indices, maps* (London 1908) 134. On the issue of the requirement as a Spartan *nomos*, Loraux, *loc. cit.* (n. 2 above) 109–114.

(7.208). The report of this behavior astounded Xerxes, who could not believe that they were really getting ready to kill or be killed (7.209). The report recalls Demaratus' description of Spartan *nomos* earlier (7.104), and Demaratus is here again summoned by Xerxes. He explains that it was Spartan custom to arrange their hair whenever they are about to endanger their lives. In addition, Demaratus tells Xerxes that he is opposing the most kingly and finest city and the bravest men (ἄνδρας ἀρίστους). These claims are confirmed by the excellence of their fighting (7.213). After the Persians traversed the Anopaian Path, Hydarnes feared that they would meet Spartan troops; he readied his men for battle when he learned they were Phocians (7.218). The power of Spartan courage is reinforced in Herodotus' description of the battle itself, when he states that Leonidas thought (at least according to one report) that it was inappropriate for the Spartans to desert their positions (7.220).

After the battle, Herodotus recounts yet another conversation between Xerxes and Demaratus (7.234–235), which again recalls the conversion from earlier in the same book (7.101–104). Here, Xerxes, frightened by the bravery of the Lacedaemonians, wishes to know how many of these warriors remain. Demaratus replies that Lacedaemon is large and has many cities, but that the most important city, Sparta, has 8000 citizens. The rest of the Lacedaemonians are not the equals of the Spartans, but they are still brave men. The reality of this conversation is unbelievable, as it is unlikely that Xerxes would never have heard of Sparta before. This passage serves an official announcement of the renown of Spartan courage and the city's preeminence in that area at the time.

There is evidence in Herodotus (and elsewhere) that variant traditions of what happened at Thermopylae were in circulation in the second half of the fifth century.[35] These conflicts manifest themselves primarily when Herodotus recounts the actions of the battle and the motivations of the individuals involved. Once the Greeks knew that their position had been betrayed, there was discussion of how to proceed. By one tradition, two factions emerged, one for departing, the other for remaining (7.219). By another tradition, Leonidas was the one responsible for dismissing all the allies except for the Thebans and Thespians (7.220).[36] Leonidas wished to spare the lives of the most of the allied force, and his reason for keeping the Spartans, Thebans, and Thespians back seems to have been to engage the Persians, thus allowing the others to flee. Earlier (7.205), however, Herodotus relates that Leonidas enlisted the Thebans to fight at Thermopylae because they were thought to be medizers; now he was holding them hostage (7.222). In addition, Herodotus (7.220) injects his own hypothesis that the allies were dismissed because of a lack of enthusiasm, whereas it was unbe-

35 See, e.g., N.G.L. Hammond, "Sparta at Thermopylae", *Historia* 45 (1996) 1–20; M.A. Flower, "Ephorus, and Herodotus on the Battle of Thermopylae", *CQ* 48 (1998) 365–379.

36 Macan, *loc. cit.* (n. 34 above) 324: "He proceeds to harmonize the two λόγοι within certain limits."

coming of the Spartans to depart.[37] These reports are contradictory, with the latter pointing toward the heroic deeds of Leonidas, which are undercut by the former.[38]

Because Herodotus employed Spartan sources elsewhere in his history, and because his account of Thermopylae shows conflicting traditions, it seems likely that Herodotus employed a Spartan source for at least one version of the story.[39] Even in his Thermopylae narrative, Herodotus claims to have learned the names of the three hundred (7.224), information that one would logically obtain from a Spartan source.[40] The large number of flattering comments about Sparta and Spartan courage throughout this account also suggest that these aspects were derived from such a source. This view is further reinforced by the details that Herodotus gives of Spartan survivors and their respective fates. In contrast to the bravery of the dead Herodotus discussing the fate of the survivors of Thermopylae, with singular attention to Spartans. In the first place he tells the story of Eurytus and Aristodemus (7.229–231). Both suffering from an inflammation of the eyes, they had the opportunity to either return to Sparta together, or to die with the other Spartans. Not able to agree, Eurytus had his helot lead him to battle, where he was killed (his helot fled). Herodotus again stresses the importance of joint action, before relating that Aristodemus returned to Sparta, provoked the anger of the Spartans, fell into disgrace, and was known as a trembler (ὁ τρέσας Ἀριστόδημος). Another Spartan, Pantites, who was sent from Thermopylae as a messenger, hanged himself because of the dishonor (ὡς ἠτίμωτο) he received there. It is difficult to believe that such detail derived from somewhere other than Sparta. Furthermore, the depiction of these failures in courage aligns so well as the antithesis of Spartan valor possessed by the dead at Thermopylae that it is likely the image of Spartan valor was one promoted by Sparta itself.

