

Interaction Between Education and Politics in Ancient Greek *Poleis*

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Öz

The concept of ancient Greek state (polis, pl. poleis) is taken as a kind of an organic whole in which the individuals have close ties with and responsibilities for their society and state. Hence, in an ancient state of this kind, any situation related to the individuals could reflect its direct results in community affairs and public administration, if the continuity and the welfare of the state are to be ensured. In this study, "education" is considered as the main model to investigate this close intercourse between the individuals, society, and state and it is aimed to reveal the actual influence of citizens' education on politics and vice versa in Classical Greece.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ancient Greek city-state, citizen, education, rhetoric.

Antik Hellen Polis'lerinde Eğitim-Siyaset Etkileşimi

Abstract

Antik Hellen polis'i, organik bir bütün olarak ele alınır ve bu bütünlük içinde bireyler, toplum ile sıkı ilişkiler içindedir; bireylerin hem topluma hem de devlete karşı sorumlulukları vardır. Öyleyse bu tür bir antik devlet yapısında bireylerle ilgili herhangi bir durum, devletin sürekliliği ve refahı sağlandığı sürece, sonuçlarını doğrudan toplum işlerine ve kamu yönetimine yansıtabilir. Bu çalışmada; bireyler, toplum ve devlet arasındaki bu yakın ilişkiyi incelemek için "eğitim" ana model olarak ele alınmış ve Klasik Dönem'de yurttaş eğitiminin siyaset üzerindeki etkilerini ortaya koymak ve siyasetin de yurttaş eğitimi üzerindeki yönlendirici rolünü belirlemek amaçlanmıştır.

Keywords: Hellen polis'i, yurttaş, eğitim, retorik.

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Introduction

The ancient Greek term *polis* has two principal meanings, “city” and “state”. The word is often used in both senses simultaneously but sometimes the emphasis is shifted. When the emphasis is on the sense of “state”, it almost exclusively refers to a small political community consisting of a city (*polis*) with its hinterland (*chora*). That political community consist of people, that is, the citizens of the *polis* and thus, the words *polis* and *politēs* (citizen) were strongly related to each other not only etymologically, but also conceptually (Hansen, 2013, p. 263). In some of ancient Greek texts, starting from the 7th century B.C. on, it can be seen that *polis* was often identified with its citizens. E.g., Alcaeus an archaic poet from Mytilene, wrote in simile that, *warlike men are a city's tower*¹ and for Thucydides, *it is men that make a State, not walls or ships devoid of men.*² That means, in ancient Greek thinking, the *polis* was not only a physical but also a political entity, and the ancient Greeks identified the state primarily with its people. This can be seen in references to the opposing sides of ancient wars; for example, in the Peloponnesian Wars (431-404 B.C.) it is not Athens or Sparta that went to war but the Athenians or the Spartans.³ Also the treaties were concluded between the communities of states as in the case of the Confederacy of Athenians in 378 BC (see Osborne and Rhodes, 2007, p. 92-105). Thus, it is clear that the citizens of *poleis* were being called by their *polis ethnikon*, i.e. an adjective derived from a toponym and used in the masculine as a noun to designate the people rather than the place (Hansen, 2000, p. 153) such as *Athenaios, Lakedaimonios, Thebaios, Samios, Milesios* and etc. Thus, the integration of state with its citizens was clear and the *polis* was primarily a “citizen-state” (Hansen, 1993, p. 7-29).

The *politeia*, on the other hand, is another political keyword, which is derived from the word *polis* literally to mean “citizenship”, but it developed from this primary meaning into a more concrete sense to designate the set of norms regulating the life of the citizens, i.e. the “government” or the “constitution” (Hansen, 2000, p. 165; Ober, 1993, p. 129-160). Aristotle, while he is explaining the concept of *polis* in his work *Politics*, puts emphasis on this integration between the citizens and their city life. He defines it as *koinōnia politōn politeias* which means *partnership of citizens in a government.*⁴ That is, *polis* is a community (*koinonion*) of citizens (*politai*) bound to organize and to run its political institutions (*politeia*). So, the *politeia*

1 Alc. fr. 112.10: ἄνδρες γὰρ πόλις πύργος.

2 Thuc. 7.77.7: ἄνδρες γὰρ πόλις, καὶ οὐ τεῖχη οὐδὲ νῆες ἀνδρῶν κεναί.

3 See Thuc. 5.25.1; Again at 1.115.2 Thucydides writes, *a war broke out between the Samians and Milesians about the possession of Priene.*

4 Arist. *Pol.* 1276b1-2: κοινῶνία πολιτῶν πολιτείας.

also can be defined as the activities of the free-born adult males, i.e. citizens in the citizen-states. Due to the active social life and direct participation of citizens in all kinds of state issues, e.g., assemblies and courts especially in the Classical Athens, the idea of education is taken into consideration within the context of this way of life. Namely, it was regarded in general as a process of education to live in a *polis*. We find the lyric poet Simonides of Athens saying that *the city is teacher of the man*⁵ and also Plato in his dialogue *Protagoras* puts emphasis on the word “*polis*” as the leading educational agent: *And when they (the sons) are released from their schooling the city next compels them to learn the laws and to live according to them as after a pattern.*⁶ This way of education was quite peculiar to Athens, whose citizens had the opportunity of getting the benefit of it almost at every occasion.

