Anxieties of Masculinity and Manly Education in Xenophon’s *Lakedaimonion Politeia*

Jed Pageler

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Introduction

Xenophon’s descriptions of male bodies undergoing the Spartan agôgê in his *Lakedaimonion Politeia* reveals deep seated anxieties about masculinity in Greek society of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. Xenophon’s prioritization of punishment and authority as corrective factors in the Spartan agôgê suggests that he was aware that masculinity was a product of performative acts and subject to instability. Through his description of male bodies in the agôgê and his emphasis of the corrective factors of punishment and authority, Xenophon presents Spartan education as the ideal system of Greek education for teaching stable performative acts of masculinity and that ensures the physical, moral, and political stability of male Spartan citizens.

Limitations

Rather than investigate the actual practices potentially recoverable from the scarce evidence of Spartan society in Xenophon’s lifetime, this paper explores the ideological claims made by Xenophon in his *Lakedaimonion Politeia* about ideals of masculinity and the methods of consistently replicating masculinity. Talented scholars have presented detailed analyses of Spartan material to navigate the complex questions of Spartan society, such as Ducat (2006), (1999); Cartledge (2001); and Kennell (1995). Other scholars have pursued detailed examinations of Greek practices of masculinity and sexuality in antiquity, such as Foucault (1985); Halperin (1993); and Davidson (2007) to name but a few. Although this investigation draws upon the detailed work produced by these scholars and others, the focus is on Xenophon’s ideological construction of the Spartan agôgê as a successful template for producing male youth as paragons of masculine virtue.

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1 LSJ s.v. “ἀγωγή” 1.1 *a carrying away, carriage;* 2.1. *leading towards a point, guiding;* 2.3 *a training.*
**Historical Background**

Xenophon was born into a wealthy Athenian family around 430 BCE, when Sparta and her allies in the Peloponnese declared war with Athens and her allies in the second Peloponnesian War (432 BCE – 404 BCE). This political struggle in Xenophon’s early life forced members of each *polis* (city-state) to highlight differences of society and ideology, where the vast majority of literary and material evidence for this period survives from Athenian sources. While the Spartan and Athenian sources emphasize distinction, the political tensions obscure similarities of shared language and cultural rituals like religious worship, and to some extent family structure. Xenophon’s early life in a wealthy Athenian family and likely position in the Athenian military inclined him to be more sympathetic with the ideals of the more militaristic and aristocratic Sparta than the literary and democratic Athens. Xenophon’s close relationship to Spartan citizens and possibly Spartan society later in life suggests that he was familiar enough to give a detailed account of the *agôgê* in his *Lakedaimonion Politeia*². But in spite of Xenophon’s sympathy towards Sparta throughout his life, his upbringing in Athens prepared him to address shared ideological concerns, like the structure and role of education in Greek society. While Xenophon emphasizes distinctions between Spartan education and the education of Greek males in other contemporary societies, his *Lakedaimonion Politeia* operates within the caricatured tensions of Sparta and Athens to advocate what he believes to be improvements to Greek education based on shared ideological constructs of Spartan and Athenian textual evidence.

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² Xenophon befriended Spartan military commanders in Anatolia after leading Greek mercenaries Cyrus’ failed rebellion in Persia. Xenophon was granted the position of Spartan *proxênos* (ambassador) near Olympia around 394 BCE after fighting with Spartan forces. (Tuplin 2015)
What then were the distinctions that Xenophon promotes as necessary reforms for non-Spartan societies? Xenophon emphasizes distinctions between Spartan and Athenian education in terms of the duration of time of structured study, and the types of authority figures that ensure students participate in that study. For Sparta, Xenophon writes that the *agôgê* lasted from early childhood to early adulthood with three distinct categories for pupils: *paides*, the youngest children; *paidiskoi*, adolescents; and *hebontes*, men in early adulthood\(^3\). Xenophon also emphasizes that the figures of authority for the Spartan *agôgê* are all citizen males, with the primary organizing figure, the *paidonomos*, occupying an elevated political position. By contrast, Xenophon demeans the relatively brief education available in Athens and other Greek *poleis* for ceasing when male students are adolescents. Xenophon also critiques the practice of assigning pedagogues (personal slaves) to oversee the individual education of each student, which was privately arranged by the student’s family rather than coordinated in some part through the political structure as in Sparta. These broad distinctions of structure and authority will be examined in far greater detail after exploring some of the shared ideals of masculine performative behavior, and explaining what performative acts are in terms of masculinity.

**Masculinity**

The primary theoretical framework of gender for this project is that of Judith Butler’s notion of performativity, which frames gender as a series of repeated ‘performative’ acts that produce the illusion of a consistent or stable identity. In other words, performative acts enact identity. For example, consider the statement “you are pronounced man and wife”: the statement transforms two independent individuals into a married couple that is recognized as such by social and legal customs. There is a social

\(^3\) See Figure 1 in Appendix for approximate age range
authority to performative actions that is not granted by, for example, a pair of actors playing the parts of man and wife, because audience members recognize the union as a temporary performance, and the belief in that recognition will disappear once the performance has ended. Moreover, Butler claims that there is a fundamental instability to performative actions that constitute identity categories like gender and sexuality. In “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” Butler writes that, “if there is, as it were, always a compulsion to repeat, repetition never fully accomplishes identity. That there is a need for a repetition at all is a sign that identity is not self-identical. It requires to be instituted again and again, which is to say that it runs the risk of becoming de-instituted at every interval.” While Butler discusses categories of sexual identity in this argument, her argument may also be applied to the notion of masculinity. In viewing masculinity as a fragile pattern of repeated performative acts, we are able to identify a prominent concern in Xenophon’s discussion as regards teaching young Sparta males how to become citizens. While Xenophon and his contemporaries did not understand their own systems of gender and sexuality as such etic categories as ‘gender’ and ‘performativity’, these etic terms help to identify and examine anxieties within the larger ideological system of Xenophon’s version of the Spartan agógê.

