

## II. XENOPHON'S THOUGHT AND STYLE

This chapter places Xenophon's systematic and comprehensive thought about the ordering of self and society in the context of his lived experience. Xenophon lived through the turbulent reordering of the Greek world as its greatest city, Athens, adjusted to its defeat in the Peloponnesian War and to the continuing contest for hegemony. In the past, he has been criticized for failings in his method, for falling short of modern disciplinary norms of historiography and philosophy. But where the scientific turn of historiography in the nineteenth century and the analytic turn of philosophy in the twentieth century caused scholars to treat Xenophon as a lesser author and thinker than Thucydides and Plato respectively, more recent scholarly developments, from the close readings of Straussians to the deployment of literary theoretical approaches such as historicism and narratology, have led to a better understanding of his distinctive achievement. The second section of this chapter uses new critical approaches to examine key features of Xenophon's prose style, ranging from its display in narrative set-piece scenes to his artful deployment of elevated rhetorical registers of language and dramatic irony. It explores his use of exemplarity to inform and educate the elite, the *kaloi kagathoi*, 'gentlemen of quality', who appear to have been his primary intended audience.<sup>1</sup>

### **An extraordinary life**

Although little is known for certain about Xenophon's life, it was shaped by the circumstances of Athenian history and by the consequences of the Peloponnesian War, already underway at his birth sometime between 430 and 425 BCE – the exact date is unknown.<sup>2</sup> Xenophon himself gives little biographical information beyond the events he relates; other surviving ancient sources provide little more. The most detailed of these, the brief biography in Diogenes Laertius'

<sup>1</sup> Gray 2011b: 5–7; on *kaloi kagathoi*, see Hammond and Atack 2023: xxxii–xxxv.

<sup>2</sup> Vivienne Gray (1998: 5 n. 25) suggests the start of this range, Debra Nails (Nails 2002: 301) the end, making Xenophon two or three years younger than Plato, mostly likely born between 427 and 425.

third-century CE *Lives of the Philosophers* (DL 2.48–59), elaborates information gathered from Xenophon's own works, especially the *Anabasis*, along with other anecdotes of uncertain historicity from now lost biographies and critiques.<sup>3</sup> There is little further contemporary evidence. A fragment from the work of another Socratic, Aeschines, shows Xenophon in conversation with Aspasia, the partner of the general Pericles, about his love for his wife; Cicero's quotation of the work (*De inventione* 1.51–2) suggests a continuing interest in Xenophon in later antiquity.<sup>4</sup> That Aeschines' fragment depicts Xenophon and his wife discussing their marriage suggests that Xenophon's interest in the domestic and in marriage as a social institution was notable even among his contemporaries.<sup>5</sup> But it also positions Xenophon within the imaginary world of the Socratic dialogue, in which historical time is suspended.<sup>6</sup>

Xenophon's father, Gryllus, was a citizen of the Athenian deme of Erchia, coincidentally also the home deme of Xenophon's older contemporary, the rhetorician Isocrates (DL 2.48). Since Erchia, a rural deme to the east of the city, close to Mount Hymettus, was too far from Athens for easy return travel in a single day, the family would also have had a home in the city. Xenophon's childhood, coinciding with the early stages of the Peloponnesian War when Pericles gathered Athenians into the city in preparation for the anticipated Spartan invasion (Thuc. 2.14–16), would most likely have been spent in the city home. Perhaps, during occasional peaceful interludes such as that negotiated by Nicias and Pleistoanax in 421, Xenophon was able to spend time at Erchia and to enjoy the mountains and countryside nearby. His life-long passion for hunting (*Cynegeticus*, *Cyropaedia*) and interest in horsemanship (*Hipparchicus*, *De re equestri*) suggest that these were formative experiences for him.

As a youth from a well-off family, Xenophon might have been expected to complete his education in preparation for an active role in democratic civic life, through lessons with a teacher of rhetoric and other skills, such as the sophist Gorgias of Leontini, who visited and taught in Athens in the late fifth century and who had taught his

<sup>3</sup> Badian 2004: 35–42. Modern biographies of Xenophon include Luccioni 1948, Delebecque 1957, and Anderson 1974.

<sup>4</sup> Aeschines Socraticus *Aspasia*, fr. SSR VIa 70; Pentassuglio 2017; Johnson 2021: 254–7.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>6</sup> Atack 2020b.

friend Proxenus of Thebes in Boeotia (*An.* 2.6.16).<sup>7</sup> Rhetorical skill was essential to a successful political career in the assembly and lawcourts of democratic Athens, a development criticized by Plato (*Gorgias*, *Protagoras*); Xenophon depicts himself showing just such rhetorical skill in his speeches to the Ten Thousand (*An.* 7.6.4).<sup>8</sup> There was also a growing interest in training in military skills, as the city's leadership roles began to demand greater technical expertise (Pl. *Laches*, although this may retroject later debates into a fifth-century context; Xen. *Hipp.*, *Mem.* 3.1, 3.3).<sup>9</sup>

Xenophon was familiar with the work and reputation of the leading sophists; he attributes the story of the 'Choice of Heracles' to the sophist Prodicus of Ceos (*Mem.* 2.1.21–34), although retelling it in his own style.<sup>10</sup> He depicts himself and others as followers of Socrates, an unconventional and informal educator, always ready to converse with fellow citizens and the young about ethical questions, and, in Xenophon's account, to offer more practical advice on questions of how to live the life of a good citizen in the context of an impoverished city.<sup>11</sup> Xenophon also presents himself as participating in the social practices of the Athenian elite, pursuing the beautiful Critobulus as a lover (*Mem.* 1.3.8–15), although this scenario does also provide the opportunity for his Socrates to give a critique of pederasty.

As Xenophon prepared for adult life, war and political turmoil dictated the opportunities open to him, as the city broke its peace treaties and reopened the war, and the military threat from Sparta and Persia revived and grew stronger. Athens' disastrous military adventure in Sicily (415–413 BCE) had destabilized the city's political balance and revitalized the war, now being fought on two fronts in the Aegean and on the mainland around Attica. It is unclear whether Xenophon served in the Athenian forces during the final stages of the war; J. K. Anderson and John Lee deduce that he may have ridden out in defence with the city's cavalry as a youth. Anderson adds the suggestion that he served as a marine, a role undertaken by some in the cavalry class as the naval conflict in the eastern Aegean, against

<sup>7</sup> Laks and Most 2016; Bonazzi 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Christ 2020: 166–7. On rhetoric in Athenian politics see Finley 1962; Ober 1989.

<sup>9</sup> On the lack of military training in Athens before the mid-fourth century, see Konijnendijk 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Whether the story told is close to Prodicus' version or Xenophon's own is much debated: see Sansone 2004, 2015; Gray 2006; Dorion 2008.