Athens: The Institutions of Democracy, Their Procedures and Rhetorical Education

In democratically constituted Athens, the education was not an institution in state’s monopoly. The Athenian state did not arrange regular, compulsory courses of teaching for every citizen child to follow. Instead, it was a private affair (Pritchard, 2013, p. 54). About at the age of seven the boys began their schooling. *Paideia* was the term for the Greeks to refer to the elementary education of this early age and this education aimed at providing the moral strength for the soul mainly through lessons in music and literature and at having the youth gain the bodily strength by gymnastics. So, the boys whose parents could afford the fee typically had a music teacher, an instructor in writing and reading (who also taught them numbers) and a trainer in athletics (Herrick, 2015, p. 30).⁷ This was the basic education for an Athenian citizen boy and the functioning of *dēmokratia* could only be realized by these literate citizens.⁸

Furthermore, as we have already mentioned above, it will not be implausible to think that stronger the bonds of the *polis* community were, the more educated the citizens became by attending the assemblies, courts, theater performances, the yearly festivals like the Great Dionysia or any other common meetings and by listening to the discussions of arguments from different points of view in these places. The social order of *dēmokratia* in Classical Athens created an educational

5 Simon. fr. 15: πόλις ἄνδρα διδάσκει.

6 Pl. *Prt.* 326c7-d1: ἐπειδὴν δὲ ἐκ διδασκάλων ἀπαλλαγῶσιν, ἡ πόλις αὐ τοὺς τε νόμους ἀναγκάζει μανθάνειν καὶ κατὰ τούτους ζῆν κατὰ παράδειγμα.

7 Probably in the mid- fourth century B.C., laws were passed to regulate the schooling. See Aesch. *In Tim.* 9-11. Pritchard, 2013, p. 54.

8 Especially for the second half of the fifth century, the increasing evidence for published decrees implies the widening literate classes (see Robb, 1994, p. 138).

environment in which the citizens with great zeal exchanged their views for views. Besides, *agora* was not only a marketplace but also a public school in this context. Therefore, the citizens became more knowledgeable and at the same time learned how systematically to use the knowledge they gained for their own benefit by participating in the political, social and cultural activities of the ancient state. Furthermore, the political success was not anymore depending on only birth from aristocratic families, but also on the power of persuasive speeches delivered in front of *dēmos*, in *ekklesiā* (assembly) or *boulē* (council).

With the constant rise of *democracy, especially in the age of Pericles* (458–429 B.C.) to lead in politics or to win a case in a court in the democratic milieu of Athens required a more specialized education. For there was no public office of legal representatives in Athens (Mintz, 2014, p. 778), every citizen needed to learn how to bring his case to the court and make his own defense in *heliaia* (lawcourt) as famous rhetor Isocrates did, who had to learn the court rhetoric first in order to regain the possession of his confiscated lands and soon he began to use this art to earn his living by writing court speeches for others. If we take into consideration the litigious nature of Athenian society,⁹ it seems to be logical to say that every citizen might have found himself in court on several occasions to defend his cases.¹⁰ Also there was for every citizen in Athens the possibility of being listed as one of the 6,000 members of jury though it was a duty badly paid. So, to gain knowledge and experience in court affairs such as law, procedure and judicature it was necessary often to attend courts and to listen to argumentation of different cases.

In such a milieu, only a speech full of skillful rhetoric could help the ambitious citizens to make out their own cases in courts or to persuade the masses that his or his party's action or way of dealing with an existing problem is the best and most beneficial to them, with the intention first to get their votes and then the political power in the end. The art of rhetoric first developed and systemized by Corax¹¹ and his students in Sicily for court use and it was brought and introduced by Gorgias of Leontini to the Athenians. In a short time, its power and importance in all areas of literary activities such as court speeches, political speeches, in philosophical argumentations, in tragedy, in laudation and invective

9 Thucydides (1.77) writes about the character of the Athenians being litigious.

10 In Athens, about 200 days the courts were in session in a year and there could have been dozens of lawsuits in one day (Lanni, 2006, p. 33).

11 After the overthrow of the tyrant Thrasybulus and the establishment of democracy in Syracuse in 467 B.C., Corax devised the art of rhetoric to help the citizens speak in the city's new democratic assembly and in the law courts to retrieve the confiscated properties of them (see Smith, 2017, p. 46-47).

kind of speeches, etc. were discovered and began to be widely used in these and many other fields.¹² Now, the importance of rhetorical training was understood and highly appreciated as a new requirement of the social and political order of Classical Athens.

