

Serio-Comic Elements in Xenophon's Socratic Writings

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B.A., University of Dallas, 1999

Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the

Department of Classics at Brown University

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

MAY 2011

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This dissertation by Alexander Alderman is accepted in its present form
by the Department of Classics as satisfying the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank David Konstan, my advisor, who encouraged me in this study from its beginning as a special author project, and my two other readers, Mary Louise Gill and Stratis Papaioannou, who stayed with me *per obscura ad obscuriora*. Without their remarkable cooperation and assistance, I would never have been able to complete my work. I should also thank Michael Cusick, who introduced me to the literary problem of the Socratic dialogue when I was just seventeen, and my professors at the University of Dallas, who nurtured my interest in the issue with diverse, challenging approaches to its solution. In addition, I owe a great deal of thanks to Livio Rossetti, David M. Johnson, and Sheila Murnaghan, who gave me helpful comments on early versions of the arguments in these chapters and let me see drafts of their own work in progress; all of them are very gracious scholars. Finally, I would like to thank Pura Nieto-Hernandez for her encouragement and administrative assistance in the final stages of this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Socratic Writing	1
Chapter 2: <i>Symposium</i> : Virtue Made Easy	19
Chapter 3: <i>Oeconomicus</i> : A Common Sense Philosophy	36
Chapter 4: <i>Apology</i> : The Best Offense	61
Chapter 5: <i>Memorabilia</i> : A Likely Defense	83
Conclusion	107
Appendix: Mennippean Features in Xenophon's <i>Symposium</i>	112
Bibliography	115

CHAPTER ONE SOCRATIC WRITING

“It seems to be a kind of poetry,” said Alice doubtfully; “at least,” she added, “some of the words rhyme and none of them appear to have any particular meaning.”

—Saki, *The Westminster Alice*

It is a commonplace for scholars to ask why Plato wrote only dialogues and whether he perceived a special relationship between his work and his subject—or between himself and his reader—that would have been compromised if he had published his philosophy in treatises or handbooks.¹ From a developmental viewpoint, we could say that Plato began his career by trying to represent Socrates and that the Socratic method could only be represented in dialogue; as Plato’s philosophical ambitions grew, the Socratic dialogue might have been retained merely as a vestige of the earlier descriptive form. Yet, even this purely biographical account of Plato’s motivations leads to questions about the Socratic dialogue as a literary form. Since Socrates did not write at all, and since Plato’s Socrates offers several critiques of writing, poetry, and rhetoric, Plato’s choice to write dialogues either represents a conscious rejection of Socrates’

¹ Griswold 1988b distinguishes three types of answers to the question: pedagogical, political, and philosophical. Pedagogical answers stress the general usefulness of the form for a beginner’s ease of understanding; these explanations no doubt cover some of Plato’s motivations, but they apply no more to Plato’s work than to the dialogues of Cicero, Augustine, or Galileo, none of which are Socratic in tone. By political answers, Griswold refers to the esoteric readings offered by Leo Strauss and his students; these Straussian readers often claim that Plato and other political philosophers hid their real beliefs from casual readers because they feared being persecuted for their views. The third category includes all interpretations that assert a special connection between the dialogue form and the practice of philosophy as Plato understood it. My own answer, in the case of Xenophon rather than Plato, is closer to the political answers in scope—like them, it pertains to an entire genre—but it lacks their claim of esotericism; I argue below that the Socratic dialogue mediates the gap between ordinary and philosophical discourses and, in a manner distinct from other pedagogical dialogues, seeks to provoke philosophical inquiry rather than represent its principles. Any representation is secondary and subject to the whims of the genre’s primary functions.

views on writing or demonstrates some attempt by Plato to develop a type of writing that can satisfy or overcome Socrates' concerns.

In contrast to Plato, while Xenophon did write Socratic dialogues, he also wrote many works in other literary forms, including some treatises. From a developmental perspective, the difference is not surprising. Xenophon began his writing career not by representing Socrates but by relating the events of his own life, and there are no great obstacles between a description of one's own actions and a declaration of one's own views. But for those readers who consider the dialogue form distinct from other kinds of writing in a way that demonstrates understanding of an essential principle about philosophy, writing, or the character of Socrates, it may be fair to doubt whether Xenophon recognized the concerns that led Plato to write dialogues.

Furthermore, Xenophon quotes or adapts many of Plato's works in his own writing, and his clear affection for other Socratic authors, whose works are now lost, has brought suspicion of much more extensive borrowing from their work.² Compounded with the plainness of his style and the blandness of his interests, such a lack of originality all but confirms the portrait of Xenophon as a conventional writer who lacks the taste, talent, or experience to appreciate the special features of the Socratic dialogue.³

But while Xenophon may disappoint readers who wish he were more like Plato, his breadth of literary production and reliance on other authors can aid scholars in understanding the character of the Socratic dialogue at the points where Plato's consistent

² Gigon 1953 and Gigon 1956 treat Xenophon as a digest of lost Socratic authors. Kahn 1996 suspects a similar degree of dependence on Plato though he allows for more creative adaptation of Aeschines and other lost Socratics; see especially pp. 75-79 and 393-401.

³ cf. the portraits of Xenophon in Guthrie 1971, 14-15, and Irwin 1974.

anonymity and literary subtlety would leave them at an impasse.⁴ Continuities of subject across genres and continuity of *topoi* among authors can make generic construction more apparent in Xenophon's Socratic writings than in the dialogues of Plato. Moreover, without a workable understanding of such generic features, arguments over dependence, allusion, and tone can adopt widely variant standards of evidence or freely incorporate anachronistic views of authorial influence. Yet, even a receptive modern reader stands at three removes from a generally informed understanding of Xenophon's Socratic works:

First, the literature of classical antiquity depends more on its readers' understanding of generic features than does modern literature, and authors generally demonstrate the originality of their work within the bounds of genre and literary tradition.⁵ In some cases, dependence on the work of other writers can be a central feature of composition or can enhance authority by demonstrating the author's breadth of literary knowledge.⁶ At the very least, ancient authors often relied on generic construction and allusion as a means to establish rapport with a reader and supply implicit cues to their works' interpretation.

Second, the Socratic dialogue is a genre in the serio-comic or carnival tradition,⁷ and its peculiar features as that sort of mixed genre resist the schematic interpretations prominent in the works of classical rhetorical theorists; often, these serio-comic genres

⁴ So Chroust 1957, 3.

⁵ Cairns 2007, 34-69, traces the development of rhetorical genres from Homer into the Byzantine period. Cairns 2007, 98-124, shows the variety of original responses possible within a generic framework, and D.A. Russell 1979 uses Longinus as the basis for a set of standards on what kinds of imitation were appropriate in classical antiquity.

⁶ cf. the role allusion plays for Virgil in Conte 1986.

⁷ See Bakhtin 1984, 132-133.

have a parodic dependence on other forms, and the essential differences between the original and its parody are obscure to traditional formalism.⁸ Dependence of one author on another can serve a similarly parodic purpose.

Third, Xenophon is a secondary participant in the tradition of the Socratic dialogue. He does not write his Socratic works with the personal authority he possesses in the *Anabasis*, nor did they possess as much renown as his *Cyropaedia*. In fact, they rely heavily on Plato and the writings of other Socratic authors that we know from fragments. It is plausible, then, that Xenophon needs to reinforce his place in the Socratic tradition by associating his work with generic precedents; at the same time, though, he may be participating in that tradition by turning its methods of cooptation and satire back upon itself.

These three difficulties, even in combination, are not insoluble, but the accident of preservation has made them worse by taking away many of the genre's early exemplars and leaving only Xenophon's imitations as the source for our knowledge of both the original and its relation to the copy. Yet, the first challenge to a serious study of the Socratic dialogue literary form in light of Xenophon's contribution to it is neither the peculiarity of its generic construction nor the poor state of our sources. Rather, many scholars doubt whether Xenophon had motivation and ability sufficient to undertake such a project at all. Instead, they take him to be a mere anthologist compiling Socratic

⁸ Here, I am not merely referring to the sort of generic inversion well treated in Cairns 2007, 127-137, where the rhetorical aim is the exact opposite of the norm; an accusation speech is not a serio-comic version of a defense, or vice versa. Rather, serio-comic writing often violates standards of good form or style for the genres it depends upon and makes humorous use of the consequent bathos in keeping with the eccentric dimension of the carnival sense of the world. For the presence of "alien discourse" in the Socratic dialogue and its dialogical relationship with the discourse within which it is embedded, see Nightingale 1995, 133-171.

episodes from memories, hearsay, and published accounts, or else they see a dull moralist passing off his views as the philosophy of a well-known wise man.

On the contrary, I argue that the prospect of borrowed authority did not draw Xenophon into writing Socratic dialogues; instead, he saw that serio-comic writing held peculiar advantages for his rhetorical and pedagogical projects, and he chose to write in the Socratic dialogue form because of its richness as such a genre. To make this account more plausible, I will first describe the elements of serio-comic writing and show how Xenophon made limited use of them in other works; then, to show the advantages Xenophon gained through the use of such a genre, I will compare his treatment of similar subjects in treatises and Socratic dialogues. Finally, I will sketch out the advantages of this study for Xenophonic scholarship and outline my approaches to each of Xenophon's Socratic works.

§1. Carnival Elements in Xenophon

Bakhtin gives his most thorough account of the commonplaces of serio-comic writing in his discussion of menippean satire.⁹ But since most of Xenophon's serio-comic writings are not menippean satires proper, it is useful to draw out of Bakhtin's descriptions the more common elements of this kind of writing as a guide to recognizing the commonplaces of other serio-comic genres. Charles Platter identifies three such categories of carnivalizing tendencies in his work on Aristophanes: anti-hierarchical, perspective-shifting, and intertextual.¹⁰ All three elements can be found in great

⁹ Bakhtin 1984, 114-18. In the appendix below, I show Xenophon's treatment of several of these commonplaces in the *Symposium*, the purest example of *menippea* in Xenophon's writing.

¹⁰ Platter 2007, 11-14.

concentration in Xenophon's Socratic works, but isolated examples appear in minor works and in short episodes from major writings.

A good illustration of the anti-hierarchical dimension of serio-comic writing is the episode in the *Anabasis* that serves as its hero's *captatio benevolentiae*.¹¹ Suspecting that Xenophon's alliance with Cyrus will foster animosity in Athens, Socrates browbeats Xenophon into consulting the Delphic oracle about his intended plans. But instead of asking the oracle whether he should go, Xenophon angers Socrates by asking to which gods he should sacrifice before making his journey. Socrates must accept the oracle's advice, and Xenophon joins the expedition.

In place of a conventional warning scene, the author produces a Socratic episode that upsets both fundamental and Socratic hierarchies. Socrates makes use of his typical indirection to prevent Xenophon from joining the expedition, but Xenophon usurps Socrates' irony and Delphic mission and gains the acquiescence of both wise man and god in his scheme. Furthermore, while Socrates' suspicions about the expedition prove true, Xenophon's disregard for them leads to his glory. The dramatic irony and strange events of the episode provoke an uncommon, ultimate question concerning Xenophon's adventure: if Socrates' view was prudent but Xenophon's brought success, which view and which standard is the correct one to live by? In the Delphi episode of the *Anabasis*, this ultimate choice between prudent restraint and political adventure helps define Xenophon's character for the reader. This opposition is one form of the second general feature of serio-comic literature, perspective shifting, and Xenophon makes such an ultimate question central to the construction of the *Hiero*.

¹¹ *Anabasis* III.1.4-7

As Deborah Gera has shown, Xenophon's *Hiero* lacks most of the distinguishing features of Socratic dialogues;¹² nevertheless, it shares with them the tendency for perspective-shifting common in serio-comic literature. The issue at stake in the *Hiero*, the happiness of the tyrant, is not a new one in Greek literature, nor is it entirely novel to depict the issue as a subject of conversation between a tyrant and a wise man.¹³ But it is precisely the sort of "extraordinary situation for the provoking and testing of a philosophic idea" heavily emphasized in Bakhtin's catalogue of characteristic features of menippean satire.¹⁴ These breaks from probability and consequence allow the author to dramatize a philosophical issue directly while avoiding personal biases and ignoring practical concerns. In the *Hiero*, Xenophon makes the already improbable situation more fantastic by having the tyrant argue that his life is less fortunate than that of a private citizen in every aspect of life that brings joy to the private citizen.¹⁵ In a reversal of the pattern we find in Solon's meeting with Croesus, Xenophon has the wise man of leisure argue in favor of the potential for good in tyranny.¹⁶ According to the character Simonides, the life of a good tyrant has peculiar benefits unknown to private citizens: a ruler so closely identifies himself with his subjects that he can gain happiness by increasing their prosperity.¹⁷

¹² Gera 1993, 44-45.

¹³ See Plato *Epistle* 2, 310e-311b, and remarks on the tradition in Gray 1986 and Gray 2007, 31-33.

¹⁴ Bakhtin 1984, 114-115.

¹⁵ *Hiero* I.10-VII.13. Gray 1986, 117, notes the oddness and effectiveness of having Hiero deliver the deprecation of the tyrant's life.

¹⁶ Herodotus I.29-32; *Hiero* VIII.1-XI.15.

¹⁷ *Hiero* XI.8-15.

The debate follows a pattern Bakhtin described as a tri-planar structure of ascent and descent;¹⁸ Hiero complains of the infernal aspects of a tyrant's life while Simonides praises the paradisaical condition of the good ruler. Both Hiero's and Simonides's positions stand opposed to the mundane view of tyranny as a life possessing bodily pleasures in their most extreme degree. The dialogue disposes of the private man's fantasy of tyranny—a view similar to what Herodotus presents in Croesus—and offers a choice to all who engage in politics: either to incur enmity by pursuing private interest in public business, or to achieve happiness beyond the limits of private life by devoting efforts to the common good. Xenophon's *Hiero*, then, does not endorse rule by one man or distinguish different kinds of monarchy; tyranny is just the simplest and most direct illustration of the principle that rule most benefits the ruler when it benefits the ruled.

By introducing Socratic features into a traditional dramatic model and by challenging the suppositions of that model while appropriating its themes and formal features, Xenophon's *Hiero* engages in the third common element in serio-comic literature, a carnival intertextuality. As Bakhtin notes, the intertextuality of Menippean satire is characterized by a variety of tones, styles, and parodies of genres.¹⁹ We also find these characteristics in an unlikely work of Xenophon, his treatise on hunting, and the unity and authenticity of the work have been called into question as a result.²⁰ The work follows the general pattern of a technical treatise, such as those written by Protagoras, but

¹⁸ Bakhtin 1984, 116.

¹⁹ See Bakhtin 1984, 118.

²⁰ Radermacher 1896 and Radermacher 1897 used the incongruity of style between the central instruction and its rhetorical frame as a proof of its late composition and misattribution. Gray 1985 demonstrates that Xenophon used the various styles of the work in other writings; comparing it to Hesiod's *Works and Days*, she argues that the framing elements are a generic component of parainetic literature. Doty 2001/2002 gives further support to her argument.

it begins with a sort of encomium to hunting in a Gorgianic style, shifts into a technical or Hippocratic style for its description of hunting particulars, and ends with a strange comparison of hunting to philosophy and sophistry in Xenophon's own plain style.²¹ In that final section, Xenophon remarks on his own unsophisticated use of language and points to it as a proof of his attention to sound judgments rather than attractive words:

My language may perhaps be plain, but then it is not my purpose to embroider. I am trying to put into words sound opinions of the kind needed by those who have been brought up with the proper attitude toward virtue. After all, education is not afforded by language, but by opinions, provided that they are good.²²

This argument could serve as a defense of the plain style characteristic of Xenophon's writing generally, but it hardly suits his stylistic indulgences in other sections of this treatise. While he uses the other styles for their proper functions in his multipart argument, the attention he draws to style at the close of the work may show that he has imitated sophistic authors in order to point them in a better direction.²³ At the same time, by demonstrating a basic level of competence in the styles associated with the sophists, Xenophon gains some authority to advance his own view of education as a superior alternative.

By adopting the methods of his opponents, Xenophon breaks down their claims to expertise and provokes an ultimate question about the nature of education. Hunting itself stands in for all proper education; he links the two and gives common criteria for judging their efficacy at the end of his prefatory encomium:

²¹ Gray 1985 gives a thorough stylistic analysis.

²² *Cynegeticus* XIII.5. Translation by Robin Waterfield.

²³ Isocrates may attempt something similar in the proemium and body of his *Helen*. See Papillon 1996.

So, I would advise young men not to despise hunting and education in general, since they are the way for them to become good at warfare and at everything else which is a sure route to excellence in thought, speech and action.²⁴

Furthermore, at the end of the treatise, he uses these criteria to defend hunting from a charge common against all education in the era of the sophists: that it leads to the neglect of duties to one's household.²⁵ By contrast, the sophistic education in stylistics fails to meet his criteria, and the behavior of the sophists is a corrupt parody of hunting:

For whereas sophists hunt wealthy young men, philosophers are prepared to associate with everyone, and they place neither too much nor too little weight on men's fortunes.²⁶

The variegated style, appropriated authority, and allegorizing tendencies reminds the reader of ongoing pedagogical disputes and add a serio-comic dimension to the position Xenophon takes in them. While the *Cynegeticus* is not a success in imitation on the order of Plato's *Symposium* or *Phaedrus*, it does stand as evidence of Xenophon's experimentation with carnival intertext alongside the other features of carnivalized literature.

§2. Didactic Uses of the Serio-Comic

These carnivalistic elements—subverted hierarchies, shifts in perspective, and carnivalized intertext—occur throughout Xenophon's Socratic works. Several of the commonplaces of menippean satire given by Bakhtin occur directly in the *Symposium*, but Xenophon's use of serio-comic elements in the *Memorabilia* is more general and in smaller concentrations; in the context of a single episode, these qualities often escape

²⁴ *Cynegeticus* I.18.

²⁵ *ibid.* XII.10-11.

²⁶ *ibid.* XIII.9.

detection. Still, comparison of Socratic episodes in the *Memorabilia* with treatments of similar themes in his treatises makes Xenophon's method more apparent and shows the peculiar value of this serio-comic mode for his broader rhetorical and pedagogical projects.

The topics of Socrates' conversations with Glaucon, Pericles, and an Athenian cavalry commander correspond fairly closely to issues taken up in Xenophon's *Poroi*, *Constitution of the Lacedaimonians*, and his treatises on cavalry command and horsemanship. In these three conversations, the primary subversion of hierarchy appears in Socrates' assumption of a position of authority in military and political discussions with young Athenians.²⁷ This relationship subverts the traditional authority of Athenian gentlemen in such matters and upsets established representation of Socrates by giving him interests more pragmatic than philosophical. The latter tendency is particularly clear in Socrates' conversation with Glaucon, which Xenophon has written to conform roughly to the dramatic progress of Plato's *Republic*. In Plato's dialogue, Socrates tames Glaucon by describing the mathematical and dialectical education necessary for the philosopher-king to rule justly; in Xenophon's version, Socrates quizzes Glaucon on matters of public finance to demonstrate his shortcomings.²⁸ The pastiche is typical of Xenophon's treatment of Plato's dialogues and other Socratic works; here, the appropriation of

²⁷ According to Chroust 1957, 8, the depiction of Socrates carrying on such conversations is "fanciful", yet just such odd juxtapositions of character, speech, and assumed authority are typical in serio-comic genres.

²⁸ *Memorabilia* III.6.

dramatic context may serve to distinguish Xenophon's pedagogical concerns from Plato's.²⁹

In the *Poroi*, Xenophon lays out the aim of his own proposals on the same subject, i.e. improving the revenues of Athens. On his view, the Athenians can only be at peace with their neighbors if they no longer have the financial need for conquest.³⁰ The episode in the *Memorabilia* reiterates this concern, but it shifts perspective through the excessive candor of Socrates' interlocutor. Stymied by Socrates' detailed cross-examination, Glaucon admits that his only plans to improve Athens' finances require conflict with other cities.³¹ After chastising Glaucon for his dangerous ignorance, however, Socrates advises him to improve his capacities for public service by engaging in private business.³² Generally, people admire those who have the most understanding of the affairs in which they are engaged.³³ By surpassing others in practical knowledge of their own problems, Glaucon can gain the confidence of the Athenians and assume authority over them.³⁴ Drawing in issues of trust and authority, Socrates encourages Glaucon not only to gain expertise in fields which would help him be a good ruler but also to develop a rhetoric of expertise that will help him gain a position of authority. The episode with Glaucon shows the reader the personal advantages of tending to the concerns Xenophon expresses in the *Poroi*.

²⁹ For similar appropriations by Isocrates in his intellectual rivalry with Plato, see Nightingale 1995, 13-59, and Livingstone 2001, 48-73.

³⁰ *Poroi* I.1.

³¹ *Memorabilia* III.6.7.

³² *ibid.* III.6.14.

³³ *ibid.* III.6.16-17.

³⁴ *ibid.* III.6.18.

Socrates delivers a similar lesson about the relationship between practical knowledge and authority in his conversation with a young cavalry commander. This conversation recalls two of Xenophon's other works, a treatise on horsemanship and one on cavalry command. These two treatises dovetail in their treatment of material, but they differ substantially in tone and style: the latter treatise is a manual of persuasion and deception whereas the former is a rote catalogue of grooming tips. Yet, the conversation between Socrates and the young cavalry commander demonstrates the functional unity of the two aspects of cavalry service. According to Socrates, it is through attention to such smaller matters that a commander convinces his men to obey him.³⁵ Here, the lesson about knowledge and authority resembles the one in the conversation with Glaucon, but Socrates goes on to note the importance of rhetorical skill in addition to technical expertise.³⁶ By having Socrates comment on the roles of practical knowledge and rhetorical skill in rule, Xenophon gives his reader an inside view of his own pedagogical aims in his treatises on horsemanship and cavalry command. This direct discussion of pedagogical principle is made possible by the transgressive, inquisitive character of Socrates, who respects neither the authority of elected position nor the standards of polite conversation.

In the conversation between Socrates and Pericles the Younger, Xenophon again emphasizes the foundation of authority in prudence and once more makes the rhetorical aims of his non-Socratic works clearer, this time regarding his treatise on the *Constitution of the Lacedaimonians*. Comparing the excellence and renown of the Athenians to a

³⁵ *ibid.* III.3.9.

³⁶ *ibid.* III.3.11-15.

piece of land in the possession of other men, Socrates suggests that they will claim it if they believe it is part of their inheritance.³⁷ When the young Pericles expresses doubts about the Athenians emulating their ancestors, Socrates suggests that they imitate the Spartans instead:

...alternatively, by at least imitating those who now have first place, and engaging in the same pursuits as they, if they use the same things similarly, they would be no worse than they are; and if they use them more attentively, they'll be even better.³⁸

In Socrates' view, admiration of Sparta can be a form of Athenian patriotism.

