

CLAUDIA ZICHI

***TYRTAEUS IN PLATO: A CASE OF POETRY AT THE SERVICE OF
PHILOSOPHY.***

MASTER AVHANDLING

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Index

Introduction.....	3
1. The Relation between Plato and Sparta.....	5
1.1 Tyrtaeus as Sparta's spokesman.....	5
1.2 284a-285d: a pro-Lacedaemon passage in the <i>Hippias Major</i>	11
2. Philosophy's appropriation of Poetry.....	15
2.1 Tyrtaeus in Plato's <i>Law</i> s II (660e-661a)	15
2.2 The submission of bravery in the scale of virtue.....	22
3. Conclusion.....	27
4. Bibliography.....	29

INTRODUCTION

This study will address a set of questions about how Plato appropriates¹ Tyrtaeus' poetry for the benefit of his own philosophical writing. In particular we will focus on Tyrtaeus' elegiac poem, *Eunomia*, as quoted in the *Laws*.² The *Laws* is the longest of Plato's extant works. In this dialogue, that resembles more a philosophical treatise than an actual dialogue, Plato sums up the issues regarding the establishing of a society's laws. Even though almost all the talking is lead by the Athenian, and his interlocutors are almost only listeners, their presence is significant because of their different nationalities. The body of the laws for the ideal city is in fact a blend of the different codes in force in Athens, Sparta, and Crete.

In this study we will focus on Plato's reading of poetry, especially Tyrtaeus' poetry, in the first books of the *Laws* and we will demonstrate that his reception oscillates between approval and disapproval. In order to prove Plato's approval of some kind of poetry, we will study Plato's reference to Tyrtaeus and quotations of his verses and we will try to prove that the poet's words are used in order to establish Plato's own argument about the individuation of the best virtue. A more general purpose of this study will be to analyse Plato's incorporation of lyric poetry into the fabric of his own work.

Tyrtaeus' quotation will be analysed both in the framework of its original poetic context and in Plato's new philosophical context. From this perspective we will discuss the extent to which Plato disregards and changes the content of Tyrtaeus' original. As regards Plato's misinterpretation of Tyrtaeus' poem in 660a-661e we will consider the meaning of textual variants and the significance of any change that Plato makes to it. In terms of context, there will be discussed the literary setting of the original text and the philosophical context in which the quotation is inserted.

According to one of the major studies regarding Plato's reference to Tyrtaeus, *Tyrtée et Platon* by Des Places,³ this reference to the poet serves to demonstrate that Tyrtaeus' conception of a society only oriented towards war is incomplete, if not entirely false. According to the scholar, Plato, later in dialogue, dismisses Tyrtaeus' scale of value, by saying that courage is not at all the first and the best of human virtues. We will point out that, on the contrary, the poet's words are perceived as the fundamental basis on which Plato can build his own argument.

When it comes to poetry, it is generally accepted that Plato shows different approaches to the works of earlier poets, from fleeting allusions to the exegesis of extended portions of text, such as the passage from Simonides discussed in the *Protagoras* or Stesichorus' Palinode considered in the *Phaedrus*. The Platonic dialogues contain hundreds of

¹ The verb *appropriate* will be intended here and in the rest of the work with the following meaning according to WEBSTER. 106, 1997 : "To set apart for, or assign to, a particular person or use, in exclusion of all others".

² Unless otherwise indicated translations of the *Laws* are mine.

³ DES PLACES, 1942, 23: "Voilà pourquoi la conception lacédémonienne du courage, celle que Tyrtée a exprimée dans ses Élégies, lui apparaît comme incomplète, sinon entièrement fausse".

quotations or allusions to the earlier poets.⁴ Plato discusses the poetic word and, when it is necessary, he confutes it, so that it can be functional to his own ethical principles. In Plato's view, poetic discourse holds the cultural authority to "speak" on the most important matters of life,⁵ and therefore it has to supply some specific criteria, and it must be held responsible and subject to the ethical interrogation of philosophical enquiry.⁶

Nowadays it is generally recognized that Plato assigned a great task to poetry, though, for decades Plato's scholars have been puzzled by the apparent inconsistency that we meet in Plato's writings and by the disagreement about poetry and its role in book III and X of the *Republic*. It is argued, for example, that while *Republic* III banishes only some kind of imitative poetry (epic poetry for instance), *Republic* X claims that all imitative poetry has to be excluded from the ideal state (X 595a), though in the same book some forms of imitation are allowed, namely hymns and encomia (X 607a).⁷

We can also go one step further and claim that Plato's attack on poetry as conveyed in book X of *Republic* does not regard lyric poetry in its entirety.⁸

In Plato's *corpus* there is enough evidence to infer that Plato may evaluate lyric poetry, especially elegiac poetry, in a different way from epic or drama. The principal reason for this different attitude is that lyric poets do not make use of *mimesis* in a systematic way. Unlike epic or dramatic poets, lyric poets can, in some circumstances, be worth trusting. In other words Plato approves and accepts only that kind of poetry that is useful and profitable for the ideal city.

Although Plato makes a conscious effort to dissociate himself from the tradition that makes poetry the chief educational medium, the dialogues themselves indicate that he is greatly influenced by poetry, especially lyric. Provided Plato's interest in the use of poetry, the aim of this work is twofold:

- Firstly it is a study of how Plato absorbs and reuses Tyrtaeus' words to convey his own ethical principles.
- Secondly we intend to refute the commonly accepted interpretation of Plato's quotations of Tyrtaeus, in order to strengthen the idea that Plato did admit and approve of a certain kind of poetry, namely that kind of poetry that is, in Plato's view, useful and profitable for the ideal city.

⁴ In *Meno* 77b3 Meno takes one of his definitions of virtue straight from poetry; In *Rep.* I 331a Cephalus invokes Pindar for an optimistic view of old age in which he can take comfort and solace. According to TARRANT, 1951, 60, the numbers, for explicit or certainly identifiable quotations, are: Homer 99; Hesiod 16; other hexameter source 7; elegiac poets 6; Pindar 11; other lyric poets 9; Aeschylus 8; Sophocles 1; Euripides 7; Aristophanes 2.

⁵ For the motif of poetry speaking on the most important matters of life see *Prt.* 347a2, *Rep.* 10.599c.

⁶ In relation to poetry submitted to philosophy see also GIULIANO, 2005.

⁷ NEHAMAS, 1982, 47–78.

⁸ With the expression Lyric Poetry we refer to the general term that scholars adopt in order to distinguish between epic, didactic, and dramatic poetry and all the extant Greek poetry, that can be subdivided in melic poetry, elegy and iambus. West, 1993, 3–6.

1. The Relation between Plato and Sparta

1.1 Tyrtaeus as Sparta's spokesman

In the *Laws* Plato presents political principles in their concrete reality as he imagined they might be embodied in an actual Greek city. These details of constitution writing and legislation cannot themselves be rightly understood outside their setting: 4th century Greece. This is the fundamental reason why every time Plato addresses his predecessors in the matters of moral politics, he tries to adapt them to his own time. In this chapter we will therefore sketch a brief history of the role Tyrtaeus played in his own time, the seventh century, and how Plato perceived him three centuries later, in the fourth century.

In the first book of the *Laws*, three old men converse about cities and legislation with reference to the best mode of living, opening with the question of whether society laws are of divine or human origin. Under the leadership of the Athenian, the simple assertion of a divine origin appears inadequate as they realize that, whatever the primary divine intentions were, the reasons for the legislations have been obscured by time. A new, intelligent examination of these matters is required. Cleinias, native of Crete, asserts that all legislation is geared towards war, τῶν πολεμικῶν ἔνεκα.⁹ A comparison is set-up between larger and smaller political units in order to understand the legal practices in Crete and Sparta (626c). At this point the Athenian (probably Plato's alter-ego) feels the necessity to consult Tyrtaeus, who, being Athenian by birth, τὸν φύσει μὲν Ἀθηναῖον, had obtained Spartan citizenship, τῶνδε (sc. *Lacedaemonians*), δὲ πολίτην γενόμενον.¹⁰

In the same lines we read that Tyrtaeus more than all other men was interested in the importance of war in the life of citizens, the same object of discussion of the Athenian, ὃς δὴ μάλιστα ἀνθρώπων περὶ ταῦτα ἐσπούδακεν (629a). Already from this first introduction of Tyrtaeus we can infer that he was read and admired in Athens at that time. Plato spends only few words to introduce the poet in the conversation and the reason is that his interlocutors, especially Megillus, are replete, διακορεῖς, with the poet's words. About the elegiac poet the Athenian just says that he is a native of Athens and citizen of Sparta. Interlocutors are well aware of who he is, for he is part of the common cultural heritage.¹¹ Secondly, by using the verb προῖστασθαι to introduce the poet in the conversation, the Athenian intends to put Tyrtaeus in a position of authority over the

⁹ *Leg.* 628e3-5: θαυμάζω γε μὴν εἰ τὰ τε παρ' ἡμῖν νόμιμα καὶ ἔτι τὰ περὶ Λακεδαιμόνα μὴ πᾶσαν τὴν σπουδὴν τούτων (πολεμικῶν) ἔτι ἔνεκα πεποιήται.

¹⁰ In *Description of Greece* (IV 15 6), Pausanias tells in details about an Athenian legend that gained lot of support in the IV century B.C. According to it, Tyrtaeus was a lame, mediocre teacher in Athens, Τυρταῖος διδάσκαλος γραμμάτων νοῦν τε ἥκιστα ἔχειν δοκῶν. When the oracle advised Spartans to welcome an Athenian advisor, the Athenians willing to harm their enemy, sent them Tyrtaeus in bad faith. The legend tells then that thanks to Tyrtaeus' martial songs the morale of the troops was restored and citizens were educated in fighting for their own country. As a result of it Spartans achieved victory against the second revolt of Messenians about 660 B.C.