Accordingly, the Sophists, itinerant teachers from all over the Greece fulfilled that growing need not only in Athens but also in other Greek communities. They traveled and gave rhetoric instructions to the citizens of various city-states about how to write and deliver persuasive speeches in public, especially on request for a fee.¹³ The Sophists focused their *teaching* on the *polis* and how to attain success and *aretē* (virtue) in it (Roisman, 2011, p. 312). The most prominent and influential of the Sophists was Gorgias of Leontini (*ca.* 485- *ca.* 380 B.C.), who was the first to introduce sophistic way of argumentation with the examples of *Encomium of Helen* and *Defence of Palamedes*. Other eminent sophists in Athens were Protagoras of Abdera, Prodicus of Cos, Hippias of Elis, Thrasymachus of Chalcedon.¹⁴ This new form of education in Classical Athens is called the secondary stage of *paideia* by some scholars (Lynch, 1972, p. 40).

The main aim of the rhetorical education was to have the citizens gain a desired capacity of speaking logically and persuasively as the case or the situation demanded to influence and lead the others in thought and action in a desired direction. For this purpose, the Sophists were mostly interested in the use of language for the effective public speeches and they focused their attention on *logos* which was a common part of both the rhetorical and philosophical studies. Therefore, *logos* was highlighted in the fragments of the Sophists. For instance, Gorgias in *Encomium of Helen* (8-14) evaluated the *logos* with the word *dunastēs* (lord, master, ruler) to emphasize its role as a powerful medium (Poulakos, 2013, p. 70). On the other hand, the episteme, namely *tekhne rhētorikē* (art of rhetoric) shows the general rules of correct and effective argumentation and how to organize the presentations clearly. The Sophists generally taught through their system of rhetoric education how to achieve a purpose by changing the criterion of the logical formula as Socrates does in the *Respublica* while discussing what the right conduct is, whether to return or not to return the weapon borrowed, if the lender is not in his right mind anymore (see Pl. *Resp.* 331c). The other rhetorical devices rhetoricians often used to enforce their points are rhetorical figures and they had many other ways of obtaining proof by the help of rhetorical art as Cicero explains

12 For its extensive use see (Worthington, 2010).

13 The Sophists were the first to put a monetary value on education (Sweeney, 2013, p. 243).

14 For a detailed information of these five sophists see Rankin, 2014, p. 30-63.

in *De Inventione* and in his other rhetorical treatises (Dugan, 2013, p. 25-40). Besides, grammar lessons improved the skills in using language.¹⁵

The Sophists had some characteristics in common such as use of logic, language, change of criteria of the logical formulae etc. as we have already referred to above. Yet, they differed widely among themselves in the details of their doctrines and did not form a uniform school (Drozdek, 2016, p. 109). Because sophistic teaching in Greece began with Gorgias of Leontini and he had many famous students who followed his lessons, such as Plato, Isocrates, a common trend of keeping close to his *praecepta* can be traced among his students and the next generation who followed them. As in the case of Gorgias and Isocrates there was a general tendency to choose the subjects of these rhetorical exercises from the Greek mythology, which had various versions of the stories to be used as examples to support or emphasize any kind of argument. These rich and flexible stories gave the rhetoricians a free scope to treat the subject as they wished and *comparatio* seems to have been one of the main rhetorical devices they widely employed to achieve their end.

On the other hand, almost all of them agreed on the importance of human perception and belief in interpreting experiences and this was called *homo mensura*, which is most obvious in a well-known dictum of Protagoras of Abdera (ca. 480-410 B.C.) *man is the measure of all things*¹⁶ which asserts that each man's or society's belief, gods, action, morals, dressing etc. is best or true according to his individual or their own judgment.¹⁷ This sentence may be seen as a summary of the sophistic relativism, which concludes in the plurality of truth and right and good etc. and the vice versa. This also brought about agnosticism and skepticism. This relativistic kind of education enabled the citizens argue any side of an issue according to his truth or reality, by redefining criteria, as necessary. For there were no objective measures, there was no objective common truth that all people can agree on. So, one could make the other believe in his truth and by this way he could have the jury or the *dēmos* on his side. Therefore, the Sophistic education was regarded as a

15 Among the Sophists especially Protagoras made essential contributions to the foundations of the science of linguistics. For detail see Hamburger, 1969, p. 34.

16 Protagoras, fr. 1. Michael Nill, *Morality and Self Interest in Protagoras Antiphon and Democritus*, Brill, Leiden 1985, p. 4; We lack a context for his fragment. However, Plato provided a detailed analysis in his dialogue *Theaetetus* that offers some insight. For detail see James D. Williams, *An Introduction to Classical Rhetoric: Essential Readings*, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, MA 2009, p. 52.

17 The anecdote of Herodotus in his book (3.38) offers a very good illustration of relativism. The Persian king Darius asks the same question to the Greeks and Indians that in exchange for what they would eat their fathers' dead bodies and he sees that their responses are strictly connected to their customs. So Herodotus notes that all men think that their own customs are the finest (*kallistoi nomoi*).

kind of *politikē tekhnē* (art of statesmanship) for political success.¹⁸ In accordance with this kind of thinking, there were written outstanding political speeches by eminent sophists like Isocrates and Protagoras and it is well known from the anecdotes of Plutarch that Protagoras was sometimes spending an entire day training Pericles in the art of sophistic rhetoric (Plut. *Per.* 36. 3). It is supposed that besides their personal relationship, Protagoras' philosophical and political ideas highly influenced Pericles, the most powerful political figure of the fifth century Athens (Silvermintz, 2015, p. 32-34).

