MICHAEL A. FLOWER

Introduction

> Your Latin & Greek should be kept up assiduously by reading at spare hours … I would advise you to undertake a regular course of history & poetry in both languages, in Greek, go first thro' the Cyropaedia, and then read Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon's Hellenics & Anabasis, Arrian's Alexander, & Plutarch's lives …
>
> Thomas Jefferson to his grandson Francis Eppes, October 6, 1820

It may seem surprising to most readers of this book, including professional classicists, that Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (or *Education of Cyrus*) is at the top of President Jefferson's "must read" list of ancient Greek prose literature. Perhaps even more surprising is Jefferson's recommendation in a letter to his nephew Peter Carr that for moral instruction he read Xenophon's *Memorabilia* as well as the Socratic dialogues of Plato.[1] But to the educated Europeans and Americans of Jefferson's own time, this was, if anything, very conventional advice. And this advice was not restricted to a white upper-class elite. When the coeducational Institute for Colored Youth was established in Philadelphia in 1837, one of its purposes was to provide a classical education to African-American students; the two Greek texts selected for study were the New Testament and Xenophon's *Anabasis*. The *Cyropaedia*, *Memorabilia*, and *Anabasis*, along with Xenophon's many other works in various genres, were standard reading and were thought to impart moral and political lessons of considerable value. If this were true today as well, it would be to our profit, as I hope the present volume will go some way towards demonstrating.

In his autobiography, *The Life of Henry Brulard*, Stendhal (whose real name was Marie-Henri Beyle) informs us: "My moral life has been instinctively spent paying close attention to five or six main ideas, and attempting to see the truth about them."[2] The same might be said of Xenophon, and

[1] Dated August 19, 1785.
[2] This work was written in 1835–6, but only published in 1890.

that would not be a criticism in the case of either author. Like Stendhal, Xenophon wrote in an array of different genres and paid close attention to some half dozen "main ideas" that engaged him over the span of his long life (ca. 430–350 BC). More importantly, those ideas are no less relevant today for "the moral life" of individuals, families, cities, and nations than they were two and a half thousand years ago. As essential as his ideas are, of equal significance is Xenophon's contribution to the forms of literature in which those ideas were expressed. Stendhal, for his part, arguably invented the realist novel. Xenophon either invented or reconfigured several new types of literature. But whereas Stendhal began many books that he left unfinished, Xenophon has bequeathed us a substantial body of finished works. He wrote the first memoir (the *Anabasis*) and the first historical romance (the *Cyropaedia*), he contributed to the genre of Socratic literature (*Memorabilia*, *Symposium*, *Defense of Socrates*, *Oeconomicus*), he wrote technical treatises (on horsemanship, hunting, leadership, finance, and the Spartan constitution), one of the very first prose encomia (*Agesilaus*), and he may have been the earliest continuator of Thucydides (the *Hellenica*). It would be difficult to name a classical author who experimented in so many different genres and achieved success (both during his lifetime and afterwards) in all of them.

Changing Fortunes

Despite his literary versatility and his focus on questions that should be of interest to modern readers (What is the best way to organize a community, to exercise leadership, to live a good life, to treat one's friends?), Xenophon's popularity suffered during much of the twentieth century. His philosophy was seen as inferior to that of Plato, and as a historian he seemed far less capable than either Herodotus or Thucydides. It was not always so. Amongst the Romans his *Cyropaedia* was held in special regard, since it seemed to offer such useful paradigms of behavior for statesmen and monarchs. Scipio Aemilianus (the adopted grandson of Scipio Africanus) is reported by Cicero to have kept a copy of it with him at all times.[3] The historian Sallust knew the works of Xenophon well. The speech of Micipsa in his *Jugurtha* (10.3–6) is closely modeled on that of Cyrus to his sons in the *Cyropaedia* (8.7.13–16).[4] The *Cyropaedia*'s general popularity among Roman elites is revealed by Cicero's complaint (*Brutus* 111–12) that his contemporaries were reading about "the life and training of Cyrus" rather

[3] *Letter to His Brother Quintus* 1.1.23; *Tusculan Disputations* 2.62.
[4] See Münscher 1920: 82–3.

than the utterly neglected, but more suitable, memoirs of Marcus Aemilius Scaurus.

