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'The City of Sages' and the 'Life of Virtue': Foucault and the Politics of Self-Cultivation in the Spartan Ideal

BURÇ KÖSTEM

Several historians of thought such as Malcolm Schofield and Pierre Hadot have noted the affinities and interactions between idealized depictions of the Spartan way of life in the classical world and Cynic and Stoic schools of thought. Yet this remains a curious relationship: the Spartan ideal demands a complete obedience to its laws from its citizenry and expresses a particular vision of political life. This vision appears to be almost the direct opposite of the uniquely antinomian and cosmopolitan character of the Cynic attitude. This study identifies the Cynic movement and Spartan ideal as projects that take the salient relationship between ethics and politics in ancient thought, to two opposite logical extremes. Both the Cynic movement and the Spartan ideal agree that the only true political association is one achieved wholly through the practice of a virtuous and self-sufficient life. However, in their idealized forms, for the Cynic, any place he can practice virtue is home, for the Spartan anything the city-state demands is part of the virtuous life. Drawing from classical texts, Foucault's 1982-1984 lectures in College de France and the work of English and French scholars, I interpret the Cynic movement and the Spartan ideal as two projects that take the practice of ethics and self-sufficiency to its extremes, while bringing about a new understanding of politics. I maintain that such an endeavour promises insights, not only into ancient political thought but also into the political significance of modern revivals of Greek ethics, particularly in the work of Michel Foucault.

The utopian image of Sparta in Greek and Roman sources paints a fascinating picture of the relationship between a virtuous life and an ideal city. The austere lifestyle of the Spartan citizen and the related idealization of the city's laws inspired both popular imagination and philosoph-

ical reflection in the ancient world. It is often suggested that philosophers such as Plato and Zeno were influenced by a utopian image of the Spartan city-state in their discussions of their own visions of an ideal polity and of a virtuous life.[1] Although individual lines of influence among schools of thought are open to dispute, Laconophilia – the idealization of Sparta – certainly has a definitive place in Greco-Roman thought. However, modern revivals of Greco-Roman ethics have often downplayed or wholly ignored this phenomenon.

One thinker who has been crucial in bringing renewed attention to the theme of a virtuous life within Greco-Roman ethics is Michel Foucault, who, in his late work, sought to carry out a genealogy of the processes through which individuals realized themselves as subjects. Moreover, in a series of interviews and lectures he delivered in the same period, Foucault also expressed hopes that such a genealogical account of the different modes of subjectivity throughout Western thought could open the door to a 'politics of ourselves', that is, a politics of the different technologies through which we have constituted ourselves as subjects.[2] It is therefore interesting that within Foucault's history of Greco-Roman ethics, as well as in the secondary literature about Foucault's later work, there is no systematic engagement with the phenomenon of Laconophilia. This lack of attention is understandable, given the vast historical period Foucault's work covers. Yet a detailed investigation of Laconophilia could yield interesting results, given that for ancient philosophers the Spartan way of life had an organic relationship with the ideal of the Spartan city-state as a strong and independent polity.

Laconophilia was popular among the Athenian aristocracy of the 5th century BC. Partly because of the long lasting Peloponnesian war (431-404 BC) during the time that Socrates and Plato are thought to have lived, a large section of young Athenian aristocrats had come to idealize Spartan culture.[3] Beyond influencing residents of Athens, the Spartan way of life also left a significant mark throughout classical thought,[4] particularly on many of the figures and movements that Foucault himself dealt

1 See: Malcolm Schofield, *Stoic Idea of the City*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Glenn R. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City: A Historical Interpretation of the Laws,* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

2 Michel Foucault. (1993) 'About the Beginnings of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth', *Political Theory* 21(2): pp.222–223.

3 Glenn R. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City: A Historical Interpretation of the Laws,* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press,) 1993, p.40.

with. According to Pierre Hadot: 'the philosophers' cloak, made of coarse cloth… was none other than the Spartan cloak, that had been adopted by Socrates, Antisthenes, Diogenes and the philosophers of the Cynic and Stoic tradition,' and the model of the Spartan style of life had been 'strongly idealized by the philosophers, especially Cynics and Stoics.'[5]

Yet Hadot is also quick to note the paradoxical nature of this association. Sparta was praised and criticized for being a city with rigid laws and customs, encouraging its citizens to live a life of endurance in order to create obedient and 'docile instruments of its will.'[6] The image of the dutiful Spartan is best summed up by Herodotus in a speech attributed to the Spartan King Demaratus, 'The Lacedaemonians… are free, yet not wholly free: law is their master, whom they fear... Whatever the law commands, they do.'[7] While the ascetic practices associated with the Spartan way of life resonate with the practices we find centuries later in the work of a Stoic thinker such as Epictetus, the obedient citizens Sparta aimed to create are almost diametrically opposed to the notion of an 'aesthetics of existence' Foucault uses in his reading of this same thinker.[8] In this sense, although many thinkers praise the frugal life adopted by Spartans, to what extent the Spartan vision of an ideal city of sages influenced Cynic and Stoic ideas remains disputed.[9] In fact the Cynic idea of the city of sages heightens the contrast one step further: whereas the Spartans valorised obedience to the laws of their city, on the contrary the Cynic city of sages has been likened to an 'anarchist utopia' where 'all

4 See: N. Tigerstedt, *The Legend of Sparta in Classical Antiquity,* 2 Vols., (Stockholm, 1965-1973): Malcolm Schofield, 'Zeno and Sparta' in *Saving the City: Philosophers-Kings and Other Classical Paradigms, (*Routledge, 1999); Malcolm Schofield, *Stoic Idea of the City, (*Cambridge University Press, 1991); Pierre Hadot, *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, (*Harvard University Press), 1998, pp.7-8.

5 Pierre Hadot, *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, (*Harvard University Press, 1998), pp.7-8.

6 *Ibid*.

7 Herodotus, Hist. 7.104.4

8 Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol III: Care of the Self*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.

