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Foreword

The idea of devoting a colloquium to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, as well as a number of suggestions for particular lecture topics, can be traced back to a brainstorming session of the then series editors of *Classica et Orientalia*. At the suggestion of Robert Rollinger, the topic became the subject of a Melammu workshop, which took place on 1–2 December 2017 at the Seminar for Ancient History of the Philipps-Universität Marburg and was organized by Sabine Müller and Bruno Jacobs. Among the invited speakers – and also guest of honour – was Christopher Tuplin, who had recently celebrated his 65th birthday. The conference was dedicated to him to mark this occasion. To round out the volume thematically, Bruno Jacobs invited a number of other Xenophon specialists to write essays on topics that were unrepresented in the original conference programme. We would like to thank them and all those who participated in the conference for their contributions.

We also thank the Marburg helpers Sarina Pal, Michelle Simon, Julia Hartrumpf and Timo Beermann for their commitment, which contributed greatly to the success of the conference.

Last but not least we would like to thank the Harrassowitz publishing house and its staff, especially Barbara Krauß and Ulrike Melzow, for their professional and dedicated support in the publication of this volume.

Berlin, March 2020
Bruno Jacobs and Sabine Müller

Straussian Readings of the *Cyropaedia*: Challenges and Controversies*

Melina Tamiolaki (University of Crete)

Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* recounts the life and glorious deeds of Cyrus the Great, founder of the Persian Empire (600–530 BCE). Xenophon considers Cyrus an exception to the rule of failure of all regimes to secure stability. According to the reflection expressed in the proem of the work, the Persian monarch possessed the knowledge of ruling (ἐπισταμένως: 1.1.3[1]), and this is why he managed to create a long-lasting empire, by gaining the willing obedience not only of the Persians, but also of many other nations (ἑκόντων ... ἑκόντων: 1.1.4).

The *Cyropaedia* thus initially prepares the reader for a straightforward praise of Cyrus. However, Cyrus' portrait, as it unfolds in the various episodes of the work, turns out to be far from idealized: he appears manipulative and self-serving on many occasions both during his childhood and in his adult life, and he does not hesitate to adopt even tyrannical practices, especially after conquering Babylon (books 7 and 8).[2] The epilogue of the work (8.8) creates more complications: in this section Xenophon becomes openly aggressive and fiercely decries the moral decline of the Persians of his time. The question thus arises: if Xenophon intended the *Cyropaedia* to be a pure encomium of Cyrus, why would he undermine this positive impression by inserting a vigorous critique of the Persians?[3]

Given these enigmatic features, it is no wonder that, perhaps more than any other work of Xenophon, the *Cyropaedia* has triggered much debate and controversy. Various analyses have been proposed for its interpretation: some scholars concede that Cyrus' character and practices are indeed often questionable, but that he still represents the ideal

* I thank Michael Flower and the anonymous reviewers of this volume for useful comments on my paper. I would also like to acknowledge the support of my research by the Foundation for Education and European Culture (IPEP, Athens).

1 Unless otherwise noted, references in this paper are to the *Cyropaedia*.

2 For Cyrus as manipulative, see mainly Tatum 1989. For his tyrannical practices, see Gera 1993, 285–299. Cf. Newell 2013a.

3 In the past the authenticity of the epilogue had been questioned (see Azoulay 2004a, 442, n. 41, for an overview of the debate in the 19th century) or chapter 8.8 was considered at best a later addition, the most characteristic example being the Loeb editor, who succinctly notes (Miller 1932, 438): "It spoils the perfect unity of the work up to this chapter ... the reader is recommended to close the book at this point [i.e. at the point of the death of Cyrus] and read no further." Today most commentators regard the epilogue as Xenophontic. A recent exception is Hirsch 1985, 91–97.

ruler. Others tend to minimize Cyrus' negative traits, by maintaining that Cyrus' portrait is undeniably positive; from this perspective, the epilogue of the work would confirm the praise for Cyrus, since it would exemplify the problems caused by the absence of the ideal leader. Finally, according to a third line of interpretation, Cyrus' portrait is negative and it is precisely his ambivalent personality and mainly deceptive tactics which pave the way for the decline of the Persian Empire.[4] This last approach is greatly inspired by the work of the Jewish-American political philosopher, Leo Strauss, and will constitute the focus of this paper.

Leo Strauss (1899–1973) was Professor of Classics and Political Science at the University of Chicago. He was a prolific thinker who studied both ancient and modern philosophy.[5] He is famous for bringing to notice the so-called "esoteric writing": according to Strauss, ancient authors (but also some modern philosophers) practiced this form of writing, which consisted in exposing their views in a covert manner, often loaded with irony. The reason for this way of presentation was, Strauss claims, fear of persecution. Consequently, in order to decipher an author's views, one needs to "read between the lines", that is to read in detail, paying great attention both to what is said and (perhaps more) to what is omitted. Since not many people are equally trained or skilled in this way of reading, Strauss maintains that the "messages" of esoteric authors are ultimately intended to be grasped only by an elite few.[6] Reading between the lines, irony, ambiguity, concealment, dissimulation: these are some catchwords which aptly refer to the Straussian method. Strauss also emphasized some specific principles for the study of ancient authors: these include emphasis on what lies "at the center" (e.g. in a narrative, in a speech, or even in a whole work), attention to repetitions, analysis of titles of works and exploration of etymology (mainly of proper names).[7]

Leo Strauss applied his method to the study of ancient authors, mainly Plato and Aristotle. He also developed a great interest in Xenophon and devoted much of his work to this author, bringing his sophistication to the fore and contributing to his rehabilitation. For instance, in a famous article, Strauss suggested that the praise of Sparta in Xenophon's *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* is largely ironical and that Xenophon's real intention was to blame the Spartans.[8] Another remarkable work by Strauss is his analysis of Xenophon's *Hiero* (1961), a dialogue between the poet Simonides and the tyrant of Syracuse, Hiero, which discusses the pleasures and miseries of tyranny. By providing subtle analyses of this conversation, Strauss illustrates that Simonides, although a wise

4 For Cyrus as both ambivalent and (in a sense) ideal, see Tatum 1989, Gera 1993, Danzig 2012, Sandridge 2012; for Cyrus as an unquestionably ideal ruler, see mainly Due 1989, Mueller-Goldingen 1995, and Gray 2011, 246–290; for Cyrus' negative portrait, see Nadon 2001 and political scientists (see below, n. 15).