Xenophon's *Constitution of the Lacedaimonians*, then, is not merely a treatise in praise of the Lycurgan system of government but a call to the Athenians to emulate the Spartans in virtue as well as political influence. Through this episode, Xenophon gives his reader a key to the interpretation of more than his *Constitution of the Lacedaimonians*: one of the central features of Xenophon's histories is the presentation of paradigms for emulation.³⁹

In these three episodes, the frank discussions between Socrates and his young interlocutors help to clarify the rhetorical aims of Xenophon's other writings and demonstrate Xenophon's commitment to making Athens peaceful, preeminent among its neighbors, and secure in its aristocracy. Maintaining the serio-comic tone in these episodes keeps him from exploring problems in fine detail, but it also allows him to make more candid statements on matters of fundamental importance and compels his intellectual rivals to meet him on the same terms.

³⁷ *ibid.* III.5.8.

³⁸ *ibid.* III.5.14. Translation by Amy Bonnette.

³⁹ Dillery 1995, 123-176, shows the importance of paradigms of personal and communal excellence to Xenophon's construction of history.

§3. Advantages and Outline of this Study

This approach has two chief advantages in dealing with recurrent issues in Xenophon scholarship. First, serio-comic works of this type often make use of imitation and allusion both as a way of indicating their tone to the reader and as an avenue for creative subversion and appropriation.⁴⁰ Seen in that light, Xenophon's reliance on other Socratic authors is both an aid to his reader and an occasion for Xenophon to undermine and reevaluate his sources. Further investigation into Xenophon's use of sources can therefore serve more valuable purposes than proving his irrelevance to the development of the genre or turning his works into a quarry for fragments of lost authors.

Second, understanding the carnival elements of Xenophon's Socratic writing can radically improve the response of Xenophon scholarship to its most successful and serious outside critic, Leo Strauss. Strauss's ironic readings of Xenophon rely on some understanding of him as a serio-comic author whose ironic perspective can only be understood through esoteric exegesis. The interpretative key to such a reading is a presumed secret teaching that can only be known through internal inconsistencies and inconspicuous passages with troubling connotations. Strauss singled out a passage in which Xenophon compared Socrates to Odysseus:

But whenever he went through something in argument by himself, he proceeded via what was most agreed upon, holding this to be safety in argument.⁴¹

On a Straussian reading of this passage, Xenophon is describing how Socrates sometimes made arguments with which most people would agree even though Socrates himself did

⁴⁰ Platter 2007, 13-14, describes how carnivalized works of literature pull other works into themselves while depriving them of their original features.

⁴¹ *Memorabilia* IV.6.15.

not believe them. In Strauss's view, there are two kinds of interlocutors in Xenophon's Socratic works:

Socratic dialectic was then twofold: he proceeded differently when he talked to a "contradictor" from how he did when he talked to non-"contradictors"; only the former procedure led to the truth, while the latter led to agreement on the basis of generally accepted opinions or concord.⁴²

On the Straussian view, then, Socrates' claims are unreliable indicators of his true beliefs; depending on Socrates' opinion of his interlocutor, he may or may not mean what he says.

Strauss considers Xenophon to have a similarly guarded attitude toward his readers. Commenting on Socrates' description of the proper arrangement of building materials, Strauss offers a comparison to rhetorical composition:

It was a rule of forensic rhetoric to discuss the strong points of the defense in the first part and in the last part and the weak points in the center, i.e., when the attention of the listeners is flagging. The weakest points are the most important in a speech or book that presents an unpopular or forbidden view in the guise of a perfectly innocent or "orthodox view"; in such a book the innocent things come to sight first and last; such books are to some extent the products of forensic rhetoric.⁴³

In keeping with this view, Straussian readings of Xenophon tend to call into question any statement by Socrates or the narrator that has a broad appeal; in any case of apparent conflict, the only way to discern the hidden, esoteric meaning of the text is to reject the popular sentiment in favor of an antidemocratic, impious, or outright nihilistic interpretation. Strauss even flirts with the notion that all of Xenophon's attempts to defend Socrates are a transparent ruse that an intelligent reader should ignore:

Thus the *Memorabilia* as a whole is devoted to proving Socrates' justice.

⁴² Strauss 1972, 122.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 58.

We shall then tentatively assume that the three other Socratic writings are not devoted to Socrates' justice.⁴⁴

But if the tone of Xenophon's Socratic works is a regular feature of its genre, and if Xenophon indicates his use of that genre to his reader through allusions and the use of commonplaces, then the irony of Xenophon's Socratic works is open to his readers and less harsh in its implications than Strauss suggests.

This study puts forth a serious, coherent reading of Xenophon within the broad historical context of the serio-comic writing tradition as well as the narrower context of fourth century Socratic dialogues. It thereby aims to avoid both the reductionism found in reading Xenophon as a mere digest of contemporaries and the apparent subjectivity of reading him as an ironist antagonistic to his reader. On this view, the chief obstacle to our understanding of Xenophon's work is neither the inability of the author nor his intention to obscure himself but our own lack of familiarity with the conventions by which he was writing.

In my second chapter, I argue that the central philosophical idea that Xenophon's *Symposium* is meant to test is the view that virtue depends on activity and display to be known and even to exist. My third chapter ventures further out from Bakhtin's model by promoting the conflated analogy—here between household and city and between practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge—as a common carnivalizing device of the Socratic dialogue and as the central compositional element in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*. In my fourth chapter, I focus on the exceptional character of Socrates and argue that Xenophon's *Apology* presents him as a unique moral agent whose attempts at achieving political virtue are antithetical to any normative standard. In my fifth chapter, I

⁴⁴ Strauss 1970, 85-86.

examine Xenophon's use of apologetics, paraenesis, and Bildungsroman to create a dialogical, multi-generic text in the *Memorabilia*. In my conclusion, I pull together my findings from the preceding chapters and lay out the presuppositions for a new method of reading Xenophon's Socratica and the Socratic dialogues of Plato.

CHAPTER TWO
SYMPOSIUM: VIRTUE MADE EASY

I am amazed that you would adopt Plato and Aristotle as a vocation for several months when it might make pleasant and enjoyable reading to you in your leisure time as relaxation at a later date.

Robert Edward Turner, Jr., in correspondence with his son

Out of all the Socratic writings of Xenophon, his *Symposium* most clearly conforms to Bakhtin's standards for carnival; its literary form is a direct representation of a social situation with a carnival sensibility:

“Dialogic banquet discourse possessed special privileges (originally of a cultic sort): the right to a certain license, ease and familiarity, to a certain frankness, to eccentricity, ambivalence; that is, the combination in one discourse of praise and abuse, of the serious and the comic. The symposium is by nature a purely carnivalistic genre.”¹

The carnival nature of the symposium allows Xenophon to break down the distinctions between Socratic and aristocratic behavior. In this symposium, a group of Athenian gentlemen try to outdo each other in sophistication, and Socrates acts like a proper *kalos k'agathos*, keeping up traditional standards through praise and polite censure.

The first words of the *Symposium* prepare the reader for its serio-comic tone and introduce the opposition between seriousness and play that comes to form a major theme of the interlocutors' discussions:

But in my opinion, not only are the serious (*spoudê*) deeds of gentlemen (*kaloi kagathoi*), worth recalling, but so too are their deeds done in times of play (*paidiai*). I wish to make clear (*deloô*) those deeds at which I was present and on the basis of which I make this judgment.²

¹ Bakhtin 1984, 120.

² Symposium I.1, Bartlett translation.

Through this contrast and a series of parallel oppositions, Xenophon examines the qualities which make a gentleman and the role of display in the formation of virtue. His development of these themes makes use of several of the commonplaces of menippean satire outlined by Bakhtin.

§1. Seriousness and Play

Seriousness, humor, and comic-seriousness figure largely in the *Symposium*. In the first line of the work, Xenophon's narrator contrasts the lighter subject matter of the Symposium with "things done in seriousness".³ Similarly, Socrates praises the playful state produced by drinking for engendering friendly feelings among men.⁴ Xenophon's choice of historical setting and interlocutors reflects the same fantastic playfulness: the lions of Athens lie down with the lambs. Lycon will later be one of the accusers at Socrates' trial; Charmides and Autolycus will die fighting on opposite sides of the battle for control of Athens.⁵ The appearance of future enemies acting courteously towards each other shows the advantages of the symposium over the strife typical in political affairs.⁶

The playfulness of this world is personified in Philippos the jokester, and its utopian character revealed in his paradoxical situation: his business (*pragmata*) is

³ I.1. Huss 1999b takes the contrast to be with the *Memorabilia*, but the emphasis here is on the gentlemen rather than Socrates. The usefulness of Socrates in play as well as in seriousness is mentioned at *Memorabilia* IV.1, and several episodes show varying degrees of playfulness.

⁴ II.26.

⁵ See Nails 2002 for details on the prosopography.

⁶ See Huss 1999b, 404-406.

laughter.⁷ To the credit of his profession, he claims that people avoid him when they are upset and seek him when they are happy—a rather idyllic life.⁸ Yet in practice, Philippos is a failure as a comedian, and his sorrow turns out to be funnier than most of his jokes.⁹

Every kind of seriousness is pushed to the fringes of the symposium. At first, Callias claims he will show Socrates how worthy he is of serious attention,¹⁰ but soon afterwards he tells Philippos that the banqueters are “stuffed on seriousness and starved for laughs”.¹¹ The narrator mentions Hermogenes’ speech as one case of conspicuous seriousness;¹² Hermogenes prides himself on the favor the gods give him in exchange for his virtuous behavior. Discussing such a subject at a drinking party seems rather awkward,¹³ and this excessive seriousness portends Hermogenes’ other excesses in the symposium. Socrates himself apologizes for speaking too seriously in his speech on the love of Autolycus and Callias, but his restraint from making jokes at their expense may be simply a matter of good manners in an awkward situation.¹⁴

The ban on seriousness also extends to Socrates’ usual business. He objects that the question whether virtue can be taught is too controversial to be taken up at a

⁷ I.15.

⁸ IV.50-51.

⁹ I.15-16.

¹⁰ I.6.

¹¹ I.13.

¹² IV.50.

¹³ The sympotic parody of the Eleusinian mysteries, everywhere in the background of Plato’s *Symposium*, is a prime example of the dangers presented by the clash of playfulness and religion.

¹⁴ VIII.41. Eupolis’ *Autolycus*, staged the year following the events in Xenophon’s *Symposium*, savagely ridiculed their relationship. See Storey 2003.

symposium.¹⁵ He keeps Antisthenes from practicing elenchus on Niceratus.¹⁶ When the Syracusan showman mocks Socrates' scientific interests in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Socrates complains that the man ^{has} given him unfunny/chilly matters (*psuchra pragmata*) to discuss.¹⁷ Socrates even puts a stop to his most notorious activity when he quashes a round of *eikones* as being inappropriate.¹⁸

But seriousness does reassert itself more covertly; at one point the narrator describes the symposiasts as mixing jokes and seriousness.¹⁹ The symposium is not purely comical, nor is it a succession of serious and comic parts: throughout, the tone is serio-comic, and a reader must keep an eye out for the serious elements in comedy and vice versa. The tone would be familiar to Greek readers from the Attic comedies looming in the background of Xenophon's work.²⁰

This tone had developed in comedy by the time of Aristophanes, who has the chorus of *The Frogs* pray for the ability to say both serious and laughable things.²¹ Moreover, Plato offers a discussion of this concept in the *Laws*,²² and combinations or oppositions of terms denoting seriousness and play occur frequently in his work.²³ In

¹⁵ II.7.

¹⁶ III.6.

¹⁷ VI.7. Socrates' pun in this section is indeed *psuchros*; see Bassett 1916/1917. Cf. Shakespeare's *Tempest* II.1, "Most foul!"

¹⁸ On Socrates' famous *eikones*, see below Ch. 3 §2.

¹⁹ IV.28. Cyrus' banqueters are similarly described at *Cyropaideia* 2.3. See Gera 1993, 160-167

²⁰ Aristophanes' *Clouds* and *Banqueters* and Eupolis' *Flatterers* and *Autolycus* all prominently featured characters in Xenophon's *Symposium*.

²¹ *Frogs*, 391-92. See Platter 2007, 28-34, for an analysis of tone and genre in Aristophanes' comedies.

²² *Laws* 816d-e; see Giangrande 1972 for a general discussion of serio-comic tone in classical literature.

²³ *Phaedrus* 276c ff., *Symposium* 197e, etc.

general, the combination or opposition of terms related to the serious (*spoudaios*) or solemn (*semnos*) with laughter (*gelôs*) or play (*paidia*) seems to be an indication that the reader should pay attention to complex or shifting tone in the author's manipulation of playful and serious elements.²⁴

For Plato, the concept of play seems closely related to the activity of philosophy. The term *paidia* frequently occurs in Plato as a hypocorism for the activities of sophists.²⁵ And Socrates' standard metaphor for dialectic is *petteia*, which is a kind of game.²⁶ The Athenian stranger of the *Laws* makes an interesting conceptual link when he calls tragedy a *paidia* and *paideia*;²⁷ both play and education are distinct from action. Education, however, can be judged according to the actions for which it prepares a person whereas play has its own standards; *paidia* is therefore a ready metaphor for the Socratic life, a life of education pursued for its own sake.

§2. Parallel Dichotomies

The opposition between seriousness and humor is reflected in other similar oppositions: speech and silence, motion and stillness, and action and leisure. The theme of speech and silence first comes up in Xenophon's description of the effect of Autolycus' beauty on the rest of the symposiasts; he remarks, in the narrative, that those possessed by most gods rave, but those possessed by *sophrôn erôs* are silent.²⁸ The

²⁴ See Friedlander 1958, 108-125.

²⁵ At *Euthydemus* 277e, Socrates describes eristic as a kind of *paidia*; at *Parmenides* 137b, the exercise in argument is called a *paidia*; in the *Statesman*, myth and eristic are so described (267d, 308d).

²⁶ *Republic* 487b

²⁷ 656c.

²⁸ I.10.

contrast between speech and silence recurs in a brief episode involving Socrates and Hermogenes:

“Could you tell us, Hermogenes, what ‘convivial misbehavior’ is?”...
“‘To give pain, under the influence of wine, to one’s companions,’ this is what I judge ‘convivial misbehavior’ to be.”
“Then don’t you know,” he said, “that you are now giving pain to us by being silent?”²⁹

Xenophon carries on the opposition between speech and silence throughout the work. In a later episode, Socrates is trying to keep Philippos the jester from mocking the Syracusan showman. After being held back from talking several times, Philippos says,

“But if I keep quiet, I don’t know how I’ll make myself deserving of the dinner!”
“That’s easy,” he said, “if you keep quiet about the things one ought not say.”

“Thus,” Xenophon narrates, “this convivial misbehavior was quenched.”³⁰ Here again we see a theme from a conversation carried over into the narrative.

Another parallel opposition, between motion and stillness, arises in the discussion of Critoboulus’ behavior toward the beautiful youth Clinias. Whenever Critoboulus sees him, he turns to stone like a man who sees a Gorgon.³¹ Socrates takes up the theme again when he admires a dancing slave boy and observes that he appears even more beautiful when moving than when still. He is so impressed that he too wishes to take up dancing—he claims he has even been experimenting with it in private.³² The buffoon Philippos responds to Socrates’ remark by dancing and showing that his body appears even uglier

²⁹ VI.1-2. Xenophon here takes a commonplace of sympotic literature, the reprimand of the silent guest, and gives it a Socratic character by introducing it with a “what is x” question; see Gray 1992.

³⁰ VI.10.

³¹ IV.24.

³² II.15-17. The latter remark is almost certainly a joke, see Huss 1999b, 383-389. This Socrates in motion is quite at odds with the Socrates of Plato’s *Symposium*, whom Alcibiades compares to a statue (215a-b).

when in motion.³³ Rather than beautifying the body, motion reveals its true nature; in a later speech, Socrates will describe a similar relationship between virtue and actions.³⁴

These two similar oppositions, between speech and silence, motion and stillness, are brought together in an opposition which spans the entire work. Early on, all of the symposiasts are rapt in silence gazing at the beauty of Autolycus;³⁵ the narrator's description of this scene is echoed in Socrates' description of Critoboulus ceasing to move entirely when looking at the fair Cleinias.³⁶ At the end of the work, all the guests watch the acrobat and the dancing boy perform a mime as Dionysus and Ariadne, and they are stirred to motion and depart, ending the symposium.³⁷ The contrast between silence before Autolycus and motion in response to the performers subsumes the oppositions of speech and silence and of motion and stillness under a broader dichotomy between action and leisure.

This distinction comes up in a comment of Antisthenes which shows some of the subtlest Xenophontic irony. As a man who devoted himself to conversation rather than action, Socrates was open to charges of idle chatter (*adoleschia*) and inaction (*apragmosunê*). In the *Memorabilia*, Socrates defends himself from these charges through a definition of leisure (*scholê*),³⁸ and he jokes about not having any free time in

³³ II.22.

³⁴ VIII.43.

³⁵ I.8-10.

³⁶ Oddly, though, the madmen Xenophon contrasts with lovers are goggle-eyed, which calls to mind the Gorgon in the Critoboulus comparison.

³⁷ IX.2-7.

³⁸ III.9.9.

front of Theodote;³⁹ Plato also periodically addresses the subject of Socratic leisure, as when Socrates argues in the *Apology* that he is a man of no leisure (*ascholia*),⁴⁰ or in Socrates' semi-ironic praise of leisure in the digression with Theodorus in the *Theaetetus*,⁴¹ or again with the discussion of the proper and improper use of leisure in the *Statesman*.⁴² Antisthenes, on the other hand, was the classical paradigm of toil as a way of life.⁴³ Here, he describes how he always wants to spend time with Socrates, but when he approaches, Socrates says, "I'm busy."⁴⁴ Socrates' rejection of Antisthenes' company reverses the roles the two men traditionally play with respect to work.

§3. Reversal and Subversion

In a contest of wit, each man at the symposium announces what he prides himself on most and justifies his choice with varying degrees of cleverness.⁴⁵ Most of the speakers make some cryptic or paradoxical statement. Callias claims he possesses the wisdom necessary for making men better, and he equates this skill with his most well-known attribute, wealth. According to Callias, giving men money makes them more just by relieving their need to commit crimes.⁴⁶ This answer seems a parody of the kind of

³⁹ III.11.16. The leisure of the thinking man is also brought to our attention at the beginning of the conversation between Socrates and Ischomachus at *Oeconomicus* VII.1, and the shared leisure of Simonides and Hiero is mentioned as well at *Hiero* I.1.

⁴⁰ 23b.

⁴¹ 172d ff.

⁴² 272b ff.

⁴³ See Pieper 1998, 16.

⁴⁴ VII.4.

⁴⁵ III.3-IV.63.

⁴⁶ IV.1-2.

knowledge of virtue which Socrates seeks in Plato's dialogues. Antisthenes submits the answer to elenchus, asking whether Callias' beneficiaries seek to do good for Callias in return, and on receiving a response in the negative, he derides Callias for making men just to everyone but himself.⁴⁷

Wealth recurs as a theme in the other symposiasts' speeches, soon becoming the common currency of their raillery. Charmides claims that poverty is superior to wealth for making people more virtuous,⁴⁸ and Antisthenes argues for the inferiority of material wealth to wealth in the soul, what we would call "spiritual goods".⁴⁹ Antisthenes claims to have acquired this wealth from Socrates, and when Socrates defends the value of his own proudest possession—the art of pimping—he returns the favor, claiming he gained his knowledge of that subject from Antisthenes.⁵⁰ Antisthenes is at first incensed, but as Socrates goes on to elaborate the benefits of this skill, Antisthenes identifies it as another source for his wealth. Again, in the beauty contest which follows this round of speeches, Critoboulus complains that Antisthenes and Socrates' wealth may hurt his chances with the judges. When Critoboulus wins the contest, Socrates retorts that Critoboulus' money—his proudest possession was his beauty—is unlike Callias' in that it corrupts men, as money usually does.⁵¹

Xenophon's manipulation of the subject of wealth and poverty reflects one of the oldest commonplaces in the literary depiction of Socrates. Aristophanes and other comic

⁴⁷ IV.3.

⁴⁸ IV.29-33.

⁴⁹ IV.34-45.

⁵⁰ IV.56-64.

⁵¹ V.8-10.

poets depicted Socrates as a poor, lazy, and garrulous fellow.⁵² In the dialogues of Plato and Xenophon, Socrates often fends off or ironically embraces these charges. Here, though, other characters take on Socrates' nonchalant attitude toward poverty. Bernhard Huss takes this kind of reversal to be a key element in Xenophon's comic method.⁵³

In Plato's *Symposium*, Alcibiades indicates that such reversals are typical of Socrates' own behavior.⁵⁴ The paradigm given for this is Socrates' inversion of the lover-beloved relationship; Socrates has sought out several handsome youths, Charmides, Euthydemus, and Alcibiades himself, and after conversing with them he has transformed them from beloveds into lovers of himself.⁵⁵ In his description, Alcibiades performs his own reversal, comparing himself to a Corybant just as Socrates had compared himself to a Bacchant in Aeschines' *Alcibiades* to describe the inspiration he had experienced from the young man's beauty.⁵⁶

§4. Freedom, Virtue, and Activity

The great reversal Socrates performs in Xenophon's *Symposium* is to transform himself into a perfect gentleman. The complaint is sometimes made against Xenophon that his Socrates is so affable that the Athenians would have had no reason to execute him.⁵⁷ This view would seem to find confirmation in a scene near the end of the *Symposium* in which Lycon, in real life one of the litigants at Socrates' trial, praises

⁵² See Guthrie 1971, 40-41.

⁵³ Huss 1999a.

⁵⁴ See Edmonds 2000 and Usher 2002.

⁵⁵ Plato, *Symposium* 222b. See Halperin 1986, 68-72 for the erotic dynamics of the reversal.

⁵⁶ Dittmar Fr. 11c.

⁵⁷ See Burnet 1914, 149, and Vlastos 1971, 3.

Socrates as a *kalos k'agathos anthrôpos*.⁵⁸ The term *kalos k'agathos* referred both to a man as an exemplar of virtue and as a representative of the upper stratum of society, and there was a perceived reciprocal relationship between the two qualities. Membership in the upper class gave a man the freedom necessary for the cultivation of moral and political virtue, and his proficiencies in these respects justified his position of relative leisure.⁵⁹

Socrates quotes a couplet of Theognis which reaffirms the status of such men as sources of virtue:

For from the good you will be taught good things.
But if you mingle with evil men,
You will destroy even the intelligence you had.⁶⁰

Lycon immediately voices his approval to his son. The abstract noun *kalokagathia*, “gentlemanliness”, occurs frequently in the *Symposium* as a term for virtue, manners, and class, culminating in Socrates’ use of the word in his advice to Callias and Autolycus on proper romantic relations. The esteem accorded a gentleman is an incitement for the beloved to return affection to the lover and for the lover to act respectfully to the beloved.⁶¹ It is this speech which provokes Lycon’s startling remark, which has been taken by Huss as Xenophon’s attempt to effect a reconciliation between those who loved Socrates and those who condemned him by harking back to a golden age of social harmony, an *aurea aetas Socratica*.⁶²

⁵⁸ IX.1.