¹¹ See also *Prt.* 339b4, when Protagoras asks Socrates if he knows Simonides' song (Socrates replies that he knows it well) and whether he needs to quote it in full. For accounts of poets' words in Plato *corpus* taken as a source of phrases, ideas, motifs, and images that might be recovered and cited in conversation, or in public speech, see HALLIWELL, 2000.

interlocutors.¹² Finally the scholion to this passage¹³ says that the Athenian refers to Tyrtaeus since he was considered a war-counselor, ἐν τῷ λόγῳ παρέλαβεν ὁ Ἀθηναῖος ξένος, ὥς καὶ αὐτὸν πολέμου σύμβουλον γεγονότα.

The Athenian regards Tyrtaeus as the outstanding representative of the Spartan spirit and its ideal of ἀρετή, excellence in battle. Tyrtaeus explicitly privileges martial ἀρετή, which is considered a common good for both the city and the entire people, ξυνὸν δ' ἐσθλὸν τοῦτο πόλῃ τε παντί τε δήμῳ (fr. 12, 15). Through his poetry Tyrtaeus exhorts his fellow citizens to fight death in defence of their community, in order both to win glory and to avert shame.¹⁴ The man who bravely falls in battle is “a common good” for the city and only the city can demand the citizens to sacrifice themselves. If he does not fulfil his task he is destined to dishonour, to a life of shame and misery.¹⁵

In Plato's passage, Tyrtaeus' best value, excellence in battle, is surpassed by the virtue praised by Theognis, *that loyalty in peril that may be called perfect righteousness*, αὐτὴ πιστότης ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς, ἣν τις δικαιοσύνην ἂν τελέαν ὀνομάσειεν (630c5-6). The Athenian claims that success in civil strife requires higher qualities than success in foreign warfare, because, to succeed in the former, a man must win the trust of his fellow citizens. Bodily courage is clearly not sufficient to accomplish this task. A good warrior must possess all virtues. On the base of this argument, namely the fact that the Athenian disdains Tyrtaeus' virtue in favour of other higher virtues, Tigerstedt states that in this passage Plato is only speaking ironically: “in a way by no means unusual for him, he deliberately explains away the words of the poet. ... If one regards courage as the supreme virtue, then civil war must be regarded as the best war, because it is the most bloody and ruthless and thus permits the manifestation of the best virtue”.¹⁶ Even if we accept that Plato did not entirely agree with the position held by Tyrtaeus, Tigerstedt's analysis stretches too far to infer an ironic treatment of Tyrtaeus words. It might be reductive and almost absurd to expect Plato to praise ἀνδρεία as the most important virtue in the life of a citizen of the 4th century, since in Plato's time Athens was more complex and sophisticated than Sparta, in the 7th century.

When it comes to Plato's admiration for the Spartan society, we find general agreement among scholars in stating that Sparta is the main source of inspiration for Plato's political theory. They basically ground their assumption on the evidence we find in Plutarch's *Lycurgus*, when Plutarch says that “Lycurgus' design for civil policy was adopted by Plato, Diogenes and Zeno”.¹⁷ Many modern scholars, Ollier among others, consider Plato's state only as an improvement of Lycurgus' city. Undoubtedly Plato often speaks admiringly of the wise and clever Lycurgus (*Lett. VIII* 354b) and his good Laws (*Phdr.* 258 b-c; *Rep.* X 599d; *Leg.* 630d). Although in the *Laches* (182e) it is said in a few words that in all their lives “they (the Spartans) only strive to learn that which will confer them superiority in

¹² LSJ, προῖστημι: “προοστήσωμεθα Τύρταιον” *put him forward, cite him as an authority*, Pl. *Lg.* 629a.

¹³ Schol. ad loc. 629°.

¹⁴ WEST, 1993. The notion of fighting in and for a group occurs often in the *corpus*, see fr. 6, 15-18, 21-9, 3.

¹⁵ For the kind of life reserved to citizens who came back to Sparta, having lost the battle, see POWELL, 1988.

¹⁶ TIGERSTEDT, 1965, n. 377.

¹⁷ PLUT. *Lycurgus* 31,2: ταύτην καὶ Πλάτων ἔλαβε τῆς πολιτείας ὑπόθεσιν καὶ Διογένης καὶ Ζήνων.

war”.¹⁸ By no means unusual for Plato, we find a mixture of admiration and criticism when it comes to the Spartan society.

Fundamental likeness between Plato’s ideal state and the Spartan State consists in the fact that in both, the individual is educated for the State and realizes himself in the State. However, this does not mean that on the whole the judgment on the Spartan community is favourable. Sparta is a military state, led by brave but ruthless, crafty and uneducated soldiers who merely out of fear of punishment fake frugality and moral purity that in reality they do not possess. Above all, Spartans are related neither to the arts of the Muses,¹⁹ nor to philosophy and thus are devoid of what constitutes the true value of man. More telling criticism occurs in the VIII book of the *Republic* (esp. 547 d-e and 548 a-b) where a state of timocracy is exemplified by the Laconian Constitution. In timocracy we find the supremacy of θυμός, the ambitious, combative, passionate elements in human nature. Even if Plato had not explicitly mentioned Sparta, it seems clear enough that he is referring to it.²⁰

At the same time it should be reminded that from the end of the seventh century to the middle of the fourth there were very few intervals when Sparta was not regarded as the most powerful state in Greece. We may then suppose that a philosopher like Plato, interested in politics or legislation, should first give attention to Sparta, whose success in maintaining her commanding position in Greece seemed to be evidence of peculiar excellence in her laws.

There was certainly much in this system of which Plato does not approve. In his own program of education for the young we shall see that he ignores, if he does not explicitly reject, the most extreme features of the ἀγωγή: the grouping of the young men into bands, or herds, the brutal and brutalizing ordeals in endurance of pain, and the systematized pugnacity of their games and contests.²¹ But there is something he very much appreciates in the Spartan community: the complete submission of the citizen to the laws of his city. Plato clearly wishes to make the state responsible for the education of the young, and he sees that he must use all possible means of persuasion, in all areas of the citizen's life, if the principles of the law are to form the character and become the inner motives of a man's actions. Tyrtaeus’ poetry served exactly this scope: to create the citizens the institutions require.

In the fragment of Tyrtaeus, which Plato refers to (*fr.* 12 West), Tyrtaeus speaks like a full-blooded Spartan. In his poems he expresses strong feelings like the disregard of death, patriotism, iron-hard manliness, and an unshakeable loyalty to the city. He is the voice of the fighting warrior community of Sparta. It is against Plato’s principle to entirely accept the type of society praised by Tyrtaeus, a society that only aims for victory at war. On the other hand there are certain features in Tyrtaeus’ poetry that may suggest that Plato actually admitted his works in his ideal state.

¹⁸ *Laches*: οἷς (Λακεδαιμονίοις) οὐδὲν ἄλλο μέλει ἐν τῷ βίῳ ἢ τοῦτο ζητεῖν καὶ ἐπιτηδεύειν, ὅτι ἂν μαθόντες καὶ ἐπιτηδεύσαντες πλεονεκτοῖεν τῶν ἄλλων περὶ τὸν πόλεμον (182e).

¹⁹ Μουσική, according to LSJ, is defined as “any art over which the Muses presided ,esp. music or lyric poetry.

²⁰ See SHOREY, 1987. Cf. XEN. *Const. Lac.* 14, 2-3.

²¹ MORROW, 1960.

First, unlike Homer and Hesiod, Tyrtaeus does not place his poetry in a legendary time, but, as Jaeger notes, he bases almost all his poetry on historical events.²² Furthermore, Tyrtaeus does not speak for himself alone: he is the spokesman of the community, the spokesman of the Spartan army, not to say its propagandist, and he is well aware of his task. The ἐγώ of the first verse of *fr.* 12 refers to all the community; it is an “impersonal collective I”, as Jaeger puts it.²³ The ἀρετή which Tyrtaeus praises is of a different sort compared to the competitive bravery of Homeric heroes. It is the disciplined solidarity of citizens, and he eulogizes the unconditional sacrifice of self for one’s city. This civic virtue, this ideal of state hitherto not found in archaic poetry, found its first and great expression in Tyrtaeus. He is the first great poet of the city-state.²⁴ It is then remarkable that Plato took just this poem of Tyrtaeus as the starting point for his great discussion of Sparta in the *Laws*.

A more subtle tribute to the Spartan society can be found in the *Protagoras*, in a passage in which the underlying seriousness is veiled, as so often in Plato, by irony. The irony regards Socrates’ interpretation of a poem written by Simonides. Socrates misinterprets the poem, but this misinterpretation is not easy to detect, since only at the end of the dialogue Socrates declares that on the whole the debate of what Simonides did, or did not, mean, had been an exercise in triviality, a complete waste of time, and a tasteless one.²⁵ At 342a-343c we find a short digression, when Socrates contends that of all the Greeks, the Spartans and the Cretans have cultivated philosophy the most seriously and for the longest time: λέγω καὶ Λακεδαιμόνιοι πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν καὶ λόγους ἄριστα πεπαιδευνται, *I believe Spartans are the most educated in matters of philosophy and discourses*. This statement clearly was nonsense: Greek Philosophy first flourished in the cities of Asia Minor, founded by Ionian Greeks, as was Athens itself. The Spartans were Dorians. According to Vlastos, the evidence provided by the context leaves no room for doubt about the irony contained in the passage; the Spartans were generally regarded as uncultivated and as interested only in gymnastics and in military exercises.²⁶ Socrates then ironically states that this pretence is part of their cleverness, since it makes the Laconizers thinking that if they practice boxing and other forms of gymnastics, and wear short cloaks in the Spartan fashion, they can conquer the rest of the Greeks, like the Spartans. He continues, this time seriously, claiming that Spartans’ superiority is due to their wisdom, σοφία, not a wisdom that shows itself in fluent and eloquent discourse, but such as comes out unexpectedly in some pithy saying:

Σω. τὰ μὲν πρῶτα ἐν τοῖς λόγοις εὐρήσει αὐτὸν φαῦλόν τινα φαινόμενον, ἔπειτα, ὅπου ἂν τύχη τῶν λεγομένων, ἐνέβαλεν ῥῆμα ἄξιον λόγου βραχὺ καὶ

²² JAEGER, 1932.