5 For Strauss' intellectual biography, see Tanguay 2007.

6 For the fear of persecution, see Strauss 1952. For the principle of "reading between the lines", see Patterson 1993, Melzer 2015. For Strauss' recovery of esotericism, see Lampert 2009.

7 For these specific principles, see Buzzetti 2014, 7–29. For criticism of these principles, see Rood 2015, 147–148, Tamiolaki 2015b.

8 Strauss 1939.

man, does not view tyranny as morally objectionable.[9] Finally, as is to be expected of a philosopher, Strauss dealt with Xenophon's Socratic works. Two monographs are the fruits of this study: *Xenophon's Socratic Discourse. An Interpretation of the* Oeconomicus (1970) and *Xenophon's Socrates* (1972). The first treats the *Oeconomicus*, while the second offers a lengthy analysis of the *Memorabilia* and shorter analyses of the *Apology* and *Symposium*. For Strauss, the first work investigates the tension between the life of the gentleman (represented by Ischomachus) and the life of the philosopher (represented by Socrates). Concerning the *Memorabilia*, Strauss puts forth the provocative idea that the Greek title (Ἀπομνημονεύματα) may mean "to remember one's grudge". He bases his interpretation on passage 1.2.31, in which the verb ἀπομνημονεύω occurs for the only time in the work; in this context it refers to Critias' remembering of Socrates reprimanding him for his love for Euthydemus and has the meaning of "resenting", "remembering one's grudge". Strauss then proposes a comparison between Critias and Xenophon: Socrates had called the latter a fool for a similar reason to that for which he had scolded Critias, because he was willing to kiss a beautiful boy (*Mem.* 1.3.13). Strauss thus concludes that Xenophon's recollection of Socrates also included remembering a grudge.[10]

Leo Strauss did not produce a book-lengthy study on the *Cyropaedia*. However, his approach to this work can be revealed by scattered observations throughout his corpus. For instance, he considers the *Cyropaedia* "a book of sublime irony"[11] and observes that the purpose of this work is "more theoretical than practical".[12] He also compares the Persian education, as it is presented in the *Cyropaedi*a, to the Spartan education, as it is depicted in the *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*.[13] He further dwells on Cyrus' tyrannical traits and establishes contrasts between Cyrus and Socrates, but also between Cyrus and Xenophon, especially regarding issues of morality, justice and political courage.[14]

Strauss' views have exerted a great influence, but have also triggered a lot of controversy. Political scientists, especially in the US, are the only category of scholars who openly follow Strauss' line of interpretation and more or less acknowledge their debt to him.[15] Literary scholars, on the other hand, appear rather divided: a few of them admit

9 See Buzzetti 2015, 241.

10 This interpretation is considered exaggerated even by Straussian scholars. See Bonnette 2015, 289: "It is of course absurd to suggest that Xenophon resented Socrates in any way ... Strauss knows it is absurd, says it is absurd, and yet wants us to think about it anyway. He may want us to ponder the difference between Critias and Xenophon, to consider whether Socrates could benefit every one of his companions to the same degree, or whether Socrates did not provide his unjust enemies with a motive for attacking him."

11 See Lampert 2009, 68 (citing Strauss' letters).

12 Strauss 2013/1961, 107, n.2.

13 Strauss 1939, 508–509.

14 For Strauss' views on Cyrus and Socrates, see Ruderman 2015, 198, 210. For his views on Cyrus and Xenophon, see Stauffer 2015, 310–311.

15 To this category of scholars belong (I limit myself here to scholars who have analyzed the *Cyropaedia,* although this list is not exhaustive): Bruell 1987, Rubin 1989, Glenn 1992, Nadon 2001, Faulkner 2007, Whidden 2007a 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, Rasmussen 2009, Field 2012, Newell 2013a, 2013b,

that Leo Strauss' approach has some merits;[16] others may express views akin to Strauss', but without having been influenced by him;[17] finally, Strauss' method of reading and interpretation has become the object of vigorous critique.[18]

In what follows I will not deal with literary scholars, since their reference to Leo Strauss is either critical or incidental. I will present an overview of the main interpretive findings of Straussian[19] political scientists who have worked on the *Cyropaedia* and will

Bartlett 2015, Pangle 2017. See also the scholars cited by Whidden 2008a, 36, n.19. All these scholars are political scientists; they cite Strauss and engage with his interpretations, which they expand or qualify. Nadon and Buzzetti appear the most enthusiastic about Leo Strauss. The first notes (Nadon 2001, 3): "Strauss encourages us to reflect on the remarkable stability of Xenophon's reputation over the centuries and to wonder whether it can simply be ascribed to luck." Buzzetti (2014, 8) writes: "It is a pleasure to acknowledge my intellectual debt to Strauss."

16 See mainly Higgins 1977, xiii: "There is one scholar, however, to whom this study owes an enormous debt. Leo Strauss has performed two great services for the understanding of Xenophon. He has displayed before the text a critical humility which should always have been present ... he has understood, as few have, the absolute need when studying Xenophon to read between the lines and to appreciate the centrality of irony in a Socratic context." Cf. also Carlier 2010, 332, n.12: "We sometimes have the impression that commentators accuse Xenophon of being superficial only because they read him superficially. In reaction to this tendency to depreciate Xenophon, Strauss has attempted, through precise reading of the texts, to illuminate the complexity, subtlety and the depth of Xenophon's thought ... Though Strauss's interpretations are questionable now and then, his method is the only legitimate one." Carlier also proposes an ironical reading of the *Cyropaedia*. For the possible merits of his reading, see Tamiolaki 2015a.

17 For instance, Azoulay (2004, 295–300) analyzes the blurring of boundaries between friendship and slavery and also speaks (Azoulay 2004a, 364–366, 422) about the "infantilization" of Cyrus' subjects. These ideas are akin to the Straussian-influenced interpretation of Whidden 2008b. Tuplin (1993, 61) interprets the Thebans' speech in Xenophon's *Hellenica* as a satire of imperial ambition, an idea with a strong Straussian echo (see Strauss' interpretation of the *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* as "disguised satire"). However, neither Azoulay nor Tuplin are Straussians: the first provides a critique of Leo Strauss (Azoulay 2004a, 17–19), while the second does not include Strauss in his bibliography. Cf. also Too 1998 who provides an ironical interpretation of the *Cyropaedia*, but expresses reservations about Strauss' method (298): "Reading between the lines is a mode of interpretation which takes enormous liberties, and I would argue that the discrepancies in the *Cyropaedia* are sufficiently explicit to demand that we read the lines themselves."