<sup>11</sup> See Chapters 3 and 4.

Persian-funded Spartan forces, became more significant.<sup>12</sup> Debra Nails, on the other hand, who argues for a later birthdate around 425, regards Xenophon as too young to have fought in this war.<sup>13</sup>

Xenophon's detailed account of the battle of Arginusae in 406 BCE and its aftermath (*Hell.* 1.6), and the subsequent prosecutions of the generals responsible for the lost fleet and sailors (*Hell.* 1.7), may reflect personal involvement in the events, or a growing involvement in the life of his city. The unjust treatment of generals by democratic regimes loomed large in his political thinking about democracy and the administration of justice.<sup>14</sup>

Within the city, these final stages of the Peloponnesian War were marked by shortages of food, especially as the routes for importing grain from the Black Sea region were blocked by the conflict. Athens was too large to feed its population from its own less productive land, although families like Xenophon's may still have managed to produce crops on their estates. Managing and surviving economic crisis is a recurrent theme of Xenophon's work (*Mem.* 2.6, 2.7; *Poroi* 1.1), although again this may reflect concerns current during the city's economic crises later in the fourth century.

Xenophon noted instances of Socrates' resistance to the Athenians' decisions when they failed to uphold their own procedures and laws: both the troubled democracy in 406 and under the oligarchic regime of the Thirty Tyrants in 404/3 (*Hell.* 1.7.15; *Mem.* 1.2.31–8). While it is unclear what his own stance or role was during this period, his writing suggests the perspective of someone who stayed in the city, albeit with decreasing enthusiasm.<sup>15</sup> He presents the more moderate oligarchs and the leaders of the democratic side as exemplary characters, presenting powerful speeches and scenes to the politicians Theramenes (*Hell.* 2.3.35–49) and Thrasybulus (*Hell.* 2.4.13–17, 40–2). The unifying speech he gives to the herald of the Eleusinian Mysteries, Cleocritus (*Hell.* 2.4.20–2; see Chapter 4) suggests his approval of the resolution of the civil war in 403. It is difficult, therefore, to see Xenophon either as a straightforwardly conservative figure or as a lifelong supporter of oligarchy over democracy. His

<sup>12</sup> Anderson 1974: 18–19, citing *Hell.* 1.6.24 as evidence for the use of cavalry; Lee 2005: 43–4.

<sup>13</sup> Nails 2002: 301.

<sup>14</sup> Christ 2020: 17–26; see also Chapter 4.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson 1974: 55–8; Badian 2004: 46–7; Christ 2020: 3.

primary concern is the fair treatment and reward of those exposed to personal risk in military and leadership roles (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Xenophon left Athens in 401 (DL 2.55), and was still absent when Socrates was tried and put to death in 399. His *Apology* relies on reports from another follower of Socrates, Hermogenes, an illegitimate son of the wealthy Athenian Hipponicus, and so half-brother of Callias, although this may be a fictive attribution, a typical feature of Socratic dialogue.<sup>16</sup>

Xenophon's eagerness to leave Athens and join his friend Proxenus in what developed into the expedition to replace Artaxerxes II on the Achaemenid throne with his brother Cyrus (the younger) (*An.* 3.1.4) suggests that he may have seen little personal opportunity under the restored democracy. Or, as John Lee suggests, he may, like other Athenians, have been tempted into mercenary service through financial necessity.<sup>17</sup> Xenophon insists that supporting this dynastic project was not the original intention of the Greeks (*An.* 3.1.9–10), but he was swept up into the mercenary campaign. The repercussions would be life-changing; Socrates' advice, warning Xenophon against being seen to support Cyrus, an ally of the Spartans, turned out to be politically acute (*An.* 3.1.5–9).

After the battle of Cunaxa, in which Cyrus was killed (*An.* 1.8.25–9.1), the 'Ten Thousand' faced many challenges, including the assassination of their original leaders. Xenophon depicted himself reluctantly taking a leading role in reorganizing the surviving members of the force, always engaging as part of a team (*An.* 3.2.32–9; see Chapter 5). He played a significant part in shepherding the Greek forces through hostile territory back to the Greek world, usually protecting the rear of the column as they travelled, and so he first experienced the famous sighting of the Black Sea as a worrying disturbance rather than a sign of safety (*An.* 4.7.21–4; see Chapter 1). However, once the Ten Thousand had reached the safety of Greek cities on the coast, rather than return to Greece, they chose to enlist on further campaigns, first with the Thracian king Seuthes (*An.* 7.3) and then, after hostility between the Thracians and Greeks grew, with Spartan forces led by Thibron attacking the Persian satrap

<sup>16</sup> Hermogenes, half-brother of Callias, appears as a member of the Socratic circle in Xenophon *Mem.* and *Symp.*, and Plato (*Phaedo*, *Cratylus*). Xenophon also attributes his *Hellenica* to the otherwise unknown Themistogenes of Syracuse (*Hell.* 3.1.2).

<sup>17</sup> Lee 2005: 42–3.

Tissaphernes (*An.* 7.6.1–7, 7.7.24). Xenophon had intended to return to Athens, a possibility which was still then open (7.7.57). However, as his account of the campaign of the Spartan king Agesilaus in Asia Minor in 396–395 shows (*Hell.* 3.4.1–4.3.4), he stayed and served with the Spartans both there and later in mainland Greece. He developed and retained a high opinion of Agesilaus as king and leader, reflected in his encomium-cum-obituary *Agesilaus*.<sup>18</sup> Xenophon's time in the Persian empire and on its fringes is also reflected in the descriptions of Persian life and imperial governance in his *Cyropaedia*, an extended exemplary account of the rise to power of Cyrus the Great, whose conquests in the sixth century BCE were the basis for the Achaemenid empire.<sup>19</sup>

After returning to Greece with Agesilaus and very likely fighting with the Spartans against his native Athens at Coronea in 395 (*Ages.* 2.6–16; see Chapter 5), there was no longer any possibility of a return to his home city, from which Xenophon appears to have been formally exiled around this time (DL 2.59). Instead, he settled in the Peloponnese at Scillous, near Olympia (*An.* 5.3.7–13), on an estate provided by the Spartans but formally in the territory of Elis. Here he lived a peaceful family life effectively outside the *polis* system, a precarious situation that his Socrates warns Aristippus about (*Mem.* 2.1.11–15).<sup>20</sup> He is reputed to have sent his sons, Gryllus and Diodorus, to be educated in the Spartan system of state education (DL 2.54), the much-mythologized *agōgē*.<sup>21</sup> Xenophon's long engagement with Sparta and its people, on campaign and within Sparta itself, makes his works a significant source for the city, although his precise stance towards Sparta as opposed to Agesilaus remains controversial.<sup>22</sup>

Both while on campaign and at home in peace, religious observation was an important part of Xenophon's life. He had taken to heart Socrates' criticism that he had failed to consult the Delphic Oracle correctly when planning to join Proxenus and Cyrus (*An.* 3.1.5–8). Important decisions were guided by divine omen, often revealed through sacrifice. He pictured himself celebrating a sacrifice with the community at Scillous, where he had established a shrine to the goddess Artemis (*An.* 5.3.7–8), and contributed to communal feasts.

