RECOVERING POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Xenophon the Socratic Prince

The Argument of the Anabasis of Cyrus

Eric Buzzetti

XENOPHON THE SOCRATIC PRINCE

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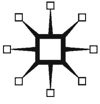

XENOPHON THE SOCRATIC PRINCE

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To Christopher Bruell

"…καὶ ἔφη συνοίσειν ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον."

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A NOTE ON THE GREEK

The translations of the *Anabasis* are my own. For the longer passages, I often chose to reprint the translation of the work by Wayne Ambler (Cornell University Press, 2008). His rendering of Xenophon is a model of faithfulness and elegance that I soon realized I could not hope to match. My borrowings have been noted.

I have transliterated the proper names in Greek literally. Thus I write "Klearchos," "Mossunoikoi," and "Kentritēs," for instance, instead of the more usual "Clearchus," "Mossynoecians" (a tribe of the Pontos), and "Centrites" (a river in Armenia). I discuss the philosophic significance of the proper names used in the *Anabasis* in my introduction. I have therefore tried to stay as close to the original Greek as possible to enable readers to explore that significance. With regard to the names of famous characters or famous places, however, such as Cyrus, Alcibiades, Socrates, Byzantium, or the Tigris, I have used the customary, Latinized spellings. To write "Kūros," "Alkibiadēs," "Sōkratēs," "Buzantion," or "Tigrēs" would have been more literal but needlessly awkward and, in some cases, confusing. Still, readers should keep in mind that a name such as "Cyrus" (KŪROS), for example, evokes a man who holds supreme "power" or "authority" (KŪROS, KURIOS: cf. *Hellenika* 5.3.24; *Memorabilia* 1.4.9; *Education of Cyrus* 8.2.17).

The present study is based on the critical editions of the Greek text by L. Dindorf (2nd ed. 1855), G. Gemoll (2nd ed. 1909), E. C. Marchant (1904), C. Hude (1930; revised by J. Peters: 1972), and P. Masqueray (1930). It has been necessary to go back to the edition of Dindorf because his *apparatus criticus* remains, despite its venerable age, the most complete reporting of the readings of *Parisinus* 1640 (C), the single best manuscript of the *Anabasis*. Among the modern editions, the most useful and complete is Masqueray's. His apparatus, though less comprehensive than Dindorf's in its reporting of the readings of manuscript C, offers a more complete reporting for the inferior manuscripts. It is also easier to read. The edition by Hude/Peters is valuable as well, though its

apparatus is less accurate and less precise than Masqueray's. Hude/Peters print the inferior manuscripts more often than other editors do. The most widely used edition of the *Anabasis* today—by E. C. Marchant—is of limited utility because of its inadequate reporting of the manuscript tradition.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book could not have been completed without the help of many friends. Thomas Pangle and Timothy Burns, the editors of the series Recovering Political Philosophy, expressed their interest at an early stage and made the publication process as easy and as smooth an experience as I could possibly have hoped. Tom also commented extensively on an early version of the manuscript while Tim assisted me at every stage. Wayne Ambler read the manuscript in its entirety and made many valuable suggestions. His knowledge of Xenophon and his usual good judgment rescued me from many errors.

Several other friends read portions of the book and gave me the benefit of their critique. They include Robert C. Bartlett, Robert K. Faulkner, Kate Kretler and Devin Stauffer. I am also grateful to Heinrich Meier for inviting me to lecture on Xenophon at the Carl Friedrich von Siemens Stiftung in Munich (June 2011). The opportunity to write a synopsis of the argument of this book provided the impetus for its final completion.

I have acknowledged my greatest intellectual debt in the dedication. This book could not have been written without the generosity and wisdom of Christopher Bruell. May he find here the expression of my friendship and gratitude. Last but not least, I wish to acknowledge the strength I have derived from the love and the occasional forbearance of my family. My wife, Kate, and our two mischievous boys, Henri and Samuel, made my study of the *Anabasis* an even more joyous and pleasant experience than it would have been otherwise. Their love is invaluable to me.