18 See mainly Gray 2011, 54–69, Dorion 2010, Rood 2015. Johnson 2012 presents a stimulating discussion of Strauss' philosophical views and acknowledges some merits in his approach.

19 The term "Straussians" has complex connotations. See Zuckert 2009, 263: "more than most thinkers of the twentieth century, Leo Strauss polarized his audience. One was either for him or against him, influenced by him, or repelled by him. Thus has arisen the phenomenon, nearly unique among the century's academic thinkers, of a recognized group of followers, called 'Straussians'. Where and when the label arose, and what exactly it means, are uncertain. It seems originally to have been a label invented by the opponents of Strauss and applied to individuals who had studied with or were manifestly influenced by him." Throughout this paper, I use the term "Straussian" to refer (neutrally) to scholars influenced by Leo Strauss. It has to be noted, however, that Straussians are not unanimous in their interpretations (of the *Cyropaedia* or in general). See below our analysis and concluding remarks.

pose the question whether and to what extent these findings can be reconciled with a literary interpretation of this work.

Cyrus' Education: Problems and Limits

The theme of education (παιδεία) occupies a prominent place in the *Cyropaedia*. Education in this work has both a narrow and a broad sense.[20] The narrow sense includes Cyrus' education in Persia. Xenophon describes the Persian educational system in the first book: it is a hierarchized system, which inflicts severe punishments on wrongdoers, divides young men of the elite into classes according to their age, and is greatly preoccupied with training in virtue, especially justice and gratitude (1.2.2–16).[21] Cyrus receives only part of this education (till the age of twelve); he then moves to Media, to the court of his grandfather, Astyages, and comes back to Persia later, at the age of fifteen, for one year (1.5.1).

The ensuing books of the *Cyropaedia*, however, provide examples of education in a broader sense (i.e. outside Persian institutions). There are many people who teach (or attempt to teach) Cyrus: for instance, he learns from his Median grandfather to appreciate luxury and solemnity (1.3.1–12), and his mother fears that he will also learn tyrannical practices in Media (1.3.18); his father Cambyses teaches him leadership tactics and moderation (1.6, 8.5.23–26); Tigranes, the son of the Armenian king who eventually becomes Cyrus' ally, lectures on the importance of pity and forgiveness (3.1.13–30); Croesus, Cyrus' captive, also offers a teaching in moderation and self-awareness (*Cyr.* 7.2.17–25). These narratives raise several questions: to what extent does Cyrus grasp the lessons from the teaching of various people who try to educate him? Has Cyrus' distance from the Persian system impacted negatively on his character and personality? If Cyrus had completed his education in Persia, would he have acquired a proper education or was the conflict between Persian traditional values and Cyrus' extremely ambitious nature inevitable?

Straussian scholars provide various answers to these questions. Some of them view Cyrus' education with sympathy. In this, they do not greatly depart from the interpretations of literary scholars.[22] For example, Christopher Nadon praises its multicultural character: "today, such an education is often advocated as a means to make us tolerant by deepening our understanding of and appreciation for the history and customs of traditions other than our own. It also holds out the promise of a better understanding of our own culture by providing different perspectives from which to examine it, perspectives that will broaden our vision and reveal as mere prejudice assumptions that had at first seemed self-evident truths. Both of these aims appear to find their full achievement in the person of Cyrus."[23] Robert Bartlett also tends to view Cyrus' education positively. By comparing his Persian and Median education, he suggests that Cyrus attributes equal importance to

20 See Tuplin 1996.
21 See Tuplin 1994, Azoulay 2007, for analogies with Sparta.
22 See Azoulay 2004b for Cyrus' double education in Persia and Media.
23 Nadon 2001, 43.

both: "we cannot understand Cyrus without seeing that he is deeply attracted to both – to virtue or nobility (consider 1.3.3), which may well demand the sacrifice of one's own good, on the one hand, and to the attainment of one's own truest good or advantage, on the other, which may well include one's own pleasure (consider 1.3.3 [7–8]; compare 1.3.4)".[24]

Another group of Straussian scholars view the theme of education more critically, underlining both the limits of the Persian educational system and the deficiencies of Cyrus' own education and perception of justice. These scholars mainly analyze omissions, both on a linguistic and on a thematic level, while they also dwell on the tension between Persian values and Cyrus' imperialism. Christopher Whidden, for instance, detects the following problems in the Persian educational system: a) its resorting to force and violence rather than persuasion (the imposition of severe punishments, etc.); b) the absence of philosophy and moral education (he further wonders what would have happened if Cyrus had lived in Athens and had received a philosophical education); c) its failure to accommodate and satisfy extremely ambitious individuals such as Cyrus; d) its failure to defend its own values when these were challenged (see below, the observations about Cyrus' first speech to his peers).[25] He goes on to characterize Cyrus' education as heterodox: "While Cyrus learned a great deal from his traditional Persian education, he also had, as it were, a second Persian education, one that he taught himself without his teachers' awareness and that proved more important than his traditional education, insofar as it proved to be the impetus for the empire. This second or heterodox facet of Cyrus's education consisted in his coming to see for himself the limitations and weaknesses of the Persian regime, which he attempted to correct by subverting the old Persian republic and establishing the Persian Empire on its ruins."[26] He also proposes a comparison between Cyrus and Socrates' notorious students, Critias and Alcibiades, with regards to teaching in forensic analysis: "Like Critias and Alcibiades, Cyrus displays occasional signs of immoderation … after he has become quite skilled in forensics (1.3.16–17), which from Xenophon's point of view is a sign that the Persians should probably have waited until Cyrus was a bit older before teaching him the finer points of dialectic … the Persians failed in the case of Cyrus … in part because they began teaching rhetoric and dialectic before they should have."[27]

Whidden further comments on the episode with the boys and their cloaks, a story which exemplifies Cyrus' distinctive perception of justice: when a big boy who had a small cloak took a big cloak from a small boy and distributed the two cloaks according to size, Cyrus decided that each boy should keep what was fitting (ἁρμόττοντα … χιτῶνα: 1.3.17). He was not acquainted with the concept of rightful possession (κτῆσις δικαία: 1.3.17) and that is why his teacher flogged him.[28] Whidden observes (my emphasis, I note

24 Bartlett 2015, 145.

25 Whidden 2007a, 555–560. Rasmussen (2009, 13) also finds the following features of the Persian regime problematic: its implicit oligarchic structure, its inflexible notion of justice, and the tension between the idea of civic virtue and the ambitions of its most talented citizens.

