PART 7

Biography

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CHAPTER 25

Xenophon

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The Importance of Character

The starting point of *Cyropaedia* is an observation about the problems of instability and disobedience in the city and the household. It then proceeds to hold up the Persian king Cyrus the Great (c. 600 or 576–530 BCE) as a paradigm to show that humans can be ruled on the basis of knowledge (*epistamenōs*), just like cattle and horses: here was a man who not only acquired a large empire, but also stably ruled over subjects who were 'willing to obey (*ethelēsantas peithesthai*)' (1.1.3).[1] The narrator frames character as the central factor in explaining Cyrus' success:

> Therefore we have made an investigation of this man, on the ground that he is worthy to be wondered at (*hōs axion onta thaumazesthai*),[2] looking into who he was by birth (*gennan*), of what quality his natural endowments (*phusin*) were and what sort of education (*paideiai*) he enjoyed that he so greatly excelled in ruling over men. So, all we have learned or think we know about him, we shall attempt to relate.
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> 1.1.6

In a further programmatic passage,[3] the narrator next gives Cyrus' noble lineage—he is the son of the Persian king Cambyses and Mandane, the daughter of the Median king Astyages—and comments on his *phusis* or inborn qualities:

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1 All references are to *Cyr.*, unless specified otherwise; all translations are mine.

2 *Pace* Gray in *SAGN* 1: 391, the verb does not mean 'admire'. As Baragwanath 2012: 632 and Harman 2012: 444 show, *thauma*-language is throughout Xenophon's corpus associated more with 'wonder' and 'scrutiny' than with 'admiration' and 'praise'. I add that, *pace* Mueller-Goldingen 1995: 59, 63, this sets *Cyr.* apart from the explicit language of praise used in Xenophon's own encomiastic biography *Agesilaus* and Isocrates' Cyprian orations; cf. *Ages.* 1.1 (*epainon*), 10.3 (*engkōmion*; cf. Isoc. 3.7, 9.8). This does not imply that Xenophon does not intend readers to evaluate Cyrus positively, but it does mean that their engagement with Cyrus should go deeper than uncritical praise (or blame, for that matter).

3 Cf. Azoulay 2004b: 321, Sandridge 2012: 15.

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> It is still now reported in stories and songs by the barbarians that he was by nature (*phunai*) most beautiful in appearance (*eidos men kallistos*) and most benevolent in soul, most eager to learn and most ambitious (*psukhēn de philanthrōpotatos kai philomathestatos kai philotimotatos*), so that he endured every labour and engaged in every dangerous enterprise for the sake of being praised.
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> 1.2.1

There then follows a lengthy narrative, which treats Cyrus' childhood and education, partly set at the Median court of his maternal grandfather (1.2.1–1.5.1); his second departure for Media and the war against Assyria, in the course of which he carries out many military reforms and also effectively replaces his uncle Cyaxares as the sole ruler of a unified Persian-Median empire (1.5.2–7.5.36); the consolidation of his government and, very briefly, the expansion of the empire (7.5.37–8.6.28); and his old age and death (8.7.1–28). The narrative spans Cyrus' entire life,[4] but the coverage is very uneven, with the lengthy second part probably covering only a single year in fabula-time.[5] An epilogue (8.8) exchanges narrative for analysis once more and argues that after Cyrus' death the Persian empire changed for the worse under his descendants. The epilogue has been variously interpreted,[6] but if, as I think likely, Xenophon in part wishes to impart to his readers that a government is only as good as the character of its leader(s),[7] it once more underlines just how crucial Cyrus' character is in explaining his success.

Character between Philosophy and Narrative

Cyropaedia does not offer its readers many clues as to the intentions of its author. However, the work has since antiquity most commonly been read as belonging to the genre of *politeia*-literature on the best forms of government. Cicero, for instance, saw it as a 'mirror of princes', claiming that Xenophon did not portray Cyrus 'true to history (*ad historiae fidem*)', but 'as a model

4 The relentless focus on Cyrus is relieved by the insertion of a number of subplots, which temporarily hone in on other characters; for these so-called 'novellas', see Gera 1993: 1–2, 192–279.

5 Due 1989: 49–50, Tuplin 1997: 100–103; see *SAGN* 2: 385–396 (Beck).

6 See Gray 2011: 246–263 for analysis and further references.

7 Sandridge 2012: 88.

of just rule (*ad effigiem iusti imperii*)'.[8] On such a reading, Cyrus embodies Xenophon's views of the 'ideal' military and political leader, being 'a useful figure to be clothed as his author likes'.[9] Thus, the direct characterization of Cyrus quoted above resonates with several Xenophontic preoccupations, including the emphasis on Cyrus' nobility, which seems to be a condition for successful leadership in Xenophon's thought,[10] and the attribution to Cyrus of key virtues which Xenophon elsewhere, too, singles out as contributing to a leader's success (this includes Cyrus' beauty, as this quality inspires loyalty).[11] It is also relevant that the passage is focalized through the descendants of Cyrus' original subjects, because people's recognition of a leader's virtues is what according to Xenophon ensures the all-important 'willing obedience' mentioned at the outset (the impression which people have of Cyrus is a recurring theme).[12] In a broader narratological analysis along these lines, Stadter calls *Cyropaedia* a 'utopian vision'.[13] Drawing attention to the fact that it contains almost none of the precise indications of time and geographical locations we expect from a work of historiography, he claims that the universe of *Cyropaedia* is a transparently fictional Shangri-La, which is moreover populated by several actually fabricated characters. He then proceeds to read the narrative as one might read *Memorabilia*, as a series of loosely connected scenes, 'each an example of virtuous behaviour in human relations'; he is not prepared even to pose the question of Cyrus' 'imperial goals' (how he came to rule the empire that earlier belonged to his uncle Cyaxares), because doing so would 'imply that the *Cyropaideia* is a history, and Cyrus a real person, who can be judged on the basis of his actions.'[14] Such a reading also implies that Xenophon may sacrifice consistency in Cyrus'