9 For two different interpretations, especially of the influence Sparta may have had on Zeno of Citium's *Republic*, see: Malcolm Schofield, 'Zeno and Sparta' in *Saving the City: Philosophers-Kings and Other Classical Paradigms, (*Routledge, 1999) and John Sellars, 'Stoic Cosmopolitanism and Zeno's Republic,' *History of Political Thought,* Vol. 18:1, 2007

existing traditional States and laws would become irrelevant.'[10] Why is it that on the one hand the Spartan way of life is closely similar to that of the Cynics or Stoics, and on the other their visions of politics so different? Moreover, what does this divergence of political vision imply for Foucault’s suggestion of carrying out a 'politics of ourselves?' What can this partial idealization of Sparta by thinkers of the Stoic and Cynic traditions tell us about the relationship between governing one’s own life and governing the lives of others?

Writing about the historical experience of Sparta is often difficult because of the limited availability of sources.[11] However, contrasting the positive idealization of Sparta in Greek and Roman sources with Foucault’s genealogy of ethics can nevertheless prove to be a useful endeavour. Specifically, comparing Foucault’s description of the idea of 'care of the self' and the Spartan virtues of discipline, obedience and courage, can yield new perspectives on the social and political implications of self-practices. In the concluding section, using this historical account of Sparta I will call into question Foucault’s distinction between technologies of domination and technologies of the self. Throughout his later thought, Foucault uses the concept of 'domination' as a unique type of relation where power instead of being variable and alterable, is 'firmly set and congealed.'[12] He further contrasts this both with power relations that are essentially reversible and mobile and with the relations one enters with oneself, i.e. technologies of the self. This paper will argue that the Spartan ideal tests the limits of these analytical categories. Aside from this theoretical point, Foucault had famously described the historical period starting with classical Greece to late Roman antiquity as a 'kind of golden age in the cultivation of the self.'[13] I also hope to show in this article that the idealization of Sparta as an egalitarian as well as controlling society demonstrates a side to the historical period Foucault engages with which is nevertheless different from the picture he paints.

This paper does not attempt to 'solve' the relationship between

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10 John Sellars, 'Stoic Cosmopolitanism and Zeno’s Republic,' *History of Political Thought,* Vol. 18:1, 2007.

11 Paul Cartledge, *Spartan Reflections*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p.56.

12 Michel Foucault, 'Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,' in Foucault, Michel, and Paul Rabinow. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. (New York: New Press, 1997), p.283.

13 Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol III: Care of the Self,* p.43.

Sparta, Stoics and Cynics but rather highlight their similarities and differences, to reveal the possible political consequences of an ethics based on self-cultivation. In order to do so, I borrow Foucault's conceptual analysis, what he calls a 'grill d'analyse' that distinguishes between four aspects of ethics: *a) 'ethical substance*, the part of the individual that is problematised as the prime material of his moral conduct,' b) '*mode of subjectivation:* the way in which one recognises the rules and bring himself to put it to practice,' *c) 'ethical work:* the conduct one performs on oneself to comply to the rule,' and finally *d) 'telos*: the mode of being the individual seeks to attain through this action.'[14] Using these terms, with regards to the ethical substance and ethical work, the Spartan way of life is only a radical example of practices that are ubiquitous in the classical world. Ascetic control of one's sexual practice or diet is an ordinary theme in ancient sources. What makes the Spartan ideal unique is how these rules are put into practice (the mode of subjectivation) and the final aims they uphold (*telos*). I therefore propose that within the same historical era, addressed by Foucault, it is possible to observe the emergence of the ideal of Sparta alongside the care of the self as an alternative answer to a similar problem of governing oneself and others. Whereas the Spartan ideal of a utopian city presented by Greek authors such as Xenophon and Plutarch shares with the Cynics and Stoics an understanding of concepts such as *autarkies* (independence/self sufficiency) and *askesis* (training/self work) there are nevertheless differences, in terms of the political ends these concepts serve.

Care of the Self and the Foucauldian *Grill D'Analyse*

In their origin, ascetic practices and the political functions they served were inseparable from one another in the Greek world. There existed 'a continuity between dominating and governing one's pleasures, one's house and one's status in the city as a free man.'[15] However, for different historical reasons, in time these practices developed an 'independent status and autonomy of their own,'[16] and were redeployed in expressing ethical and aesthetic ideas. One clear example is how, in classical Greece, the practices of 'truth telling' and 'care of the self' transformed from serving political and social functions to more ethical ones.[17]

14 Michel Foucault, 1985, (*History of Sexuality, Vol II: The Use of Pleasure*, New York: Pantheon Books) pp. 25-27

15 Ibid. p.76.

16 Ibid. p.77.

17 See: Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth.*

Especially with the figure of Socrates, the practice of self-care was related to questions regarding what type of a life one should lead and how one should train in order to lead a virtuous life. This attention and care afforded to one's life gave a structure to one's existence, which was not immediately connected to any political institution.[18] The care of the self was not regulated by any judicial discourse. Appropriately, the criteria with which one takes care of oneself were not dictated by rules but rather to be discovered through testing and trial. In his reading of Laches for example, Foucault notes[19] that the agreed criteria for testing one's life is the harmony between one's mode of living and one's words.

A second important transformation the theme of care undergoes is that it is no longer merely a pedagogic tool. Rather, the practice of self-care is exercised continually even by Socrates himself. Similarly, care of the self is no longer viewed instrumentally for the attaining of some office. It is now understood as an ethical practice, that is pursued for its own sake, 'in order to give one's life a form' that answers to some aesthetic or ethical criteria.[20] Socrates gives form to his existence through the act of caring for himself and reminding others to do the same, a theme that continues to have a growing significance in the centuries that follow among thinkers such as the Roman Stoic philosopher Epictetus. Nevertheless, the concern for the other has not ended in this picture. Rather it now exists alongside care of the self, as an ethical concern: in the form of the relationship I enter into with a pupil or friend asking me for guidance.

The basic characteristics of self-care in classical Athens that are relevant to my study can be summed up following Foucault. First, the *mode of subjectivation*, that is, the way in which one recognized the rules of moral conduct, didn't involve the establishing of a code that would prescribe and determine moral acts. It was not a question of what one was forbidden or allowed to do, but rather involved strategies such as testing, trying, 'calculating, reflecting on, redistributing and controlling one's own desires and acts.'[21]

Second the *telos* that self-care sought in each case was the attain-

18 Michel Foucault, 'Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,' in Foucault, Michel, and Paul Rabinow. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. (New York: New Press, 1997), pp.281-302.
19 Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth,* p.128.
20 Michel Foucault, 1985, *History of Sexuality, Vol II: The Use of Pleasure*,) pp. 27.
21 Ibid. p.54.

ment of an autonomous existence. Although there are variations, in general terms the *telos* that Greco-Roman ethics sought can be summed up as attaining, αὐτάρκεις [independence] and εὐδαιμονία [happiness], to 'keep from being carried away by the appetites and pleasures, to maintain a mastery and superiority over them, to keep his senses in a state of tranquility, to remain free from interior bondage to the passions, and to achieve a mode of being that could be defined by the full enjoyment of oneself, the perfect supremacy of oneself over oneself.'[22] These two characteristics are especially important for the contrast they provide with Sparta.

