

BOOK REVIEW

Plato and Xenophon. Comparative Studies. Mnemosyne Supplements 417. Edited by GABRIEL DANZIG, DAVID JOHNSON and DONALD MORRISON. Leiden, NL and Boston, MA: Brill, 2018. Pp. xvi + 670. Hardback, \$185.00. ISBN: 978-90-04-36901-6.

After more than two centuries, the search for the historical Socrates has failed to produce consensus. In recent decades, scholarly interest is shifting toward the relations among Socratic writers. Of the two whose works survive in bulk, ancient critics detected reactions in Xenophon to Plato's *Republic* (Gel. 14.3.3) and rejoinders to Xenophon in Plato's *Laws* (D.L. 3.34, Athen. 505A). Arguments in Plato's *Symposium* are rebutted in Xenophon's *Symposium* (8.32-35). Specialists are asking, how did Plato and Xenophon and other Socratics impact each other? Is the study of Plato—or other Socratics—enriched significantly by studying Xenophon, and *vice versa*? Where does Xenophon fit among the “Socratics”?

These questions generated a 2014 conference on Plato and Xenophon, 21 selected papers from which, revised, appear in this volume (Contents at <https://brill.com/view/title/38213>). The contributors explore connections between Plato and Xenophon over ethics, politics, friendship and culture. Some contributors find overt conversation between the two in their texts, while others identify similar views but do not posit direct relationship. Portrayals of Socrates hold center stage, but we also get analyses of non-Socratic writings—especially those by Xenophon, who occupies more than half the pages. Indeed, one goal of the volume, says Johnson, is to heighten interest in Xenophon among researchers into ancient philosophy (32).

In the introductory section, preceding Johnson's summaries of the essays, Danzig reviews the state of the question in Socratic studies. He looks at chronology, intertextuality, the Socratic Question and literary interaction. One quibble: I wish Danzig had done more than assert that characters in fiction—Socratic dialogues, speeches in the *Cyropaedia*, etc.—can convey authors' views (17), for on this thesis rest many of the essays and indeed, the whole project to the extent that

it asks whether Plato and Xenophon “agree or disagree about a given topic” (Johnson, 33). I have defended this thesis elsewhere; the issue could have received fuller treatment here.

Part I, “Methods,” opens with Dorion’s revised keynote address. Deeming the Socratic Problem unsolvable, Dorion proposes that “comparative exegesis” is a better goal of research because it is (1) historically more sound, (2) more specific about various portraits of Socrates and their coherence, (3) open to all the sources, not just the early ones (especially Plato), and (4) less risky for its fewer contentious assumptions. Detailing over twenty points of discrepancy between Plato’s Socrates and Xenophon’s, Dorion concludes against Johnson (cf. below) that the two accounts are not compatible: e.g. Xenophon’s makes *enkrateia* (self-mastery) fundamental, while Plato’s hardly mentions *enkrateia* and identifies virtue with wisdom/knowledge.

In reply, Johnson urges that we scrutinize points of agreement. He makes some good points: e.g. for Xenophon’s Socrates, *enkrateia* is the foundation of virtue (cf. *Mem.* 1.4.5), but “plenty of important work [is left] to be done by *sophia*” (wisdom, 94). In the end, however, I do not see how Johnson’s allowance that Xenophon seeks to “improve on” or “correct” Plato (73) does not admit Xenophon’s as a rival portrait, given the differences between the two. It also remains unclear what we are to do with “the” intertextual Socrates (96), since that is a constituent of no narrative but rather a construct that differs for different readers.

In the rest of Part I, William Altman reviews the case he makes elsewhere, that Plato arranged his dialogues in a reading order culminating in the *Phaedo*, and suggests that Plato got this idea from Xenophon’s collection and division of narrative units (e.g. *Cyropaedia* ending with hero’s discourse and death). James Redfield thinks Xenophon wrote his Socratic works after the first-generation Socratics. He contrasts Xenophon to them for his more prominent authorial presence and his picture of a practical, non-ironic Socrates. Surveying *philosoph-* words in Xenophon, Christopher Moore determines that, although Xenophon does use “the term [philosopher] to refer to specific practices of specific practitioners” (129), only Xenophon’s characters, not the author in his own person, denominate Socrates a “philosopher.” Moore ties this reticence to apologetic purposes: Xenophon did not want Socrates to be pigeonholed as a philosopher but to be seen as “a unique moral and intellectual exemplar” (131). Finally, Lachance finds that the Socratic elenchus in the *Memorabilia*, unlike Vlastos’ account of it in earlier Plato, does not elicit further propositions from the interlocutor and does not aim to establish a truth but only, as in later Plato, to expose the interlocutor’s ignorance.