Greek masculinity in antiquity is as complex a system as that of gender and sexuality in the modern world, but for the purposes of this paper, the primary component of Greek masculinity relevant to Xenophon and his description of male bodies in the Spartan agógê is that of bodily integrity. Xenophon’s political and social positions throughout his life inform the type of textual evidence that is key to examining the system of bodily integrity and masculinity that he advocates when discussing the Spartan

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4 Butler (1993: 315)
agôgê. Such textual evidence includes Spartan lyric poetry, as well as Athenian
philosophical dialogues, comedic drama, and legal arguments that promote distinct
aspects of bodily integrity central to Xenophon’s anxieties about the masculine
performative behavior of young Greek males.

The Spartan lyric poet Tyrtaeus (writing in the mid-7th century BCE) writes about
two aspects of bodily integrity relevant to performative acts in a military context: the
physical wound of a Spartan hoplite when defeated by an enemy, and the position of the
spear in the back as an indication of unacceptable cowardice. Tyrtaeus writes, “For to
pierce a man behind the shoulder blades as he flees in deadly combat is gruesome, and a
corpse lying in the dust, with the point of a spear driven through his back from behind, is
a shameful sight.” (Fr. 11, 17-20).5 First, the wound itself is a sign of failed military
prowess, which Tyrtaeus presents as a signature of bodily integrity. In other words, if the
Spartan hoplite had performed the expected masculine act of defeating his opponent,
there would not be a wound. The spear violates the male body when it should remain
whole through the hoplite’s military prowess. Secondly, the location of the spear wound
in the back of the corpse is morally shameful as a physical sign that the hoplite turned to
flee from combat rather than face his opponent directly. Tyrtaeus demonstrates that the
failure to maintain a whole body is the outcome of the hoplite’s moral weakness in the
face of deadly combat. The violated body is then both a physical and moral sign of a
failed performative act of masculinity in a military context.

5 Stobaeus 4.9.16 Anthology:
ἀργαλέον γὰρ δὴ ποσθε μετάφρενόν ἔστι δαίζειν
ἀνδρός φεγγόντος δήμῳ ἐν πολέμῳ
αἰσχρός δ’ ἔστι νέκυς κατακείμενος ἐν κοίνῃ
νότον ὑπεσθ’ αἰχμῆ δουρός ἐξηλάμενος.
Xenophon writes in his *Symposium* (ca. 365 BCE) about the physical and moral failures of bodily integrity in the context of philosophical ideals when discussing the pederastic relationship between an older male *erastēs* and a younger male *eromenos*. In this Socratic dialogue (with elements that favor Sparta, but notably in an Athenian context), Socrates is concluding his discussion of the ideal pederastic relationship of emotional rather than physical connection when he says,

But what is there to induce reciprocal affection from a boy whose lover is hooked solely on his body? Because to himself the lover allots what he wants but to the boy only the most contemptible role? Or because he does his best to bar his own relatives from doing what he is bent on getting his favorite to do? As for his using seduction rather than coercion, that makes him all the more detestable: the rapist merely reveals his own rascality, while the seducer corrupts the soul of the seduced. (Xen. *Symp.* 8.19-20)

Xenophon demonstrates that the *erastēs*’ physical violation of the *eromenos* presents a socially abhorrent act on by the older male that brings shame upon the younger male by means of the violation. The physical body becomes the space by which the social act of masculine performativity is practiced. Further, the *erastēs*’ lack of self-control over physical passion reveals moral failing that can in turn corrupt the soul of his *eromenos*. Xenophon’s anxiety about the violated body and corrupt morals of both older and younger male in this philosophical context suggests recognition of the failure of masculine performativity. This anxiety is distinct from that of Tyrtaeus by means of philosophical rather than military context, but each are highly relevant to Xenophon’s description of the Spartan *agôgê* in his *Lakedaimonion Politeia* as each author favors Spartan society over Athenian society.

While Xenophon is sympathetic to Sparta even before becoming *proxēnos*, he grew up knowing the legal and artistic contexts of Athenian sources. The legal source,
Demosthenes, suggests that the *polis* is endangered when performative acts of bodily integrity are not repeated while the artistic source, Aristophanes’ *Women at the Thesmophoria*, suggests that common physical attributes can reflect a failed enactment of bodily integrity. Demosthenes’ legal arguments in *Against Androtion* (ca.355 BCE) rely on Athenian laws against political participation for male citizens who had prostituted themselves to attack his enemies. In the language used thus far to describe the system of bodily integrity, Demosthenes’ arguments suggest that willingness to subject oneself to bodily violation reveals a threat to the political structure of the *polis*, not just the physical or moral status of the individual male citizen. Demosthenes claims, “such men may lead the people into moral failings, in order to make them as much like themselves as possible” (Demosthenes, *Against Androtion* 22.30-32), suggesting the connection between bodily violation and moral failure demonstrated with Tyrtaeus and Xenophon above. The legal context of Demosthenes’ argument reveals that there is (at least in Athens), a legal basis for arguing that willing bodily violation threatens the basic responsibilities of a citizen. Demosthenes’ argument continues to expand the consequence of bodily violation from a failed demonstration of citizenship (as well as masculinity), to a threat of corrupting other citizens and therefore the *polis* itself. Xenophon’s description of the young male bodies of Spartans in the *agôgê* also contains this anxiety as well; further revealing Xenophon’s awareness of the possible failure of repeated performative acts of masculinity.

