SOCRATES ON SAMOS

Ἴων δὲ ὁ Χίος καὶ νέον ὄντα εἰς Σάμον σὺν Ἀρχελάῳ ἀποδημῆσαι

Ion of Chios [says] while he [Socrates] was still young he made a trip to Samos with Archelaus. (Diogenes Laertius 2.23)

Like most students of Socrates, I have read over this biographical report many times without taking serious notice of it. But perhaps we have been hasty.

According to the scholarly consensus, there is some biographical information to be extracted from this report, but less than what appears on the surface. In the first place, Plato's testimony seems to produce a 'glaring contradiction' with it.[1] 'You have not', say the Laws of Athens in an imaginary conversation, 'ever left this city to go sightseeing, except once to the Isthmus, nor gone anywhere else, unless you were on a military expedition, neither did you ever make another other trip abroad, like other men, nor did you long to be acquainted with some other city or other laws' (*Crito* 52B).[2] In the *Phaedrus* Plato portrays Socrates as unacquainted with the suburbs of Athens (230C–E), so much is he a creature of the city. Thus in so far as we take Plato as our best source for Socrates, we must take Ion's report with a grain of salt.

Also troubling is the fact that the report suggests a kind of succession story in which one philosopher was taught by another in some sort of unbroken genealogy of thinkers, preferably back to Thales. Accounts of successions are notoriously schematic, and in some cases demonstrably false, as when Anaxagoras is said to have been taught by Anaximenes, who died before he was born.[3] In Hellenistic times there was a need to track down lines of descent and establish some sort of school traditions in imitation of the Hellenistic schools–even when it was unclear that there were schools in any formal sense among early philosophers.[4] The Archelaus connnection quickly seems to be assimilated into a string of succession stories told of early philosophers.[5]

Thus there is a conflict between what Ion tells us and what Plato tells us, and some reason to be suspicious of Ion. The now standard solution to the problem is to accommodate the two accounts: 'The prudent course is to reconcile so far as may be the plain sense of Diogenes' brief report with the clear and authoritative evidence offered by Plato.'[6] Plato's Socrates tells us he never left Athens except for military campaigns; Ion says Socrates was in Samos; there was a military expedition against Samos in 440, when the city was in revolt against the Athenian

[1] F. Jacoby, 'Some remarks on Ion of Chios', *CQ* 41 (1947), 1–17, at 10.

[2] The statement of the exception, *ὅτι μὴ ἅπαξ εἰς Ἰσθμόν*, is missing from some MSS, but should be kept: J. Burnet, *Plato's Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates and Crito* (Oxford, 1924), ad loc. It is retained in the new edition of the OCT (E.A. Duke et al., edd.).

[3] Diogenes Laertius 2.6 with 2.7 and 2.3.

[4] See Diels, *Doxographi Graeci* (Berlin, 1879), 147; F. Wehrli, *Lykon und Ariston von Keos*, (*Die Schule des Aristoteles*, vol. 6 [Basel], 1967–9), 65; J. Mansfeld, *Heresiography in Context: Hippolytus' Elenchos as a Source for Greek Philosophy* (Leiden, 1992), 23–6.

[5] Theophrastus (Simplicius, *Physics* 27.23–4 = Theophrastus, *Physicorum opiniones* fr. 4 Diels) reports it as hearsay: 'Archelaus of Athens, whom *they say* Socrates himself attended', while Archelaus was Anaxagoras' student; cf. Diogenes Laertius 2.16; Aristoxenus, ibid. 2.19; Diocles, ibid. 10.12.

[6] L. Woodbury, 'Socrates and Archelaus', *Phoenix* 25 (1971), 299–309, at 301.

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confederacy.[7] We may connect the dots by saying that Socrates (and Archelaus) served in the invasion army together. That Socrates does not mention this episode in his trial is not a problem: presumably he served in other campaigns than the ones he mentioned, but only chose the cases in which he distinguished himself to present to the jury. A military campaign can count as an *apodêmia*, so there is no linguistic obstacle to the explanation.[8]

This account, taken from Burnet and developed in detail by Woodbury, has served as the standard interpretation of the Samos trip to the present.[9] There have been dissenting voices, but they have not won much ground or made much of Ion's report in any case.[10] In the current climate of opinion most scholars probably pay no attention to the problem. A survey of recent books on Socratic philosophy shows little ink being devoted to fine questions of biography. The closest thing to a notice comes from a blanket rejection of our main biographical source by Brickhouse and Smith: 'As we have seen…we have no good reason to accept any of Diogenes' specific claims.'[11] Nails's valuable prosopographic study of Plato's characters provides biographical sketches and information, but does not do much with Ion.[12]