8 *Q.fr.* 1.1.23; cf. D. H. *Pomp.* 4.1.7 for a description of Cyrus as a 'likeness (*eikona*) of a good and happy king'. See Nickel 1979: 58, Gera 1993: 11. Cf. Connor 1985: 461–463 for a brief sketch of *politeia*-literature. Due 1989: 30 and Mueller-Goldingen 1995: 56 note the similarities between the proems of *Cyr.* and Xenophon's political treatise *Lac.*

9 Gera 1993: 2; such analyses are developed in detail by e.g. Due 1989, Gray 2011.

10 Tamiolaki 2012: 576–577. It is intriguing to note that Pheraulas, one 'of the people (*dēmotōn*)', but 'not like a lowborn man (*ouk agennei andri eoikōs*)' (2.3.7), should in the end forfeit his acquired power and wealth (8.3.35–50)—he is unfit to rule and he knows it.

11 On these virtues in Xenophon, see above all Sandridge 2012: 59–78. Cf. Due 1989, Mueller-Goldingen 1995, Azoulay 2004b, Gray 2011.

12 Cf. Gray 2007: 7–8, 2011: 15–18 on 'willing obedience', and 100 on focalization as a way of underlining the importance of the open manifestation of virtue in Xenophon.

13 Stadter 1991: 468 = 2010: 374.

14 Stadter 1991: 490–491, 2010: 398–399.

characterization on the altar of his didactic purposes, because these may differ from one scene to the next.[15]

However, by presenting *Cyropaedia* as the result of an investigation into Cyrus' life and career ('what we have learned'), Xenophon also aligns it with the genre of historiography.[16] And it has been argued that interpretations of *Cyropaedia* as being largely fictional underestimate the extent to which it contains recognizably historical elements in the accounts of Cyrus' Persian education and his military and political reforms.[17] Partly on this basis, it has been claimed that Xenophon's identification of a Persian king as his 'ideal' ruler was intended to shock his Greek audience,[18] although the work's historicity has also been used by Carlier to support the claim that, far from presenting Cyrus as a positive paradigm, Xenophon really intended to expose the weakness of Persian institutions.[19] Furthermore, not all scholars have been prepared to discard the fact that *Cyropaedia* offers what is after all a largely continuous narrative. Thus, Nadon approaches it as one might the *Anabasis*, insisting that events and speeches must be analysed within their dramatic context, evaluated against the contingencies faced by the characters and in light of the movement of the story as a whole. For him, the real story of *Cyropaedia* is Cyrus' relentless pursuit of power and he claims that the narrative shows how Cyrus acquires his empire by dishonest means; he makes much of supposed inconsistencies between Cyrus' short-term actions and speeches and his alleged long-term goals.[20]

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15 Cf. Gera 1993: 115. Her example is Cyrus' scathing remark about the value of exhortatory speeches (3.3.55), though elsewhere he delivers such speeches. But her point can be disputed, because what Cyrus actually argues is that delivering exhortatory speeches is pointless only if the audience is otherwise uneducated in military virtue—this plainly does not hold for Cyrus' well-trained army.

16 Cf. Sandridge 2012: 4. See Due 1989: 117–135 and Gera 1993: *passim* for Xenophon's engagement with historiography (notably Herodotus).

17 Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1985 = 2010, Hirsch 1985: 61–97 and Tuplin 1997: 95–154, 2012 defend *Cyr.*'s value as a legitimate historical source (and, implicitly, its status as a work of historiography) for Old Persia.

18 Cf. Hirsch 1985: 41–42. It is true that Cyrus generally enjoys a fairly good reputation in Greek literature (cf. Gera 1993: 7–8), but that is not the same as turning him into the 'ideal' ruler. We would be better able to assess the 'shock value' of Xenophon's choice if we knew more about Antisthenes' works entitled 'Cyrus' (for which see now Prince 2015: 145–146).

19 Carlier 1978 =2010.

20 Nadon 2001: esp. pp. 24, 40. Less radical, but similar analyses are offered by Tatum 1989; Azoulay 2004b.

Even if we are not prepared to accept Carlier's and Nadon's conclusion that Xenophon puts Cyrus in a bad light (their readings are ultimately dependent on the questionable *a priori* assumption that Xenophon is an 'ironical' author who always means the opposite of what he says),[21] it is revealing that they base their case in large part on *Cyropaedia*'s narrative format. For no matter how schematic and unhistorical the narrative may be in certain respects, Xenophon chose to answer a *universal* question (what is the 'ideal' form of government?) in *particularizing* terms ('Cyrus, who was such-and-such a man and did such-and-such things'), and this must surely influence views of Cyrus' 'ideality' and 'exemplarity'.[22] For example, the programmatic statement quoted above does not simply flag up Cyrus' nobility, but stresses his specific ethnic identity as half-Persian and half-Median, and this will prove relevant later on, when the 'ideal' government which he establishes as king is founded, according to Xenophon, on a mixture of specifically Persian and Median institutions.[23] Furthermore, the superlative formulation of Cyrus' character (he possesses *kallos*, *philanthrōpia*, *philomathia* and *philotimia* to an outstanding degree) may be thought to make him a supremely successful leader, but also a unique and not so easily imitated one (how many Cyruses do you know? Can you be Cyrus?).

