

LAONISM AND DEMOCRACY: RE-READING THE *LAKEDAIMONIŌN POLITEIA* AND RE-THINKING XENOPHON¹

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Abstract

The present paper proposes that circular reasoning colours the way we approach Xenophon's LakedaimoniŌn Politeia and obscures its role in Xenophon's corpus. Part one deconstructs some of the suppositional evidence underpinning the longstanding communis opinio that Xenophon was innately predisposed to reject democracy, while part two offers a new reading of the LakedaimoniŌn Politeia. This perspective considers the themes of the LakedaimoniŌn Politeia alongside Xenophon's Memorabilia and Plato's Alcibiades I, and highlights the work's unity and its capacity to rebuke members of the Athenian elite accused of laconising and subverting democracy.

What follows approaches ancient democracy through an alleged 'critic' of that system, Xenophon the Athenian, and proposes a new reading of his LakedaimoniŌn Politeia. As neither Athens nor its democracy is invoked explicitly therein, the treatise appears an unlikely source for reconstructing Xenophon's views on democracy. Yet the work continues to underpin the longstanding communis opinio that Xenophon was an oligarch.² The present paper challenges this view. It examines the expectations typically brought to the LakedaimoniŌn Politeia and

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² See for example Tigerstedt 1974, p. 15; Goldhill 1997, p. 4; Rebenich 1998, p. 20; Pownall 2004, p. 110; Lee 2007, p. 14; Cartledge 2009, p. 91; questioned by Grav 2007; Kroeker 2009.

demonstrates that traditional readings rely on unsustainable assumptions of birth and background. Considered alongside Xenophon's Memorabilia and Plato's Alcibiades I, it is argued that the LakedaimoniŌn Politeia can be read as a didactic, Socratic work directed principally, though not exclusively, towards young Athenians aspiring to advise and lead the Athenian democracy.

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I – Xenophon, Sparta and Re-creating a Theory of Ancient Democracy

Relative to the study of antiquity, the quest for a theory of ancient democracy represents a recent and ongoing pursuit. Lamenting that modern scholars had 'rather uncritically accepted the oligarchic view of Athens' and shocked that 'no statement of democratic political theory' had survived antiquity, A. H. M. Jones turned to democracy's critics to 're-create' a theory of Athenian democracy in 1953.³ While the method has been questioned and ultimately refined, the desire underlying such re-creation reflects a much larger shift in the way that we now study ancient and modern manifestations of democracy and ancient authors such as Xenophon.⁴

Xenophon, Aristocracy, and Democracy

Relatively little is known of Xenophon's early life or his social and economic background. He first enters the world's historical consciousness as a character in his own *Anabasis*, which recounts his participation in Cyrus the Younger's unsuccessful *coup d'état* against his brother Artaxerxes, the King of Persia. Its third-person narrative records some of the events in Xenophon's life between 401-399 BCE and briefly alludes to Xenophon's activities before and after the campaigns it recounts.⁵ Using these incidental vignettes and a late, flawed biography composed by Diogenes Laertius, modern commentators have endeavoured, like Diogenes

³ Jones 1953, p. 26; Scharr 1919, especially pp. 146-51, cf. Roberts 1994.

⁴ Finley 1962, pp. 9-10; Loraux 1986; Ober 1989, et al. offer more positive reconstructions, drawn from Attic oratory; Ober 2002 returns to social criticism. Ancient Democracy: cf. an earlier proposal by Gernet 1983 (1948), p. 276; Modern Democracy: cf. de Sola Pool 1970, especially chapter three; Parsons 2007, pp. 684, 686-7 for the proliferation of democracy through the history of ideas.

⁵ Xenophon, *Anabasis* 3.1.4-10; *Anabasis*, 5.3.4-13. All dates that follow are BCE unless otherwise stated.

before them, to reconstruct a narrative beginning from Xenophon's own works.⁶ In attempting to illuminate the shadows of Xenophon's life, however, they continue to draw on otherwise unsustainable generalisations often derived from little more than assumptions of class and background.

Scholars presume Xenophon's outlook to be 'aristocratic', though the label and his qualification as an aristocrat remain poorly, if ever, defined.⁷ Unlike Pericles and his ward Alcibiades, or Critias and his nephew Plato, Xenophon does not fit the class of *eupatridoi* reconstructed by modern scholars. In his own works Xenophon identified himself simply, and ubiquitously, as an Athenian. The gesture forsakes his patronymic and reproduces the idealised democratic practice evident in Attic *epitaphioi*, which put communal ties before personal relationships.⁸ Nor do any extant Athenian records reveal whether Xenophon's family held high office or were affluent enough to perform liturgies, the latter outlined by Davies as *the* criterion for 'defining membership of the Athenian upper class.'⁹ Despite such unknowns, the mere assertion that Xenophon was an aristocrat is taken as evidence that he opposed democracy.¹⁰ This view oversimplifies, misleads and ultimately exaggerates the degree to which members of the Athenian elite held, let alone supported, the same views.

In the fifth-century *Athēnaiōn Politeia*, attributed to the 'Old Oligarch', the author observed that well-born and well-to-do Athenians acted against innate self-interest to support democracy.¹¹ The orator Lysias likewise invoked the services rendered to Athens by such individuals, while Ober has suggested that the backgrounds and economic means of Athens's leaders hint at the democracy's symbiotic relationship with, if not *de facto* dependence upon, the Athenian elite for leadership.¹² Although meriting additional development elsewhere, Xenophon's background – the complexities of re-constructing it and its historical misuse for distilling the essence of his political thought – exceed the scope of the present paper. It shall suffice to caution that the foundations for

⁶ Laetius, *Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers*, II.6 'Xenophon'.

⁷ Strauss 1939, p. 533; cf. Bazin 1885, p. 39; Luccioni 1947, p. 108; Proletti 1987, p. xiv; Lee 2007, p. 14.

⁸ The toponymic parallels Attic *epitaphioi*. Cf. Loraux 1986, p. 23. If one accepts that a patronymic also denoted 'class, status, and political values' as Whitehead 1986, pp. 50, 71-2 and Ober 1989, p. 256 do, Xenophon's omission is potentially more significant.

⁹ Davies 1971, p. xx.

¹⁰ Bazin 1885, p. 35; Scharr 1919, p. 146ff.; Luccioni 1947, p. 142; Strauss 1948, p. 55; Moure 2010, p. 67.

¹¹ Old Oligarch, *Athēnaiōn Politeia*, 2.19.

¹² Lysias 16.21; 27.10; cf. Ober 1989.

reconstructing Xenophon's thought on the basis of an uncertain social and economic background, from which we then read his works, remains unsound.¹³ Such caution is magnified by a second fallacy nourished by the first, which underpins virtually all readings of Xenophon's *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*: the presumption that as an Athenian *aristocrat*, Xenophon was innately predisposed to reject democracy because the Athenian elite preferred Sparta.