<sup>18</sup> On Agesilaus' career, see Cartledge 1987.

<sup>19</sup> On Cyrus, see Briant 2002; Mitchell 2023.

<sup>20</sup> It is unclear whether Xenophon's wife, named Philesia (DL 2.52), was an Athenian (Badian 2004: 42).

<sup>21</sup> On Spartan education, see Ducat 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Humble 2022.

However, this was a period of disruption and change in the Peloponnese and wider Greek world, as Spartan fortunes waned and other cities rose to prominence. After Elis increasingly asserted its independence from Spartan control, Scillous was no longer a safe refuge from the constant war between Greek cities. Socrates was right again: life as a non-citizen was precarious. Xenophon and his sons moved to Corinth around 371, after the Spartan defeat at Leuctra (DL 2.56).

Both of Xenophon's sons fought as members of the Athenian cavalry, supporting Sparta against the increasingly powerful Thebes, in the battle of Mantinea in 362, but Gryllus was killed in a skirmish preceding the main battle, in which the Theban general Epaminondas died, ending Thebes's period of dominance (DL 2.54, *Hell.* 7.5.24–5). Xenophon ends his *Hellenica* at this moment of enhanced inter-*polis* upheaval but of greater personal consequence to him than to the warring cities: 'Let events to this point be the part written by me; perhaps what follows will be the concern of another' (*Hell.* 7.5.27).

Diogenes Laertius reports a story about Xenophon's response to his loss:

They say that Xenophon was at that moment performing a sacrifice, wearing a wreath, but, when his son's death was announced to him, he took it off. However, after he learned that his son had died nobly, he put the wreath back on. Some say that he did not shed a tear, but said 'I knew that I had fathered a mortal'.

(DL 2.54–5)

This anecdote, while unlikely to be historical, represents two key aspects of Xenophon's ethics: the incorporation of religious practice and piety into daily life, and the high value he placed on the courageous performance of civic and military duty.

Xenophon shows detailed awareness of Athens' financial crisis after its defeat in the Social War of 357–355, in what appears to be his final work (*Poroi*). Whether he died in Corinth, as Diogenes Laertius states (DL 2.56), or elsewhere, his attention was focused on his home city in his final years.<sup>23</sup> Matthew Christ argues, against William Higgins, that Xenophon's continuing concern for his native city does not presuppose his return there.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps Athens remained for him a city of the imagination.

<sup>23</sup> Whitehead 2019: 7–8.

<sup>24</sup> Higgins 1977: 128–33; Christ 2020: 3–4, see also Anderson 1974: 193.

Xenophon's life outside the *polis* structure gave him leisure to write, but there is little agreement about when his works were produced or circulated, whether they were the product of continuous effort or whether he broke off from and returned to literary activity. A historicist reading, taking account of the way in which he responds to and engages with his contemporaries, not just Plato but other Socratics, as well as writers in other historical and rhetorical genres, points to a period of intense composition later in his life, after his departure from Scillus, at a time when the legacy of Socrates was contested; this 'unitarian' view was first articulated by Schwartz and developed by Higgins.<sup>25</sup> Xenophon's dialogues provide exceptional evidence for the early Socratics.<sup>26</sup>

Scholars have taken the apparent break in the *Hellenica* – between its account of the Thirty in Athens and that of Agesilaus' campaigns against the Persians – as evidence for Xenophon's beginning writing soon after his return from active military service with Agesilaus.<sup>27</sup> Arguing for an early composition date for the first section of the *Hellenica*, Barthold Georg Niebuhr pointed to the apparent closure provided by the 403 oath of reconciliation (*Hell.* 2.4.43), and to Xenophon's use of the key phrase 'still to this day' (*eti kai nun*), less appropriate in the 350s than in the 390s.<sup>28</sup>

One pointer to later composition is the presence of anachronistic references to topics and places of fourth-century concern in dialogues apparently set in the fifth century, before the death of Socrates.<sup>29</sup> The discussion of conflict on the borders of Attica and Boeotia between Socrates and the younger Pericles is one example (*Mem.* 3.5.25–6). This appears linked to Athens' conflicts of the 370s and 360s, a period also documented in the *Hellenica*, rather than those of the 410s, the apparent dramatic date, given that this Pericles is presented as a youth prior to his achieving election as a general. The impossible dramatic date of the *Symposium*, and its clear response to Plato's *Symposium* in its final two chapters, also suggests later composition.<sup>30</sup> Some have argued that Xenophon's original work predates Plato's,

<sup>25</sup> Schwartz 1889; Higgins 1977: 99–102.

<sup>26</sup> Tsouna-McKirahan 1994; Vander Waerdt 1994.

<sup>27</sup> Dillery 1995: 24.

<sup>28</sup> Niebuhr 1827; and see below, n. 52.

<sup>29</sup> Athenaeus found multiple anachronisms in the *Symposium* (*Deipnosophistae* 5.216d–217a).

<sup>30</sup> Danzig 2005: 331; Gilhuly 2024, citing the detailed analysis in Thesleff 1978. See also Huss 1999a; Wohl 2004.



but this seems unlikely, as Xenophon condenses Plato's discussions, rather than Plato expanding Xenophon's.

### **An extraordinary body of work**

Xenophon's corpus has survived complete from antiquity, although some of the shorter works and parts of longer ones may be later interpolations. Categorizing his works by genre is difficult, and is one of the reasons why this book is not arranged by work or genre; as Tim Rood has written, Xenophon is 'a strikingly innovative writer – one of the great generic experimenters of antiquity'.<sup>31</sup> His *Cyropaedia*, for example, contains elements of multiple established genres – Socratic dialogue, protreptic, myth, *politeia*, and more – within an overall structure, similarly to Plato's *Republic*, a work which Xenophon clearly knew.