There is, I think, a still more important point to the in-built tension between the universal and the particular, which can be brought out by reminding ourselves of the fact that several ancient authors claim that *Cyropaedia* was Xenophon's answer to Plato's *Republic*.[24] That work sketches a truly utopian society, in which everybody knows their place and all upheavals (really all 'happenings') are prevented. Xenophon, by contrast, chooses to dramatize the ways in which an exceptional leader needs to deal with particular, concrete problems, in the conviction that such problems will inevitably rise: there is a down-to-earth, realistic 'as good as it gets (or got)' quality to Xenophon's theory of leadership. Furthermore, as Vandiver has argued, while Plato casts *philotimia* ('ambition, love of honour') as a vice and an undesirable catalyst of change, Xenophon posits himself as its defender, both acknowledging it as a driving force in political life and attempting to give it a place.[25] And it is difficult to

21 See Dorion 2010 for a good account of the intellectual underpinnings of this 'Straussian' approach to Xenophon.

22 Cf. Sandridge 2012: 8–9.

23 8.2; see Gera 1993: 293–295. Perhaps not coincidentally, this is the point at which she thinks the positive portrait of Cyrus darkens.

24 D. L. 3.34, Aul. Gell. *Noct. Att.* 14.3.
■ remove space?

25 Vandiver 2014.

see how he could argue his case without showing how an ambitious character (who is, indeed, a 'character' in the 'he's quite a character' sense of that word) negotiates his way through life without narrating how that character achieved his ambitions. Also important, finally, is Sandridge's insight that there are inherent tensions between the three virtues which Xenophon ascribes to Cyrus, especially between the first (*philanthrōpia* 'love of humanity') and the third (*philotimia*); for instance, readers familiar with the literary tradition on Cyrus may well ask how Cyrus fulfilled his ambition of becoming the ruler of a vast empire in a 'philanthropic' way; again, the narrative format is Xenophon's medium of choice to show how such contradictions may be solved (and perhaps not entirely solved).[26]

Cyropaedia derives much of its interest and energy from the fact that Xenophon does not always explicitly answer such questions. In particular, while the beginning of the narrative characterizes Cyrus in very explicit terms and gives readers the impression that they are 'on top of' him, the narrator later largely withdraws explicit comments and at certain moments even distances the readers from his protagonist, instead making it more easy to identify and empathize with the characters with whom Cyrus comes into contact and whose lives he shapes, even if their dispositions and responses may not be 'ideal'.[27] This also opens up alternative and at times unsettling perspectives on Cyrus. Thus, in what follows I will argue that Xenophon makes Cyrus exemplify his 'ideal' leader, but also that he dramatizes the conduct of this leader in ways which suggest that understanding and dealing with him are not always easy or straightforward. This sort of reading is in line with ancient critics' assessment of Xenophon's style as being marked by *apheleia* or simplicity. For one important ingredient of that style is the implicit delineation of character: readers are to infer from simple statements of fact what a certain person is like.[28]

26 Sandridge 2012: 107, 120.

27 Shifts in the narratorial voice are a Xenophontic peculiarity and seem designed to create uncertainty; cf. Bradley 2001: 70–71 = 2010: 535–536 on the narrator's 'withdrawal' from *An.* after Book 1, and *SAGN* 2: 147–163 (Rood) on a shift in the temporal scheme after Book 2 of *HG*, whose imprecision is eloquent of Xenophon's view of the chaotic texture of Greek history after the Peloponnesian War.

28 [Aristid.] *Peri aph.* 40–42.

Cyrus' Education

The first phase of the narrative deals with Cyrus' upbringing and education (*paideia*), though, somewhat oddly, while Xenophon offers a systematic exposition of Persian educational practices (1.2), we are not told how Cyrus functioned in it, except in a later analepsis.[29] The narrative really only starts with a set of instructive incidents that take place during Cyrus' prolonged stay at the court of his Median grandfather Astyages (1.3–4), which interrupts his Persian education. These chapters abundantly characterize Cyrus through a wide variety of means, which are geared towards elucidating his innate and acquired traits, respectively.[30]

To begin with, the narrator motivates a number of actions in terms of the attributes which he singled out at the beginning as characteristic of Cyrus' nature in general. He so suggests that in important ways the man was already present in the boy, which is in line with other stories that instantiate the familiar motif of the child destined for great things.[31] Thus, the readiness with which Cyrus petitions his grandfather on behalf of his peers is 'due to his benevolence (*philanthrōpian*) and ambition (*philotimian*)' (1.4.1) (these virtues here operate *in tandem*), while his inquisitiveness is attributed to his 'being eager to learn (*dia to philomathēs einai*)' (as well as to his Persian education; 1.4.3). When Artabazus tries to steal a kiss from Cyrus, it is because he was struck by 'his beauty (*tōi kallei*)' (1.4.27).[32] The fact that Cyrus works hard to get the better of his peers in various activities (see especially 1.4.4–5, on horsemanship) is an only slightly more implicit early demonstration of the narrator's initial assertion that Cyrus 'endured every labour' as well as a nice realistic touch. On the other hand, Cyrus receives only little formal instruction, and the anecdotes concerning hunting and war rather imply that he is a 'natural born' huntsman and soldier, thus enriching our picture of Cyrus' *phusis*.[33]

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29 1.3.16–17; see *SAGN* 2: 387–389 (Beck).

30 Cf. Due 1989: 150–152.

31 Herodotus' account of the young Cyrus (1.107–122) is particularly relevant. Cf. Pelling 1990b: 213–214, 226 for the Greek habit of retrojecting aspects of a man's later life onto his childhood.

32 Cf. Mueller-Goldingen 1995: 96–97, and Dihle [1956] 1970: 25 on Xenophon's habit of exemplifying explicitly mentioned moral traits through narrative instantiations of them. The relation between the two is not always unproblematic, though (cf. Rood in this volume on Xenophon's (→) historiography).