To be sure, our information about Ion's notice is a mere scrap in a rubbish heap of problematic biography. Yet it is one of those scraps we should take seriously. It belongs to a series of reported cases in which Socrates made non-military trips outside of Athens.[13] Thus the immediate context already rules out the standard reading of the passage.[14] And in the context, Ion's report is especially valuable because Ion was older than Socrates by a generation, and died in 422, or at latest in the winter of 422–21, as an 'epitaph' by Aristophanes reveals.[15] Socrates first stepped

[7] Thucydides 1.115.2–117.3; scholium to Aristophanes' *Wasps* 283; Plutarch *Pericles* 24–28. On details of the chronology, see C.W. Fornara, 'On the chronology of the Samian War', *JHS* 99 (1979), 7–19; B.D. Meritt, 'The Samian revolt from Athens in 440–439 B.C.', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 128 (1984), 123–33.

[8] See LSJ, s.v. ἀποδημέω 1, with Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* 101.

[9] Burnet (n. 2), 205; Woodbury (n. 6). Curiously, Burnet also accepted the claim that Archelaus was Socrates' teacher: 358 and n. 5. In a recent study of Archelaus, V. Tilman, 'Archélaos d'Athènes', *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 18 (2000), 65–107, at 71–72, accepts this account without modification.

[10] Jacoby (n. 1), followed by M. Pohlenz, 'Nomos und Physis', *Hermes*, 81 (1953), 418–38, at 432, n. 2.

[11] *The Philosophy of Socrates* (Boulder, 2000), 49, n. 9, cf. 13. T.C. Brickhouse and N.D. Smith, *Socrates on Trial* (Princeton, 1989), 18, n. 54, specifically reject Ion's statement, citing Zeller (see E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtliche Entwicklung*, Part 2, Section 1: *Sokrates und die Sokratiker: Plato und die alte Akademie* (Leipzig, 1922[5]), 49, n. 3) – who sketches many of the arguments later developed by Burnet and Woodbury – and W.M. Calder III, 'Socrates at Amphipolis (*Ap.* 28e)', *Phronesis* 6 (1961), 83–5.

[12] D. Nails, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics* (Indianapolis, 2002), 176 on Ion; cf. 264–9 on Socrates.

[13] Diogenes Laertius 2.23 continues: *καὶ Πυθώδε ἐλθεῖν Ἀριστοτέλης φησίν· ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰς Ἰσθμόν, ὡς Φαβωρῖνος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τῶν Ἀπομνημευμάτων*. Aristotle and Favorinus are the further authorities; but it remains unclear whether Favorinus collected the former two references, or Diogenes himself. In any case, the context clearly indicates that the set of references is of non-military travels recorded for Socrates. (On the trip to the Isthmus, see n. 2 above, the ultimate source presumably being Plato himself.)

[14] Woodbury (n. 6), 300 notes, 'The last triad of sources seems to have been collected to correct another statement made by Plato (*Cri.* 52B, cf. *Phdr.* 230C–D)…' But he never adequately explains how Diogenes or his sources could have misconstrued Ion so completely as to reverse the sense of his report.

[15] Jacoby (n. 1), 1 and n. 3, with Aristophanes *Peace* 832–37.

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on to the stage of Athens (at least in drama) at the Greater Dionysia in 423, when both Aristophanes and Ameipsias dramatised his work.[16] Given Ion's date of death, it is possible and even likely that his notice of Socrates is the first surviving public recognition of the philosopher. If there were no other reason for caring about Ion's report, we should pay heed to it as the first text chronicling Socrates' reception.

Now consider Diogenes' sentence. In the absence of any textual reason to impugn its validity, I shall assume that it is an accurate paraphrase of something Ion wrote.[17] It contains three pieces of information: (a) when Socrates was young, (b) he went to Samos (c) in the company of Archelaus. For our purposes, (b) provides the *explanandum*, (a) and (c) the evidence for the *explanans*. The standard interpretation does a poor job of dealing with either of the pieces of evidence. In 440 Socrates was about twenty-nine years old. Of course the term 'young' is inherently vague and usually context-dependent. But there is nothing particularly young about a twenty-nine-year-old soldier, and no particular reason to mention his youth during a campaign. It is possible that Ion might have written his account years later. Then, however, the most obvious point of reference would not be Socrates' age, but the time of the Samian revolt, which was a well-known event of recent history. To focus on Socrates' age suggests attention to an event that was important for Socrates but not for Athens.