In Part II, “Ethics,” Jazdzewska contrasts Xenophon’s portrayal of joking and laughter in his *Symposium* with Plato’s association of laughter with humiliation. Stavru unpacks how unflattering images of Socrates’ physiognomy (animals, Silenus/satyrs) are transvalued in Xenophon into beauty because Socrates’ features are useful, while in Plato they are signs of his strangeness as a philosopher who unsettles other men. Edmunds argues that what is often called a triad of character virtues of Xenophon’s Socrates, sc. *enkrateia*, *karteria* (endurance) and *autarkeia* (self-sufficiency), is really a dyad, since *autarkeia* is connected in Xenophon to intellect and to Socrates’ poverty, which is the result, not the cause, of his *karteria*. This paper contains some poorly supported claims (e.g. that Athenian hoplites could be below *zeugites* status, 260, but cf. G. Mavrogordatos, *CW* 105 [2011] 3-23). Weiss contributes a lucid analysis of stances on intentional wrongdoing: Xenophon’s Socrates does not want to pity or pardon wrongdoers, Plato’s Socrates pities them but does not pardon, and Aristotle will not pity or pardon the true wrongdoer. Chernyakhovskaya and Danzig each dissect how the means to happiness differs for Xenophon’s Socrates from Plato’s, while Pentassuglio disentangles differences in Socratic *eros* in Xenophon, Plato and Aeschines of Sphettus. On the theory of monetary value, van Berkel argues that exaltation of soul over body problematizes money in Plato, while Xenophon’s Socrates lauds “proper use” of money for long-term goals.

Tamiolaki opens Part III, “From Friendship to Politics,” by contrasting Xenophon’s (and his Socrates’) concern with friendship as a practical political connection to the Platonic concern for friendship as unity of affections seeking a transcendent ideal. Bevilacqua masterfully reprises the case she has made previously, that Xenophon, his Socrates, and probably the historical Socrates were critics of democracy and exponents of an enlightened oligarchical politics. In his second paper in the volume, Dorion details differences between Plato’s and Xenophon’s Socrates over rationales for not escaping from prison, arguments for obeying law, the justice of harming enemies, the ability of politicians to benefit the state, the legality of rhetorical tricks in court and the identity of experts in politics. Atack contends that despite uncertain chronology, it is reasonable to suppose that Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* responds to Plato’s *Republic* on rulership and Plato’s *Statesman* to the *Cyropaedia*, both authors underscoring the importance of the leader’s ability to identify *kairos* (the right time).

In Part IV, “History,” Humble argues that Xenophon helped Plato see the flaw in Spartan discipline: it failed to engender virtue because it relied on fear and

violence in default of genuine persuasion. In a similar way, Tuplin maintains that Xenophon, especially his *Oeconomicus* and *Cyropaedia*, influenced Plato's attitudes toward Persia. This may be true, but readers deserve more argument for and information about assumptions like Platonic authorship and the late date of the *First Alcibiades* (601) or Dio Chrysostom's use of Antisthenes at *Oration* 13.14-28 (580-581). It remains unclear what Tuplin thinks Plato and Xenophon accomplished by making what he labels as intentionally garbled and misleading Persian references (607-609). On Xenophon's *Cynegeticus*, Thomas does not offer a rigorous defense of authenticity against objections that, like Moore (159), I find persuasive, and it is not obvious that this or that ungainly feature was intended by Xenophon to "tease out" (613) or "work out" (632) his meaning for themselves. I am not convinced that Critias and Plato stand behind the critics of hunting and the sophists attacked in *Cyneg.* 12-13.

I confess that, in the end, I am not persuaded that our encounter with Plato is enhanced significantly when we compare his work to Xenophon's. Too often in Xenophon and his Socrates I find exposition from a standpoint of authority rather than the open-ended spirit of inquiry that, in Plato's Socrates, hooks many of us for philosophy. Xenophon, though, may help one become a better leader. Either way, these essays offer much to students of Xenophon, Plato and other Socratics. The volume is produced with relatively few typos or editing errors. Morrison provides a helpful index of passages. The result well justifies the price.

DAVID J. MURPHY

New York, david.murphy20@verizon.net