33 Cf. Mueller-Goldingen 1995: 98. Two other traits which will remain with Cyrus are also here introduced for the first time: his wit, as demonstrated in a series of frank remarks

Xenophon's insistence on Cyrus' pre-eminence among his peers (1.3.1, 1.3.12, 1.4.5, 1.5.1) is also a standard feature of stories of the youth of future kings, which often foreshadow the protagonist's position in later life (cf. Hdt. 1.114). There are also more specific prefiguring 'firsts', ranging from the concrete—for instance, Cyrus' distribution of food to his servants as a reward for their services (1.3.7) establishes a lifelong habit (see especially 8.2.3) which underlines the continuity between managing a household and managing the state noted in the proem—to the symbolical, as when Cyrus' first battle pits him against the Assyrian crown prince (1.4.16–24), who as king will be Cyrus' chief opponent. The narrator does not forego the opportunity of indirect characterization through comparison here: after Cyrus' risky but impressive hunt on rough terrain (1.4.8), we learn that the Assyrian prince, by contrast, takes care to hunt 'safely (*asphalōs*)' and uses attendants to drive the animals to level ground (1.4.16): this is the man who as king will leave the initiative in battle to Cyrus and his own supreme command to Croesus. The foundations of the clash between Cyrus and Cyaxares are similarly laid in the first hunting scene. First scolding him for his rash behaviour, Cyaxares quickly gives in, adding a comment which reveals much about their future relationship: 'Do as you wish,' he says, 'for you now seem to be our king' (1.4.9).[34]

This strand of Cyrus' characterization is balanced by Xenophon's keen interest in child psychology, something which is largely absent from standard Greek narratives about the early years of great men. For example, when the young Cyrus in Herodotus addresses his grandfather 'rather freely' (Hdt. 1.116.1: *eleutherōterē*; the word connotes nobility), the implication is that his manner betrays his royal ancestry: already he behaves like the king he will become. But when Xenophon reports, perhaps echoing the Herodotean passage, that Cyrus 'rashly (*propetōs*)' answered Astyages, he explains it with a reference to 'what may be expected from a boy (*pais*) who is not yet shy (*hupoptēssōn*)' (1.3.8). A similarly motivated action is Cyrus' hugging of Astyages upon their first meeting: this forward behaviour is excused with the statement that Cyrus was 'by nature an affectionate boy' (1.3.2). Also in line with Cyrus' youthful impulsivity is his tendency to show, and act on, his emotions: given a luxurious Median robe, he 'was delighted (*hēdeto*)' (1.3.3); when Astyages fell ill, he wept, because he 'was very afraid (*huperephobeito*) that his grandfather would die' (1.4.2); he

during a dinner with his grandfather and mother (1.3.4–12), and his eagerness to gratify others (the key term is *kharizesthai*: 1.3.12, 1.3.13, 1.4.2). Both these attributes help explain his talent for making friends.

34 Due 1989: 55–56. See also the first battle scene, in which Cyaxares 'followed behind' Cyrus (1.4.22), a characteristic order, as will become clear.

'vehemently desired (*epithumōn … sphodra*)' to go out on a hunt (1.4.6), and when on a different occasion Astyages refused to let him, he became 'sulky and sullen-faced (*aniaros … kai skuthrōpos*)' (and so got his way) (1.4.14); after his first battle, Astyages recognized that he was 'high on daring' (*mainomenon … tēi tolmēi*), which manifested itself through his inability to keep his eyes off the corpses left on the battlefield (1.4.24).[35]

Xenophon is not interested in this aspect of Cyrus' characterization for its own sake, however. Rather, they allow him to show that a naturally virtuous character driven by such virtues as *philotimia* is prone to excess if it is not tempered by an awareness of one's limits and a certain amount of discretion in dealing with others (virtues which elsewhere are called *sōphrosunē*, *engkrateia* and *pronoia*).[36] He completes his portrait of the young Cyrus by relating how he gradually becomes more self-aware. As he grew older, he became less talkative and used a gentler voice, and was 'gradually filled with shame (*aidous … enepimplato*)', so that he often blushed and behaved less 'rashly (*propetōs*)', but began to leave behind his 'puppyish behaviour of jumping up to all (*to skulakōdes to pasin homoiōs prospiptein*)' (1.4.4). Xenophon elaborates this remark in two similes: during a hunt, Cyrus cries out 'like a well-bred puppy (*hōsper skulaki gennaiōi*)' (1.4.15), while later, during his first battle, he unthinkingly launches an attack 'like a well-bred, but inexperienced dog (*hōsper … kuōn gennaios apeiros*)' (1.4.21). These similes hint at Cyrus' development, but also cast him as not yet having attained his due position in life: for Cyrus will not grow up to be a 'dog'; such comparisons to animals are elsewhere in *Cyropaedia* reserved only for Cyrus' social inferiors.[37] Cyrus' increasing shyness is encapsulated in a memorable phrase: while he used to blame Astyages' steward Sacas for not always allowing him access to his grandfather, he now 'became a Sacas unto himself' (1.4.5).

35 Cyrus' sulking and battle-*mania* may remind us of heroic models of behaviour, notably Achilles. There may be an intertextual reference to Pl. *R.* 439e–440a (as also suggested by Vandiver 2014: 97), where a similar anecdote about gazing upon corpses serves to establish the base, 'desiring' part of Plato's tripartite soul. Xenophon himself operates with a notion of a bipartite soul, containing a good and a bad side, one of which may 'conquer' the other (6.1.41). Xenophon, then, may be implying that Cyrus has not yet learned to make his 'good soul' prevail in all situations. If so, the anecdote illustrates Cyrus' immaturity rather than, as Nadon 2001: 160 will have it, 'a cruel twist to Cyrus' soul'.

36 Cf. Vandiver 2014: 94–95.

37 Cf. e.g. 1.6.19, 2.2.26. Drawing analogies between man and dog may reflect a Socratic habit; cf. e.g. *Mem.* 2.7.13–14, 4.1.3.