Aristophanes’ *Women at the Thesmophoria*⁶ presents an artistic context for a final aspect of the anxieties about bodily integrity: the ease with which a man may demonstrate

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⁶ Xenophon may have even witnessed this production performed in 411 BCE since it was produced before Xenophon joined Xerxes rebellion as a Greek mercenary
bodily violation or dissipation. *Women at the Thesmophoria* details the tragic playwright Euripides’ attempt to argue that he is innocent of slandering citizen women with his plays before the assembly of Athenian citizen women at the women’s festival of the Thesmophoria. Euripides’ plot requires that a man go disguised as a woman to argue his case, and he turns to another tragic playwright, Agathon, as the man for the job. Agathon appears on stage dressed in women’s clothing, clean shaven, and performs a choral exchange between female chorus leader and chorus for the play he is working on. In response to Agathon’s appearance and feminine presentation, Euripides’ Kinsman proclaims, “Holy Genetyllides, what a pretty song! How feministic and tongue-gagged and deep-kissed! Just hearing it brought a tingle to my very butt!” (Aristophanes. *Thesm.* 130-133). These jokes by the Kinsman suggest that each outward behavioral marker from clothing to speech habits can be a sign of the moral and political threats of bodily violation noted above with Xenophon’s *Symposium* and in Demosthenes’ legal arguments. The Kinsman verbalizes and exaggerates the associations of Agathon’s presumed oral and anal sexually receptive role and his outward presentation anticipated from the Athenian audience. While the Kinsman crude jokes connect outward presentation with extreme bodily violation, Euripides description of Agathon soon after the Kinsman’s comment as, “good-looking, pale, clean shaven, soft, presentable, and you sound like a woman,” (Aristophanes. *Thesm.* 190-193) reveals a further anxiety that the body may weaken should a man fail the repeated performative acts expected of him. Each element of Euripides’ description of Agathon fits into the system of bodily integrity by providing markers of violation through outward presentation. This example of Agathon in Aristophanes’ *Women at the Thesmophoria* develops the limits of the system of bodily
integrity with the combined aspects of outward descriptors and ideologically laden jokes about bodily violation. In other words, if a male Greek citizen displays any of the outward markers of Agathon, he is presumed to be a moral failure and a threat to the polis because his repeated performative acts are outside the system of bodily integrity developed across textual genres and historical periods.

While Greek masculinity of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE was comprised of many performative elements, the performative acts of masculinity most relevant to Xenophon’s discussion of Spartan education in his Lakedaimonion Politeia are those in the system of bodily integrity outlined above. The array of textual evidence from martial lyric poetry to philosophical and legal discourse each emphasize aspects of this system unique to their respective literary contexts, but around the central concerns about weakness or degradation of the male body. From these evidences, it is clear that weakness of the body may be perceived through outward appearance as well as by observing disciplined deployment of the body to avoid penetration. Failing to repeat these performative acts of bodily integrity could result in, or be a sign of, moral decay and political disenfranchisement. Therefore, the stakes of successfully educating young male citizens in the proper presentation of these performative acts is essential to not only their individual social status, but also the stability of the polis.

**Xenophon’s Contrast Between ‘Hard’ and ‘Soft’ Descriptors**

As Xenophon develops a linguistic contrast between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ qualities of male youth in the agôgê, he promotes Spartan education as the ideal system for teaching masculine performative acts while detailing how the failure to repeat those acts develops in other Greek education systems. For the youngest age category, the paides, Xenophon
develops linguistic contrasts when discussing footwear, and cloaks, in the *agôgê*, each of which is a performative act where the Spartan youth enact the ideal of bodily integrity. When describing the contrasting practice of non-Spartan Greeks (*Lak. Pol. 2.3*), Xenophon uses the verb ἁπαλύνω (‘to soften’)⁷ to describe the effect on a child’s feet when wearing shoes and κρατέω (‘to be strong, mighty, powerful’)⁸ to describe the effect of going barefoot throughout this stage of the *agôgê*. Xenophon in this section on children going barefoot explicitly suggests that there is a physical advantage gained by improving the child’s resilience and an improvement of speed and climbing ability for bare-foot children. But it is not just that a child can be taught to be a better warrior by training his feet to be resilient, but that he is learning how to practice endurance and excellence. His body must be instructed and trained to be resilient to external threats, and develop strength, agility, and power so that as he grows he will be able to better serve the Spartan state as a soldier, but also maintain his bodily integrity against opponents. In a poem attributed to Tyrtaeus by Lycurgus in *Against Leocrates*, after the narrator urges young men to fight valiantly and risk their lives for his homeland, he ends the poem with the following exhortation: “Come, let everyone stand fast, with legs set well apart and both feet fixed firmly on the ground, biting his lip with his teeth” (Fr. 10, 31-32).⁹ Tyrtaeus here connects military excellence and resilience to the firmly fixed feet of the Spartan soldier, reinforcing Xenophon’s claim that strengthening a *pais*’ feet in the *agôgê* teaches the *pais* to perform the expected masculine strength of a tough warrior.

Xenophon then appears to be drawing upon this previously established understanding of

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⁷ LSJ s.v. “ἁπαλύνω”
⁸ LSJ s.v. “κρατέω”
⁹ ἀλλὰ τις εὖ διαβάς μενέτω ποσίν ἀμφοτέροις στηριχθεῖς ἐπὶ γῆς, χείλος ὀδοὺς διδῶν
strong feet as part of the Spartan military acumen to articulate how Spartan ideals of bodily integrity are fostered by the *agôgê*. But the same section includes a telling line “if they endured this training” (εἰ τοῦτ´ ἄσκησιαν) that suggests the possibility of *paides* who fail to continue through training in this most virtuous hardening or strengthening of the feet. The inclusion of this conditional statement illustrates that the stark contrast between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ descriptors concerning the feet of *paides* acknowledges failure to repeat the performative act of bodily integrity, even within Xenophon’s depiction of the *agôgê* as the ideal masculine education.