This self-portrait appears again in Thucydides' account of the events on Sphacteria. In this rare episode of Spartan surrender, the other Greeks were astounded, having previously thought that it was the Spartans' duty to "die fight-

37 Hammond, *loc. cit.* (n. 35 above) 11, 13–14.

38 E. Baragwanath, *Motivation and Narrative in Herodotus* (Oxford 2008) 71. C. Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion of Greece* (Oxford 1963) 373 suggests that this account, which reflects poorly on the Peloponnesians, derived from the poleis of central Greece.

39 For the multiplicity of sources, see F. Jacoby, "Herodotus", *RE* Suppl. 2 (1913) 455–459, Hignett, *loc. cit.* (n. 38 above) 371–378. Macan, *loc. cit.* (n. 34 above) lxvii–lxxvi considers Herodotus' sources for book 7–9 in general; see also Jacoby (this note) 392–467 for an extensive discussion of Herodotus' source material. Herodotus' Spartan sources are also discussed by F. Jacoby, *Atthis* (Oxford 1949) 390 n. 6 and G.L. Huxley, "Herodotus on myth and politics in early Sparta", *PRIA* 83 (1983) 1–16.

40 Although he does not name them all, which may cause some to doubt his claim, he does provide a significant number of individual names, such as Dieneces, Eurytus, Pantites, and Aristodemus. See S. Flory, *The Archaic Smile of Herodotus* (Detroit 1987) 64–65 for similar examples of Herodotus' selection of material.

ing as well as they could".[41] The shock that overtook the Greek observing this moment of Spartan weakness underlines that fact that the Spartans advertised their civic directive to seek death in battle in an effective way. This passage need not rely on a Spartan source to vouch for the historicity of the concept, since the expectation of normative Spartan behavior has been confounded.[42] We glimpse Spartan self-presentation through the surprise of others when it is not maintained. The rest of the Greeks were perplexed by the Spartan surrender; they did not know that Spartan retreat existed because the Spartans likely promulgated this sense of courage about themselves.

Such self-promotion is seen later in Thucydides' account of the war. In his plea to prevent the Athenians from engaging in the Sicilian expedition, Nicias states that the Spartans had for a long time been cultivating a reputation for bravery above all.[43] This passage suggests that the Spartans were in active pursuit of being known as courageous, a notice which helps to explain both the shock of the Greeks at their surrender at Sphacteria, as well as their goal in the development of the Thermopylae narrative which would place them in the best possible light. No doubt this sense of competition was primarily with Athens over hegemony in the Hellenic world in the second half of the fifth century.

This method of self-presentation persisted throughout the period of Spartan hegemony. In his *Hellenica*, Xenophon frequently records the deaths of Spartan commanders in battle.[44] Xenophon had unusual access to Spartan sources, and his repeated interest in recording Spartan deaths in battle, and frequent commemoration of their deaths as achieved while fighting, suggests that he is reflecting the same aspect of Spartan courage that has been observed in Herodotus and Thucydides. Although one might object that Xenophon was writing the *Hellenica* in the period post-Leuctra and thus reflecting images of Spartan valor from that time, the consistency of his portrayal in comparison to Herodotus and Thucydides suggests that no great change had taken place in this regard between the second half of the fifth century and the mid-fourth century in which he was writing.

41 Thuc. 4.40: ἀλλὰ ἔχοντας καὶ μαχομένους ὡς ἐδύναντο ἀποθνήσκειν.

42 Thucydides' sources are notoriously difficult to discern, but generally his exile has been seen as allowing him sufficient freedom to gather sources from various locations. He himself states that while in exile he was able to learn of affairs in the Peloponnese no less than on the Athenian side (5.26.5), suggesting freer access to Spartan sources; cf. E.N. Tigerstedt, *The Legend of Sparta in Classical Antiquity*, vol. 1 (Stockholm 1965) 132. On Thucydides' use of evidence, see S. Hornblower, *Thucydides* (Baltimore 1987) 77–96.

43 Thuc. 6.11: ὅσῳ καὶ περὶ πλείστου καὶ διὰ πλείστου δόξαν ἀρετῆς μελετῶσιν.

44 Xenophon records the deaths of over thirty Spartans in this work, including several to whom he has attached the commemorative "died fighting" (μαχόμενον ἀποθανεῖν, or variant): Mindarus (1.1.18), Peisander (4.3.12), Pasimachus (4.4.10), Anaxibius (4.8.3–39), Teleutias (5.3.6), Cleonymus (5.4.33, cf. 6.4.14), Phoebidas, (5.4.46), Polytropus (6.5.14), and Polyainidas and Chilon (7.4.23).

