
Stephen Hodkinson himself in his introduction to this co-edited collection describes the contents of the papers, and the state of the debates into which they enter:

The opening three papers deal with central institutions of Spartiate life: political institutions, the public upbringing, and the common messes ... the public upbringing, whose study is presently in a state of flux following Nigel Kennell’s recent monograph (1995) ...

The other papers reconstruct archaic and hellenistic events and chronology, and explore topics: education, women, athletics, values and psychology, and ‘Messenian’ identity. The collection is a welcome continuation of what is becoming a series from these editors. The new perspective that runs right through it is that the realities of Spartan society were much more like those of a ‘normal’ Greek polis (as necessarily represented by Athens) than the myth of ‘difference’ would allow.

It is possible for me to comment on only a small selection of the many papers. Hans van Wees emphasises the difference between two approaches to solutions of Archaic Sparta’s internal problems, as represented by the poetic fragments of Tyrtaeus, in which ‘the kings are to begin counsel’, and by the Great Rhetra, which empowers the people in prose. He places Tyrtaeus’ response alongside other poetic responses of the time, and proposes a chronological development from this kind of response down to the kind found in the Great Rhetra. He offers a reconstruction of how the controversial pamphlet of King Pausanias might have amalgamated the two types of responses to challenge the constitutional legitimacy of the ephors (because neither referred to ephors as part of what Delphi approved for Lycurgus), and established a controversy that explains even Xenophon’s insistence in *The Constitution of the Spartans* (hereafter Lac.) that Lycurgus secured the agreement of the best men before asking Delphi to authorise laws that established the ephors. There is much to reflect on in this paper, but its concluding distinction between a time when order was asserted through oracles, and a
time when change was negotiated through *rhetrai*, does not account for the impact of the oracle about the lame kingship on the fourth century accession of Agesilaus.

Stephen Hodkinson continues to offer clear new perspectives on Spartan athletics, adducing evidence that many aspects of their inscriptive and dedicatory practice prove an identity more in the mainstream of Greek practice than outside it, and less in accord with the Spartan myth of suppression of the individual and the family. Massimo Nafissi’s measured assessment of the evidence for archaic relations between Taras and Sparta makes me yearn for him to comment on Arion’s voyage from Taras to Taenarum in Herodotus. Ellen Millender tests the image of empowered Spartan women against the controversial reality. She says that Herodotus projects their cleverness and promiscuity; but those married to the Minyans use their cleverness to rescue their legitimate husbands; and the rumour that Demaratus’ mother conceived him of a slave is only a footnote to the non-promiscuous official line that she conceived him of her first husband. Thomas Figueira neatly uncovers the self-representation of the Messenians, and how Thucydides represented them as slaves rebelling from Spartan control in the context of their relation to the Spartans, but as free Messenian nationals seeking to recover their homeland in relation to the Athenians. The other ‘myth’ that the ‘Messenians’ were the oppressed ‘demos’ of their society, paradoxically makes them seem more ‘normal’ than they might really have been.

I take a special interest in perspectives on Xenophon’s evidence. Noreen Humble writes briefly, but directly, on an aspect of his presentation of the Spartans. Elsewhere, Xenophon’s experience of Sparta is valued, but there is no fresh attempt to understand how his literary works may be recreating his experience. They continue to be read as defensive reaction against existing controversies. Thus, on the impression that *Lac.* does not recognise an active military role for the *hippeis* (56), *Hellenica* corrects the extreme thesis, with its apologetic aim, of the Xenophon of the *Lac.*; but there is no contradiction, only a different emphasis—*Lac.* insists, ‘If there is any need [the *hippeis*] will as one come to the aid of the polis in full strength’. *Lac.* will also suggest that the Spartan mother’s responsibility for her ‘most orderly’ quartet of sons (46) is not educational, but biological: her physical condition in pregnancy
and nursing ensured that four male children survived infancy, and every one in good condition!

Xenophon’s admiration of the Spartans is often accepted uncritically. Paul Cartledge (318-321) reads two dialogues from his Memorabilia in support, but Socrates, though he offers models of virtue in both (and may reflect the opinions of Xenophon), conspicuously fails to nominate contemporary Sparta. The first dialogue (3.5) is one of a series that shows how Socrates helped men achieve the excellence they desired (3.1.1). Socrates helps Pericles the Younger improve his military leadership against the Boeotians by suggesting that he follow either the ancient ‘practices’ (the same word for the ‘practices’ of the Spartans in Lac.) of their Athenian ancestors, or the (pluralised) contemporary practices of ‘those who are currently the best’. Pericles takes this as a reference to the respect for age, obedience, unity and physical training of the Spartans and despairs of matching them; but Socrates directs him to multiple models of these virtues from within contemporary Athens. He also insists that Pericles explore multiple models for his generalship—even the Mysians and Pisidians.

In the second dialogue (4.4), Socrates praises Lycurgus’ insistence on obedience to law, but offers plural models of contemporary virtue again, endorsing those ‘Greek cities’ which practice obedience, and indicating how ‘frequently’ the gerousiai and the best men ‘in the cities’ encourage their citizens to homonoia, and how there is a law ‘everywhere’ that the citizens should swear homonein, and that citizens ‘everywhere’ do indeed so swear. Sparta is inferred, but such oaths were widespread, and gerousiai were known outside Sparta. Socrates may pluralise his models for rhetorical reasons. He may equally share Xenophon’s disillusion with contemporary Sparta. Lac. praises the ancient practices of Lycurgus, as Socrates does, but criticises contemporary Spartans for abandoning their ancient obedience. Admiration for the past and disillusion with the present is a common stance, already illustrated in Socrates’ endorsement of ancient Athens. These dialogues, then, do not admire contemporary Sparta above others, do not even name her, but may, tacitly, accept her as one of the many contemporary models available. The silence has been made to suggest that Xenophon is concealing a genuinely offensive laconism from his audience, but those who already suspected Socrates would find the silence deafening when Pericles offered him the bait. Plain readings of
Xenophon can be unpopular. Ironification (of Socrates, or Pericles, or of Xenophon, whom others would re-habilitate in such golden literary uplands), would complicate the evidence, but is not obviously in evidence in these passages.

Vivienne Gray
University of Auckland.