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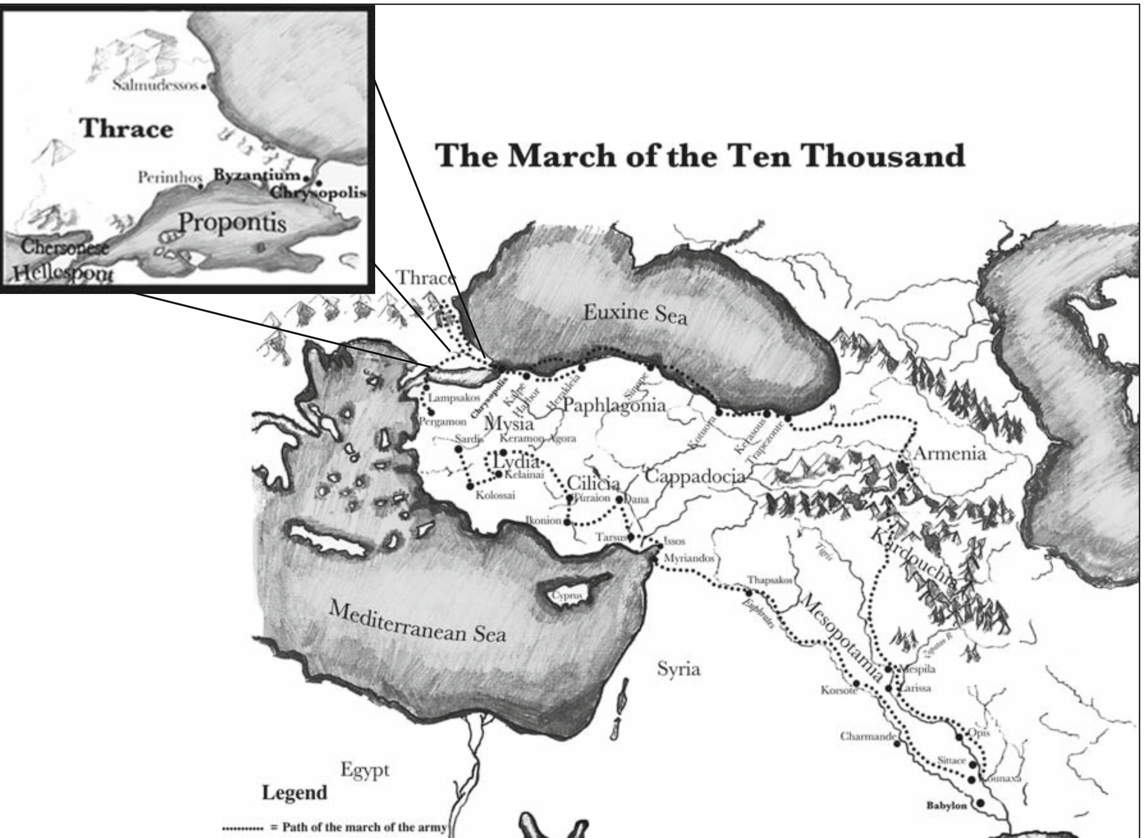
NOTE FROM THE SERIES EDITORS

Palgrave's Recovering Political Philosophy series was founded with an eye to postmodernism's challenge to the possibility of a rational foundation for and guidance of our political lives. This invigorating challenge has provoked a searching re-examination of classic texts, not only of political philosophers, but of poets, artists, theologians, scientists, and other thinkers who may not be regarded conventionally as political theorists. The series publishes studies that endeavor to take up this re-examination and thereby help to recover the classical grounding for civic reason, as well as studies that clarify the strengths and the weaknesses of modern philosophic rationalism. The interpretative studies in the series are particularly attentive to historical context and language, and to the ways in which both censorial persecution and didactic concerns have impelled prudent thinkers, in widely diverse cultural conditions, to employ manifold strategies of writing—strategies that allowed them to aim at different audiences with various degrees of openness to unconventional thinking. The series offers close readings of ancient, medieval, early modern, and late modern works that illuminate the human condition by attempting to answer its deepest, enduring questions, and that have (in the modern periods) laid the foundations for contemporary political, social, and economic life.

Together with Plato and Aristophanes, Xenophon is one of only three thinkers whose writings on Socrates, the founder of political philosophy, survive intact. Long admired and enjoyed by political philosophers, Xenophon's writings came into disfavor—significantly—at about the same time that the deepest reasons for esoteric writing began to be lost. Recent scholarship on Xenophon, which has taken advantage of the recovery of those reasons, has begun to restore Xenophon's writings to their former rank. Eric Buzzetti's *Xenophon, the Socratic Prince* is a major contribution to that effort. It is the first book-length treatment of the *Anabasis* that takes seriously Xenophon's Socratic education, and hence the central issues of political philosophy as they come to sight in the

actual political leadership of human beings. His argument is as novel as it is convincing, and significantly extends the recent scholarship on Xenophon, including his Socratic agreements with and divergences from Machiavelli. Buzzetti manifests a deep knowledge of the whole corpus of Xenophon's writings, and he deftly and unobtrusively incorporates it into his analysis of the *Anabasis*. This book will be of great interest to all who teach the *Anabasis*, to students of Xenophon's work, to students of classical political philosophy and the history of political philosophy, to classicists, and to historians.