²³ JAEGER, 1932, 52: “ganz unpersönlich kollektives ich”.

²⁴ SNELL, 1969, BOWRA, 1938.

²⁵ *Protag.* καὶ γὰρ δοκεῖ μοι τὸ περὶ ποιήσεως διαλέγεσθαι ὁμοιότατον εἶναι τοῖς συμποσίοις τοῖς τῶν φαύλων καὶ ἀγοραίων ἀνθρώπων. (347c3-5).

²⁶ VLASTOS, 1991, 136.

συνεστραμμένον ὥσπερ δεινὸς ἀκοντιστῆς, ὥστε φαίνεσθαι τὸν προσδιαλεγόμενον παῖδός μὴδὲν βελτίω.²⁷

*So.: at first you will find him (an ordinary Spartan) acting like a dull fellow for most of the conversation; but then, no matter what you are talking about, he flings in some notable remark, short and compressed saying, like a skilful darter, and making his interlocutor look no more than a child.*²⁸

An example of this “deadly shot” is, for instance, the “Nothing in excess” attributed to Chilon, the Lacedaemonian member of the Seven Sages.²⁹ As Morrow clearly points out, “the wisdom meant in the *Protagoras* is of course not the dialectical intellectual σοφία, which Plato regards as the crowning achievement of education; it is rather a sturdy moral sense, unpolished by superficial accomplishment, and unaffected by reflective doubts”.³⁰ The choice of the maxims that illustrate this wisdom (“know thyself”; “nothing in excess”; “excellence is hard”) shows clearly the serious undertone in Socrates’ irony. If we are to take this passage seriously, we can even read here a connection with the mention of Tyrtaeus in the first book of the *Laws*. Tyrtaeus is the Spartan poet who preaches virtues to the citizens. The question that consequently arises is: if there really were some kind of σοφία behind Spartan military prowess, would not Plato refer to the one who actually spurred this moral value? It might be possible to read in Plato’s mention of Tyrtaeus a clue of his will to discover a deeper source of Spartan strength.³¹

This analytical attitude is marked in the *Laws*, particularly in the early books, where the principles are laid down for the detailed legislation to follow. In the *Laws* from 628c to 660 d-e the Athenian criticizes the Spartan constitution, ending his arguments saying that Clinias and Megillos’ state has the constitution of an armed camp, and that they have never learned the highest μουσική τέχνη. Nevertheless, the very fact that they figure in this dialogue is a proof that these constitutions were worth criticizing.

Moreover, as it has been noted by Morrow, when it comes to Sparta’s constitution, Plato had in high esteem first of all its stability.³² Among other characteristics of Spartans praised by the Greeks of Plato’s time, we surely can count: the supremacy of law, the courage and political concord of the citizens. What we find in Sparta is a constitution that could maintain the supremacy of law for such a long period, and that could mould its citizens so efficiently into conformity with the laws’ demands. This Spartan *eunomia* certainly had some secrets of wisdom to reveal to the earnest inquirer into politics, as Plato was. What were the causes of this *eunomia* so manifest among Lacedaemonians, so

²⁷ *Protagoras*, 342d7-9.

²⁸ Translation is based on Taylor, 1996, but slightly revised.

²⁹ Critias makes a point by attributing this saying to Chilon, DIELS-KRANZ, ,380, 7.

³⁰ MORROW, 1960, 46.

³¹ It is an anticipation of the *Laws* 630 d, when the Athenian endeavors to show his Cretan and Lacedaemonian friends that they do not truly understand the intent of their legislator if they regard their laws as designed solely for success in war.

³² See also THUCYDIDES, I, 18,1.

frequently lacking elsewhere? To understand Plato's reference to Tyrtaeus we must try to find the answer to this question.

One piece of evidence on this pattern is found in Herodotus, when he mentions Spartans' stubborn devotion to their laws. Herodotus writes about Xerxes' expedition against Greece in 480. The Spartan Demaratus, talking to Xerxes, who is going to meet Spartans at Thermopylae, says that he should be worried since Spartans fear their law more than his subjects fear him: ἐλεύθεροι γὰρ ἔόντες οὐ πάντα ἐλεύθεροί εἰσι· ἔπεστι γὰρ σφι δεσπότης νόμος, τὸν ὑποδειμαίνουσι πολλῶ ἔτι μᾶλλον ἢ οἱ σοὶ σε.³³ The same profound fear and respect for the law we find in the epigram of Simonides, composed for the Spartans who died at Thermopylae:

ὦ ξεῖν', ἀγγέλλειν Λακεδαιμονίοις ὅτι τῇδε // κείμεθα, τοῖς κείνων ῥήμασι πειθόμενοι.³⁴

*go tell the Spartans that here, obedient to their words, we lie.*³⁵

The Spartan ideal of dying for the homeland had been memorably expressed by their poet Tyrtaeus, whose songs had stiffened their determination during the long war with the Messenians, and were ever afterward sung as the best expression of their conception of civic virtue. It is not a coincidence that Plato admires Tyrtaeus! Plato's reference to the poet's songs shows that he is aware of their importance in moulding the Spartans' character.³⁶ As Jaeger points out, Spartan education no longer had as its aim the selection of heroes, as Homeric epic did, but the formation of an entire city of heroes.³⁷ From Plato's perspective about poetry, as it is sketched in the *Republic* and in the *Laws*, we can infer that he himself was looking for someone who could, through a more rational (and less imitative), kind of poetry educate an entire city. In the fourth century Spartan state had achieved a remarkable place in history of education, and its ideals had been enhanced and conveyed by Tyrtaeus' poetry. We might therefore conclude that Tyrtaeus incarnates the poet who more than others fulfilled Plato's idea of an education based on moral poetry.

Because in Plato's time Sparta was considered an example of good institutions, in the first book of the *Laws* Plato takes Spartan πόλις as the point of departure for the creation of his political city. Proceeding in the same way, to begin the discussion about the best virtue, Plato refers to Tyrtaeus regarding him as an authority in this field. Therefore we shall conclude that Plato considers him as an example of how a poet should act for the country he is devoted to.

³³ HERODOTUS, *Hist.* VII 104, 4.

³⁴ HERODOTUS, *Hist.* VII 228, 2.

³⁵ Translation based on GODLEY, 1982, but revised.

³⁶ *Laws* 629a-e.

³⁷ JAEGER, 1946.

1.2 284b-285d: A Pro-Lacedaemon passage in the *Hippias Major*

It has been amply demonstrated that Plato, when speaking about Sparta, underlines its virtues as well as its vices.³⁸ The dialogues contain many echoes of the conventional praise of Sparta for the excellence of its laws and the character of her citizens. In this study we will consider in particular one passage of the *Hippias Major*, which illustrates to what extent Spartan way of teaching is useful to the city. The *Hippias Major* is one of the earlier dialogues, and it is concerned with the definition of “beauty”.³⁹ In the dialogue some of the most common thoughts about Spartan education are expressed. Socrates, in order to discredit Hippias' claims as a teacher, refers to the Spartan concern for the right education of young men. Socrates points out that maybe the Spartans refused to put their children under Hippias' tutelage because they can educate their children better than him (283d6-11):

ΣΩ. τί δῆτ' ἂν εἴη ὅτι ἐπιθυμοῦντες καὶ ἔχοντες χρήματα, καὶ σοῦ δυναμένου τὰ μέγιστα αὐτοὺς ὠφελεῖν, οὐ ὠφελεῖν, οὐ πλήρη σε ἀργυρίου ἀπέπεμψαν; ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνο, μῶν μὴ Λακεδαιμόνιοι σοῦ βέλτιον ἂν παιδεύσειαν τοὺς αὐτῶν παῖδας; ἢ τοῦτο φῶμεν οὕτω, καὶ σὺ συγχωρεῖς;

*So. What, then, could be the reason, that when they desired it and had money, and you had power to render them the greatest benefits, they did not take benefits, neither send you loaded with money? But maybe this, perhaps the Lacedaemonians might educate their own children better than you? Shall we state so and you agree?*⁴⁰

Hippias does not agree with Socrates that the Spartans educate their children better than a sophist does. His answers imply, as it becomes explicit later, that Spartans are “lawless”, παράνομοι (285b), since they do not allow a foreigner to teach to their youth, even if this teacher would give them a more beneficial education than the local one. Therefore, since Hippias states that it is more lawful for the sons of Lacedaemonians to be educated by him than by their families, Socrates concludes that Lacedaemonians are acting against the law by not giving the money to Hippias and not entrusting their sons to him, παρὰ νόμον οὖσιν ἄρα Λακεδαιμόνιοι οὐ διδόντες σοι χρυσίον καὶ ἐπιτρέποντες τοὺς αὐτῶν υἱεῖς, *so Spartans go against the law, by not giving you the money and not entrusting you their sons* (285 b).

Socrates seconds here the reasoning of his interlocutor Hippias in order to make him reveal his own belief: Spartans are very fond to listen only to that sort of things that may be recited. When Socrates asks Hippias what are the subjects Spartans mostly like to hear from him, Hippias answers (285d8-12):

³⁸ See among others, MORROW, 1960.

³⁹ The authenticity of the *Hippias Major* is testified by the authority of the tradition and by the undeniable platonic features in the dialogue. For the discussion about its authenticity, see CROSET, 1921, 3-7.

⁴⁰ Translations of *Hippias Major* are based on FOWLER, 1926 but slightly revised.

περὶ τῶν γενῶν, ὃ Σώκρατες, τῶν τε ἡρώων καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ τῶν κατοικήσεων, ὡς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἐκτίσθησαν αἱ πόλεις, καὶ συλλήβδην πάσης τῆς ἀρχαιολογίας ἥδιστα ἀκροῶνται, ὥστ' ἔγωγε δι' αὐτοὺς ἠνάγκασμαι ἐκμεμαθηκέναι τε καὶ ἐκμεμελετηκέναι πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα.

They are very fond of hearing about genealogies, Socrates, of heroes and men, and the foundations of cities in ancient times; and in general all that is related to the ancient world, so that I was forced, because of them, to learn by heart all these subjects and to deal with them.