Furthermore, Xenophon, in his *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* (*Lac.* 9), outlines the benefits of bravery vis-à-vis the punishments of the coward, couched in the language of valor and cowardice (e.g. ἀρετή, ἀγαθός, κακός, and ἀνανδρία), going so far as to cite the Spartan preference for an honorable death (τὸν καλὸν θάνατον) rather than a life of disgrace (*Lac.* 9.1). To an even greater extent than in the *Hellenica*, Xenophon is likely relying on Spartan sources for this document, and indeed he appears to have had privileged access.[45] This passage suggests that the elevation of military excellence as the highest virtue was developed in Sparta, rather than simply foisted upon it by outsiders. Although the date of this text is not certain, it may date to the early fourth century, prior to the end of Spartan hegemony after Leuctra.[46] If such is the case, then it would appear to provide an image of Sparta that can be dated to its period of power.

Throughout the classical period texts of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon there is a persistent theme of death in battle and its importance to Spartan identity. The fact that these authors likely consulted Spartan sources, and the consistency of their testimony, suggests that this aspect of Spartan courage was derived from the Spartans themselves. The depiction is also consistent with the portrait that is contained in the relevant passages of the Laconian apophthegms. Indeed, the connecting thread between Thermopylae and Xenophon's *Hellenica* runs through the character of Callicratidas. The apophthegms have him state just before his death that "to flee is shameful and harmful to Sparta; it is best to die remaining here or to conquer."[47] Similarly, Xenophon quotes Callicratidas as saying that Sparta would be no worse off if he died, but that flight was disgraceful. He then meets his death fighting in battle.[48]

Still, there may be lingering doubt about the effect of the so-called Spartan mirage, namely that Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon are drawing on non-Spartan sources for this information. Therefore, we need only look at Spartan practices surrounding burial of the dead to confirm the portrait from these classical period sources. Spartiates who died in battle were honored with an inscription, as Pausanias (3.14.1) reports in the case of Brasidas. The specific method of burial is detailed by Plutarch (*Lyc.* 27.2, *Mor.* 238d), who states that Spartans who died in battle would receive an inscribed memorial, which was unavailable

45 See M. Lipka, *Xenophon's Spartan Constitution. Introduction, Text, Commentary* (Berlin 2002) 3–5 for Xenophon's association with Agesilaus and his residence in the Peloponnese.

46 Xenophon's discussion of harmosts in chapter 14 suggests a *terminus ante quem* of 371, and the address to a non-Athenian audience perhaps indicates a date prior to Xenophon's exile after Coronea in 394, Lipka, *loc. cit.* (n. 45 above) 9–13. While this dating can not be absolutely certain, the evidence leans toward a date prior to the end of the Spartan hegemony.

47 Plut. *Mor.* 222e–f: ἀλλὰ φεύγειν αἰσχρὸν καὶ βλαβερὸν τῇ Σπάρτῃ· μένοντα δὲ ἢ ἀποθανεῖν ἢ νικᾶν ἄριστον.

48 The interpretation of Xenophon's depiction of Callicratidas' death is a point of dispute. See J. Moles, "Xenophon and Callicratidas", *JHS* 114 (1994) 70 for a review.

to most of the rest of the citizen population.[49] Incredibly, this textual evidence is confirmed by archaeology, as number of Spartan memorials, bearing just this sort of inscription, have been found.[50] While questions remain about the sites and motivations behind the placement of these memorials, their relation toward Spartan attitudes toward death in battle seems clear: this was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, honor a Spartan could win for himself. Its reflection in the apophthegms seems neither surprising nor distorted.

3.2. Interchangeability

Following closely upon the concept of the ideal Spartan death in battle is the belief in interchangeability or replaceability among the Spartan citizen body. The idealized version of Sparta is depicted as a society in which much, if not all, was held in common, including wives, children, servants, and property.[51] Likewise, Spartans considered themselves *homoioi* (peers).[52] Although the term *homoios* is not attested in a technical sense until Xenophon (e.g. *Lac.* 10.7), its meaning and usage seems apparent in Herodotus (7.234) and Thucydides (4.40.2).[53] Although the origins of the ideal might be contested, it seems clear that it was in place by the classical period.[54] The attempt to erase, insofar as it was possible, distinctions among the citizen body in terms of class and wealth is also mirrored