⁵⁹ See Sarpedon’s speech to Glaucus at Iliad 12.310-328.

⁶⁰ Theognis 35-36 quoted at II.4, Bartlett translation.

⁶¹ VIII.32-40.

⁶² Huss 1999b, 398-406.

Xenophon's concern with *kaloi kagathoi* coincides with his persistent emphasis on freedom and liberality in the *Symposium*, as well as on the distinction between persuasion and compulsion. Critoboulus, Charmides, and Antisthenes defend their respective prized possessions for their promotion of freedom and liberality;⁶³ Socrates denigrates physical love as illiberal, and praises spiritual love as a kind of willing compulsion.⁶⁴ And in describing the erotic mime which closes the symposium, the narrator expresses admiration for the performers acting not as they have been taught but as they have been allowed to act.⁶⁵ On the other hand, Socrates does warn that unlike compulsion, persuasion can corrupt the persuaded.⁶⁶ We could say that Socrates as we usually know him is most similar to a *kalos kagathos* in his enjoyment of freedom; his most permanent characteristics, poverty, free speaking, a lack of involvement in commercial and political affairs, are consequences of his extreme devotion to personal freedom.

But gentlemanliness is constrained by its own standards of conduct and by the concern of gentlemen to be recognized for adhering to them. Gentlemanliness exists largely as a display of itself, and Socrates' proudest possession—pimping—is the skill of showing the good in people to each other in order to allow them to benefit each other. We see him engaging in this activity time and again in the *Memorabilia*, which also contains a discussion of Socrates' skill in matchmaking.⁶⁷ In both the *Memorabilia* and

⁶³ IV.15, IV.31, and IV.43, respectively.

⁶⁴ VIII.23 ff.

⁶⁵ IX.5-6.

⁶⁶ VIII.20.

⁶⁷ II.6.36 ff.

the *Symposium*, Socrates makes it clear that in order to be a good pimp, one must not falsify the objects of one's pimping, one may only bring to the fore their better characteristics. A false reputation is always exposed through trial.⁶⁸ Furthermore, as Socrates goes on to say in the parallel passage in the *Memorabilia*, "Those who have been deceived hate each other and the matchmaker at the same time."⁶⁹

Display and viewing figure largely in the discourse of the symposium; the frequent references to display culminate in Socrates' great speech on the proper place of love in which he describes the role of mutual perception in attracting lovers and enforcing their virtuous practices. This speech itself is a display in which Socrates presents Autolycus and Callias each with the other's most admirable characteristics. Xenophon shows the speech's effect by reversing the image of the symposiasts staring in silence at Autolycus; now, all of the men are discussing what Socrates said, but Autolycus stares at Callias in silence.⁷⁰ Callias is so impressed that he asks Socrates to pimp him to the whole city.⁷¹

Here Socrates makes his remark about true virtue shining forth in actions. But, we might ask, if it is in action that excellence is best revealed, has Xenophon not chosen a poor environment for displaying virtue and distinguishing character? Would the serious actions of men be better touchstones for these qualities?

§5. Socratic Errors

⁶⁸ VIII.43.

⁶⁹ II.6.36.

⁷⁰ Another reversal, this time of the silent stares at Autolycus in I.8-10.

⁷¹ VIII.42.

The delayed question confronts the reader: Why does Xenophon think that the deeds of gentlemen done in play are worth remembering? Is it merely for the pleasure of his readers, or is there something useful to it? In many of his writings, Xenophon explores the value of play in teaching serious lessons, as when Cyrus the Great has his army play a game to teach them the relative value of close and distant fighting.⁷² The symposium is not an environment in which flaws of character are obvious, but some may still be evident to a careful observer. A reader's perspective from outside the symposium can help in seeing the relations between small errors within and great errors without.

The first figure to look at for this relationship is Charmides. Soon after Socrates makes a remark that wine kindles friendly-feeling as oil the fire, Charmides tries to reapply Socrates' comment to the young musicians at the party:

Well in my opinion, men, what Socrates said regarding the wine applies also to this mixing of youths in their bloom with music: on the one hand it lays pains to rest, and it awakens erotic passion on the other.⁷³

That Charmides alters Socrates' "friendly-feeling" to "erotic passion" may reveal an overly-erotic disposition of the sort stereotypical of tyrants, and this latent tendency appears again when he compares himself favorably with a tyrant in his speech on the value of poverty.⁷⁴ Furthermore, Niceratus' rather naïve ideas about the sufficiency of Homer for knowledge of political and social life do not bode well for his chances of surviving the purges of the late fifth century.⁷⁵ The seeds of doom may already be sown

⁷² *Cyropaedia* II.3.17-20.

⁷³ III.1. Strauss 1972, 148-149, notes the difference between Socrates' remark and Charmides and implies that the latter's focus on bodily pleasures prefigures his future turn to tyranny.

⁷⁴ IV.32.

⁷⁵ IV.5-6.

in the *aurea aetas Socratica*. Of course, Charmides' future alliance with the Thirty Tyrants does not reflect well on Socrates either, and many might agree that it was Socrates' association with the Thirty rather than his elenchus which led to his trial and execution. Bernhard Huss, again trying to preserve the *aurea aetas*, argues that Socrates is not responsible for Charmides on the same grounds that Xenophon defends Socrates from the charge of corrupting Critias and Alcibiades: while they were with Socrates, they were good, but when they left him, they grew corrupt.⁷⁶

But even if Charmides did stop associating with Socrates before his collaboration with the Thirty, Xenophon portrays their relationship in a much different light than he does the ones with Socrates' two most famous ex-pupils. Critias and Alcibiades studied with Socrates because they were ambitious and thought he could make them more politically adept.⁷⁷ But the case was different with Charmides, whom Socrates sought out on account of his good sense and persuaded to take up a political life.⁷⁸ When he protested his fear over such involvement, Socrates steered him away from his cowardice. In Xenophon's portrayal, Charmides' tyrannical actions were a kind of collateral damage of Socrates' moral teaching in a way that Critias' and Alcibiades' were not.

At least one more revealing error occurs in the long speech Socrates gives at the climax of the *Symposium*. The speech is an encomium to pederastic love, reminiscent of Phaedrus' and Pausanias' speeches in Plato's *Symposium* and the erotic speeches in Plato's *Phaedrus*. In the speech, Socrates distinguishes the vulgar Aphrodite from the

⁷⁶ Huss 1999b, 405-406.

⁷⁷ *Memorabilia* I.2.14.

⁷⁸ III.7.

heavenly Aphrodite, saying the former is of bodies, the latter of souls, and friendship, and good deeds.⁷⁹ Socrates pays Callias a compliment by saying that his is a heavenly love.

Indeed, Callias, it is by this latter sort of Eros that you are in my opinion restrained. I offer as evidence of this the gentlemanliness of your beloved and that I see you invite his father to your get-togethers with the boy. For none of these is concealed from the father by the lover who is a gentleman.⁸⁰

Quite to the contrary, opinion in Athens held that Callias and Autolycus' Aphrodite was of the distinctly earthly variety. But Socrates is here pimping Callias to Callias, making him seem better to himself so he will improve his behavior. That Xenophon intended just this is fairly clear because precisely at this moment, Hermogenes blunders in on Socrates' speech:

"By Hera, Socrates," said Hermogenes, "I admire you particularly for the fact that at the same time as you compliment Callias you're also teaching him what sort of person he should be."⁸¹

It appears that Hermogenes, in avoiding one extreme of convivial misbehavior, has veered into the other. Socrates, carrying on his speech, avoids any implication that he is misrepresenting Callias to Callias. If Hermogenes somehow endangers Socrates' rhetorical strategy by revealing it, Xenophon has presented us with an earlier Socratic project endangering his current attempt at moral instruction. This kind of conflict seems to be a prime danger of the game. But if Socrates misrepresents Callias to Callias, and in turn to Autolycus and his father Lycon, he surely risks what he described as the

⁷⁹ VIII.9-10.

⁸⁰ VIII.10-11.

⁸¹ VIII.12. See Higgins 1977, 16, and Strauss 1972, 172-173.

consequence of bad pimping in the *Memorabilia*, that those who are deceived hate each other and the matchmaker at the same time.⁸²

Relevant to this matter is Antisthenes' nearby insult, calling Socrates a pimp of himself for making excuses.⁸³ If Socrates is his own pimp, he should take care that people do not get the wrong impression about him. From that perspective, Lycon's complement to Socrates, that he is a *kalos kagathos anthropos*, could also be a seed of future doom: Autolycus, like Niceratus, was a victim of the Thirty Tyrants, and Lycon may have had good reason to hate the matchmaker when things went sour. Furthermore, since Socrates represented himself to the Athenian demos, his conviction and execution would seem to reveal him to be a failure. Yet, someone who thought so might be judging Socrates by a different set of standards than his own.

Conclusion

The prevalence of so many serio-comic features in the *Symposium* should give a reader some confidence in Xenophon's capacity to construct a *menippea* or comparable carnivalized work of literature. Xenophon makes use of these commonplaces in a complex treatment of a basic ethical question, how a person can be educated in virtue. Dramatically, the dialogue shows the setbacks in Socrates' education of Hermogenes; ironically, it gestures toward a series of setbacks and moral failings that will culminate in the execution of Socrates. Xenophon's dramatic and thematic treatment of these issues in the *Symposium* clearly conforms both to the commonplaces of Menippean satire and to the common features of the Socratic dialogue.

⁸² *Memorabilia* II.6.36.

⁸³ VIII.5.

CHAPTER THREE
OECONOMICUS: A COMMON SENSE PHILOSOPHY

I always thought that if she had a dog she'd name him Spot—
without irony. If I had a dog I'd name him Spot, with irony.
But for all practical purposes no one would know the
difference.

Mary Flannery O'Connor, letter to Betty Hester ("A.")
August 9, 1957

Because of the attention it gives to the relationships and responsibilities of husbands and wives, Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* is one of our most important sources for understanding Athenian domestic ideology.¹ But the work's combination of two dissimilar literary forms, the technical treatise and the Socratic dialogue, has led to much confusion regarding its tone and intent. Some scholars have read it as a straightforward treatise broken up into conversation form.² Others have recognized Socratic elements in it but considered their application to the subject extraneous or incoherent.³ When Ischomachus teaches Socrates about farming, for example, he claims that the art is so simple that Socrates already knows it—he only needs to be reminded (*hypomimnêskô*) of it.⁴ So, Ischomachus' lesson consists in a long series of leading questions about plowing, sowing, and reaping, to which Socrates, in awe of himself, gives correct answers:

¹ See e.g. Foucault 1990, 152-165. Cartledge 1993 gives a representative bibliography, 9 n 26.

² Marchant 1923, xxiv: "The thoughts and reflections, whether put into the mouth of Socrates or Ischomachus, are so entirely Xenophon's own that we may wonder why he did not frankly produce a treatise on the management of an estate instead of a Socratic dialogue." On the widespread identification of Xenophon with Ischomachus and the issues it raises, see below §4.

³ Brickhouse and Smith 2000, 39: "The closest this 'Socrates' comes to being a philosopher is when he remarks (in passing) about the value of asking the right questions if one wants a student to learn anything..."

⁴ *Oeconomicus* XVI.8.

‘I know these things,’ I said, ‘without being aware of it. And for some time I have been thinking whether I might know how to pour gold, play the flute, and paint, without being aware of it...’⁵

Of this ersatz *anamnesis* of the art of farming, Marcel Caster wrote:

Le procédé d’exposition est une véritable parodie de la méthode socratique, et le pire, c’est que la parodie est inconsciente.⁶

While the mismatch of form and content may seem bathetic or misguided, the juxtaposition of high and low can also be a sign of carnival discourse. According to Bakhtin,

The *menippea* loves to play with abrupt transitions and shifts, ups and downs, rises and falls, unexpected comings together of distant and disunited things, mésalliances of all sorts.⁷

In particular, the genre tends to combine philosophical or mystical elements with a *slum naturalism*:

The idea here fears no slum, is not afraid of any of life’s filth. The man of the idea—the wise man—collides with worldly evil, depravity, baseness, and vulgarity in their most extreme expression.⁸

As often in the *menippea*, the distortions of hierarchy and perspective in the *Oeconomicus* broaden the scope of the work’s subject;⁹ Xenophon exploits the disparity between method and subject and other awkward incongruities to draw attention to the nature of a kind of intelligence, or *gnômê*, that plays a defining role in all practical

⁵ *ibid.* XVIII.9. Carnes Lord translation.

⁶ Caster 1937, 49 n. 2.

⁷ Bakhtin 1983, 118.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁹ See the discussion of “extraordinary philosophical universalism” in *ibid.*, 115-16.

endeavors.¹⁰ But the dialogue struggles to retain the complexity of the philosophical problems surrounding that faculty, and it makes extensive use of the commonplaces of the Socratic dialogue to add a further dimension to its treatment of that subject. An examination of carnival elements in the *Oeconomicus* not only helps us to understand the work as a source on Greek domestic ideology but also draws attention to features common to the *menippea* and the Socratic dialogue.

§1. Artful Rule

The extensive carnivalization of the *Oeconomicus* can be seen by comparing its whimsical prologue with an episode in the *Memorabilia* that presents a more direct argument for a nearly identical thesis. When a soldier named Nicomachides expresses his disgust at the election of a successful businessman to the position of general, Socrates claims that command in one area is comparable to command in another:

...whatever someone presides over, if he knows what is needed and is able to procure it, he will be a good presiding officer, whether it is a chorus or a household or a city or an army that he presides over.¹¹

When Nicomachides expresses astonishment that Socrates would claim that “good household managers would make good generals”,¹² Socrates lists the activities common

¹⁰ See *Oeconomicus* XXI.2 and my remarks below in §3 of this chapter. At *Symposium* II.9, Socrates opposes the term *gnômê* to things that a person can be taught, and at *Oeconomicus* XXI.2, Ischomachus uses *gnômê* as a general term for the kind of intelligence that increases chances of success in household management, farming, warfare, and politics—all activities involving risk and requiring reliance on other people. I take it to be similar in scope, if not in sense, to Aristotle’s use of *phronêsis*: it may be that Xenophon is merely using *gnômê* as a generic term for knowledge or a term for intellectual faculties generally, but he gives the term some special significance by opposing it to *technê*. Xenophon also uses *sôphrosynê* in his Socratic works to refer to the same kind of intelligence, but he diminishes the distinctness of that term by playing on its two senses—self-control and practical wisdom—at *Oeconomicus* VII.14-15; see North 1966, 129. At *Cynegeticus* XIII.3, Xenophon uses the plural form *gnômai* to identify the things to be found in his writings that give them more value than sophistic treatises. The term occurs in many senses in Thucydides, but its use as a form of intelligence with a putative claim to success in practical ventures seems thematic there as well; see Edmunds 1975.

¹¹ *Memorabilia* III.4.6, translation by Amy Bonnette.

to both professions: training their inferiors, directing them, punishing them, encouraging them, gaining allies, defending their property, and being attentive and hard working in all of their tasks.¹³ Socrates concludes the episode by stating that both private and public affairs require knowledge of how to deal with human beings, and the two kinds of business differ only in scale.¹⁴

But instead of using this direct approach in the *Oeconomicus*, Socrates establishes the importance of household management through a cascade of specious arguments. In search of a definition of the term *household*, he first gains Critoboulus' assent that *household* refers not merely to a house but to everything that a man possesses.¹⁵ When Critoboulus objects to the inclusion of enemies among one's possessions, Socrates takes advantage of his hesitation to restrict the definition of household and personal wealth to those things which benefit a man, and in turn, to those things a man knows how to use to his benefit.¹⁶ Then, by exploiting the breadth of the concept of possession, Socrates extends the definition of household to apply to all of the relations with human beings that a man possesses; according to Socrates' final definition, then, the enemies of a wise man are a part of his wealth since he knows how to use them to his advantage, but the money of a foolish man is not his wealth since he does not know how to benefit from it.¹⁷

¹² *ibid*, III.4.7.

¹³ *ibid*, III.4.8-9.

¹⁴ *ibid*, III.4.12. Similarly, Socrates urges the politically minded Glaucon to take up household management at III.6.14 by comparing the management of one household with that of ten-thousand households.

¹⁵ *Oeconomicus* I.5.

¹⁶ *ibid*, I.6-13.

¹⁷ *ibid*, I.14-15.

Having established the importance of household management through a casuistry that makes the term *household* include all goods available to a human being, Socrates argues for the nobility of farming with the help of utopian fantasy.¹⁸ According to Socrates, farming must be on the same level of nobility as military command since those are the two spheres in which success is most prized in Persia.¹⁹ After telling several anecdotes in support of this claim,²⁰ Socrates concludes his proof of the similarity of farming and military command by listing their common features, much the same as he had done in the *Nicomachides* episode: both kinds of work involve alliances, obedience, punishments and rewards, and encouragement.²¹

In the end, Socrates' claim about the continuity of features in all forms of rule is substantially the same here as in the *Memorabilia*, but in the *Oeconomicus*, Xenophon introduces it through extraordinary and rather implausible arguments. The tangential definition of economy creates an atmosphere of serendipity, and the alien praise of farming suggests utopian escapism. Together, they show that the treatise on housekeeping and farming has much broader implications, and they predispose the reader toward a philosophical idea without providing a cogent argument in its favor. The idea is the uniformity of rule, and its carnivalized introduction provides Xenophon with an opportunity to test it rather than merely promote it.

¹⁸ On the organic incorporation of "social utopia" in *menippea*, see Bakhtin 1984, 118.

¹⁹ *Oeconomicus*, IV.4ff.

²⁰ The rosiness of these stories is well represented in Socrates' praise of the younger Cyrus, in which he ignores the betrayal of Araios in his account of the loyalty of Cyrus' friends. See Strauss 1970, 21n21.

²¹ *Oeconomicus*, V.14-16.

Xenophon further complicates the tone of the *Oeconomicus* here by foreshadowing the work's ambiguous ending. After Socrates concludes his argument on the definition of household management, Critoboulus objects that while Socrates believes that all things will be beneficial to someone who knows how to use them, there are cases in which people know how to gain benefits from something and yet neglect to do so; to them, even their knowledge is not truly wealth.²² Socrates gains Critoboulus' willingness to learn more about household management by convincing him that he is free of the vices that hold such men back, but he does not address the underlying problem of the insufficiency of knowledge to attain success.²³

Later, Ischomachus' lessons in the art of farming end with Socrates doubting the sufficiency of such training for bringing about success in any practical activity. Ischomachus admits that knowledge is insufficient to bring about success in fields like farming and household management—since the art of farming is so simple, success in it must depend on another factor—and he concedes that people vary in the intelligence necessary for all pursuits involving human beings.²⁴ After describing how such differences affect success in several different practices, Ischomachus concludes that the ability to rule willing subjects is a divine gift rather than a human one.²⁵ This notion of a divine gift that performs a role that no art can is an aporetic device represented in the

²² *ibid.*, I.16-17.

²³ *ibid.*, I.22-II.1. At V.18-20, he similarly dodges Critoboulus' question about the role of fortune by stressing the importance of prayer in all practical affairs.

²⁴ *ibid.*, XXI.2. In the performance of the tasks of farming, attention (*epimeleia*) matters most, as Ischomachus describes at XX.2-21. But in directing others to attend to their tasks, the intelligence that Ischomachus believes of divine origin alone brings success.

²⁵ *ibid.*, XXI.11-12.

conclusions of other Socratic dialogues,²⁶ and Xenophon's inclusion of it here provokes a reexamination of all of Socrates' and Ischomachus' arguments. Most directly, the reversal casts doubt on the answer to the first question Socrates asks Critoboulus, whether household management is a kind of science (*epistêmê*).

The introduction and conclusion of the dialogue provoke questions about the nature of the capacity to rule along two axes: uniformity of rule at different scales and the conformity of rule to the standards of art or science. Xenophon's engagement with these two issues through the example of household management follows one of the most well-represented commonplaces of the Socratic dialogue, the craft analogy.

§2. Socratic Analogies

Of chief importance in determining the commonplaces of Socratic writing are those passages where a character remarks on the sorts of things that Socrates always does or says.²⁷ In the *Memorabilia*, Hippias calls Socrates out on one such tendency:

...Socrates was saying to some people that it was a wonder that, while one who wishes to have someone taught shoemaking, building, smithing, or horsemanship is not perplexed as to where he would send him to obtain it—and some say that for one who wishes to have even a horse or cow made just, all places are full of teachers—but if one wishes either oneself to learn justice or to have one's son or household servant taught it, he doesn't know where to go to obtain this. And after listening to these things, Hippias said, as though making fun of him, "Are you, Socrates, still saying the same things that I myself once heard from you a long time ago?" And Socrates said, "And what is even more terrible than this, Hippias—I not only say always the same things but even say them about the same things."²⁸

²⁶ e.g. *Meno* 100b, Aeschines' *Alcibiades* fr. 12.

²⁷ e.g. Thrasymachus' remarks on Socrates' *eironeia* at *Republic* 337a.

²⁸ *Memorabilia* IV.4.5-6.

The passage shows some of Xenophon's most direct borrowing from Plato.²⁹ In the *Gorgias*, Socrates tests the view that the superior man has a right to take a greater share from the inferior one by applying it to the work of doctors, weavers, cobblers, and farmers. Callicles grows impatient with the line of questioning:

Callicles: How you keep on saying the same things, Socrates!

Socrates: Yes, Callicles, not only the same things, but also about the same subjects.

Callicles: By the gods! You simply don't let up on your continual talk of shoemakers and cleaners, cooks and doctors, as if our discussion were about them.³⁰

Though the point of the charge varies a bit between Hippias and Callicles, the remarks serve as a helpful generic marker for both Plato and Xenophon, connecting these arguments to similar ones throughout the corpus of Socratic literature.³¹ The craft analogy is related to another device commonly encountered in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, the sort of vulgar analogy that Socrates uses to startle or provoke shame in his associates.³² Like those analogies, the craft analogy can serve as a form of general or personal criticism.³³ In the *Memorabilia*, the Thirty Tyrants silence Socrates for using both sorts of disparaging analogies against them, in his comparison of Critias to a rutting piglet and in his criticism of the Tyrants' actions as a poor form of shepherding:³⁴

²⁹ Kahn 1996, 397, notes this as one of 11 clear instances of Xenophon's dependence on Plato. Of the 11, five (2, 5, 6, 8, and 9) involve or refer to craft analogies.

³⁰ 490e-491a, Donald J. Zeyl translation.

³¹ While Hippias is upset by Socrates' lack of novelty, Callicles is annoyed at the *auxesis* in Socrates' analogies and the diversion they present to his own argument.

³² e.g. *Memorabilia* III.13.6, where Socrates compares a free man to his slave in physical conditioning.

³³ e.g. *ibid.* I.7.3; here, Socrates uses analogies to crafts to keep his associates from boasting.