26 Whidden 2007a, 546.

27 Whidden 2007b, 142.

28 For this episode (*Cyr.* 1.3.17), see Danzig 2009.

his analysis of omissions): "The fact that Cyrus's teachers *did not successfully persuade him* to rethink his verdict proved highly consequential for them, as their most talented student apparently drew the lesson that no rational argument against his verdict existed. Consider the fact that when Cyrus returned home to Persia after his trip to Media, he did so only to avoid arousing his father's anger ... (1.4.25). *The possibility that he might have had something additional to learn from the Persian system of education never even crossed his mind*."[29]

Laura Field is another political scientist who is critical of Cyrus' education. She also exploits omissions in Xenophon's narrative and questions the overall quality of the education Cyrus receives (my emphasis in the quotations below): "Because of his great nature, Cyrus arguably needs a good education more than most, and it is far from clear that he gets it in Persia or Media. The education in Old Persia is excessively negative, focused narrowly on obedience and the body, and even tinged with brutality ... In Media, Cyrus' development proceeds largely unchecked for several years, and here our questions about his education grow more acute. Cyrus receives *no guidance or admonishment while there*."[30] She goes on to challenge even the success of the education Cyrus receives from his father Cambyses: "Though Cambyses does go some way towards discussing the ends of politics with his son ... *he falls short of having Cyrus question* the coherence of his own actions and ends, and does not shy away from supportive lessons in political ambition ... He is largely *absent* from Cyrus' childhood and *never tries to dampen Cyrus' ambitions to dominion* in any obvious way, *nor does he turn him towards other kinds of pursuits and interest*, including the pursuit of knowledge ... It is perhaps surprising, then, that by the end of Book 1, Cyrus is leading the Persian army as general and that the remaining seven books tell the story of his conquests. Of course, Cyrus will continue to learn over the course of his campaigning career, but through the *brevity and sparse content of the account of his formal upbringing*, Xenophon raises questions early on about the adequacy of Cyrus' 'education'."[31]

Some aspects of these interpretations sound anachronistic. For example, the ideal of obedience and the implementation of strict punishments may appear harsh from our own perspective, but Xenophon does not present (or insinuate) a negative evaluation of them. Nor can we easily infer from the narrative of the *Cyropaedia* that these traits (or the absence of liberal education) are responsible for the negative features of Cyrus' personality. On the other hand, the analysis of the tension between the values of moderation and imperialism seems worth pursuing: the *Cyropaedia* can indeed be read as a complex and multi-faceted reflection on empire. What is absent, however, from Straussian analyses of this theme is a better contextualization of the phenomenon of imperialism (since Xenophon was admittedly not the first Greek thinker to discuss it; and it is a pity that Herodotus and Thucydides scarcely appear in Straussian approaches). The emphasis on omissions (what Cyrus does not do or say, or what he could have done or said, what Xenophon does not say or could have said, etc.) also yields interesting insights, since it alerts readers to alternative scenarios and eventually highlights ways in which the *Cyropaedia* could have been more

29 Whidden 2007a, 547.
30 Field 2012, 727.
31 Field 2012, 727–728.

moralizing (and hence more simplistic). In this way, Straussian interpretations can often throw Xenophon's sophistication into relief.

Cyrus' Questioning of Persian Values

A favorite theme for Straussian scholars is Cyrus' first speech in front of his peers. In the course of this speech Cyrus appears to question traditional Persian values:

> "I consider our ancestors to be no worse than we. At least they too spent all their time practicing the very things that are held to be works of virtue. What good they acquired by being such, however, either for the community of the Persians or for themselves, I cannot see. And yet I do not think that human beings practice any virtue in order that those who become good have no more than the worthless. Rather, those who abstain from the pleasures at hand do so not in order that they may never have enjoyment, but through their present continence they prepare themselves to have much more enjoyment in the future." (1.5.7–9, translation from Ambler 2001)

It is indeed astonishing that Cyrus preaches the practice of virtue not for its own sake, as is the traditional Greek philosophical (and Socratic) position, but for the sake of (future) gains/pleasures. This notion forms the theoretical background of his exhortation to the peers to fight the enemy with courage. Christopher Nadon perceives this speech as containing the seeds for the transformation of republic into empire[32] and concludes that it "provides the strongest possible evidence in support of Machiavelli's judgment that Cyrus ranks among the great founder-prophets who establish not only new states but new moral orders and ways of life."[33] Laura Field also talks about Cyrus "undermining of Persian tradition".[34] These scholars also emphasize Cyrus' valorizing of traditional virtue. Nadon notes: "If Cyrus openly attacks the understanding of continence as something to be practiced for its own sake, he does not dismiss or abandon the virtue altogether."[35] Similarly, Robert Bartlett characterizes Cyrus' first speech as "subversive and revolutionary" and observes that "Cyrus seeks to combine a clear-eyed calculation of his advantage with the dedication to noble virtuous means."[36] In a similar vein, Lorraine S. Pangle notes that "Cyrus' justice as a reward for merit seems to consist in prudent self-interest, educational benevolence, and noble devotion to principle all at once … Cyrus never clearly disentangles these strands in his thinking."[37] Paul Rasmussen notes that Cyrus "does not

32 Nadon 2001, 54–60.
33 Nadon 2001, 59.
34 Field 2012, 728.
35 Nadon 2001, 58.
36 Bartlett 2015, 145–146.
37 Pangle 2017, 313.

completely undermine their [i.e. the Persians'] belief in the inherent nobility of virtue," but also remarks that "the peers' quick and unanimous acceptance of Cyrus' command confirms the allure of such rewards and the tenuousness of their commitment to the more aristocratic notion of virtue as a good in itself."[38] Finally, Walter Newell observes that "although Cyrus in one sense corrupts the Persian education by arguing that virtue is not its own reward, in another sense he fulfills the aims of that education to produce citizens of 'surpassing nobility' more successfully than the republic had even been able to."[39]

Straussian scholars rightly stress the provocative dimension of Cyrus' views. Perhaps it may not be absolutely accurate to claim that Cyrus "corrupts" the aristocracy,[40] but there is no doubt that his views are highly unconventional. This becomes more evident if we compare Cyrus' speech with the beginning of Pericles' Funeral Oration, as it is reported by Thucydides (it is very probable that Xenophon modeled Cyrus' speech on Pericles'[41]):

> "I will speak first of our ancestors, for it is right and seemly that now, when we are lamenting the dead, a tribute should be paid to their memory. There has never been a time when they did not inhabit this land, which by their valour they have handed down from generation to generation, and we have received from them a free state. But if they were worthy of praise, still more were our fathers, who added to their inheritance, and after many a struggle transmitted to us their sons this great empire. And we ourselves assembled here to-day, who are still most of us in the vigour of life, have carried the work of improvement further, and have richly endowed our city with all things, so that she is sufficient for herself both in peace and war." (Thuc. 2.36.1–3, translation Jowett 1881)

Like Cyrus, Pericles establishes a comparison between his contemporary Athenians and their ancestors; like Cyrus, he acknowledges that his contemporaries may be more successful (on a military and political level) than their forefathers. However, Pericles *does not ever openly question* the values of his ancestors, whereas Cyrus wonders bluntly (!) whether anything good has been achieved by his Persian ancestors.