Map by A. Enescu

INTRODUCTION

THE POLITICAL LIFE AND THE SOCRATIC EDUCATION

In an age where the ability of reason to answer the age-old Socratic question of the best way of life is widely doubted, the quiet wisdom of Xenophon has been rediscovered with profit and delight by a new generation of readers. For much of the last two centuries, Xenophon was censured by academic authorities as a treasonous Athenian, a limited Socratic, and a hypocrite in matters of morality and piety. In more recent time, however, this rash censure has been challenged by several valuable studies that have begun to restore the signal reputation he enjoyed in Antiquity and well into nineteenth century as an outstanding general and a genuine philosopher. The present interpretation of the *Anabasis of Cyrus*, often regarded today as Xenophon's masterpiece, aims to contribute to the rehabilitation of one of the great men of Antiquity.

The *Anabasis of Cyrus* tells a memorable story. Our hero, a youthful Athenian and student of Socrates, accepts an invitation to travel to Asia Minor and join a military expedition organized by Cyrus the Younger, the brother of the King of Persia. The purpose of the expedition, it is said, is to quell an insurrection in Cyrus's dominions. Yet the secret and true aim of Cyrus is in fact to overthrow his brother and take his place as King of Persia. The *Anabasis* is the story of how Cyrus assembles a small army of Greek mercenaries—the so-called Ten Thousand—and leads them from the coast of Asia Minor, through the deserts of Arabia and up to the gates of Babylon, where he meets his brother in battle. The Greek mercenaries win a remarkable victory that becomes Pyrrhic when Cyrus is killed in the fight. To make matters much worse, the generals of the Greeks are soon ensnared and murdered by the Persians. At that point the plight of the Ten Thousand, leaderless and alone in the heart of hostile Persia, appears desperate. But Xenophon emerges from obscurity and thrusts himself forward. Elected general, he manages to overcome

countless dangers and to lead the host to the safety of "The Sea! The Sea!" The *Anabasis* tells the greatest survival story to have come down to us from Antiquity.

1. Morality and Advantage in Rule: The Noble and the Good

Yet the *Anabasis of Cyrus* is much more than a memorable story. The aim of the present study is to show that it is also a work of political philosophy, and to begin with, a study of the political relevance of the Socratic education. The *Anabasis* contains an analysis of how an outstanding student of Socrates became, through the Socratic education, better able to rule human beings. In their respective writings, Xenophon and Plato both present Socrates as a teacher of politics. They show him introducing himself to potential pupils as a teacher of what is sometimes called the kingly or royal art, the art of ruling with knowledge.[1] It is therefore reasonable for us to wonder: What contribution, if any, did Socrates's teaching of this art make to the successes of Xenophon? How was *he* prepared for rule? This question is at the heart of the present study. But I also develop a more paradoxical line of argument. I contend that the *Anabasis* is intended to serve, in the economy of Xenophon's writings, as an introduction to philosophy. The highest aim of the work is *not* to prepare for politics (or for the exercise of rule) but to educate ambition and cause high-minded and talented youths to consider the alternative embodied by Socrates. In other words, the *Anabasis* is an introduction to philosophy in the form of a critique of the political life. I hope to make this claim less paradoxical than it must now appear.

⋆ ⋆ ⋆

Let us begin by considering how the political life is approached in the *Anabasis*. Here it is useful to call to mind the most famous book on rule, Niccolò Machiavelli's *Prince*. In a well-known passage, Machiavelli claims that it is necessary for a prince to learn to be able not be good if he wants to maintain himself in power (chap. 15). A complete reconciliation of morality and advantage is impossible, Machiavelli contends, since human conditions do not admit of it. A prince must learn to be bad. This is of course a perennial issue: Is it possible for a ruler to be at once good and effective? But what is *Xenophon's* view of it? Does he agree with

[1] For example, *Memorabilia* 1.6.15, 4.2 (esp. §11); *Alcibiades I* (beginning). The art in question is the BASILIKĒ TECHNĒ.

Machiavelli that morality and advantage cannot be conjoined or reconciled in and through rule?

This study will show that the *Anabasis* examines the political life from the standpoint of this question. The work sketches three models of rule, depicting how the three men who successively rule the Ten Thousand as *de facto* kings—Cyrus, Klearchos, and Xenophon—endeavor to reconcile morality with advantage. Of course, the most important of these models is Xenophon himself. His career is depicted in the last five books of the *Anabasis*. But two alternative models are also presented. Book one depicts the rule of Cyrus, the younger brother of the King of Persia, who meets with an untimely death in the Battle for Babylon (1.8). And book two depicts the rule of Klearchos, a Lacedaemonian who takes over after Cyrus and is ensnared and killed at the end of book two. As I intend to show, the *Anabasis* spells out how, according to Xenophon, these three models of rule meet (or fail to meet) the challenge of reconciling morality with advantage. To put the matter as Xenophon himself would have put it, the *Anabasis* depicts how these rulers endeavor to reconcile "the noble with the good." But before I proceed any further, let me try to situate these models of rule briefly.