³⁴ Socrates compares Critias to a piglet at I.2.30, and he compares the tyrants to herdsman who make their cattle fewer at I.2.32.

But Critias said, “However, you will have to refrain, Socrates, from the following: from shoemakers, builders, and smiths; indeed, I think that they are already worn out from being bandied about by you.”

“Then,” said Socrates, “should I not also refrain from what follows upon these—both the just and the holy and the other things of this sort?”

“Yes, by Zeus,” said Charicles, “and from herdsmen! Or else be on your guard that you, too, do not make the cattle fewer.”³⁵

Here, Xenophon incorporates the Socratic commonplace into a heroic portrayal of civil disobedience and points to the transcendent dimension of such discussions. Bakhtin considers this sort of juxtaposition of high philosophical ideas with a sense of *slum naturalism* as a salient and persistent feature of menippean satire,³⁶ and its frequent presence in Socratic dialogues, in the form of craft analogies, shows the proximity of tone between the two genres.

In Plato’s *Symposium*, Alcibiades compares the dissonance in these arguments to the one in Socrates himself:

If you were to listen to his arguments, at first they’d strike you as totally ridiculous; they’re clothed in words as coarse as the hides worn by the most vulgar satyr. He’s always going on about pack asses, or blacksmiths, or cobblers, or tanners; he’s always making the same tired old points in the same tired old words. If you are foolish, or simply unfamiliar with him, you’d find it impossible not to laugh at his arguments. But if you see them when they open up like the statues, if you go behind their surface, you’ll realize that no other arguments make any sense.³⁷

While the vulgarity of these analogies brings a serio-comic tone to Socratic dialogues, the tendency to focus on crafts takes advantage of the extensive discussion of the nature of craft that flourished in Hippocratic treatises as well as in the works of the sophists

³⁵ *ibid.* I.2.37.

³⁶ Bakhtin 1984, 115.

³⁷ 221d-222a. Translation by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff. Hunter 2004, 11, relates the image to the literary genre: “...we may be tempted, particularly in a work of the tone of the *Symposium*, to see this not merely as Alcibiades’ enthusiastic reaction to Socratic discourse, but also as one programmatic image for the reading of Socratic dialogues as a whole, and most notably the *Symposium* itself.”

Hippias, Prodicus, and Protagoras.³⁸ As in Socrates' disparaging analogies at the expense of his companions, both the similarities and the distances between the objects of comparison can be important, and the device points to a range of difficulties in assimilating them rather than merely asserting their basic conformity.³⁹

The analogies often occur in Socrates' conversations with practitioners of some craft. Socrates refers to such dialogues in Plato's *Apology*,⁴⁰ but his interlocutors in Plato usually have higher profiles as statesmen, sophists, or poets. Phaedo's *Simon*, on the other hand, presented a dialogue-length conversation between Socrates and a cobbler, and an entire subgenre of short cobbler dialogues developed from it.⁴¹ The genre of the craftsman dialogue proved a rich source for paradoxical variations. In Phaedo's *Zopyrus*, Socrates spoke with a physiognomist—whose art purports to offer an understanding of human nature; through Zopyrus' faulty predictions about Socrates, Phaedo explored the question of the determining influence of character on human action.⁴² Aeschines' *Aspasia* introduced another paradoxical element that quickly became a commonplace: arts of love.⁴³ When we do see major treatments of the craftsman conversation in Plato's dialogues, they take even more convoluted forms, such as his treatment of the

³⁸ The Hippocratics defended the status of medicine as an art; Plato depicts Hippias as a polymath in the *Hippias Minor* and a proponent of liberal arts in the *Protagoras*; Prodicus wrote on farming in the *Horai*; Protagoras wrote treatises on wrestling and other arts.

³⁹ I am most sympathetic with the account of craft analogies in Roochnik 1996, and in turn Hirschberger 1932.

⁴⁰ 22d-e.

⁴¹ See Diogenes Laertius 2.122-123. Sellars 2003 argues for the historicity of Simon and describes his *Nachleben* in classical literature.

⁴² See Kahn 1996, 11-12.

⁴³ See Kahn 1994, 94-103.

paradoxical art of prophesy with Ion, who at least believes himself to be a mantic,⁴⁴ and Diotima, who is both a sort of prophet and the teacher of a kind of erotic art.⁴⁵

The conversation with Ischomachus lies on the more complex end of the spectrum since it involves an activity which has a liminal status as an art and a claim to be a sort of architectonic art.⁴⁶ At the simpler end, Xenophon gives us three short dialogues between Socrates and accomplished artisans in the *Memorabilia*.⁴⁷ He discusses the crafts of the painter, the sculptor, and the armourer and seeks to find the standard to which each art conforms its work in order to produce pleasure;⁴⁸ the painter needs to represent visible nobility of character, the sculptor to imitate the effects of the soul on the body, and the armourer to shape his breastplates to the needs of the body.⁴⁹

These three conversations help introduce an episode with a more paradoxical artisan—the courtesan Theodote—by establishing a generic pattern for the craftsman dialogue and making some preliminary claims about the aims of all arts and the nature of pleasure. Each short conversation reveals that the standard of an art will change based on the situation it encounters; this structure matches the one Xenophon's Socrates lays out for the nature of the good and beautiful in human affairs.⁵⁰ Furthermore, in the three arts

⁴⁴ *Ion* 535 a.

⁴⁵ *Symposium* 201 d.

⁴⁶ Sprague 1976 gives a thorough treatment of first and second order arts in Plato. For the relationship between arts and the ability to deal with people in Xenophon, see below §3.

⁴⁷ III.10.

⁴⁸ Socrates' concern with standards in the arts is parallel to his study of ethical standards; see his remark on the just and the holy as they relate to crafts at I.2.37, quoted above at n32.

⁴⁹ III.10.5; III.10.8; III.10.15.

⁵⁰ At III.8.7, Socrates thwarts Aristippus' attempted elenchus of any assertions of good by arguing that goods exist relationally: "For all things are good and noble for the things for which they are well suited, and bad and shameful for the things for which they are ill suited." Socrates himself performs a similar

Socrates examines, the artisans gradually shift the standards for their products away from internal harmony and mechanical accuracy toward the acknowledgement and incorporation of their user's pleasure in their design.

In the Theodote episode following, Socrates extends this shift of focus to the subject of the use of pleasure in the acquisition of friends and lovers. He disabuses the courtesan of the notion that success in her profession comes about as a direct result of beauty and advises her to respond carefully to the peculiar needs of her friends by rewarding attention, punishing negligence, comforting sickness, praising nobility, matching degrees of benefaction, and gratifying only in time of need.⁵¹ Making use of the courtesan's euphemistic description of her clients as friends, he discretely broadens his discussion of her art into an account of all dealings with people then collapses the metaphor into a joke about his own contrivances, which he describes as "love charms and incantations".⁵² As with the crafts of the painter, sculptor, and armourer, the practice of dealing with people is complicated by having the pleasure of another person as a standard of its success; the complexity and variability of human psychology keeps this practice from being a true art.⁵³

elenchus on Euthydemus at IV.2.32-35, but his commitment to the views on the good in this discussion are suspect in light of the role the elenchus is meant to play in a larger, constructive education. Similarly, Socrates' close identification of the good and the beautiful in *Symposium* V.3-7 is suspicious given the comic absurdity of his claims to physical beauty. Socrates' discussion of *eupraxia* at III.9.14-15 again denies that anything is good *simpliciter*.

⁵¹ III.11.10-14. The use of friendship as a euphemism for the practices of a courtesan was common; see Konstan 1997, 90-91, and the citations there.

⁵² III.11.16.

⁵³ Xenophon does not believe that the standards of success in such an activity are decided by each individual subject, however. While the pleasure of the soul varies greatly between situations and persons, it is regularly observable and can be used as a basis for regulating activity, as in III.8.8-10, and opposed to the inclinations of the will, as in the discussions of physical fitness and diet that follow the Theodote episode in III.11-14. In the *Memorabilia* and *Symposium*, Xenophon's Socrates uses matchmaking and pimping as

§3. The Kingly Art

In his elenchus of Euthydemus, Socrates refers to the virtue that makes men good household managers and politicians as “the kingly art”,⁵⁴ but elsewhere he makes it clear that he understands that the capacity to rule is not something that can be taught. At the conclusion of the *Oeconomicus*, Socrates asks Ischomachus why success in farming varies so much when the art itself is so simple; Ischomachus concedes to him that there is a kind of intelligence (*gnômê*) associated with success in farming, military command, household management, and politics, and all other activities (*praxeis*), that men differ in this capacity, and that it cannot be given by man but only by a god.⁵⁵ In the *Symposium*, Socrates makes another remark that shows recognition of such a distinction: a woman can be taught anything a man can be taught since she is inferior only in strength and intelligence (*gnômê*).⁵⁶ Yet, for Xenophon’s Socrates, the existence of natural disparities in intelligence and the impossibility of overcoming them through art are not reasons to neglect activities like farming and household management even if a person has shown no promise in such activities before.⁵⁷

According to Xenophon’s Socrates, wisdom, virtue, and success in public and private affairs all depend on the development of self-control (*enkrateia*).⁵⁸ By making a

metaphors for the process of representing goods, and he makes it clear that the proper exercise of that art requires the representation of real goods. See above Ch. 2 §4.

⁵⁴ *Memorabilia* IV.2. Dorion 2009 takes this passage as proof that rule is a craft like any other to Xenophon’s Socrates, but again statements in this elenchus likely do not carry Socrates’ commitment.

⁵⁵ *Oeconomicus* XXI.2. See above n10 for the sense of *gnômê* in this passage.

⁵⁶ *Symposium* II.9.

⁵⁷ Socrates shows that Glaucon has no promise in politics yet encourages him to gain practice managing his own affairs at *Memorabilia* III.6.

⁵⁸ See Socrates’ instructions on *enkrateia* to Euthydemus at *Memorabilia* IV.5.

commitment to one of these areas, a gentleman improves his chances with the rest by cultivating that fundamental capacity. Furthermore, Xenophon's Socrates believes that virtue can be improved through practice and lost through neglect,⁵⁹ and the same belief may apply to his view of this form of intelligence. If so, then success in private affairs would somewhat improve a person's capacity to succeed in public ones. Another common element between private and public business is the benefit that Xenophon assigns to the use of dialectic.⁶⁰ The ability to sort out different actions for different situations is not sufficient for correct action, but it is necessary for regular success and may be transferable to some degree. Again, self-control is a prerequisite for this form of dialectics, and its improvement has the potential to improve capacities in many different areas.

Yet, success in any of these activities depends on the knowledge of many particulars, especially of those arts that are closely associated with that sphere of activity.⁶¹ The acquisition of genuine skills is necessary for the improvement of this intelligence, then, even though *the art of rule* is not a skill itself; in this sense it may be appropriate to call it "the kingly art", insofar as it is a faculty that rules arts.

But the development of such skills also serves an important rhetorical purpose.

As Ischomachus noted, the most difficult capacity for a ruler to attain is the ability to

⁵⁹ See *Memorabilia* III.9.1-3.

⁶⁰ See *ibid.* IV.5.11-12. Natali 2006 and Dorion 2009 take the exercise with Euthydemus at IV.2.11-19, dividing actions into the categories of just and unjust, as a paradigm of this form of dialectics and so distinguish it from the type advocated by the Eleatic Stranger in Plato's *Sophist*. But since Socrates uses the exercise to show Euthydemus that he cannot divide actions so categorically, the identification is likely flawed. The valid divisions in the exercise are the ones which differentiate circumstance, e.g. deceiving an enemy rather than an ally; for Xenophon's Socrates, all moral knowledge is knowledge of particulars.

⁶¹ Ischomachus acknowledges the need for such material knowledge in the education of a slave overseer at *Oeconomicus* XIII.2.

make others follow willingly.⁶² Knowledge of the skills relevant to any particular activity can promote workers' confidence in their leader.⁶³ Likewise, success in private affairs may improve the general intelligence associated with rule, but it will also help gain the confidence of more people and provide opportunities for success in public affairs.⁶⁴ Xenophon's choice to write treatises promoting household management and farming, then, would be based not merely on some contemporary crisis of resource management but on a general interest in promoting the individual good based on a coherent moral psychology.

The actual treatise, though, does not make that coherence plain. Many of the difficulties it presents to its reader concern the chief interlocutor of the central dialogue, Ischomachus, and his relationships to Xenophon and his Socrates. In particular, it is not clear to what extent he represents Xenophon's interests, or how much he differs from Xenophon's Socrates in this regard.

§4. Problems of voice in Xenophon's Socratica.

There is much disagreement over the extent to which Plato's Socrates represents Plato's own views, and given that our best knowledge of Plato comes from his dialogues, we may never properly resolve that question.⁶⁵ But regarding Xenophon, we know more. He and his Socrates share similar views about most of the issues Xenophon wrote about in his treatises.⁶⁶ Yet, there is some distance between Xenophon and his Socrates,

⁶² *Oeconomicus* XXI.3-12.

⁶³ See Socrates' advice to the cavalry commander at *Memorabilia* III.4.8-10.

⁶⁴ *Memorabilia* III.6.18.

⁶⁵ Several models for approaching this problem are represented in Press 2000.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 1§2 above.

especially since Xenophon's Socrates deals as much with practical advice as he does with theoretical issues. While Xenophon had a military and political life as a mercenary commander, his Socrates only became involved in politics indirectly through his students; in general, then, there are differences between the pursuits Xenophon and his Socrates consider worthwhile. Because the two men differ in their broadest aims, their answers to many practical problems could diverge from one another substantially. Furthermore, the argumentative methods that Socrates uses to achieve these goals might also be unacceptable to Xenophon in certain situations. First, Socrates is much more candid about the flaws of his companions than an Athenian gentleman would likely be;⁶⁷ on the other hand, Socrates also makes use of rhetorical approaches that Xenophon might find disagreeable in his own speech. In Xenophon's one appearance in the *Memorabilia*, he upsets Socrates by disagreeing with him in the course of an attempt to shame Critoboulus.⁶⁸

Xenophon and Ischomachus have more in common with each other: both are practical men. In the juxtaposition of such a man with Socrates, we can see another commonplace of the serio-comic in the dialogue's concern with an "ultimate question", the contest between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*.⁶⁹ The *Oeconomicus* presents a conversation between a practical man and a philosopher, and they discuss the nature and value of the practical life in the style of philosophical examination. By putting the activities of the philosopher and the practical man on display in the same work and

⁶⁷ The comparison of Critias to a rutting piglet at *Memorabilia* I.2.30 lacks Xenophon's customary charm.

⁶⁸ See *Memorabilia* I.3.10.

⁶⁹ See Bakhtin 1984, 115-16. This sort of *auctio vitarum* is a commonplace in carnival literature. In Greek literature, Euripides' *Antiope* presented this contest in a debate between Zethus and Amphion, to which Plato's *Gorgias* alludes extensively; see Nightingale 1995, 69-87.

personifying them in Socrates and Ischomachus, Xenophon may be advocating one of these “ultimate life positions”, asserting their fundamental similarity, or inviting his reader to make a choice between them. How we understand the function of this opposition depends largely on our view of the relationship between Xenophon and Ischomachus.

Some have suggested that Ischomachus is a direct representative of Xenophon’s beliefs, serving as advocate for a simple life of farming.⁷⁰ Others claim that Ischomachus appreciates aspects of both the active and contemplative lives.⁷¹ Contrary to these views, however, a number of factors make it likely that there is an ironic distance between Xenophon and Ischomachus.⁷²

The most widely recognized mark of this distance involves the knowledge shared by author and reader of events after the historical Ischomachus’ death: a scandal in which Ischomachus’ wife was involved calls into question his status as an authority on education, politics, and practical reason.⁷³ After Ischomachus died, his wife moved in with her son-in-law, the famous voluptuary Callias. Callias then had an affair with his mother-in-law and impregnated her, becoming a joke around Athens in the process.⁷⁴ As

⁷⁰ See, among others, Jaeger 1944, Sandbach 1985, Pomeroy 1994, Brickhouse and Smith 2000, Morrison 2000, and Murnaghan 2006.

⁷¹ Taragna Novo 1968 argues that the two lives are complementary analogues of two aspects of divine nature; Danzig 2003 gives an even handed account in which Ischomachus represents, among other things, a response by Xenophon to Socrates that defends his choice of a practical life.

⁷² So also Higgins 1977, Stevens 1994, Too 2001, and Kronenberg 2009.

⁷³ See Mackenzie 1985. Stevens 1994, 223, takes the subversion of Ischomachus as an indictment of conventional education: “If the education that Ischomachus gave to his wife prepared her for the kind of outrage she committed with Callias, and if this is what one would call a training in conventional moral virtue, then the greatest threat to the religious conventions of society would turn out to be the education of which society most approves.” But Ischomachus’ education is not entirely typical.

⁷⁴ See Andocides’ *On the Mysteries*, 124ff. for the affair.

with several characters in Plato's dialogues, later events known to the reader create a sense of dramatic irony and cast light on the early signs of the faults that may have led to misfortune.⁷⁵ In the case of Ischomachus, the later scandal casts doubt either on his optimism regarding the educability of women or on the particular education he gives to his wife, depending on whether we assign the blame to nature or education.⁷⁶ Socrates raises the general possibility of both scenarios in his conversation with Critoboulus at the beginning of the *Oeconomicus*:

“When sheep fare badly,” said Socrates, “we usually fault the shepherd, and when a horse behaves badly, we usually speak badly of the horseman; as for the woman, if she has been taught the good things by the man and still acts badly, the woman could perhaps justly be held at fault; on the other hand, if he doesn't teach the noble and good things but makes use of her though she is quite ignorant of them, wouldn't the man justly be held at fault?...”⁷⁷

In either case, the scandal undermines Ischomachus' status as a teacher at least as much as the scandals of Critias and Alcibiades undermined Socrates in the eyes of the Athenians.⁷⁸

Xenophon creates further distance from Ischomachus by using literary allusion to objectify Ischomachus as a fictional character; Xenophon creates another shared frame of observation for himself and his reader by modeling his Ischomachus on Aeschines' Aspasia. In the prologue, Xenophon refers to Aspasia as an expert on household affairs

⁷⁵ In particular, the conversation with Critias and Charmides on moderation in the *Charmides* and the one with Meno on virtue in the *Meno* show a darkly comic irony.

⁷⁶ Harvey 1984, Goldhill 1995, 141, and Kronenberg 2009, 60, all suggest that the affair resulted from the loss of the male organizing principle in the household, but this view seems contrary to the model of male and female relations to which Socrates subscribes at *Oeconomicus* III.15. In his system, the male acquires while the female preserves. Ischomachus' wife's subsequent failure to control herself may instead reflect her loss of female circumspection in exchange for a more “manly understanding”; see *Oeconomicus* X.1.

⁷⁷ *Oeconomicus* III.11

⁷⁸ For similar reasons, Pomeroy 1994, 261-64 rejects the identification of this Ischomachus with Callias' father-in-law.

similar to Ischomachus, a role that she served in Aeschines.⁷⁹ Likewise, Ischomachus' education of his wife has much in common with the preserved fragments of Aeschines' *Aspasia*. First, Ischomachus encourages his wife to become better than himself and to make him her servant.⁸⁰ In Aeschines, Aspasia persuaded a young couple that they both needed to compete in order to secure each other's affection, yet she suggested that they should compete with other husbands and wives rather than each other.⁸¹ There are also similarities between Ischomachus' instructions to his wife on cosmetics and similar advice that Xenophon ascribes to Aspasia; in both cases, the intimacy between partners precludes any chance of deception.⁸² A subtle *schema etymologicum* in two of these passages may tie both of them back to their source.⁸³

Moreover, the appropriation of Socratic discourse by Aspasia serves as a model of carnival intertext for the *Oeconomicus*. In Aeschines, Aspasia had demonstrated a knowledge of sophistic argument and Gorgianic rhetoric.⁸⁴ The *Aspasia*'s lesson on marriage took the form of a Socratic elenchus, and Ischomachus' lesson to his wife on

⁷⁹ At III.14, Socrates recommends Aspasia as a teacher of good wives. Pomeroy 1994, 232-34 finds it remarkable that Xenophon's Socrates would recommend a courtesan to such a position and offers some circuitous justifications for the choice, but the remark is only an allusion to Aeschines. Cicero translates this portion at *De Inventione* I.31.

⁸⁰ *Oeconomicus* VII.42.

⁸¹ See the translation preserved in Cicero, cited above n73.

⁸² Cf. the discussion of cosmetics at *Oeconomicus* X.3-8 with the one regarding deception in matchmaking at *Memorabilia* II.6.36 and pimping at *Symposium* VIII.42-43.

⁸³ There may be an echo of Aspasia's name in *aspasasthai* at *Oeconomicus* X.4 and *anaspasas* at *Symposium* III.10, where pimping is first introduced. Judging from the use of the *schema etymologicum* at Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* XIII.56 and Plutarch, *Life of Pericles*, 24.8, Antithenes likely used it in his speech against Aspasia.

⁸⁴ See Kahn 1994.

marriage borrows both form and language from that passage.⁸⁵ Like Aeschines' Aspasia, Xenophon's Ischomachus is a kind of hybrid between his historical model and a philosopher. Ischomachus conducts all of his wife's instruction in Socrates' indirect, questioning style of teaching. Furthermore, Ischomachus's pedantic terminology links his description of a well ordered household to a philosophical understanding of the general capacity for orderly decision making.⁸⁶ The order of the household enables its inhabitants to find the appropriate object quickly,⁸⁷ in which capacity it resembles the function that Xenophon's Socrates assigns to dialectic in the *Memorabilia*:

...it is possible only for the continent to examine the best of the things and, by separating (*dialegontas*) them in speech and deed according to classes (*kata gene*), to choose the good things while refraining from the bad.⁸⁸

Here, the introduction of Socratic language into the description of household order broadens the scope of Ischomachus' arguments so that they apply to decisions in all matters and shows the complementary relationship between dialectic and all activities.

Ischomachus and Aspasia each transgress boundaries. Aspasia is a woman who invades male prerogatives by asserting a female knowledge of political affairs. Ischomachus also breaks down the distinction between male and female by incorporating political features, such as forensic rhetoric and class standards, into the management of his home. While Aspasia is a Lysistrata or Praxagora, Ischomachus is a kind of

⁸⁵ See above n74.

⁸⁶ The division of household utensils *kata phulas* at *Oeconomicus* IX.6-7 resembles the Eleatic stranger's division of terms according to *phulon* at *Sophist* 218c and 220b and later at *Politicus* 260d and 264e. *Akribeia* is also a recurrent theme at *Oeconomicus* VIII.10, 11, 17, and Ischomachus shares the Eleatic stranger's terms for division at *ibid.* VIII.9. See Alderman 2008, 206-210.

⁸⁷ *Oeconomicus* VIII.10.

⁸⁸ *Memorabilia* IV.5.11. Strauss 1972, 114-116, connects the description of dialectic with the lesson on household management.