This episode could be considered emblematic of the different stance literary scholars and political scientists adopt for the interpretation of the *Cyropaedia*. The philologist Christian Mueller-Goldingen, for example, twice characterizes Cyrus' words as "surprising" ("überraschend, erstaunlich"); however, he then takes pains to argue that Cyrus' words do not express a polemical attitude towards Persian tradition and that his emphasis on material gain should not be associated with greed.[42] This approach is rather rigid: it relies on the premise that the *Cyropaedia* is an undeniable encomium of Cyrus and hence attempts to justify and soften peculiar traits, such as Cyrus' statement that the

38 Rasmussen 2009, 54–55.
39 Newell 2013a, 202.
40 Glenn 1992.
41 For other parallels between the *Cyropaedia* and Thucydides' *History*, see Tamiolaki 2017, 187–189.
42 Mueller-Goldingen 1995, 103.

Persian forefathers did not achieve anything important. Political interpretations, on the contrary, do greater justice to the complexity of Xenophon's text, since they encourage us to reflect on the opposition between virtue and gain, between ethical and material values: can they be reconciled? Which is more predominant? How does Xenophon problematize this issue in the *Cyropaedia*? Straussian scholars are also right to comment on the lack of opposition to Cyrus' views. Of course, this is a pattern in the *Cyropaedia*: Cyrus' speeches are almost never met with contestation. However, there are also many debates in this work, so Xenophon could perfectly well have inserted a debate at this point, too. What does this absence signify? Does it point to another deficiency of the Persian educational system, its lack of resilience? Or could it be a negative comment on the Persians' character? Straussian interpretations contribute to raising our awareness with regards to all these issues.

Cyrus' military reform

Another hallmark of Straussian interpretations is Cyrus' military reform. In order to face the Assyrian threat, Cyrus proposes the enlargement of the Persian military force, by providing the commoners (Persians of the lower class) with the same armament as his peers (the so-called *homotimoi*). This suggestion becomes an object of debate in the *Cyropaedia*: much of the second book of this work is devoted to speeches (uttered by Cyrus, the *homotimos* Chrysantas, and the commoner Pheraulas) discussing this issue. Cyrus tries to persuade both classes of the advantages of his proposal; more precisely, he suggests that both classes should enter into a bravery competition and appoints himself judge (2.1.14–17, 2.2.20–21). Chrysantas expresses some reservations about the potential equation of the two classes, but eventually accepts Cyrus' proposal (2.2.17–20, 2.3.5–6). Pheraulas, the representative of the commoners, exposes the deficiencies of the commoners' education and also agrees with Cyrus' reform (2.3.7–15).

Cyrus' proposition has been interpreted by Straussian scholars as devaluing and further corrupting the peers. Christopher Nadon and Paul Rasmussen emphasize Cyrus' persuasive agenda. The first scholar remarks that Cyrus uses different arguments when addressing the peers and the commoners: he praises aristocratic education when addressing the former, while he minimizes it when addressing the latter.[43] In a similar vein, Rasmussen highlights the problems raised by Cyrus' proposition, and comments on Cyrus' manipulation of the fears and hopes of the peers and the commoners: "the Peers' 'aristocratic' virtue has been subverted and effectively replaced by excellent service to Cyrus. Whatever distinction they may obtain … has meaning only in so far as it is obtained in obedience to Cyrus' command and devotion to his cause … Despite the flattering remarks … the core of Cyrus' argument is an appeal to the Peers' more ignoble fear for their own safety … with respect to the commoners, Cyrus wins their support by

43 Nadon 2001, 61–76.

exploiting their dissatisfaction with their inferior position in the regime … given the inherently competitive nature of Cyrus' meritocratic system of promotion and the commoners' lingering resentment of the Peers … a complete reconciliation between the two factions remains elusive."[44] Christopher Whidden also speaks about the devaluation of the peers' education, but links Cyrus' proposition to his imperial project: "By abolishing the traditional class distinctions and encouraging the peers to desegregate and intermingle with the commoners, Cyrus hopes to create a situation whereby the peers will abandon their moderation in favor of the pursuit of gain … as one who seeks to acquire and found an empire, it is in Cyrus's interests to tacitly devalue the education of the peers without stressing the point, since from the perspective of the Persian education in moderation and justice Cyrus's imperial project looks most immoderate and unjust."[45]

We can observe different nuances in the interpretation of this episode: Rasmussen speaks about an "elusive reconciliation" between the peers and the commoners, while Whidden views Cyrus' proposition as an "abolition of traditional class distinctions". The first approach is more compelling, since it pays attention to Cyrus' persuasive strategies. It also opens new perspectives, towards a detailed interpretation of Cyrus' speeches, their setting and argumentation, a topic which has recently been analyzed by literary scholars too.[46] On the contrary, Whidden's approach seems more questionable. In fact, the vocabulary he employs is a bit too strong: Cyrus does not exactly encourage the peers to "desegregate". Nor is it clear that the intermingling of the peers with the commoners entails that the peers will become immoderate (the text provides no evidence that the commoners are immoderate). Furthermore, the abolition of class distinctions does not actually take place, since in the end the man who proves to be the bravest and receives Cyrus' reward is a *homotimos*, Chrysantas (*Cyr.* 4.1.1–6). Finally, it is not obvious that Cyrus' proposition is associated with his imperial project; the text does not allow us to assume that Cyrus has a hidden agenda and makes his proposition in view of his (future) project of creating an empire. It seems more like a measure for tackling an urgency of the moment, which Cyrus later exploited further in order to create and consolidate his empire.