Sparta and the Foucauldian Grill D'Analyse

'Manly courage,' or *andreia,* is the virtue most closely associated with the Spartan way of life. As Powell argues, most Greeks 'were convinced of the exceptional bravery of the Spartans,'[23] mainly because of their acts in battle. For ancient Greeks *andreia* was a claim that rested on 'what one has done rather than on who one is'[24] and therefore demonstrated continuities with Socratic ideals of subjecting one's life to tests. Nevertheless, if the care of the self increasingly represented a fracturing of the relationship between the political function of asceticism and its ethical connotations, the Spartan ideal represents a radical correspondence between the two. The ascetic practice of the Spartan citizen becomes the cornerstone of Sparta's military might and endurance. What is peculiar in the Spartan ideal is the image of the Spartan *polis* as an ideal, egalitarian, and controlling city. The city's laws are a constant presence in the lives of its citizens and shape their lives in a number of ways. Put differently, considering the mode of subjectivation, the Spartan ideal substitutes the economy of desires/pleasures with a strict adherence to the city's laws as the means of recognizing and practicing moral conduct. Additionally, the final aim moral conduct seeks is also different. The interlocutors of Socrates or the disciples of Epictetus wished to gain mastery over themselves either in order to further their own social and political status, or simply as a means of giving an aesthetic shape to their lives. In Sparta, however, this self-mastery was regulated by and served a higher purpose

22 Ibid. p.31.

23 Paul, Cartledge, *The Spartans: The World of the Warrior-heroes of Ancient Greece, from Utopia to Crisis and Collapse,* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 2003), p.70.

24 David, Whitehead, "Cardinal virtues: the language of public approbation in democratic Athens" *Classica et Mediaevalia*, 1993, Vol. 44, p.48.

of obeying the city's laws and securing the independence of the Spartan city-state from outside forces. However, this obedience was not an unwilling submission. If anything, in the Spartan ideal, men and women of Sparta took great pride in the superiority of their own way of life as well as that of their city. Even influential men 'took pride in their obedience to the officials, whereas in all other cities such men thought it beneath their dignity to have any fear of those in office.'[25]

How (through which mode of subjectivation) do citizens, in this ideal conception of Sparta, recognize the criteria of their moral conduct? The most important technology in this regard is the myth of Lycurgus, as a lawgiver who authors the *Great Rhetra*, which functions as the constitution of Sparta. Lycurgus is clearly a mythologized figure who was applauded for his moral superiority. Second, as we will see below, the moral excellence of Lycurgus himself is clearly a tool that sets an example to all Spartans. Plutarch, writing several centuries later, takes things one step further, and claims that Lycurgus's 'theory of government was adopted by Plato, Diogenes (of Sinope), Zeno (of Citium) and all those who are praised for their attempts to make some statement about these matters, even though they left only paper theories.'[26] Here Plutarch considers that the government and happiness of both the city and the individual's life are achieved through the prevalence of virtue within the city's borders. Lycurgus's aim therefore is to bring this about by promoting independence and self-sufficiency. In the Spartan myth, before Lycurgus lays down his constitution, Sparta is considered one of the worst governed cities amongst the Hellenes.[27] Therefore Lycurgus presents a founding figure who, 'at a moment of deep crisis'[28] is able to lay down a new moral code that ties the individual's life with the state.

Giving an account of this moral code had become a standard practice for thinkers 'in the 4th century B.C. and throughout the Hellenistic period.' Unfortunately few of these survived.[29] Ancient writers often trace

25 Anton Powell, *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478BC,* (London:Routledge Publishing, 2001) p. 242.
26 Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*, para.31.
27 Herodotus, *Histories*.1.65.1.
28 Paul Cartledge, *The Spartans: The World of the Warrior-heroes of Ancient Greece, from Utopia to Crisis and Collapse,* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 2003), p.32.
29 Nigel Kennell, *Gymnasium of Virtue: Education and Culture in Ancient Sparta,* (NY: North Carolina University Press, 1997), p. 17.

these reforms directly to Lycurgus, although of course this is highly unlikely. What are the reported features of the *Great Rhetra* that supposedly changed Sparta's fortunes? The *Rhetra* touches every aspect of life, from childbirth to clothing and diet. Yet arguably the most critical reforms are in the areas of education and distribution of land.

Education and technologies of domination

The first reform that Lycurgus is renowned for is the education of the youth through an extensive training system called the *agoge*. Spartan education is often described as a physically demanding process that attempts to instil in the children the virtues of courage and obedience. This moral education is 'at the heart of Spartan ideology and practice',[30] to such an extent that it functions as a rite of passage to becoming a full citizen.[31] The brutal practices often employed as part of the *agoge* drew praise as well as criticism from ancient writers. The ascetic practices that form the *agoge* do call into mind similar Cynic and early Stoic practices: walking bare feet, wearing the same cloak throughout the year, being accustomed to hunger.[32] Some have even suggested that Sphaerus, an advisor to the Spartan king Cleomenes and a student of Zeno of Citium, could have been the inventor of the famous Spartan *agoge.*[33]

Yet once again the unique features of the Spartan ideal are important to note. The first aspect of the *agoge* that ancient writers draw attention to is that education in Sparta was mandatory and exercised collectively by the city, rather than being at the discretion of the parents.[34] According to Xenophon, children were separated from their parents at an early age and were put in the supervision of an older Spartan selected by the elders, called *paidonomos* (literally boy-herder).[35] As a result, Xenophon claims, 'respect and obedience are to be found in a high-degree in

30 Jean Ducat, 'Perspectives on Spartan education in the Classical Period', ed. S. Hodkinson & A. Powell, *Sparta: New Perspectives*, London: (Duckworth, 1999), p. 43.
31 Paul Cartledge, *The Spartans*, 2003, p.93.
32 Nigel Kennell, *Gymnasium of Virtue: Education and Culture in Ancient Sparta,* (NY: North Carolina University Press, 1997), p. 18.
33 Ibid. Ch. 5.
34 Xenophon *Const. Lac.* 2.1
35 Anton Powell, 'Spartan Education', in *A Companion to Ancient Education,* ed. Martin Bloomer, (Oxford:Wiley Blackwell, 2015), p.99.