Dikaiopolis, treating his home as its own *polis*.⁸⁹ This conflation of household management and politics calls attention to the issue of the transferability of practical intelligence from private to public affairs. The transgressive portraits in the works of Aeschines and Xenophon play off the disturbances caused by the historical characters: Aspasia made the leader of the Athenians subject to a woman, and Ischomachus' conflation of business and politics may have been the cause of his most notable political failing: the choice of Callias, a rich man of poor character, for his son in law.

Both Ischomachus and Aspasia also transgress didactic barriers by assuming Socrates' position of dominance in their discussions with him.⁹⁰ Unlike Aspasia, though, Ischomachus does not recognize himself to be a sophist and distances himself from the sophistic practice of "making the worse argument the stronger".⁹¹ While Aspasia transgresses political and didactic barriers through art, Ischomachus overcomes them through obliviousness.⁹² Due to his strong desire for transparency and prejudice against sophistry, Ischomachus is unfamiliar with the sophistic character of the practices Xenophon shows him using and does not understand the implicit comparison between himself and a sophist.

⁸⁹ Lysistrata and Praxagora assume masculine political roles in Aristophanes's *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*, respectively. In the *Acharnians*, Dikaiopolis attempts to secure a peace treaty for his household apart from the rest of Athens. Particularly striking in similarity to Dikaiopolis's actions are Ischomachus's establishment of a household court at XI.23-25 and his description of respecting slaves as free men and honoring them as gentlemen at XIV.9.

⁹⁰ Diotima assumes a similar position in Plato's *Symposium*. Socrates' typical position in Plato's dialogues is itself a kind of subversion since he leads discussions without asserting didactic authority. In Xenophon's Socratic works, there is generally no pretense of ignorance on Socrates' part; he uses arguments by questioning as a rhetorical strategy to gain assent.

⁹¹ *ibid.* XI.25.

⁹² Like Ischomachus, Theodote practices an art unawares in *Memorabilia* III.11.

The obtuseness of Ischomachus reaches its comic height when he teaches Socrates the art of farming in what reads like a parody of the doctrine of recollection. This jarring juxtaposition of farming and philosophy serves several literary and rhetorical ends. Like Socrates' disparaging analogies in the *Memorabilia*, the lesson in farming can act as a rebuke, upbraiding Xenophon's readers for failing to practice an art that requires so little examination and provides substantial economic and personal benefits. At the same time, it anticipates the conclusion of the dialogue by showing that differences in the knowledge of the craft have little to do with success and failure in the field. But the parody also calls into question the claims about *anamnesis* that Socrates makes in the *Meno*.⁹³ Socrates can correctly guess the answers to Isocrates' questions about farming without having practiced the art in his life, and it is doubtful that he had any chance to practice it in the underworld.

Considering the ironic distance between Xenophon and Ischomachus, Leah Kronenberg has recently argued that the *Oeconomicus* is not a treatise on household management at all; on her view, the dialogue so undermines the position of the practical man, Ischomachus, that it must be an exhortation to avoid practical affairs and study philosophy instead.⁹⁴ Yet, Socrates' promotion of household management in the *Memorabilia* makes no sense on such a model. The *Oeconomicus* does present its reader with a choice between lifestyles, but that choice is not between philosophy and the practical life. Instead, Xenophon presents two models of the practical life in household

⁹³ See Waterfield 2004, 102-04.

⁹⁴ Kronenberg 2009, 54-72.

management: the avenue for the practice of political virtue, in which Socrates has a theoretical interest, and the source of financial gain, which interests Ischomachus.

Socrates draws out this contrast with two jokes in the form of upsetting comparisons. When he first meets Ischomachus, he recalls how happy he had been to hear a horse praised as being good even though it had no property since it made him think that he too had a chance to be good.⁹⁵ Later, when Ischomachus praises his own father's love of farming by describing how he had improved and sold several farms, Socrates asks him whether, on the same grounds, merchants have a great love of grain.⁹⁶

But while Xenophon certainly shares Socrates' interests in rule and practical intelligence, he does not deny the importance of finance in political affairs. In the *Poroi*, he advocates economic reforms in the interest of establishing peace and extending the influence of Athens among the Greeks. Furthermore, he promotes economic development despite his awareness that it can distract from the practice of political virtue. He dramatizes the conflict between commitment to virtue and the need for money, honor, and power in the *Cyropaedia*, where he depicts the transformation of the Persians from a virtuous but powerless people into a supreme but corrupt one. When Cyrus first takes command of the Persians, he disparages their single-minded pursuit of virtue:

I consider our ancestors to have been no worse than we. At least they too spent all their time practicing the very things that are held to be works of virtue. What good they acquired by being such, however, either for the community of the Persians or for themselves, I cannot see.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ *Oeconomicus* XI.3

⁹⁶ *ibid.* XX.27-28.

⁹⁷ *Cyropaedia* I.5.8-9. Translation by Wayne Ambler.

By the end of his life, Cyrus consolidates his power through a culture of conspicuous consumption.⁹⁸ The Persians trade much of their virtue for honor and comfort, but Cyrus' rule brings stability and prosperity to the nations under his authority. In preserving the conflict between competing goods while acknowledging the claims of both, Xenophon creates a dialogical rather than dialectical opposition between virtue and success; the decision between the two is not final and determinative but an ongoing concern for a moral agent.

When Cyrus dies, the empire falls into disorder.⁹⁹ As with the scandal of Ischomachus' widow, the collapse can be read as a tribute to Cyrus' influence during his life or as an indictment of the situation he left behind.¹⁰⁰ In Plato's *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger ties the empire's decline back to the themes of the *Oeconomicus*:

My guess, then, about Cyrus, is that although he was doubtless a good commander and a loyal patriot, he never considered, even superficially, the problem of correct education; and as for running a household, I'd say he never paid any attention to it at all.¹⁰¹

According to the Stranger, Cyrus failed to attend to the education of his sons and left the empire without a suitable replacement for himself. While the remark does little justice to the complex relationships Xenophon depicts, it may indicate a significant change in attitudes in Plato's late period: an interest in Xenophon.

⁹⁸ See Too 1998, 293-97.

⁹⁹ *Cyropaedia* VIII, 8

¹⁰⁰ Gera 1993, 297-98 takes the collapse as a sign of Cyrus' inimitable capacity as a ruler; Nadon 2001, 142-46 treats it as the predictable outcome of the Persians' corruption under Cyrus' rule.

¹⁰¹ *Laws* 694c, Trevor J. Saunders translation. Aulus Gellius XIV.3.4 records the ancient view that Plato intended here to criticize Xenophon.

Conclusion

In the *Oeconomicus*, Xenophon makes use of a central commonplace of the Socratic dialogue, the craft analogy, to test the accuracy and transferability of the capacity to rule. He combines the genres of technical treatise and Socratic dialogue to construct an unresolved conflict of voices within the work; these voices advocate theoretical claims regarding the nature of the capacity to rule as well as practical justifications, ethical and financial, for attention to household management. At least some elements of these conflicts are central in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, where they have a similarly dialogical relationship. Through carnival intertext, Xenophon draws the writings of Aeschines and Plato into these conflicts.

While Xenophon is genuinely concerned with the examination and promotion of proficiency in household management in the *Oeconomicus*, care must be taken in its use as a source for understanding Athenian domestic ideology generally and even for Xenophon's own view of the role of knowledge in both virtue and financial success. Ischomachus' views vary from comic exaggerations of Xenophon's views to a parody of shallow acquisitiveness, and Socrates only concurs with Xenophon in a limited range of affairs. Xenophon should not be taken to endorse Ischomachus' methods of education, which are an intentional conflation of conventional and sophistic methods. At the same time, Socrates' methods of argument are often comical even when Xenophon agrees with their premises. Comparison with Xenophon's treatises, histories, and other Socratic works can help gauge the degree of parody and exaggeration in the arguments of the *Oeconomicus*.

CHAPTER FOUR
APOLOGY: A GOOD OFFENSE

FESTE. Would you have a love-song, or a song of good life?

SIR TOBY. A love-song, a love-song.

SIR ANDREW. Ay, ay. I care not for good life.

Twelfth Night, II.3

Two complaints of prominent historians of philosophy have damaged the reputation of Xenophon's depiction of the trial and execution of Socrates. First, John Burnet, considering how beneficial Socrates appears in the *Memorabilia*, found Xenophon's account to be improbable since the Athenians would not have had any reason to execute such a man.¹ Later, Gregory Vlastos objected to Xenophon's account of Socrates' motives at his trial, according to which he intentionally provoked the jury's anger since he saw benefit in being executed. Through such a course of action, Vlastos claimed, Socrates would have made his jurors unjust.²

But both objections fail to take account of the views on justice and beneficence that Xenophon promotes in his Socratic works and of the peculiar success his Socrates achieves according to those views. These failures stem from a deeper misunderstanding of the role that Xenophon's portrayal of Socrates' justice and happiness is meant to serve in the moral education of his readers. Xenophon does not portray Socrates as a normative model for the ethical life. Instead, his Socrates models a supererogatory virtue that none

¹ Burnet 1914, 149.

² Vlastos 1991, 291-92.

of his readers can hope to emulate;³ in turn, this virtue grants his Socrates a position of moral exceptionalism that none of Xenophon's readers could justify imitating.

Socrates owes this inimitable virtue to knowledge provided by his *daimonion*, which both guides his decision not to seek acquittal and becomes the object of his jurors' hostility. This surprising relationship between the defendant's virtue and his condemnation has close parallels in other paradoxical defense speeches from sophistic rhetoric and Greek tragedy. Xenophon draws on this tradition of adoxographical rhetoric to transform the trial and death of Socrates into a caricature of Greek honor ethics through which the problems inherent in that ethical system are thrown into relief.⁴

§1. Charges against Xenophon

For anyone who loves Plato's *Apology*, Xenophon's work of the same name holds an exciting prospect, another opportunity to watch one of history's central figures at the most brilliant and heroic moment of his life. But many readers have been disappointed in Xenophon's account, and at the very point where Xenophon claims his version superior. Comparing his account with Plato's, he writes:

...about this others too have written, and all touched on his boastful manner of speaking...But they did not make quite clear that he already believed death to be preferable to life for himself, so that his boastful speech appears to be rather imprudent.⁵

According to Xenophon's Socrates, if his age advanced further, it would be necessary

³ See Zagzebski 1996, 155, where she takes the distinction between supererogatory acts and duties from deontological ethics and applies the concept of supererogation to intellectual virtue.

⁴ I use the term adoxography to refer to the variety of epideictic oratories that argue for improbable causes; see Pease 1926 for the term and the rhetorical tradition.

⁵ *Apology* 1, Andrew Patch translation.

“to pay the dues of old age” and gradually lose his faculties of perception, learning, and recollection.⁶ Admirers of Plato’s Socrates have been scandalized by this explanation of the manner of Socrates’ defense. Reginald Allen offers a particularly cutting summary of Xenophon’s position:

Socrates, far from attempting to gain acquittal, was actively courting condemnation: he was committing suicide by judicial process, one of the rarer forms of suicide by blunt instrument.⁷

While most scholars have found Xenophon’s account hard to accept, many have also found it easy to explain. It is, after all, just the sort of thing a simple-minded soldier would write about someone as enigmatic as Socrates. As John Burnet wrote:

...the *megalegoria* of Socrates was something Xenophon felt bound to accept as fact, though the justification of it was beyond the reach of his understanding.⁸

While such low estimates of Xenophon’s intelligence plague the literature on his Socratic works, Gregory Vlastos leveled an even more severe charge against Xenophon’s version of Socrates in the *Apology*:

...it is clear that if Socrates_x, believing himself, as he does, to be completely innocent of the charges..., had chosen to provoke the court by the “haughty tone” of his speech to vote for his conviction, he would have willfully connived at a grave miscarriage of justice...⁹

Yet, critics who find Xenophon’s Socrates craven or foolish generally ignore the basis for his willingness to die. While he does recognize that his death will prevent him from experiencing the troubles of old age, he also suggests that the gods have arranged for his

⁶ Ibid. 6.

⁷ Allen 1980, 35.

⁸ Burnet 1924, 66. See also Taylor 1926, 166, Cornford 1964, 31, and Santas 1979, 4.

⁹ Vlastos 1991, 291. In Vlastos’s system of notation, the subscript indicates the author whose depiction of Socrates is being discussed; so, Socrates_x refers to Xenophon’s Socrates.

release from these troubles as a special act of beneficence.¹⁰ According to Xenophon, the manner of Socrates' death was one more aspect of the peculiar and enviable relationship Socrates shared with the divine.

The two central marks of this relationship were Socrates' claim to follow the advice of a *daimonion* and the special praise given to him by the oracle of Delphi. Both of these figure largely in the unique benefit Socrates finds in his death. He claims that his *daimonion* has prevented him from attempting to gain acquittal, and reflection on its motives leads him to see the good in his situation.¹¹ At the same time, the virtues admired by Delphi are necessary for him to accept it. In Xenophon's version, the god claims that no human being was more free, more just, or more prudent than Socrates.¹² Socrates himself attributes this praise to his avoidance of desires of the body and debts to other men:

And whom would you be likely to believe more just than the one so well adapted to his present possessions as not to need in addition any of the possessions of others?¹³

The same qualities free him to make his extraordinary decision to allow himself to be convicted; Socrates' extreme self-control and commitment to benefiting his friends without reward are of a piece with the unique insights into human good which he

¹⁰ *Apology* 7: "And perhaps...the god too, on account of his good will, is arranging for me that I end my life not only at an opportune age, but also in the easiest way."

¹¹ *Ibid.* 4-6.

¹² *Ibid.* 14.

¹³ *Ibid.* 16. See Pangle 1996, 37: "What underlies Socrates' 'justice' is his high-Olympian independence from the needs and fears which prompt men to compete with, but also to help, one another in the city. As a matter of fact, a close consideration of what Socrates says here about each of his moral virtues, other than wisdom, shows that the heart of these virtues is 'liberality'...understood not as generosity, or the disposition to give appropriate gifts to appropriate persons, but rather as freedom, or noble independence from the ordinary desires for security, pleasure, prosperity, and political success."

attributes to his *daimonion*. He closes his defense by proclaiming his unparalleled beneficence:

...I never did injustice to anyone or made anyone base but benefited those who conversed with me by teaching without charge whatever good thing I could.¹⁴

Xenophon's narrator affirms the truth of this statement in the last words of the *Apology*:

...if one of those who aim at virtue came together with someone more helpful than Socrates, I believe that man worthy to be deemed most blessed.¹⁵

It is precisely because Xenophon has portrayed Socrates in this way that many have found his trial and execution implausible.¹⁶

According to Gabriel Danzig, this implausibility made it necessary for Xenophon to depict Socrates' death as intentional:

If Socrates was a great expert in winning friends and influencing people, how could he have wound up being executed by his own neighbors? It is for this reason that Xenophon's explanation of the trial and execution is so fundamental to his whole view of Socrates. In Xenophon's view, Socrates wanted to die. Any other explanation would be inconceivable.¹⁷

But there are several problems with Danzig's interpretation. There is little support for his claim that, in the eyes of Xenophon, "virtue tends to be rewarded in political life as in any other aspect of life."¹⁸ This principle does not hold true either for the men his Socrates exhorts to political action, Charmides and the younger Pericles, or for the

¹⁴ *Apology* 26.

¹⁵ Ibid. 34. The emphasis here is on the assistance in practicing virtue rather than using Socrates as a model for imitation. The same can be said of *Memorabilia* IV.8.11. Virtue depends on knowledge of the right action in a particular situation, and Socrates surpasses all men in such knowledge. He can therefore assist other men in achieving virtue despite their inability to attain his moral knowledge.

¹⁶ Hence the view that Xenophon had made a Socrates so good that no jury would convict him. See Burnet 1914, 149; B. Russell 1945 popularized the criticism, and it is still evident in Brickhouse and Smith 2000.

¹⁷ Danzig 2003, 317.

¹⁸ Ibid. 317.

commanders Xenophon admires most, Proxenus and Agesilaus, or even for Xenophon himself. Furthermore, though Danzig can point to Socrates' professed skill in the art of pimping as an indication that Socrates had the ability to defend himself successfully,¹⁹ Socrates' restraint in using that skill calls into question the compatibility of political rhetoric with his moral-philosophical project.²⁰ But even more troublesome for Danzig's account is Xenophon's indication that Socrates' unique virtues actually instigated his unjust execution. All the arguments that anger his jurors are proofs of Socrates' virtues, and Xenophon's description of the jury's sharpest reaction to the defense shows that they did not entirely doubt his account. At the climax of the *Apology*, Xenophon's Socrates offers a proof of the existence of his *daimonion*:

...though I reported the counsels of the god to many of my friends, never yet was I shown to have spoken falsely...²¹

At this point, Xenophon reports that the crowd began to shout,

...some disbelieving what was said, others being envious that he should receive from the gods too greater things than they themselves received...²²

While Socrates is uniquely capable of enjoying the beneficence of the gods and uses the gifts of that relationship to practice beneficence beyond the abilities of other men, he is the object of other men's spite and envy for the same reason.

Miraculously, his unique gifts enable him to benefit even from the others' attempts to harm him; they mean to punish him with death, but he sees it as a divine gift. At the same time, Socrates is so beneficial to everyone, even to those who accuse and

¹⁹ Danzig 2003, 288n22.

²⁰ See Socrates' remarks to Critoboulus on responsible matchmaking at *Memorabilia* II.6.36.

²¹ *Apology* 13.

²² *Ibid.* 14.

condemn him, that those who deny his will only suffer harm themselves. According to Xenophon's Socrates, it is established by divine law that one must benefit one's friends.²³ We find a strange corollary to this law in his discussion of proper rule. According to Socrates, even a tyrant must follow the advice of one who speaks well:

How indeed would it be possible for him not to obey, since a penalty is laid down if someone does not obey the one who speaks well? For in whatever matter someone does not obey the one who speaks well, he will no doubt err, and in erring be penalized.²⁴

When an associate objected to him that a tyrant can kill the wise man, Socrates asked if "the one who has killed the best of his allies is free from penalty".²⁵

Socrates demonstrates this principle in the *Apology* after he sees his accuser Anytus celebrating his condemnation. Rather than showing anger at Anytus, he makes a prophecy that Anytus' family will come to ruin because he failed to follow Socrates' advice. As surely as the *daimonion*, Socrates' prophecy is proven correct.²⁶

Xenophon's optimism consists not in the view that the virtuous will be regularly rewarded but that the wicked will be regularly punished. Certain vices disrupt the economy of reciprocal benefaction and stand in the way of virtue achieving political success. For Xenophon, the rewards of that system outweigh the risks of failure. A closer examination of the traditional moral order of the polis will help clarify the position of Socrates in Xenophon's *Apology*, which permits an eccentric involvement with this

²³ *Memorabilia* IV.4.24; see Vander Waerdt 1993.

²⁴ *Memorabilia* III.9.12. Cf. *Gorgias* 466b-c.

²⁵ *Ibid.* III.9.13.

²⁶ *Apology* 31.

moral system but prevents Socrates from gaining acquittal while satisfying his own standards of justice.

§2. Favor and Honor in Xenophon's Socratica

In his mythological account of the origin of political virtue, Plato's Protagoras identifies the fundamental political virtues as justice and shame.²⁷ Justice (*dikaiosynê*) in this sense is excellence in the most elemental forms of social interaction, helping friends and harming enemies; friendship is a contract of reciprocal beneficence, and its violation can lead to a contract of enmity.²⁸ Shame (*aidôs*) is a concern for personal status or honor (*timê*), and it is important in extending the bounds of self-interest from the sphere of direct contracts of reciprocal benefaction to the broader system in which one has such status. The two virtues are intimately linked:

...aidos and dike, sophrosune and dikaiousune all connote recognition of one's place as one among many and acceptance of the obligations entailed by the legitimate claims of others.²⁹

Opposed to these virtues are two political vices: hubris—the violation of another's status—and the vice Protagoras expresses his greatest concern over, spitefulness (*phthonos*). According to Protagoras, the sophists of previous generations disguised their sophistry as poetry, prophecy, gymnastics, or music out of fear that their art would inspire spite and envy.³⁰ Xenophon's Socrates expresses a similar concern for this vice's effects on friendship:

²⁷ Protagoras 322d.

²⁸ See Dover 1974, 180-84; Konstan 1997, 56-58.

²⁹ Cairns 1993, 356.

³⁰ Ibid. 316d-e.

And when he examined envy [*phthonos*], whatever it is, he discovered that it is a certain pain, not indeed that which comes at misfortunes of friends nor that at the good fortunes of enemies, but he said only those who are distressed by their friends' doing well feel envy. When some wondered if someone who loved another could be pained by his doing well, he reminded them that many are so disposed to some people that when those people are doing badly they are unable to look the other way but aid them in their misfortune, while they are pained at those people's good fortune. This, however, would not happen to a sensible man, but those who are foolish always experience this passion.³¹

Xenophon's Socrates believes this vice can only exist in a relationship of reciprocal beneficence and that it harms such relationships. In a moral system based on the exchange of assistance between noblemen, spite breaks down the relationship between participants at the fundamental level: good deeds no longer incur the proper obligations of return.

In the *Memorabilia*, Xenophon promotes such an honor-based model of ethics in Socrates' discussions with Critoboulus and Theodote.³² In both episodes, Xenophon treats the principle of helping friends in the context of erotic relationships. With Critoboulus, Socrates emphasizes the importance of establishing a reputation for helping friends and harming enemies in order to convince others to enter into bonds of friendship.³³ With Theodote, he shows how those bonds can be strengthened, particularly through general examination of the circumstances that lead to the greatest gratitude and careful attention to the particular needs of a friend.³⁴ In this analysis, he counters Theodote's impression that the quality of her personal resources—in her case, her

³¹ *Memorabilia* III.9.8. *Phthonos* also appears as a hateful condition at *ibid.* II.6.21.

³² Critoboulus in *Memorabilia* II.6; Theodote in III.11.

³³ *Memorabilia* II.6.33-39.

³⁴ *ibid.* III.11.10-14.

beauty—will determine the degree of favor given to her by her friends.³⁵ Without being able to improve her resources, she can nevertheless increase the benefits that she receives in the exchange through a more detailed knowledge of the good for her friend in a particular circumstance.

Socrates employs a version of the same strategy in his personal relations. His knowledge of the good in any particular circumstance so exceeds that of his peers that he can confer on them a recognizable benefit merely by sharing his understanding of the goods available to them. So, he can be a benefactor to rich men despite having quite limited financial resources. They do not need to emulate his wisdom in order to improve in virtue; they only need to listen to his advice. At the same time, Socrates is so self-sufficient that other men would have difficulty returning favors to him. In the *Apology*, Xenophon exploits these peculiarities to associate Socrates' relationships with another system of benefit in which reciprocity seems impossible: the relationships between gods and men.