On the other hand, with the agnosticism and skepticism posed by sophistic education in Athenian society, the social values, absolute foundations of traditional institutions, including laws and religious beliefs of the *polis* became questionable. Socrates (470–399 B.C.) was thought to be another sophist in the same *agora* with the others. There, by asking leading questions on the meaning of life, truth and justice he encouraged the people to critical thinking. He was skeptical about what human beings can know for sure. Unlike the skepticism of the Sophists, his agnosticism persists in the midst of doubt and uncertainty. *E.g.* at the end of *Lysis* Socrates propounds that they are friends, but they haven't been able to discover just what a friend is (Pl. *Lys.* 223b). By this sentence he invites the reader to think more on the issue and on their own experience of friendship. For Socrates the *telos* of the philosophical inquiry is truth; but in the case of the Sophists it is what seems against the tradition and how impossible (*adunaton*) can be made possible (*dunaton*); it is confusion or persuasion of others for some immediate purpose of gain (Houston, 2017, p. 218).

As far as I can see, the confusion, persuasion or deception of others were not their main intention but the byproducts of their system of approach to *telos*. However, the Sophists' way of critical thinking and approach to *telos* was assessed as a danger to the order in state and for the maintenance of status quo. Therefore, even the fact that Socrates was not teaching in exchange for money as the Sophists did and his persistent denials to be a sophist did not alter his function and repute as an educator and he was evaluated as just another troublesome sophist¹⁹ who threatened to undermine the social order in Athens (Fieser, 2000, p. 18). He was accused of not accepting the traditional gods and introducing other strange divinities and moreover accused of corrupting the young. To avoid the unrest in society Socrates was sentenced to death at the turn of the fourth century B.C.

18 For "*politikē tekhnē*" (πολιτικὴ τέχνη) see Pl. *Grg.* 521d7, *Prt.* 319a4.

19 In his trial the accusers sought to confound him with the Sophists (Colaiaco, 2001, p. 46).

Educational Theory in Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*

Having seen Socrates condemned to death at the hand of a democratic state, the political theorists such as Plato and Aristotle, started to think of new forms of constitutions other than democracy. For under the current constitution of Athens the morality of society and the politics were corrupted and to ensure the maintenance of the state it was necessary to form a new constitution with the weight on morals and political reforms. In their political dialogues, Plato and Aristotle tried to explain how to achieve their ideal states and what can be done in practice to organize them properly and to obtain the best results. To that end, every institution of the state must have been subject to reforms, but the education must have been the first to begin with.

Plato (*ca.* 428-348 B.C.), in response to the situation in Athens, attempted in the *Republic* to find a permanent basis for stability in the *polis* and to have the entire community conform to rational principles. It was obvious that the educational system founded on the traditional mythic religion of Homer and Hesiod was not adequate for the needs of late-fifth century Athens.²⁰ So, he reorganized his theory of the educational system to bring up citizens conscious of law and justice and to prepare philosophical leaders to govern the state. To this end, he divided the society in the *Republic* into three classes: The guardians, the auxiliaries, and the laboring class (Pl. *Resp.* 412b-415d). The upper two *classes*, the guardians and the auxiliaries have common origins. More precisely, these two *classes* were subdivisions of a single military *class*. Those who would be successful in fulfilling the requirements of the prescribed education will be leaders as guardians and the others will be auxiliaries. The last class is that of laborers.

Of these three divisions, Plato seems to be putting great weight on the education of the guardians of the state.²¹ But before disclosing his ideas on education, he strongly emphasizes that in society, each person by nature fits only for one task and must only do that proper task (*Resp.* 370b-c). Actually by this way, he tries to divide the society into professional departments. The main purpose of this division according to his thinking is that the government is a science and needs expert knowledge namely *politikē tekhnē*.²² However in Athens

20 The texts of Homer and Hesiod were the basic readings for the Classical period. See Most, 1999, p. 337.

21 Plato's educational program is explicitly introduced only in reference to the Guardians. See Barrow, 2010, p. 16.

22 The knowledge of *politikē tekhnē* differs from the episteme of other *tekhnē*, such as *carpenters*, *blacksmiths* and farmers. Here is another negative reference to the multifaceted character of the Athenian advisers in debates on political questions. See Sorensen, 2016, p. 109.

all the *dēmos* was sovereign and intensely engaged in politics. In Plato's divided society, the guardians are the prospective governors; keen intelligence, high spirit, quickness in thought and action and bodily strength as well are required to be their distinguishing characteristics (*Resp.* 376c). Due to the importance of their prospective tasks, the education of the guardians demands specialization in the science of governing and extraordinary training for the strength and continuity of the state (*Resp.* 374d-e) While suggesting gymnastics for the body and music for the soul (*Resp.* 376e), Plato pays particular attention to the moral values; so he lays special emphasis on the training of their soul from this point of view.²³ In the course of the guardians' early education, Plato suggests that a great care has to be taken of the use of the myths (as fables). The gods in myths must be represented as ideal models for men to follow, not as enemies in battle with their kiths and kins (*Resp.* 378c-d). Otherwise, he thinks, it would be impiety. The first stories that the kids hear should be so composed that they must teach the fairest lessons of virtue (*Resp.* 378e). Here again, there are hints of criticism of impiety to gods in Athens of which ironically, he was accused later.