Renaissance writers were especially attached to Xenophon and his *Cyropaedia* was considered essential reading for princes.[5] Edmund Spenser, in his introduction to *The Faerie Queene*, ranked Xenophon even above Plato. Machiavelli cites Xenophon more frequently in *The Prince* and the *Discourses* than Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero combined.[6] Moreover, he is the only one of the four and, apart from Virgil, the only classical author, to be even mentioned in *The Prince* (in chap. 14, discussing how Scipio Africanus imitated Xenophon's Cyrus the Great). But the *Cyropaedia*'s popularity did not end in the sixteenth century (as the quotation from Thomas Jefferson reveals). In fact, the *Cyropaedia* was the first book printed in America from Greek type made in that country.[7]

During the eighteenth century Xenophon's most popular work was the *Memorabilia*. Although his reputation as a philosopher declined steeply after the publication of Schleiermacher's influential 1818 attack on Xenophon's portrait of Socrates ("Über den Werth des Sokrates als Philosophen"), Nietzsche did not hide his admiration for the *Memorabilia*, calling it in 1879 "the most attractive book of Greek literature."[8] Yet just when appreciation of the *Memorabilia* was waning, the *Anabasis* came to be considered Xenophon's masterpiece and one of the greatest works of Greek prose. Lord Macaulay, after reading it for the third time, wrote at the end of his personal copy: "One of the very first works that antiquity has left us. Perfect in its kind. – *October* 9, 1837." Such praise from a fellow historian is perhaps not unexpected; more surprising perhaps is that Leo Tolstoy listed the *Anabasis* (which he taught himself Greek in order to read) as one of the fifty books which had most influenced him. It is no wonder then that "X is for Xenophon" appeared in so many nineteenth-century alphabet books.[9]

Over the past twenty years there has been a resurgence of interest in Xenophon that has involved new ways of reading his works and understanding his significance as a historian, philosopher, and political theorist. No area of Xenophontic studies has been more significantly reappraised in recent years than his relationship to Socrates and Plato. A huge body of scholarship (most of it in French) has shown that Xenophon should be

[5] See the contribution of Humble in this volume.
[6] Newell 1988.
[7] *Xenophontis De Cyri institutione libri octo*, published by Wm. Poyntell, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1806.
[8] Schleiermacher 1818/1879 (1879 is an English translation) and Nietzsche 1967: vol. IV.3: 442; posthumous fragment 41 [2] 1879. See further Dorion 2009 and his chapter in this volume.
[9] See Rood in this volume and Figure 22.1.

taken seriously as a philosopher and that his version of "Socrates" is well worth studying in its own right (and not just for the sake of comparison with Plato's). The *Cyropaedia* has been the subject of a series of important studies (principally in English), and Xenophon's place in the development of historical writing is currently undergoing a major reappraisal, with a flurry of publications on the *Anabasis* in particular.

Xenophon's literary and linguistic style has also received renewed appreciation. Xenophon was famous in antiquity as the "Attic bee" and "Attic Muse" whose style and diction were as sweet as honey. Yet his reputation as a thinker has suffered in modern times, ironically enough, as a very consequence of his style. His apparently artless eloquence and simplicity of expression have wrongly been taken as a sign of simplicity of thought, in contrast to the complex linguistic and conceptual brilliance of Thucydides and to the wonderfully varied, yet often difficult, style of Plato. It might be going too far to deny the link completely between complexity of thought and complexity of style, but it is certainly the case that complex ideas can be expressed effectively in straightforward language.