Cyrus embodies the first model. I call him the Godlike King. The name is meant to indicate that Cyrus rejects the traditional gods—several scenes adumbrate his impiety—but also that he seeks to become a sort of deity on Earth. He aspires to become an all-powerful and all-knowing king over a large portion of mankind. In effect, the title of our work—the "Ascent of Cyrus"—refers not only to a march upland (as it undoubtedly does) but also to the rise of a man who, should he conquer the Persian throne, would be in a position to dispense a kind of secular providence. As King of Persia, Cyrus would be in a position to reward and punish the vast human multitudes under his rule in accordance with merit. He would be able (in principle at least) to reconcile the noble with the good in the sense that the goodness of virtue among a large portion of mankind would be put beyond question. In other words, "Cyrus the King" is an alternative to "Zeus the King." But the question then arises: Does the "Ascent of Cyrus" herald the dawn of universal justice? Can the problem of justice be solved, according to Xenophon, through the establishment of a human kingship at once absolute, high-minded, and of enormous geographic scope? This question is treated in book one of the *Anabasis*. It is analyzed in the first part of this study (chapter one).

The Lacedaemonian Klearchos embodies the second model of rule. I call him the Pious King. In marked contrast to Cyrus, Klearchos bows before Zeus the King and pays homage to this deity. He trusts in the superior prudence and in the just providence of what he regards as the King of

Kings. This means that he consults Zeus regularly through sacrifices and oracles. But does piety hold the key to a successful reconciliation of the noble with the good? Is the Pious King superior to the Godlike King? For, abiding by what he thinks the gods demand of him—abiding by the demands of piety and virtue—Klearchos hopes to secure divine assistance and help. Is this hope well founded? Needless to say, Machiavelli would deride any such notion. Every reader of the *Prince* knows that Machiavelli urges rulers to rely on *their own* weapons. They should imitate King David, he writes, who fought Goliath with *his own* sling and *his own* knife (chap.13). But does *Xenophon* approve of rulers who rely on *heavenly* weapons? After all, Xenophon is still thought of today as a paragon of piety.[2] Yet, as we will discover, he depicts a grave error of judgment of Klearchos, which had fatal consequences (2.5). Could it be that Xenophon is in fact a critic of the Pious Kingship? This question, treated in book two of the *Anabasis*, is analyzed in the second part of this study (chapter two).

The third model of rule is embodied by Xenophon himself. I call him the Socratic King. The bulk of the *Anabasis* depicts how *he* endeavors to conjoin or reconcile the noble with the good. Specifically, each one of the five books that depict and analyze his rule brings to light how he reconciles the demands of one specific virtue with the imperatives of safety and political advantage. Book three, for example, is the book of piety because it shows us how Xenophon reconciles piety—his own piety as well as the piety of the soldiers—with the political good. Book four is the book of courage; book five is the book of justice; book six is the book of gratitude; and book seven is the book of what Xenophon calls "PHILOSTRATIŌTĒS" (i.e., "the love of the soldier": cf. 7.6.4, 7.6.39). In each case, Xenophon shows us how (as a ruler) he reconciles the virtue or quality in question with the political good. Hence, the third part of this study analyzes piety (chapter three), courage (chapter four), justice (chapter five), gratitude (chapter six) and the love of the soldier (chapter seven). The place that each quality is assigned in the rule of the Socratic King is each time considered.

The present study uncovers for the first time what I believe is the authentic plan of the *Anabasis*, the plan devised by Xenophon when he composed the work. I show that the *Anabasis* is not only a historical chronicle and a war memoir—I readily concede that it is both these things as well—but above all *an argument* or a *logos*[3] developed in and through a chronicle and a memoir. Hence the various episodes of the work, and the manner of treatment of these episodes, reflect the stages and the demands

[2] See, for example, Waterfield (2006) pp. 42–43, Cawkwell (1979) p. 45, Parker (2004).

[3] For the *Anabasis* as "logos," see 2.1.1, 3.1.1, 4.1.1, 5.1.1, 7.1.1.

of the argument. Minor episodes are sometimes developed at length while major episodes are sketched more summarily. To take a single example here: toward the end of the expedition, the reader is made to witness a symposium that features a longish scene of dancing among the soldiers (6.1.4–13). The scene is entertaining. But why is it treated at such length? Is dancing somehow important for the *logos* of the *Anabasis*? I show (in chapter six) that this seemingly minor scene conveys nothing less than the principle of Xenophon's self-presentation in the *Anabasis*. The scene adumbrates that Xenophon thinks of himself as a Socratic—a "dancing philosopher"—dressed in martial garb. More generally, this study demonstrates that several minor scenes, including "digressions" that bear little or no apparent connection to the expedition proper, are in fact crucial stages of the philosophic argument of the *Anabasis*.[4]