Hippias, probably unconsciously, is saying that Spartans do not want him to speak about ethical, important matters, but only about genealogies of heroes and men, i.e. a subject that does not need particular philosophical explanations.

This sincere but simultaneously naive response of Hippias gives Socrates the opportunity to state that Spartans make use of Hippias exactly as children make use of old women, to tell stories in a pleasant way (286a2-5):

ὥστ' ἐννοῶ ὅτι εἰκότως σοι χαίρουσιν οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι ἅτε πολλὰ εἰδότι, καὶ χρῶνται ὥσπερ ταῖς πρεσβύτισιν οἱ παῖδες πρὸς τὸ ἡδέως μυθολογῆσαι.

so well, I imagine Spartans rejoice at you, as at the man who knows everything, and they make use of you like children make use of old women, to tell stories in a pleasant way.

The context of this passage is clearly ironic in respect to Hippias, whose way of teaching is an object of derision. However, if we take Socrates' last words more seriously, we might read here praises to Spartans who do not give credit to a sophist like Hippias.

For a better understanding of Socrates' attitude towards the Spartans in this passage it might be useful to relate firstly what we read about Sparta in the Socratic dialogues⁴¹ to what we know about Socrates' ideas and habits. A sketch of Socrates' habits might be found in Aristophanes' *Birds*, when the comic poet inserts Socrates among the ridiculous Laconizers:

ἐλακωνομάνουν ἅπαντες ἄνθρωποι τότε,
ἐκόμων, ἐπείνων, ἐρρύπων, ἐσωκράτων,
σκυτάλι' ἐφόρουν (1280-1283).

*All men had gone Laconian-mad; they went long-haired, half-starved, unwashed, they had Socratitis, with scytales in their hands.*⁴²

With the expression "had Socratitis", Aristophanes probably refers not only to Socrates' Spartan-tough physique (*Smp.* 220 a-c), but also to his ability to go without food and his

⁴¹ Through the expression "Socratic dialogues" I refer to the earlier dialogues of Plato, where Socrates, as one of Plato's character, pursues, the philosophical inquiry.

⁴² Translation is based on DUNBAR, 1995, but slightly revised.

indifference of cleanliness (*Smp.* 174a).⁴³ That Socrates himself was an admirer of Sparta is also strongly suggested in Plato's dialogue *Critias* (52e): "Sparta and Crete which you (Soc.) constantly say have eunomia, εὐνομεῖσθαι". What we read here are hints of the "laconomania" of the philosopher.⁴⁴ In a passage of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Socrates praised Lycurgus since he established in Sparta obedience to the laws πείθεσθαι τοῖς νόμοις, unlike all other cities (IV 4 15), and in the *Symposium* when talking to Callias Socrates advised him to reflect upon the practices that made Lacedaemonians the best commanders, κράτιστοι ἡγεμόνες (VIII, 39). In the same passage of *Memorabilia* (IV 4) Socrates praises Spartans even more. He argues that if the Athenians aim to defeat the actual decadence, they have to go back to the ancient habits, and they should imitate those who now are "in the first rank". From this passage we can infer that the comparison between Spartans and Athenians is remarkably unfavourable towards the latter group. What is more, Spartans are presented as models when it comes to respect for the old, physical training, and obedience to magistrates. There is enough evidence to conclude that Socrates' account of the Spartans' character is on the whole very positive.

Having considered the piece of evidence of Socrates' attitude towards Sparta in other works, we can now look back at the passage in the *Hippias Major* and demonstrate that a similar attitude towards Spartans can also be read in the *Hippias Major* or in the *Protagoras*, whose passages undoubtedly contain a good part of irony in regard to Hippias, but where it is nonetheless still possible to trace some serious undertones. In the *Hippias Major*, the prologue is dedicated to the relationship between Hippias and Sparta. What is the reason of this introduction? Is it not the occasion to underline a strong contrast between the Spartans and the sophist? By tracing a contrast, some traits of the sophist come easier to light. The result is then not at all favourable for Hippias. Spartans dislike his long speeches, and the sophists' futile innovations in discourse are dangerous because they may seduce and then turn away Spartan youth from virtue. When Socrates accuses Spartans of being lawless, παράνομοι, because they do not accept Hippias' teachings of virtue, he is certainly ironic: Lacedaemonians are, on the contrary, more clever than Hippias, since they know that Spartan youth will not benefit from him.

Surely we cannot read this passage entirely as praise for Spartans, because Socrates still despises their ignorance and indifference towards all the arts (285d). But even if Sparta is not the city that Plato can elect as having the best constitution, still, he admires their good sense and their practical knowledge. In other words, if Plato had to start from some place to build his own ideal state, Sparta would undoubtedly be the best place to start from.

In the *Hippias Major*, through the comparison between the Lacedaemonians' way of speech (namely concise, short, and wise sayings) and the sophists' long and futile speech, Plato succeeds in presenting on the one hand, the sophist Hippias in a totally unfavourable light, and on the other hand Sparta as the master of practical and convenient knowledge. Spartan teaching represents in this portrait the contrary of a sophist teaching. Since Plato's Socrates disapproved of sophists, we may assume that Plato actually approved of the Spartan way of education. The mixing of ironic and serious tones is

⁴³ DUNBAR, 1995.

⁴⁴ That Socrates was a great admirer of Sparta has already been noted; among others see OLLIER, 1934.

nothing new in Plato. The knowledge Spartans possess is certainly not a veritable and illuminated knowledge, but rather a practical knowledge resulting from an excellent education and good habits.⁴⁵ This is the kind of knowledge we find in the famous words of the Seven Wise Men. Undoubtedly in the *Protagoras* and in the *Hippias Major* Socrates is partly ironical, but this does not make the whole reference to the Spartan knowledge only a matter of derision.

⁴⁵ POWELL, 1994.

2 Philosophy's appropriation of Poetry

2.1 Tyrtaeus in Plato's *Laws* II (660e-661a)

Plato refers to Tyrtaeus on different occasions in the *Laws*,⁴⁶ but in this chapter we will focus on one particular passage: 660e-661a. In these lines it is evident that Plato appropriates Tyrtaeus' verses for his own purpose. We will consider not only what Plato says about Tyrtaeus, but also how he (by way of the Athenian) *uses* the poet's words, and how he adapts the words of the poet to his purpose. As this study will try to prove, Tyrtaeus' poem *Eunomia* reacts well to Plato's claims of an acceptable poem. First of all, Tyrtaeus' poem praises the good man, ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ⁴⁷, and therefore it can be related to encomia, hymns and encomia being songs of poetry approved by Plato.⁴⁸ Secondly, whereas all the virtues Tyrtaeus mentions are, in his opinion, inferior to the first and best one, i.e. bravery in war, Plato, on the other hand, while adhering to the same hierarchical reasoning in his evaluation of human virtues, puts justice ahead of all the other. Thirdly, we intend to prove that Tyrtaeus deserves credibility, since he possesses a real knowledge of the subject he is talking about. From this perspective, it seems that Plato found a way to incorporate Tyrtaeus' message into his own political view. As a consequence of this appropriation, Tyrtaeus' work may be admitted in the ideal city. In this scenario the poet is not anymore in contrast with the philosopher. Tyrtaeus' ethic has been discussed, absorbed⁴⁹ and expanded by Plato.

The general topic of the passage taken into consideration is education, παιδεία. Education, according to the Athenian, is the process of leading and guiding children towards that principle which is considered right, both by the law and by the oldest and most just men.⁵⁰ The Athenian points out that in order to accomplish this education, the city needs "chants" that are able to produce in the souls of children the necessary conformity and harmony. What is more, the legislator has the task to persuade the poet to compose, through fine and choice language, the tunes, σχήματα, of men who are temperate, σώφρονες, courageous, ἀνδρεῖοι, and good in all respects, ἀγαθοί. The point being that, by listening to characters superior to their own, the audience improves its own standard of pleasure. At the time of Plato's society the problem is that poets adapt their

⁴⁶ Passages of the *Laws* in which Tyrtaeus is cited: *Leg.* I 629 b-e; I 630 c; II 666 e-667a; IX 858 e.

⁴⁷ The complex and different meaning of "ἀγαθός" will be discussed throughout this section.

⁴⁸ *Resp.* 607e3-4: ὅτι ὅσον μόνον ὕμνους θεοῖς καὶ ἐγκώμια τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ποιήσεως παραδεκτέον εἰς πόλιν. Critics have different opinions about the evaluation of this passage. On the one hand, it seems that through the nexus, ὕμνοι θεοῖς καὶ ἐγκώμια τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς, Plato approves the traditional forms of hymns and encomia, such as the *Homeric hymns*, or the encomia from choral poetry, since this kind of poetry is not mimetic. On the other hand, the nexus may indicate the program for a new kind of poetry, based on philosophical knowledge. This poetry tends to coincide with the Platonic dialogues. For further reading in this direction see GAISER, 1984; ARRIGHETTI, 2006.

⁴⁹ The verb *absorb* will be understood with a meaning similar to the verb *appropriate*, that is, according to WYLD, 1932, 4: "to take in, assimilate (learning, ideas, knowledge etc.)."

⁵⁰ *Leg.* 659d1-5: ὡς ἄρα παιδεία μὲν ἐστ' ἡ παίδων ὀλκή τε καὶ ἀγωγή πρὸς τὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου λόγον ὀρθὸν εἰρημένον, καὶ τοῖς ἐπιεικεστάτοις καὶ πρεσβυτάτοις δι' ἐμπειρίαν συνδεδογμένον ὡς ὄντως ὀρθός ἐστιν.

works to the poor standard of pleasure of the judges, which makes *the spectators the teacher of the poets*: αὐτοὶ αὐτοὺς (scil. τοὺς ποιητὰς) οἱ θεαταὶ παιδεύουσιν (659 c1-3).