Laconism and its Ancient and Modern Perceptions

Broadly speaking laconism entailed two forms of imitation. The first, and seemingly more innocuous, concerned itself with the superficial affectation of Spartan fashions and manners.¹⁴ Beginning with Cimon, Athenian 'aristocrats' are alleged to have admired, imitated, and ultimately proliferated what became the 'Spartan mirage'.¹⁵ Prestel asserted that the trend was increasingly common during the Peloponnesian War among 'young Athenian aristocrats', a group traditionally thought to include Xenophon.¹⁶ Yet Prestel's study relies on Plutarch's biographies that, although invaluable, were composed under the Roman Empire and so offer a perspective that may reveal more about Roman social divisions and conflicts of the first century CE than those of Athens in the fifth century BCE.¹⁷

Scholars typically develop Laconic traits from caricatures, though the embryonic jests from which they develop are in turn complex.¹⁸ Such narrow focus obscures, for instance, that Aristophanes also invited Athenians to make peace with Sparta.¹⁹ In the satirical *Birds*, Aristophanes observed that before the founding of the avian utopia, 'all men', had suffered from 'laconomania'. Although the joke attests to the historical phenomenon of laconising, its presentation demands additional consideration. Aristophanes highlights that 'all men' and thus not simply

¹³ See for example Bazin 1885, p. 39; cf. Ollier 1934, pp. xxxii-xxxiii; Luccioni 1947, p. 143.

¹⁴ Tigerstedt 1965, p. 155.

¹⁵ Tigerstedt 1974, p. 15; Prestel 1978, p. 41.

¹⁶ Prestel 1978, p. 42.

¹⁷ Cf. Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 1.1.32; 4.4.15; 4.8.18; 5.4.55; 6.4.18; 6.3.14, 7.1.44-46, where he highlights cases of political faction defined in terms of laconism and its manipulation.

¹⁸ Tigerstedt 1965, pp. 123, 155; Lipka 2002, p. 121; and Rawson 1969, pp. 35, 45 enumerate the symptoms of laconism from Aristophanes' *Birds* and *Wasps*.

¹⁹ See for example Aristophanes, *Acharnians*; *Lysistrata*, especially ll. 1133-4.

the elite were seduced by Sparta; second 'laconomania' is depicted as a trend and thus by definition ephemeral. Moreover, precisely how uniform such 'aristocratic' imitation of Sparta could have been remains equally uncertain given the coeval adoption of 'Perserie', (the imitation of Persian attire and manners).²⁰

Although Aristophanes enumerates one alleged 'symptom' of laconomania as a tendency 'to Socratise', Plato complicates this perspective. In the *Protagoras* Socrates suggests that Spartan ascendancy relied on wisdom, specifically an education in philosophy enabled by the presence of more sophists than any other place in Greece; only deceived fools, whom Socrates himself labels 'laconisers', would accept and emulate what we now speak of as the 'Spartan mirage' and believe that by wearing Spartan attire and exercising one could replicate Spartan excellence and power.²¹ Most disconcerting of all, however, is that it remains to be shown that Xenophon adopted or advocated such physical affectations.

Xenophon typically stands accused of a second, more serious degree of imitation that scholars suggest came to connote treason in the closing years of the fifth century.²² Such 'political laconising' was first attributed to the sophists, themselves influential in shaping the education of the Athenian elite during the fifth century. If the sophists are understood to have promoted Sparta as a political ideal in explicit opposition to democracy, Xenophon's own writings suggest caution.²³ In *On Hunting* Xenophon rejects certain Sophistic paradigms and so their views cannot simply be equated with Xenophon's own.²⁴ More explicitly, Xenophon depicts himself opposing Spartan interests at great personal risk.²⁵ Despite such complexities, received opinion perpetuates a view of Xenophon as a committed 'laconophile' unequivocally opposed to democracy.²⁶

Here the force of twentieth-century events appears. Popper adopted Athenian democracy as the embodiment of his *open society*, defined by individual freedom, while Sparta symbolised *closed society* and the

²⁰ Miller 1997, pp. 136-150; Balcer 1983, p. 260.

²¹ Plato, *Protagoras* 342b-343a.

²² See for example Azoulay 2004 p. 330 n. 15, p. 435; Bazin 1885, p. 38; Luccioni 1947, pp. 143-4; Lipka 2002, p. 4 'admiration' and 'devotion'.

²³ Tigerstedt 1974, p. 13; applied to Xenophon Tigerstedt 1965 p. 167, cf. Rebenich 1998, p. 18.

²⁴ Xenophon, *On Hunting*, 13.1-2.

²⁵ By no means exhaustive, cf. Xenophon, *Anabasis*: 4.6.13-5; 7.1.30; 7.2.14; 7.3.3-6, 10-14, 7.6.9, also Strauss 1939, pp. 516-7; Humble 2004, p. 220.

²⁶ Gray 2004 and Kroeker 2009 are notable exceptions.

'ancient tribal aristocracy' from which democracy miraculously had freed humanity.²⁷ In turn, Tigerstedt equated 'salon-Laconism' of fifth- and fourth-century Athens with 'its later counterparts in salon-nazism and salon-communism.'²⁸ He reiterated this view with respect to Xenophon himself, asserting that with Xenophon 'we encounter for the first time Lycurgus the great reformer and the ideal statesman whom long afterwards men – French philosophers and revolutionaries, no less than German Nazis – admired and endeavoured to emulate'.²⁹ America's founders are conspicuously absent.³⁰ Rather than drawing upon Athenian ideals, such views illuminate *our* collective predisposition towards modern democratic values and its emphasis on the individual in particular. The result implicitly predisposes readers to respond negatively to apparent infringements on personal liberty.³¹ As Bowden's study of religion in Athenian democracy rightly cautioned, however, Athens was not 'liberal, individualistic, capitalist... [or] secularist'.³²

Such expectations nevertheless continue to plague evaluations of Xenophon's broader political thought. Citing the 'philo-Laconian aspects' of Xenophon's writing, Ober implied that the Athenian was an external/rejectionist social critic.³³ Yet Ober offered no analysis to support this claim. Following Ober, Schofield proposed that Xenophon adopted a rejectionist stance, though he too left Xenophon's writings untouched; his conclusions instead rely on assertions of genre.³⁴ Building on the studies

²⁷ Popper 1945, pp. 145; 15; 88, 150-2; Tigerstedt 1965, p. 113.

²⁸ Tigerstedt 1965, p. 156.

²⁹ Tigerstedt 1965, pp. 162-3.

³⁰ Cf. Adams 1787, I, letters 40, 42; on Xenophon in particular cf. Pangle 1990, p. 147 'probably the most widely read and cited classical political theorist at the time of the Founding'.