In the educational process of creating this philosophic aristocracy in the *Republic*, dialectic seems to be the cornerstone of the syllabus (*Resp.* 533c-d, 534e, 537d, 539a). So, no other higher kind of study could rightly be placed above it. For him, dialectic is a thinking tool which distinguishes itself from other sciences, e.g. arithmetic, geometry, or astronomy in that they have few rules in numbers and fit for solving only certain problems. But dialectic is a method of correct reasoning and proper questioning to reach the truth. By inventing and producing proofs, dialectic has features of both science and art. Plato explicitly calls the dialectic as a kind of *tekhne* in the *Republic* (533b).²⁴

The virtue of the *psykhē* (soul) that appears as the main concern in whole *Republic* is going to be seen in the management of the *polis* (401d, 427e). Because for Plato, the man and the *polis* have parallel characteristics much in common (Voegelin, 2000, pp. 85-86). In this pattern he speaks of a sophistic or philosophic *polis*, in relation to the ruler (*Resp.* 540d-e). *Polis* is a reflection of its ruler's wisdom. The wise ruler counsels well, then the *polis* is to be called wise and well advised (*Resp.* 428b-d). The wise men, as the prospective rulers and guardians of the Plato's ideal state are the smallest in number of all the groups in that society (*Resp.*

23 Plato proposes that the education on music will help them to control emotions and desires for the virtue of the soul. Again, for the virtue of the soul, he thinks that the poetry and tragedy should be expelled from the state. Because they manipulate the feelings and have deteriorated effects on morale (*Resp.* 603b-605c).

24 For *dialektikē tekhnē* see also *Pl. Phdr.* 276e.

428e). So, whether the state is managed wisely depends on this small minority. Here again, we can assume that Plato was reacting against the malfunctioning of democracy in Athens in that time and that the constitution of his ideal state again is in keeping with philosophic aristocracy.

We can see another reaction to the malfunctioning of democracy in Athens, in the Aristotle's political treatise *Politics*. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), the pupil of Plato, was a native of Stageira, on the eastern coast of Chalcidice. After his arrival in Athens in 367 B.C., he became a follower of Plato's academy and lived there for twenty years as a *metic*, free foreigner (Ober, 2001, p. 290). Then, for a long time he was away from Athens. When he returned to this city in 335 B.C. he founded his own school, the *Lyceum*. That time, the democracy in Athens was in a state of corruption and Aristotle came to the conclusion that the excessive freedom given to the individuals could be highly damaging to the functioning of democracy and even could put an end to it (Cohen de Lara, 2018, p. 28). The reason why he thought so, probably was that the democracy in practice then was working just in the interest of the poor, not of the whole community (*Pol.* 1279b9). Instead of full democracy, he proposes a mixed constitution for his ideal state in which the *polis* and *politês* are represented in an organic integrity (*Pol.* 1265b33-34). He defines the place and role of men in that organic integrity as "*zōon politikon*" (*Pol.* 1253a8) which means the man is by his very nature political. The citizens belong to the state and the state exists and works for the good of her citizens (*Pol.* 1337a28). So, the state is required to provide an ideal kind of education for her citizens (*Pol.* 1337b4) so that they may achieve a high grade of potentiality to live that ideal good life. Therefore, the ideal prospective politicians of this ideal state are expected to determine the system of education that is to be used in the instruction of young citizens for certain desired results.

The system of the education in *Politics* is based on age classes. From infancy to the age of seven no formal instruction is required (*Pol.* 1336a-1336b). Exercises in lighter gymnastics are said to take the space of time from the age seven to puberty (*Pol.* 1338b40-42). Advanced topics along with laborious exercises and strict training diet took the three years following puberty (*Pol.* 1339a5-7). While disclosing his thoughts on his system of education, under which he subsumes political art, Aristotle explains how to organize and direct it (Dyngneson, 2008, p. 176) and he seems to be emphasizing that the citizens should be educated in accordance with the spirit of the state's constitution (*Pol.* 1310a14). This he considers to be a priority and at the same time of the primary importance in order to be a state morally good and bodily healthy and functioning perfectly. Moreover, these words of Aristotle imply that to create or achieve an ideal state certain kind of education should be used

as a key instrument. Aristotle made that suggestion about the second half of the fourth century. Whereas Sparta as early as seventh century B.C., made her first constitution and started educating her citizens in the spirit of that new constitution. To understand the development of educational system in Sparta, we need a brief glance at the early political history of the Spartan *polis*.