The authentic plan of the *Anabasis*, reflecting a *logos* in three main stages, can therefore be summarized in a preliminary fashion as follows:

I. The Kingship of Cyrus (Book One)
"Reconciling the Noble and the Good in and through the Rule of a Godlike King"

II. The Kingship of Klearchos (Book Two)
"Reconciling the Noble and the Good in and through the Rule of a Pious King"

III. The Kingship of Xenophon (Books Three to Seven)[5]
"Reconciling the Noble and the Good in and through the Rule of a Socratic King"

1. Piety (Book Three)
2. Courage (Book Four)
3. Justice (Book Five)
4. Gratitude (Book Six)
5. The Love of the Soldier (Philostratiōtēs) (Book Seven).

My reading of the *Anabasis* is bound to raise a number of objections.[6] Allow me to consider only two for now. It could be argued that Xenophon

[4] For example, the famous "digression" on Skilloūs: 5.3.

[5] Readers will be in a position to make interesting discoveries if they compare the implicit plan of Part III of the *Anabasis* with the explicit plan of the *Agesilaos* (a work dedicated to a model king as well). Suffice it to note here that in the *Agesilaos*, Xenophon begins all his accounts of the virtues or qualities of the Spartan king with piety (c. 3 [beginning], 10.2, 11.1). This helps confirm that book three of the *Anabasis*—the first book treating the kingship of Xenophon—is the book of piety.

[6] My claim to have discovered the authentic plan of the *Anabasis* implies, of course, that the division of the work into seven books goes back to Xenophon. I know of no weighty

is not a genuine Socratic and that his political successes should not be viewed in light of his education. Indeed, the few scholars who have stressed the theme of education in their study of the *Anabasis* have linked Xenophon's successes to his *Athenian* education.[7] After all, the fact that Xenophon chooses to *leave* Socrates (and the philosophic life) to befriend Cyrus (and for a political life) in the single most important scene of the *Anabasis* seems to prove that he views the political life as superior to the philosophic (3.1). Doesn't this choice even prove that he failed to grasp the Socratic argument for the superiority of philosophy? How, then, can I rightly call Xenophon a Socratic? A second objection would stress that Xenophon is never actually elected sole ruler of the army. His elevation to the "monarchy" is seriously considered but it never comes to pass (cf. 6.1.31). How, then, can I rightly call him a king?

I will show that Xenophon's decision to befriend Cyrus (and to leave Socrates) was *not* the result of a rejection of philosophy but stemmed, in part, from the fact that Athens had become a dangerous place for a Socratic in 401 BC. The trial and execution of Socrates a few months after Xenophon's departure from Athens was to illustrate this danger with shocking clarity. Textual evidence will be adduced that Xenophon's decision to leave must be viewed in light of his dimming prospects at home. Nor is it adequate to ascribe Xenophon's successes to his *Athenian* education: there were several other Athenians among the Ten Thousand but only he rose to the challenge of saving the army. Better to take our bearings by the author's explicit indications that *Socrates* was crucially important for him. Indeed, in the most important scene of the *Anabasis* just referred to, Xenophon makes clear that he sought the counsel of Socrates—and of no one else—before joining Cyrus and Proxenos (3.1.4–10). Xenophon quietly presents himself as a Socratic.

As for the second objection, it is admittedly correct that Xenophon is never elected sole ruler of the Ten Thousand. But this objection is not decisive. Xenophon *does* exercise *de facto* kingship in book five.[8] Besides,

argument against this view, though the opposite is occasionally asserted (e.g., Masqueray [1930] p. 6; Couvreur [1929] p. 104, note 1 and passim). Yet even Masqueray, who doubts the authenticity of the division, admits that it is mentioned in Antiquity "par Hérodien, Harpocration, Diogène, Athénée" (p. 6). The correct view, as I believe, has been stated powerfully by Høeg (1950, pp. 162–64). The division of the *Anabasis* into seven books is found in all the complete MSS. For further discussion, see Appendix 2.

[7] See, notably, Grote (1900) Vol. 9, p. 87. Also Erbse (2010) p. 491. The outstanding exception is Bruell (1987).