Cyrus' Psychology

Cyrus' psychology is another theme which occupies a central place in Straussian interpretations. A personality trait analyzed by Straussian scholars is Cyrus' extraordinary ambition. More specifically, the ambiguities surrounding Cyrus' ambition have become the focus of study. For instance, Robert Faulkner sees Cyrus' ambition (φιλοτιμία) as closely interdependent with his pursuit of self-interest.[47] Laura Field discerns a shadow in Xenophon's observation that "Cyrus was willing to undertake any risk for the sake

44 Rasmussen 2009, 65, 57, 58, 59.
45 Whidden 2007b, 133, 144.
46 See Nicolai 2014.
47 Faulkner 2007, 127–176.

of praise and honor." (1.2.1) She remarks: "Even from the preliminary perspective it is questionable whether this kind of risk taking is praiseworthy in itself."[48] More recently, Lorraine S. Pangle has compared Cyrus' ambition to godlike benefaction and further explored the ambivalent connotations of this feature: "... what most fundamentally fuels his ambition is not a passion for justice but a more elemental affection, a desire to please and benefit his own, a desire indeed to please and benefit as many as possible, thereby making them his own ..."[49] Straussian scholars have also proceeded to establish interesting comparisons and contrasts between Cyrus and Thrasymachus, Cyrus and Alcibiades, but also between Cyrus and Socrates.[50]

A second trait of Cyrus' personality analyzed by Straussian scholars is the pursuit of self-interest. Christopher Whidden has shown how Cyrus deceives the people of his entourage (his relatives, allies, enemies, and subjects), an interpretation very much akin to James Tatum's characterization of Cyrus as manipulative.[51] The famous novella of Panthea has been also interpreted to reveal Cyrus' self-serving character. The story unfolds in books 5, 6, and 7 of the *Cyropaedia*: Cyrus assigns Araspas to protect his captive, the beautiful Panthea, by warning him about the dangers of *eros*. Araspas overlooks Cyrus' advice, falls in love with Panthea and makes advances to her. When she informs Cyrus of this, he sends Araspas away as a spy. In order to express her gratitude to Cyrus, Panthea convinces her husband, Abradatas, to fight in the army of the Persian monarch. Abradatas gladly agrees, but dies in battle; Panthea then feels guilty of her husband's death and commits suicide.

Contrary to literary scholars, who emphasize aspects such as the importance of conjugal love or the connection of the Panthea story with the novel,[52] Straussian readings bring to light the political implications of this story. For instance, Cyrus notes early on that Panthea will be of service to him (5.1.17), a phrase which reveals his primary emphasis on his self-interest. Whidden goes so far as to suggest that Cyrus "quite deliberately

48 Field 2012, 725.

49 Pangle 2017, 312.

50 Whidden (2008b, 232) considers Cyrus "a midpoint" between Thrasymachus (acting on the basis of self-interest) and Socrates (acting selflessly), while Newell (2013a, 225–226) compares Cyrus with Alcibiades and perceives him as "an improved Alcibiades": "It is hard not to see in Xenophon's re-creation of the young Cyrus a version of what Alcibiades might have become if a philosophically grounded education had taken hold in his character from early on." Cf. also Faulkner 2007, 161 (on Cyrus' and Platonic Alcibiades' dependence of the opinion of others). For the comparison between Cyrus and Socrates, see Whidden (2007a, 549) commenting on Cyrus' ignorance of the soul in contrast with Socrates. Dorion (this volume) offers the most thorough comparison between the portraits of Cyrus and Socrates in Xenophon; he concludes that "of all his heroes, Xenophon considers none to be Socrates' equal."

51 Whidden 2007b. Cf. Tatum 1989.

52 See, for example, Romilly 1988, Zimmermann 1989 and 2009. Whitmarsh (2018, 59–60) notes that the characterization of the *Cyropaedia* as a romance goes back to antiquity. However, his excellent analysis of the *Cyropaedia*, and of the Panthea story, more specifically (59–83), rather highlights the dissimilarities with the ancient novel. See also Madreiter (this volume) who characterizes the *Cyropaedia* as "metafictional historiography" (in Tamiolaki 2017: 189, I see it as "historiography of a Socratic type").

allowed Araspas to fall under Panthea's spell" and that he even orchestrated Abradatas' death,[53] while Walter Newell expresses the hypothesis that Araspas' disappearance from the narrative may even point to his murder.[54] The story has also been viewed as inviting a comparison between Cyrus' ignoble character and the nobility exemplified by Abradatas and Panthea. Field makes a comparison between Cyrus and Panthea, on the issue of self-retrospection. Commenting on Panthea's speech a little before her suicide, in the course of which she blames herself for her husband's death, she observes: "Cyrus, unlike Panthea, never makes any discovery about the implications of his actions."[55] Finally, the discussion between Cyrus and Araspas on *eros* as willing slavery has been interpreted as provoking reflection on the political implications of *eros* and on the similarities and divergences between individual *eros* and *eros* for the ideal leader.[56]

A third important feature of Cyrus' personality which has become an object of study by Straussian scholars is his despotic profile. This profile has many ambivalent facets. First, Cyrus tends to conceive of people surrounding him as animals. Commenting on the analogies between soldiers and animals, enemies and hares, Whidden remarks: "Cyrus conceives of his subjects as animals ... his soldiers as dogs and enemies as hares, while the empire under his rule alternately resembles a herd of cattle and a beehive" and further concludes that "the decline of the Persian empire is ... the logical outcome of Cyrus' policy of dehumanizing both his enemies and his subjects."[57] He also signals the ambivalent connotations of Chrysantas' comparison with the Centaur: "Implicit in Chrysantas' view that he will be able to alternate between the human and beastly natures is the premise that man's primal and animalistic passions are like a switch that one can rather easily turn on or off ... the metaphor of the Persians as centaurs nicely foreshadows the decadence and rapid decline of the Persian empire. For the Greeks, the Centaurs were considered oversexed and prone to drunkenness."[58] In a similar vein, Rasmussen comments on the comparison of Cyrus' troops with beasts of burden: "Xenophon's account also raises questions about the specific character of the virtues Cyrus ultimately seeks to cultivate in his subordinates. Cyrus' comparison of his troops to beasts of burden makes us question whether the qualities he wants them to possess are consistent with the highest standards of the Persian republic, much less with human excellence simply."[59]

Second, Cyrus tends to treat people around him as slaves. Whidden exploits the Aristotelian distinction between household management and political rule, according to which political deliberation is absent in the household. He ingeniously argues that Cyrus' rule resembles an imperial household, in which Cyrus acts as a despot (by treating

