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Review Essay: Xenophon as Philosopher

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Thomas L. Pangle: The Socratic Way of Life: Xenophon's "Memorabilia." (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018. Pp. xi, 288.)

Thomas L. Pangle: Socrates Founding Political Philosophy in Xenophon's "Economist," "Symposium," and "Apology." (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020. Pp. viii, 245.)

Dustin Sebell: *Xenophon's Socratic Education: Reason, Religion, and the Limits of Politics*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021. Pp. ix, 217.)

Xenophon's reputation as a thinker of the highest order has been rehabilitated thanks principally to the work of Leo Strauss, his students, and his students' students in political theory. Evidence of Xenophon's rehabilitated reputation is also the recent growth in Xenophon studies in academic fields outside political theory—classics, history, and philosophy—by scholars who are unaffiliated with Strauss, some of whom are even deeply critical of him, among them Paul Cartledge, Louis-André Dorion, Vivienne Gray, and Christopher Tuplin. There is also the success of the Landmark editions of Xenophon's *Hellenika* and *Anabasis*. To this growing body of scholarly literature, three monographs devoted to Xenophon's Socratic writings are now added. Thomas Pangle has written two excellent books, *The Socratic Way of Life: Xenophon's "Memorabilia"* and *Socrates Founding Political Philosophy in Xenophon's "Economist," "Symposium," and "Apology."* Additionally, Dustin Sebell has written a penetrating analysis of Book IV of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, titled *Xenophon's Socratic Education*: *Reason, Religion, and the Limits of Politics*.

Xenophon's works range in breadth, subject, and style. Although he composed four works about his teacher Socrates, he is perhaps better known for his non-Socratic writings. Indeed, nowadays he is frequently tagged as a historian or political thinker for his book about the final years of the Peloponnesian War and its aftermath, the *Hellenica*, as well as for his accounts of his own military adventures in Persia, *The Anabasis of Cyrus*, and his highly embellished account of the life of Cyrus the Great, *The Education of Cyrus*. In contrast to the philosophical interests of that other student of Socrates, Plato, Xenophon's appear to be

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much more practical, and his books show an abiding concern for this-worldly, all-too-human affairs (to say nothing of dogs and horses). Yet despite Xenophon's growing reputation, few outside the Straussian orbit hold him to be serious enough to warrant the title philosopher. By contrast, Pangle's and Sebell's interpretations of Xenophon's Socratic works take them seriously as the product of a Socratically educated philosopher. Xenophon, in their view, not only understood well the core of Socrates's thought, but he also reflected deeply on the best way to transmit that thought to posterity. In this review, I will give a brief synopsis of each of the three works and then turn to discuss five themes that I take to be fundamental to Pangle's and Sebell's respective accounts of Xenophon's Socratic thought. In the future, any scholar who wishes to call into question Xenophon's status as a philosopher must tackle these three books that establish beyond any reasonable doubt his philosophic depth.

Pangle has published books on a wide range of authors and texts, including Montesquieu, Aristotle, Plato, the American Founders, and the Bible. These two new works are his first book-length treatments of Xenophon, each offering an impressive interpretive commentary on Xenophon's Socratic works. Comparisons with Leo Strauss will inevitably be drawn, who also devoted two works to Xenophon focused on his Socratic writings. There is, however, a notable difference. Strauss devoted a single book to Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* and another to the *Apology, Memorabilia*, and *Symposium*, whereas Pangle devotes a single book to the *Memorabilia* and a second to the remaining three Socratic works. The fact that Strauss and one of his most prominent students looked to Xenophon's Socrates after having studied Plato at length ought to encourage serious students of political philosophy, if they have not already done so, to follow suit. Along with those of Strauss, Pangle's commentaries on Xenophon's four Socratic works may well be the best available, but the latter are more accessible than Strauss's and a better starting point for students and scholars alike.