Sparta.'[36] It is particularly interesting to observe that the obedience and respect is primarily owed not to the parents, but to the *paidonomos* and to the moral code. The second prominent aspect of the *agoge*, the isolation of the youth from their family and their segregation into different age groups, reinforces the importance of fraternal ties among citizens. The education system is therefore a part of Sparta's moral code and is of an obligatory and uniform character, forming the condition of citizenship and reinforcing the egalitarian and controlling ideal of Sparta.

The Spartan education is not only a disciplining process. The final purpose of this education system 'is to transform the child into a member belonging to…a political society, and what the child must be transformed into is either a citizen, or the future mother of citizens.'[37] Remember that Foucault had emphasized in his reading of Laches the idea of philosophy as 'a test of life, a test of existence.'[38] This same theme of submitting oneself to a series of tests appears in the Spartan *agoge*. According to the various myths surrounding the *agoge*, Spartan children were submitted to physical combat, were provoked by adults into fighting,[39] and were even subject to whipping contests to see who could endure pain in silence for the longest periods of time.[40] At each step then, the Spartan education tested the endurance and resourcefulness of the children. 'The *agoge* thus presented…a permanent trial.'[41] Therefore, the Spartan *agoge* has strong affinities with the theme of self-transformation. In a sense Spartan children do leave the *agoge,* presumably as a new type of political subject. It is not by accident that Epictetus praises the Spartan education system in his *Discourses.*[42] Despite this similarity, however, the city's laws and

36 Xenophon *Const. Lac.* 2.1

37 Jean Ducat, 'Perspectives on Spartan education in the Classical Period', ed. S. Hodkinson & A. Powell, Sparta: New Perspectives, (London: Duckworth, 1999), p.53.

38 Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth (the Government of Self and Others II): Lectures at the Collège De France, 1983-1984*, (Houndmills, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.128.

39 Jean Ducat, 'Perspectives on Spartan education in the Classical Period,' 1999, p.59.

40 Plutarch writes how he has witnessed many boys die this way (Plutarch, Lycurgus:18.2) Kennell provides a comprehensive list of the Classical sources that refer to the whipping contests: Nigel Kennell, *Gymnasium of Virtue: Education and Culture in Ancient Sparta,* 1997, pp. 149-161.

41 Jean Ducat, 'Perspectives on Spartan education in the Classical Period,' 1999, p.60.

42 'From such principles as these have grown our well constituted states; by these was Sparta founded: Lycurgus fixed these opinions in the Spartans by his laws and education.' Epictetus, *Discourses*, 2.20.

institutions mediate and monitor every aspect of this transformation, leading to a totalising experience.

Thus the *agoge* can be described as a technology of domination in Foucault's sense of the term, as it does not leave much room for negotiation and produces a distinct type of subject, the Spartan citizen. The agoge reminds us that an institution, which relies heavily on self-practices can nevertheless produce relations of domination. This once again brings into light a theme Foucault touches upon in his earlier work. In his analyses of the function of confessions in judicial and psychiatric institutions, Foucault had observed how even in the midst of a well-controlled environment such as a psychiatric clinic, the nominal cooperation of the patient was critical. Describing the tactics employed by a 19th century French psychiatrist Dr. Leuret, Foucault observed that obtaining confessions formed an indispensable part of Leuret's psychiatric practice. 'To ground his practice, establish his therapeutic intervention, and open up the possibility of healing, the doctor needed the patient to formulate a discourse of truth about himself.'[43]

The subject's own self-recognition constitutes an irreducible element that technologies of domination have to co-opt. In a similar vein, beyond the political institutions of the city-state it is crucial for the citizens to recognize themselves as subjects of the law for the Spartan ideal to work. The fact that Spartan citizens were not passive participants in the political system but took pride in their obedience strengthens this conclusion. It is in this sense that the training at the *agoge* is indispensable for the functioning of the laws.

Equality and Violence

The Spartan ideal also includes a sense of egalitarianism among disciplined citizens. Therefore, the second noteworthy aspect of Lycurgus's moral code is the redistribution of land. Lycurgus 'persuaded his fellow-citizens to make one parcel of all their territory and divide it up anew, and to live with one another on a basis of entire uniformity and equality in the means of subsistence, seeking pre-eminence through virtue alone.'[44] According to Xenophon, Lycurgus's moral code also ensures

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43 Michel Foucault, *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling: The Function of Awoval in Justice,* (Boston: University of Chicago Press, 2014), pp. 14-15.

44 Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*. 8.1-2

equality, by forbidding 'citizens to have anything to do with business affairs.'[45] Spartans did not farm nor produce artefacts but were mostly soldiers. This egalitarian bond forged by the moral code is as strong as the one based on kinship; the whole of Laconia after the land reform is likened to a single estate newly inherited and distributed among brothers.[46] 'The upshot of this system was to create an intense collective unity among the Spartiates, who proudly designated themselves *hoi homoioi* – the 'Equals.''[47]

Of course the flip-side of this strong equality among citizens is the violence exhibited to those who were not citizens, especially in the form of political and economic exploitation of slaves. The large number of Messenian population subject to Spartan rule meant slave labor was ubiquitous, which 'relieved the citizenry of any direct role in production at all, allowing it to train on a full-time basis. The result was to produce a body of perhaps some 8-9000 Spartan citizens, economically self sufficient and politically enfranchised.' [48] Thus, slavery was a definitive institution that helped secure equality among citizens. Moreover, due to the sheer number of the slave population (known as helots), Spartans lived in fear of a revolt. In order to quell possible revolts before they took place, they adopted a policy of terrorizing helots and driving them to 'political abjectness'[49] by subjecting them to routine exploitation and ritual violence. Many different classical sources describe how young Spartans, equipped with daggers and food, would attack and kill random helots they had caught at night.[50] In short, far from being a personal choice, moral practice in Sparta required a strict adherence to a code. In return Sparta promised equality to its citizens and violence to its enemies and slaves.