At this point Clinias replies that only Crete and Lacedaemon, among all Greek states, have accomplished this practice. The Athenian contests this claim, since this practice is his inner desire but he doubts it is already a practice in his interlocutors' cities. He assumes that in Sparta they oblige their poet, Tyrtaeus, to teach that a good man, since he is temperate and just, σώφρων ὢν καὶ δίκαιος, is a happy man, εὐδαίμων ἐστὶ καὶ μακάριος, no matter whether he be great or small, strong or weak, rich or poor ἐάντε μέγας καὶ ἰσχυρὸς ἐάντε μικρὸς καὶ ἀσθενὴς ἦ, καὶ ἐάν πλουτῇ καὶ μὴ (Leg. 660e-4-5).

Before we look at Tyrtaeus' poem as reported by Plato, it seems necessary to state first how it has been transmitted to us. Obviously we cannot say which text Plato had read; therefore we will content ourselves with looking at Tyrtaeus' elegy as it is transmitted by Stobaeus IV, 10. There we find it divided in two parts, vv. 1-14 and vv. 15-44. The second part has been attributed to Tyrtaeus by Trincavelli in the *editio princeps* of Stobaeus (1535). There is a defined symmetry in the structure. The form of the poem with this chosen structure is probably traditional, since we find parallels in other elegiac poets of the time, like Solon and Theognis.⁵¹ As Campbell points out, dividing the poem into two halves we have: 20+2 and 20+2. At verse 20 we find the end of the first section, and vv. 21-22 fill out the idea of the first 20 verses. Verses 23-42 concern the other main section, and again a final couplet conveys the final exhortation.⁵²

The first half (the one quoted by Plato) is about the “man of worth”, the ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ who has proved his value in war.⁵³ He is recognized through comparisons and the exclusion of alternative values. The originality of Tyrtaeus relies in the picture he creates of the Spartan warrior. Tyrtaeus' warrior citizen has only one aim: to fight. He fights in the closed ranks of his comrades and dies for his country. In the second half of the poem Tyrtaeus describes the rewards that await such a man first in death, then in life. The remembrance lies not in the words of the poet but rather in the city, and for a man the remembrance of the city is the highest achievement. The dead man will live in the memory of the other citizens.

In Tyrtaeus we find a complete moral system that reveals some differences from Homer's previous ideal.⁵⁴ In his fragments he is mostly concerned with two concepts: ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός

⁵¹ According to JAEGER, 1932, resemblances and allusions in Solon, and Theognis show the authenticity of Tyrtaeus' poem, because these authors must have read Tyrtaeus. Jaeger collected and commented upon the parallels: Sol. 1 32, - Tyr. 12, 29-30; Sol. 3,8 -Tyr. 12,38; the similarity between the whole of Tyrtaeus' poem and Xenophanes fr. 2 Dielhs. In it, Xenophanes treats the ἀρετή problem in a polemic on sports. In Theognis' collection, Tyr. fr. 12, vv. 13-16 and 37 -40 are equal to vv. 1003-1006 and 935. Furthermore Theognis 699-718 seems to hint at Tyrtaeus 12. In 699-718 Theognis adopts the same procedure and considers the modesty of Rhadamanthus, the wisdom of Sisyphus, the eloquence of Nestor, and the swiftness of the sons of Boreas, only to conclude that ἀρετή lies in none of these.

⁵² CAMPBELL, 1967.

⁵³ ἀγαθός in early texts means more than just good, since it also refers to social status, inherited wealth, breeding. Therefore it should be better translated with expressions like “man of quality”, “man of worth”, see WEST, 1993; ADKINS, 1960.

⁵⁴ In Tyrtaeus' *corpus* we find five occurrences of the word ἀγαθός. In all occurrences the word is related with the brave warrior who sacrifices his life for the homeland:

(fr. 10; 11); and ἀρετή (fr. 11; 12). In fragments 10 and 11 it is καλὸν to die in battle for the homeland, while both the flight of young people and the death of old men (instead of the young) are considered αἰσχρὰ. The words respectively imply the approval and the disapproval of the city and define what makes the man proud and what makes him ashamed.⁵⁵ As we can infer from the authors that refer to Tyrtaeus, Tyrtaeus' philosophy of life played a considerable part in the Spartan educational force and Plato had to come to terms with it when discussing the most important virtue for a man.

In 660e7 we find the first verbatim quotation of Tyrtaeus' poem *Eunomia*. The Athenian says that in Sparta they will compel their poet to say that a man who does not possess justice is not worthy of any mention, not even if he were richer "than Midas and Cinyras".

Tyrt. 12, 6-7

οὐδ' εἰ Τιθωνοῖο φυὴν χαριέστερος εἶη,
πλουτοίη δὲ Μίδεω καὶ Κινύρεω μάλιον

Leg. 660 e7

ἐὰν δὲ ἄρα μὲν πλουτῇ μὲν Κινύρα τε καὶ
Μίδα μᾶλλον ...

In Tyrtaeus' text the concessive clause is introduced with οὐδ' εἰ and the optative, in Plato's text we find the subjunctive introduced by ἐὰν.⁵⁶ This is especially noteworthy because, while the quotation from Tyrtaeus runs on, Plato uses the optative forms of τολμῶ and νικῶ. These optatives are, in form, the direct expression of the poet's wish, but as England points out, in Plato's text they convey the *reported* expression of the poet's wish.⁵⁷ What is more, Tyrtaeus uses the Ionic forms of the genitive, even though the structure of his line is kept intact in Plato. If Tyrtaeus speaks the truth, continues the Athenian, he "would not mention nor take into account" a man unless he performs and acquires all goods with justice.⁵⁸ In this case in Plato's text, we find Tyrtaeus' first verse of fr. 12 but with a subtle difference. Plato has the medium form of τίθημι while in Stobaeus' text we have the active form⁵⁹:

1. fr. 5, 3: Μεσσήνην ἀγαθὸν μὲν ἀροῦν, ἀγαθὸν δὲ φυτεύειν.

2. fr. 10, 2: τεθνάμεναι γὰρ καλὸν ἐνὶ προμάχοισι πεσόντα // ἄνδρ' ἀγαθὸν περὶ ἧ πατρίδι μαρνάμενον.

3. fr. 12, 10: οὐ γὰρ ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς γίνεται ἐν πολέμῳ.

4. fr. 12, 20: οὗτος ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς γίνεται ἐν πολέμῳ.

⁵⁵ WEST, 1998.

⁵⁶ At the best of my knowledge no discussion has been made about this difference in the use of the mode in this passage.

⁵⁷ ENGLAND, 1921, 297.

⁵⁸ ἐν λόγῳ ἄνδρα τίθημι is often translated as "I would not be placed in poetry", see PRATO, 1968; CAMPBELL, 1967. Since no general account of the reasons for this reading can be attempted here, we will content ourselves with the more common translation: "Take into account", see ENGLAND, 1921, and WEST, 1993. To remember someone in poetry is the supposed task of the poet. In this case what is worthy of the poet's attention is the new fighter demonstrating his ἀρετή.

⁵⁹ Plato has the middle on both occasions of quoting the line (Leg. 629 a7; 660e8). The middle is used in a similar expression ἐν τιμῇ τίθεσθαι (HDT. 3.3.2) See LSJ, τίθημι. WEST, 1974, chooses τιθείην, because a quotation, especially by Plato, is liable to be less trustworthy than a direct tradition, and because τιθείμην was more likely to displace τιθείην after μνησαίμην than vice versa.

Tyrtaeus, fr. 12, 1

οὐτ' ἄν μνησαίμην οὐτ' ἐν λόγῳ ἄνδρα
τιθείην

Laws, 660e5-6

οὐτ' ἄν μνησαίμην, φησὶν ὑμῖν ὁ
ποιητής, εἴπερ ὀρθῶς λέγει, οὐτ' ἐν λόγῳ
ἄνδρα τιθείμην...

Although some small textual differences do occur in Plato's text, the general impact of Tyrtaeus' poem does not change.

In the present analysis, we will consider the first half of the poem so-called *Eunomia*, since Plato, in 660e-661a, only refers to its first 12 verses. The first half of this poem is based on a *Priamel*. It means that through a list of alternatives, Tyrtaeus highlights the true subject of his poem: bravery in war is the best virtue.

Tyrt. 12, 1-4 and 10-12	<i>Leg.</i> 660e11-661a3
<p>οὐτ' ἄν μνησαίμην οὐτ' ἐν λόγῳ ἄνδρα τιθείην οὔτε ποδῶν ἀρετῆς οὔτε παλαιμοσύνης οὐδ' εἰ Κυκλώπων μὲν ἔχοι μέγεθος τε βίην τε, νικῶν δὲ θεῶν Θρηϊκίον Βορέην οὐδ' εἰ Τιθωνοῖο φυὴν χαριέστερος εἴη, (5) πλουτοίη δὲ Μίδεω καὶ Κινύρεω μάλιον, οὐδ' εἰ Τανταλίδεω Πέλοπος βασιλεύτερος εἴη, γλῶσσαν δ' Ἀδρήστου μελιχόγηρυν ἔχοι, οὐδ' εἰ πᾶσαν ἔχοι δόξαν πλὴν θούριδος ἀλκῆς· οὐ γὰρ ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς γίνεται ἐν πολέμῳ εἰ μὴ τετλαίῃ μὲν ὀρῶν φόνον αἱματόεντα, καὶ δηίων ὀρέγοιτο ἐγγύθεν ιστάμενος.</p>	<p>τοὺς ποιητὰς ἀναγκάζετε λέγειν ὥς ὁ μὲν ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ σώφρων ὢν καὶ δίκαιος εὐδαίμων ἐστὶ καὶ μακάριος, ἐάντε μέγας καὶ ἰσχυρὸς ἐάντε μικρὸς καὶ ἀσθενὴς ᾗ, καὶ ἐὰν πλουτῇ καὶ μὴ· ἐὰν δὲ ἄρα μὲν πλουτῇ μὲν Κινύρα τε καὶ Μίδα μᾶλλον, ἢ δὲ ἄδικος, ἄθλιός τ' ἐστὶ καὶ ἀνιαρῶς ζῇ. καὶ Οὐτ' ἄν μνησαίμην, φησὶν ὑμῖν ὁ ποιητής, εἴπερ ὀρθῶς λέγει, οὐτ' ἐν λόγῳ ἄνδρα τιθείμην, ὅς μὴ πάντα τὰ λεγόμενα καλὰ μετὰ δικαιοσύνης πράττοι καὶ κτῶτο, καὶ δὴ καὶ δηίων τοιοῦτος ὢν ὀρέγοιτο ἐγγύθεν ιστάμενος, ἄδικος δὲ ὢν μήτε τολμῶ ὀρῶν φόνον αἱματοεντα μήτε νικῶ θεῶν Θρηϊκίον Βορέην.</p>
Transl. 12, 1-4 ; 10-12 ⁶⁰	Transl. <i>Leg.</i> 660e11-661a3
<p>I would not rate a man worth mention or account, either for speed of foot or wrestling skills, not even if he had Cyclops' size and strength or could defeat in speed of foot the fierce north wind of Thrace;</p>	<p>You oblige the poets to teach that the good man, since he is temperate and just, is fortunate and happy, whether, he be great or small, strong or weak, rich or poor; whereas, though he be richer even than Cyniras or Midas, if he be unjust, is a wretched man and</p>