Pangle's two books are informative, penetrating, and a delight to read. He is even playful at times, though perhaps not as playful as he was in his recent book on Aristotle's *Politics*. Pangle's joy comes across through the pages, as he peppers the books with rhetorical questions, comical suggestions (*SFPP*, 198n35, 215n27), and not a few exclamation marks. For example, in the midst of invoking the authority of Nietzsche to encourage readers to take Xenophon's portrayal of Socrates seriously, he asks, "Xenophon's *Memorabilia* is to replace the Bible?! Xenophon's Socrates is to replace Jesus, as a guide to morals?! Can Nietzsche be serious?" (*SWL*, 6). That is not to say that Pangle's book is not serious. Rather, Pangle is at once entertaining, scholarly, and educational. Moreover, he respectfully and thoughtfully engages the scholarly literature, in a departure from Strauss, who declined to do so. Pangle's endnotes show that he has read and reflected on competing interpretations of Xenophon and that he has arrived at his views fully aware of the scholarly alternatives.

Pangle's first book on Xenophon's Socratic writings, *The Socratic Way of Life*, was published in 2018. As Pangle presents it, the *Memorabilia* is divided into

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two parts of vastly unequal length. In the first part, which consists of only the first two chapters, Xenophon responds to the twin charges for which Socrates was convicted: impiety and corrupting the youth. The remainder of the *Memorabilia* (Book I, chapter 3 until the end, IV.7) is ostensibly devoted to showing how Socrates benefited others. Accordingly, Pangle's commentary is divided into two main parts. In part 1, he devotes a chapter each to the charges of impiety and corruption. In part 2, he again follows Xenophon's lead by classifying those whom Socrates benefited into four groups and devoting a chapter apiece to each kind of beneficiary. Chapter 3 examines how Socrates benefited his companions through piety and self-mastery, chapter 4 shows how he benefited friends and family, and chapter 5 shows how he benefited those who longed to attain the noble or beautiful. The final chapter is devoted to showing how Socrates benefited others as a teacher. Pangle concludes with a small epilogue, "Xenophon's Conclusion," in which he discusses the ending of the *Memorabilia*. There, Xenophon addresses the charge of a suspicious doubter who claims Socrates lies about his daimonion, and he also gives an account of Socrates's trial and last days that differs in important ways from the account in his *Apology*. The two themes are connected insofar as the suspicious doubter suggests that if Socrates truly had a daimonion, it would have advised him better on how to defend himself. Pangle persuasively shows Socrates's response to such a doubter is inadequate and suggests that Xenophon presents this inadequate response in order to point readers to his *Apology of Socrates to the Jury*.

Unlike his book on the *Memorabilia*, the structure of Pangle's *Socrates Founding Political Philosophy* does not strictly follow the structure of Xenophon's works. Pangle devotes six chapters to the *Economist*, Pangle's thought-provoking translation of the title of the work more commonly known simply by its Greek title, *Oeconomicus*, the Xenophontic text that he says portrays Socrates founding the science of economics; he then offers one chapter each to the *Symposium* and to the *Apology of Socrates to the Jury*. The book also includes a compelling, informative appendix containing Pangle's preliminary observations on the similarities and contrasts between Plato's and Xenophon's presentations of Socrates. There is much to learn from this short piece.

Dustin Sebell's widely praised first book, *The Socratic Turn: Knowledge of Good and Evil in an Age of Science* is a close reading of Plato's *Phaedo*. His new book on Xenophon also offers a close reading, but taking something of a different tack from Pangle, Sebell sets out a clear thesis that he (successfully in my view) seeks to defend: Socrates encouraged promising students to arrive at his considered judgments about morality, politics, and theological matters by jokingly educating other less promising students in their presence. In the process, Sebell also guides the reader to those considered judgments.