This comparison of human and divine benefaction is something of a commonplace in Xenophon. Socrates spends much of the *Memorabilia* solving practical ethical problems, and he often builds his advice on the continuity between people's relations with other human beings and their relations with the gods. In order to persuade Aristodemus to revere the gods, he draws an analogy between human beneficence and the gods' kindness toward human beings, and he urges Aristodemus to reciprocate the kindness of the gods as he would with human beings.³⁶ Even if the gods do not expect

³⁵ *ibid.* III.11.5-6, where Socrates compares Theodote's method of catching friends to having a bug land on her.

³⁶ *Ibid.* I.4.

benefits in return, other human beings will judge Aristodemus' capacity to do justice based on his ability to show gratitude for what the gods have given him, and his refusal to meet their expectations will hurt his ability to make friends, which will both harm him materially and limit his prospects for performing just actions.

Later on in the *Memorabilia*, Socrates speaks about the beneficence of the gods in creating pairs of similar things capable of assisting each other to improve Chaerecrates' relationship with his brother.³⁷ Furthermore, his advice to his son on honoring his mother stresses the need to act graciously, even beyond reasonable limits, toward those to whom a person owes his very existence.³⁸ Yet, when Xenophon depicts a companion of Socrates declaring that he honors and is honored by the gods, the fellow comes off as a boor for saying it.

In Xenophon's *Symposium*, when each character half-jestingly describes the thing on which he prides himself the most, the socially-challenged Hermogenes claims to be proud of his powerful friends.³⁹ When he gives his speech revealing his friends to be the gods, the narrator notes it as the one conspicuous case of seriousness at the party.⁴⁰ The other symposiasts cannot joke much about the gods, and Hermogenes' display of bad manners elsewhere in the symposium reinforces the notion that his speech on divine honor is out of place if not itself lacking in judgment.⁴¹

³⁷ Ibid. II.3.18-19.

³⁸ Ibid. II.2. See also Xenophon's remarks on the attitudes of the Persians regarding ingratitude at *Cyropaedia* I.2.6.

³⁹ *Symposium* III.14.

⁴⁰ Ibid. IV.47-50.

⁴¹ See the *paroinia* episode at Ibid. VI.1-10 and Hermogenes' interruption of Socrates at VIII.12.

For Xenophon's Socrates, the observance of some duty to reciprocate divine beneficence on the analogy with human beneficence may be necessary in living a just and pious life—especially to improve one's reputation for justice—but Hermogenes' strict identification of piety and friendship leads to an impossible arrangement: how can a man reciprocate the kindness of the gods?⁴² Yet, for someone as distinct from other men as Socrates, such a relationship is at least an intriguing possibility. By making Hermogenes the source of his account in the *Apology*, Xenophon ties the conceit of divine reciprocation here to its appearance in his *Symposium*.⁴³ Xenophon's Socrates understands justice as beneficence, and this helps to explain his remarks on his impending death: if he really does view his death as a divine gift, it would be dishonorable for him to reject it.⁴⁴ As for reciprocating it, Hermogenes suggests that pious actions are a man's gifts to the gods,⁴⁵ and a similar view may link Socrates' extraordinary fortune and virtue in the *Apology*.

Yet, if Socrates views justice as beneficence, it is troubling that he does not confer any benefit upon his jurors in his defense speech. For this reason, Vander Waerdt has argued that the speech serves as a lesson in justice, teaching the jurors about the divine law demanding the reciprocation of beneficence.⁴⁶ The loss that the Athenians suffer through the death of Socrates could serve as an object lesson in justice, provided that the

⁴² Socrates must console Euthydemus over this very concern at *Memorabilia* IV.3.15-17.

⁴³ Pangle 1996, 27: "The impoverished Socrates and Hermogenes have in common an unconventional self-respect that is intimately linked with a claim to a special kind and degree of piety."

⁴⁴ Euripides' *Alcestis*, 1070-1071, presents a similar conflation of the principle of not refusing gifts from the gods with a actual gift exchange between a man and a divine being, in this case Heracles.

⁴⁵ *Symposium* IV.49.

⁴⁶ Vander Waerdt 1993.

Athenians came to recognize the good that Socrates had done among them, yet the speech gives little reminder of that good.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Socrates' willingness to die is a kind of lesson by example that demonstrates a proper attitude toward death. Socrates proves his justice through his independence rather than by a peculiar benefit, as in Plato's *Apology*, or a superlative degree of regular benefit, as in the *Memorabilia*. On the other hand, benefitting his jurors may not be a concern for him at all. This kind of justice is regulated by reciprocity rather than by minimum standards or categorical imperatives, and no one is accountable for every benefit he could perform, only for favors owed for favors,⁴⁸ or aid given to friends in need.⁴⁹ Furthermore, it is doubtful that Xenophon's Socrates can offer any of his peculiar beneficence through the medium of forensic rhetoric; as he showed in the *Symposium*, his method of argument is absurd as a form of mass communication.⁵⁰

The failure of Socrates' defense speech to meet his own standards of justice, then, may simply be a sunk cost. Socrates is unable to benefit his jurors, and they are incapable of delivering a truly just verdict. Some might even say that by provoking his jurors into an unjust act, Socrates commits the truest form of injustice by making other people unjust. Yet, Socrates can hardly be held accountable for habituating his jurors to injustice, and it is not even certain that he provokes them into an unjust act; Socrates

⁴⁷ This part of Vander Waerdt's argument rests squarely on *Apology* 17: "And what shall we assert is responsible for this: that although everyone knows that I least of all would be able to repay them, nevertheless many desire to give me some gift? And I am asked by no one to return benefits, but many admit to being in debt to me."

⁴⁸ See Konstan 1997, 81-82.

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, 56-59.

⁵⁰ *Symposium* IV.56-61.

transforms the failures of his jurors into a triumph by using his defense speech to show his gratitude to the gods as well as the virtues that occasioned their favoritism. If his jurors do not learn a lesson from his example or from their loss, neither do they get away with being unjust; Socrates is confident that those who put him to death will suffer a divine penalty. His superhuman justice, beneficence, and gratitude exculpate him from the charges leveled against him by scholars.

His arrogance in flaunting those virtues follows a rhetorical tradition that Socrates may hint at in a mythological allusion at the end of his speech:

But that I die unjustly, not even on account of this should I feel humbled: this is shameful not to me but to those who condemned me. And Palamedes, who died in a similar way, also comforts me, for even now he still occasions much nobler songs than Odysseus, who unjustly killed him.⁵¹

Here, Socrates turns his defense speech into an accusation against his prosecutors and jurors, and he associates himself with a figure who used his failed defense in much the same way.

§3. Circle-in-the-fire Rhetoric

In his life of Socrates, Diogenes Laertius mentions the claim that Euripides used his play the *Palamedes* to rebuke the Athenians for executing Socrates.⁵² If we did not know that Euripides died before Socrates, we might believe the claim as well; the cases of Socrates and Palamedes are so similar. Furthermore, there are a number of similarities between Plato's *Apology* and the defense speech of Palamedes written by Gorgias.⁵³ It

⁵¹ *Apology* 26.

⁵² *Lives of Philosophers* 2.44.

⁵³ See Coulter 1964.

was common practice for sophists to write show-pieces, so-called epideictic speeches, in defense of or against mythological characters. The paradoxical rhetoric of Xenophon's *Apology*, then, continues a sophistic tradition that had a heavy influence on the Socratic dialogue.

We have two such speeches by Gorgias: In his *Encomium to Helen*, he admits her misdeeds but exculpates her with a psychological defense, arguing in part that it is not possible to resist persuasive speeches.⁵⁴ Rather than postulating the existence of a wandering pseudo-Helen, as Steisichorus did, Gorgias admits that the woman did all the things of which she is accused, but he develops a psychological account of her actions which relieves her of all blame. In part, he argues that a person cannot resist the awesome, arbitrary power of persuasive speech.⁵⁵ He describes rhetoric as a kind of magic, calling speech a *pharmakon* and *epode* and echoing the popular charges against the art of speaking.⁵⁶ The speech itself evidences the power of such persuasion, and its description of that power demonstrates how it is *deinos* in every sense. Such bravura is not surprising from Gorgias.

But the defense of Palamedes was quite different. While the speaker of the *Helen* is Gorgias himself, Palamedes gives his own defense. We know that Palamedes' speech will fail despite his innocence, and Palamedes' deviations from rhetorical norms help to explain his loss. Despite the circumstances, Palamedes is quite cheerful throughout the

⁵⁴ This speech so resembles the defense Helen gives in the *Trojan Women* that it is often claimed that Euripides used it for his model. See Worman 2002, 123-135 for bibliography and an in depth comparison of the two works.

⁵⁵ *Encomium to Helen*, 8-14.

⁵⁶ See Gellrich 1994 for the use of these terms to indicate sophistry.

speech. He knows he is innocent, has no interest in rhetorical tactics, and thinks his jury should be more concerned about their inevitable dishonor than he should about his impending death.⁵⁷ Palamedes claims that his accuser can have no knowledge of his guilt since that man did not witness him committing any act of treason. If he heard about such an act, he only has an opinion, and opinion should never be preferred to knowledge.⁵⁸ By this standard, the only man who can judge the guilt of Palamedes is Palamedes.

In the peroration, he renounces all deceptive speech in favor of clear explanation,⁵⁹ despite the acknowledged power of speech to alter opinion. Throughout the defense, Palamedes explicitly refuses to follow the rhetorical conventions common to such deception. He will offer no summation, since his judges should be smart enough to remember the arguments.⁶⁰ He will not bring in friends to plead for him since the judges should be above such appeals.⁶¹ And though he recognizes that it is not his place to do so, he says he has no choice but to describe his own virtues, wisdom, and the debt which all of Greece owes him for his beneficence.⁶² Palamedes is as proud of his knowledge as Xenophon's Socrates is of his virtues, and his devotion to it is so extreme that it leads

⁵⁷ *Palamedes* 35.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 33-34.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 37.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 33.

⁶² *Ibid.* 28-30.

him to make the rather specious argument that a clever man cannot do wrong, since all error is the result of ignorance.⁶³

Just as the *Encomium of Helen* stands as its own proof of the vast power of speech, the *Defense of Palamedes* shows the inadequacy of knowledge and the limitations of speech to convey truth. When Palamedes argues that he could not have had any opportunity to betray the Greeks, describing every imaginable contingency and listing the practical difficulties, he knows his innocence but to his judges he can only seem to protest too much.⁶⁴ When he argues against the likelihood that a person such as himself would be willing to betray his allies for money, his claims are no doubt true for him but hardly evident to his listeners.⁶⁵

Palamedes distances himself from his judges at every turn. Instead of appealing to their own fear of death by emphasizing the personal urgency of his acquittal, he stoically declares death an inevitability.⁶⁶ His only concern is honor, and he does not worry much that his own honor is at stake; instead, he tells his judges that they must acquit him to avoid a dishonor even worse than that of his accuser.⁶⁷

Gorgias' *Palamedes* bears the general marks of carnival literature: it appropriates and undermines the apology form, it upsets hierarchy in Palamedes' use of his defense to call into question the honor of his jurors, and it distorts the perspective of the situation to

⁶³ Ibid. 25-26. The assertion resembles Socrates' identification of knowledge with virtue but lacks Socrates' typical self-effacement; according to this standard, Palamedes considers himself beyond all reproach.

⁶⁴ *Palamedes* 9-21

⁶⁵ Ibid. 15.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 1.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 35-36.

conform to Palamedes' singular vision.⁶⁸ At the same time, its use of dramatic irony shows an affinity with Greek tragedy. Though the defense from Euripides' *Palamedes* is lost, the doomed speech of Gorgias' *Palamedes* has a close parallel in Euripides' *Hippolytus*.

Like Xenophon's *Apology* and Gorgias' *Palamedes*, the defense of Hippolytus distorts the methods of forensic rhetoric. It was a commonplace of classical rhetoric for an orator to deny possessing any skill at speaking: it made for an easy *captatio benevolentiae*.⁶⁹ So, when Hippolytus begins his defense with such a denial,⁷⁰ it is not clear whether he is expressing a genuine concern or merely repeating a formula. Again, Hippolytus would seem to disavow rhetoric when he asks to be judged on facts over language and implies that his father is an unjustly clever speaker by calling the accusation *deine*, the term meaning both clever and frightful, often used to describe the sophists.⁷¹ Yet, Theseus turns the charge back on his son and calls him a sorcerer and enchanter, *goes* and *epoides*, the terms used frequently to disparage the sophists' ability to overcome their listeners with speech.⁷²

⁶⁸ Worman 1999 reads the *Palamedes* as a parody of Prodicus. Adkins 1983 argues that the *Encomium to Helen*'s method of argument is incompatible with the line of reasoning in the *Palamedes*, but takes it to be a failing of the form rather than an intentional distancing by Gorgias. Long 1984 defends the validity of arguments in the *Palamedes*, but their efficacy is the object of Gorgias' satire rather than any lapses in logic.

⁶⁹ See Conacher 1981, 15. Burnet 1924, 67, comments on the similar irony of this disclaimer in Plato's *Apology*.

⁷⁰ *Hippolytus* 986-89.

⁷¹ Ibid. 984.

⁷² Ibid. 1038-40. See Gellrich 1994 for the use of magical terms in accusations of sophistry and the appropriation of the term by Gorgias and Plato.

The structure of Hippolytus' defense conforms to the professional standards of forensic rhetoric, and the refutation of the charges against him draws from a familiar stock of *to eikos* arguments. So, the speech bears enough marks of conventional rhetoric to be mistaken for sophistry. Nevertheless, it fails to employ those conventions effectively and so reveals Hippolytus' genuine shortcomings as an orator and as a human being. The chief problem with the defense is Hippolytus' tendency to create a distance between himself and his judge by elevating himself over other human beings. Conacher notes a series of faults with the speech:

...Hippolytus spoils the conventional *captatio benevolentiae* of the exordium with characteristic haughtiness ("unaccustomed as I am to public speaking" acquires the unfortunate addendum, "for only the vulgar can speak before the mob," 988-89). Among the "improbabilities" of his alleged fall from grace is included a tactless reminder of Phaedra's limited charms ("Was she, after all, so beautiful?" 1009-19). Finally, the repeated occurrences of the term *sôphrôn*, in one form or another (995, 1007, 1013, 1024), provide sinister reminders that this "virtue," linked with Hippolytus' *semnotês*, has been played up throughout as the catastrophic element in this tragedy.⁷³

As little as Hippolytus thinks of his father's wife, he seems to think even less of his father's office. He claims that no moderate man would want to rule, much as Creon claims to Oedipus.⁷⁴ Yet, Hippolytus goes further by claiming that only madmen would want to rule.⁷⁵ While Creon's adherence to modest living leaves room for a king to possess other virtues, such as justice and courage, Hippolytus' devotes himself to this one

⁷³ Conacher 1981, 15.

⁷⁴ *Oedipus Rex*, 584-89.

⁷⁵ *Hippolytus* 1013-15

virtue, *sôphrosynê*, to the exclusion of all else. He even makes the claim that of all men, he is the most modest.⁷⁶ After the defense, he repeats this claim twice.⁷⁷

To be sure, the term *sôphrôn* is diverse enough in meaning that he can say this without utter absurdity: *sôphrosynê* is not just modesty, but temperance, reservation, discretion, prudence, and self-knowledge. Nowhere does Euripides make more frequent use of the term than the *Hippolytus*, where *sôphrôn* and its derivatives occur some 18 times, not counting the dozens of references to losing, keeping, or possessing one's wits, or *phrenes*.⁷⁸ Because of the variety in meaning, Hippolytus can brag about his *sôphrosynê*, a servant can criticize people for having a mind like the boy (*phronountas houtôs*),⁷⁹ and Phaedra can take her final exit criticizing Hippolytus for being high minded and predicting that her actions will teach him to be moderate (*sôphronein*).⁸⁰

In a way, Hippolytus is moderate to an excessive degree. As for the boast about being most *sôphrôn*, Euripides and his audience were aware of the paradox in such a statement as much as they were aware that Hippolytus' defense would fail, and the poet exploits this shared ironic perspective to heighten dramatic tension while distancing his hero from their sympathies.

Socrates himself appears as such a *sôphrôn hybristês* at the end of Plato's *Symposium*. The speeches in that dialogue follow the tradition of paradoxical

⁷⁶ Ibid. 995.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 1100, 1365.

⁷⁸ See North 1966, 79-82, for a detailed analysis of the use of the term in Euripides generally and in the *Hippolytus*.

⁷⁹ *Hippolytus* 115.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 730-31

encomium.⁸¹ Each of the *Symposium*'s speeches in praise of love proposes some unusual metaphor or benefit of love and supports it with arguments drawn from the more advanced intellectual circles. But the *Symposium* ends with the speech of Alcibiades, who chooses to praise Socrates rather than Eros. One paradoxical notion at the heart of Alcibiades' speech is that Socrates possesses self-restraint to a hubristic degree, a quality exemplified in Socrates' refusal to accept Alcibiades as a lover.⁸² In this way, perhaps Socrates, too, is excessively moderate.

But the speech in Xenophon's *Apology* differs from these other paradoxical encomia. Both Plato's *Apology* and Xenophon's may look back to Gorgias' *Palamedes* as a model for a failed defense, but they both further ironize that model by making the failures of the defense intentional. In offering to correct Plato's account, Xenophon makes the ironic construction of Plato's work explicit. Xenophon grounds this strange discursive model in a dramatic account that is both realistic in terms of his protagonists' psychology and fantastical in its construction of superhuman goodness.

Conclusion

Though the *Apology* is quite short, it contains several commonplaces and all the chief characteristics of carnival literature: hierarchical subversion in Socrates' attitudes toward the gods and his jurors, distortion of perspective in the uniqueness of his moral position and the momentous situation of the capital defense, and carnival intertext in the inversion of the defense speech's function and in Xenophon's recapitulation and

⁸¹ Phaedrus mentions the encomium to salt at *Symposium* 177c as a justification for writing encomia to love. Pease 1926 gives a survey of the genre. Nightingale 1996, 93-131 treats the paradoxical encomium of Alcibiades together with other carnivalized forms of encomia.

⁸² See Gagarin 1977.

reevaluation of Plato's *Apology*. His treatment of the Socrates' defense draws on precedents of paradoxical rhetoric for structure, tone, and even parallel themes.

In the tradition of adoxography, Xenophon constructs an ethical conceit that makes Socrates an inimitable success in conventional terms and explains his unjust execution as an exaggerated case of a typical problem in an ethical system based on reciprocated favor and personal honor: spitefulness. By assuming that Xenophon's primary interests lay in apologetics and biography, scholars have largely missed the fantastic element in the work. Rather than showing Xenophon's overzealousness or shallowness, the *Apology* shows the depth of his knowledge of the genre and the richness of his paradoxical imagination.

CHAPTER FIVE

MEMORABILIA: A LIKELY DEFENSE

The only concession I want from Germany is that she gives me a loaf of bread, tells the gentlemen with muskets at the main gate to look the other way, and leaves the rest to me. Pelham Grenville Wodehouse. Berlin, 1941.

At first glance, Xenophon's *Memorabilia* may seem to be a loose collection of personal anecdotes. This appearance contributed to its ancient reputation as the earliest collection of writings on Socrates¹ and to its modern one as a uniquely unfiltered source of information about him.² The scholarly consensus has since called its testimony into question, but more critical approaches to reading the work have also helped to make its design more intelligible.

The *Memorabilia* borrows structuring principles from some genres of sophistic rhetoric and wisdom literature. The external frame of the work is a defense speech; Book I includes direct responses to the charges against Socrates as well as short scenes that serve as evidence for its claims.³ The culmination of the work in Book IV is a sort of *Bildungsroman* that depicts the stages of education through a series of conversations with

¹ So Diogenes Laertius, II.48: "And he was the first person who took down conversations as they occurred, and published them among men, calling them *Memorabilia*" (Yonge translation).

² Schmid, in his revision of Christ's *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, promoted the view that Xenophon's very lack of intelligence guaranteed the accuracy of these accounts, whereas B. Russell (1945), 101, criticized the tendency of scholars to trust Xenophon for his simplicity. For the controversy on the issue, see Lesky 1966, 494.

³ Erbse 1961, Gray 1998, and Chroust 1957 all treat the apologetic concern as the central structuring principle of the *Memorabilia*.

a single student, Euthydemus.⁴ The middle two books present several episodes of *parainesis*—advice on conventional, practical problems—and these are organized by levels of social complexity, treating in turn personal relations, politics, and individual goods such as health and skill.⁵ Both the *paraenesis* and Euthydemus sections make Xenophon’s claims in defense of Socrates more plausible: Socrates’ practical advice shows his concern for the good of his associates while the final demonstration of his methods and beliefs shows his concern for the truth.

But the structure of the *Memorabilia* is more complex than the order of its parts. The episodes and arguments of the work illustrate, explain, and augment each other, but a reader must supply the relations between those elements. The *Memorabilia* aids the reader in understanding its internal structure through reference to generic models, but it also reshapes the reader’s understanding of those models. The three currents of the work—apologetics, parainesis, and pedagogical demonstration—all retain the devices of carnival literature in their adaptation of Socratic commonplaces to Xenophon’s own views on the relationship between education and a successful, practical life.

§1. Carnival Apologetics

Bakhtin considered one of the distinguishing characteristics of the *menippeia* to be a freedom of plot that contrasted with the Socratic dialogue’s treatment of historical persons and events.⁶ The strong apologetic current in dialogues reinforces the notion that they are constrained by history in a way that the *menippeia* is not; without verisimilitude,

⁴ This education focused version is also referred to as *Erziehungsroman*, of which an early exemplar was Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*. For generic problems with *Bildungsroman* and the “didactic-pedagogical novel”, See Bakhtin 1986, 19-23.

⁵ For an outline of the parainetic section, see Erbse 1961, 279.

⁶ Bakhtin 1984, 114.

the author's defense of Socrates would lose its persuasive force. Nevertheless, Socratic dialogues sometimes feature gross inaccuracies,⁷ and their authors discovered ways to put the biographical tradition into the service of carnival even when they were aiming for verisimilitude. In certain places, they used their audience's knowledge of historical events to heighten the intensity of irony in their works; elsewhere, they introduced new elements into the biographical tradition that played off what had been written before but confirmed Socrates' status as a carnival hero.

By the time Xenophon wrote the *Memorabilia*, Socratic dialogues had already significantly altered the literary tradition on the life of Socrates.⁸ In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates takes time from pleading his case to protest his depiction by the comic poets; he insists that unlike the Socrates of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, he is concerned exclusively with human affairs and takes no interest in natural science.⁹ By the time Plato wrote the *Phaedo*, however, his portrait of Socrates had become well enough established that he could incorporate a Socratic interest in natural science into his biography; here, Socrates admits that he had studied natural science with Anaxagoras but claims he abandoned it to focus on human affairs.¹⁰ Likewise, Antisthenes' portrait of Socrates, as far as it can be reconstructed, has little resemblance to the Socrates of Plato's earlier dialogues, but

⁷ So, Plato's *Parmenides* stretches chronology to stage a meeting between the old Parmenides and the young Socrates, and the *Menexenus* has Socrates narrating events that followed his death. In Polycrates' *Accusation of Socrates*, Anytus described Conon's rebuilding of Athens' Long Walls years before it occurred. In Aeschines' *Aspasia*, Socrates narrated a conversation between Aspasia, Xenophon, and his wife even though Xenophon probably did not marry until sometime after Socrates' death. As for Xenophon's own Socratic works, if we identify Xenophon with his narrator, we find similar distortions of timelines in the *Oeconomicus*, *Symposium*, and *Memorabilia*.