In the most intriguing episode which highlights Cyrus' development his friends ask him to request Astyages' permission for them to go out hunting, but Cyrus answers that for reasons unclear to himself he finds himself no longer able openly to approach his grandfather: 'I do not know what kind of man I have become (*hostis anthrōpos gegenēmai*)'; but he is 'stung (*edēkhthē*)' by the prospect of his friends turning elsewhere to procure favours (1.4.12–13). For the first time, Cyrus becomes aware (if only dimly) of the fact that *philanthrōpia* and *philotimia* cannot always be pursued without losing one's own sense of honour and self-esteem. However, the sequel shows how he finds his feet: he finally 'ordered himself to take the dare' and speak to Astyages in the 'least painful (*alupotata*)' but most effective way (1.4.13). There follows a quite extraordinary dialogue, which reveals Cyrus' sense of inferiority in that he compares himself to a slave:

> 'What would Astyages do if he caught a runaway servant?' 'Chain him and force him to work.' 'And what if the servant came back of his own accord?' 'Beat him, so that he would not try to escape again.' 'Then prepare to beat me, because I am planning to run away and take my agemates out on a hunt.' 'I forbid you to go: it would be a fine thing if I let my daughter's son stray out for a few pieces of meat!'
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> 1.4.13, abbreviated

Hitherto, Cyrus' manner of expressing himself has been characterized by frank bluntness (see especially 1.3.1–11), but he now pursues his goal indirectly, through an argument by analogy, the point of which is presumably that Astyages is revealed to pronounce a judgement on his own grandson which he would not be prepared actually to carry out. In this respect, the episode constitutes another 'first': several subsequent episodes will show Cyrus using argumentative techniques which are reminiscent of those used by Socrates in *Memorabilia*,[38] although he is here not yet as sophisticated and successful as Socrates: Astyages flatly denies the validity of the analogy with the words 'my daughter's son'.[39] Cyrus responds by passing his time 'sulky and sullen-faced', until his grandfather gives way (1.4.14).

Interestingly, much about this episode remains unclear. The narrator refrains from clarifying how Cyrus learned to argue in this specific way (one may con-

38 Gera 1993: 28–29.

39 Cf. Gera 1993: 28–30 and Tatum 1989: 109–110 for different thoughts on Cyrus' point and failure.

trast the reference to Tigranes' sophistic education at 3.1.14; see below), but also from telling us why Cyrus thought this was the 'least painful' way of handling his problem,[40] and from elucidating the precise point of the analogy—in short, he makes no effort to fill the gap that has opened up between what Cyrus says and what he wants. Paradoxically, to some readers the very artificiality and formality of Cyrus' new way of speaking may suggest a certain depth and individuality of character. Xenophon does not, I think, cast a sinister light on Cyrus—discretion in human interaction is sensible and a sign of maturity—but he does suggest that 'the man Cyrus has become' will not always be easy to read. And here another paradox makes itself felt. As my survey has shown, the childhood narrative largely deals with the characterization of Cyrus in transparent ways: much of his conduct is explicitly motivated by the narrator in terms of his inborn virtues, his youth or his emotions and desires. These strategies of characterization point to an integrated concept of character, in that the reader is given the tools to categorize Cyrus' behaviour using familiar frames of reference. If there is anything to 'wonder' about, it is the remarkable degree to which Cyrus possesses the virtues ascribed to him. In the remainder, however, precisely when Cyrus' engagement with the world around him becomes more complex, the narrator for the most part refrains from making explicit characterizing comments about his protagonist. He now places different demands on the reader.

Virtue in Action, or: When Worlds Collide

Cyrus' education is concluded with the long conversation on the art of ruling between him and his father Cambyses (1.6). His innate and acquired abilities are now perfected and enable him successfully to deal with all eventualities.[41] In that sense, Cyrus may be called 'a constant, unvarying figure, a static embod-

40 And there is uncertainty about who is spared pain, Cyrus or Astyages; contrast Bizos' translation in the Budé edition ('sans s'attirer aucun ennui') with Gera's 1993: 29 ('without paining his grandfather'). Against Gera's interpretation it may be objected that it is difficult to see how Astyages could be expected to be *less* offended by a direct question than by being caught in a dialectical trap, and that the foregoing paragraph has focused on *Cyrus*' predicament.

41 Nickel 1979: 57–58, Due 1989: 148. There are (often implicit) back-references to Cyrus' *paideia* throughout, in particular to the conversation in 1.6, which show Cyrus putting theory into practice; e.g. when Cyrus chooses a 'healthy' location to construct a camp (6.1.23), he follows Cambyses' advice (1.6.16).

iment of success'.[42] It need not be concluded, however, that the main thrust of the narrative is 'revelatory' rather than 'exploratory'.[43] For Cyrus still needs to negotiate the sometimes competing demands of his various character traits and the narrative explores several concrete ways in which he does so, often leaving it to the reader to figure out exactly what 'lesson' they should draw from it.

In many parts of the narrative, to be sure, things proceed in a fairly unproblematic way. For example, at one point Cyrus predicts (rightly, as the sequel shows) that, if the Persians allow their Median and Hyrcanian allies to divide the spoils, they will later 'remain with us more gladly', and he argues that this benefit outweighs the likelihood of the Persians getting less in the short term (4.2.42–45). The narrator does not state explicitly that Cyrus' policy is informed by the *philanthrōpia*, in particular its subspecies 'generosity' or *kharis*, which has been part of his *phusis* from the start, by his wish to bind the allies to him (a mark of *philotimia*) and by the *engkrateia* he has acquired. Rather, readers are called on to draw that conclusion for themselves in an active engagement with Xenophon's theory of successful leadership;[44] the explicit characterization of Cyrus in the childhood narrative enables them to do so. They may also notice how Cyrus' policy plays upon characteristic traits of the Medes, who are throughout described as given to luxury, and of the Persians, who have the virtue of *engkrateia* drilled into them from an early age.[45] They may admire Cyrus' skill in 'using' the right people in the right ways, without them becoming less happy as a result (making good use of people is certainly part of what Xenophon thinks proper *philanthrōpia* is).