Unlike Pangle, moreover, Sebell does not proceed straightforwardly through the text—he frequently refers to other passages and moves back and forth through the *Memorabilia*. Further, the structure of Sebell's book does not simply reflect the structure of Book IV of the *Memorabilia*. It is

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divided into three parts of unequal length. Parts 1 and 2 consist of two chapters each, but the third part contains five chapters, and there appears to be something of an ascent to the book. The heart of Sebell's argument is concentrated in part 3, where he discusses the theme of the divine. Part 1 contains a chapter devoted to Socratic rhetoric, and another to the question of the teachability of politics. Both of the chapters in part 2 are devoted to doubled topics: justice and the weakness of writing, in chapter 3, and self-knowledge and the hope for happiness in the fourth chapter. Part 3 consists of five chapters: "Natural Theology," "Natural Law," "The Foundation of Wisdom," "The (Rhetorical Treatment of the) Dialectical Method," and "Human Wisdom and Divine Providence." The title of Sebell's book, *Xenophon's Socratic Education: Reason, Religion, and the Limits of Politics,* also calls for reflection and brings to mind Strauss (*Xenophon's Socratic Discourse*) and Christopher Bruell (*On the Socratic Education*), two thinkers he evidently emulates.

Sebell's book is penetrating, and its prose is demanding. Because Sebell is exacting in his attention to detail, one must read his book with the *Memorabilia* near to hand. With the requisite attention, however, the reader will make great progress in understanding Xenophon's Socrates, especially when it comes to the question of reason and religion. Like Pangle, moreover, Sebell demonstrates a comprehensive familiarity with the scholarly literature on Xenophon. Again, such attention to the scholarly literature shows that his disagreements are grounded not in a lack of familiarity with other scholars but in competing interpretations of the text. The efforts of Sebell and Pangle to engage the secondary literature ought to attract serious attention to their books by a wide audience.

Sebell turns to Socrates on moral, political, and theological questions guided by his judgment that Socrates and his students provide the best model for understanding oneself, the world, and the divine. In particular, Sebell thinks that in Xenophon we find a more serious philosophical treatment of revelation than we do in modern political thought, or rather contemporary political thought, as the counterexamples he points to are John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas. Philosophy may well have progressed on several fronts, but, according to Sebell, it has been at a steep cost in understanding theological questions. Contemporary thinkers like Rawls and Habermas hold that theological disputes are a relic of the past; they therefore ignore the epistemological challenge posed to philosophy by revelation and focus on moral and political matters. But Sebell makes clear that without being able to understand the grounds of disbelief in revelation, the preference of contemporary thinkers for philosophy is arbitrary, groundless—that is to say, unphilosophic.

Socrates, by contrast, did not ignore fundamental alternatives. He went out into the marketplace to engage others first and foremost about moral and political matters in order to engage those whose understanding of the world differed from his own, partly because he saw the deep connection between moral and political matters, on one hand, and theological ones, on

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the other. As Sebell shows, Socratic political philosophy faces the challenge of religion or theology squarely. If revelation is possible, the philosophic life would rest on an ungrounded and so arbitrary decision. Philosophy would rest on unphilosophic grounds, it would rest on faith, and it would thus be indistinguishable from belief in revelation. Philosophy must address the possibility of revelation if it seeks a philosophic grounding. And if one wishes to understand the grounds of philosophy, especially in the face of the compelling theological alternative, there is "no better guide than Socrates" (*XSE*, 5). Sebell argues persuasively that Xenophon shows us the heart of a serious Socratic education. And Sebell himself devotes most of his attention to theological matters, aiming to show readers the heart of Socrates's considered judgments on them.

Sebell and Pangle touch on a variety of themes, but for purposes of this review, I will focus on five interconnected themes: Socrates and death, Xenophon's portrait of Socrates as a natural scientist, Socrates as a teacher, Socratic theology, and last, the best way to preserve Socratic philosophy through writing.