[8] He exercises the kingship during a long absence of the *primus inter pares*, the Lacedaemonian general Cheirisophos. This seldom-noted fact makes book five the most important of the five books devoted to Xenophon's rule. (Cheirisophos leaves at the beginning of book five and returns—two months later—at the beginning of book six.)

while he is never elected "monarch," the same can be said of Cyrus and Klearchos (cf. 2.2.5). Indeed, Socrates is reported to have said that it is not election but knowledge of how to rule that makes a man a king.[9] Xenophon, as we will see, holds the same view.[10]

But (it will be asked) what exactly is the Socratic education? It seems that I must answer this question before I can analyze how Xenophon puts his education to work, so to speak, in the *Anabasis*. And, it would appear, I must develop my answer through a study of the Socratic writings. For several reasons, however, not the least of which is that my task would become unmanageable, I will *not* take this path here. Though I will often refer to Xenophon's four Socratic writings—the *Memorabilia*, the *Oikonomikos*, the *Symposium*, and the *Apology of Socrates to the Jurors*—and though I will analyze some key passages from these works, for the most part I will look directly at the finished product—Xenophon himself—as he is seen in the *Anabasis*. Yet it will not be amiss if I state at the outset what I mean by the Socratic education. Following Xenophon's indications in the *Memorabilia*, the Socratic education can be said to consist, at its core, in a thorough investigation of what virtue is. This investigation includes a comprehensive reflection on the character of, and the relation between, the noble and the good.[11] Indeed, Xenophon shows in the *Oikonomikos* that Socrates was once eager to converse with the noble and good man Ischomachos in order to discover how "the good is attached to the noble" in his person.[12] In other words, what I am calling the question of the noble and the good is but another way of referring to the age-old Socratic question, "What is virtue?" One aim of the present study is to analyze the political benefits, as well as the results, of the Socratic inquiry into virtue.

2. Xenophon's Manner of Writing: The Question of Esotericism

Before I interpret the *Anabasis*, I must explain how I read Xenophon. Since the issue is important, my explanation must be substantial. No

[9] *Memorabilia* 3.9.10, 3.1.4.

[10] One sign that kingship is the theme of the *Anabasis* is the fact that the word "king" (BASILEUS) occurs at least 144 times in the work (according to the Perseus Digital Project). This number is substantially larger than the number of occurrences of the word in the *Education of Cyrus* (at least 100), a work longer than the *Anabasis* by perhaps 25 percent. And of course, the *Education of Cyrus* is unquestionably focused on the theme of kingship and its establishment.

[11] *Memorabilia* 1.1.16.

[12] *Oikonomikos* 6.15.

interpreter of Xenophon has been more influential and controversial in modern times than the philosopher Leo Strauss. His rediscovery of the art of esoteric writing—and his claim that Xenophon practiced this art—has been accepted in some quarters but has met with spirited resistance in others.[13] It is a pleasure to acknowledge my intellectual debt to Strauss. The present study is both premised upon and a defense of the claim that he was the first to formulate that Xenophon *is* an esoteric writer capable of the most refined forms of irony. Yet I confess my sympathy for critics who have charged that Strauss's students and followers have occasionally used esotericism to obfuscate or distort, rather than to illuminate, great texts of the past. That a particular chapter is at the "center" of a book, for example—to mention a much-maligned Straussian hermeneutical principle—is not an argument for anything. It is a fact, and not a very interesting fact at that. Nevertheless, facts are liable to occur in patterns, and patterns should be an object of careful examination.

I wish to approach the question of esotericism as fruitfully and unpolemically as possible. To do so, I will consider Xenophon's treatment of the question of piety and the gods. For as we will discover, the three models of kingship presented in the *Anabasis* differ profoundly on the issue of the place that piety and the gods should have in rule. (In fact, the question of the noble and the good is ultimately inseparable from the issue of piety, as we will see.) Of course, it would not be particularly surprising if we should discover that Xenophon exercised restraint when he wrote about piety and the gods. We have already alluded to the fate of Socrates, who was executed by the Athenians partly for not believing in the gods in which the city believed. Moreover, Socrates was neither the first philosopher to fall victim to politico-religious persecution in the West, nor was he to be the last. We citizens of liberal democracies are rediscovering today after a hiatus of over two centuries certain forms of pious virulence, which, though obviously different from premodern forms, adopt a stance toward reason, philosophy, and secular rule that is hardly unprecedented. These developments should give us pause and renew our openness toward the *possibility* that Xenophon wrote esoterically. For, as a thinker and an author, Xenophon faced a solidly pious world that resembled in some respects the Islamic world of today. The pious and moral opinions of his average Hellenic reader had not been transformed by anything resembling the Enlightenment, that is, by the modern project to (in the words of Montesquieu) "detach religion from the soul."[14] It is not reasonable, in other words, to expect complete

[13] The most recent spirited and extensive critique is Gray (2011a).