The Spartan Constitution and Its Collectivist Principles of Education

About 1100 B.C. the Dorian immigration into Peloponnese began to take place and by the beginning of the 9th century B.C. the Dorian tribes conquered the whole region of Laconia. In the first half of the 8th century B.C. five Dorian villages united to form the *Spartan* state. In the 8th century when *the age of* colonization began and the other Greek poleis were expanding overseas by colonization in search of new lands, the Spartans crossed over the Mountain Taygetus and conquered the fertile land of neighboring Messenia despite its larger size and bigger population. After a series of wars (First Messenian War *ca.* 740-720 B.C.; Second Messenian War 685-668 B.C.), the Spartans annexed the whole region of Messenia to Lacedaemonian territory and from that time on, Sparta's main aim was to keep a tight rein on the old population of this newly seized region. That hegemony over Messenia completely changed the social and political conditions in Sparta. After these wars it became clear that the aristocrats were no longer able to maintain the state and the non-elite hoplite-farmers (heavily armed infantry *soldiers*) who had achieved a notable military success in Messenian Wars, struggled for political rights. Besides that, the growing need to control the huge population within the Messenia region required reforms in government. Therefore, the Spartan lawmaker Lycurgus instituted the reforms and wrote down a constitution called "*Rhetra*" (Plut. *Lyc.* 6.1.4). Hereafter the *Spartan* government was based on the citizen body and it was the first *hoplite* constitution in Greece.²⁵

In terms of *Rhetra*, the whole population was divided into three social groups as Spartans (or Spartiates), helots and perioeci (*perioikoi*-dwellers around). At the top of the Spartan hierarchy there were two hereditary kings and the Spartiates. The Spartiates, Dorian in origin, were the only free full citizens to take the control of the state (Hodkinson, 2014, 80). Helots²⁶ on the other hand were, as

25 In some certain *poleis*, such as Sparta, there were actually more farmers who were well-to-do non-aristocrats and more able to afford weapons. So, probably by means of that multitude of farmers who constituted the citizen body, Sparta was the first *polis* to have *hoplite* constitution. See Viggiano, 2013, pp. 123, 125.

26 On their identity see Figueira, 1999, pp. 211-244.

the pre-Dorian inhabitants of Messenia region, became state-owned agricultural serfs. They were allocated by the Spartan state to till the land of their Spartan masters and as much as the half of their produce the helots were required to hand over to their masters. This was vital for the Spartans because it ensured a complete independence to them from economic concerns, so they could devote themselves to military affairs and politics. The helots also served in the army as servants to Spartan soldiers,²⁷ but they couldn't be bought and sold by individuals. *Perioikoi*, on the other hand, as occupants of the self-governing villages throughout Laconia and Messenia, were free but non-citizen habitants of Sparta.²⁸ They were also Dorian in origin and integrated into Spartan system as traders, manufacturers, and craftsman. For the Spartans themselves were legally banned from being engaged in business affairs,²⁹ the *perioikoi* filled that gap and their economic activities were necessary for the livelihood of the city. Besides, they were obliged to pay taxes and to serve in the army together with the Spartans.

The main concern of the Spartan ruling class was to prevent any attack from hostile powers, specially to deter any revolt of the helots, who were constant threat to Spartan *polis*. Because the lands helots were tilling for the Spartan masters once had been their own property, and after the Messenian wars they were split up and allotted among the Spartans. Besides, in every field of life, the helots were always held in excessive contempt and treated cruelly and bitterly by the Spartans and it was a constant policy of Sparta to demoralize them.³⁰ So, the helots' general feeling of mistreatment and social inferiority made them the enemies of the state. They were always apt to rebel and it was a difficult task for the Spartans to control a group of people who outnumbered them.³¹ Therefore, recognizing that external laws have no real power if not written "on the soul" by education and the lifestyle (Desmond, 2011, p. 67), Lycurgus focused his attention on the education of the young Spartans, who were intended to be the prospective governors. That means, how the children should be trained was planned in accordance with the certain articles of the new constitution of Sparta. As a matter of fact, it was more than that. Because when examined, it can be seen that Xenophon in his political treatise called *Lakedaimoniön Politeia (Constitution of the Lacedaemonians)*, discusses public affairs in a loose sense, yet dwells at length on the Spartan system of education and gives us more detailed and precious information about it. The Spartan education

27 For the ratio of helots to hoplites in a war see Hdt. 9.10.1

28 They retained a measure of local autonomy and generally had been loyal (Rahe, 2016, pp. 11-12).

29 In brief, Xenophon says that there is no point in making money for the freeborn citizens of Spartan state. For reasons see Xen. *Lac.* 7.1-6.

30 For detail see Hunt, 2002, p. 16-17.

31 Thucydides (4.80.3) notes that the *Spartiates* feared especially the *plēthos* (large number) of them.

system seems to have been the core of the constitution of the Spartan state and so, to understand the Spartan State, one needs to look at its education system.