It is more often the case that the characterization of the figures who help shape the narrative's events 'is dictated by the particular qualities in Cyrus which their interaction with them will reveal'.[46] Thus, throughout *Cyropaedia*, minor figures are often given one or two constant traits, which embed them in Xenophon's scheme of virtue and configure their particular relationship to Cyrus. In the case of opponents, this strategy serves to contrast Cyrus' virtues with their vices; the method of characterization through comparison is continued from the childhood narrative. For instance, Gobryas typifies the Assyrian king as both jealous and cruel, when he tells Cyrus how the king killed Gobryas' son because he was a better hunter (4.6.2–7) and castrated Gadatas

42 Tatum 1989: 94.

43 Stadter 1991: 491 = 2010: 399.

44 Due 1989: 167 observes that although a term like *philanthrōpia* is itself only sporadically used, Cyrus is depicted as possessing this and other virtues throughout.

45 Cf. Gera 1993: 76–77 for the luxury of the Medes in *Cyr.*, and 1.2.8 for Persian *engkrateia*.

46 Stadter 1991: 488 = 2010: 396; cf. Due 1989: 53, Tatum 1989: 94–96.

because he was more handsome (5.2.28); Gobryas' own desertion exemplifies the resentment which the Assyrian king's behaviour inspires in his subjects. Whereas the childhood narrative allowed us to see that the Assyrian king was less suited to a life in arms than Cyrus (see above), we can now also contrast Cyrus' immunity to jealousy and his efforts to gratify his subjects rather than antagonize them. In the case of Cyrus' friends and allies, the same strategy serves to show how Cyrus turns different types of people into willing subjects and makes fruitful use of them. For instance, of Cyrus' two steadfast Persian friends, Hystaspes is repeatedly singled out for his wit and provides light relief when needed, while Chrysantas stands out because of his intelligence and often backs up Cyrus' plans with cogent arguments; the Mede Artabazus, who enters the story when he steals a kiss from Cyrus by pretending to be one of his relatives (see above), continues to act on the basis of his loyalty to Cyrus then created.[47] Incidentally, as if to underline the schematic nature of these characterizations, the narrator withholds the names of many figures when they are first introduced. For instance, Artabazus has to wait till 6.1.9 to be named: until then, he is only identified with a reference to the incident that defines his relation to Cyrus and motivates his acts of loyalty, as 'the one who once claimed to be a relative of Cyrus' (4.1.22, 5.1.24). The Assyrian king is never named at all.[48]

Yet, this is only part of the story. More elaborately told episodes often exhibit a greater complexity, suggesting alternative ways of making sense of the world and opening up views of Cyrus which leave room for a wider range of responses. A prime example of such an episode concerns the story of the (unnamed) Armenian king, a vassal to Cyaxares who no longer meets his obligations of paying tribute and sending troops, because he has heard about the war waged on Media (2.4.12). Cyrus mounts a campaign against him, promising Cyaxares not only to ensure that the Armenian king will fulfil his obligations but also to make him a greater friend than before (2.4.14). The Armenian king is not much of an opponent: 'stunned' (*exeplagē*) by Cyrus' approach, he responds by 'being afraid (*ephobeito*)', 'hesitant (*oknōn*)', 'lacking nerve (*ouk etlē*)' to fight, and by being altogether 'helpless (*aporōn*)', and withdraws into the mountains (3.1.1–5). The king is soon coaxed out from his stronghold and

47 Cf. Due's 1989: 62–65, 68–73 elaborate treatment of these three figures and citation of relevant passages.

48 Cf. Tatum 1989: 164–165, 175–177 for further comments on the narrator's naming practices. An important character like Cyaxares is also first introduced by highlighting his relation to Cyrus: he is Cyrus' 'mother's brother' (1.3.12) and Cyrus' 'uncle (*theios*)' (1.4.7, 8, 9) before he is 'Cyaxares' (1.4.9); cf. Due 1989: 56.

put on trial for his life, but it quickly becomes clear that his *aporia* extends to his rhetorical abilities, when he is forced to admit that it would be just if he were to be put to death (3.1.6–13). At this point, the king's son Tigranes asks permission to plead his father's case. Cyrus consents, because he knows that Tigranes used to take lessons with a certain sophist and he 'very much desired (*panu epethumei*)' to learn the results of this education (3.1.14). A dialectical conversation ensues, which quickly turns from the question *if* the king should be spared to the question *why* he should be spared. Of particular interest is Tigranes' point that his father has learned discretion now that he has been caught. Cyrus cannot believe that a single day can have turned the king from *aphrōn* to *sōphrōn*, for that is to believe 'that self-control is an affectation of the soul (*pathēma ... tēs psukhēs*), like pain, not something it needs to learn (*mathēma*)' (3.1.17). Tigranes denies that the king's new-found *sōphrosunē* is fleeting, because through his defeat he 'is conscious (*sunoiden heautōi*)' how much better Cyrus is than he (3.1.19), and fear of Cyrus will ensure the longevity of his submission (3.1.24). Cyrus remains unconvinced: 'it is typical for the same man to turn insolent in good fortune and quickly back off when he blunders and, when he is let off, to grow arrogant again and cause trouble' (3.1.26). The exchange is brought to a close only when Tigranes argues that, were Cyrus to 'gratify (*kharisaio*)' the king by sparing his life and allowing him to continue to rule, 'he would be most grateful (*megistēn an soi kharin eideiē*)' (3.1.29). Cyrus 'was very pleased (*huperēdeto*)' with this, realizing that his objective of making the king a greater friend than before can now be fulfilled (3.1.31): he displays great generosity to the king, and asks for significant benefits in return. When the Armenians go home after a celebratory dinner, some praise Cyrus' 'wisdom (*sophian*)', some his 'firmness (*karterian*)', some his 'mildness (*praotēta*)', yet others his 'beauty and height (*to kallos kai to megethos*)' (3.1.41).