[14] *The Spirit of the Laws*, book 25, chap. 12.

openness from Xenophon, at least if he can be shown to have rejected the orthodoxy of his day in matters of piety and morality. For, to write seriously about kingship requires a reflection on who (or what) the highest king is.[15] Besides, the theme of kingship is delicate for other reasons as well: it is liable to offend democratic sensibilities.[16]

To many readers, these considerations will perhaps appear plausible but nevertheless unconvincing. For even if we set aside the issue of whether Xenophon challenged the orthodoxy of his day—and aren't his books replete with evidence of his conventional piety and morality?—many will feel puzzlement or disbelief at the notion that an author might convey his thought between the lines of his work. Why would anyone choose to conceal his views from the majority of his readers and only intimate them to a close-reading minority? The purpose of a book is to enlighten and convey knowledge, not to mislead. How can social progress occur if intellectuals lack the courage to challenge openly the orthodoxies of their day? Isn't esotericism the practice of a misguided or cynical elitist who thinks that the *hoi polloi* are too unintelligent to understand the truth and to benefit from it? And doesn't this practice suggest that the ideas being concealed are disreputable? Finally, the alleged "proofs" of esotericism—small textual hints—are regarded as proofs only by those who ignore the damage suffered by ancient MSS. These proofs are in fact blemishes or scribal blunders.

Proponents of esotericism must confront these powerful objections. I intend to do so. But open-minded critics must face the possibility, for their part, that their hostility to the idea of esotericism reflects the influence of an argument spelled out famously by John Stuart Mill: speech ought to be free in a civilized society because truth will win out over error if both are allowed to clash publicly in the marketplace of ideas, and because the victory of truth will be socially beneficial and conducive to intellectual progress as well.[17] Whether we, citizens of liberal states, like it or not, Mill's liberal-progressive view is not Xenophon's view. As I hope to show in this study, Xenophon accepts a version of the Platonic-Socratic view stated so memorably in Plato's *Republic*: every political community is akin to a dim-lit cave. Only few human beings are ever both able and willing to

[15] For a humorous treatment of this issue, see Aristophanes's *Clouds*, lines 380–82 and *passim*.

[16] The true king is a practitioner of the "kingly art." But this art points toward the rule of the wise. See *Memorabilia* 1.2.58, quoting *Iliad* 2.188–91, 198–202. In the *Memorabilia* passage, Xenophon "omits" to quote *Iliad* 2.204–6, where Odysseus endorses kingly rule at the expense of democracy since "no good thing is a multitude of lords." See also Plato's *Republic* 488b6–8.

[17] J.S. Mill, *On Liberty* (1998).

free themselves from the shackles enslaving their minds and ascend toward the light of the natural sun. The pursuit of truth and the authority of the "shadows" on the walls of the cave are in a state of permanent tension. It is from this tension, in part, that the practice of esotericism arises.

To be sure, we modern readers do not have to accept this Platonic-Socratic-Xenophonic view. We may even reject it wholeheartedly, just as thinkers of the Enlightenment such as Kant or (later) Mill rejected it. Yet it is imperative when we read an author who shows signs of accepting this view that we let our interpretation be guided by that fact throughout. Historical objectivity is not possible on another basis, and a failure to read accordingly is bound to distort the author's thought. I readily grant, however, that the burden of proof rests on the shoulders of those who claim, as I do, that Xenophon is an esoteric writer.

To begin to discharge this burden, I shall therefore consider a series of literary techniques employed by Xenophon in the *Anabasis* to convey his thought between the lines. In the remainder of this section, I examine how he depicts Cyrus's stance toward the gods. This brief case study is followed by a more general analysis of his manner of writing (section two).[18] I then consider the manuscript tradition of the *Anabasis*. My goal is there again to explore literary devices employed by Xenophon to convey his views quietly (section three). Finally, I consider the recent scholarship on the *Anabasis* to show the importance of approaching the work as a study in Socratic rule and an introduction to philosophy (section four).

i) A Case Study: Xenophon's Depiction of Cyrus's Stance Toward the Gods

Early in their march toward Babylon, Cyrus and the Ten Thousand reach the city of Peltas where they stay for three days. Xenophon describes the scene as follows:

> In those days, Xennias the Arcadian performed the sacrifices of the Lukaia and he held an athletic contest. The prizes were golden scrapers. Even Cyrus beheld the athletic contest (1.2.10).

This passage seems innocuous enough: the Ten Thousand celebrate a festival honoring Zeus Lukaion under the presidency of Xennias, a prominent Greek general. They also hold an athletic contest. Cyrus looks on. Less

[18] I have benefited from several discussions of Xenophon's manner of writing. These include Bartlett (1996b), Bruell (1987), Dillery (1995), Flower (2012), Gautier (1911), Higgins (1977), Hirsch (1985), Nadon (2001), Proietti (1987), and the several works of Strauss on Xenophon.

innocuous is a detail omitted by Xenophon. Let us reproduce the same paragraph minus all the unessential information:

> [. . .] Xenias the Arcadian performed the sacrifices of the Lukaia and he held an athletic contest (AGŌNA) [. . .] Cyrus beheld the athletic contest (AGŌNA).