Establishing Xenophon's intended and actual readership is also difficult. His exploration of similar themes to those of other Socratic writers, substantial intertexts with Platonic dialogue, and thematic overlap with Isocrates all suggest that he at least aimed to participate remotely in the intellectual life of the Athenian elite. The *Hipparchicus* and *Poroi* point to a more active and practical engagement with civic life, while the *Cyropaedia* and *Agesilaus* demonstrate his interest in the new genre of prose encomium and thinking on monarchy, both typified by the work of Isocrates.<sup>32</sup>

Even Xenophon's brief *Constitution of the Lacedaimonians* sits uneasily among other *politeia* texts, through its complex temporal structure and its focus on lifestyle and culture rather than political institutions. Like other stand-alone *politeiai*, it is argumentative and critical rather than descriptive, as is the pseudo-Xenophonic *Constitution of the Athenians*, misattributed to Xenophon in early modern times.<sup>33</sup> In his account of Sparta, Xenophon contrasts past and present throughout the work, leading to a penultimate chapter (which some have rejected as an interpolation) highly critical of the Spartan failure to live up to the ideals of the lawgiver Lycurgus (*LP* 14).<sup>34</sup> He also writes about the household and social institutions which produce citizens

<sup>31</sup> Rood 2005: xix.

<sup>32</sup> Pontier 2018; Atack 2020a: 122–50. See also Chapter 6.

<sup>33</sup> Bordes 1982: 165–203; Osborne 2017; Schofield 2021.

<sup>34</sup> Humble 2004, 2022: 52–61.

(*LP* 1–3), rather than focusing on the political institutions in which they interact, although fragments from the Spartan *politeia* attributed to Critias suggest a similar interest in Spartan social arrangements.<sup>35</sup>

Xenophon's three longest works, the *Hellenica*, *Anabasis*, and *Cyropaedia*, each inhabit multiple genres, from narrative military history to philosophical dialogue, and contain exemplary portraits of a wide range of figures, male and female, as they exert influence on events. But each has an overarching narrative arc, as does the *Memorabilia*.<sup>36</sup>

Although none of Xenophon's works are formally rhetorical, they contain significant speeches, both standalone and grouped, which indicate political and legal context and fill out character portraits.<sup>37</sup> A good example is the arrangement of grouped speeches in the *Anabasis*, at the key turning point as the Ten Thousand assess their situation and, under Xenophon's guidance, prepare to find their way home. He presents successively longer speeches addressed to successively larger groups, starting with questions addressed to himself after a prophetic dream (*An.* 3.1.13–14), and speeches to the commanders of his own group (3.1.15–25). He then addresses first the commanders of the other groups (3.1.35–44) and finally the entire force (3.2.8–32), an occasion for which Xenophon dresses up in his best armour (3.2.7), and which is interrupted by someone sneezing in the crowd (3.2.9), seized upon as an omen.<sup>38</sup>

Punctuating the narrative of military action with speech and debate is a structure familiar from both Homeric epic and the historiography of Herodotus and Thucydides. Other epic features that Xenophon borrows include arming scenes (such as that of Abradatas, *Cyr.* 6.4.2–9), while historiographical echoes include the rewriting of the encounter between Cyrus and Croesus originally presented by Herodotus (*Cyr.* 7.3).<sup>39</sup>

### Originality and method in history

Xenophon's approach to the writing of history reflects the trends of his time. His central organizing method is exemplarity, with his chosen case studies inviting reflection on specific topics of leadership and

<sup>35</sup> Critias DK 88 B32 = Clem. Str. 6.9. See Humble 2022: 93–9.

<sup>36</sup> See e.g. Erbse 1961; Due 1989; Tuplin 1993; Gray 1998.

<sup>37</sup> Christ 2020: 156–60.

<sup>38</sup> Atack 2022; Rood 2004a.

<sup>39</sup> Gray 2011b: 119–78; Ellis 2016.

behaviour worth imitating. He deploys exemplarity both in short works such as the *Agésilas*, built around a single exemplar, and in longer ones such as the *Cyropaedia*, which goes beyond the central exemplar of Cyrus through its many subsidiary character portraits. Even brief sketches can illuminate significant points about leadership.<sup>40</sup> Xenophon's assessments of character, and his crafting of valuable examples, are fully developed, and, as Frances Pownall has shown, offer 'lessons from the past for the moral instruction of his fellow aristocrats'.<sup>41</sup> These lessons typically present lived examples of some of the problems and examples explored more theoretically in the *Memorabilia*, another work once seen as disorganized and episodic, but whose overarching structure and argument have been recognized once again.<sup>42</sup> John Marincola notes that Xenophon evaluates his examples more explicitly than his predecessors had done.<sup>43</sup>

In the nineteenth century, proponents of the new academic discipline of historiography, such as the Danish-German scholar Barthold Niebuhr, criticized Xenophon's work for falling short of modern standards of completeness and accuracy, and for exhibiting bias rather than objectivity.<sup>44</sup> More recent scholars of historiography, however, have rejected the idea that 'scientific' historiography, if possible at all, is the only allowable method, and have recognized both Xenophon's clear and consistent method, and his use of exemplarity to produce a 'moral history', a model that later Greek historians such as Polybius and indeed Diodorus Siculus followed.<sup>45</sup>

The *Hellenica* begins as a near-continuation of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, and echoes Thucydidean features such as the use of speeches to convey analysis.<sup>46</sup> Hans-Joachim Gehrke notes that the *Hellenica* covers events during Xenophon's lifetime, and as a work of contemporary history barely engages with the past.<sup>47</sup> The account of the decline into tyranny of the oligarchy of the Thirty (*Hell.* 2.3–4) imposes an exemplary structure on its historical narrative and portrayal of key political actors such as Critias, leader of the Thirty (see also

<sup>40</sup> Flower 2015; Huitink and Rood 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Pownall 2004: 66.

<sup>42</sup> Erbse 1961; Gray 1998 illuminates the structural technique of amplification, repeating themes with greater detail.

<sup>43</sup> Marincola 2017: xlv.

<sup>44</sup> Niebuhr 1827; see Tuplin 1993: 12–18.

<sup>45</sup> Hau 2016; Pownall 2004.

<sup>46</sup> Rood 2004c.

<sup>47</sup> Gehrke 2023: 88–9.

*Mem.* 1.2.31–8).<sup>48</sup> Its later sections loosely track another conflict; they cover Sparta's further rise to hegemony across the Greek world and the beginning of its fall, amid the shifting balance of power among Greek cities and Athens' changing status within that balance (*Hell.* 3–8).<sup>49</sup> Xenophon recounts both campaigns that he experienced personally and events that show a new trend: the rise of strong military leaders such as Jason of Pherae (*Hell.* 6.1) and Epaminondas of Thebes (*Hell.* 7.4.40, 5.4–25), who threatened the dominance of Athens and Sparta. The late introduction of Epaminondas to the narrative points to Xenophon's notorious selectivity.