This episode is another lesson on how an opportune display of generosity helps to turn a disobedient vassal into a useful ally, but this time the conclusion that *kharis* will inspire *kharis* is weighed against a number of alternative approaches to the problem. First, Cyrus' chosen course of action conflicts with the concept of justice he himself laid down at the beginning of the trial: instead of being punished, the Armenian king will be rewarded for his insubordinate behaviour. Secondly, there is the suggestion that instilling fear is a suitable way of ensuring obedience, which is rejected because Cyrus dismisses the deeply ingrained traditional wisdom that suffering leads to insight.[49] The narrator

49 Cf. Mueller-Goldingen 1995: 154–156 on the background and Xenophon's reactions to it

does not make it easy for his readers to adjust themselves to Cyrus' way of thinking. One reason for this is that the initial characterization of the Armenian king does not only provide readers with a negative model of leadership which contrasts unfavourably to Cyrus, but also produces associations with a familiar type of ruler from Greek historiography (and elsewhere) whose abilities do not match his aspirations: Herodotus' (→) Croesus is one prominent example which comes to mind. It is readers' experience of such models which makes that they cannot but seriously consider the approaches which Cyrus rejects.[50] Furthermore, the narrator creates a certain distance between Cyrus and the readers by making two references to his state of mind which are puzzling rather than elucidating. When Cyrus 'is pleased' with Tigranes' practical solution, readers may wonder (and have wondered) whether this is because he has learned something or because he has found a convenient moment to put a stop to the proceedings.[51] It is in any case surprising that Cyrus should not simply accept, but even enjoy taking a practical decision without much regard for the wider ethical dimensions of the case. The reference to Cyrus' 'desire' to engage in a bit of rhetorical argument in any case implies that for Cyrus, at least, the whole debate was not much more than an amusing diversion.[52] To be sure, the happy ending which Xenophon has given the story guides readers to support the Armenians' perception of Cyrus' 'wisdom', but, like them, they may also find it difficult to attach a label to this wisdom: does Cyrus' conduct instantiate 'firmness' or 'mildness', or does neither term quite cover it? They may even sympathize with those Armenians who simply admired Cyrus' outward appearance and, perhaps like them, acquiesce in the impossibility of scrutinizing Cyrus' conduct further.

Nowhere do these techniques and their consequences become clearer than in Cyrus' confrontation with his uncle Cyaxares. The two characters are contrasted from the beginning,[53] but the conflict between them really deepens when Cyrus wishes to follow up his first victory against the Armenians by pur-

elsewhere. However, the fact that Xenophon may elsewhere express the same opinion should not prevent us from weighing the arguments against the narrative here.

50 For Croesus, *pathēmata* are *mathēmata* (Hdt. 1.207.1), and he does comply out of fear (Hdt. 1.156.1). It does not help that the effects of *kharis* are not subjected to dialectical scrutiny. Moreover, as Tamiolaki 2012: 576 n. 48 points out, the proem of *Cyr.* (1.1.5) states explicitly that the reciprocity between Cyrus and his subjects was based on fear.

51 The former view is defended by Gray 2011: 370, the latter by Tatum 1989: 143, Gera 1993: 97, Mueller-Goldingen 1995: 153.

52 Gera 1993: 91.

53 See above and cf. Due 1989: 56–58, Tatum 1989: 119–123.

suing the enemies into their own country. In a long speech, Cyaxares cautions *engkrateia* and *sōphrosunē* (4.1.14–18), but in the introduction to that speech the narrator tells us that his real motives for recommending an end to the war are the fact that he was 'secretly jealous (*hupephthonei*)', did not wish to engage in further risky business (*mē palin kinduneuein*) and 'happened to be enjoying himself (*peri euthumian etungkhanen ōn*)' (4.1.13). Although Nadon aims to show that Cyaxares' speech is sensible,[54] the narrative does not prove the Median king right, and the motives imputed to him indicate that he is prepared to use the rhetoric of virtue in the service of his emotional needs. Cyaxares does allow Cyrus to recruit any volunteers from the Median army he can find to launch a small campaign, but the unintended consequence is that almost all Medes leave with Cyrus. Cyaxares' discovery of what has happened makes him 'fall into an animal rage (*ebrimouto*)'[55] and this, the narrator adds, is in line with his reputation for being 'savage (*ōmos*)' and 'senseless (*agnōmōn*)' (4.5.9), thus adding an aspect of his character which had not been particularly visible till now, but which is confirmed when he sends a letter to summon back the Medes, who respond to this news by falling silent, 'especially because they were aware of his savagery (*ōmotēta*)' (4.5.19).

There can be no doubt that Cyaxares represents a negative model of leadership, in fact the most elaborate such model *Cyropaedia* has to offer: Cyaxares' vices are as many as Cyrus' virtues.[56] To an extent, the shift of allegiance on the part of the Median troops from Cyaxares to Cyrus, which effectively makes the latter the new sole ruler, is presented as following naturally from the fact that Cyrus knows how to handle soldiers while Cyaxares does not. The question whether Cyrus also actively and intentionally pursued this transference of power is, however, kept vague.[57] Due thinks that Xenophon's 'vagueness and ambiguity' in this respect springs from his 'lack of interest',[58] but other scholars argue that the simple narration of the event tells its own, sinister story.[59]

54 Nadon 2001: 89; *contra* Gray 2011: 270.

55 Cf. Gray 2011: 272 for this word.

56 Tatum 1989: 118 points this out well.

57 It is only at 7.5.37 that it is said that 'Cyrus finally desired (*epithumōn … ēdē*) to establish himself as he thought befitted a king'.