³¹ Cf. Luccioni 1947, p. 145; Popper 1945a, p. 159; Proietti 1987, p. 51.

³² Bowden 2005, p. 2.

³³ Ober 2002, p. 50 n. 70. Cf. Ober 2002, pp. 48-51 criticism derived from a value system alien to a particular society; p. 49, n. 68 reveals that Ober conflates Walzer's external critic with Wolin's epic theorist and the conception of derangement cf. Wolin 1969, p. 1081, but doing so transgresses the intended bounds of Walzer's model, which understood 'conversion and criticism' as 'different activities' Walzer 1987, pp. 44, 45, 52.

³⁴ Schofield 2006, p. 47 n. 40. Schofield 2006, pp. 37-8, 54 asserts that *politeia* writing was a 'politically partisan activity... favoured by aristocratic admirers of Sparta: 'Laconizers'; Kroeker 2009, p. 200 n. 20 refutes Schofield's assertion directly, proved by nothing 'beyond the bare statement'; Bordes 1982, p. 166-7 questioned the title and genre of the *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* observing that the work is primarily descriptive and that functional political institutions are not described, while the word *politeia* appears only in the final chapter.

of Tuplin and Humble, who advocated a more balanced assessment of Xenophon's relationship with Sparta, Kroeker partly refuted the insinuations of Ober and Schofield and proposed that Xenophon 'tended strongly towards an internal/immanent critique'.³⁵ With respect to the *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*, however, Kroeker declared that the work 'exhibits a decidedly external/rejectionist stance'.³⁶ Attempting to harmonise Xenophon's corpus according to Walzerian canons, Kroeker questioned the work's authorship. While precedent for doing so exists, the work's language and style are Xenophonic, and Xenophon's intellectual context reveals that such a procrustean solution proves unnecessary.³⁷

II – Rethinking the *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*

Rather than severing the *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* from Xenophon's corpus, we should question traditional approaches to the text. The studies of Xenophon's political and social thought and the assumption that Xenophon was an aristocrat and laconiser predate our modern re-creation of a theory of ancient democracy.³⁸ This hypothesis offers a more objective means of evaluating Xenophon's thought and reminds us that ours is an age and an intellectual climate hostile to perceived critics of democracy, whereas those preceding ours have apologised for, or agreed with, 'critics'.³⁹ Putting aside such expectations, therefore, part two of the present study proposes a new reading. It argues that: (1) the *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* can be understood as a Socratic exercise to enhance self-knowledge; (2) its content and themes are consistent with those present across Xenophon's *oeuvre*; (3) its ideas are compatible with our reconstructed theory of Athenian democracy.

³⁵ Cf. Tuplin 1993, especially chapter six; Humble 2004; Lipka 2002, p. 14 contests both, though concedes Xenophon is 'not the stout, simple-minded lakonist that he was supposed to be by previous scholarship'.

³⁶ Kroeker 2009, p. 226. In antiquity Demetrius of Magnesia questioned Xenophonic authorship, cf. Ollier 1934, p. vii; while Diogenes Laertius and Plutarch accepted the work. Modern concern for authenticity arose with Valckenaer in the late eighteenth century, cf. Bazin 1885, p. 24; Lipka 2002, p. 5. Chrimes's proposal for Antisthenes's authorship has not found support, 1948, pp. 40–48; Chrimes 1949 pp. 490 ff.

³⁷ On linguistic and stylistic grounds, Richards 1907, pp. 41–7; 67–72; cf. Rebenich 1998, pp. 14–15; Ollier 1934, p. xi, Bordes 1982, p. 165, following Ollier 1934, pp. vii–xi and Delebecque 1957, pp. 194–9, 329–331, *et al.*

³⁸ Cf. Scharr 1919; Luccioni 1947.

³⁹ Scharr 1919, pp. 146–7.

Uncertain Intent

The purpose of Xenophon's *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* remains contested. Some understand the work purely as praising Sparta;⁴⁰ others find subtle satire or explicit condemnation.⁴¹ The question is ultimately more complex. Observing that both Demosthenes and Aeschines used Sparta as a paradigm to contrast the behaviour of Athenian audiences in the 350s and 340s, Yunis explained away such laconism by noting that at the time, 'Athens viewed Sparta with moderately friendly intentions'.⁴² The qualification ought to caution that it is not simply the invocation of, or even explicit praise for, Sparta, or Spartan connections, but the context of such references that ultimately matters in assessing the tone of laconism. If we accept that political laconism was among the casualties of the Battle of Leuctra, the democracy's passive acceptance extends to at least 371, and likely earlier when Athens sought to check an ascendant Thebes.⁴³ Shortly thereafter, Xenophon himself records that Athens and Sparta became allies once more.⁴⁴ Thus, evaluating Xenophon's *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* as praise or satire proves less illuminating until we can discern when the text was composed and circulated.

Date(s)

Contextualising the work ought to begin with consideration of its date, yet both the unity of the text and the date(s) of its composition(s) remain contested.⁴⁵ Cartledge's observation that 'chronological certainty is impossible' remains the most transparent assessment.⁴⁶ For, despite agreeing

⁴⁰ Ollier 1934, p. 13; Luccioni 1947, pp. 139–41, 144, 152, 167; Lipka 2002, pp. 4, 10; cf. Humble 2004, p. 215.

⁴¹ Strauss 1939, pp. 503, 506, 528, 531; Higgins 1977, p. 75 'an essay against tyranny'; Proietti 1987, p. 45, 50; cf. Humble 2004, p. 216.

⁴² Yunis 1996, p. 254 n. 32; cf. Aeschines 1.179–82; Fisher 2001, p. v; Harris 1995, p. 7; Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates*.

⁴³ Tigerstedt 1974, p. 15.

⁴⁴ Xenophon *Hellenica*, 6.3.14, 18; 7.1.1–14.

⁴⁵ Unity of composition – Anderson 1964, p. 36 n. 6; Bordes 1982, pp. 198–9; Cartledge 1987, p. 57; Higgins 1977, p. 66; Meulder 1989, pp. 74, 85; Momigliano 1936; Proietti 1987, pp. 46, 74; Rebenich 1998, p. 30; Strauss 1939, pp. 522–5. Opponents – Bazin 1885, p. vi; Delebecque 1957, pp. 194–9; 329–31, 341 n. 18; Ollier 1934, pp. vii–xi; Luccioni 1947, pp. 173–4; MacDowell 1986, pp. 9–10; Tigerstedt 1965, p. 169.