Thomas Pangle's discussion of Xenophon's *Apology* shines new light on this short, curious work. Pangle has argued before that Hermogenes plays a key role in Xenophon's *Apology*. Because Xenophon was absent, most of his account of Socrates's defense ostensibly relies on Hermogenes's report of it. Pangle persuasively argues that the rationale Socrates gave Hermogenes was specifically tailored to impress him and those like him, the gentlemen. That is, Socrates aimed to make himself look tough, manly even, someone who had the courage to stand up for his conception of justice and who refused to bend to a corrupt political system. But Socrates's genuine motivation was something else altogether. Further, as Pangle brings out, Socrates did not face death as confidently as he presents himself. For Pangle notes that after Hermogenes's account of the trial ends, Xenophon's account continues. He goes on to rely on the report of an anonymous witness who relates two instances where Socrates conducts himself in a peculiarly un-Socratic manner. First, Xenophon notes, it is said that Socrates laughed in response to the crying of one of his devoted followers. As Pangle notes, following Strauss, this is the only place in the Xenophontic corpus where Socrates is said explicitly to laugh. Second, Socrates prophesies that Anytus's son will fall victim to shameful desire and advance far in wickedness; here Socrates seems to let himself engage in rather vicious revenge, though Pangle points to the possibility that it was Xenophon who gave himself over to the desire for revenge, not the master: "It is said" but is not necessarily the case that Socrates pronounced this vengeful prophecy. Pangle indicates that these two instances show some hesitation on Socrates's part regarding his impending death. Did Socrates in fact judge that it was preferable to die? Surely, he thought he was helping his friends and philosophy. Further, Pangle believes Socrates likely took moderate joy in the prospect of the possibility that his death might be proudly and gloriously transfigured into a shining benefit

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to humanity (*SWL*, 215). However, Pangle suggests, Socrates's laughter indicates some hesitation or doubt on his part regarding the choice-worthiness of death. Socrates lets himself go and allows himself, as Pangle, invoking Plato, puts it, "an outburst of overconfident triumph or liberation, which is laughter at its core, and which signals a temporary, explosive quest and hope for a mighty change in or forgetfulness of one's limited human condition" (*SFPP*, 172). Pangle reveals Socrates sought a powerful forgetfulness, and what Socrates sought to forget, even if momentarily, was his own mortality. Although Socrates "believed for himself that death was more choiceworthy than life," he nevertheless sought to soothe his mortal doubts or to arouse his human hopes. Socrates did not hope for a recompense for the sacrifice he was making but perhaps sought momentarily to give himself over to hope. By this account, Socrates was indeed making a sacrifice; he was dying so that philosophy might live and his students might continue to philosophize. But Socrates made this sacrifice somewhat reluctantly and he remained alive to the real costs. Death may indeed have been choiceworthy at that moment, in those particular circumstances, but it was not altogether or simply desirable.

The question of why Socrates chose to die may well be unanswerable, but Pangle offers helpful insights that spur reflection on this most interesting question. If Sebell is right in stressing Socrates's disbelief in the traditional accounts of the gods, or the immortality of the soul, death may well be nothing but a final annihilation. Can anyone face annihilation without trembling? Is death something a rational human being should fear? Xenophon's Socrates tries to impress upon Hermogenes the belief that he is facing death fearlessly, that he marches to his death out of something like spite or pride—he is sticking it to Athens. But Pangle suggests that perhaps Socrates was, in fact, afraid of dying.

With regard to natural science, Pangle and Sebell show that Xenophon sought to correct a common misconception of Socrates as someone interested solely in human affairs. Xenophon, by their accounts, shows readers that Socrates remained a natural scientist throughout his life, although he became aware, at some point, of the need to obscure this fact and present himself as someone interested solely in human affairs (this is not to deny that Socrates was interested in moral and political matters, nor that that interest was guided in part by a concern for natural scientific, theological, and epistemological matters). At any rate, one who has read only Plato could be forgiven for holding that Socrates turned away from natural philosophy and set his sights solely on political philosophy; Socrates's autobiographical remarks in the *Phaedo*, after all, certainly make such an impression. But as both Pangle and Sebell emphasize, Xenophon presents a Socrates who takes pleasure in speculating about natural wonders. Indeed, Xenophon occasionally lets it slip that Socrates remained a natural philosopher to the end, that he "*never* ceased examining with his companions what each of the beings is" (*Mem.* IV.6.1, emphasis mine). Or perhaps it is better to say that Xenophon shows Socrates letting this fact slip. In the *Symposium*, for