Linguistic style aside (that is, his manner of expression and choice of words), Xenophon is a master of narrative style second to none. This is evident whether he is providing the telling vignette or creating suspense before a major battle. Many of his narrative techniques cut across genres and indeed serve to blur the boundaries between them. Yet despite Xenophon's fame during his lifetime (as attested by Diogenes Laertius) he employs a highly reticent literary persona, perhaps even suppressing his identity as the author of his own works or publishing under a pseudonym, as may have been the case with the *Anabasis*. His narrative voice, so different from that of Herodotus and Thucydides, requires careful analysis.

In antiquity Xenophon was chiefly known as a philosopher first and a historian second, whereas now the situation is reversed. Ironically, the opposite fate befell David Hume, who wished to be remembered as a historian, and was indeed best known as a historian in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (for his massive six-volume *History of England*), but is now almost exclusively known as a philosopher. As is the case with Hume (whose philosophic and historical thinking inform each other), the historical and the philosophical aspects of Xenophon's writings are not so easy to disentangle.[10]

It cannot be denied that Xenophon has little interest in epistemology or metaphysics, and in those areas cannot compete with Plato or Aristotle, and that the speeches in his historical works lack the highly abstract *Realpolitik*

[10] On this aspect of Hume, see Spencer 2013.

theorizing of Thucydides. But there is still much of philosophical value. Because of the prevalent modern assumption that Xenophon was not a philosopher, even when he does make an original argument he is seldom given credit for it. Near the beginning of the *Memorabilia* and once again near its end (1.4 and 4.3), Xenophon gives the first ever account of a theory that still has currency in certain sectors of contemporary society – that is, the theory of intelligent design. Xenophon's Socrates attempts to prove that the gods have designed the universe for the benefit of humankind. Given the fictional nature of the genre of the Socratic dialogue (see below), this is likely to be Xenophon's own personal contribution to a theological and philosophical debate that has had a very long history.[11]

Moreover, his ethical teaching is still of immense value for anyone who wishes to improve their managerial style or their interpersonal relationships; his political theory offers a powerful alternative to the realist foreign policy of Thucydides;[12] and his economic ideas, anticipating those of some modern economists, could benefit both small businesses and large corporations, as well as governments. Indeed, Xenophon anticipated, and even influenced, Adam Smith's insight that the division of labor is determined by the extent of the market, and he aptly has been called "the earliest extant management consultant or managerial *guru*."[13]

But perhaps the most radical and unusual idea to be found in Xenophon's writings is the belief (articulated especially in his *Oeconomicus* and *Poroi*) that the same capacity for virtue can be found in all human beings – that is, in men and women, in free people and in slaves, and in Greeks and non-Greeks.[14] Xenophon, to be sure, did not advocate the abolition of slavery or the extension of political rights to women; yet the truly radical notion that they were fully capable of moral and intellectual virtue makes him look much more forward-thinking than Aristotle, whose theories of natural slavery and of women's defective rationality have had such a long and pernicious afterlife.

When making the case for the contemporary relevance of an author or subject, it strikes me as a mistake to appeal to precise contemporary events, since such references, however pressing at the moment, become dated sooner

[11] See especially McPherran 1996: 279–91 and Sedley 2007: 75–92, who, however, attribute the theory to the historical Socrates rather than to Xenophon. But note Dorion in this volume.

[12] Lendon 2006.

[13] So Figueira 2012: 683–4, a fundamentally important study of Xenophon's economic thought. For Xenophon's influence on Adam Smith, see Lowry 1987: 68–73, with *Cyro.* 8.2.5–6.