Xenophon does, indeed, omit significant events, such as the foundation of the Second Athenian League in 378.<sup>50</sup> As George Cawkwell noted, the *Hellenica* is a 'personal' account; Xenophon writes most thoroughly about people he knew, and events in which he participated, such as Agesilaus' campaign in Asia Minor (*Hell.* 3.3–4.2) and later on the Greek mainland (*Hell.* 4.3–5.4).<sup>51</sup> His chronology is often at odds with that of other sources, even in his relatively detailed account of the Thirty at Athens.<sup>52</sup>

Lisa Hau identifies various strategies by which Xenophon sets out a moral message: explicit statements, juxtapositions, and the narration of exemplars, sometimes mixing them together.<sup>53</sup> Some exemplary narratives are extended – the entire campaign of Agesilaus, for example, might be seen as such – while others are short and focused, such as his assessment of Teleutias, the half-brother of Agesilaus and the Spartan naval commander who sets off home garlanded by his men after defeating the Athenians off the coast of Aegina (*Hell.* 5.1.2–4). Xenophon wraps up this exemplar with an explicit evaluation:

I know that in this case I am not relating anything noteworthy in the way of expenditure or danger or planning, but, by Zeus, I think it worth a man considering what actions made his subordinates feel this way about Teleutias. For this is an action of the greatest value (*axiologōtaton*), much more than those involving great expenditure or danger.

(*Hell.* 5.1.4)

<sup>48</sup> Pownall 2019.

<sup>49</sup> Tuplin 1993.

<sup>50</sup> DS 15.28–9; *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 43. See Cawkwell 1973; Rood 2004c.

<sup>51</sup> Cawkwell 1979: 22–3.

<sup>52</sup> Krentz 1982: 131–52, tabulating Xenophon's account against that of the Aristotelian *Ath. Pol.* (25.1–38.1) and DS 14.4–33.

<sup>53</sup> Hau 2016: 219–20.

Note the superlative: for Xenophon, few achievements outrank successful leadership in the field. Juxtaposition, on the other hand, is a way of making implicit comment through the selection and ordering of material. As deployed by Xenophon, it is both a form of irony and a nod to Thucydides.<sup>54</sup> Examples are the comparison of Agesilaus with the Persian satrap Tissaphernes (*Hell.* 3.4.6, 11) and the Spartan general Lysander (*Hell.* 3.4.7–10; see Chapter 5).

The *Anabasis* contains a single overarching narrative: the story of Xenophon's adventure with the mercenaries of Cyrus, the Ten Thousand, and the return of the group after the death of Cyrus at the battle of Cunaxa in 401 (see Chapter 5). Like the *Hellenica*, it includes exemplary portraits of military and political leaders, which in this work often appear as obituaries, for Cyrus (*An.* 1.9) and the murdered generals Clearchus, Proxenus, and Meno (*An.* 2.6). As noted above, Xenophon's role is established through his speeches, but the journey home is characterized by strife among the Ten Thousand as well as the external dangers they face.

Although his focus in most works is on recent events, Xenophon's writings often feature complex temporal structures, shifting through multiple timeframes to incorporate a deeper past. Typically, his analysis slowly reveals a system which has changed for the worse. The *Lacedaimonion politeia*, for example, starts with the idea that the Spartans preserve the institutions and practices legislated by Lycurgus, which made them great. But eventually (*LP* 14) they are shown to have fallen away from the practices of which Xenophon approves.<sup>55</sup> A similar revelation occurs at greater scale in the *Cyropaedia*, where the final chapter (*Cyr.* 8.8) sets out how, in the present day, long-standing institutions set up by Cyrus the Great have been abandoned. Earlier in the work, their continuance into the present was indicated through the frequent use of phrases such as *eti kai nun*, 'still to this day', the phrase to which Niebuhr objected.<sup>56</sup>

### Order and character in Xenophon's ethical system

The works most in conformity with a generic model are Xenophon's Socratic and other dialogues. While Diogenes Laertius identifies him

<sup>54</sup> For Thucydidean examples, see Rood 1998: 120–1.

<sup>55</sup> Humble 2022: 52–61.

<sup>56</sup> The phrase often appears at critical junctures and conclusions; examples include *Hell.* 2.4.43, *Mem.* 4.8.11, *Symp.* 8.2, *Cyr.* 1.2.1, 1.2.16, 7.1.45–7, 8.6.14.

as the originator of the genre (DL 2.48), many of the *Memorabilia's* short conversations draw on and respond to Plato's dialogues, such as the discussion of friendship in Plato's *Lysis* that is echoed in Socrates' conversation with Critobulus (*Mem.* 2.6).<sup>57</sup> Xenophon's pointed use of characters who also appear in Plato, such as Plato's brother Glaucon (*Mem.* 3.6) and uncle Charmides (*Mem.* 3.7), as well as educators such as Hippias of Elis (*Mem.* 4.4), appears to be an act of criticism. Louis-André Dorion's major commentary on the *Memorabilia* shows the many interactions between Xenophon's work and Plato's, as well as with the thought of other Socratics such as Aristippus and Antisthenes, and the natural philosophy of Presocratic thinkers.<sup>58</sup> It may be helpful to see the Platonic corpus as a 'borrowed landscape' for Xenophon's philosophical writings, in which brief allusions to Plato can open a broader discussion or critique.

Xenophon explores themes and concepts in common with other Socratics, such as the master skill common to or superior to all others, labelled as the 'kingly art' (*basilikē technē*) both because it is practised by kings and because it rules over other skills (*Mem.* 2.1, 4.1; Plato *Statesman* 259d; see Chapter 6).<sup>59</sup> He makes specific criticism of some Socratics: Aristippus, connected with the Cyrenaics, a later hedonist school of philosophy, is Socrates' interlocutor to whom the story of the 'Choice of Heracles' between Virtue and Vice is pointedly retold (*Mem.* 2.1).<sup>60</sup> Like Plato, Xenophon uses historical leaders as characters to represent political and ethical positions: in a short but memorable discussion about law and justice supposedly between Pericles and Alcibiades (*Mem.* 1.2.40–6; Chapter 3); and in the *Hiero*, an imagined dialogue between the fifth-century BCE Syracusan tyrant Hiero and the epinician poet Simonides (Chapter 5).<sup>61</sup>

Both Xenophon's two longer Socratic dialogues, the *Symposium* and the *Oeconomicus*, explore Platonic ethical themes in Xenophontic locations.<sup>62</sup> The *Symposium* matches the erotic theme of Plato's version, although its setting, in a home of Callias at the Piraeus, also nods to

<sup>57</sup> Tamiolaki 2018.

<sup>58</sup> Dorion and Bandini 2000–11 (especially on *Mem.* 3.8–9).

<sup>59</sup> Dorion 2004, Atack 2020a: 98–106.

<sup>60</sup> Johnson 2009; Narcy 1995.