The Body Politic

What was the *telos,* or, the final purpose of this training? As hinted above these practices sought to base the city's salvation on the personal resilience of its members. For the individual this implies making the well-

45 Xenophon, *Const. Lac*.7
46 Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*.8.4
47 Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism,* (London:Verso, 1996) p.34.
48 Ibid., p.35.
49 Anton Powell, *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478BC*, p. 254.
50 Ibid.

being of the city the basis of one's existence, through following Lycurgus. For women this consisted of formal exercise and training, so as to be able to give birth to strong children.[51] For men it meant fighting and dying for the city. As a result, only women who died in childbirth and men who died in battle had marked graves.[52] Plutarch also presents an interesting use of the word 'care', *epimeleia,* that forms Foucault's famous *epimeleia heautou*, care of the self. Asked why the Spartans do not cultivate their own fields but leave this job to their slaves, the Spartan king reportedly answers that it is 'not by taking care of the fields, but by taking care of ourselves (ἐπιμελέομαι) we have conquered these fields.'[53] In Sparta, 'care' is a collective activity that serves a collective purpose.

The idea of Sparta as an enduring state is reflected in Thucydides, who explains that Sparta has never had a tyrant, and that for almost four centuries it has had the same constitution.[54] The political stability and military might of Sparta is connected to the endurance of the moral code. When Sparta does decline after having conquered Athens, it is because its citizens have deviated from a key aspect of Lycurgus's code and revoked the equal distribution of land.[55] What survives through the deployment of this taxing life style, idealized by the thinkers discussed here, is the image of Sparta as a just, powerful and enduring city. Plutarch explains this powerful image by writing that, for as long as Lycurgus's code remained intact, Sparta led the life 'not of a city under a constitution but of an individual man under askesis and leading a full life of wisdom. (ἀλλ᾽ ἀνδρὸς ἀσκητοῦ καὶ σοφοῦ βίον ἔχουσα)[56] The *telos* of the individual is intimately bound up with the final aim and purpose of the city, so much so that the whole body politic is likened to a single man practicing virtue. Therefore the concern afforded to the self is not only mediated through political institutions, but also has political purposes.

The Virtuous life and City of Sages: Cynics and Spartans

As explained in the introduction, the Cynic movement more than

51 Another dramatic rendering of this is Leonidas who before going to war with the Persians is said to have instructed his wife Gorgo to 'marry good men and bear good children.' Plutarch, *Apophthegmata Laconica*, Leonidas.2.
52 Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*.27.2.
53 Plutarch, *Apophthegmata Laconica.*10.3.
54 Thucydides 1.18.
55 Plutarch, Agis.3.4
56 Plutarch, Life of Lycurgus.30.2.

any other school of thought presents a political attitude that appears diametrically opposed to that of the Spartan ideal. Yet at the same time the extreme ascetic exercises the Cynic philosophers practice resemble those promoted in the Spartan ideal more than any other school in the ancient world. Now that we have a better grasp of the Spartan ideal, let us compare it with the Cynic movement to understand how exactly they differ. The argument I seek to advance here is that the Cynic movement and Spartan ideal take the relationship between the life of the individual (*bios)* and that of the city (*polis)* in two opposite directions. Both are agreed that the only true political association is one achieved wholly through the practice of a virtuous and self-sufficient life. However, for the Cynic, any place he can practice virtue is home, for the Spartan anything the city-state demands is part of the virtuous life. There are five interesting ways in which the categories of *bios* and *polis* are intertwined in the Spartan ideal and the Cynic movement.

a. The Great Sage

Both in the Spartan ideal and in the Cynic movement there exists the idea of great leader or sage undergoing a radical personal transformation that in turn connects with transforming the outside world. The recurring figure of a Spartan leader, who rejects a life of luxury to make an example out of his *bios* and bring order to the *polis*, is the perfect manifestation of this theme. For the Spartans this would be Lycurgus, a mythologized figure who is compared to a god.[57] Several Stoic sources note Lycurgus's self-mastery. The Roman Stoic Musonius Rufus credits Lycurgus with 'driving out extravagance from Sparta, preferring a life of deprivation and courage, banishing luxury as a corrupting influence, considering personal resilience as the city's salvation.'[58] According to Rufus, the *askesis* and restraint set by Lycurgus does not only ensure *his* political influence but is the *salvation of the city*. Lycurgus's personal *askesis* is carried to its extreme point when he tells fellow Spartans to obey the city's laws until he returns. After telling this he visits the Delphic Oracle and practically starves himself to death there, 'considering that even the death of a statesman should be of service to the state..._ the end of life would actually be a consummation of his good fortune and happiness; and as for his fellow-citizens, he would make his death the(ir)

57 Herodotus, *Histories.* 1.65.2
58 Musonius Rufus, *On Furnishings*, Lecture XX

guardian'.[59] Even in his death Lycurgus teaches Spartans to learn to 'choose an honourable death in preference to a disgraceful life.'[60] In this way Lycurgus becomes a model for all future Spartan leaders. After Sparta's decline at the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War, we see a perpetuation of the theme of the Spartan king rejecting a life of luxury and grace, and by his plain life setting an example to the rest of his citizens, 'in order to restore the ancient laws and discipline.'[61]

The Cynic too, just like the Spartan soldier, walks around bare-foot, with nothing but an old cloak. Once again the figure of Diogenes is clearly a mythologized one, Dio-genes literally meaning 'born of God.' All Cynics are continuously referred to as 'friends of the gods,' and 'the only true kings.'[62] The Cynic also has a mission, this time of transforming the cosmos as a whole. Diogenes is meant to have been 'sent to human beings by Zeus as a messenger, to show them that they are wholly mistaken with regard to what is good and what is bad.' He is a 'physician of men's souls.'[63] The Cynic transforms the universe by keeping 'watch over all human beings, so far as they can, observing what they do and how they feel and how they pass their life.'[64] On this point, 'Diogenes (is) in agreement with Lycurgus that happiness is dependent upon self sufficiency.'[65] The Cynic endures and deprives himself in order to become a walking manifestation of the virtuous life.[66] By leading a self-sufficient and virtuous life himself, the Cynic is also able to demonstrate to others the self-contradictory lives they lead under the laws of the city. Both for the Spartan ideal and for the Cynics then, there is a strong connection between an individual's transformation and the government of the outside world. For the Spartans the boundaries of this outside world are strongly limited. The transformation experienced by the Spartan is solely for the purposes of his city and secures the happiness of *bios* and p*olis* alike. For the Cynics on the other hand, the boundaries of this 'outside world' are