⁸ Xenophon can hardly have begun work on his Socratic writings before 371 BC.; see Lesky 1966, 468, and Kahn 1996, 30. For a relative chronology of Plato's writings, see Kahn 1996, 47-48.

⁹ *Apology* 18c-19d.

¹⁰ *Phaedo* 97b-100a.

Plato's *Symposium* and Xenophon's Socratic writings take over his *enkrateia*, *kartereia*, and *autarkeia*.¹¹

As the Socratic dialogue grew and its treatment of philosophical issues gained complexity, the portrait of Socrates grew along with it, incorporating elements from both hostile and friendly sources.¹² So, while the *Memorabilia* has a clear apologetic agenda, its presence in the work does not constrain Xenophon as much as his detractors have charged;¹³ the authors of *Sokratikoi logoi* could choose which aspects of Socrates to defend and which to ignore, and they could invent new material so long as they retained some aspect of Socrates' character.

The apologetic elements of the *Memorabilia* are its primary link to the biographical tradition, and Xenophon uses the defense as a framing device for the whole work. In the first two chapters of Book I, the narrator responds, point by point, to a series of charges against Socrates, some drawn from his trial and some from the subsequent literary tradition. The last chapter of Book IV shows Socrates facing his trial and execution confident in his innocence and indifferent toward his coming condemnation. Everything in the middle complements Xenophon's defensive arguments and his portrait of Socrates as an unjustly condemned man.¹⁴

¹¹ Plato's *Symposium*, 212c-222c. For Antisthenes and his relation to Socrates, see Tsouna-McKirahan 1994, 369-377. For Xenophon's reliance on Antisthenes, see Kahn 1996, 30-31.

¹² For descriptions of this process and speculative reconstructions of the early development of the Socratic dialogue as a literary form, see Chroust 1957, Rossetti 1977, and Montuori 1981.

¹³ For an outline of this standard objection and relevant bibliography, see Dorion 2000, lxx-lxx.

¹⁴ Gray 1998 shows how all of the narrative episodes of the *Memorabilia* function in some way as a rhetorical amplification, or *auxêsis*, of Xenophon's arguments in defense of Socrates.

But the literary form is more likely a pretext for Xenophon to refashion the character of Socrates than the necessary defense of a maligned historical figure.

Xenophon structures his defense of Socrates in the *Memorabilia* chiefly as a response to the sophist Polycrates, who had published an *Accusation of Socrates* several years after the trial. This work elicited a number of responses other than the *Memorabilia*,¹⁵ but it is doubtful that their authors considered Polycrates a serious critic of Socrates since Polycrates had an ancient reputation as an author of absurd and comical show pieces.¹⁶ Isocrates even claims that some elements of Polycrates' accusation functioned better as a defense of Socrates.¹⁷

Nevertheless, Polycrates' reputation did not prevent his work from infiltrating the biographical tradition; according to Isocrates, Polycrates was the first author to mention that Alcibiades was educated by Socrates.¹⁸ If Isocrates' report is true, authors such as Aeschines, Plato, and Xenophon may have accepted the association not because they had to accept it but because they considered it a useful narrative framework for dramatizing the philosophical problems that interested them. Alcibiades was already a prominent figure in history, comedy, and epideictic oratory before anyone wrote about his association with Socrates, and the introduction of such an association allowed authors to bring together two burgeoning traditions of philosophical literature.¹⁹ Furthermore, while

¹⁵ For responses to Polycrates, see Chroust 1957, 69-99.

¹⁶ See Demetrius *On Style* 120, Quintillian 2.17.4. Aristotle points out fallacies in Polycrates' speeches at *Rhetoric* 1401a-b. In the preface to his *Praise for Folly*, Erasmus cites Polycrates as an ancient exemplar of paradoxical encomium.

¹⁷ *Busiris* 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁹ Gribble 1999 traces the development of Alcibiades' character as a subject for various authors and genres in classical Athens and in the subsequent rhetorical and literary traditions.

an association with Critias by itself makes Socrates seem like a partisan of oligarchy, adding an association with Alcibiades shifts the portrait away from factional concerns toward the issue of education's effect on behavior; contemporary scholars have even cited the relationship with Alcibiades as proof that Socrates was not put on trial because of his antidemocratic views.²⁰ The serio-comic tone of the Socratic dialogue allows authors to direct their apologetic arguments toward the testing of philosophical views rather than personal vindication.

But this tone has often escaped the notice of Xenophon's readers, especially in the case of the *Memorabilia*. To be sure, the defense in the *Memorabilia* is not as provocative as Socrates' speech in Xenophon's *Apology*, but it contains a milder version of the same reversals of expectation. When Socrates claims in the *Apology* that no one can dispute the communications of his *daimonion* because of its perfect record of predictions, his jury erupts in a mixture of envy and disbelief;²¹ Xenophon includes the same argument in the *Memorabilia*, but its boldness is tamped down by the move from the dramatic situation of the trial to the narrative.²² Similarly, the narrator's counter accusation—that the Athenian *demos* rather than Socrates was responsible for the corruption of Critias and Alcibiades—is less emotive in the *Memorabilia* than it would be in the *Apology*, where Socrates addresses the Athenians directly.²³ Xenophon's use of such methods of indirection has the general effect of muting the sense of distortion and

²⁰ Brickhouse and Smith 1989, 77: "To be sure, an association with Critias, taken by itself, might suggest an affinity for oligarchical politics. Yet it was plain to all that Alcibiades' rise to power derived from his relationship with Pericles and the democratic faction in Athens."

²¹ *Apology* 13-14.

²² *Memorabilia* I.1.4-5.

²³ *ibid.* I.2.24-25.

subversion in the *Memorabilia*. This tendency accords with Bakhtin's observation that "'Socratic irony' is reduced carnival laughter".²⁴ But the central tendencies of carnival can all be seen in both the defensive arguments and in the episodes of Book I that directly support them.

In the Critias episode, for instance, Xenophon creates an improbable situation in which two Socratic commonplaces—craft analogies and the profession of ignorance—become the substance of Socrates' heroic resistance to the tyranny of The Thirty.²⁵ Socrates uses a disparaging analogy with herdsmen to criticize The Thirty's reign of terror: like bad herdsmen, they were making their flocks fewer. So, the tyrants Critias and Charicles bring him in and remind him that they had made it a crime to teach the young how to speak. Socrates, in turn, asks whether it was a crime to teach the young to speak correctly or to speak incorrectly; so, Charicles gives him a clearer law to follow:

Socrates, since you are ignorant, we give you the following orders that are easier to learn: don't converse with the young at all.²⁶

When Socrates again plays the fool, the tyrants make it clear that he cannot speak to the young about craftsmen or about the concepts he gets at through analogies to craftsmen, or else he will have to worry that "you, too, do not make the cattle fewer".²⁷

With the Alcibiades episode, on the other hand, Xenophon appropriates from the comic poets and Polycrates the charge that Socrates turned children against their fathers and relatives by showing Alcibiades interrogating his guardian Pericles on the nature of

²⁴ Bakhtin 1984, 132.

²⁵ *Memorabilia* I.2.31-38.

²⁶ *ibid.* I.2.35.

²⁷ *ibid.* I.2.37.

law.²⁸ The subversion of hierarchy adds a comic dimension to a scene that serves a supporting role in Xenophon's response to charges against Socrates—it shows that Alcibiades' *philotimia* was natural to his character and not a result of Socrates' teaching—but plays a bigger part in Xenophon's literary and philosophical agendas. As humorous as they are, the Critias and Alcibiades episodes reinforce Xenophon's position that the two men were not true associates of Socrates but ambitious men drawn to Socrates by the authority he demonstrated over others in argument.²⁹

But the episodes also show why Socrates' argumentative skill would appeal to men of a tyrannical disposition, and in this respect they give some support to Socrates' accusers. In addition, there is often some variance between similar statements in different episodes or between the narrator's descriptions and what we see in the episodes. For instance, the narrator defends Socrates from the charge of introducing new gods by denying that he ever discussed divine matters with his associates.³⁰ But Socrates seems to violate this principle in his discussion with Aristodemus, where he tries to persuade the man to engage in sacrifices through an argument by design that shows how much human beings owe to the gods.³¹ Both the claim that Socrates never discussed divine matters and the episode with Aristodemus counter the charge that Socrates dishonored the gods, but the two proofs are at odds with each other at a certain level. These apparent

²⁸ *ibid.* I.2.39-47.

²⁹ *ibid.* I.2.15 : "They knew that Socrates lived in a most self-sufficient manner on the least amount of wealth, was most continent in regards to all the pleasures, and *dealt as he wished with all who conversed with him*" (emphasis added).

³⁰ *ibid.* I.1.11-16.

³¹ *ibid.* I.4.1-19.

discrepancies have inspired three distinct approaches to the interpretation of the *Memorabilia*.

§2. Dialectics, Dialogics, and Deficiencies

Throughout the *Memorabilia*, there are discrepancies that require some explanation. Dorion sees them as instances of “clumsiness” that show Xenophon granted too much ground to Socrates’ accusers and was unprepared to defend Socrates on their terms.³² Strauss, on the other hand, saw two portraits of Socrates in Xenophon’s work: an exoteric portrait, in which he was innocent of the charges put against him but somewhat dull in his outlook, and an esoteric one, in which he was liable to the charges against him but revolutionary in his ideas.³³ In a third approach, Gray argues that more complex views presented in the *Memorabilia* need to be combined with simpler ones dialectically in a process she compares to rhetorical amplification.³⁴

All three approaches to explaining the discrepancies have their drawbacks. Dorion’s interpretation makes an ideal of the very thing Burnet impugned the *Memorabilia* for being: a defense of Socrates so complete that no one could understand why the Athenians put the man to death.³⁵ For Dorion, the problem seems to be not that Xenophon made such a goal for his work but that he failed to achieve it.³⁶ While I admit a degree of artistic failure in Xenophon’s defense of Socrates, I believe the appearance of

³² See the comments on I.2.9-11, 17-18, 27-28, 48 and I.6.15 in Dorion 2000 and the argument against Strauss in Dorion 2010.

³³ Strauss 1972. Strauss’s books on Xenophon are themselves written in an esoteric style, but some of his admirers often spell out what is implied in his work. See Bruell 1987 and Buzzetti 1998.

³⁴ Gray 1998, 16-19.

³⁵ Burnet 1914, 149.

³⁶ See above, n. 33.

clumsiness can be mitigated through three considerations. First, the epideictic apology is generically defined by the defense of its subject, but it usually has other goals as well, and these may take priority over its central conceit.³⁷ Second, while the defense of Socrates is the clearest agenda of the *Memorabilia* and takes up its external frame, the work has at least two other major agendas, and it is plausible that the apologetics are an amplification of its other sections rather than vice versa; in such a case, Xenophon's success should be judged not by the strength of the defense but by its contribution to the whole. Third, if the work is similar to a menippean satire in its attitude toward its subject, its form will likely seem clumsy to a reader who does not anticipate it. As Northrop Frye wrote,

The intellectual structure built up from the story makes for violent dislocations in the customary logic of narrative, though the appearance of carelessness that results reflects only the carelessness of the reader or his tendency to judge by a novel-centered conception of fiction.³⁸

Standards of artistic success and failure for serio-comic works differ widely from other kinds of writing.

Strauss and Gray's models of interpretation are more directly at odds with one another, and they suffer deficiencies of opposing types. Strauss's separation of esoteric and exoteric elements is one version of what Bakhtin terms a dialogical relationship, in which the elements are not combined into a synthesis but remain distinct.³⁹ But Strauss would lead his reader to disregard the majority of what Xenophon has written in the

³⁷ The precedence of theme over subject is especially clear in mythological display speeches such as Isocrates' *Defense of Helen*, but it can apply to epideictic speeches on historical themes as well. Even in a serious epideictic speech, the ostensible subject may only be a pretense for a larger treatment of a theme, e.g. the crown in Demosthenes' *On the Crown* versus Demosthenes' account of his rhetorical career.

³⁸ Frye 1957, 310.

³⁹ See Booth's discussion of the difference in the introduction to Bakhtin 1984, xxxii-xxxiii.

Memorabilia, and his justification for such a procedure seems to be based on a faulty reading of a passage concerning Socrates' rhetorical method.⁴⁰ Conversely, Gray interprets the whole *Memorabilia* as a series of amplifications that deepen Xenophon's treatment of issues through an extensive internal dialectic, but her interpretation is so strongly opposed to ironic readings of the text that it may exclude consideration of ironic features common in Socratic dialogues or in other forms of wisdom literature.⁴¹

It is plausible, though, that the *Memorabilia* builds both dialectical and dialogical tensions between its elements. Gray's conception of a broad internal dialectic is generally sound, and Xenophon also uses an external dialectic to incorporate the views of other authors into his account. With few exceptions, he does not deny the claims of Plato, Aeschines, Antisthenes, or even Polycrates but adds new material to their accounts.⁴² Bringing in the views of others, Xenophon's account forms a retroactive continuity that can explain the origins of all the other accounts.

But Xenophon does not wish for all opinions about Socrates to stand. To discriminate against certain views, he creates an internal dialogic in the *Memorabilia* by opposing Socrates to a series of deficient doubles: Aristodemus, Antiphon, and

⁴⁰ Strauss adopted his esoteric reading model from the medieval commentators Al-Farabi and Maimonides; see Burnyeat 1985. Strauss justifies this approach to Xenophon through a statement in the *Memorabilia* about Odysseus; see Strauss 1972, 122-123, and Buzzetti 2001, 7-8. Gray 1998, 22 gives an alternate reading that fits the context better: Xenophon is not describing two sets of Socratic doctrines but two related Socratic methods, refutation and argument through agreed stages.

⁴¹ Gray's strong aversion to ironic readings of Xenophon is apparent in her response to David Johnson in Gray 2004, and Johnson is right to reply with concern in Johnson 2004. On the issue of legitimacy and natural law, though, Gray is on firmer ground.

⁴² Xenophon directly cites the claims made by Polycrates' Anytus about Socrates' teachings at I.2.9, 12, 49, 56, and 58, and instead of denying these claims, Xenophon adds context to make each accusation a defense.

Aristippus.⁴³ Each of these characters acts out a conception of Socrates that Xenophon wishes to disarm: Aristodemus neglects the worship of the gods,⁴⁴ Antiphon takes money for teaching,⁴⁵ and Aristippus avoids political life altogether.⁴⁶ The decrowning or parodying double, which takes over and exaggerates certain aspects of another character, is a common form of dialogical opposition in serio-comic literature.⁴⁷ By opposing Socrates to these three figures, Xenophon can fashion an unconventional and recognizably Socratic protagonist who is not liable to any of the most serious charges set against him.

There may also be an external dialogic at work in the *Memorabilia* in the form of dramatic irony. Xenophon depicts Socrates encouraging Charmides and the younger Pericles in their pursuit of political authority, but both leaders met with unfortunate ends.⁴⁸ While neither figure was as monstrous or tragic as Critias or Alcibiades, the later misfortunes of each serve as a practical counterbalance to the optimistic views on the political life promoted by Socrates. In a way, the younger Pericles and Charmides are Alcibiades and Critias writ small, being kinsmen of theirs and resembling them in personality and politics. By displacing the more dangerous figures with milder versions

⁴³ O'Connor 1994 reads Aristodemus and Aristippus as deficient models of self-sufficiency and Antiphon as a deficient model of dependence.

⁴⁴ *Memorabilia* I.4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* I.6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* II.1.

⁴⁷ Bakhtin 1984, 127-28.

⁴⁸ Pericles the Younger speaks with Socrates in *Memorabilia* III.5; he was one of the six generals put to death by the Athenians after the Battle of Arginusae. Charmides appears in *Memorabilia* III.7; eventually the leader of the Piraeus Ten, Charmides died fighting the democrats who rose up against the Thirty Tyrants.

of the same, Xenophon can reinforce the view that the ubiquitous misfortune of political ambition was to blame for the downfall of Socrates' students rather than their education. But he can also preserve an inherent problem in the relationship between moral theory and practice, that an education in virtue can be instrumental in a person's ruin. Furthermore, Socrates' arguments in the Charmides and young Pericles episodes exhibit the oligarchical and laconizing tendencies that made Socrates politically suspicious to the Athenian *demos*.⁴⁹ But Xenophon shows how Socrates could play off of such controversial views to encourage his associates to pursue both their own success and the common good of Athens.

Including themes and incidents that complicate his defense of Socrates may be a detriment to the apologetic agenda of the *Memorabilia*, but it better serves the menippean construction of the work to make the ideas contained in the defense more important than the defense itself.

§3. Unconventional Parainesis

Scholars have criticized Xenophon's *Memorabilia* for making Socrates appear too conventional. This image contrasts sharply with Plato's Socrates, whose *atopia* Alcibiades labors to describe in Plato's *Symposium*:

There is a parallel for everyone—everyone else, that is. But this man here is so bizarre, his ways and his ideas are so unusual, that, search as you might, you'll never find anyone else, alive or dead, who's even remotely like him. The best you can do is not to compare him to anything human, but to liken him, as I do, to Silenus and the satyrs, and the same goes for his ideas and arguments.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ At *Memorabilia* III.5.14-15, Socrates advises Pericles that the Athenians should imitate the Greeks who are currently most preeminent in virtue, i.e. the Spartans; see my discussion of this episode above at Ch. 1 §2. At III.7.6-7, Socrates combats Charmides' diffidence by reminding him that the assembly he is afraid to address is made up of craftsmen he considers inferior to himself.

⁵⁰ Plato's *Symposium* 221d.

This eccentricity makes Plato's Socrates an apt carnival hero who breaks through barriers and offends the people around him. Xenophon's Socrates, on the other hand, has several quite conventional interests: bodily health, personal finance, domestic harmony, and military service. In enumerating the differences between Xenophon's Socrates and Plato's, Dorion goes so far as to say,

While [Plato's Socrates] is notorious for the "outrageousness" (*atopia*) which so disconcerts his interlocutors, [Xenophon's Socrates] is usually predictable...⁵¹

But while Socrates has a number of conventional interests in the *Memorabilia*, his manner of discussing them is still quite eccentric, and we can see this eccentricity more clearly in conjunction with the other elements of carnival laid out by Bakhtin: free and familiar contact, mésalliance, and profanity.⁵²

Bakhtin recognized one of these categories, familiarization, as an essential feature of Socratic dialogue:

The Socratic discovery of the dialogic nature of thought, of truth itself, presumes a carnivalistic familiarization of relations among people who have entered the dialogue; it presumes a familiarizing of attitudes toward the object of thought itself.

We can see this carnival mode at work in the wide variety of interlocutors in the *Memorabilia*—family members, politicians, prostitutes, and sophists—but also in Socrates' tendency to use shame to break through conventional social distance. In this respect, Socrates' advice often takes a form we could call a practical elenchus, by analogy with the practical syllogism. Instead of using ambiguity as Plato's Socrates does, usually in the form of equivocal terms, to commit his interlocutor to a theoretical

⁵¹ Dorion 2006, 96.

⁵² See Bakhtin 1984, 122-123.

position he is ashamed to defend,⁵³ Xenophon's Socrates uses ambiguity, usually in the form of strained analogies, to commit his associates to descriptions of their actions that they are ashamed to carry out, such as "I am willing to treat my brother worse than I would treat a dog".⁵⁴ Socrates sidesteps the rules that govern direct criticism of his associates by resorting to eccentric modes of speech, such as mocking praise and disparaging comparisons, to express his disapproval.

Another eccentricity common in the *Memorabilia* is Socrates' application of academic methods to mundane problems. This scholastic approach toward discussions creates some odd situations, such as Socrates' oddly passive-aggressive conversation with his son,⁵⁵ his advice on table manners via definitions,⁵⁶ and his purely theoretical interest in the work of the artisans.⁵⁷ While these passages might be taken as signs that Xenophon has a tin ear for conversation, the combination of high diction and low situation is a kind of *mésalliance*, another one of Bakhtin's categories of carnival sense, and another way for Xenophon to depict Socrates' eccentricity.

Finally, despite scholars' perception of conventionalism, Socrates even offends his companions with the advice he gives them. Even when Socrates is promoting a conventional interest such as the prosperity of the household, he often advises his companion to achieve that end through a violation of protocol. In this manner, he tells

⁵³ See Gordon 1999, 21-28 for the role of shame in Socratic dialectic.

⁵⁴ At *Memorabilia* II.3.9, Socrates uses this comparison to make Chaerecrates reconcile with Chaerephon.

⁵⁵ *Memorabilia* II.2, which begins, "Tell me, child, do you know human beings who are called ungrateful?"

⁵⁶ *ibid.* III.14.

⁵⁷ *ibid.* III.10-11.

Aristarchus to put free women to work for wages,⁵⁸ advises Eutherus to “endure slavery” voluntarily,⁵⁹ and convinces Crito to hire his own sycophants.⁶⁰ All of these actions benefit his associates, but each is also controversial behavior for an aristocratic Athenian.

In the *Memorabilia*, both the form and practical content of Socrates’ advice are quite unconventional. But the bizarreness of Xenophon’s Socrates has usually gone unnoticed by scholars. Unlike Plato’s Socrates, Xenophon’s Socrates shares theoretical commitments about ethics with ordinary Greeks, but this aspect of the character is more traditional than conventional. A completely conventional thinker would uphold contradictory conventional views without recognizing them; Xenophon’s Socrates has a more coherent theoretical basis for his practical views and can affirm or deny conventional views insofar as they conform to that underlying philosophy.

§4. Anatomy of Socratic Dialogue

The fourth book of the *Memorabilia* deals with the complete education of a student. Unlike most of the episodes in the two central books, the conversations with Euthydemus do not contain advice for particular, conventional problems. Euthydemus’ problem is his choice of education: he is attempting to gain virtue by buying books on the subject, such as all the poems of Homer.⁶¹ The nature of Euthydemus’ problem allows Socrates to take a greater role in assisting him. While Xenophon’s Socrates can usually only give his interlocutors advice about what they should do, he can participate with Euthydemus in the activity with which he needs assistance. As a result, the

⁵⁸ *ibid.* II.7.

⁵⁹ *ibid.* II.8.

⁶⁰ *ibid.* II.9.