53 Whidden 2007b, 152.
54 Newell 2013a, 206.
55 Field 2012, 733.
56 Rubin 1989. Interpretations akin to Rubin's are offered by Tatum 1989, 163–188 and Tamiolaki 2010, 305–309.
57 Whidden 2008b, 226, 228.
58 Whidden 2007b, 149.
59 Rasmussen 2009, 60.

people as slaves), as a master (by rendering people around him effeminate) and as a father (by perpetuating the infantilization of his subjects and thus his control over them): "On an Aristotelian analysis, the key point of Cyrus' knowledge is his keen recognition that one way to avoid revolution and the problem of political rule is to do away with political rule altogether by turning the world into his imperial household, which, insofar as his authority therein is unquestioned … closely resembles Aristotle's primitive household."[60] Rasmussen also underlines Cyrus' tendency to blur the boundaries between free men and slaves. Commenting on Cyrus' decision to allow equal share between servants and ambassadors in the army, he notes: "That Cyrus intends to honor and educate servants like ambassadors and peers makes us wonder whether he does not conversely look upon ambassadors and peers as he does on servants: as men whose primary virtue is unhesitating obedience rather than the more noble qualities of proud gentlemen."[61] Similarly, when Xenophon notes that slaves called Cyrus a father (8.1.44), like noble men, the same scholar observes: "Cyrus no longer makes a meaningful distinction between the noble … and slavish individuals motivated primarily by their carnal appetites."[62]

Straussian analyses of Cyrus' personality may at times seem exaggerated or over-subtle (especially when they argue, without specific evidence, that Cyrus has planned everything in advance); at the same time, however, they make us alert to the political connotations of Xenophon's text and open interesting perspectives for a systematic analysis of Cyrus' motivation and emotions.

The Meaning of the *Cyropaedia*

If Cyrus' education is deficient, his political reforms questionable, and his character far from ideal, then what is the meaning of the *Cyropaedia*? Why did Xenophon write this work? First, it is worth noting that Straussian scholars overall emphasize the dialectical character of the *Cyropaedia*, treating it more or less as a philosophical (Socratic) dialogue, and thus expanding on Strauss' view, according to which philosophy is *zetetic*.[63] Whidden notes (my emphasis, here and below, in quotations): "Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* is less a practical treatise than *a theoretical exploration* …"[64] He also observes: "The act of reading the *Cyropaedia* is thus *a profoundly dialectical encounter*, one entirely befitting Xenophon … a pupil of Socrates …"[65] Another Straussian idea which pervades these studies is that the message of the *Cyropaedia* is intended for the elite few. Again, Whidden observes that the

60 Whidden 2008a, 39.
61 Rasmussen 2009, 61.
62 Rasmussen 2009, 75.
63 Tanguay (2007, 88): "Philosophy [i.e. according to Leo Strauss] is not to be confused with the science of all beings, since it is not itself this science or even completed wisdom, but rather the attempt to attain that science."
64 Whidden 2007b, 154.
65 Whidden 2008a, 33.

Cyropaedia "is designed less to change the world than *to help a few discerning individuals* grasp intellectually the necessities, possibilities, limits, and alternatives to political rule, which for Xenophon include the need for deception, the dazzling prospect of empire, the fleeting nature of imperial rule, and the resigned serenity of intellectual life, respectively."[66] He also notes: "Like Socrates, Xenophon reveals himself but also keeps part of himself hidden; certainly he does not blurt out his secrets to ... all ..."[67] Paul Rasmussen appears equally restrictive as to the proper recipients of the message of the *Cyropaedia*: "For those readers of the *Cyropaedia* who have become disenchanted with Cyrus' accomplishments ... Xenophon's allusions to Socrates help reveal the difficulties of political life and thus lead *his most inquisitive readers* a first few steps down the path toward a more philosophic understanding of the human good and truly self-sufficient virtue ... the philosophic education to which the *Cyropaedia* implicitly points is accessible to only a *few of the brightest and most talented individuals*."[68]

What is this message that remains secret to the many and obvious only to philosophically-minded students? Straussian scholars, in their majority, conceive of the *Cyropaedia* as a critique of imperialism or political life in general. From this perspective, the epilogue of the work represents, in their opinion, a kind of epitome or escalation of Xenophon's critical stance. Christopher Whidden interprets the *Cyropaedia* as a critique of Cyrus and his empire[69] and further notes that this work "teaches the limits of politics".[70] In a similar vein, Christopher Nadon and Paul Rasmussen view this work as a critique of political life as such.[71] Qualifications to this altogether negative view have been offered by Walter Newell and Laura Field. The former acknowledges the problems raised by Cyrus' imperialism but tends to see a double message in the *Cyropaedia*: "the imperial monarchy pays a price in the long run for its freedom from republican or philosophical moderation. Xenophon wishes to elaborate the optimal potentiality of princely virtue for stable and prosperous rule, but also its drawbacks."[72] He also views Cyrus' rule as the realization of Simonides' project (expressed in the *Hiero*) of transforming tyranny into benevolent leadership.[73] The latter argues that Cyrus' failures are not inevitable and that the work in essence provides guidance about political improvement. She concludes that the *Cyropaedia* encourages us "to be especially on guard against single-minded political solutions."[74]

66 Whidden 2007b, 154.
67 Whidden 2008a, 33.
68 Rasmussen 2009, 94–95.
69 Whidden 2008a, 58. Cf. Whidden 2007a, 540: "*Cyropaedia* as a thoughtful critique of empire and imperial ambition."
70 Whidden 2007a, 565.
71 Nadon 2001, 178. Rasmussen 2009, 53: "Xenophon intends the *Cyropaedia* to be a critique of political life as such." Cf. Rasmussen 2009, 81: "The *Cyropaedia* as an exploration of the sufficiency of political life itself."
72 Newell 2013a, 209.
73 Newell 2013a, 186.
74 Field 2012, 736.