⁶⁰ Translation is based on WEST, 1993, but slightly revised.

or if he surpassed in beauty Tithonus or if he were richer than Cinyras' or Midas or were more royal than Pelops son of Tantalus, or had Adrastus' smooth persuasive tongue, or fame for everything save only valour: no, no man is of high regard in time of war unless he can endure the sight of bloody death, and lunges at the enemy, standing close.	lives a miserable life. Your poet says, if he speaks the truth, I would not mention nor take into account a man who, <u>without justice, performs and acquires all the thing accounted good</u> ; such man lunges at the enemy, standing close , whereas the unjust man does not dare to face the bloody death , nor does defeat in speed of foot the fierce north wind of Thrace.
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Whereas Tyrtaeus indicates a brave man as model, Plato in his turn intends a just. Plato is using the same method of praising adopted by Tyrtaeus: he expresses his concept by comparison and exclusion of alternatives, but he changes the basic meaning of Tyrtaeus' poem. On the one hand Tyrtaeus mentions the athletic prowess, the beauty of Tithonus, and the royalty of king Pelops, only to come to the conclusion that ἀρετή lies in none of this, but only in bravery at war, ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς γίνεται ἐν πολέμῳ (12, 10). On the other hand, Plato adopts the same procedure by considering other types of excellence, but then he comes to the conclusion that a man ought to be δίκαιος καὶ ἀγαθός and not only ἀγαθὸς ἐν πολέμῳ.

How does one explain this reinterpretation of the spirit of Tyrtaeus' poem? One answer to this question has been that Plato ironically refers to Tyrtaeus in order to underline the incompleteness or even the entire falsity of his virtue, bravery in war, and therefore, when it comes to quoting his verses Plato changes the very basic meaning of it.⁶¹ However, we do not find this reading very persuasive. There might be a hint of irony in these lines since Tyrtaeus in Sparta does not teach about a man who is temperate and just, but still, we find more convincing the idea that Plato, by changing the base meaning of Tyrtaeus' poem, indicates a concrete example of how a poem can be readapted to serve the purpose of philosophy. Tyrtaeus' poems are the highest revelation of the spirit of the Dorian state, of that spirit which trained all its citizens to display the same courage in war. The Athenian's reference to Tyrtaeus shows that even a non-Spartan who, like himself does not accept the Spartan conception of the fighting nature of the state, must still admit the cogency of much of Tyrtaeus' poems. It is then too reductive to read Plato's reference to Tyrtaeus as mere ironical evidence of Plato's negative attitude towards the poet.

Plato adopts, in the dialogue, Tyrtaeus' formal reasoning, that is the formal structure of the poem, but instead of seeing bravery as the best virtue, he substitutes it with justice. It seems as though Plato assimilates Tyrtaeus' verses in the discussion, at the moment when their ideas diverge from one other, the philosopher keeps the formal structure, that is to say the framework or the form of the message, but changes its basic content. In Tyrtaeus' poem, the virtuous man realizes his life's purpose if he is ἀγαθός ἐν πολέμῳ. A man worthy in war "would face the bloody death" and he "would lunge at the enemy, standing close". Plato maintains these two qualities but he attributes them to a man who is just,

⁶¹ See DES PLACES, 1942.

δίκαιος. In fact, the Athenians says, a man who is unjust does not a) “lunge at the enemy, standing close” b) nor does he dare “to face the bloody carnage”, c) nor does he “defeat in speed of foot the northern wind of Trace”.

One element of detachment between Plato and Tyrtaeus is the value of the term ἀγαθός. In the *Lexicon des frühgriechischen Epos*, we find that the original core meaning of the word ἀγαθός is “physically strong”. The ἀγαθός man seems to be that man who accomplishes himself through a physical conflict with the opponent.⁶² Nevertheless, already in the *Iliad*, we can find evidence of a wider meaning of the concept: in Book IX, Achilles sincerely talks to Odysseus about his reason for not coming back to the battle, and tells him that a true man, who is ἀγαθός and sound of mind ἐχέφρων, loves his own woman and cherishes her. From this example (in the *Iliad* similar examples are countless), not only physical strength defines a man ἀγαθός but also his affection for his woman.⁶³

In Homer there is hardly mention of the man who is ἀγαθός with the meaning conveyed by Tyrtaeus. According to Bowra, the adjective in Homer is mostly used to define the skills of a man in some activity.⁶⁴ When Homer does not specify at what the ἀγαθός ἀνὴρ is good at, he seems to hint at some such meaning as “noble” and to imply that the man is well bred and of noble birth. But we cannot deduce from these passages either an entire system of values of the ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός or the ideology of the polis we find in Tyrtaeus.

In fact, as Jaeger has demonstrated, Tyrtaeus’ elegy represents the first stage in the development of city-state morality.⁶⁵ In every Greek land where civic courage was practiced or imposed by the state, the poems of Tyrtaeus were praised as classical utterances of the “Spartan creed”.⁶⁶ All Spartans, the Athenian says, “are crammed” with Tyrtaeus’ poetry.⁶⁷

⁶² LFE, ἀγαθός: “Als ursprünglicher Bedeutungskern von ἀγαθός ist die Verwendung im Sinne von -vital stark- ...der ἀγαθός erscheint als die physisch machtvolle Persönlichkeit, die sich anderen gegenüber durchsetzt...”.

⁶³ The value of the term ἀγαθός has been enormously studied, but no general account of its value can be attempted here. We will content ourselves with giving a short sketch of the shift in meaning of the word through eighth and seventh centuries. For a wider literary study of the term see ADKINS, 1960.

⁶⁴ BOWRA, 1938, 60-70, makes a list of examples in which the word ἀγαθός connotes the special skills of heroes such as Menelaus or Hector. Menelaus is βοὴν ἀγαθός, good at the war-cry (*Il.* II 408); Hector wishes his son to be βίην ἀγαθός, good in physical strength (*Il.* VI 478), Polydeuces is πύξ ἀγαθός good at boxing (*Il.* III, 237). Examples of this kind are numerous both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*.

⁶⁵ When it comes to the interpretation of Tyrtaeus’ verses we find two lines of explanation. On the one side scholars read in his poetry the seeds of Spartan history, its famous militaristic character. On the other side Tyrtaeus is considered as an «able propagandist». Unlike in Homer, in Tyrtaeus’ poetry one could observe the increasing primacy of the city and the beginning of civic obligation. As Jaeger points out «the spirit of the early greek polis found its embodiment, expressing the inner laws of political society in a great series of imperishable works, beginning with Tyrtaeus and Solon...» JAGER 1966, 103. In a similar vein SNELL, 1969 accounts for the differences he perceives between elegy and Homeric poetry, by asserting that the community redoubled its claim on the individual.

⁶⁶ POWELL, 1998.

⁶⁷ When referring to Tyrtaeus’ verses, the Athenian stranger suggests that Megillos is replete, διακορής, with them. According to POWELL, 1988 the word διακορός is rarely used by Greek authors, and sometimes it has a clear negative overtone (XEN. *Laced. Cons.* I 5; PLUT. *Vita Lic.* XV; PLUT. *Moralia* 228a. It may be possible that

In the prosperous and cultivated Athens of the 5th- century, the word ἀγαθός had undergone a specific shift in meaning. Probably due mostly to Socrates, the word had acquired a moral sense rather than a social one, since in the fifth century the ambitious youth of Athens were mostly trying to pursue supremacy in politics.⁶⁸ Undoubtedly the significance of the expression had changed, thus we cannot expect that Plato attribute to the word ἀγαθός the same meaning it had in the Sparta of Lycurgus. If we assume that Plato wishes the teaching of Tyrtaeus to be applied to the youth of his period, it should be clear that he is not referring to the value of the young Spartan who dies fighting for his own country. What we read in Plato is the acceptance of a certain kind of poetry that can be used in the ideal city, provided that it conveys the right principles.

for Plato even the exposure to Tyrtaeus was in some sense overdone, but still, it seems difficult to find in the Athenian's words evidence of dislike.

⁶⁸ We talk about the fifth century because Plato's dialogues take place at that time.

2.2 The submission of bravery in the scale of virtue

As we stated in the introduction, education, παιδεία, is one of the main topic of the *Laws*. Plato is well aware that this education is mostly put into practice through μουσική. That is the reason why, from Plato's standpoint, the choice of rhythms and songs is fundamental, since they are the bases of the right educational training. While the right principles of the poems are to be judged by the choir of old people, for the poet it is enough to have knowledge of harmonies and tunes, as it is said in Book II of the *Laws*, 670e4-7:

τὸ γὰρ τρίτον οὐδεμία ἀνάγκη ποιητῇ γινώσκειν, εἴτε καλὸν εἴτε μὴ καλὸν τὸ μίμημα, τὸ δὲ ἁρμονίας καὶ ῥυθμοῦ σχεδὸν ἀνάγκη, τοῖς δὲ πάντα τὰ τρία τῆς ἐκλογῆς ἕνεκα τοῦ καλλίστου καὶ δευτέρου.