The system of education and how it should be implemented was written down in *Rhetra*. First of all, there was a specific name “*agōgē*” for the education system in Sparta.³² The *agōgē* was developed to bring up the young Spartans so as to manage the state affairs in the best way possible. Only after a successful graduation from *agōgē* the Spartan youth could join to the group of full citizens, known as *homoioi* (similars, equals). The system was prepared with the intention to make the young Spartans strong in soul and body, disciplined and fearless, perfect hoplite soldiers to maintain the well-being of their state. Only a fulltime hoplite army educated and trained in such a way could govern a kind of state like Sparta, which had constant enemies in her own territory. Therefore, the *agōgē* contained in the first place heavy physical education programs which were interspersed with communal dances, poetry and nationalistic songs of Sparta.³³ Also letters were taught only enough to serve basic needs (Plut. *Lyc.* 16.6.1). Besides, the *agōgē* was designed to produce absolute obedience to authority and to enable the prospective citizens to gain high resistance against all kinds of living conditions. This education was compulsory for all Spartan boys and was based on age classes.³⁴

In fact, the Spartan state kept a tight control over each Spartan from birth on. A *newborn boy* was subjected to an examination by state officials. If he was not found enough healthy, i.e. looked deformed or seemed to be too boney in structure he was thrown off a precipice of a cliff or a mountain to death (Plut. *Lyc.* 16. 1-2). The infants who were physically fit to survive lived with their families until the age of seven. Beginning from this age, the Spartan *paides* (this word was used for the Spartan boys between ages of 7-18) together with their age-mates were placed in a public dormitory under the supervision of Spartan state. The chief trainer of them was called *paidonomos* and he had a squad of young adults under his command to administer punishment when necessary. There was a high pressure exerted specially to the disobedient youth for conformity by the use of corporal punishment. Each *agela* (herd, pack of youths) was commanded by an *eiren*, senior student aged 20. At the age of twelve, body covering was minimal, for this purpose only a piece of cloth was given per year and food was scarce. They made their own beds of reeds which they gathered by the side of Eurotas River breaking them off with their own hands, because they were not given knives. Only certain days of the year they

32 For the term *agōgē* see Cartledge, 2003, p. 83.

33 For detail see Rahe, p. 13-14.

34 For a long detail on the age-based education of Spartans see Ducat, 2006, p. 85-112.

were allowed to take bath (Plut. *Lyc.* 16.6-7). They were taught how to steal; theft was not thought to be a crime; but being caught in action was (Plut. *Lyc.* 17.3). The boys of the age of eighteen seem to have entered their final two years of *agōgē* training. In this stage, young men called *paidiskoi* (Spartan young, aged 18 and 19) received full military training. The promising ones who were likely to obtain senior public posts in the later stages of their life were taken to *krupteia* (secret service), an institution in Spartan education system. The ones, chosen to *krupteia* were sent out into the country, provided with minimal supplies and armed only with a knife; they were hidden in a secret place during the day time; but they came out into the highways in darkness to hunt down any helot they caught (Plut. *Lyc.* 28.2-3). The implementation of such a rule of *krupteia* has generally been considered either as a kind of military training or to have been intended as a means of lessening the numbers of helots to prevent the rivalry among them and to reduce their power against any possibility of up rise. And then, when a *Spartan* reached at the age of twenty, he was regarded as a mature man, but he was still not accepted as a free and full citizen of *Sparta*. For this reason, a *hebon* (pl. *hebontes*; Spartan youth, between ages of 20-29) had to be enrolled in the army and he had to live in barracks with his companions.³⁵ After ten years of training, at the age of thirty they could be considered worthy of Spartan citizenship and expected to marry and have offsprings.³⁶ However, until they retired at the age of sixty from military service, they were regarded as the property of the Spartan state (Cartledge, 2003, p. 84).

The Greek writer and philosopher Plutarch (*ca.* 45-50 CE -*ca.*120-125 C.E.) summarizes the aim of Lycurgus' education system as follows: *In a word, he trained his fellow-citizens to have neither the wish nor the ability to live for themselves; but like bees they were to make themselves always integral parts of the whole community, clustering together about their leader, almost beside themselves with enthusiasm and noble ambition, and to belong wholly to their country* (trans. by Perrin, 1914).³⁷

Here, the main aim of the education of the Spartan state as written down in the constitution was to make the Spartans *homoioi* namely similar in character and equal in status. It was the ideology of Spartan state to minimize the internal

35 Being still under the control of *paidonomos*, they were subject to *hippagretai*. The task of *hippagretai* was to select the elite squad of 300 *hippeis* ('knights', the royal bodyguard) from among the *hebontes*. The *hippeis* were subsequently under their command. For detail see Hodkinson, 2013, p. 110.

36 The practice of the *agōgē* survived until its waning in the third century B.C. See Ducat, 2006, p. intro x.

37 Plut. *Lyc.* 25.3.1-6: Τὸ δὲ ὅλον εἶθιζε τοὺς πολίτας μὴ βούλεσθαι μηδὲ ἐπίστασθαι κατ' ἰδίαν ζῆν, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ τὰς μελίττας τῷ κοινῷ συμφυεῖς ὄντας ἀεὶ καὶ μετ' ἀλλήλων εἰλουμένους περὶ τὸν ἄρχοντα, μικροῦ δεῖν ἐξεστῶτας ἑαυτῶν ὑπ' ἐνθουσιασμοῦ καὶ φιλοτιμίας, ὅλους εἶναι τῆς πατρίδος.