<sup>61</sup> Tamiolaki 2016a; see also Berkel 2020.

<sup>62</sup> See Chapter 2. On *Symp.*, see Christ 2020: 102–25; Johnson 2021: 187–230; Baragwanath and Verity 2022. The classic commentary on *Oec.* is Pomeroy 1994; see also Christ 2020: 72–101; Johnson 2021: 31–278; Baragwanath and Verity 2022. For a Straussian reading of both dialogues, see Pangle 2020.

Plato's *Protagoras* and *Republic*. David Johnson suggests that Xenophon's *Symposium* is intended to correct other literary accounts of Socrates' thought on *eros* and behaviour; others have argued, less plausibly, that Xenophon's work preceded Plato's.<sup>63</sup> The *Oeconomicus* brings together many of Xenophon's key themes, connecting the microcosm of the household to the larger scales of city, army, and empire (*Oec.* 21), and initiating a strand of social and ethical inquiry which continues with Aristotle.<sup>64</sup>

Xenophon's interest in spatial organization becomes a focus on good order in his philosophical works. It is identified as *taxis*, *kosmos*, or occasionally *eukosmia*, all terms which have a military origin.<sup>65</sup> Good order denotes both practical fitness for purpose and a broader alignment with the divine order of the cosmos; it can be instantiated at any level, from household to empire, but is of particular importance on the battlefield and on campaign, as the Athenian gentleman Ischomachus notes (*Oec.* 8.4–6).

Xenophon's ethical system is constructed consistently across his works and sets out a scheme of values, based on the Socratic pursuit of excellence (see Chapter 3), but Xenophon is more concerned than Plato with the regulation of physical appetites.<sup>66</sup> So for Xenophon's ideal citizen, the *kalos kagathos*, the intellectual virtue of *sōphrosunē*, a form of 'rational agency' combining self-control, moderation, and thoughtfulness, is partnered by the physical virtue of *enkrateia*, producing a combination of thoughtful behaviour and physical self-restraint.<sup>67</sup> Its opposite, *akrasia*, is exemplified by physical appetite uncontrolled by self-restraint, such as taking more than one's share of the delicacies at a party (*Mem.* 3.14).

Xenophon explores these virtues and their vices across a wide range of settings, from the Athenian home to cities and empires, and presents both men and women as exemplars. In this respect he is unusual among the philosophers of fourth-century Greece.<sup>68</sup> Virtues and vices take physical form for him; the muscular physique of an elite citizen,

<sup>63</sup> Johnson 2021: 214. See also Danzig 2005; Hobden 2005; and Huss 1999b: 415–17, with notes on parallels between *Symp.* 8.32–5 and erotic speeches in Plato's dialogues.

<sup>64</sup> [Arist.] *Oeconomica*; Natali 1995; Nelsestuen 2017. On the centrality of the *Oeconomicus* to Xenophon's thought, see L. Strauss 1970.

<sup>65</sup> Pontier 2006: 231–44.

<sup>66</sup> On *sōphrosunē* as a virtue, see North 1966 and Rademaker 2005.

<sup>67</sup> Moore 2023: 157–84. See also L. Strauss 1972; Pangle 2018; Sebell 2021.

<sup>68</sup> See Atack 2024; Johnson 2024; Baragwanath forthcoming.

trained in the gymnasium and exercised in the countryside, contrasts with the damaged body of the manual labourer in the city or the flabby bodies of defeated Persians exhibited by Agesilaus as a warning to Greeks of the dangers of a luxurious lifestyle (*Hell.* 3.4.19; *Ages.* 1.28), and indeed of Vice herself, with her 'abundance of flesh' (*Mem.* 2.1.22)

Xenophon expects individuals to take responsibility for maintaining and improving the skills which differentiate them from the poor and enslaved, the foreign, and women. This is particularly true of physical skills and endurance (*karteria*), which benefit from practice (*askēsis*) through activities such as hunting. Encouraging others in the development and maintenance of their skills, and ensuring that they stick to their tasks and responsibilities, are key parts of leadership as managerial oversight (*epimeleia*; see Chapter 4). The *Cyropaedia* is framed as an inquiry into the superlative leadership skills of Cyrus the Great (*Cyr.* 1.1.1–6; see Chapters 5 and 6), while much of the *Memorabilia* details Socrates' ability to impart such skills (Chapter 4). The *Anabasis* provides a series of case studies of leadership in adversity, including critical notes on Spartan leadership (Chapter 6). The ability to impart practical skills to the domestic workforce is equally evidence of leadership skill, exemplified by the wealthy Athenian Ischomachus, who trains both his wife and his (enslaved) workforce well (*Oec.* 7–10, 12–14; Chapter 3).

Xenophon is also concerned with interpersonal relations in the context of civic and military life. This is expressed through the concepts of *charis* and *philia*, both concerning personal relationships of reciprocity. *Philia* is the value invoked in the traditional Greek concern with 'helping friends and harming enemies'; Xenophon devotes much of the second book of the *Memorabilia* to exploring Socrates' thought on how friendships should be created and maintained, and how they might be valued (see Chapter 3).<sup>69</sup> *Charis* is the reciprocal exchange of favours, gifts, and influence, which operates between family members, between democratic citizens in the *polis*, and between powerful rulers like Cyrus and his subjects. Vincent Azoulay describes it as a 'compelling norm' which nonetheless was frequently flouted, making ingratitude a vice which Xenophon frequently criticizes in many kinds of social relationships, from parent and child to leader and citizen body.<sup>70</sup> While *charis* governs many relationships and exchanges, Xenophon is also, in

<sup>69</sup> Tamiolaki 2018; Berkel 2020. For the wider context, see Blundell 1991.

<sup>70</sup> Azoulay 2018a: 21–2.



common with other fourth-century thinkers, much concerned with the question of the just distribution of material and immaterial goods among incommensurate non-equals. The distribution of the spoils of war between those who have made different contributions to their capture offers a pressing example of this problem, addressed explicitly by Cyrus (*Cyr.* 2.2–4; Chapter 6).