[14] See especially Baragwanath 2012b, and note Jansen 2012.

than one might imagine at the time. Nonetheless, one sweeping generalization seems to me to be valid. The problems facing contemporary democratic states, especially in terms of effective and morally responsible corporate and political leadership, find practical and realistic solutions in the works of Xenophon. To express his theory very concisely: his ideal leader secures consent to his leadership, treats his followers as friends, shares their toils, solicits their advice, and works for their mutual success as a group with shared interests. This theory can be applied equally to one's relations with co-workers, friends, and family. The value of Xenophon's theory of leadership was recognized for centuries by political leaders in every type of polity, ranging from the monarch Queen Elizabeth I to the democratically elected president Thomas Jefferson. In today's world, his model has an important place in current management theory.[15]

I think that it would be very instructive to undertake a wide-ranging comparison of the reception, for good and ill, of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and Plato's *Republic*, the former currently of interest only to a limited number of specialists and the latter a staple of university reading lists in at least a half dozen different disciplines.[16] Yet it was not without good reason that Karl Popper gave the title "The Spell of Plato" to the first volume of his seminal work *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. I doubt if one could find a similar denunciation of the *Cyropaedia*, given that it promotes a particular style of leadership, in which leaders govern willing followers for their mutual benefit, rather than advocating monarchy per se.

The value in reading Xenophon, taken for granted for so many centuries, becomes apparent to those who take the trouble to become acquainted with his works at first hand. But to get the most benefit out of this experience, one must read across genres. Since he was both a philosopher and a historian, his many works are all too often examined in isolation because they fall into different genres that now come under the purview of distinct academic specializations. The contributors to this volume have cut across those generic boundaries in order to give a more holistic view of Xenophon's methods and concerns. This way of examining Xenophon, with a marked emphasis on intertextuality, opens up new avenues of research and new types of questions. Vivienne Gray, of course, has already pioneered this method of reading Xenophon – but much more can be done.[17]

[15] See, for instance, O' Flannery 2003 and Field 2012, both cited by Tamiolaki in this volume.
[16] For the reception of Plato, see Lane 2001. Pontier 2006 compares the solutions that they offered to the political crisis of their own times.
[17] Especially in her magisterial 2011 book.

Irony and the Reader

Given that the same themes, with the quest for effective leadership heading the list, appear again and again throughout his corpus, this has prompted two different ways (they could even be called schools) of how to read Xenophon's works: one that sees a consistent message, to be taken at face value, that is repeated in all of his writings, and another that stresses "irony" and a need to read between the lines. As it happens, none of the essays in this volume propose an "ironic" reading in the tradition of the influential political philosopher Leo Strauss; that is, a reading according to the principle that what Xenophon says is consistently the opposite of what he means for those clever enough to read between lines or to perceive the tension between passages that convey conflicting messages. Of course, as David Johnson has proposed in another venue, one does not need to be a follower of Leo Strauss to perceive that actions narrated by Xenophon sometimes are at variance with explicit authorial evaluations.[18] It is in that spirit that Paul Christesen, in his chapter, says that "the reading of Xenophon's views on Sparta presented here might be described as Neo-Straussian or perhaps Straussian-lite." More radically, I have elsewhere argued that although Cyrus the Younger is almost always taken by modern scholars to be a latter-day version of Cyrus the Great, he lacks certain of his namesake's virtues, such as self-control, humanity (*philanthropia*), and, most noteworthy of all, piety. In my opinion Xenophon intended his readers to notice the difference between the two men and to reach the conclusion that the younger Cyrus was a greatly inferior version of his namesake.[19]

I will not press that interpretation here and I only mention it by way of example, since the dangers of this kind of reading are apparent and I am fully aware that many readers of the *Anabasis* will understand Xenophon's portrait of Cyrus the Younger very differently. This is because reading against the grain always entails jettisoning some statements that point in the other direction, such as the narrator's claim in Cyrus' obituary that "no one has been more beloved either by Greeks or non-Greeks" (1.9.28). Xenophon, if nothing else, is a subtle and discreet writer, and that can lead to the related dangers of "overreading" (seeing in a text things that are not signified within it) and "underreading" (missing things that are signified).[20]

The best way to negotiate these two poles is by being an informed reader – one who can relate any particular passage to similar passages throughout

[18] Johnson 2012a.
[19] See Flower 2012: 188–94 and, more fully, 2016. Higgins 1977: 82–6 is especially good on Xenophon's treatment of Cyrus the Younger.
[20] For these terms see Kermode 1983: 138–9 and Abbott 2008: 86–90.