Straussian scholars go one step further, by suggesting that the *Cyropaedia* invites a comparison between Cyrus and Socrates, between political and philosophical life; that is why they often establish comparisons between Cyrus' and Socrates' views and characters. In this way, they elaborate on an idea favorite to Leo Strauss, the conflict between philosophy and politics.[75] Consequently, in their view, the drawbacks presented in the *Cyropaedia* concerning leadership, imperialism, and political life prepare the reader for the perfection of philosophical life. Whidden notes: "Since Socrates is not one of the characters in the *Cyropaedia* ... within the *Cyropaedia* the most profound alternative and rival to Cyrus' imperial ambitions that culminated in the Persian empire is Xenophon's own desire for wisdom, the product of which is the *Cyropaedia* itself."[76] He also observes: "If readers come to the same conclusion as Xenophon, then they will be open to alternative human activities, such as the philosophic life, that are potentially more satisfying ... In this sense, the *Cyropaedia* is by its nature a prolegomenon to Xenophon's Socratic writings."[77] But again this idea is not fully endorsed by all Straussian scholars: others view republicanism and the rule of law as the alternative to imperial rule. Newell notes: "The *Cyropaedia* represents not only Xenophon's critique of absolute rule, but also his qualified case for the rule of law."[78] Similarly, Rasmussen observes: "Traditional republicanism may very well be the best practical, if tenuous, solution to the inherent difficulties of political life."[79]

Attractive though some Straussian analyses may appear, several problems emerge with regards to the overall interpretation of the *Cyropaedia*. On the one hand, it is true that this work does not offer clear-cut solutions to political problems and has a strong dialectical dimension. It is also true that it can be read as a reflection on empire and/or as an endorsement of republican law. On the other hand, however, the dialectical dimension of the *Cyropaedia* is not linked (or is not linked only and necessarily) with Socrates (since Xenophon was also subject to other influences: Greek poetry, historiography, etc.). More importantly, it is not intended to be grasped by an elite few. This interpretation is reductive and also intolerant (not to say insulting) to opposite views, since it assumes that whoever does not agree with Straussian analyses does not belong to the "few, inquisitive readers" who are capable of grasping Xenophon's hidden messages, but to the masses who are prone to digesting conventional wisdom. The reason why Straussian scholars emphasize Xenophon's "hidden agenda" is that they are trying to explain why Xenophon does not explicitly blame Cyrus. However, it is not necessary to believe either that Xenophon wished to blame Cyrus or that he intended the *Cyropaedia* to be grasped only by an elite few. Some Straussian interpretations, indeed, suffer from the pressing need to find a "message" (a problem present in some literary approaches as well, as we saw above). In this way, although they suggest sophisticated analyses of ancient texts, they eventually end

75 For this idea, see Strauss 1957, and the recent analysis by Zuckert and Zuckert 2014.
76 Whidden 2007b, 154.
77 Whidden 2007a, 567. Cf. Bartlett 2015, 153: "Xenophon prepares us to encounter the philosophical works."
78 Whidden 2007a, 553.
79 Rasmussen 2009, 78.

up proposing simplistic "messages". Such a "simplistic" message is the idea of criticism of political life. The idea of criticism of imperialism is more compelling, but it often becomes over-stated, especially when it is linked to criticism of political life in general: Xenophon was a man of action and we have no evidence that he rejected political life altogether.

This leads us to the final, most important point, the so-called "tension between philosophy and politics". Straussian scholars assume that when Xenophon went to Scillus and had the leisure to write his works, he discovered, in a way, the importance of philosophical, contemplative life, and hence rejected political life. This assumption, however, is at least misleading, since Xenophon continued to write political works in Scillus (and even later) and, more importantly, in Scillus he did not lead a life of an isolated philosopher: as Tim Rood rightly notes, Scillus was a highly political place and Xenophon would certainly have had contacts and conversations with people involved in political life.[80] Overall, the idea of the tension between philosophy and politics is anachronistic, since it relies on an opposition between the contemplative life and the life of action, which is not sufficiently substantiated in ancient texts: even Socrates, both in Plato and in Xenophon, expresses political ideas, so he cannot be said to represent "pure philosophical life" either. Consequently, the suggestion that the *Cyropaedia* prepares readers for an exclusively philosophical life seems rather untenable.

Concluding remarks: Straussian lesson(s) for the *Cyropaedia*?

Our investigation has focused on Straussian readings of the *Cyropaedia*. The question which arises is what we can learn from these readings, both for the study of the *Cyropaedia* and for the study of Xenophon more generally. The first lesson, I think, is that Straussians are not a strictly unified category: of course, all of them are political scientists who cite and engage with Leo Strauss. Moreover, all of them are philosophically rather than historically oriented: they perceive the *Cyropaedia* as a philosophical treatise, establishing comparisons with Plato and Xenophon's Socratic works.[81] However, not all of them follow Leo Strauss *à la lettre* (for example, not all of them speak with the same emphasis about hidden messages or fear of persecution or the tension between philosophy and politics). Nor do they adopt identical interpretations of Xenophon's works; there are considerable nuances and divergences in their analyses. Consequently, it may be misleading to talk about "Straussian interpretations" *en masse*. It would be more accurate to concede that some Straussian interpretations are more valid than others; it may also be the case

80 Rood 2015, 161: "It can plausibly be argued that Xenophon had a highly political role at Scillus. His own account of his life there suggests the prestige that his founding of a festival for Artemis brought him: it says nothing about philosophy. The very idea of Scillus as an idyllic retreat also ignores its proximity to Olympia, a site for intellectual as well as athletic display, where he could obtain copious information on Greek politics."

81 That said, again there are nuances in this aspect, too: Newell 2013a proposes an interesting comparison between the *Cyropaedia* and the context of the Peloponnesian war on the topic of empire.

that the Straussian interpretations *of certain works of Xenophon* are more compelling than the interpretations of other works.

Secondly, although some Straussian interpretations may be a bit exaggerated, and although, as we have shown, some Straussian premises are highly questionable, it has also to be admitted that the Straussians' great attention to detail, their analysis of omissions, their exploration of the potential of analogies, and the connections they propose not only among Xenophon's works, but also between Xenophon and modern political thought (e.g. Machiavelli's political thought is another favorite topic) bear interesting fruits, many of which, and this is very important, are perfectly compatible with the analyses of literary scholars. From this perspective, and this is the last and most useful lesson in my opinion, it is indeed regrettable that there is not (yet) a genuine dialogue between political scientists and literary scholars: political scientists, for the most part, content themselves with a rather self-referential dialogue, rarely engaging with literary scholars,[82] while literary scholars tend to discard Straussian interpretations altogether as unconvincing. In conclusion, I would like to suggest that an important challenge for Xenophontic studies is the promotion of a fruitful dialogue between political scientists and literary scholars, on the basis of mutual respect and understanding of different methodologies, and with an eye to a more convincing (and hence more attractive) interpretation of Xenophon. He is an author sophisticated enough to deserve it.

82 To give just an indicative example, Bonnette 2015 writes a study on Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and does not cite Dorion's extensive commentary, which is by far the standard reference for this work.

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