In addition to the absence of footwear as a mechanism for hardening the feet of *paides*, Xenophon frames the single cloak mandated in the *agôgê* as leading to the development of ideal ‘hard’ bodies rather than the multiple cloaks and degraded bodies and morals of non-Spartan *paides*. Xenophon uses the verb διαθρύπτω (‘to break in sunder, break in pieces, shiver’) to capture the threat of physical and moral degradation caused changing into numerous cloaks (*Lak. Pol. 2.4*); the verb may also be understood in a more ideological sense “to break down by profligate living and indulgence, *to enervate, pamper, make weak and womanish*”\(^1\). The verb διαθρύπτω links Xenophon’s description of education in other contemporary Greek societies not only to the production of ‘soft’ bodies, but also to the moral failure a weakened body represents, as in the example from Xenophon’s *Symposium* cited above about the moral corruption of an *eromenos* whose body has been penetrated by his *erastês*. As with the passage from the *Symposium*, the weak body of a *pais* not in the *agôgê*—in this case broken down by indulgence of numerous cloaks rather than by physical penetration—represents weakness of discipline antithetical to the ideal discipline developed in the *agôgê*. Unlike the

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\(^{10}\) LSJ s.v. “διαθρύπτω”
physical development of hardened feet connected to the ideal of performative acts of bodily integrity in battle by Tyrtaeus, Xenophon’s use of the verb διαθρόπτω for paides with numerous cloaks outside of the agôgê suggests a moral failing through indulgence and a lack of incentive to develop mental discipline. Xenophon’s description of requiring one cloak for the paides serves to further develop the notion that the agôgê is the ideal training for developing consistent performative acts of bodily integrity, because a pais practices the mental fortitude to endure physical hardship.

For the category of adolescents, the paidiskoi, Xenophon promotes the Spartan agôgê as the ideal system for teaching performative acts of bodily integrity by presenting ‘hard’ bodies and mental discipline as nearly mastered. Xenophon describes the contrast of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ bodies with, “In any case, you would hear stone statues talking sooner than these youths, and see bronze statues turning their eyes; you would judge them even more reserved than virgins in their wedding chamber” (Xen. Lak. Pol. 3.5). Unlike the bodily contrasts developing from external circumstances of the agôgê with the paides, the contrast with the paidiskoi comes from their internal behavior within the rigid system of Spartan education. That Xenophon relies on the ‘hard’ qualities of stone and bronze to depict the agôgê as an ideal masculine education for adolescents suggests that the bodies of the paidiskoi need minimal development, but that disciplined behavior must be assessed publically. Public monuments made of stone or bronze formed important signs of masculine ideals of bodily integrity, and could be easily compared to the bodies and internal discipline of these adolescents in a public setting. But it is in Xenophon’s contrast of this public disciplined behavior with the private discipline of the παρθένων...
(maidens) that his depiction of the agôgê as ideal education in repeated performative acts of bodily integrity flourishes. The ‘soft’ bodies and discipline of the παρθένων present the opposite end of the system of bodily integrity as it is private and followed by bodily violation as the marriage is consummated. The public setting of Xenophon’s description of the paidiskoi indicates that this group has mastered the physical component of performative acts of bodily integrity and successfully demonstrates their internal discipline.

For the oldest age group, the hebontes, Xenophon emphasizes only the ‘hard’ physical body and discipline, marking no ideological limits to the performative acts of which the hebontes are capable. Therefore, Xenophon writes, “So, seeing that it is when the strongest competitive spirit exists that choirs are most worth listening to and gymnastic competitions most worth watching, he thought that if he made the hebontes also compete in virtue, they would achieve the height of valour” (Lak. Pol. 4.2). The key term in this passage with regards to the analysis of the performative acts of bodily integrity is ἀνδραγαθίας (bravery, manly virtue, the character of a brave honest man), translated above as “valour”.12 This term indicates that the primary goal of the agôgê is a mastery of these performative acts, and that the agôgê is the ideal system because the hebontes have already perfectly presented public mastery of their physical body in choral and gymnastic performance; now only the internal quality of bravery is left over which to demonstrate mastery. Xenophon’s lack of a ‘soft’ linguistic contrast suggests that even this final component of the performative acts of bodily integrity, ἀνδραγαθίας, is within reach of the hebontes through the competition of the agôgê.

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12 LSJ s.v. “ἀνδραγαθίας”
The dialectical series of contrasts between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ descriptors for each age category develops both the ideal performative acts of bodily integrity taught in the agôgê as well as the less desirable qualities taught in non-Spartan education. By describing the physical bodies and discipline required to maintain peak physical ability, Xenophon’s description is connected to the ideological system of bodily integrity that holds deep-seated anxieties about moral and political instability of both Spartan and Athenian societies. Xenophon’s set of contrasts defines the positive and negative limits of the system of performative acts as of bodily integrity to demonstrate how the agôgê develops the former for male youth. The stakes of the stability of this system is best captured in Xenophon with the conditional statement about the hebontes, that “if they were to become what they should, they would clearly incline the city towards good” (Lak. Pol. 4.1). This statement indicates that the political stability of the polis rests on successfully demonstrating mastery of the performative acts of bodily integrity. One of the two factors that Xenophon identifies as improving transmission of these performative acts unique to Spartan education is their system of punishments.