At the same time, Xenophon's works were reinterpreted by the political philosopher Leo Strauss and his followers, who treated them as 'esoteric' texts with meanings concealed from non-initiates. Some scholars draw on this tradition to deny that Xenophon is an ethicist and to present him as a 'realist', seeking pragmatic solutions to political problems without concern for custom or morality, citing Xenophon's Cyrus as the key exemplar as he builds his empire and cements personal control over it.<sup>71</sup> Such readings explore the explicitly military and political elements of Xenophon's work, especially the *Cyropaedia* and its account of Cyrus' rise to power, and the regime transition ('republic to empire') between the limited monarchy of Persia and the autocratic empire that Cyrus creates. They observe how Cyrus is taught by his father to use deceit as a management tool (*Cyr.* 1.6; see Chapter 6), and how he employs those techniques himself to outmanoeuvre his uncle Cyaxares for command and loyalty of the Median forces (*Cyr.* 5.5; see Chapter 6).<sup>72</sup> Cyrus becomes not a positive exemplar for imitation, but a warning to those tempted to imitate him.<sup>73</sup>

Twentieth-century analytic philosophers, like nineteenth-century historians, saw little of value in Xenophon's portrait of Socrates, compared with Plato's version with his emphasis on dialectic and intellectual puzzles, and the epistemology and metaphysics of the *Republic* and *Phaedo*, topics largely (though not entirely) absent from Xenophon's Socratic works. These critics imagined the real-life Xenophon, in J. K. Anderson's words, 'hanging around the outskirts of a discussion, picking up something of the manner but not the matter'.<sup>74</sup> Bertrand Russell was damning in his assessment of 'a stupid man's report of what a clever man says', but, as Gregory Vlastos noted,

<sup>71</sup> Strauss's key contributions include L. Strauss 1972 (*Memorabilia*) and L. Strauss 2013 (*Hiero*); see Burns 2015. Critiques of Straussian approaches to Xenophon include Dorion 2001 (*Mem.* 4.4); Gray 2011b (focused on the *Cyropaedia*); and Rood 2015 (*Anabasis*).

<sup>72</sup> See Chapter 5. 'Republic to empire' readings of the *Cyropaedia* include Newell 1983 and Nadon 2001.

<sup>73</sup> See Reisert 2009.

<sup>74</sup> Anderson 1974: 21.

Xenophon is 'anything but a stupid man' who 'displays shrewd judgement', and his work presents important testimony, albeit in Vlastos' view limited in understanding of the philosophical details.<sup>75</sup>

More recently, scholars such as Louis-André Dorion have shown how Xenophon's dialogues contain a distinctive and coherent presentation both of a system of thought and also of the contested legacy of Socrates.<sup>76</sup> In this reading, the *Memorabilia* engages extensively with the work of Plato and with other Socratics such as Aristippus and Antisthenes, and provides important evidence for the early reception of the natural philosophy of Presocratic thinkers.<sup>77</sup>

The 'dark' readings of Straussians have been opposed by those working within the more literary and humanistic field of Classics, whose readings acknowledge the complexity and nuance of Xenophon's writing along with its literary and humanistic qualities. Literary scholars such as Vivienne Gray have rediscovered the strengths of Xenophon's work and have reasserted the seriousness of his endeavour and the skill with which he carries it out.<sup>78</sup> Sarah Pomeroy, Emily Baragwanath, and others have shown how his focus on the home and the personal makes a distinctive contribution at odds with the often misogynistic context of the Greek world.<sup>79</sup>

### Style and language

From antiquity onwards, Xenophon's writing – and indeed his person – have been praised for their charm and beauty. Diogenes Laertius described Xenophon himself as 'very handsome' (DL 2.48), adding that 'he was called the Attic muse for the sweetness of his style' (DL 2.57), and that this led to Plato's rivalry with him. Another ancient literary critic, Demetrius, noted that Xenophon was able to deploy 'charm' through skilful writing (*On Style* 134, 137–9). Cicero wrote that 'the Muses were said to speak with the voice of Xenophon' (*De oratore* 62).<sup>80</sup> However, although Xenophon's style was much

<sup>75</sup> Vlastos 1991: 101, citing Russell 1945: 83. Vlastos praised the wit of Xenophon's *Symposium*. See Irwin 1974 for a strong statement of this critique of Xenophon.

<sup>76</sup> Best summarized in Dorion 2017; fully set out in Dorion and Bandini 2000–11; Dorion 2013; and Dorion and Bandini 2021.

<sup>77</sup> Sedley 2007: 78–86.

<sup>78</sup> E.g. Gray 1998, 2011b.

<sup>79</sup> E.g. Pomeroy 1994; Baragwanath 2002.

<sup>80</sup> See Gray 2017 and Rood 2017b.

discussed in antiquity, it is only more recently that scholars have used modern techniques of literary and linguistic analysis to demonstrate the careful composition of his work. Narratologists, for example, have shown how artfully he constructs his narratives, and how apparent digressions emphasize important themes.<sup>81</sup> The flashback to Xenophon's conversation with Socrates before his departure from Athens, for example, is positioned in the *Anabasis* at the point when the character Xenophon begins to emerge as a leader deploying Socratic values (*An.* 3.1.5–7).

Xenophon offers readers a mixture of vivid narrative, dramatic tableaux, witty dialogue, and impassioned speeches. He also comments on and connects his narrative and analysis to those of other writers, such as Plato in his Socratic works, although these references are often oblique and unmarked. There may, therefore, be other allusions to Socratic texts by other authors whose texts are lost; his accounts of Socrates' encounters with Antiphon (*Mem.* 1.6) and Antisthenes, for example (*Mem.* 2.5; *Symp.* 4.34–44), hint at continuing debates, the full details of which are unknowable. Echoes of other texts and writers feature across his work; as noted above, his historical writing is in dialogue with Thucydides and his philosophical writing with Plato, and like Plato he often nods to Homer and the epic tradition.

Xenophon's descriptive tableaux are a notable feature of his narrative work, incorporating both description and implicit commentary on the scene and events, often delivered through intertextual parallels with Homeric epic and historiography.<sup>82</sup> His account of the return of Alcibiades to Athens from exile in 408/7 (*Hell.* 1.4.12–16) demonstrates these features, recalling Thucydides' depiction of the departure of the Sicilian expedition from Athens' port in 415 (*Thuc.* 6.31.1–32.2), and of the arrival of news of its defeat in 413 (*Thuc.* 8.1.1–2). Alcibiades, of course, had sailed with the Sicilian expedition as one of its generals, but did not return, as he went into traitorous exile in Sparta. Xenophon's account contains features of both Thucydidean passages, and follows Thucydides in focalizing the departure scene through the responses of the watching crowds:

When [Alcibiades] saw that the city was favourable to him and that he had been elected a general, and his friends had privately sent for him, he sailed into the Piraeus on the

<sup>81</sup> E.g. Rood 2012a, 2012b.