⁴⁶ Cartledge 1987, p. 57; Rawson 1969, p. 33 and Gray 2007 p. 42 suggest a window c. 494–454 BC.

that the work's dateable clues appear in chapter fourteen, scholars have applied the same details to place the work in the 390s, 380s, 370s, 360s, and 350s.⁴⁷ Rather than investigating what a fixed date might reveal about the text's content, scholars attempt the opposite. Dates are assigned on the basis of content, and such interpretation inevitably begins from unproven expectations of laconism. More perverse, as Higgins observed in 1977, 'in an abandoning of logic', the *Lakedaimonion Politeia* is then taken to *prove* Xenophon's laconism.⁴⁸ Although the placement of the fourteenth chapter remains constant in our manuscript tradition, some have joined it to chapter one or swapped it with fifteen.⁴⁹ Such manipulation suggests that wherever the section belongs, it represents a later addition. As Bianco notes, however, accepting the dates proposed for the work on the basis of chapter fourteen proves unwise when the very unity of the work remains contested.⁵⁰ We must therefore concede that no objective means of dating the *Lakedaimonion Politeia* presently exist beyond placing it in the first half of the fourth century.

Audience and Circulation

Ascertaining the immediate circulation, reception and purpose of the *Lakedaimonion Politeia* appears an equally tortuous task. Its proposed recipients vary as widely as its possible composition date(s). The present spectrum ranges from all Greeks⁵¹ to just one, Callias the Athenian.⁵² In

⁴⁷ Chrimes 1948, p. 17; Rebenich 1998, p. 26; Humble 2004, p. 215; Gray 2007, p. 42. 390s: Bazin 1885, pp. iii, 36; Rebenich 1998, pp. 24-5; Bianco 1996, pp. 23-4; Lipka 2002, p. 13 but chapter 14 dated between 394 and 371 p. 10; Ollier 1934, pp. xxi uncertain, xxix though on the assumption of a tone of anger at Athens dates chapter fourteen to 378. 380s: c. 388-80 Delebecque 1957, p. 195; c. 386/5 Luccioni 1947, p. 165; 370s: 378 - Momigliano 1936, pp. 172-3; Higgins 1977, p. 163, n. 68; Meulder 1989, p. 81 c. 377-71; 371 Breitenbach 1967, col. 1752; 360s: Gray 2007, p. 43; 350s: Jaeger 1986, pp. 326 n. 56; 344 n. 170; Cartledge 1987, p. 57.

⁴⁸ Higgins 1977, p. 66.

⁴⁹ One: Chrimes 1948, p. 7, cf. Lipka 2002, p. 29 Chrimes extends the argument of Wulff 1884, pp. 44-49, 53 ff., 59 ff. Fifteen: Bazin 1885, pp. vi, 268-71; Ollier 1934, p. ix, xii-xiii, xvi; Luccioni 1947, p. 168 n. 179.

⁵⁰ Bianco 1996, p. 13.

⁵¹ Luccioni 1947, pp. 170-1 as propaganda; Tigerstedt 1965, p. 168, though especially Athens; Rebenich 1998 pp. 24-5 all Greeks under Spartan influence; Gray 2007, p. 43 suggests that smaller *poleis* could apply its message and model for reform.

⁵² Meulder 1989, pp. 82, 86; cf. Bianco 1996, p. 17.

between, one finds proposals that the work was directed towards all Athenians,⁵³ 'aristocratic' Athenian youths,⁵⁴ those who thought that they educated their young nobly,⁵⁵ laconophiles⁵⁶ and critics of Agesilaus.⁵⁷ Expectations of Xenophon's Spartan bias are again apparent. It is often understood as a piece of pro-Spartan propaganda composed to justify Spartan hegemony,⁵⁸ or Xenophon's association with Sparta during the Corinthian War (395-87).⁵⁹ The latter conflict remains central to the unresolved debate over the cause and date of Xenophon's exile. Yet many who understand the *Lakedaimonion Politeia* as propaganda also have proposed that, although drafted early in the fourth century, the work (along with its later additions) was published only posthumously, i.e. after 354.⁶⁰ If correct, the work's alleged force as propaganda dissipates, along with its supposed anti-democratic tone. For, as Yunis's assessment of Demosthenes and Aeschines reiterates, Greek audiences would have understood the treatise differently in the 350s when the geo-political landscape of Greece had changed and fewer tensions between Athens and Sparta existed.⁶¹ As Xenophon himself offers no dedication or explanation of the work's intended beneficiaries, and we are wholly ignorant of the work's initial reception, each interpretation holds merit. Yet by suspending pro-Spartan expectations and contextualizing the work's themes alongside other Xenophontic works an altogether different emphasis emerges.

The *Lakedaimonion Politeia*: The Proem

Xenophon's proem outlines a hypothesis explored throughout the work. Spartan ascendancy resulted from their *epitadeumata* (ways of living). The suggestion recalls the funeral orations presented by Pericles in Thucydides and Socrates in the *Menexenus*, where both understand the quality of citizens to reflect the quality of the *politeia* producing them.⁶² The proem

⁵³ Ollier 1934, p. xxviii as a challenge to Athenians; Chrimes 1948, p. 32 claimed that its dialect is Attic and thus it is 'virtually certain'; Tigerstedt 1965, p. 168; Rawson 1969, p. 33; Lipka 2002, pp. 13, 32, 132, followed by Kroeker 2009, p. 203 n. 25.

⁵⁴ Lipka 2002, p. 32; Chrimes 1948, p. 32.

⁵⁵ Proietti 1987, p. 49.

⁵⁶ Chrimes 1948, pp. 30-2.

⁵⁷ Meulder 1989, p. 81; though Lipka 2002, p. 13 rejects a Spartan audience.

⁵⁸ Ollier 1934 pp. xviii, xxi ff. xxix; Luccioni 1947, pp. 160, 163, 165, 171.

⁵⁹ Specifically his presence at the Battle of Coroneia in 394; cf. Lipka 2002, p. 32.

⁶⁰ Lipka 2002, p. 37; Ollier 1934, pp. xvi-xvii; Luccioni 1947, pp. 173-4.

⁶¹ Yunis 1996.

⁶² Thucydides 2.34 ff., Plato, *Menexenus* 478c-d.

and summative transitions at *Lakedaimonion Politeia* 5.1 and 11.1 suggest that the work comprises five main parts after 1.2: (1) practices specific to age groups (1.3–4.7); (2) practices applicable to all (5.2–10.8); (3) martial practices (11.2–13.10); (4) an assessment of the continuity of Spartan habits (14); and (5) Spartan kingship as the lone uninterrupted practice (15). Combined with Xenophon's *Agesilaus* and *Cyropaedia*, the work offers an idealised account of the 'nurture' and 'education' of Spartan and Persian rivals. Its content therefore supplements the knowledge outlined by Socrates in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and Plato's *Alcibiades I*. In both Socrates guides ambitious Athenians to acquire self-knowledge and to become *useful* citizens, that is to enhance Athenian democracy and its standing in Hellas.