**Punishments Across Age Groups**

While Xenophon’s contrast of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ descriptors for the three age categories of the Spartan agôgê indicates both the successes and anxieties of performative acts of bodily integrity, his description of the punishments specific to each age category illustrates how these punishments ensure successful education. The distinct focus of punishments emphasizes either the outward physical or internal discipline necessary to enact the performative elements of bodily integrity, as was discussed above with the ideal

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13 See figure 2 for visual outline of the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ descriptors across age categories
14 εἰ γένοιτο οίωνς δεῖ, πλέιστον ρέπειν ἐπὶ τὸ ἄγαθὸν τῇ πόλει
outcomes of the ‘hard’ Spartan youth. Punishments shift away from the physical body to focus on social rights or status as a youth progresses through the *agôgê*. This shift in punishment from the physical body to the social rights or status of a youth indicates which element of the *agôgê* needs the most reinforcement during each age category. The need for reinforcement reveals that anxiety of failed repetition of performative acts already present in the ideological system of bodily integrity, which Xenophon demonstrates may be overcome by following the punishments of the *agôgê*. One key aspect of these punishments that recurs in each age group in Xenophon’s *Lakedaimonion Politeia* is that violations of the training regimen of the *agôgê* or the laws are punished only when detected; it is tacitly accepted that boys can get away with breaking the law as part of their education. As Butler’s theory of gender performativity posits, is that the naturalized performance of gender “is always a surface sign, a signification on and with the public body,” therefore the surface sign of the performative act is only relevant when recognized within a social network. But punishment focuses Spartan boys on developing their bodies and or mental discipline if a lapse in the repeated performative acts of bodily integrity is detected.

The primary punishment for *paides* is physical beatings, which may initially appear to be violations of bodily integrity, but instead reinforce the lessons of physical endurance and mental discipline. That these punishments are allowed reinforces that a temporary violation of norms—as in the case of learning to steal food without being caught—should be viewed as instructional rather than threatening the public recognition of bodily integrity that a *pais* is developing. Xenophon writes that punishments when

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15 See figure 3 for visual outline of punishments across age groups
16 Butler (1993: 317)
caught stealing food are intended to instruct Spartan boys with, “in all kinds of education
the disobedient pupil is punished. So it is at Sparta: those who are caught because they
have stolen badly are punished” (Lak. Pol. 2.8). Xenophon clearly states that this practice
of physical punishment is not unique to Spartan education, but that the context of
punishment for stealing badly uniquely motivates paides to improve their physical
endurance and cunning. Punishments for paides are generally overseen by the
paidonomos and carried out by the hebontes as whip-bearers, but any male citizen may
beat a disobedient child who is beat again by his father for disobeying an authority
figure. Punishment for paides is therefore both public and socially shameful as it comes
from respected authority figures, but the temporary nature of the punishment gives it an
instructional purpose rather than permanent sign of disgraced social status.

For the adolescent age group, the paidiskoi, Xenophon provides a rather limited
description of punishments, but he makes it clear that punishment includes the removal of
rights and privileges for the adolescents. This form of social rather than physical
punishment addresses the apparent anxiety that adolescents bodies may be strong, but
they categorically still need to develop the mental discipline expected to perform the
bodily integrity of full Spartan citizens. Rather than the freedom from education
experienced by adolescents in other Greek societies, Xenophon claims that Lycurgus—
the lawgiver Xenophon presumes to have created many elements of Spartan society—
continued the agôgê for adolescents;

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17 Xen. Lak. Pol. 2.2; 6.2
18 For a physical punishment as a permanent sign of low social status, see the frequent beatings of slaves in
Attic comedy. This dramatic trope would have been familiar to Xenophon as an Athenian citizen, and
suggests a common social practice. Aristophanes’ Frogs (605-673) is a particularly excellent example
beating as fitting treatment of slaves.
For having noticed that it is at this age that the temperament is the most arrogant, insolence the most frequent, and desires the most violent, it is on these that he most imposed harsh exercises, for these that he organized the most complete absence of respite. In prescribing also that anyone who shirked these obligations would have no further share in the ‘good things’, he contrived that not only the city representatives but also those responsible for each boy would see to it that he avoided bringing complete dishonour on himself in the city by cowardice. (Lak. Pol. 3.3-4)

Xenophon asserts here that the social demonstration of strong bodies and rigid discipline is more important than for paides, necessitating full schedules and increased oversight. While the harsh exercises mentioned suggest increased physical training rather than physical punishment, Xenophon leaves out details of those activities in contrast to the extended description of physical training of the agôgê with the paides. This shift from physical to social aspects of the agôgê suggests that the paidiskoi are more receptive to social punishments overseen by respected authority figures such as those who punish the paides. Additionally, physical punishment may be less appropriate for adolescents who are more recognizable as proto-citizens than paides. The harsh exercises of physical training serve to reinforce the adolescents’ development of strong bodies, while increased oversight emphasizes an increased awareness of the social network that the adolescent approaches in this stage of the agôgê. The arrogant temperament Xenophon attributes to paidiskoi suggests that while these adolescents may be on their way to developing the strong bodies and rigid discipline of bodily integrity, these social punishments, facilitated by more city representatives, correct the dangerous natural tendencies of the paidiskoi.

Punishments for the hebontes continue the trend away from the physical to the social, because as was mentioned at the end of the section on contrasts between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ descriptors, the stability of the polis rests on their ability to valorously deploy their body in public. Physical punishments are not necessary to guide the development of
a strong body because *hebontes* are perfectly fit, but social punishment is still an effective instructional tool to ensure rigid self-discipline. Corrective social punishment is indeed necessary on account of the physical competitions arising from the superior bodies of the *hebontes*. Xenophon writes that,

They also have to watch their physical fitness. Indeed, their rivalry pushes them to fist fights wherever they encounter one another. However, anyone who comes upon them has the right to separate the combatants. If one of them refuses to obey this arbiter, the *paidonomos* brings him before the ephors; they punish him with a heavy fine, with the intention of inducing him never to let anger prevent him from obeying the laws. (*Lak. Pol. 4.6*)