49 There is some controversy on who else would receive such a burial, as the text is uncertain; it may have been priestesses or women who died in childbirth. While the emendation to pair death in battle and death in childbirth has been widely accepted, P. Brulé/L. Piolot, "Women's way of death: fatal childbirth or hierai? Commemorative stones at Sparta and Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 27.3", in: T.J. Figueira (ed.), *Spartan Society* (Swansea 2004) 151–178 and M. Dillon, "Were Spartan women who died in childbirth honoured with grave inscriptions?", *Hermes* 135 (2007) 149–165 make arguments to the contrary. On these passages from Plutarch, as well as the archaeological evidence, see D.W. MacDowell, *Spartan Law* (Edinburgh 1986) 120–122; Nafissi, *loc. cit.* (n. 19 above) 277–341, esp. 290–309; N. Richer, "Aspect des funérailles à Sparte", *CCG* 5 (1994) 51–96.

50 Hodkinson, *loc. cit.* (n. 5 above) 237–270; and P. Low, "Commemorating the Spartan war dead", in: S. Hodkinson/A. Powell (eds.), *Sparta & War* (Swansea 2006) 85–109.

51 E.g. Xen. *Lac.* 1.7, 6.1, 10.4, with Lipka, *loc. cit.* (n. 45 above) 160.

52 Ducat, *loc. cit.* (n. 31 above) 169.

53 See further Lipka, *loc. cit.* (n. 45 above) 186. For its usage in Herodotus, see B. Shimron, "Ein Wortspiel mit *HOMOIOI* bei Herodot", *RhM 122* (1979) 131–133.

54 M. Meier, "Wann entstand das *Homoios*-Ideal in Sparta?", in: A. Luther et al. (eds.), *Das Frühe Sparta* (Stuttgart 2006) 113–115 reviews the various possibilities for its inception. See L. Thommen, *Sparta: Verfassungs- und Sozialgeschichte einer griechischen Polis* (Stuttgart 2003) 117–122 for placing the development in the mid-fifth century. It does not seem possible to me that this ideal be dated to after the fifth century, given that fact that it seems to have been understood by Herodotus and Thucydides. Some, e.g. J.F. Lazenby, *The Spartan Army* (Mechanicsburg, PA 2012) 97, suggest that it was in place already in the time of Tyrtaeus, though this may be a bit earlier.

in Spartan attitudes toward valor.[55] There was a paradigmatic, static version of courage to which each Spartan aspired, and which culminated in death in battle. Such a view could be held because of this belief that there was always a fellow citizen who could aptly serve as a replacement. This sense of similarity, sanctioned by passage through the Spartan educational system, was confirmed in the Spartan's becoming a citizen-soldier and participating in the attendant social institutions.[56] The focus on military excellence as the main outlet for a display of manliness in the apophthegms is therefore reflective of the sense of interchangeability among the citizen class.[57]

The sense of interchangeability is also reinforced by the visual image of the Spartan warrior that we receive. There is significant uniformity of appearance.[58] These men wore their hair long, donned a red cloak, and carried a bronze shield.[59] The importance of Spartan hair is key to Herodotus' Thermopylae narrative, and supposedly had its origins in the archaic period.[60] The Spartans' hair practices in particular united the citizen body.[61] The standardization of the Spartan soldiers' appearance seems to have taken place in the fifth century,[62] likely at the same time that Sparta was developing this ideology of courage. The uniformity of appearance seems to match the sense of interchangeability among the citizen body, while also serving to unite the Spartans as a cohesive unit.

55 See C. Hawkins, "Spartans and perioikoi: the organization and ideology of the Lakedaimonian Army in the Fourth Century B.C.E.", *GRBS* 51 (2011) 412–415 for the ideological differences between *homoioi* and *perioeci*, and its effect on military arrangements; cf. H.W. Singor, "The Spartan army at Mantinea and its organisation in the fifth century BC", in: W. Jongman/M. Kleijwegt (eds.), *After the Past: Essays in Ancient History in Honour of H.W. Pleket* (Leiden 2002) 235–284.

56 M.I. Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History* (New York 1975) 164–165. The role of the education in the ideology of courage will be discussed below. It is important here to differentiate between being a Spartan hoplite and fighting in battle, thus avoiding the characterization of Sparta as a "militaristic" state. Sparta was not frequently at war and was depicted as slow to engage in war. See Finley, *loc. cit.* (this note) 171–177; S. Hodkinson, "Was classical Sparta a military society?", in: S. Hodkinson/A. Powell (eds.), *Sparta and War* (Swansea 2006) 111–162; and P. Christesen, "Athletics and Social Order in Sparta in the Classical Period", *ClA* 31 (2012) 234–239.