Although no immediate link between Plato's *Alcibiades I* and Xenophon's *Lakedaimonion Politeia* exists, Xenophon's work offers an Athenian audience precisely the same means of acquiring political self-knowledge that Plato's Socrates offers Alcibiades.⁶³ In the *Alcibiades I*, Plato outlines an educational paradigm for attaining self-knowledge to enable Alcibiades to successfully rival Athenian adversaries.⁶⁴ Not yet twenty years old, Alcibiades intends to speak in the assembly immanently and aspires to lead the democracy.⁶⁵ Despite his confidence in his innate advantages, namely wealth, birth and an education that surpassed Athenian competitors, Socrates chides Alcibiades that he is unprepared to enter political life.⁶⁶ It is not the Athenian demagogues, but the kings of Sparta and Persia who represent the true adversaries of Athens and thus of Alcibiades himself. Success requires besting domestic and foreign rivals. Socrates' reasoning is straightforward. Athens goes to war with both politics and so competes with both to win power and prestige.⁶⁷ Although Plato's Socrates offers an overview of the lineages,⁶⁸ educations⁶⁹ and wealth⁷⁰ of the Kings of Sparta and Persia, he curtails a fuller discussion of the 'nurture' and 'education' of Alcibiades' adversaries as doing so proves

⁶³ Denyer 2001, p. 11 dates Plato's *Alcibiades I* to the 350s; the proposed range covers 390 to the 350s.

⁶⁴ Plato, *Alcibiades I*, 124b–c.

⁶⁵ Plato, *Alcibiades I*, 105a–106c.

⁶⁶ Plato, *Alcibiades I*, 118b–c.

⁶⁷ Plato, *Alcibiades I*, 124a–b; 120a.

⁶⁸ Plato, *Alcibiades I*, 120e, 121a.

⁶⁹ Plato, *Alcibiades I*, 121e–122e.

⁷⁰ Plato, *Alcibiades I*, 122e–123c.

'too much of a deed'.⁷¹ One might understand Xenophon's *Lakedaimonion Politeia* to fill this void.

Age Specific Practices

The *Lakedaimonion Politeia*'s first chapter records unique eugenic practices attributed to Sparta.⁷² Their discussion might prompt modern audiences to recall twentieth-century totalitarianism, though Xenophon's intellectual context offers a parallel emphasis. Plato's Socrates invoked the examination of newborn Spartans to demonstrate that Alcibiades takes too much pride in his own birth.⁷³ In turn, chapter two outlines the education of young Spartans that Xenophon contrasts with 'those who think that they educate their children most beautifully'.⁷⁴ Although no other *poleis* are mentioned explicitly, Plato's *Alcibiades* suggests that elite Athenians would understand Xenophon as commenting on their practices.

Xenophon speaks of slave pedagogues who direct non-Spartans to learn music, letters and athletics just as Plato's Socrates faults Alcibiades' education in music, letters and athletics under the care of Zopyrus, said to be the most useless slave of Pericles.⁷⁵ Coping with the educational autonomy facing the Athenian elite and discovering the best education consistently emerge as a challenge in Socratic works. In contrast, all Spartan boys are said to undergo a common education. Aristotle highlighted this habit alongside shared meals and attempts to bar distinction on the basis of wealth as prompting 'many' fourth-century Greeks to believe that Sparta was actually a democracy.⁷⁶ The perception raises additional questions best developed elsewhere, though they are also the themes of chapters five, six and seven of Xenophon's *Lakedaimonion Politeia*.⁷⁷

Athenian 'civic' education, is outlined and rejected in Plato's *Apology* and *Theaetetus*, but invoked by Aeschines as supplementing the otherwise inadequate education offered through music and gymnastics.⁷⁸ In the *Lakedaimonion Politeia* Xenophon does not attack this civic, (read: 'democratic') education instilled through daily life and participation in the

⁷¹ Plato, *Alcibiades I*, 122b.

⁷² Xenophon, *Lakedaimonion Politeia*, 1.3–1.0.

⁷³ Plato, *Alcibiades I*, 121a–b, 123c; for similar criticism of Alcibiades and Critias, cf. *Memorabilia* 1.2.25.

⁷⁴ Xenophon, *Lakedaimonion Politeia*, 2.1.

⁷⁵ Plato, *Alcibiades I*, 122b.

⁷⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, IV. 1294^b19–30.

⁷⁷ Xenophon, *Lakedaimonion Politeia*, 5, 6 and 7.

⁷⁸ Plato, *Apology*, 24d–25a; *Theaetetus*, 172c ff; Aeschines 3.246.

Athenian democracy. Rather, Xenophon rejects the practices of the Athenian elite, who possessed sufficient leisure and means to allow their sons to pursue specialised education, the same demographic presumed to imitate Sparta. Xenophon's rebuke highlights that the competing and unstructured methods of education in Athens separated the Athenian elite from those of more modest means and simultaneously left the Athenian elite worse off than their Spartan rivals. The qualities instilled by Sparta's education are those imbued by nature and poverty. Inadequate food, shelter and clothing prompt the attainment of endurance of extremes and with them, the moderation of physical appetites. Like Socrates and Xenophon's Persians, the divine gradually acclimated Athenians of modest means through nature and necessity.⁷⁹ Whereas other Greeks, specifically wealthy Athenians, softened their sons' feet with sandals, Spartan boys were required to go without, like Socrates and the sophists.⁸⁰

This is not to suggest that Xenophon desired Athenians to force their young to go without proper food or clothing; rather it forms an important first step of acquiring self-knowledge. Presented with an extreme, perhaps ahistorical ideal, Xenophon highlights the willingness of Athenian rivals to sacrifice and endure suffering. It represents a vital step towards helping deluded youths realise that their birth, wealth, and education were inadequate. If they wished to attain prosperity, enhance their own reputation and the standing of Athens, they must undertake toil and be willing to endure suffering.

Practices Applicable to All

The second section of the treatise repeatedly emphasises discipline and obedience. Xenophon does not praise Sparta directly, but Lycurgus, the mythical lawgiver, who instilled discipline and subdued the most powerful Spartans with their willing consent. That Lycurgus is praised for having 'compelled public servants to practice virtue' does not sit well with modern expectations of democracy.⁸¹ Indeed when determining that the *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* represents an external/rejectionist critique of Athenian democracy, Kroeker suggested that Xenophon's 'significant criticism' amounted to advocating Spartan discipline over 'the foundational Athenian democratic principle of personal freedom'.⁸² Kroeker followed Lipka's comparison of Xenophon's *Lakedaimoniōn*

⁷⁹ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 6.1.25 ff.

⁸⁰ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 229a.

⁸¹ Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* 10.4.

⁸² Kroeker 2009, p. 204.