Second, Socrates went with Archelaus. On the present interpretation, he also went with several thousand other fellow citizens. It seems more than a little perverse to represent him as going with one of them in particular. We have no corresponding report that Socrates went to Potidaea or Delium with Alcibiades – though in both cases there is a significant military connection. If when he says Socrates 'made a trip to Samos with Archelaus' Ion means 'he went on campaign to Samos with the same group that included Archelaus', he is at least guilty of *suggestio falsi*. Even worse is the hypothesis that Ion referred not to Socrates of Alopece, but Socrates Anagyrasius, a general in the Samos campaign.[18] But then it would be impossible for Socrates to be young; moreover, it would be bizarre to say that Socrates went with Archelaus, a general with a private, rather than vice versa. In other words, we can get this reading out of the passage only by completely misconstruing the sentence. Of course it is possible that Diogenes Laertius in reporting what Ion said has mistaken his meaning. But the burden of proof must be on the interpreter who makes this claim. If the only reason for the claim is the presumption that Plato must be right no matter what, the argument against Ion's statement begs the question.

The standard interpretation not only strains the words of the sentence, it ignores the historical and cultural context of its utterance. As Jacoby argues, the report must

[16] K.J. Dover, *Aristophanes: Clouds* (Oxford, 1968), l–li.

[17] No variant readings are reported; there are no obvious corruptions present. Nevertheless, the reliability of the sentence has been repeatedly challenged on historical grounds. I shall deal with historical objections in due course. For all Diogenes Laertius' limitations as a biographer and historian, he has emerged as a reliable transmitter of testimonies. See J. Mejer, *Diogenes Laertius and His Hellenistic Background* (Wiesbaden, 1978); on Diogenes' method of scholarship, 16–29; Mejer quotes approvingly a letter of Wilamowitz (Ep. 151):…*in Diogene non acumen quidem aut iudicium sed aliquam saltem et lectionem et sedulitatem invenimus, neque ullum aut dissimulationis aut mendacii vestigium* (13).

[18] See Zeller and Calder, a view apparently accepted by Brickhouse and Smith (n. 11); the view originated with Wilamowitz, based on a scholium to Aristides, *Against Plato on Behalf of the Four* 135.18 (U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, 'Von des attischen Reiches Herrlichkeit', *Philologische Untersuchungen* 1 [1880], 1–96, at 23, n. 42).

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come from Ion's *Visits* (*Epidemiai*) or *Memoirs* (probably alternate titles to the same work).[19] Although Ion was an accomplished poet who won first prize for his tragedies, he was also a prose writer whose works include historical studies. The *Visits* include accounts of the author's meetings with renowned citizens such as Cimon (his patron) and Sophocles. In the latter case, Sophocles came to Ion's native Chios when he was general for the Athenians, and met Ion at a dinner party.[20] Thus his accounts might include military visitors, but Ion was not, for all that, a military historian. In fact, he was the closest thing Athens had to a gossip columnist. In his memoirs he seems to have been excessively proud of eminent individuals bringing their graces to Ionia. It is one thing for a leading man of letters in the office of general to dine with the author in Chios, but another thing for Socrates and Archelaus to be eating at a common mess in a camp on Samos. What is the occasion that distinguishes Socrates and Archelaus?

One further point. Ion was in fact interested in philosophy, and the author of *Triagmoi*, a philosophical treatise with cosmological theory.[21] He thus must have been interested in the work of Archelaus, whatever his reaction to Socrates. Yet obviously the report singles Socrates out for special mention, apparently as a young man with a future (at least in retrospect). There is no evidence that Ion was interested in successions *per se*, or in the sort of proto-doxography that began in the sophistic age.[22] He was interested in the personalities behind the letters. Thus, however jaundiced our view of succession literature, it does not apply to Ion – who, in any case, was about the age of Archelaus, must have met him, and had no need to manufacture pedagogical connections for his subjects. It would, no doubt, be naive to say that Ion had no axe to grind, no programme to push. What is important for us is that his programme was not to establish intellectual genealogies or school affiliations, but to chronicle famous people whom he had known and who had had connections with his native Ionia. Because his motivations are different from those of later writers, his information provides independent confirmation of those writers' claims. Moreover, the historical context of Ion's report was in one way very different from that of later biographers and historians: Archelaus and Socrates were alive and flourishing when he wrote, and able to deny any false reports about themselves, so there was a kind of built-in check to literary or historical invention.