Xenophon's corpus and who can place them in their broader historical context.[21] Moreover, one has to be an imaginative reader, one who can think deeply about the implications of a text, but not so imaginative as to make Xenophon consistently mean the opposite of what he explicitly says in violation both of common sense and of the narrative logic of the text. For instance, to read the *Agesilaus* as a subversive critique of its honoree is to ignore the generic conventions of encomia and to render Xenophon's opening statement that Agesilaus was "a perfectly good man" spectacularly hypocritical. If the work glosses over Agesilaus' failures and faults, it is because Xenophon chooses to ignore them in this particular literary context and rather stresses his virtues.[22] Contemporary readers would not have been surprised, or disturbed, to read a more critical treatment in the *Hellenica*.

The power of a work of literature resides not only in the meanings assigned to it by readers but also in its capacity (or potential) to create (or stimulate) meanings. Xenophon's various works have elicited vastly different, and often diametrically opposed, interpretations by scholars over the past fifty years. That is surely a sign of their continuing vitality. And it may not be going too far to say (and not too anachronistic to suggest) that if Xenophon sometimes leaves implicit the lessons that his narrative seems designed to convey, prompting his readers to do some of the interpretative work themselves, such was his "intention." As Fiona Hobden has argued (2005: 105), in many of his works, and particularly in his *Symposium*, *Cyropaedia*, *Anabasis*, and *Hellenica*, "Xenophon displays a propensity for writing which stimulates its reader towards intellectual endeavor instead of offering straightforward lessons." Or as John Marincola suggests in this volume, "Like Herodotus and Thucydides before him, Xenophon expected his readers to be engaged constantly in the work of interpretation."

Unanswerable Questions

The task of interpretation, however, is made more difficult by our ignorance or uncertainty in regard to several essential matters. One of these is the relative chronology of Xenophon's works and the other is the concept of genre that both he and his readers were working with. Scholars tend to group most of his writings after 371, the year in which he fled his idyllic estate at Scillus near Olympia for the life of an exile at Corinth.[23] It is possible that he could have produced this large and varied body of work late in life, but perhaps

[21] See further the insightful remarks of Hobden and Tuplin 2012b: 31–7.
[22] A recent subversive reading is Harman 2012; Pontier 2010 rightly stresses the encomium's emphasis on Agesilaus' civic virtues.
[23] Thomas 2009a: xxii–xxiii is typical.

not very likely. As far as we know, Xenophon may have circulated, revised, and then recirculated some of his works over the course of his long career before they reached a final form.[24] It is difficult to imagine that he wrote nothing at all during his many years at Scillus, and then became a prolific author only after he began his exile at Corinth. In any case, we simply do not know enough about the editing, manufacture, and circulation of books (or rather "papyrus rolls") in antiquity to be able to say how Xenophon produced and then distributed his writings. It might be better, therefore, to lay aside the question of chronology, and concentrate on the construction of meaning across the corpus. That would also avoid the temptation to read these works in terms of the author's assumed life story.

The question of generic expectations is rather more vexed. In antiquity, or at least by the time of Dionysius of Halicarnassus writing in the first century BC, Xenophon was known as both a philosopher and as a historian. Indeed, our main source of information about his life, apart from what he tells us explicitly or what we can infer from his writings, is the brief biography of him that Diogenes Laertius, a writer of the third century AD, includes in his lives of famous philosophers.[25] We tend to assume that Xenophon used different methodologies when writing "history" and "philosophy," since they belonged to two different genres each with its own set of more or less implicit rules. So when the anonymous narrator of the *Anabasis* says that Xenophon was a participant in Cyrus' expedition, we take that as a fact. But when in the *Memorabilia* and *Symposium* the narrator (presumably Xenophon) says that he witnessed certain conversations of Socrates, we assume that to be one of the fictional narrative devices of the genre of the Socratic dialogue.[26] And when the proem to the *Cyropaedia* mimics the language of historical inquiry (1.1.6), most, but not all, scholars do not take those words literally, but again as a literary or rhetorical device.