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example, Socrates admits—perhaps under the inebriating effects of wine, as Pangle points out (*SFPP*, 5)—to reflecting on natural "wonders," and he notes the curious fact that oil, although wet, is inflammable, but water extinguishes fire. He also notes that brass reflects light, but does not produce it (8.4, cf. 2.24–25). The examples seem innocuous, but Sebell notes that Socrates's reflections on brass and oil may well be allusions to his thoughts about the nature of the sun and the moon, since Anaxagoras had likened the moon's reflection of light to brass (*XSE*, 212n9). Further, to repeat, Xenophon reports that Socrates examined the beings with his companions, highlighting the fact that Socrates not only studied natural science himself, but that he also inquired into such matters with students.

With regard to students, Xenophon charitably presents us with an entire Socratic education, from start to finish, but his charity has its limits. As Sebell persuasively argues, Xenophon only shows Socrates "teaching" about the beings in an indirect and intentionally defective manner, but "the one and only time Xenophon lets us see Socrates as a teacher, Socrates is the teacher of a youth who is not even remotely fit for an education"—Euthydemus (*XSE*, 20). Sebell's book is consistently guided by this central thesis, namely, that a reader can arrive at the heart of a Socratic education by reading Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, but that in order to do so, one must attend to the intentionally and sometimes comically insufficient character of Socrates's attempts to teach as portrayed by Xenophon. Euthydemus's defective education was given in the presence of, and actually for the benefit of, others in the audience, including Xenophon himself, who reports being present for many conversations.

There is thus a saving grace, since Socrates gave comically bad lessons to unpromising students in the presence of promising ones. He educated the promising natures by showing them the inevitable educational failures of those with bad natures. Socrates's mock attempts at education are riddled with logical fallacies, omissions, and contradictions—defects Socrates intended to be noticed by students with a good nature. Paradoxically, their goodness can be an impediment to Socratic education, since these good youths have been habituated or trained to do what they should by the city; the good youths are exceptionally law abiding (*XSE*, 31), and so "to tell them the truth in the simplest and clearest manner would have been contrary to nature and incorrect" (*XSE*, 24). Their educational transformation, therefore, must be indirect, slow, and gradual; they must come to certain conclusions on their own after noting the deficiencies of more conventional accounts of moral, political, and theological matters. As Sebell says, "the more good natures strove in response to Socrates's erotic art to gratify their desire for knowledge all by themselves—while thoughtfully listening to Socrates jokingly arouse and gratify a bad nature's desire—the more they would come to see with their own eyes the problems with, and hence the undesirability of, such knowledge to begin with. . . . There is no shorter, straighter way to the education of good natures" (*XSE*, 24). Moreover,

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according to Sebell, Xenophon's manner of writing imitates Socrates's wise manner of teaching: he deliberately writes incorrectly. Xenophon was surely aware that many would read him incorrectly (cf. *Kyneg.* 13.6–7). Thus, good readers of Xenophon's Socratic works are encouraged to play the part of the promising auditor, to note the difficulties he raises, and to think them through for themselves.