Suppose, then, that what Ion reports is not a military campaign but, what it appears to be, a voluntary excursion by the mature Archelaus and the young Socrates. When and why did it take place? It must have happened before the Samian revolt for Socrates to be young and presumably under the tutelage of Archelaus, in the time 449–441, and presumably closer to the earlier date.[23] Why would Archelaus want to

[19] Jacoby (n. 1), 9–11, 15.

[20] Athenaeus 13.81 = *FGH* 2.46.

[21] DK 36A1, B1–2.

[22] Chiefly from Hippias and Gorgias. See B. Snell, 'Die Nachrichten über die Lehren des Thales und die Anfänge der griechischen Philosophie- und Literaturgeschichte', *Philologus* 96 (1944), 170–82; C.J. Classen, 'Bemerkungen zu zwei griechischen "Philosophiehistorikern" ', *Philologus* 109 (1965), 175–81; A. Patzer, *Der Sophist Hippias als Philosophiehistoriker* (Freiburg, 1986); J. Mansfeld, *Studies in the Historiography of Greek Philosophy* (Assen, 1990), 22–83 et passim.

[23] Assuming Socrates had attained the age of majority (eighteen) and finished his military obligations as an *ephebe* (at twenty) when he went. The date can even be pushed earlier, to 452, especially in light of insinuations that Socrates became Archelaus' boyfriend at 17 years of age (Porphyry, *FGH* 260F11, *Suda,* s.v. *Σωκράτης* = DK 60A3). Woodbury (n. 6), 302–5 traces this report back to Aristoxenus, whom he accuses of being 'a sensation-seeker and muck-raker'. But claims of Aristoxenus' bias now seem exaggerated (C.A. Huffman, 'The secret life of Socrates',

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cross the Aegean to Samos? There is one obvious reason why a philosopher would go to Samos: to see the famous philosopher of Samos, Melissus. This suggests an occasion worthy of a Platonic dialogue: Archelaus, young Socrates, and Melissus the Eleatic debating – what? Perhaps the possibility of cosmology. And what would the outcome be? If there were such a meeting, it would rival some of the great meetings of minds, such as Leibniz and Spinoza, or Hobbes and Galileo. But perhaps the very lack of a report about such a meeting is an argument against it.

Another hypothesis is possible. The meeting took place, and helped to convince Socrates of the futility of cosmological speculation, which could produce, in Kantian terms, only a vain dialectic. This outcome is certainly consistent with Socrates' later attitude, as portrayed both by Plato and Xenophon, that cosmology was not his concern. Socrates for his part was not the sort of person to advertise his meetings with famous people. If Plato, on the other hand, was aware of the meeting, he must have suppressed knowledge of it. But why? Perhaps because it gave fuel to Aristophanes' portrayal of Socrates as (in part) a scientific philosopher and (in part) a logic-chopper. As student of Archelaus and in a sense of Melissus, he would be open to the charge of guilt by association. It might be objected that Plato himself has the young Socrates associating with Parmenides and Zeno in the *Parmenides*, so he should not shy away from contact with Melissus. But there is one big difference between Plato's portrayal and Ion's report: Plato shows Socrates as an independent thinker, even as a youth, and not beholden to any philosophical school or teacher. He has a nose for an argument, which he naturally sniffs out like a 'Spartan puppy' (128C). Plato does allow Socrates to say that he was worried about causal explanations as a youth (*Phaedo* 96A ff.) – a passage that has often led to biographical inferences[24] – but even there he does not have him name a teacher or mentor.[25]

Whatever the outcome of the trip, Ion puts Socrates and Archelaus together in a way that confirms the later rumour that the one was the student of the other. And that piece of information itself provides a kind of starting point for Socrates' intellectual biography. In that time and realm, solid evidence is hard to come by, and we need to use what evidence we have as the foundation for our interpretations. With Ion we have a man about town who knows the characters and is writing memoirs rather than doxographies, at a time when our only other sources are comic poets. Events and relationships that were to later writers matters of hearsay and inference were to him current events. If he said that the young Socrates went to Samos with Archelaus, he did so presumably because the young Socrates went to Samos with Archelaus.

unpublished). Further, it is not clear that tales of romantic connections between master and student would be received as scandalous by Greek audiences; indeed they sometimes seem almost conventional (even in Plato: *Parmenides* 127B). Aristoxenus cannot be regarded as being as reliable as Ion; rather than using Aristoxenus to confirm Ion, we should perhaps use Ion to confirm Aristoxenus, at least as far as validating a teacher-student relationship between Archelaus and Socrates.