59 Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*, 29.5
60 Xenophon, *Const. Lac*. 9.1
61 Plutarch, *Agis*.3.4; Plutarch, *Cleomenes*.3.13
62 Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 6.37
63 Epictetus, Discourses. 3.22
64 Ibid.
65 John Sellars, 'Stoic Cosmopolitanism and Zeno's Republic,' *History of Political Thought,* Vol. 18:1, 2007, p. 12.
66 Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth (the Government of Self and Others II): Lectures at the Collège De France, 1983-1984*, (Houndmills, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 172.

less clear. Rather, the Cynic is indifferent to the city and takes part in 'the government of the universe.'[67]

b. A Different Type of Politics

The personal transformation of the Spartan or the Cynic brings about a new type of association that is different from the ordinary definition of the city-state. Let us briefly recall the classic definition Aristotle makes of politics. According to Aristotle man is by nature a social being[68] and the association that most fully realizes this sociability is the city-state. In other words, man is more self-sufficient and more able to rule himself, not when he is living as an individual nor even in his kingly rule of his household (although mastery in the first two cases may be necessary precursors to political life), but rather is living as a freeman inside a city-state.[69] The highest form of self-sufficiency is not that of an isolated individual but that of an active citizen, ruling and being ruled in turn.

This is precisely the type of life neither the Cynics nor the Spartan ideal promoted. Sparta of course had a monarchical form of government and, perhaps equally importantly, is often likened to a family or a large estate. In the Spartan mind, Aristotle's distinctions would sound superfluous. The true life of virtue demands not 'ruling and being ruled' but obedience to the laws of the city. Hence this is a different type of polity than Aristotle's classical definition implies. Similarly the Cynics famously reject the laws of the city to those of nature. Aristotle himself had argued that 'whatever is incapable of participating in the association we call the state, a dumb animal for example, and equally whatever is perfectly self-sufficient and has no need to, a god, is not a part of the state at all.'[70] As Barker and others observe,[71] Cynics themselves adopted these titles. On the one hand they fully embraced being called 'dogs' as the very word

67 Ibid., p.303.

68 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1097b.

69 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1261b10-15.

70Ibid., 1253a1-30.

71 Ernest Barker, *Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle,* (NY: Russell & Russell, 1959); Andre Roslen, 'Civic virtue: citizenship, ostracism, and war' in ed. Deslauriers, Marguerite & Montréal Pierre Destrée, *Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics,* (Cambridge University Press, UK, 2013), pp.140; Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth (the Government of Self and Others II): Lectures at the Collège De France, 1983-1984*, (Houndmills, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.57-60.

'kunikos' indicates and on the other they claimed to rule the cosmos alongside Zeus. Although the Cynics were not members of any existing city, they claimed to be a member of a higher city, a citizen of a cosmic city of sages that transcends boundaries. Cynics are not just apolites (without a city) but also kosmopolites (citizens of the universe), following the cosmic laws of nature, rather than the laws of individual cities.

c. The City of Sages: the Criteria for Membership

In order to be a member of the Cynic city of sages, or the idealized city of Sparta, one must first learn to govern one's own desires. The criteria for membership is wholly dependent on this. As argued above, the ascetic exercises of Spartans do not only shape the lives of the individuals practicing them, but also give form to the city, ensuring its self-sufficiency and autonomy. As one scholar expresses, 'in Sparta alone is the pursuit of *kalokagathia* (moral excellence) a wholly public matter, with heavy penalties for those who fail to do so.'[72] To repeat the passage by Plutarch, 'the happiness of an entire city, like that of a single individual, depended on the prevalence of virtue and concord within its own borders. The aim therefore, of all (Lycurgus's) arrangements was to make his people free-minded, self-sufficient and moderate in all their ways… (Lycurgus) brought into the light of day, not paper theories but a functioning constitution, which is quite unmatched. He has exhibited his whole city practicing philosophy, (πόλιν φιλοσοφοῦσα).'[73] In Sparta, practicing philosophy, that is to say leading a life of virtue and self-sufficiency is both what secures the well being of the city and is what enables one access to citizenship. The very constitution of the city is not a paper doctrine, but is manifested in the way of life of its citizens.

Similarly, becoming a member of the Cynic city of sages is conditioned solely on the self-sufficiency one is able to achieve. Material wealth, as well as marriages and titles would only burden the life of a Cynic. The whole Aristotelian idea of a polis has been inverted here: The idea of a pre-political mastery over one's household that makes politics possible has been turned into a mastery over oneself that makes membership to the Cynic brotherhood possible. The Cynic virtue doesn't discrim-

72 Stephen Hodkinson, 'The imaginary Spartan politeia', in M.H. Hansen (ed.), *The Imaginary Polis, Acts of the Copenhagen Polis Centre*, vol. 7, Copenhagen, 2005, p.248.
73 Plutarch, Life of Lycurgus, 31.

inate based on 'sex, birth, rank, race or education.'[74] We hear the Cynic philosopher claiming: 'Take notice of me, that I am without a country, without a house, without an estate, without a servant; I lie on the ground; have no wife, no children, no coat; but have only earth and heaven and one poor cloak. And what need I? Am not I without sorrow, without fear? Am not I free? … Who that sees me does not think that he sees his own king and master?'[75] Moreover, because the criteria for citizenship is virtue, the Cynics could claim to be brothers in poverty, regardless of geographical location, without the need for legal or political institutions uniting them. Thus they could claim to be living in the same *polis*, no matter where they went.

d. Aversion to Doctrine

Both the Spartan ideal and the Cynic movement are agreed that the government of one's life as well as the lives of others should not be through long and complicated doctrines. Whereas the laws of other cities are long and complicated, the laws of the Spartan city-state are simple and prepare the Spartan hoplite for every contingency, thus promoting both his and the city's self-sufficiency. Similarly whereas a life according to the laws of the city, *nomos*, is self-contradictory, arbitrary, and full of unnecessary embellishments, the laws of the cosmos, *phusis*, are straight-forward and prepare one for a self-sufficient life. Simplicity rules both the life of the individual and that of the city.