This edited version makes conspicuous what Xenophon merely adumbrates: Cyrus beheld the athletic contest and *only* the athletic contest. He displayed publicly his indifference to the Lukaia. By the simple device of mentioning and then omitting the Lukaia, Xenophon is able to hint at this indifference. Does this mean that Cyrus is indifferent not only to a festival but to the divine more generally?

This conclusion is surely premature. Xenophon could be guilty of writing sloppy prose. Besides, it could be objected that Cyrus's indifference to the Lukaia is insignificant: he is a Persian, after all, and the festival in question was honoring a *Greek* god (Zeus Lukaion). To meet these difficulties, let us therefore consider a later passage of book one, which will help us confirm our budding suspicions about Cyrus.

In the passage in question, Xenophon recounts a private exchange between Cyrus and his leading Greek general, the Lacedaemonian Klearchos. The exchange takes place as Cyrus nears Babylon and the battle for the throne of Persia seems imminent:

> "Do you suppose, Cyrus, [Klearchos said] that your brother will engage battle with you?" "Yes, *by Zeus*," said Cyrus, if at any rate he is the son of Darius and of Parysatis, and my brother, I will not take these things [i.e. the throne of Persia] without a fight" (1.7.9, my emphasis).

Once again, we have a seemingly innocuous passage. It is, however, an arresting passage insofar as it contains one of the few private exchanges of Cyrus deemed important enough to be reported. But why does Xenophon stress this private exchange? Does he wish to emphasize Cyrus's pride in his lineage or in his family virtue? Or perhaps his doubts about his brother's legitimacy?[19] It is striking that Cyrus, though a Persian, swears the Greek oath "by Zeus": his indifference to Zeus Lukaion in the passage considered a moment ago cannot be explained by his Persian origin.[20] But what is the solution to our larger difficulty? The solution is conveyed, I believe, in the

[19] Braun (2004) sees in this scene "some chivalrous joust" (p. 125).

[20] At *Oikonomikos* 4.24, Cyrus is made to swear the historically more accurate oath "By Mithra!" The Persian Artabadzos uses the emphatic form of the same oath at *Education of Cyrus* 7.5.53. Unless I am mistaken, Cyrus the Elder always swears by Greek gods.

following way. Xenophon writes a few paragraphs later (after reporting on the exchange between Cyrus and Klearchos) that Cyrus called to his side a Greek soothsayer named Silanos and gave him a large sum of money (1.7.18). He did this, we are told, because eleven days earlier the soothsayer had predicted to Cyrus that King Artaxerxes would not fight him within the next ten days. Silanos made this prediction after he questioned the gods by means of divination. And Cyrus replied to the divination as follows: "Then [my brother] will not fight thereafter, if he will not fight within these ten days. But I promise you ten talents if you should speak the truth" (1.7.18). On the eleventh day—as the battle had not yet occurred—Cyrus paid out the promised sum to Silanos, who had predicted accurately.

Cyrus's private exchange with the general Klearchos must be read in light of his remarks to the soothsayer Silanos. Or rather, the meaning of the private exchange with Klearchos becomes clear once we restore the chronological order of these two conversations, which Xenophon has purposely reversed. *First* in the order of time are Cyrus's remarks to the soothsayer that his brother *must* fight within ten days if he is to fight at all. Afterward it will be too late. *Then* come Cyrus's private assurances to Klearchos that his brother *will* certainly fight "if he is the son of Darius and of Parysatis, and my brother." It is therefore clear that Cyrus thinks that his brother—who *must* fight within the next ten days if he is to fight at all—*will* certainly fight *within the next ten days*. But this means that he is certain that the soothsayer is wrong. He puts no faith whatsoever in Silanos's divination.[21] No wonder, then, that Cyrus swears "By Zeus!" in his exchange with Klearchos—the only such oath he swears in the *Anabasis*.[22] Far from indicating Cyrus's piety, this oath calls attention to his *rejection* of the god's signs. Yet this rejection does not keep Cyrus from rewarding the soothsayer for having spoken "the truth." In other words, if the two conversations are read together in their proper chronological order, it becomes clear that Cyrus rejects *in toto* the guidance of soothsayers. Xenophon conceals the import of these conversations with the simple expedient of reversing their chronological order. Had he done what I just did—to recount Cyrus's remarks to the soothsayer first—the implication of Cyrus's later private assurances to Klearchos would have been obvious. Not so when the conversations are inverted.

We are now in a position to understand why the obituary of Cyrus is silent about his piety (1.9).[23] This silence is confirmed by several

[21] This conclusion is confirmed by 1.7.14.

[22] Cyrus swears one more oath—"By the gods"—at 1.4.8. For an explanation of this oath, see chapter one, note 21.

[23] Strauss (1983) p. 107. There is, however, one reference to the fact that Cyrus may have prayed (1.9.11). See chapter 1, note 89.