Politeia with Pericles' funeral oration, itself lauded as the 'most eloquent exposition of the Athenian democratic system' in which Athens is defined in opposition to Sparta.⁸³ Whereas Spartans endure painful education, Athenian citizens are said to be free to act as they wish.⁸⁴ This division in the rhetoric of war also underpinned Popper's view of Athens as the open society and Sparta as the closed society *par excellence*.⁸⁵ Yet such interpretations become untenable in light of the internal consistency of Thucydides, the full speech of Pericles and Xenophon's own emphasis on the persuasion of Lycurgus, said to be so potent that the most powerful are alleged to prefer death to a shameful life.⁸⁶

While Sparta is understood as opposing freedom in Pericles' speech, Thucydides also recounted that the Corinthians urged Sparta to oppose Athenian power in the debates preceding the Peloponnesian War on the basis that Athens was behaving like a 'tyrant polis'.⁸⁷ Sparta is there called to live up to its own fiction as the opponent of tyranny in all its forms. Moreover, the funeral oration also: (1) co-opts Sparta's trademark discipline; (2) reveals that idealised Athenian democracy possessed methods of enforcing civic virtue similar to Lycurgus, and (3) that Xenophon not only agrees with the elder Pericles but also authored a Socratic dialogue presenting Pericles' advice to Pericles' son.

While Xenophon betrays his belief that obedience and discipline were essential for communal success, this stance is compatible with our reconstructed theory of ancient democracy. Pericles proclaims that Athenians were free to live as they wished, but such 'individual' freedom dissipates rapidly. The speech honouring the war dead removes all individual accolades and appropriates them for the wider Athenian community.⁸⁸ They made this sacrifice because we enabled them to do so. Our needs override the needs and wants of the few. Pericles here invokes Athens's own *epitādeumata* (ways of living). Their kin are implored to follow the example of the dead and produce more sons to serve Athens,

⁸³ Lipka 2002, p. 21. Donlan 1999, p. 125; Roberts 1994, p. 41; Popper 1945, pp. 35, 163; though an ancient scholiast understood the speech to reflect Athens was actually an aristocracy cf. Hude 1928, p. 131; Larsen, 1948, p. 14, also Loraux's proposal that Athenian democracy appropriated aristocratic terms, 1986, pp. 16, 51.

⁸⁴ Thucydides 2.37.2; 2.39.

⁸⁵ Popper 1945, p. 164.

⁸⁶ Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* 8.5-9.1.

⁸⁷ Thucydides 1.124.3.

⁸⁸ Thucydides 2.44-45.

recalling the judgment of the Corinthians that Athenians deploy their bodies in the service of Athens as if they belonged to another.⁸⁹

The very passage that invokes Athenian autonomy and is presumed to reflect the ideal of *individual* freedom actually ends by noting that Athenians are checked by 'fear'.⁹⁰ Shame at being thought useless drives men to participate, while the mark of cowardice is said to sting more than death.⁹¹ Even in the ideal of the funeral oration, Pericles reminds his audience that they must 'always be obedient to the magistrates and the laws, both those written and unwritten'.⁹² He invokes the oath taken by all male Athenians, which bound them to obey the law of Athens.⁹³ Both Athenian democrats and Spartans are deterred by fear and social expectations. Each evokes the same sentiments and manipulations deemed totalitarian and anti-democratic in the similarly exaggerated Sparta of the *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*.

Nor is the funeral oration unique. With respect to broader democratic discourse, both Aeschines and pseudo-Andocides proclaimed that the salvation of Athens lay with the obedience of citizens to laws and magistrates; while in his speech used to prosecute the younger Alcibiades, Lysias spoke of good democrats fearing the law more than foes on a battlefield.⁹⁴ The litigant emphasises that the lofty task of enforcement fell to the Athenians convened in court. Such men were entrusted by the community and bound by their oaths to make 'those disorderly individuals more moderate'.⁹⁵ Men behave well when they 'fear the laws and you [the *dēmos*]'.⁹⁶ Lysias's first speech, itself addressing adultery, likewise invoked this fear brought to bear through the courts, for the vote of the citizen judges carried the 'most sovereign power in the *polis*' and empowered the laws.⁹⁷ Moreover, the supposed dichotomy between rigid Spartan training and the 'innate bravery' of the Athenians, which scholars allege signifies a commitment to individuality, actually opposes ancient democratic theory and practice. Contrary to the alleged division of Athenians living however they please and Spartans enduring forced

⁸⁹ Thucydides 1.70.6.

⁹⁰ Thucydides 2.37.3.

⁹¹ Thucydides 2.40.2; 2.43.6.

⁹² Thucydides 2.37.3.

⁹³ Hornblower 1991, pp. 300-303; Siewert 1977, pp. 105, 107; Bosworth 2000, p. 16.

⁹⁴ Aeschines 1.6, 221; pseudo-Andocides 4.19.; Lysias 14.15.

⁹⁵ Lysias 14.12.

⁹⁶ Lysias 14.10.

⁹⁷ Lysias 1.36.

discipline, both *poleis* required, in fact *compelled*, civic discipline and obedience that the community enforced.

In her examination of Pericles' speech, Loraux observes that in order to praise the Athenian war dead as 'aristocratic warriors', the *epitaphioi* deliberately avoided discussions of military *technē* (acquired skill). Doing so 'conceals the maritime war which requires very extensive training'.⁹⁸ That Xenophon's outlook was compatible with democratic expectations and that his *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* actually could be used to realign the elite of Athens with the democracy's ideals becomes apparent when the treatise is read alongside his *Memorabilia*. There, the younger Pericles alleges that as of 406 Athens appears a long way from reaching *kalokagathia* as a whole, for 'evil and vice grow within the city, and great enmity and hatred of one another appears among the citizens'.⁹⁹ To illustrate his point, Pericles invokes Spartan excellence and claims that, in contrast to contemporary Athenians, the Spartans honoured their elders, maintained their bodies and obeyed their leaders.¹⁰⁰ None are virtues unique to a particular constitution type, and it is Pericles the Younger, a democratically elected general, who condemns Athenians as undisciplined. In contrast Socrates, the alleged critic of democracy, implores Pericles to take heart.

Socrates argues that Athens is already on its way to virtue, for *most* of its citizens are obedient and disciplined. In support of this assertion, Socrates asks Pericles if he does not see:

how well disciplined they are with respect to their navy, how orderly they obey the ones overseeing their training for gatherings of gymnastic contests, and with respect to the choruses, are they not second to none at obeying their chorus leaders?¹⁰¹

Xenophon's praise for the *thetes*, the poorest Athenians who manned the fleet, ought not be minimised, for Socrates continues:

For this, let me tell you, is strange – these ones [the rowers, the athletes, and the choruses] set their minds to obey the ones in command, but the hoplites and the cavalrymen, the ones *seeming* to be preferred over all other citizens as beautiful and good [*kalokagathia*], [set their minds] to be

⁹⁸ Loraux 1986, p. 151.