58 Due 1989: 25.

59 Hirsh 1985: 81 speaks of a 'coup', Tatum 1989: 123 of 'disempowerment', Carlier 2010: 345 of the 'seduction of [Cyaxares'] troops', Gera 1993: 100 of the 'usurpation' of power. All these 'dark' interpretations presuppose an intention on the part of Cyrus which is nowhere made explicit in the text. This is not to say that Cyrus did not have that intention before, but rather that Xenophon deliberately keeps matters vague.

Arguing against such 'dark' readings, Sandridge points out that, although Cyrus deceives Cyaxares several times (in order to be able to continue the war against Assyria), against the background of the wider literary tradition on Cyrus, which shows how Cyrus came to power by force and design, Xenophon's story is rather innocent.[60] Another line of attack is taken by Danzig, who argues that everything which happens in the story shows Cyrus operating on principles endorsed in Xenophon's philosophy, especially the concept of proportional justice, according to which everyone should get what he deserves on the basis of his moral capacities: Cyaxares does not deserve to rule, while Cyrus does. Thus, some scholars may protest that Cyrus mistreats Cyaxares, but '[i]t is hard to find a principle in Xenophon that would justify such a protest'.[61]

These arguments are true as far as they go, but they arguably ignore how Xenophon, in the final showdown between the two protagonists, firmly puts the spotlight on Cyaxares (who occurs in no other account of Cyrus' story and may well be an invented character) and offers a convincing picture of the predicament in which he finds himself. Things would be easy if Cyrus were made openly to state the lesson Danzig thinks we should draw from it, but while he frames the final debate with his uncle in terms of justice (*dikaiosunē*), he makes his uncle admit that *every individual action* he has undertaken was just (5.5.13)—he may be right, but if so, Xenophon ensures that the lesson is hard to swallow. Cyaxares soon stops responding to Cyrus' questions, and his silence is not necessarily an indication that Cyrus' case is unanswerable. Rather, for Cyaxares 'justice' is not the point at all. What matters to him is that he, a descendant of kings and himself a king, is humiliated (5.5.8). This is why he says to Cyrus, 'the greater your benefactions are, the more they weigh me down' (5.5.25). His final points are worth quoting in full:

> If I seem to you to lack judgement in taking these things to heart (*agnōmonōs enthumeisthai*), then apply all these points to yourself (*eis se trepsas*) instead of me and see what you think. (…) As for what pertains in particular to my own experience (*tōi emōi pathei*), if someone should treat the Persians whom you were leading in such a way that they followed him more gladly than you, would you believe him to be a friend? I think not, but more of an enemy than if he had killed many of them. And what about this? If you, with the best intentions, told one of your friends to take however much he wanted and then on hearing this he took as much as he was

60 Sandridge 2012: 91–92.

61 Danzig 2012: 538.

> able to and left, and became rich with what belonged to you, while you did not even have a limited number of things at your disposal, would you be able to regard that person as a blameless friend?
>
> 5.5.28, 31–32

Cyrus breaks off the conversation, but ensures Cyaxares that he will continue to be honoured. And so it is, though Cyrus needs to persuade the Medes to give Cyaxares gifts (5.5.37) or even to call on him (5.5.39). The effect on Cyaxares is no less real for that: 'he changed to the opinion that Cyrus was not alienating them from him and that the Medes were not paying him any less attention than before' (5.5.40). However, the fact that Cyaxares is appeased does not mean that the reader cannot be impressed by the power of his words—Cyrus, too, has evaded humiliation since childhood, as we have seen, and this makes Cyaxares' point ('what if you were me?') rather pointed. On a different level, this same point also invites the reader to step into the shoes of Cyaxares ('what if *you* were me?'). Cyaxares is, perhaps, a rather more straightforward 'example' for many readers than Cyrus.

Conclusion

Here, then, are some of the ways in which Xenophon keeps the readers engaged with his story of unmitigated success. He acknowledges the complexities and potential contradictions involved into putting theory into practice, suggests alternative ways of dealing with the situations with which Cyrus is confronted and is ambiguous about Cyrus' own intentions and desires. Furthermore, the characters whom Cyrus confronts are more interesting than the scholarly habit of ranking them on Xenophon's scale of virtue suggests, because they tap into realms of experience which readers can take seriously. When Stadter maintains that, '[i]f the narrative is not convincing, it is because Xenophon cannot overcome the reader's sense, based on his own experience, of the way such situations resolve themselves in real life',[62] he fails to appreciate an important aspect of Xenophon's narrative art. As studies on characterization have shown, in interpreting characters in narrative it is not easy to leave behind 'the cognitive structures and inferential mechanisms that readers have already developed for real-life people' or for familiar literary constructs.[63] And Xenophon

62 Stadter 1991: 490 n. 58 = 2010: 398 n. 58.

63 Culpeper 2001: 10–11.

does not ask us to do so when reading *Cyropaedia*. In fact, the power of the work to a large extent resides in the way in which it stages confrontations between his ideal leader and a far from ideal world. And in assessing Cyrus' character, one is at times reminded of Aeschylus' words in the *Frogs* about a lion cub that has been reared in the city and now needs to be dealt with.[64] But whereas Aeschylus recommends forcing the lion to conform to the city's laws, Xenophon controversially suggests that the lion should be allowed to determine them: that is for the best, even if it is not easy.

64 Ar. *Ra*. 1431–1433.