[24] Notably by J. Burnet and A.E. Taylor. See Taylor, *Socrates: The Man and His Thought* (1933), 63–8; Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedo* (Cambridge, 1955), 127–31. Mansfeld (n. 22), 65–6, sees the difference between the *Phaedo* and the *Parmenides* accounts as tantamount to Plato's moving Socrates from the Ionian to the Eleatic succession. This is interesting, but fails to take into account the degree to which Plato's Socrates remains aloof from the two traditions. When Parmenides gives detailed instructions in his method in the second half of the eponymous dialogue, he uses Aristotle, not Socrates, as his interlocutor. On the *Phaedo*, see following note.

[25] Plato goes to some trouble to present Plato's encounter with Anaxagoras' book as an accident (*Phaedo* 87B–98B) – not likely if he were a student of Archelaus, or, as some accounts have it, of Anaxagoras himself (Diogenes Laertius 2.19, 45).

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It is often pointed out that we are in a disadvantageous position when we question Plato's view of Socrates, because in most cases there is no way to verify or falsify his claims. But with Ion, who died when Plato was about seven years old, we have a chance to keep Plato honest. Do we dare?[26]

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[26] I shared a draft of this paper (which was not my formal presentation) with participants in the Symposium Antiquae Philosophiae in Samos, Greece, in July 2005; I am grateful for comments from them, especially those of Carl A. Huffman.

ANNOTATED INNOVATION IN EURIPIDES' *ION*

Scholars have long sensed an artistic self-awareness in Euripides' plays that is usually associated with Hellenistic poets and their Roman heirs. Wilamowitz[1] noted the clever double entendre in the *Heracles* when the presentation of Lycus and his back-story in the play (26–34) also seems to be a staging of Euripides' introduction of a new character into the Heracles tradition. Euripides annotated his innovation, G.W. Bond suggested,[2] by describing Lycus as *kainos* in a way that alludes to the tyrant's dual role as an upstart in both the plot of the play as well as in the Heracles narratives that Euripides had inherited. A fuller investigation of Euripides' proto-Hellenistic self-referential gestures can be found in E. McDermott's 'Double meaning and mythic novelty',[3] where she discusses moments in the *Supplices* and *Hecuba* in which the poet's own mythic innovation is marked by a conspicuous *kainos* or *neos* that does double-duty by describing an appearance that is 'new' or 'recent' in two ways: novel or unexpected for the characters in the unfolding action of the play as well as for the audience members who are taken by surprise as they witness Euripides' transformation of mythic tradition first hand. Since Euripides' will to innovate is nowhere more evident than in the *Ion*, a play which is also 'self-referential to a degree unparalleled anywhere else in Euripides',[4] it is reasonable to expect some knowing nods to the inventive revision that is underway.

Euripides received, and elsewhere adopted, a tradition that named Xuthus as Ion's father. Both Hesiod (fr. 10a) and Herodotus (7.94; 8.44) record this parentage as does Euripides himself in a fragment of the *Wise Melanippe* (481 N).[5] Another Euripidean deviation – and possible innovation – is the transfer to Xuthus of the military prowess elsewhere attributed to Ion.[6] Even if Euripides did not invent the idea of Apollo as Ion's father, the fact that later versions of the story revert to the standard Xuthus lineage shows that he was making a radical departure. The dramatic masterstroke of the *Ion* is to build the conventional genealogy into the plot instead of suppressing it.

[1] *Euripides: Herakles* (Berlin, 1895), 2.112.
[2] *Euripides: Heracles* (Oxford, 1981), xxviii.
[3] *TAPA* 121 (1991), 123–32.
[4] T. Cole, 'The *Ion* of Euripides and its audience(s)', in L. Edmunds and R.W. Wallace (edd.), *Poet, Public and Performance in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore, 1997), 87–96.
[5] K.H. Lee, *Euripides: Ion* (Warminster, 1997), 38.
[6] By Herodotus in the above passages and by Aristotle *Ath. Pol*. 3.2 and fr. 1.

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