This mistrust of complicated doctrines is best illustrated by their attitudes towards the currency of money, speech and conventions.[76] For example, Lycurgus is thought to have withdrawn all gold and silver currency and replaced it with iron that has a very low value. Since Spartan coin was very low in value, it was very difficult to transport large amounts of it. Therefore, 'no merchant-seamen brought freight into (Sparta's) harbours; no rhetoric teacher set food on Laconian soil, no vagabond soothsayer, no keeper of harlots, no gold or silver smith, since there was no money there.'[77] The idea of revaluing money has the effect of keeping out those that would corrupt and ornament speech, rhetoric

74 John L. Moles, 'Cynic Cosmopolitanism,' *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and its Legacy, (*London:University of California, 1999), p. 106-107.

75 Epictetus, Discourses, 3.22

76 It is important to note the etymological link between the word monetary currency, *nomisma* and the word law or convention, *nomos*, in ancient Greek.

77 Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*, 9.3

teachers and soothsayers, as well as those that would corrupt beauty, harlots and silversmiths. Keeping out rhetoricians has both political and moral consequences since complicated doctrines threaten moral and political education alike. As Plutarch explains, 'When an Athenian orator declares that the Spartans had no education in doctrines, the Spartan king replied, 'True, we are indeed the only Greeks to have learned no evil from you.'[78]

A similar theme of revaluing speech is also present in what is known as laconic remarks. Spartans were well known for their short, biting retorts and aversion to long speech. Referring to Spartans' ability to deliver pithy remarks in argumentation, Socrates says that their 'cult is much more the pursuit of wisdom than of athletics; for they know that a man's ability to utter such remarks is to be ascribed to his perfect education.'[79] One can observe that Socrates praises Spartans as pursuers of wisdom, not because they engaged in rhetoric or had developed extensive doctrines but because they refrain from doing so.

Cynics also criticized complicated doctrines through this double imagery of currency of speech and money. The Cynics were famous for their slogan 'deface of the currency.'[80] This meant a symbolic attack on the city's laws and conventions for being self-contradictory, complicated and against the cosmic order. The act of defacing the currency in fact implies that 'starting from a certain coin which carries a certain effigy, eras[ing] that effigy and replac[ing] it with another which will enable this coin to circulate with its true value.'[81] This exercise is carried out to reveal the currency's true and unalloyed value. Similarly, aversion to long doctrines is yet another favourite theme of the Cynics.[82] In fact, some argue that the Cynics were 'developing collections of Spartan sayings, which continued to enjoy a wide popularity for centuries.'[83]Therefore, Cynics are equally known for their short and biting remarks, which were often likened to the 'barking' of a dog because of their sharp and blunt nature. One rather fitting extract claims: 'Being asked where in Greece he saw good men,

78 Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*, 20.4
79 Plato, *Protagoras*, 342e
80 Diogenes Laertius. 6.20
81 Michel Foucault, *Courage of Truth,* 2011*,* p. 227.
82 Ibid., p. 178
83 Richard Talbort, 'Introduction' in Plutarch, ed. Richard J.A. Talbort, *Plutarch on Sparta,* (Penguin Classics, 1988), p. 106.

(Diogenes) replied, 'Good men nowhere, but good boys at Sparta.'[84]

e. An Exclusive Utopia

Cynic sages are brothers in poverty and, regardless of whether they are dispersed or gathered together in one place, live as fellow citizens of the cosmos.[85] Yet it is not entirely clear whether the Cynic utopia of sages is open to everyone. Noting the emphasis on virtue,[86] H. C. Baldry makes the interesting observation that the Cynic '*politeia* of men of wisdom is nothing like an all-embracing society of all mankind. If it can be described as a state at all, it is a super-state outside all states, the members of which are cut off from the mass of humanity. Although the Cynic wise man … ignores the traditional barriers that make female inferior to male, slave to master, foreigner to Greek… The Cynic conception does not unite the human race, but draws a single great dividing line across it, separating the few wise men from the many fools'. Far from extending membership to everyone, the Cynic utopia rather imagines an exclusive community of sages, who no longer have the need for boundaries, laws or institutions.

However the Spartan could also be thought of as an exclusive utopian project with one important difference. Whereas the Cynic sages have no need for the laws, for the Spartan citizen the laws themselves already promise to bring about a self-sufficient life. The criteria for citizenship in the Spartan utopia therefore are not the laws of nature but rather the ideal laws of the constitution. In this sense, Sparta and Cynicism can be thought of as two extreme outcomes, two poles that both end up trying to resolve the tension between the *bios* and *polis,* either through completely working against the laws of the city and applying to a higher principle, in the case of the Cynics, or through formulating a perfect constitution that already promotes self-sufficiency in *bios* and *polis* alike, in the case of Sparta.

Conclusions: Power, Domination and Sparta

84 Diogenes Laertius. 6.22
85 Ibid. p. 11.
86 H.C. Baldry, *The Unity of Mankind in Greek Thought,* (Cambridge University Press, London, 2009), p.110.

Having conducted a thorough historical analysis of the Spartan way of life, we can now draw conclusions regarding its implications for Foucault's thought. Let us begin by sketching some of Foucault's ideas. Foucault's genealogy of ethics is supported by a distinction he makes between technologies of domination 'which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends', and technologies of the self 'which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom…'[87] The difference between these two technologies is important to stress, as they are both concerned with governing individuals. Technologies of domination outline how certain power relations, 'such as enclosure, surveillance, reward, punishment'[88] work to incite, suggest and direct persons to certain modes of subjectivity. The technologies of the self, considered exclusively, focus on how an individual conducts his own practices, through a work performed 'on the self, by the self.'[89] Moreover, the bulk of Foucault's work related to power and governmentality can be seen as historical analyses of the points of convergence, overlap and friction between 'the technologies of domination...and those of the self.'[90]

How does Foucault get to this notion? As Deleuze[91] explains in an illuminating passage,

> Foucault felt he was getting locked into the play of forces..it's all very well invoking foci of resistance to power relations, but where are such foci to be found? …Whereas power was a relation of force to other forces, the self is a relation of force to itself, a fold of force. Establishing different ways of existing, depending on how you fold the line of forces, or inventing possibilities of life, existing not as a subject but as a work of art.