For although it is almost necessary for a poet to have a knowledge of harmony and rhythm, it is not necessary for him to know the third point also- namely, whether the representation is noble or ignoble; but for our older singers a knowledge of all these three points is necessary, to enable them to determine what is first, what second in order of nobility.

In this passage the representation, the μίμημα, concerns a most likely mirroring of what is good or what is bad. To judge if the mirroring is correct, is the task of the choir, which acts like a guard checking what is worth singing and what is not.⁶⁹ The choir of the old will not allow that which is morally bad, and it follows that the composer is not concerned with the moral effect of his poetry.

Book II is fundamental in Plato's conception of music, and in it we read some of the criteria regarding the right use of music. The Athenian, for example, agrees that music should be judged by the pleasure it provides, δεῖν τὴν μουσικὴν ἡδονῇ κρίνεσθαι (658e8). However this music should please the best and the highly educated men, ἥτις τοὺς βελτίστους καὶ ἱκανῶς πεπαιδευμένους τέρπει, since only these men are able to recognize the difference between an incorrect mimesis and the truth. It is not a mere coincidence that we find the adverb ὀρθῶς to introduce Tyrtaeus' quotations: the ὀρθότης is the highest result of the mediation between an incorrect mimesis and the truth. That is to say an imitative artwork (e.g. painting, poem, etc.) is correct, ὀρθός, when it respects the quality and the quantity of its original (*Leg.* 667D5-7):

τὴν δέ γε ὀρθότητά που τῶν τοιούτων ἢ ἰσότης ἂν, ὥς ἐπὶ τὸ πᾶν εἰπεῖν, ἐξεργάζοιτο τοῦ τε τοσοῦτου καὶ τοῦ τοιούτου πρότερον, ἀλλ οὐχ ἡδονή.

But speaking in general, the likeness in respect of both quality and quantity to the original, and not the pleasure, would accomplish the correctness of these things.

Now our focal point will be that, the Athenian, having absorbed Tyrtaeus' poem, changes it to express a more convenient message. Tyrtaeus is in charge of the harmonies and the

⁶⁹ For the concept of ὀρθότης in the representation of characters, see TULLI, 2007.

tunes of the poetry, that is to say he is held responsible more for the formal structure of the poem than for its content. Since Plato respects and assumes his external framework, we can deduce that his poetry is not rejected in its entirety, but rather the essence of the poem is modified so that it can be admitted in the ideal city.

If we now look at the structure, we see that the first verse of Tyrtaeus' *Eunomia* οὐτ' ἄν μνησαίμην, resembles the Homeric *Hymn to Dionysus* (7, 1 f.): ἀμφὶ Διώνυσον Σεμέλης ἐρικύδεος υἱὸν μνήσομαι,⁷⁰ verb μνιμνήσκω meaning "call to mind; remember". What is more, Stobaeus, our primary source for Tyrtaeus' text, calls Tyrtaeus' poem ἔπαινος τόλμης, praise of courage (in IV, 10). The poem praises the brave man, and from this perspective is taken by Plato. In Book VII of the *Laws* the Athenian establishes a rule regarding the subjects of the poetic praise. The subjects of praise should be those men who have accomplished the goal of life, both by realizing noble works and by obeying the laws (*Leg.* 801e-802a):

τῶν πολιτῶν ὅποσοι τέλος ἔχοιεν τοῦ βίου, κατὰ σώματα ἢ κατὰ ψυχὰς ἔργα ἐξειργασμένοι καλὰ καὶ ἐπίποννα καὶ τοῖς νόμοις εὐπειθεῖς γεγονότες, ἐγκωμίων αὐτοὺς τυγχάνειν πρέπον ἂν εἴη.

All citizens who have attained the goal of life, and who by their physical efforts or personality have performed noble and arduous works, and those who have lived in obedience to the laws, should be regarded as proper subjects for our panegyrics.

From the passages in the *Laws*, we may well infer that Plato considers the praises of good men as examples of good and formative poetry.⁷¹ In the *Laws*, even more than in the *Republic*, we find evidence for the endorsement of encomiastic poetry. Again in Book VII of the *Laws* the Athenian points out (fourth νόμος about μουσική) the literary genres that are employed for the praise of those citizens who are authors of good works, ἔργα καλά, after their death. These are: ἐγκώμιά τε καὶ ὕμνοι (801e6-802a3).⁷² In Book X of *Republic*, where the discussion focuses more extensively on these genres, it is claimed that in the hymns, the mirroring regards the ἀρετή of the gods, while in the *encomia* the mimesis refers to the ἀρετή of individual men. Both in the hymns and in the *encomia* the poetic production educates the Guardians, it makes them strong and able to exclude evil (595a-608b).⁷³

Also in the *Protagoras*, when defining the traditional educational program, the *encomia* have a central role in society, because they inspire positive imitation. Young people are to emulate the positive models that this kind of poetry praises (325e5-326a4):

⁷⁰ cf. *Il.* II 492, *Od.* III 101, IV 331, IV 118.

⁷¹ For poetic praise and blame of living see also *Leg.* 829c.

⁷² GIULIANO, in his attentive study regarding Plato's attitude towards poetry, states that the mention of hymns and *encomia* in Book X suggests a readiness to accept the production of those literary works that put into practice the μίμησις of positive models. GIULIANO, 2005, 118–129.

⁷³ ERLER, 2006, 97–100.

ἀναγιγνώσκειν ποιητῶν ἀγαθῶν ποιήματα καὶ ἐκμανθάνειν ἀναγκάζουσιν, ἐν οἷς
πολλὰ μὲν νοουθετήσεις ἔνεισιν πολλὰ δὲ διέξοδοι καὶ ἔπαινοι καὶ ἐγκώμια παλαιῶν
ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν, ἵνα ὁ παῖς ζηλῶν μιμῆται καὶ ὀρέγεται τοιοῦτος γενέσθαι.

*they (scil. the teachers) compel them (scil. the children) to read the works of good poets, and make them learn them (scil. the poems) by heart; they contain a lot of exhortations, and many passages praising and eulogizing good men of the past, so that the child zealously will imitate them and will be filled with desire to become a man like that.*⁷⁴

We will now make our point clear: Tyrtaeus' way of praising a man seems to be closely related to the encomium of the good man we find in Book X of *Republic*. Provided that the man to be praised is not just a good soldier, but possesses justice, we can conclude that the mention of Tyrtaeus in the first books of the *Laws* responds to a specific purpose: Plato's endorsement of a certain kind of traditional poetry, to which Tyrtaeus belongs. Logically enough, we cannot ask Plato to submit all virtues to bravery in war. In the Athens of the 4th century, the youth were looking for a more complex and subtle system of virtue.

There is another point that is worth noting. As stated above, Tyrtaeus draws attention to his best virtue by mentioning and excluding all other virtues that were popular in his own time.⁷⁵ For example Pindar had celebrated the royalty of king Pelops in *Olympian I* and in Xenophanes' *fr. 2*, the wisdom of the poet is worth more than the strength of men and horses.⁷⁶ Through a series of significant and well-known examples like these, Tyrtaeus points out the superiority of the warrior. It is important to stress that these examples acquire a specific function. The alternative values are not rejected but they serve, in the poetical fiction, to detect the best virtue. In other words, they become subsequent to the supreme ἀρετή, that in this way is emphasized. The *Priamel* from verse 1 to 9 serves, then, on the one hand, to assert the best ἀρετή, but on the other hand it legitimizes all the other ἀρεταί: they are important but subsequent to the best one.

From the perspective of the good warrior, all the "rejected" virtues assume additional values: the good warrior has to stay in the forefront of battle, ὅστις ἀνὴρ διαβὰς ἐν προμάχοισι μένη, νωλεμέως (*fr. 12, 16*); he has to inspire, with words, courage to the comrade next to him, θαρσύνη ἔπεσιν τὸν πλησίον ἄνδρα παρεστώς (*fr. 12, 19*) and that is how he uses the sweet tongue of Adrastus.⁷⁷ To be brave in battle is the true value, the best prize a man can achieve, ἥδ' ἀρετή, τόδ' ἄεθλον ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ἄριστον (*fr. 12, 13*). Mentioning the prize, Tyrtaeus recalls the competitive dimension he had dismissed in the

⁷⁴ Translation is based on TAYLOR, 1977, but slightly revised.

⁷⁵ BOWRA, 1938; CAMPBELL, 1967.

⁷⁶ PIND. *Ol. I*, vv. 93-98: τὸ δὲ κλέος // τηλόθεν δέδορκε τᾶν Ὀλυμπιάδων ἐν δρόμοις // Πέλοπος, ἵνα ταχυτὰς ποδῶν ἐρίζεται // ἀκμαί τ' ἰσχύος θρασύπονοι // ὁ νικῶν δὲ λοιπὸν ἀμφὶ βίοντον // ἔχει μελιτόεσσαν εὐδίαν. XEN. *fr. 2* ῥώμης γὰρ ἀμείνων // ἀνδρῶν ἥδ' ἵππων ἡμετέρη σοφίη.

⁷⁷ In these lines Tyrtaeus makes a list of all mythical characters who represent the highest level of excellence in the various values' categories: Adrastus is the king of Argos who, thanks to his eloquence, persuades Theseus to intervene against Tebe in order to bury the defeated warriors who fought for Polynices.

first verses, when he says that even if a man defeats the gods in the race, νικῶν δὲ θεῶν, he is not a man of worth if he is not brave in battle.⁷⁸

If we now compare this reading of Tyrtaeus' poem to what the Athenian says in 661a, we will find a remarkable resemblance in the way of reasoning. The Athenian says that what men call goods (health, beauty, wealth etc.) in reality are not, and that the only one and true virtue for a man is to be just, while all other goods in man's life are to be subsequent to this very one, courage included:

λέγεται γὰρ ὡς ἄριστον μὲν ὑγιαίνειν, δεύτερον δὲ κάλλος, τρίτον δὲ πλοῦτος, μυρία δὲ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ λέγεται. ... ὑμεῖς δὲ καὶ ἐγὼ που τάδε λέγομεν, ὡς ταῦτά ἐστι σύμπαντα δικαίοις μὲν καὶ ὁσίοις ἀνδράσιν ἄριστα κτήματα, ἀδίκους δὲ κάκιστα σύμπαντα, ἀρξάμενα ἀπὸ τῆς ὑγείας. (Leg. 661b).