57 This does not preclude other outlets for competitive display, such as athletics, on which see Christesen, *loc. cit.* (n. 56 above).

58 Even in their everyday lives, Spartan males theoretically dressed in a similar, simple fashion; E. David, "Dress in Spartan society", *AncW* 19 (1989) 3–13; Hodkinson, *loc. cit.* (n. 5 above) 219–220.

59 Detailed by Xen. *Lac.* 11.3, with Lipka, *loc. cit.* (n. 45 above) 191–194. See P. Cartledge, *Agesilaos and the Crisis of Sparta* (Baltimore, MD 1987) 44 for the association between these external similarities and their status as *homoioi*.

60 Hdt. 7.208–209 for preparations before Thermopylae; Hdt. 1.82 for the origin of the practice, after the so-called Battle of Champions. For the similarities between these episodes, see E. David, "Suicide in Spartan Society", in: T.J. Figueira (ed.), *Spartan Society* (Swansea 2004) 29–30.

61 E. David, "Sparta's Social Hair", *Eranos* 90 (1992) 11–21.

62 Hodkinson, *loc. cit.* (n. 5 above) 225.

3.3. Spartan women

While the Spartan noble death is the least likely to be challenged as the product of contamination, the other issues are less straightforward, and the subject of feminine power at Sparta is particularly tricky. Recently, scholars have tended to see the depiction of Spartan women as a reflection of Athenian ideology and the need to portray them as "others". In this attempt to cut through this aspect of the Spartan mirage, sources are only seen through a distorted lens. What is at issue for this paper is whether Spartan women did place some sort of monitoring role over their male counterparts, or were at least described as doing so by Spartans themselves.

Herodotus is again an important source for answering this question, since, as we have noted above, he likely employed Spartan sources and shows a significant interest in Spartan women throughout his history. In Herodotus' text, Spartan women consistently show cleverness and independence.[63] The most important for our purposes is the figure of Gorgo, who urged her father Cleomenes to avoid being corrupted by the foreigner Aristagoras. This passage in Herodotus (5.51) most certainly employs a Spartan source, thus making it likely that the Spartans themselves described the women of their polis as strong in nature and with a tendency to monitor masculine behavior.[64] It may still very well be the case that the extent to which we see Spartan women as the arbiters of courage and bravery in the apophthegms is a distortion of this general tendency, and the depiction of Spartan women that we see, for example, in Attic comedy has been filtered through the lens of Athenian ideology.[65] These depictions, however, are likely exaggerations and embellishments based on some reality at Sparta itself.[66] Leaning again on the evidence for Gorgo that is presented by Herodotus, it seems rather clear that it was the Spartan themselves who offered up this view of the female members of their society.

The power of Spartan women is surely linked to their supposed license, for which they were frequently criticized. While the issue of female license is not a concern here, the causes of it are. Spartan women were seen as rather free because of frequent absence of Spartan men, away on campaign, which was thought to have occurred as early as the eighth century.[67] Spartan women are famously

63 E.G. Millender, "Athenian ideology and the empowered Spartan woman", in: S. Hodkinson/A. Powell (eds.), *Sparta: new perspectives* (Swansea 2009) 356–357.

64 Jacoby, *loc. cit.* (n. 39 above) 438, 457; Figueira, *loc. cit.* (n. 5 above) 266–267.

65 Millender, *loc. cit.* (n. 63 above) 357–363, 373–378.

66 B. Kunstler, "Family dynamics and female power in ancient Sparta", *Helios* 13 (1987) 34–36 in particular supports this view, with an emphasis on psychoanalysis of the mother-son relationship at Sparta. J. Ducat, "Perspectives on Spartan education in the classical period", in: S. Hodkinson/A. Powell (eds.), *Sparta: new perspectives* (Swansea 2009) 46 notes: "It is more than probable, moreover, that, under the pressure of the myth of gynecocracy, the *Sayings* in their turn distort reality by exaggerating the role of the mother."

67 Arist. *Pol.* 1270a; cf. Plut. *Lyc.* 14.2.

depicted as independent in a variety of other ways as well, including entering into plural marriages, possessing land, and managing the household.[68] The image of female influence is pervasive throughout various aspects of Spartan society, and it should therefore not surprise to find them judging male behavior.[69] This aspect of Spartan masculinity may have been one less advertised by the Spartans, but likely reflective of the significant role women played in their society.