<sup>82</sup> Gray 2011b.

day when the city celebrates the Plynteria, and the shrine of Athena is covered up, which some people thought was prejudicial both for him and the city. For no-one in the city would dare to undertake any serious business on this day. But when he sailed in, a crowd both from Piraeus and the city, gathered by the ships, wandering about and wanting to see Alcibiades. Some were saying that he was the strongest of the citizens and he alone had been unjustly exiled, and that those less capable than him had plotted against him, making even more shameful allegations and conducting politics in their own private interest, while that man had always increased public resources both from his own and the city's capacity...but others said that he alone was responsible for their past troubles, and that the things they feared happening to the city were a risk if he alone were in place as a leader. (Xen. *Hell.* 1.4.12–17)

Xenophon evokes both the excitement of the scene and the division of opinion about Alcibiades among the Athenians between the positive and the negative, alerting the reader to the political conflict which materializes in the subsequent narrative. His characteristic focus on religious detail – the inauspicious day of the return – here echoes the unusual prominence of religion in Thucydides' account, where the expedition's departure had been accompanied by prayers and libations (Thuc. 6.32.1–2), and its failure by anger against seers (Thuc. 8.1.1). Xenophon also sets up future steps in the narrative: Alcibiades is met on his arrival by his cousin Euryptolemus (*Hell.* 1.4.19), who will later speak in defence of the generals prosecuted after the battle of Arginusae (*Hell.* 1.7.12, 16–34).<sup>83</sup>

Xenophon uses similarly vivid scenes to set up important narrative strands in the *Cyropaedia*, as when the courtier Araspas describes his first encounter with the Asian queen Pantheia, who has been captured after Cyrus' forces defeated her husband's allies in a key battle. Araspas describes what he saw when he went to explain her fate to her:

when we entered her tent, we didn't identify her at first. For she was sitting on the ground with all her attendants around her. Then, since we wished to know which was the mistress, we looked around, and at once she seemed different from all the other women, even though she was sitting with her head covered and looking at the ground. When we ordered her to get up, all the women around her got up with her, and she was distinguished first by her height, then by her excellence and graceful posture, even though she was wearing humble clothing. It was clear that her tears were flowing, some down her dress, others even to her feet. (*Cyr.* 5.1.4–6)

At this point, the oldest of Araspas' party explains to Pantheia that she is being allotted to Cyrus, and Araspas reports her reaction:

<sup>83</sup> See Chapter 4 for a detailed reading of the trial.

When the woman heard this, she tore her outer clothing from top to bottom and wailed; her attendants cried along with her. At that moment the greater part of her face became visible, and her neck and arms too. You can be sure, Cyrus, that I, and all the others who saw her, agreed that there was not a mortal woman of such a kind in Asia. But you absolutely must see her yourself. (Cyr. 5.1.6–7)

This scene further exemplifies the way in which Xenophon exploits the power of looking, and of the description of spectacle, as the queen's attendants act in chorus with her; there may be some orientalism in play in his presentation of the sights of Cyrus' court and its exoticized captives.<sup>84</sup> As with the Ten Thousand's sighting of the sea, he reveals details gradually, as Pantheia becomes visible. Araspas' narration also exemplifies Xenophon's control of his narrative through the use of irony. In this case, Araspas will later become obsessed with Pantheia's beauty, and will stalk and harass her, threatening her with sexual assault (Cyr. 6.1.31–7; see Chapter 6); his initial description of her hints at this later development.

Xenophon's varied diction, which incorporates different dialectical forms and military and technical language, further enriches the texture of his prose. His careful use of Ionic and Doric dialect forms contributes to the overall effect of his writing, and indeed may better represent the Athenian language of his time than the 'pure' Attic of the orators.<sup>85</sup> Huitink and Rood note that this development is anticipated by the Old Oligarch (ps-Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 2.8) and also suggest that Xenophon deploys non-Attic forms to internationalize his work for a wider readership, pointing to their greater presence in works such as the *Cyropaedia* which are not focused on Athens itself.

Using technical language enabled Xenophon to make precise points about military action, as well as adding colour and interest. Huitink and Rood note that military jargon itself is often metaphorical, such as the use of parts of the body to describe a column of troops (for example *pleurai*, 'flank', at *An.* 3.2.36). They add that this use of technical terms represents a development in historiography which is continued by Polybius.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Whitmarsh 2018: 62–72 on cultural hybridity in the *Cyropaedia*; see also Chapter 6, and Harman 2008, 2023: 117–23. Xenophon's description of the *hetaira* Theodote's home (*Mem.* 3.11) receives a similar treatment: see Goldhill 1998.

<sup>85</sup> Huitink and Rood 2019: 27–9.

<sup>86</sup> Huitink and Rood 2019: 31–2.

Xenophon's use of speeches contributes to the management of narrative pace, pausing the action while its significance is made explicit. His authorial judgements echo the style of his speeches – Huitink and Rood note the presence of *pan-* compounds, denoting scale and universality.<sup>87</sup> He uses strings of superlatives to emphasize important points, as at *Mem.* 3.3.9, where he argues that people are especially (*malista*) obedient to the best (*beltistous*) and most knowledgeable experts in their field – from medicine (*iatrikōtaton*) to helmsmanship (*kubernētikōtaton*) and farming (*georgikōtaton*). The herald Cleocritus' reconciliatory speech to the warring Athenians uses similar language to emphasize important religious and cultural arguments (*Hell.* 2.4.21–2).

Finally, Xenophon makes consistent use of vivid imagery to illustrate his political points, including collapsing image and referent with troubling political and ontological implications. Some of this imagery is traditional and Homeric, such as the analogy between kings and shepherds (*Cyr.* 8.2.14), which characterizes rule and leadership as a form of care:<sup>88</sup>

Why do you think Homer called Agamemnon 'shepherd of the people'? Is it because the shepherd must see to it that his sheep are safe and have what they need, so that the purpose for which they are kept is achieved? (*Mem.* 3.2.1)

Xenophon appears at times to take the implicit consequences of this image – that those under the care of rulers are inferior to them in the same way that animals are to their human shepherds – as evidence that social hierarchies have a natural cause in the essential nature of the parties in the relationship. The uneducated, women and young men alike, are likened to unbroken and untrained animals (*Symp.* 2.10–11; *Mem.* 4.1.3; *Oec.* 3.10–11). And, like Plato, he collapses the personal status of enslavement with the political experience of unfreedom (*Mem.* 2.1, 3.5).

### Conclusion

Xenophon's unusual life influenced the topics about which he wrote, from his encounters with Socrates to his experiences of the Persian empire and its rulers. His varied works often sit uneasily within modern

<sup>87</sup> Huitink and Rood 2019: 34–6.

<sup>88</sup> Brock 2004; Atack 2020c.

classifications of literary genre. However, all share features such as a focus on exemplary narrative, the use of speeches to convey judgement, and a consistent and systematic ethics with a Socratic heritage, focused on values such as self-control and generosity. While philosophers and historians aligned to some methodologies have disputed the value of his work as evidence for the thought of Socrates or the history of Athens, more sophisticated evaluations by current scholars have demonstrated the skill with which Xenophon crafts his vivid narratives and analysis, across and between different genres.