Men say that the chief good is health, beauty the second, wealth the third; and they call countless other things "goods" - ... - but what you and I say is this, that all these things are very good as possessions for men who are just and holy, but for the unjust they are (one and all from health downwards) very bad.

and then right after that:

ταῦτα δὴ λέγειν, οἶμαι, τοὺς παρ' ὑμῖν ποιητάς, ἅπερ ἐγὼ, πείσετε καὶ ἀναγκάσετε, καὶ ἔτι τούτοις ἐπομένους ῥυθμούς τε καὶ ἁρμονίας ἀποδιδόντας παιδεύειν (Leg. 661c6-9)

This, I believe, is what you (like myself) will persuade or compel your poets to teach, and compel them also to educate your youth by furnishing them with rhythms and harmonies in consonance with this teaching.

As Tyrtaeus is not refusing the other virtues but subordinating them to the first and most important one, in a similar vein Plato recalls Tyrtaeus' structure of the poem and expands the message this poem conveys: the virtue Tyrtaeus praises is good, but it has to be submitted to justice.

The last argument for Plato's acceptance of Tyrtaeus' poem regards the practical knowledge the poet possesses. The passages in Tyrtaeus' *fr.* 12 suggest an identification of his talents and activities with those of the fighters. In his own way Tyrtaeus is one of the warriors. He is a poetic fighter and an example of good citizen. This is what Plato was looking for in the ideal city: someone who is an expert of the art he is teaching, and who practices it as well. In the *Ion*, a Socratic dialogue that deals for the most with poetry and the role of poet, Socrates ironically chides the rhapsode Ion because he does not have any understanding, and therefore, authority, in regard to the subjects about which he speaks. At the end of the dialogue Socrates makes fun of the rhapsode telling him that if he really thinks himself to be an expert of the στρατεγική τέχνη, since he knows war's poems by

⁷⁸ In addition to this concept, see SHEY, 1976, 13-15; ADKINS, 1960, 73.

heart, it would be better for all Greece if he would lead the troops instead of being a poet.⁷⁹ With Tyrtaeus we find exactly the opposite: Tyrtaeus is a general and a poet; therefore his poetry can be admitted because he possesses real knowledge of it.⁸⁰

From Plato's perspective, the poet's role in Tyrtaeus' *Eunomia* is then of great importance. The poet needs to imprint on the citizens the values he professes, and that is the reason why, for instance, in the *priamel*, the different alternatives are excluded one after the other without any further explanation.⁸¹ The main goal of Tyrtaeus' poetry was to exhort the troops to fight in battle. In this case Tyrtaeus' poem becomes a metaphorical weapon in the state's behalf. In exhorting the warriors to defend their own country Tyrtaeus is actually practicing what he is preaching. Unlike Ion, in the homonymous dialogue, Tyrtaeus is taken seriously because he actually was considered a Spartan στρατηγός.⁸² The knowledge of the subject is a deciding factor, when it comes to establishing if a poetic production is good or bad. Tyrtaeus knew what was the best for his own time, because he himself was an active part of that lifestyle. Because of this knowledge the harmonies and tunes of his poetry are well considered by Plato. Obviously enough, though, the teaching had to change according to Plato's time and place.

As we have seen, Plato transforms Tyrtaeus' writing by assimilating it to his own. In this way poetry, rather than continuing its ancient quarrel with philosophy (*Rep.* 10.607c), works in conjunction with it. In Plato's use of Tyrtaeus the philosopher questions a mute poet and reinterprets him in a way that suits his own ends. If Tyrtaeus is to be regarded as an educator of the young, then his message needs to be imparted in the right way through the vehicle of philosophy. There is enough evidence then to conclude that what we read in 660e1- is an act of active appropriation of Tyrtaeus' poem rather than a passive or ironic assimilation.

⁷⁹ *Ion*, 541b1-c3: οὐκοῦν σὺ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἄριστος ῥαψωδὸς εἶ; Ἰω. Πολύ γε, ὦ Σώκρατες. Σω. Ἥ καὶ στρατηγός, ὦ Ἴων, τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἄριστος εἶ; Ἰω. Εὖ ἴσθι, ὦ Σώκρατες· καὶ ταῦτά γε ἐκ τῶν Ὀμήρου μαθὼν. Σω. Τί δὴ ποτ' οὖν πρὸς τῶν θεῶν, ὦ Ἴων, ἀμφότερά ἄριστος ὦν τῶν Ἑλλήνων, καὶ στρατηγός καὶ ῥαψωδός, ῥαψωδεῖς μὲν περιῶν τοῖς Ἑλλησι, στρατηγεῖς δ' οὐ; ἢ ῥαψωδοῦ μὲν δοκεῖ σοι χρυσῶ στεφάνῳ ἐστεφανωμένου πολλὴ χρεῖα εἶναι τοῖς Ἑλλησι, στρατηγοῦ δὲ οὐδεμία;

⁸⁰ The knowledge of the subjects of poetry is one of the key-points in Plato's attitude towards poets.

⁸¹ Unlike Xenophanes' fr.2 v.19 when he explains that a victor in race will not help to enrich the funds of the State; or Theognis who uses 11 lines to explain why the ἀρετὴ of Sisyphus is not a ἀρετὴ of the stature of wealth.

⁸² Evidences of Tyrtaeus being a στρατηγός: STRABO 8.632; ATHENAEUS 14, 630; TYRT. I, 54, see CAMPBELL, 1967, 169.

CONCLUSION

In this study we have analysed Plato's appropriation of Tyrtaeus' poem in Book I and II of the *Laws*. It has been proved that Plato uses Tyrtaeus' words as a platform on which he can construct his philosophical and ethical ideal. In the first part of the analysis we have considered the context of Tyrtaeus' poetry, i.e. for which society he composed his poetry. Starting from the authority he had in Sparta, it has been pointed out that Tyrtaeus is regarded, in Book I and II of the *Laws*, as the poet who is able, through his poetry, to create the citizens the institutions require. In the second part we have discussed how Plato first accepts and then overcomes Tyrtaeus' poem. The focal point being that the pleasure which Tyrtaeus' poetry conveys can be considered as positive only if it goes together with the teaching of the right ἀρετή.

In almost every page of Plato's *corpus* we find poetic echoes, in form of citations, quotations or allusions. This is especially noteworthy when we look at Plato's reference to Tyrtaeus in Book II of the *Laws*. In this Book the possibility to select the good poetry from the tradition is more explicit (657a-660d). Through the concrete example of Tyrtaeus, Plato trains his contemporary audience about how poetic works should be properly used. Poetry could be useful to the society only at one condition: the pleasure ἡδονή, it conveys, must be guided through the ἀρετή. It is important to add that in 670a the Athenian makes clear that the point of discussion is to talk about how, in what way, the choir of those who are over thirty years old, will make good use of the Muses (*Leg.* 670 a4-6):

ἡμεῖς δέ γε οὐχ ὅτι μὴ δεῖ ταῖς Μούσαις ἡμῶν προσχρῆσθαι τοὺς ἤδη τριακοντούτας καὶ τῶν πεντήκοντα πέραν γεγονότας σκοπούμεθα, ἀλλ' ὅτι ποτὲ δεῖ.

What we are considering is, not how those who are thirty years old, or beyond fifty, ought not to make use of the Muses, but how they ought to do so.

The basic point in the Athenian's words is not to find a way to avoid the use of Muses, but to find out in which way the choir can profit of the Muses. The use of poetry is then not rejected but rather submitted to philosophical and ethical criteria. In other words, it should be used for "useful" χρήσιμος and "beneficial" ὠφέλιμος ends.

By imitating Tyrtaeus' formal structure of the poem, Plato becomes a poet himself, since he adopts the poet's words as his own. It is poetry working for philosophy, not poetry rejected for philosophy. Plato absorbs Tyrtaeus in a philosophical context and in this way he illustrates how poetry can serve the interest of philosophy. Tyrtaeus is actively engaged, questioned, interpreted, and when the poet's message is not convenient Plato reshapes the linguistic material so that it can meet his philosophical ends. Tyrtaeus' misquotation in Book II is not textual in nature, it is a misquotation in a different sense: it is a reinterpretation and a reappropriation of Tyrtaeus' original. Nevertheless Plato's misuse is noble because he aims to turn poetry in something that works for the Good. Plato performs a noble mimesis of the poet, whose words are recontextualized and incorporated in the form of philosophic discourse.

It has often been claimed that Plato's attitude towards poetry is deeply inconsistent, since on the one hand he refuses the various poetic modalities but on the other hand he incorporates them in his text. In one of the most sustained analyses of the subject Giuliano has observed that it is all a question of ethics. What matters is that the models to be imitated should be appropriate, regardless of the kind of poetry in which they are represented. Within this framework, Plato's misinterpretation of the Tyrtaeus' *Eunomia* is to be seen as a revision of the poem so that it is both incorporated into a philosophic context and subjected to the interest of philosophy.

The main purpose of this work was to prove the acceptance of positive poetry in Plato's *corpus*, unfortunately this aim has not yet been fully accomplished. Many aspects are still to be considered in discussing Plato's reception of Tyrtaeus' poetry. Further studies are required to analyse for instance the relationship and the similarity between Tyrtaeus' and Solon's poetry as presented in Plato's *corpus*. Another important point to discuss may be the difference in Plato's reception of epic, drama poetry and lyric poetry. As it has been persuasively argued, Plato is well aware of the great roll poetry plays in every citizen's life, and this is the reason why he discusses, confutes and readapts it to his own ends.

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