3.4. Education[70]

The issue of education is related to that of interchangeability, as it was in their collective upbringing that Spartans would be molded into figures as similar to one another as possible.[71] The apophthegms stress the association between becoming a man and demonstrating valor. This issue can be approached directly through Xenophon's constitution (*Lac.* 4.2), which states that competition was an essential part of Spartan education and helped to develop a proper sense of masculinity.[72] The issue can also be addressed obliquely from a variety of sources. In his funeral oration (Thuc. 2.39.1–2), Pericles contrasts the pursuit of manliness (τὸ ἀνδρεῖον) from childhood at Sparta with the more relaxed approach at Athens.[73] These comments also suggest that the goal of Spartan edu-

68 Plural marriage: Xen. *Lac.* 1.8–9; property ownership: Arist. *Pol.* 1270a; household management: Pl. *Leg.* 805e.

69 E.g. Plutarch reports in his *Life of Lycurgus* (14.3) that Spartan girls watched the boys at public spectacles, and even jeered those who erred in some way. While it is perhaps a little curious that Xenophon does not mention similar behavior among women, his treatment of Spartan women in his constitutional treatise centers on their role in procreation and is placed at the very outset of the text, suggesting their importance in Spartan society.

70 The accounts of Xenophon (*Lac.* 2–4) and Plutarch (*Lyc.* 16–21) are the most thorough ancient accounts of the Spartan educational system. Most recently Kennell, *loc. cit.* (n. 30 above) and Ducat (n. 31 above) have analyzed this system; see also H. Jeanmaire, *Couroi et Courètes* (Lille 1939) and A. Brelich, *Paides e Parthenoi* (Rome 1969).

71 Ducat, *loc. cit.* (n. 66 above) 43: "Of all Greek cities, Sparta is surely the one where education played the greatest role, because the model of the citizen was particularly demanding and exerted a very strong pressure on individuals; in particular, one of its principal missions was to make them as far as possible the same, which implied that the process should be identical for all."

72 Xen. *Lac.* 4.2: ἔριν περὶ ἀρετῆς … ἀνδραγαθίας. The sense of ἀρετή in this passage, though multi-dimensional, seems heavily weighted toward courage. Xenophon goes on to describe the fights that were arranged between the *hebontes*, with a focus on martial prowess. Lipka, *loc. cit.* (n. 45 above) 143 describes this as "willingness to sacrifice oneself for the sake of the city". N. Humble, *Xenophon's View of Sparta: a study of the Anabasis, Hellenica and Respublica Lacedaemoniorum* (Diss. McMaster University 1997) 206 notes that ἀνδραγαθία here has "the restricted sense of bravery/courage".

73 P. Cartledge, *Spartan Reflections* (Los Angeles 2001) 80: "… the Spartans' and Athenians' educational practices were not just very different from but radically opposed to each other." Cf. K. Bassi, "The semantics of manliness in ancient Greece", in: R.M. Rosen/I. Sluiter (eds.), *Andreia: studies in manliness and courage in classical antiquity* (Leiden 2003) 47–48.

cation as the attainment of proper masculinity, or courage.[74] This critique of Spartan manliness is present as well in Plato and Aristotle, who saw Spartan education aimed at producing martial virtue, implicitly denying any attempt at developing political virtue.[75]

The sources suggest that at Sparta, what it meant to be a man was more prescribed than in other *poleis* and can be considered the bedrock upon which the Spartan social system was established.[76] Indeed, it seems that proof of valor was needed to become a full citizen.[77] In Athens, one simply became a citizen by having Athenian filiation and being a male adult (an ἀνήρ), and full citizenship within a deme was demonstrated through the inscription ἄνδρα γίγνεσθαι (i.e. to be of adult male age).[78] The Spartan system required passing through the educational system, which is portrayed as the training ground for the Spartan warrior.[79]

3.5. Summation

Each of these aspects of Spartan courage can be found to have some basis in material from the classical period. The evidence from Spartan burials is by far the strongest, as there can be little doubt that it reflects Spartan practice. For the literary sources, the reliance has primarily been on Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon. Each of the authors likely drew on Spartan sources or sources that reflected the ideology of Sparta itself. This analysis has also highlighted the interrelated nature of these five aspects of Spartan courage, though the role of Spartan women is perhaps the least well attested. We should conclude then that the other four aspects were significantly developed at Sparta, whereas the role of Spartan women as the overseers of masculine behavior likely suffered the greatest distortion. Still, the apophthegms appear to reflect well an image of Spartan courage that was current in the fifth century, and thus were not as contaminated by fourth and third century philosophy as ones that dealt with other issues.

74 Though the adversarial context of the passage should be noted; cf. the comments of Hodkinson, *loc. cit.* (n. 56 above) 118–119.