conflict among its own citizens. So, the state encouraged them to take a collective and unified attitude towards each other in state affairs and hoplite warfare,³⁸ in which each soldier used his shield to protect his comrade next to him,³⁹ because any success required a bond of loyalty among them. And to ensure that loyalty, an egalitarian structure in state was necessary. Equality and unity in thought and action among citizens in this case meant a common life cycle: a single profession that of a hoplite soldier or officer that was maintained by economic freedom that was provided by the enemy namely the helot labor force and a common public life including shared meals (*sussition*).⁴⁰

Therefore the Spartan state disciplined her citizens by means of *agōgē*; taught the main principles of that communal life and engraved in their minds the opinions that the well-being and survival of the community is more important than that of a private, how to share everything they got and how to be ready to die for one's own community or country without hesitation and how to rule when they get enough mature.⁴¹ This may seem at first sight strange and unfavorable on their part when judged by the modern concept of liberty, for that system extremely limited the rights of individuals and also of families; in general it did not give the citizens any reasonable degree of liberty to realize their wishes; they were forbidden to be engaged in any trade or art other than state affairs and to own property.

On the other hand, it seems to have several strong justifications when we consider the facts and the conditions of the ages in which they used to live. First of all, as we referred to above, they were living face to face with an enemy that was by far the bigger in number. So, they had to be ready to face any uprising anytime. In ancient ages those who were masters could easily be slaves if they were not militarily well trained and if they did not act collectively. Such dangers and threats used to come not only from other nomad races but also from a race who spoke the same language and who had the same customs and same religions. Too much liberty could be the beginning of slavery. The real security in ancient times needed specially trained forces and depended, as always does, on the living and

38 In hoplite phalanx formation, huge ranges of *hoplites* were closely connected and the efficacy of the phalanx depended on how well the hoplites could maintain this formation when in combat. Full discussion in Cartledge, 1977, p. 11-27.

39 For Thucydides' explanation of hoplite phalanx formation see Thuc.5.71.1

40 *Sussition* (pl. *sussitia*) was dining group of which membership was a condition of full Spartiate status. These common meals were regarded as educational institutions in Sparta where the boys listen to the conversations of their elders on *political affairs* (Ducat, 2006, p. 93).

41 Besides the education, there were some economic measurements to provide that similarity or equality among Spartans. For example, the Spartan state prohibited the use of money and luxury and prevented any citizen from engaging in trade. The economic equality was necessary to remove the corrupting influence of money on society (Powell, 2016, p. 223).

acting collectively. Plato must have this fact in his mind while writing the *Republic*. And we see that many ancient philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and some others who wrote their book on the ideal form of and administration of a state support more or less the idea of collectivism. We can infer from this fact that dealing with the living conditions of those ancient ages involved collectivism as these thinkers and writers saw.

Conclusion

Therefore, it is clear that, as it is the case in the Plato's *Republic* and the Aristotle's *Politics*, also in the Spartan state a certain system of education was used as a significant instrument to reach a certain kind of ideal state and to ensure its survival. It was dedicated to cultivating the character of the future citizens to make them compatible with the integrity of their institutions. Through the social consciousness created by this way, the society became its own Guardian. As the Guardians in the ideal state of Plato in *Republic*, their role was primarily to maintain the well-being of the state. So, Sparta evolved into a totalitarian state in which every citizen was committed himself to the maintenance of it. The situation here, indeed, represents an obvious example of the interaction of the concept of citizenship and the system of citizenship education. By the maintenance of that citizen education system, *agōgē*, Sparta had been one of the most prominent *poleis* of Classical Greece. It seems that describing the constitution of Sparta, the ancient writers Xenophon and Plutarch regarded *its agōgē*, as the key to her political success.

On the other hand, the other leading *polis* of Classical period, the democratically constituted Athenian state, as we have mentioned above, had no state schools from the beginning or any compulsory intervention in education, but the institutions of democracy and their procedures and the social life became the educators of citizens besides the elementary education. In that milieu of Athens to be a citizen active in social affairs, particularly in politics required a new rhetorical education and anybody who could afford, got that education for his own good or interests. The democratically constituted Athenian state was devoted to freedom and that freedom was reflected to the *ethos* of citizens. Thanks to the freedom of thought and systematic use of the knowledge gained through rhetorical education many fields of literature, philosophy, art, and science developed in Athens. In consequence the city became the intellectual center of the Greek world. However, that was also a kind of liberation from ordinary and conventional restraints and that made them lost their public-spiritedness which was the main objective of the Spartan state and also the ideal states of Plato and Aristotle. Later on, devotion to common good decreased in Athens and this entailed also the rejection of the

traditions or ancestral laws and order. Therefore, it will not be implausible to think that in Athenian democratic milieu the politics and anything related to the institutions of democracy shaped the education of citizens. That means, even when there was no state interference in education, they interacted heavily *per se*.

To sum, however the two *Greek poleis* Athens and *Sparta* represent illustrative contrasts in terms of the patterns of education they pursued, the strong integrity between the state (*polis*) and citizen (*politês*) appears in the interrelated connection of education (*paideia*) and politics (*politeia*) in both *poleis*. As a result of which, the education had deep impacts and long-term consequences on ancient states' functioning and whether planned or not, the education assumed a direct instrumental role in ancient politics.

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