Punishment here results from blatant violation of the designated authority of full citizen arbitrators, followed by an official judgment and monetary fine, in contrast to the limitation of social privileges with the *paidiskoi* or the shame of physical violation experienced by *paides*. The specific oversight of not just the *paidonomos*, but also judgment and fine from the ephors, reinforces the anxiety that the physical capable *hebontes* may misuse their physical prowess due to underdeveloped self-disciple and harm the *polis*. As with the categories of *paides* and *paidiskoi*, Xenophon emphasizes that the violation must be observed in order to deserve punishment, reinforcing the notion that social context is essential to the performative acts of bodily integrity. Xenophon’s description of the physical punishments of the *paides*, then increasing oversight and social punishment for the *paidiskoi* and *hebontes* promotes the *agôgê* as the ideal education system for developing physically and mentally strong male citizens because the unique instructional benefits of these punishments take a more direct approach than other Greek education systems. These differentiated punishments address Xenophon’s anxieties of masculine behavior and change with the developmental needs of each age category. Beyond the punishments that address Xenophon’s anxieties of bodily integrity,
the authority figures and mentors of the Spartan agôgê correct the repeated performative acts of Spartan youth by modeling proper behavior.

**Mentors and Authority Figures**

Xenophon emphasizes the importance of the citizen authority figures and mentors in education throughout the *Lakedaimonion Politeia*. Citizen status and the distinct types of relationships between authority figures and the male Spartan youth in the agôgê make these authority figures the primary corrective aspect of Spartan education. While the contrast between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ bodies in Sparta and other Greek societies highlight the favorable outcomes of the agôgê, and punishments for each age group guide those favorable outcomes, citizen authority figures enact the ideal masculine behavior to guarantee that pupils achieve those outcomes. Xenophon lays the groundwork for the effectiveness of the citizen authority figure from the outset of describing Spartan education when he writes,

> Those other Greeks who claim to give their sons the best education, as soon as they are of an age to understand what people say to them, immediately submit them to pedagogues of servile status, and immediately send them to teachers to learn their letters, *mousikê*, and gymnastic exercises (*Lak. Pol.* 2.1).

The key component of this passage is that the (non-Spartan) citizen boy is subjected to the authority below his own social standing. The servile status of the pedagogue precludes him from demonstrating the masculine ideals of bodily integrity because he his body is not his own, but rather the property of his owner. The difference in age and life experience between pedagogue and pupil that could prove instructional if social status were equal or the pupil was of a lower status is rendered null by the exclusion of the
pedagogue from high social standing. If a citizen boy modeled his behavior on that of his pedagogue, that boy runs the risk of a mistaken identity and loss of physical, moral, and political autonomy.

In contrast to the servile pedagogue, the paidonomos who oversees the entire process of the agôgê across each age category fills the role of citizen authority figure and mentor by means of his social standing and political position. Xenophon introduces the paidonomos in specific opposition to the figure of the pedagogue with,

Lycurgus, on the contrary, instead of letting each one assign slaves on a private basis as pedagogues, put in command of the boys a citizen from amongst those who occupied the highest magistracies; he is called the paidonomos. He gave this man the power to assemble the boys, to supervise them, and to punish severely those who misbehaved. (Lak. Pol. 2.2)

Xenophon here reiterates the contrast of ideal Spartan education with other Greek education to highlight the importance of social status to the identity of an authority figure. The paidonomos is the most qualified Spartan to lead the agôgê because he has successfully demonstrated his masculine virtue as a product of that training. The Spartan youth of the agôgê have both a position to aspire to, as well as an example of masculine excellence from which to model his behavior. The paidonomos also has publically validated authority over Spartan youth as opposed to the private and individual authority

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19 One interesting balance of the concern for individual presentation of ideal masculine qualities is the poet Tyrtaeus, who occupies a similar status to Xenophon as (supposedly) an Athenian citizen and general who was lame of foot. The Suda records that before the Spartan’s captured Messene, “the god gave them an oracle to take a general from the Athenians, they took the poet Tyrtaeus, a man who was lame” (iv. 610.5, Adler). Reading this description with Xenophon’s suggestion that deviation from the law or custom of the age group in the agôgê throughout chapters 2-4 of the Lakedaimonion Politeia suggests that the educational and inspirational value of Tyrtaeus martial poetry for enshrining bodily integrity and self-discipline as key components of military success outweighed his possible physical malady in the minds of the Spartans. In the terms above, The Spartan citizens recognized Tyrtaeus as a paragon of masculine virtues for the value of his poetry, and being lame did not invalidate the ability of Spartan society to recognize him as such.
of the pedagogue\textsuperscript{20}. The oversight of a respected citizen improves the reputation of the educational system and facilitates efficiency by selecting one person to manage instruction and punishments. The \textit{paidonomos} is also an important model of masculine behavior because he is the only figure who Xenophon clearly describes as consistently involved as an authority figure for the \textit{agógē}. The arguably 20+ year duration the \textit{agógē} and oversight by the \textit{paidonomos} contrasts sharply with the brief duration of the oversight of the pedagogue. As Xenophon comments with the \textit{paidiskoi}, “When they leave the category of children and enter adolescence, this is, amongst other Greeks, the end of pedagogues, the end of teachers; no one is in charge of them any more, they are left free” (Lak. Pol. 3.1). The figure of the \textit{paidonomos} is therefore twice as valuable for educating youth as a pedagogue because he is both a citizen whose behavior is worth replicating and because he maintains authority over youth when they most require guidance.