75 Pl. *Leg.* 666e–667a, Arist. *Pol.* 1271b1–6. Aristotle (*Pol.* 1338b) further condemns the Spartan educational system, inclined toward producing manliness (πρὸς ἀνδρείαν), as making Spartan youths more like animals through the harsh physical training.

76 Cf. Cartledge, *loc. cit.* (n. 73 above) 74.

77 Ducat, *loc. cit.* (n. 66 above) 53. Jeanmaire, *loc. cit.* (n. 70 above) 489 considered ἀρετή a prerequisite for citizenship, proven by passage through the ἀγωγή.

78 N. Loraux, *The Children of Athena* (trans. C. Levine) (Princeton 1993) 16–17.

79 For the "military interpretation" of the Spartan educational system among the ancients, see Ducat, *loc. cit.* (n. 31 above) 139–148.

4. Form and function of the apophthegms

The apophthegms may have been one of the vehicles for publicizing the image of Spartan courage, and evidence suggests that the Spartans were the creators of aphorisms that depicted an idealized version of their society. I will pursue this argument long three lines: the Spartans' reputation for aphoristic speech; the evidence of aphorisms created prior to the fourth and third centuries; and the existence of the *syssition* as a possible venue for the development and transmission of these sayings. While the subsequent discussion will have to remain tentative due to the sparseness of evidence, it seems that the gathering of circumstantial evidence will present a plausible picture.[80]

The Spartans' reputation for aphoristic speech was well known in antiquity.[81] Herodotus had at his disposal already a number of Spartan aphorisms.[82] The brevity of Spartan speech was noted by Socrates (Plat. *Prot.* 342e–343b). Plutarch, likely influenced by the Cynic and Peripatetic tradition from which he was drawing, devotes significant space in his *Life of Lycurgus* (19–20) to the phenomenon. And to make a connection with another of the themes treated in this paper, learning to speak in this manner was a part of the Spartan educational training.[83] Because of the relatively early existence of such aphorisms in the literary tradition (namely, in Herodotus), it seems that Tigerstedt's view that these sayings were an early part of Spartan propaganda is correct.[84]

This certainly seems to be the case for several of the earliest recorded apophthegms, contained in the texts of Herodotus and Thucydides. For example, in response to Aristagoras' attempt to bribe Cleomenes, Gorgo tells her father that he must leave or else be corrupted by the foreigner (Hdt. 5.51). As a rejoinder to a Trachinian's report that there were so many barbarians at Thermopylae that their arrows would hide the sun, Dieneces stated that if this were the case then they would fight in the shade rather than the sun (Hdt. 7.226).[85] At Plataea, Callicrates, while dying, said to Arimnestus, a Plataean, that he was not sorry to die for Hellas, only that he had done no fighting nor performed any deed worthy of himself, when he had desired to make such a display (Hdt. 9.72). Finally, in his account of the incident at Sphacteria, Thucydides (4.40) attributes to an anonymous Spartan a retort to the sarcastic question of whether all the brave men were killed: "The spindle (meaning the arrow) would be worth a lot if it identified the brave."[86]

80 Similarly Tigerstedt, *loc. cit.* (n. 3 above) 28.

81 An accessible survey can be found in M. Beck, *Plutarch's Use of Anecdotes in the Lives* (Diss. UNC-Chapel Hill 1998) 119–127.

82 Rawson, *loc. cit.* (n. 5 above) 19–20; see the following paragraph for specifics.

83 Cartledge, *loc. cit.* (n. 73 above) 85.

84 Tigerstedt, *loc. cit.* (n. 42 above) 80–81.

85 It is noteworthy that Dieneces is said here to have been the most courageous (ἀνὴρ ἄριστος).

86 The Athenian allies who pose this question employ the term καλοὶ κἀγαθοί, on which see note 19 above. A.W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides: the ten years' war. Vol. III, Books IV – V 24* (Oxford 1956) 481 provides this explanation of the retort: "Hoplite fighting

The aphorisms of Dieneces and Callicrates just mentioned are good examples of the shifting nature of these sayings. In Plutarch's collection, the saying of Dieneces is attributed to Leonidas (*Mor.* 225b), while Callicrates' is given to an anonymous Spartan (*Mor.* 234e). Indeed, the apophthegms of Callicrates and the anonymous Spartan in Thucydides share a close affinity of theme, as they ridicule the uncourageous method of fighting with arrows, rather than in traditional hoplite methods. Even within Plutarch's collection itself there exist examples of the same saying attributed to various individuals.[87] The shifting authorship of the sayings, while perhaps attributable to a garbled oral tradition or the gathering of relevant material to the main actor of an event (in this case, Leonidas), could also be the natural outcome of a society that attempted to remove differences among its citizen body and expected adherence to a strict code of behavior. The significant number of anonymous sayings in Plutarch's collection also seems to reflect the sense of the Spartan citizens as *homoioi*. Valorous action could be reduced to generalizations, strengthening the sense that one's course of action was limited.