⁶¹ *ibid.* IV.2.1; IV.2.9.

conversations with him demonstrate Socratic methods and give plain accounts of Socrates' views on the relationship between education and virtue. The narrator comments on these conversations and explains how they fit together into a coherent education; Xenophon claims to be presenting a more comprehensive view of the kind of education partially represented by other authors' depictions of Socratic elenchus.⁶²

First, Socrates brings Euthydemus into a state of *aporia*. To show Euthydemus his limitations, Socrates makes him doubt whether he knows what justice is. He shows Euthydemus that no act is always just or unjust, even if qualified as an act toward a friend or an enemy.⁶³ Then, using the craft analogy to cast doubt on willingness as a criterion of justice and injustice,⁶⁴ Socrates shames Euthydemus for his ignorance in ethical matters, unwilling though it may be. When Euthydemus acknowledges his faults and admits that he does not know where to begin examining himself, Socrates goes on to convince him that nothing he considers to be good is good without qualification⁶⁵ and that he has no understanding of the nature of the most commonly recognized good, wealth⁶⁶.

But after Euthydemus reaches this state of *aporia* and recommits himself to learning from Socrates, the tone of their conversation changes, and Socrates begins to

⁶² At *Memorabilia* I.4.1, Xenophon attacks those who believe Socrates can only turn people to virtue and not lead them to it. A turn between these two processes with Euthydemus occurs at IV.2.40.

⁶³ This elenchus is similar to Socrates' exchanges with Cephalus and Polemarchus in *Republic* I, but in this case Socrates does not actually take issue with the principle of helping friends and harming enemies, just the use of the distinction to qualify lists of actions as just or unjust.

⁶⁴ This passage closely resembles the argument of Plato's *Hippias Minor*, but in this case the point is purely a critique of negligence and not an indication that Xenophon's Socrates doubts the existence of *akrasia*.

⁶⁵ At IV.2.33, Xenophon's Socrates even denies the inherent goodness of wisdom. Without some goods to serve as a foundation for determining other relative goods, this theory seems incoherent; even happiness is not a good since it is composed of other goods (IV.2.34-36). Euthydemus notes that if happiness is not good, he does not know what he should be praying for. But Socrates' eristic attitude in this section indicates that he does not accept all the views he makes use of in humbling Euthydemus.

⁶⁶ The argument here that wealth depends on self-control resembles an argument from *Oeconomicus* I.5-15.

lead him through more constructive arguments. The narrator explains that Socrates recognized Euthydemus' commitment to self-improvement and began to treat him in a different way:

...he disturbed him as little as possible and explained in the most simple and clear manner what he held he should know and what he held best for him to pursue.⁶⁷

The conversation culminates in a round of definitions: the pious is what is lawful concerning the gods; the just is what is lawful concerning human beings; wisdom is understanding; the good is the beneficial; the noble is the useful; courage is nobly dealing with the terrible and dangerous.⁶⁸ The surrounding dialogues and the narrator's comments help to show how this dialectical method is relevant to the practical advice Socrates usually gives his students and to Socrates' elenchus of Euthydemus: continence is a prerequisite for dialectics and self-examination, dialectics and self-examination are aids to deliberation, and proper deliberation is essential to knowing and doing what is good.⁶⁹ The end result of the process is what we observe in Socrates throughout the *Memorabilia*—the capacity to make sound deliberations, act on them, and advise others to do the same.

Between the elenchus and the definition section are conversations that help the reader relate the education of Euthydemus to the rest of the *Memorabilia*. In order to make Euthydemus behave more moderately, Socrates calls his attention to the benefits that the gods have given to human beings; the argument resembles the one with Aristodemus in Book I, but Euthydemus is a more receptive interlocutor and is deeply

⁶⁷ IV.2.40.

⁶⁸ IV.6.2-11.

⁶⁹ IV.5.6-12; see my discussion of continence, dialectics, and “the kingly art” in Ch.3 §3 above.

impressed by the arguments that Socrates makes in favor of lawful religious observation.⁷⁰ Socrates' success with Euthydemus makes his general intentions toward his interlocutors clearer: even if Socrates does not always succeed, he is always aiming to make his companions more moderate.

To make the contrast more immediate, Xenophon includes another confrontational episode in the midst of Euthydemus' lessons, a conversation between Socrates and the sophist Hippias on the nature of the just.⁷¹ Here, Hippias is not willing to concede to the definition of justice elsewhere agreed to by Socrates and Euthydemus—that the lawful can be identified with the just—despite Socrates' detailed catalogue of the benefits of strict lawfulness.⁷² When Hippias will only admit that the lawful is not the opposite of the just, Socrates uses a more advanced tactic to rein him in. Offering a theory of divine law, Socrates shames Hippias by showing that the gods, for their part, have no trouble identifying the just with the lawful.⁷³ This episode contrasts directly with the definition of justice that appears soon after, but it also recalls Alcibiades' conversation with Pericles earlier in the *Memorabilia*, where Alcibiades touched on doubts about the relationship between law and justice. For Xenophon's Socrates, though, the existence of bad laws does not justify lawlessness; instead, it shows the importance of perfecting the law through a good government.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ See Gray 1998, 37-39.

⁷¹ IV.4, between the section on honoring the gods and the one on continence and incontinence.

⁷² IV.4.17.

⁷³ IV.4.25.

⁷⁴ i.e. an aristocracy. See IV.6.12.

The definitions presented by Socrates at the end of the *Memorabilia* relate to the particular ethical problems of his interlocutors, such as Euthydemus' doubt of his ability to repay the gods' beneficence and Hippias' general contempt for law. By putting these episodes in the midst of Socrates' education of Euthydemus, Xenophon shows the relevance of definitions and dialectical method to the rest of the *Memorabilia*. But the education of Euthydemus, and the narrator's remarks on it, relate to other Socratic dialogues as well. According to Xenophon's account of Socratic education, Socrates has clear answers to give for all the issues he treats in the aporetic dialogues;⁷⁵ dialogues that end in *aporia* were depicting conversations with an interlocutor who did not follow through with the constructive part of his education.⁷⁶ Therefore, Xenophon's portrayal of Socratic dialectic directly engages dialogues that treat the same virtues, such as Plato's *Euthyphro* and *Laches*, and even engages dialogues on other subjects in an indirect way. While Xenophon presents the education of Euthydemus as comprehensive, he does not depict it completely. Since Socrates was always engaged in defining the essence of things, the narrator claims that he does not have room to describe all of his views.⁷⁷ So, any Socratic episode or dialogue that ends with *aporia* or disagreement is open to the same form of resolution.

As in the apologetic section, Xenophon's gambit is to acknowledge enough of what was said about Socrates by other authors that his own inventions appear plausible, then to present a synthesis of his work and theirs that purports to be more complete and

⁷⁵ IV.7.1: "It is clear, then, from what has been said, in my opinion, that Socrates declared his own judgment simply to those who associated with him."

⁷⁶ At IV.2.40, the narrator mentions that some interlocutors gave up on Socrates after being subjected to the elenchus.

⁷⁷ *Memorabilia* IV.6.1.

accurate. Through comprehending the views of other authors, Xenophon presents a challenge to them. This agonistic spirit helps to explain why the fourth book of the *Memorabilia* resembles Plato's dialogues so much more than the other books.⁷⁸ The elenchus of Euthydemus draws directly from Plato's stock of eristic devices so that Plato's version of the Socratic dialogue becomes a kind of inserted, alien genre in the *Memorabilia*.⁷⁹

Furthermore, the philosophical seduction of Euthydemus that frames the education recollects the erotic reversal of another famous Socratic antecedent: Aeschines' *Alcibiades*. Alcibiades himself calls attention to the similarity in Plato's *Symposium*:

...I told you how horribly he treated me—and not only me but also Charmides, Euthydemus, and many others. He has deceived us all: he presents himself as your lover, and, before you know it, you're in love with him yourself!

Modeling Euthydemus' education after Aeschines' *Alcibiades* particularly suits

Euthydemus' character as a book-lover;⁸⁰ at one point he is even shown to be eavesdropping on a conversation that closely resembles one from Aeschines'

Alcibiades.⁸¹ But the substitution of Euthydemus for Alcibiades is also strange since he was neither a prominent nor a dangerous political figure in the manner of Alcibiades,

⁷⁸ Book IV is the source of five of the eleven instances of dependence noted by Kahn 1996, 393-401.

⁷⁹ For alien genres, see Nightingale 1995, 133-171. At *ibid.* 5, Nightingale claims that Plato authored mixed, multi-generic dialogues but denies that Xenophon wrote in the same mode; she does not consider the possibility that the *Memorabilia* is another kind of mixed, multi-generic text, and that the inserted form is Plato's version of Socratic dialogue.

⁸⁰ Johnson 2005 notes the recurrence of reading and writing motifs in the passage.

⁸¹ The argument about Themistocles at IV.2.2 sounds similar to the one partially preserved in Dittmar fr. 7. Given the erotic overtones of both Aeschines' *Alcibiades* and the Euthydemus conversation, the use of the image of reader as eavesdropper may be an early instance of the reader as voyeur trope, for which see Walters 1998.

Critias, Charmides, or Meno. Moreover, Euthydemus never displays the spiritedness in conversation that those characters show in their dialogues with Socrates, who gives an account of the human beings who have the best natures and need education the most which seems to favor his infamous students over Euthydemus.⁸²

The question of Euthydemus' suitability as an interlocutor has divided commentators: ironic readers have tended to see the episode as an anticlimactic parody of Socratic dialogue while anti-ironic readers have defended the straightforwardness of Euthydemus' answers as a dialectical ideal.⁸³ It is also possible to split the difference and take the dialogical opposition between conflict and acquiescence to be the theme of the work.⁸⁴ But while I consider the character Euthydemus a poor model for philosophy students, I take Xenophon's narrator to be a reliable source for his own motives in depicting the conversation and for Socrates' motives in teaching Euthydemus. Xenophon chooses Euthydemus for this demonstration to give a more complete account of an education, not to show the reader an ideal education. The *Memorabilia* merely points the way to a comprehensive Socratic education rather than leading its readers there. The acknowledged insufficiency of the dialogue presents a practical alternative to the view of education held by Euthydemus at the outset of the discussion, that one can learn everything just by reading.⁸⁵

⁸² IV.1.3-4.

⁸³ Pangle 1994 presents an ironic, Straussian reading of *Memorabilia* IV; Morrison 1994 presents an unironic, analytical reading of the same.

⁸⁴ My interpretation of Xenophon's *Symposium* in Ch. 2 above follows a similar approach.

⁸⁵ *ibid.* IV.2.1

Taken together, the conversations with Euthydemus form a kind of *Bildungsroman*—or *Erziehungsroman*—that draws attention to the features of the Socratic dialogue and proposes an alternate view of its function. Because they are organized to demonstrate a set of ideas about pedagogy, their literary form could be described as an *anatomy*, the term Frye proposed for a kind of serio-comic literature that uses an idea as a structuring principle rather than plot or character.⁸⁶ They could even be described justly as a *satire*, given the wide range of that term's use.

Conclusion

The *Memorabilia* features a complex and extensive treatment of one of the most ubiquitous Socratic commonplaces, apologetics. Xenophon creates an image of Socrates that can serve as the likely basis for all other portraits and still propound a set of philosophical beliefs that largely conform to traditional conceptions of knowledge, virtue, and happiness. But Xenophon is not just defending Socrates from criticism. The parainetic episodes that comprise the majority of the work promote Xenophon's views on particular areas of political and economic interest, and the Euthydemus episodes demonstrate some of Xenophon's pedagogical principles.

All the threads of the work show a tinge of the serio-comic, and they all benefit from it. The defense of Socrates is transformed from an exercise in advocacy to an experiment on the nature of the life devoted to learning. Xenophon's views on politics and economics gain immediacy through Socrates' familiarization and take on a degree of transcendence through his eccentricity. The pedagogical demonstration with Euthydemus makes use of the allegorical and dialogical dimensions of carnival literature to present a

⁸⁶ Frye 1957, 308-312.

conversation on the relationship between virtue and knowledge which also serves as a practical model of that relationship.

Though the *Memorabilia* is less philosophically ambitious than Plato's dialogues and rougher in its composition, its underlying message and structural principles are also more straightforward. It may be easier, then, for critics to understand Xenophon's use of the Socratic dialogue as a literary form, use that understanding to discover what Xenophon has in common with Plato, and learn how they have misread both authors in the past. In this respect, study of the *Memorabilia* could promote a genuinely Socratic aim: self-examination.

CONCLUSION XENOPHON AS A SOCRATIC

“You can hardly doubt the purport of my discourse, however your natural delicacy may lead you to dissemble; my attentions have been too marked to be mistaken.”
Collins in *Pride and Prejudice*

While I have tried in these chapters to defend Xenophon’s literary skill and philosophical insight, I have made no attempt to assert his status as a genuine Socratic in several senses of the term.

I am not persuaded that Xenophon was a personal friend and passionate defender of Socrates. His claims to have witnessed Socrates’ conversations are so perfunctory that there is little sense of connection between the narrator of his Socratic works and the historical Xenophon. While he does depict himself in conversation with Socrates in the *Anabasis* and *Memorabilia*, each episode is heavily informed by generic conventions and serves more as a *captatio benevolentiae* than a proof of acquaintance. Furthermore, the whole argumentative strategy of the *Memorabilia*, supplementing and contextualizing the claims of others rather than disputing them, shows little personal authority in the details of Socrates’ biography. If Xenophon knew Socrates at all, there is no clear sign of it in his writings.

I very much doubt that Xenophon was any kind of Socratic evangelist, promoting a set of Socratic doctrines among a wider audience than the more elite Socratics could reach. The theoretical commitments of his Socrates are in perfect accord with traditional Greek views on morality. For the most part, Socrates’ specific proposals are Xenophon’s

own, some even concurring with the views put forth in Xenophon's treatises. Xenophon is advertising no one's philosophy but his own.

There is little evidence that Xenophon was trying to exhort his readers to take up philosophy as a way of life. To the contrary, while his Socrates leads such a life, he is always advising his companions to pursue success in practical affairs such as business, military command, and politics. Unlike what we find in Plato, there is little information about the methods of philosophy in Xenophon's writings and surely not enough to serve as a curriculum in philosophical study. To the extent that Xenophon promotes philosophical examination, he does so for its value as an aid to achieving personal excellence and success in the pursuits generally prescribed for aristocratic gentlemen.

In what sense, then, is Xenophon a Socratic? First, he is an author of true *Sokratikoi logoi*. He recognizes, understands, and imitates the commonplaces of that genre, such as historically informed dramatic irony, playful diffidence, the craft analogy, and paradoxical encomium. But these marked Socratic features appear among several other devices that are common not just to Socratic dialogues but to carnivalized literature as a whole. Moreover, the Socratic commonplaces all appeal to the various aspects of carnival sense: familiarity, eccentricity, *mésalliance*, and profanity. Xenophon's breadth of knowledge of serio-comic elements and ability to use that knowledge to experiment and test the features of Socratic dialogue prove him to be a true Socratic writer.

But Xenophon is also a Socratic in the sense that he uses his conception of Socrates as a model for his own approach to education in his writings. Xenophon is a Socratic in the same sense that he understands Socrates to be Socratic; he is a beneficent sophist, using the methods of a new education to promote the good of his readers,

traditionally understood. In Xenophon's view, such a good does not consist in an entire life devoted to theory. But even though Xenophon chose for himself an active life in the military and politics and though he advocates the same kind of life for his readers, he can only advocate it by becoming a philosopher. It is wrong, then, to think of Xenophon's Socratic works as anti-intellectual; they are the work of an intellectual advocating activism.

The findings of this study can be applied beyond this work in two directions. The skillful literary construction of Xenophon's Socratic works is one more proof of his talent for complexity of tone, a talent also visible in the problematic heroism of his *Cyropaedia* and the anticlimactic resolutions of the *Hellenica* and the *Anabasis*; these works deserve more careful attention from a literary point of view. At the same time, Xenophon's success in promoting his own views against this literary background should call into question many assumptions about the limitations, both in literary ambition and philosophical agenda, of Plato's earlier works. If Xenophon can bring such a broad awareness of genre and tone to his work, we should expect even more from Plato.

Unfortunately, I have not found much in Xenophon's Socratic writings that fulfills the expectations of the various camps that produce much of the scholarly work on Plato. Xenophon does not present a panacea to the problem of the historical Socrates; his intellectual portrait is not detailed or accurate enough for historical use, and he often sneaks his own views into Socrates' speeches. Furthermore, Xenophon's Socrates is not dark enough to satisfy the Straussians, intricate enough to please the analytic readers, or sublime enough to instigate deep philosophical reflection.

The value of studying Xenophon's Socratic works comes from an improved understanding of the genre of Socratic dialogue and its relation to philosophical examination. To the historian, Xenophon offers a chance to put the idiosyncratic features of the Socratic dialogue into a broader context; dead ends in interpretation can be opened up with a range of comparable, practical artistic choices, and the usefulness of methods can be tested against a broader range of data. Keeping in mind the special literary features of the Socratic genre, social and cultural historians can make firmer claims with clearer qualifications.

The Bakhtinian serio-comic model can also benefit the various philosophical schools of reading Socratic dialogues. Allegorical and dialogical elements of Straussian interpretation can be reincorporated in a more transparent, putative, and disputable form; the notion of the unfinalizable, important to both Straussian readings and reflective readings of the continental variety, can be more clearly described and related to work in similar genres. In Bakhtin, the philosopher of the continental persuasion also has a model for expanding the principles of literary study into psychology and metaphysics.

As for analytical readers of the Socratic dialogue, formal criticism on serio-comic literature justifies an important aspect of their approach: treating arguments in isolation. As carnivalized genres tend to have only a loose kind of unity, the analytic reader can treat oddities in isolation without deferring to methods of interpretation that have little bearing on the Socratic dialogue, such as novelistic or Romantic readings. There is, in fact, a closer kinship between the Socratic theory and the thought experiment than between the Socratic dialogue and the Romantic novel.

For literary study, Nightingale has already shown much of the richness of carnival intertext in the dialogues of Plato.¹ Xenophon, in turn, shows other carnival elements inherent in Socratic writings. A more thorough carnival reading of Plato, building on that understanding, could shed light on a number of recurrent problems in the different periods of Plato's writing: Socratic irony, *aporia*, Socrates' expressed standards of dialogical conduct and apparent violation of them—especially in his use of equivocation—as well as Socrates' use of allegory, utopia, and eschatological myth, anticlimax and unrealized expectations, digressions, the odd attachment to scholarly miscellany in the later writings and their mixture of comic elements with dense information, and Socrates' appropriation of sophistic methods such as eristic, etymology, and the method of division.

Finally, the carnival reading of Xenophon's Socratic works and the genre of Socratic literature as a whole is one step toward the better understanding of the historical development of generic complexity in Greek and Roman literature, especially in terms of complexity of tone. The satire has many features that resemble elements in more purely serious and more purely comical genres, but they operate there in a different register. Formal criticism has an unexplored potential for describing shifts in tone in the course of a literary genre's development, and a more thorough analysis of this subject could lead to a better understanding of the more curious and appealing features of Greek and Roman authors.

¹ Nightingale 1996.

APPENDIX
MENIPPEAN FEATURES IN XENOPHON'S *SYMPOSIUM*

I have already marked out the thematic connections within Xenophon's *Symposium* and shown their relevance to Bakhtin's view of carnivalized literature in chapter two above, but I believe that the robustness of Xenophon's generic consciousness can be shown more clearly by pointing out the occurrences in that work of so many of the characteristics of menippean satire that Bakhtin noted as generic markers, in the numbering he assigned to them:¹

1. "Emphasizes comic elements": The *Symposium* is a Socratic dialogue, but it is more comically oriented than the other Socratic writings of Xenophon. There is a similar difference in tone between Plato's *Symposium* and his other Socratic dialogues.
2. "An extraordinary freedom of plot and philosophical invention":² Bakhtin formulates this requirement to distinguish the *menippea* from the Socratic dialogue, but Xenophon's *Symposium* does not possess the direct conflict between major interlocutors that propel the plot of most Socratic dialogues, and the philosophical positions offered by the symposiasts are mostly ironic and all fantastic.
3. "A philosophical idea": In Xenophon's *Symposium*, the idea being tested is the necessity of action and display to the acquisition and proper functioning of virtue.
4. "Slum naturalism": Xenophon populates his *Symposium* with several lowlifes and has them discuss major philosophic problems with Socrates and his friends. The Syracusan and the jokester Philippos are good examples of this sort of character. Socrates' extended

¹ Bakhtin 1984, 114-119.

² *ibid*, 114.

comparison of his activities to pimping makes this disjunction a feature of his own speech.

5. “Ultimate questions”: Early in the *Symposium*, each symposiast attempts to show what kind of wisdom he is most proud of (and its ability to make men better). Through the paradoxical examination of each interlocutor’s offering, the symposium quickly becomes a site for abstract conflict of a high order.

6. “A three-planed stage with earth, heaven, and hell”: Here, the tragic irony attendant upon the character of Socrates warps the structure of the *menippea*. The plane of earth is normal life, and the plane of heaven is either the symposium or what the symposium promotes or represents. The plane of hell, however, is only visible as a dark future known to the audience but not to the interlocutors.

7. “Experimental fantasticality”: Experimental fantasticality takes the form of radical revisions of self-image in the symposiasts’ speeches in praise of their favorite possessions, as well as in Socrates’ attempt to redefine beauty in his contest with Critoboulus.

8. “Unusual moral and psychological states of man”: The characters of Callias, Hermogenes, Antisthenes, Charmides, Critoboulus, and especially Socrates are all morally or psychologically bizarre. Callias is a renowned philanderer and philosophaster; Hermogenes is a kind of religious fanatic; Antisthenes is a belligerent cynic; Charmides is an embittered victim and future tyrant; Critoboulus is a vain dilettante; Socrates is an inveterate ironist.

9. “Scenes of scandal and inappropriate behavior”: Xenophon’s *Symposium* contains several episodes of inappropriate behavior, which is usually quashed by Socrates. At the

same time, the ironic dimension of the Socratic dialogue points attention toward future scandals in the lives of Socrates, Callias, Autolycus, and Charmides.

10. “Contrasts and oxymoron”: The speech contest of the *Symposium* is dense with such turns and contradictions: poor men are really rich, ugliness is beauty, etc.

11. “Social utopia”: Huss, at least, is content to claim the presence of an *aurea aetas Socratica*³ in the work. The idealized love between Callias and Autolycus is also utopian, at least in Socrates’ encomium.

12. “Inserted genres” In addition to a perverse and failed encomium, Xenophon’s *Symposium* contains parodies of elenchus, argument by assent, definition, and cosmological speculation.

13. “Multi-styled, multi-toned writing”: The broken, episodic narration helps to establish this irregularity in construction together with the inserted genres and peculiar interactions among speakers.

14. “Concern with topical issues”: The recurring Socratic issue, the question of the possibility of an education in virtue, takes precedence; that it is initially rejected by Socrates is a sign of its controversy. Contemporary concerns, such as the validity of an education based on learning to recite Homer, fall under the broader category of education in virtue.

³ See above, n. 63.

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