87 Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), p.18.

88 Michel Foucault, 'Subject and Power', Afterword to Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, (NY:Chicago University Press, 1982), p.219.

89 Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self,* p.19.

90 Ibid., p.19.

91 Gilles Deleuze, 'Life as a Work of Art." in *Negotiations 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp.100-101.

Thus technologies of the self imply an interesting power relation where a force acts upon and transforms itself. Through this transformation, Deleuze seems to be arguing, technologies of the self can act as sources of resistance and change. Technologies of the self are therefore irreducible to relations of domination but at the same time necessary for their operation. Foucault himself makes a similar point about the relationship between moral codes and ethical practices. It is important to remember that, for Foucault, ethics implies not simply the contents of a moral code, nor the actions that are tolerated or punished in relation to this moral code, but rather the 'manner in which (one recognizes) oneself acting in reference to the prescriptive elements that make up (a) moral code.'[92] In other words, all codified moralities presuppose not only certain rules and regulations but also the practices and means with which we recognize ourselves as being bound by those rules and subject to those laws, without which ethical practice becomes impossible.[93]

However, this equally means that in practice, even domination requires the exercise of an irreducible self-recognition and freedom. Explaining domination, Foucault writes that it is senseless to talk of power relations where one person can exercise 'an infinite and unlimited violence' on another.[94] Yet although he uses the concept of states of domination to describe situations where power relations are perpetually asymmetric and 'the marginal of freedom extremely limited,'[95] in practice Foucault never proposes a total state of domination where all resistance has been eliminated. We can advance this line of thought and claim that in the right conditions, technologies of the self act not only as a source of resistance and change as Deleuze hinted, but equally carry the potential to reinforce and tighten situations of domination. Consider the example of confession provided above. The practice of recognizing oneself as the subject of a discourse of truth, when exercised under the strict and calculated environment of a courtroom, can be crucial in the continuation of a certain mode of domination.

Isn't this precisely what the experience of Sparta illustrates? It is simple to observe that in Sparta self-practices serve relations of domination. However, could one not argue that there is a certain ethic or a certain

92 Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol II: The Use of Pleasure,* p.26.

93 Beatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project,* trans. Edward Pile, (NY: Stanford University Press, 2002), p.161.

94 Michel Foucault, 'Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,' p.283.

95 Ibid.

mode of becoming in the Spartan warrior too? Let us return to the Spartan children in training. Although we do not know enough about the *agoge*, there is no doubt that Spartan children are under a certain relationship of domination, with well-calculated outcomes, rewards and punishments. Commentators on Foucault's work have accused him of overstating the aesthetic and ethical aspects of self-practices at the expense of its political connotations especially in the context of classical Greece.[96] The perpetuation of the Spartan ideal throughout the Greco-Roman period suggests that the political functions of self-practices were never wholly defunct. Yet beyond its political functions, isn't there a certain ethic and even an aesthetic associated with the training provided at the *agoge*? Why couldn't key aspects of the Spartan education such as the promotion of laconic retorts, the significant role of music and dance,[97] the valorisation of masculinity, be interpreted from an aesthetic framework? Of course, the margin for negotiating and reflecting on one's practices is limited in the context of the *agoge*, since superior military officers routinely monitored the children. Yet how clearly can we separate the relations of domination and the practices of freedom in this educational system, given that the Spartans were so proud of it?

Perhaps the lack of historical accounts of Sparta by Spartans holds us back from making more definitive claims. Suffice it to say that it is not so easy to delineate the analytical opposition between technologies of domination and the self in the Spartan ideal. A clearer conclusion to be drawn from this line of thought, is that, taken in isolation, there isn't anything inherently political to self–practices. The very same practices that are used by Stoic thinkers such as Marcus Aurelius and Seneca to advance cosmopolitan arguments can be used by Spartan warriors to promote almost diametrically opposed political projects. Therefore it is appropriate to envision the political significance of self-practices only in their entanglement with other technologies of power, communication and production, to use Foucault's terms.

That so many thinkers such as Socrates, the Cynics, Zeno and Epictetus carry affinities with Sparta seems counterintuitive to the contemporary reader, given Sparta's image as a controlling city. The fact that this image does exist can be interpreted as further evidence for some-

96 See: Timothy O'Leary, *Foucault and the Art of Ethics,* (London:Continuum, 2002).
97 A.J. Holladay, *Spartan Austerity,* The Classical Quarterly, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1977), p. 117.

thing Foucault admits; despite our ideas about classical Greece, this was nevertheless 'a virile society, (built on) dissymmetry and exclusion of the other."[98] Some have suggested that ethical self-constitution is in fact always 'bought at the cost of a host of other constraints, codifications, regulations and encumbrances that may have been just as deplorable.'[99] While this may not be true at all times, at least in classical Greece, aristocratic culture and slavery went hand in hand with ethical self-constitution. Sparta is an extreme example in this regard.

The Spartan example further corroborates doubts others have raised about Foucault's reading of the history of Western politics, which presents an implicit discontinuity and sharp distinction between modern biopolitics and an ancient ethics of self-cultivation.[100] As we have seen, the golden age of self-practices in Greek and Roman antiquity did not only give rise to a culture of care of the self. Rather, alongside the practices of self-care there existed a Spartan ideal based on obedience, respect and courage. The influence that Sparta exerted over Cynic and Stoic writers indicates some overlap between the Spartan ideal and care of the self. How strong is the connection between these two visions? Is the Spartan ideal merely an anomaly, a relic of the archaic past from which Classical Greece had emerged? Or, on the contrary, could there be something about the idea of self-transformation beyond the Greco-Roman experience that lends itself easily to disciplinary and controlling visions of society? Of course there isn't enough evidence to make such a claim within the confines of this study. Perhaps leading a cross-cultural analysis of self-practices, including the evidence from Sparta, may help us better understand whether this may be the case. While this study doesn't pretend to answer such questions, it can at least help us ask them.

98 Michel Foucault, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics', p.258.
99 James I. Porter, 'Foucault's Ascetic Ancients,' *Phoenix,* Vol. 59:2, 2005, p. 125.
100 Jacques Derrida, The Beast & the Sovereign: Volume 1, (London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 305-334.