Another aspect of the citizen authority figure in Spartan education is that possessing authority over the temporarily lower status Spartan youth reinforces masculine behavior on the part of the authority figure. The role of select members of the \textit{hebontes} as whip-bearers illustrates how masculine behavior is reinforced and reasserted by their temporary position of authority. Immediately following his introduction of the \textit{paidonomos}, Xenophon writes, “[Lycurgus] also appointed as [the \textit{paidonomos’}] assistants whip-bearers taken from among the \textit{hebontes}, to administer the necessary punishments; as a result, there is as much respect as obedience at Sparta” (Lak. Pol. 2.2). By using members of the \textit{hebontes} as whip-bearers for punishing the \textit{paides}, the \textit{agógē}

\textsuperscript{20} Griffith (2001) on the complication of ‘public’ and ‘private’ understandings of education or instruction of Greek youth
makes space for these members of the *hebontes* to assert their strong bodies and self-discipline before both the *paides* whose physical punishment reminds the *hebontes* of how much they have developed. The *paides* meanwhile are shown the authority and gendered practices that they should work to achieve by youth who are older peers who have demonstrated high levels of competence.

Xenophon also discusses the *eirenes* (*εἰρένων*) as an example of the instructional function of temporary authority for pupils. These older youth are presumably qualified for a limited position of authority because they have demonstrated that they are adequate examples of physical strength and self-discipline. As with the *hebontes* above, it is not the entire group, but just the first (τὸν πρῶτατον) among the *eirenes* who are granted this position of authority. This limited selection suggests that older youth would compete to display their physical and mental fortitude, motivating those older youth and then the younger *paides* under their authority. Xenophon describes the conditional authority of the *eirenes* over the *paides* with;

> And in order that, should it happen that no man was present, even so the boys should never be without a leader, he laid down that the most intelligent of the *eirenes* should command each *иле*: thus the boys there are never without a leader.

The authority of the *eirenes* appears to be purposefully unsupervised, unlike the whip-bearers’ supervised authority. The lack of supervision of the *eirenes* suggests great accomplishment of the ideals of bodily integrity expected of citizens, and a meaningful level of trust. Another key distinction of the *eirenes* is that similar to the role of the *paidonomos*, the authority of the member of the *eirenes* is over a group, not like the individual authority of the pedagogue over his pupil. With this temporary authority for

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21 LSJ s.v. "εἰρένων": “A Lacedaemonian youth who had completed his 20th year, when he was entrusted with authority over his juniors, Plut.”
select members of both the *eirenes* and the *hebontes*, Xenophon suggests that the *agôgê* is an ideal education system for performative acts of bodily integrity because instructional mentoring relationships arise from older pupils as well as full citizen figures of authority like the *paidonomos*.

The specific examples of authority figures like the *paidonomos*—and in the limited cases of the *hebontes* or the *eirenes* with *paides*—overshadow the major authority of all Spartan citizens. Every Spartan citizen has the authority to issue a command to presumably any pupil in the *agôgê*, that Xenophon specifically articulates with the right to issue commands and punish disobedient *paides*, and to break up fights between *hebontes*.\(^\text{22}\) This broad authority enables a far greater scope of corrective instruction to Spartan education than the individual system of education Xenophon depicts with the pedagogue as primary authoritative figure. With shared authority over youth, Spartan citizens are also encouraged to observe the behavior of their peers to ensure that each citizen is properly modeling masculinity for the Spartan youth.\(^\text{23}\)

Xenophon further specifies the responsibility of Spartan citizens towards youth when discussing the impacts of shared responsibility on the father and son relationship;

> Here are some more points where Lycurgus decided the opposite to most people. For in other cities, each is master of his own children and slaves and possessions; but Lycurgus, wanting to arrange things so that citizens, without doing any harm, might to some extent gain mutual enjoyment from their possessions, decided that each man would have control over other men’s children just as over his own. Nonetheless, when someone

\(^{22}\) Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 2.10; 4.6

\(^{23}\) So that, even if the *paidonomos* was absent, the boys would never be without a leader, he granted any citizen who found himself there the authority to give any order he judged appropriate, and to punish the disobedient. By doing this he made the boys even more respectful: for at Sparta there is nothing that all, boys and men alike, respect as much as the magistrates. (*Xen. Lak. Pol.* 2.10): Xenophon appears to equate respect for citizens with respect for the magistrates, suggesting that self-discipline is modeled at every level of Spartan society, and therefore that instruction can effectively be performed by any citizen.
knows that the children over whom he has control themselves have fathers who have the same right, he is obliged to control them as he would want others to control his own. If a child who has been beaten by another father reports this to his own, the latter is obliged, on pain of dishonour, to give him further blows; so great is their confidence in one another that no one will ever give any dishonourable order to the children. (Lak. Pol. 6.1-2)

Xenophon’s description here of the relationship between father and son suggests that the son’s actions reflect back upon the father, incentivizing the father to closely observe his son’s actions, and to do the same with other children lest they dishonor their own fathers. Shared authority over Spartan youth therefore results in close observation of the behavior of peers. This cycle of authority and observation as a corrective mechanism for masculine behavior demonstrates that Spartan education is ideal for instructing youth in the expected performative acts of self-discipline and a strong body. When youth are observed not just by their peers, but all citizens, and their lack of self-discipline results in social shame and a beating, Spartan youth must quickly learn how to best display their masculine virtue.

Each of the above figures of authority serves both as models of behavior and as instructor in self-discipline, but Xenophon describes the erastēs as the ideal mentor figure for a Spartan youth in the agōgē. The citizen status of the erastēs, along with the intimate emotional relationship between erastēs and youthful eromenos suggests that instruction from the erastēs effectively corrects any gaps in the repeated performative acts made by the Spartan youth. Xenophon describes the relationship between erastēs and eromenos as follows;

Amongst other Greeks, either, as in Boeotia, a mature man and a boy live together as a couple, or, as amongst the Eleans, possession of a young body is bought with presents; but there are also cities where it is absolutely forbidden for lovers to talk to boys. Lycurgus, though, adopted a position different from that of all these people, too. When a man who
was himself completely respectable was seized with admiration for a boy’s soul and tried to befriend him without dishonour and to keep company with him, Lycurgus approved this and considered it to be the finest education; but if it was clearly the boy’s body which interested him, Lycurgus condemned this as a terrible disgrace; so much so that at Sparta lovers abstain from physical relations with their beloveds as rigorously as do parents with their children, brothers with their brothers (Lak. Pol. 2.12-13).