There is, however, a serious problem with this set of assumptions. What if all of these statements of method and claims to autopsy are equally fictional? What if the set of generic expectations that we moderns take for granted did not exist in the same form, or, if they did (which is unlikely), Xenophon is purposefully subverting them? If the Socratic dialogue is essentially a work of fiction (albeit one in which the characters are actual people as in some modern historical novels), then can we take as a historical fact the interchange between Xenophon and Socrates in the *Anabasis* (3.1.5–7)

[24] For one possible scenario, see Kelly 1996.
[25] See Dion. Hal. *Letter to Pompeius* 4; Diog. Laert. 2.48; Cicero, *de orat.* 2.58.
[26] See Danzig and Pelling in this volume. Kahn 1996: 29–35 makes the larger argument that the Socratic dialogue, as composed by all of the Socratic writers including Plato, was a genre of literary fiction.

in which Socrates advised Xenophon to consult the Delphic oracle about joining Cyrus' expedition? Could Xenophon keep his generic boundaries so well fenced that there was no slippage from one into the other?

By the middle of the fourth century BC the Greeks seem to have developed a notion of historical writing as a particular genre of prose literature.[27] But even so, the expectations of a historical work's various audiences were not the same as those of modern readers, at least since the emergence of "scientific," evidence-based history during the nineteenth century.[28] As Christopher Pelling has aptly pointed out, generic expectations, especially for prose literature, were never totally fixed in antiquity, and readers had only general expectations of what they would find when they picked up a work. So a reader "will have a provisional idea of what may be expected, but will not be surprised to find one or several of the usual features to be absent, or present in an unusual or off-key way."[29] To judge from his penchant for literary innovation, Xenophon certainly was not worried about breaking any tacit rules or normative expectations. Yet unlike Isocrates, who highlights his generic innovations, Xenophon lets his speak for themselves without any cues from the author that the reader is about to experience something new.[30]

One huge question remains unanswered and, if the truth be known, unanswerable. Why did Xenophon write anything at all, much less a huge corpus of varied works: five volumes in the Oxford Classical Texts series (in Greek), six volumes in the Loeb Classical Library (facing Greek and English), and four volumes of Penguin paperbacks (minus the *Cyropaedia*)? There is a concern with practical ethics that underpins nearly all of his writings, even the technical ones such as his treatises on commanding cavalry (*Hipparchicus*) and on hunting (*Cynegeticus*). And this ethical dimension is very likely to have its origin in his attachment to Socrates. But we simply do not know which came first, his historical narratives (especially the "continuation" of Thucydides' unfinished history of the Peloponnesian War which comprised the first part of his *Hellenica*) or his Socratic essays (his *Defense of Socrates* is probably the earliest of them). And thus it is probably overly speculative to see his interest in Socratic moral philosophy as the key to understanding the genesis of and motivation behind his entire literary production, including his historical works.[31] As Melina Tamiolaki well observes

[27] See Isocrates, *Antidosis* 45–6, *Panathenaicus* 1–2; Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451a36–b11, *Rhetoric* 1.4.1360a36–7; Theopompus, *FGrH* 115, F 25; and Ephorus *FGrH* 70, F 111.
[28] Tucker 2004: 44–5.
[29] Pelling 2007: 80.
[30] See *Antidosis* 10 with Nicolai 2014b: 77–84.
[31] Hobden and Tuplin 2012b: 20–39 suggest that he was drawn to the presentation of the past by the fate of Socrates.