The last point to make here is that the Spartans had a venue for the composition and recitation of these apophthegms, namely the *syssition*. Xenophon (*Lac.* 5.6) explicitly cites this Spartan version of the symposium as a *locus* for the discussion of good deeds.[88] Likewise, Plutarch (*Lyc.* 18.3) mentions the questions put to boys in the messes about someone's behavior or who was the best man in the city, suggesting further that the *syssition* was a place for the discussion of meritorious conduct. He also mentions the songs that the Spartans sung, which resembled their speech and praised the men who died for Sparta, while censuring the cowards (*Lyc.* 21). Although Plutarch does not indicate a venue for the performance of these songs, the *syssition* seems likely. In such a scenario, apophthegms would serve as an analogue or supplement to traditional sympotic song, and such discussion would show parallels with the more traditional Greek symposium as a setting for the remembrance of valor.[89] The aphorisms would serve as easily digestible and memorable snippets that could be variously applied and serve not just as a method of commemoration, but also as a mechanism for training younger men in these mixed-age messes.[90] The *syssition* served as one

does distinguish the brave; but *we* could do nothing but wait to be hit by chance stones and arrows. This is what you and your Athenian masters call being soldiers." For the bow as a cowardly weapon, cf. also Eur. *HF* 160–162.

87 E.g. *Mor.* 216f (Anaxandridas) = *Mor.* 224f (Leo) = Plut. *Lyc.* 20.1 (Leonidas); *Mor.* 218c (Archidamus) = *Mor.* 224a (Cleomenes).

88 It seems that Xenophon's phrasing refers to courageous action (λέγεσθαι ὅ τι ἂν καλῶς τις ἐν τῇ πόλει ποιήσῃ), perhaps among other things. For other examples, see Likpa, *loc. cit.* (n. 45 above) 156.

89 W. Rösler, "Mnemosyne in the symposium", in: O. Murray (ed.), *Sympotica: a symposium on the symposium* (Oxford 1990) 231.

90 See S. Hodkinson, "Social order and the conflict of values in classical Sparta", *Chiron* 13 (1983) 252 for the mixing of ages in the *syssition*.

of the most important mechanisms for the acculturation of Spartan youth, and it allowed for an intergenerational transmission of ideals.[91] Once familiar with these sorts of aphorisms, Spartans would be armed, so to speak, for interlocution with foreigners, as the apophthegms themselves stress.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to show that many of apophthegms in Plutarch's collection accurately reflect the depiction of Spartan courage as it was developed in the fifth century. Admittedly, we can not trace most of the aphorisms to an earlier source, and it may be the case that many in this collection were fabricated by non-Spartans. Still, it seems that the strong emphasis on martial virtue throughout the apophthegms coincides closely with what evidence from the classical period tells us about Sparta. This coincidence suggests that the content of the aphorisms, at least in terms of defining Spartan courage, reflects the static image of the Spartan warrior that was developed in or by the fifth century. The apophthegms likely originated as a way to define Spartanness inside and outside of the city with the express intention of advertising the city's military valor. The enduring depiction of Spartan valor reflects Sparta's desire to promote itself not only as the most brave but also as a city that never changed. Thus, the apophthegms that depict this ideology are largely free from the contamination of fourth and third century philosophy and demonstrate a similarity to the depiction of Spartan courage as it was promoted in the fifth century. This valor would have been particularly important in the period between the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars when Sparta was vying to power in the Hellenic world. It therefore seems likely that the core ideas contained in these aphorisms can be traced to Sparta itself and served as a form of both internal and external propaganda.

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91 Such a function already appears to be present in the exhortative elements of the poetry of Tyrtaeus (especially frr. 10–12W); cf. the poetry of Callinus (fr. 1) and its likely sympotic setting. On the symposial setting of such poetry, see E.L. Bowie, "Early Greek elegy, symposium and public festival", *JHS* 106 (1986) 13–35, and "Miles ludens? The problem of martial exhortation in early Greek elegy", in: Murray, *loc. cit.* (n. 89 above) 221–229. Nafissi, *loc. cit.* (n. 19 above) 206–224 discusses the Spartan symposium in the archaic period.