Xenophon’s description of the system of pederasty in Sparta suggests that the close emotional relationship between erastēs and eromenos is the perfect relationship to motivate a youth to develop his physical strength and improve his discipline. Xenophon claims here that lovers completely refrain from sexual interaction that would threaten the social standing of both erastēs and eromenos, similar to the discussion of pederasty in his Symposium (8.16-22). But while Xenophon is clear that physical violation displays moral deprivation and can corrupt the eromenos in his Symposium, in his Lakedaimonion Politeia, Xenophon banishes that possibility entirely and expresses complete trust in the purely emotional connection between erastēs and eromenos. With the threat of bodily violation out of the way, Xenophon promotes the role of erastēs as ideally situated to instruct his eromenos in the performative acts of bodily integrity. The erastēs must model self-discipline over his passions so as to avoid social disgrace from engaging in a sexual relationship with his eromenos, and the eromenos has a highly motivated figure to teach him how to strengthen his body so as not to die in combat, and to gain social status through displays of virtuous discipline. The relationship also emphasizes intergenerational learning and connection, based less on the physical or social punishments meted out by the other older authority figures, and more on respectful support and care. Xenophon even suggests a similarity of chastity and care between the connection of erastēs and eromenos in Sparta and that of a parent and child. This
relationship of care suggests a welcoming space in which the Spartan youth may
demonstrate his attempts at performing bodily integrity under the guidance of a citizen
mentor who can advocate for him in a system primarily concerned with rigid obedience
to authority. Based on Xenophon’s description of the relationship of erastēs and
eromenos, the figure of the erastēs comprises the best corrective elements of the Spartan
agôgê and serves as the cornerstone for the stable transmission of performative practices
of bodily integrity central to Xenophon’s description of the agôgê.

Conclusions

Although Xenophon was sympathetic to Sparta throughout his life, his early life
in Athens and lifelong Athenian citizenship indicate that Xenophon was well aware of the
system of bodily integrity in the ideological space of both societies. His Lakedaimonion Politeia presents the Spartan system of education as the ideal method for overcoming
anxieties of bodily violation or dissipation. Xenophon discusses how the Spartan agôgê
hardens boys’ bodies and teaches them the discipline to control and deploy those strong bodies in public settings. While Xenophon claims that the repetition of performative acts of bodily integrity is vulnerable to interruption in other Greek education systems through indulgent access to clothing, and oversight by slavish pedagogues, he argues that Spartan education eliminates these vulnerabilities with physical and social punishments and a multi-tiered system of authority figures and mentors.

Appendix

Figure 1: Xenophon’s Age Categories of Spartan Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range*</th>
<th>Paides</th>
<th>Paidiskoi</th>
<th>Hebontes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>Early to Late Childhood</td>
<td>Adolescents</td>
<td>Young adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6 to 14-16 years old</td>
<td>14-16 to 20 years old</td>
<td>20-30 years old</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*All age ranges are approximate as Xenophon does not provide explicit age markers for the transition into each age category; See Ducat (2006: 81-112) for detailed discussion

Figure 2: Xenophon’s ‘Hard’ and ‘Soft’ Descriptors Across Age Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Paides</th>
<th>Paidiskoi</th>
<th>Hebontes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Hard’</td>
<td>κρατέω (‘to be strong, mighty, powerful’): verb to describe the effect of a boy not wearing shoes on his feet</td>
<td>Stone (τῶν λαθίων) and bronze (τῶν χαλκῶν) noun with associations of public presentation of a rigid body, and demonstration of rigid discipline</td>
<td>ἀνδραγαθίας (bravery, manly virtue, the character of a brave honest man): with physical body at peak performance, there is only public demonstration of discipline and deployment of the body left to refine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generally, building physical and mental resilience to scarcity through conditioning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Soft’</td>
<td>ἀπαλύνω (‘to soften’): Verb to describe the action of shoes of a boy’s feet</td>
<td>Παρθένων (‘maiden’): noun with associations of private presentation of receptive bod that will be penetrated when wedding is consumated</td>
<td>The lack of ‘soft’ descriptors suggests that there is no limit to the capacity of these young adults to demonstrate performative acts of bodily integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>διαθρύπτω (‘to break in sunder, break in pieces, shiver’) or “to break down by profligate living and indulgence, to enervate, pamper, make weak and womanish”: verb to describe the effect of changing cloaks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Punishments Across Age Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Paides</th>
<th>Paidiskoi</th>
<th>Hebontes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Punishments</td>
<td>Public beating or whipping after being caught stealing or disobeying an authority figure, as well as private punishment by the father</td>
<td>Increased training regime</td>
<td>Physical punishment is absent for the hebontes, as physical excellence is demonstrated through public completion of choral and gymnastic exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Punishments</td>
<td>Disgrace of those responsible for the child, but the limited</td>
<td>Loss of access to the “good things”: limitations placed</td>
<td>Judgment by the ephors and monetary fines if they refuse to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social rights of <em>paides</em> suggest no ability to rescind those rights</td>
<td>upon the social rights of the <em>paidiskoi</em></td>
<td>obey the commands of a citizen or the <em>paidonomos</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Griffith, Mark. “‘Public’ and ‘Private’ in Early Greek Institutions of Education.” In *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*. Edited by Yun Lee Too. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2001