⁹⁹ Xenophon, *Hellenica* 1.6.1-1.7.35; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.5.15; 3.5.17.

¹⁰⁰ Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.5.15-6.

¹⁰¹ Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.5.18.

the most disobedient of all.¹⁰²

Xenophon here lauds the *dēmos* and attacks those Athenians presumed to have embraced superficial laconic affectation. By invoking and praising Athens's naval discipline in the *Memorabilia*, Xenophon does what the official eulogy of democracy failed to do: acknowledge and praise the 'non-aristocratic' element of Athenian society. Xenophon's implicit reference to the discipline of the poorest Athenians as exhibiting commendatory orderliness stands in direct opposition to traditional critiques of democracy, such as that of Megabyzus in Herodotus' account of the Persians' constitutional debate.¹⁰³

Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* complement one another. The exchange between Pericles the Younger and Socrates illustrates that, as a rival of Sparta for hegemony, Athens must match Sparta in virtue and that the weak link lies at the top of Athenian society. The dialogue reiterates that any implied criticism of Athens evident in the *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* was not directed at the *dēmos* or democracy, but at the most powerful and influential Athenians, whom Xenophon depicts as the cause of Athenian disorder. As with the fault Xenophon finds with elite education, Xenophon blames those 'who *think* themselves to be *kalos kagathos*', from whose ranks Athens traditionally drew its leaders, and whose members represent the cross-section of Athenian society presumed to be natural laconophiles. Xenophon's observation in the *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* that 'with respect to other *poleis*, the chief men of rank and influence do not wish to seem to stand in awe of the archons, but think this to be servile: but in Sparta the strongest men are most subordinate to the archons' enhances this parallel.¹⁰⁴

The *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* rebukes powerful, but deluded, Athenians and suggests that, although they may imitate Spartan manners superficially, they fail to duplicate Sparta's idealised obedience to the laws and officials of the *polis*. Xenophon shares this expectation with the Attic Orators, from whose works modern scholars have sought to reconstruct a theory of ancient democracy. Even if understood as representative of a resistant subculture opposed to democracy, therefore, Xenophon simultaneously could realign Athenian laconisers with the Spartan mirage and their democratic oaths.

¹⁰² Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.5.19. Gray 2004, pp. 14–15 likewise recognises the passage's democratic significance.

¹⁰³ Herodotus 3.81.1–2 outlines their unrivalled ignorance and *hybris*; cf. Ostwald 2000, p. 19.

¹⁰⁴ Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* 8.2.

Spartan Military Practices

Having completed his account of the daily practices of the Spartans, Xenophon shifts to consider Sparta at war.¹⁰⁵ Rather than turn to the class of professional teachers of war, whose knowledge Xenophon attacks as limited and offered only for a fee, Xenophon presents Athenian audiences with a compelling alternative.¹⁰⁶ The *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* contains an overview of traditional Spartan military practices witnessed first-hand by an author who was himself a spectator of, if not a participant in, Spartan campaigns in Asia and Greece and had led soldiers in combat alongside Spartans in the *Anabasis*. Xenophon demonstrates his possession of, and thus capacity to teach, one aspect of knowledge essential for his ideal orator.¹⁰⁷

In the *Memorabilia* Xenophon outlined that those aspiring to lead the democracy must advise Athens when the *polis* deliberated on questions of war. To do so effectively, and thus to be a useful Athenian, 'it is necessary to know the power of your city and of its opponents'.¹⁰⁸ Xenophon offers Athenians a means to evaluate Sparta's military capacity from the mundane (the appearance, attire, and equipment of Spartan soldiers)¹⁰⁹ to the essential¹¹⁰ (their precise units and formations, combat tactics, methods of camp selection and organization),¹¹¹ as well as the duties of Spartan Kings as hereditary generals.¹¹² In turn, the discussion in chapter thirteen of the knowledge and skills required of Spartan kings on campaign provides insight into the duties of a general. Xenophon deemed such knowledge essential for leading Athenian troops and returns us to the rivalry between aspiring Athenian leaders and Spartan kings outlined by Plato.¹¹³

¹⁰⁵ Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* 11.2–13.5.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Lipka 2002 198; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.1.9–11; *Cyropaedia* 1.6.12–14.

¹⁰⁷ Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.6; Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1359^b 7.

¹⁰⁸ Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.6.8.

¹⁰⁹ Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*, 11.3.

¹¹⁰ Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*, 11.4 ff.

¹¹¹ Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*, 12.1–7.

¹¹² Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*, 13.1–5.

¹¹³ Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 3.1.1–3.

Discontinuity: Chapter Fourteen and the Divide between Ideal and Practice

The fourteenth chapter begins: 'if anyone should ask me if even *now* the laws of Lycurgus *seem to me* to remain inviolate, by Zeus, I would not reply confidently.'¹¹⁴ Sparta has lost its hegemony over willing allies. Whereas the Hellenes once sought Spartan leadership, they now unite to oppose Spartan aspirations.¹¹⁵ Xenophon closes his editorial with his strongest rebuke of all: 'it is obvious that they obey neither the god nor the laws of Lycurgus'.¹¹⁶ We are reminded of the weight Xenophon placed on the consultation of Delphi in chapter eight as part of the lawmaker's strategy. Having acquired divine approval for the laws, their violation amounts not to mere disobedience, but religious sacrilege.¹¹⁷ This condemnation resonates with Xenophon's condemnation of Sparta's seizure of the Theban Cadmea.¹¹⁸ Scholars have found fault with the chapter's emphasis for its alleged violation of our safest assumptions, namely that (a) Xenophon was a committed laconophile,¹¹⁹ and (b) that the work praises Sparta; yet no such inconsistency presents itself.

This allegedly shocking assessment merely returns us to the poem of the work where Xenophon drew a direct correlation between Spartan *epitadeumata* (ways of living) and Spartan power. The hypothesis permits discussion of how Sparta had become the most powerful *polis* in Greece as well as how it then lost such pre-eminence.¹²⁰ Xenophon reports his findings by outlining traditional practices from 1.3 to 13.10, which ultimately awards praise to Lycurgus for cleverly securing obedience, an end not unique to Sparta but, as has been shown, one to which Athenian democracy also aspired. The same prompt permits Xenophon to assess the continuity of such practices and thus speak on another tenet of his thought: the potential for virtue and hegemony to wax and wane.

This judgement is consistent with Xenophon's broader thought. In the *Memorabilia* Xenophon's Socrates speaks of an individual's *epitadeumata* determining their overall welfare. Good habits fortify health; bad habits

¹¹⁴ Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*, 14.1.

¹¹⁵ Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*, 14.6.

¹¹⁶ Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*, 14.7.

¹¹⁷ Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* 8.5.

¹¹⁸ Xenophon, *Hellenica* 5.4.1.

¹¹⁹ Bazin 1885, p. vi; Chrimes 1948 p. 3; Tigerstedt 1965, p. 169; Lipka 2002, p. 10.

¹²⁰ Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*, 1.1.

bring sickness.¹²¹ A book earlier, in the passage discussed at length, Pericles expressed concern for the decay of traditional Athenian *epitadeumata*.¹²² Xenophon portrays Cyrus similarly as fretting for the Persians and Teleutias for the Spartans.¹²³ Throughout his corpus Xenophon proposed that individuals and *poleis* were not innately virtuous. They could realise virtue, but then faced an altogether new struggle to maintain such excellence.¹²⁴ I therefore second Humble's view that chapter fourteen does not oppose the remainder of the work, but logically flows from those preceding it.¹²⁵ The work's first thirteen chapters record traditional practices reputed to have enabled the *polis* to attain collective virtue and martial success; its fourteenth highlights decay and its cost.

Continuous Kingship

The placement of the fifteenth chapter has invited further speculation, notably that it should follow thirteen, where Xenophon outlines the military role of Spartan kings. Yet its theme and closing hexameters make its ultimate position in the manuscript tradition logical. Having assessed the discontinuities between Sparta of the present and its idealised past, Xenophon closes the work with a discussion of the sole institution that remains unchanged since its inception: the compact between the *polis* and its kings.¹²⁶ Such stability is underscored by Xenophon's assertion in the final chapter that attests to their obedience to their oaths. The resulting narrative has been thought to obscure Sparta's constitution and prompted suggestions that Xenophon wished to emphasise Sparta's *politeia* as being distinctly monarchic.¹²⁷ Rather than embracing monarchy, however, the passage reminds us that in Sparta sovereignty does not rest with the kings. Like in Athens, Spartan magistrates are understood as accountable to, and serving, the legitimate sovereign power. At Sparta, Xenophon suggests, it is the ephors who are *kurioi* (sovereign) and thus able to fine, depose, imprison and charge any magistrate.¹²⁸ At Athens, it is the *dēmos* that is

¹²¹ Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 4.2.31.

¹²² Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 3.5, especially 3.5.14.

¹²³ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 3.3.49-50; 53. Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 5.1.13 ff.

¹²⁴ Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.2.24; 3.5.13-14; *Cyropaedia* 7.5.75.

¹²⁵ Humble 2004, p. 221.

¹²⁶ Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*, 15.1; on this point I am in agreement with Proietti 1987, pp. 45, 74; cf. Xenophon, *Agésilas* 1.2.4 for praise of 'continuous kingship'.

¹²⁷ Cf. Bordes 1982, p. 194-5.

¹²⁸ Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*, 8.4.

kurios.¹²⁹ Spartan kings enjoy their station and lead in war and ritual but do so *only* when they abide by and uphold the established laws.¹³⁰ To an Agesilaus it reads as praise, to an ambitious Athenian, caution.

Conclusions

Putting aside misplaced expectations of Xenophon's laconism, the fifteen chapters of his *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* may be divided into five sections that logically follow from one to the next as they have been preserved in our manuscript tradition. The work's language coheres with Xenophon's wider writing, and his authorship of the *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* cannot be excluded on the basis of its themes and content or dismissed as 'a strictly rejectionist' work that attacks Athenian democracy.¹³¹ This is neither the only nor the likeliest message fourth-century Greek audiences could have drawn.

The *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* can be understood alongside Xenophon's wider moral purpose in writing and as reiterating a universal tenet of Xenophon's thought applicable to the leading powers of his era. To any possible Spartan audiences, Xenophon could be understood to call for the realignment of daily practice with their earlier 'Lycurgeoan' ideal. In Walzerian terms, the work's fourteenth chapter signals that any Spartan readers could understand the work as a form of 'internal criticism'.¹³² For such auditors Xenophon assumes the mantle of an outsider who enters 'into local practices and arrangements' thereby appearing to any Spartan audience(s) as a connected critic drawing on mutually agreed-upon values.¹³³ If, however, we must read the instances of 'other Greeks' as specifically speaking to Athenians, it should be reiterated that neither the *dēmos* nor democracy are criticised.

Xenophon reserves his praise almost exclusively for Lycurgus and his capacity to persuade even the most powerful to obey the laws and magistrates, while fifth- and fourth-century Athenian rhetoric demonstrates that even explicit praise for Sparta need not necessitate rejection of democracy. The *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* does not reject or seek to replace democracy with Spartan institutions. Rather it attacks those who aspired

¹²⁹ Lysias 1.36; Demosthenes 3.30; 13.31; Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 1. 19; ps. Aristotle, *Athēnaiōn Politeia* 43.4.

¹³⁰ Xenophon, *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*, 15.2; 15.7.

¹³¹ Kroecker 2009 pp. 202ff., especially 206.

¹³² Walzer 1987, p. 38.

¹³³ Walzer 1987, p. 38. Bianco 1996, p. 24 similarly highlights the potential reform of Sparta rather than being 'anti-Athenian'.

to become, or already thought themselves to be, 'beautiful and good' (*kalokagathia*) but failed to serve their community. Whether their measure was Spartan or Athenian, Xenophon elsewhere singled out their behaviour at the close of the Peloponnesian War as worthy of criticism. Just as Plato's Socrates called Alcibiades to self-knowledge, Xenophon's Thrasylbulus rebuked the oligarchs of 404 to come to know themselves.¹³⁴

Some of these oligarchs have been equated with the allegedly aristocratic circle of laconisers historically asserted to form the *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*'s principal audience. To this end the kings of Sparta serve as a paradigm worthy of the attention of Athenians aspiring to lead, like Alcibiades and Critias, whose generation had twice disobeyed and inverted the laws of Athens and its democracy in 411 and 404. Spartan kings provide the same measure of virtue that they do in Plato's *Alcibiades I*, not least because the system was designed to moderate its occupants' 'tyrannical spirit' (*tyrannikon phronēma*).¹³⁵ Xenophon's treatise chastised such auditors for thinking themselves superior by emulating Spartan manners and attire, yet failing to obey the laws and magistrates of Athens as their Spartan counterparts.¹³⁶ It is equally true that if they were to realign with the Spartan ideals they professed to admire, Xenophon could simultaneously enhance Athenian democracy by helping to diminish such disorder, itself a desired end expressed throughout democratic discourse. To fourth-century Athenians, therefore, Xenophon's *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia* did not deviate from democratic ideology; it reiterated and reinforced it.

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¹³⁴ Xenophon *Hellenica* 2.4.40-1.

¹³⁵ Plato *Alcibiades I*, 124a-b. Xenophon *Lakedaimoniōn Politeia*, 15.8; note the parallel to Plato's immoderate *tyrannikon ti phronēma*, *Republic* 9.573b-c.

¹³⁶ Xenophon *Memorabilia* 3.5.18.

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