Sebell persuasively points out that this is one way, and perhaps the most common way, that Socrates taught—indirectly or by proxy—but Pangle underscores another part of Socratic education that Xenophon mentions only once and in passing. While Socrates may have tried to attract students by speaking to others in their presence, this primary mode of education strikes me as primarily propaedeutic: Socrates was trying to attract the attention of the gifted students. But what would they do once he had won them over, after they had become convinced of the insufficiency of the salutary stories that Socrates led his less than gifted companions to accept? Surely, they would try to piece together what Socrates truly thought, but it seems unlikely it would have ended there. As Pangle emphasizes, one of Socrates's activities was participating in reading groups where he and his students would read great books by the wise men of old, something Xenophon mentions once. Pangle notes that "the 'wise men of old' to whom Socrates refers would be the 'pre-Socratic' philosophers and poets," like Hesiod, Homer, and Anaxagoras (*SWL*, 61, cf. *XSE*, 42). Accordingly, Xenophon "indicates that learning from the study together of old books, that are great because they contain treasures of wisdom, is a peak activity of the Socratic life and friendship. Here, finally, we see virtuous activity that Socrates did not merely turn his companions toward, but effectively led them into" (*SWL*, 60). Pangle argues that Xenophon portrays these small reading groups that studied great old books as the peak, beneficial Socratic activity. Xenophon calls Socrates's life blessedly happy directly after noting these private discussions, and nowhere else does Xenophon praise Socrates—or anyone else for that matter—so highly and in his own name.

Pangle and Sebell agree that Socrates taught, but they disagree regarding what he taught. One of Sebell's most daring claims is his contention that Socrates did not teach politics. "Neither he himself [Socrates] nor anyone else," Sebell claims, "was a teacher of some art of politics or statesmanship" (*XSE*, 39). Rather, Socrates made a pretense of being a teacher of politics in order to attract promising young students. While it seems entirely persuasive that Socrates lured in many potential students with such promises, it is difficult to follow Sebell all the way to his conclusion. Many scholars see Socrates's response to Antiphon in the *Memorabilia* as a more or less frank admission that Socrates taught politics (I.6.15). But here Sebell insists that we pay precise attention to Socrates's words and note that nowhere in the passage does Socrates actually say he teaches politics (*XSE*, 190n13). Rather, Socrates responds with a rhetorical question that inclines the listener falsely to conclude he is a teacher of politics. Sebell's claim is intriguing, to say the

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least, but it would be good for him to spell out his argument more clearly, although that is perhaps contrary to his intention. Much surely depends on what he means by "politics." In the passages where Sebell denies that Socrates taught "political affairs," he emphasizes "statesmanship" and repeatedly denies Socrates taught "some art" of politics. So perhaps Sebell means to say that Socrates did not teach politics in its most precise or highest sense—statesmanship—because statesmanship is not teachable qua art. Or perhaps Sebell means to say that those whom Socrates taught rhetoric and other political skills were not his students properly speaking—or he does not think rhetoric is a part of politics (or he would deny that Socrates taught rhetoric)? Interestingly, none of the scholars to whom Sebell attributes the mistaken belief that Socrates taught politics is a "Straussian." Yet, Pangle argues, "Xenophon makes it clear that Socrates taught his young followers, including not least Alcibiades and Critias, great political and especially rhetorical skills" (192). Perhaps Sebell would deny that Alcibiades and Critias were students of Socrates, properly speaking, and so his argument depends on a narrow definition of student. In any event, Sebell's position needs to be laid out more clearly if it is to persuade those who hold the opposite view.

But even if we grant that Alcibiades and Critias did not learn political skills from Socrates, we would have to address Xenophon's self-presentation in the *Anabasis*. For there, Xenophon aims to show that his own political success, such as it was, owed much to his Socratic education. He implicitly contrasts his own political success and Socratic education with Proxenus's sophistic education and political failure. Xenophon was "tougher, wilier, and wittier" than Proxenus, a disciple of the rhetorician Gorgias, who put too much stock in the power of persuasion and proved insufficiently aware of the harsh necessities of political rule. Eric Buzzetti's recent book *Xenophon the Socratic Prince* (Brill, 2014) develops this thesis excellently. After all, to return to Sebell's account of the *Memorabilia*, he claims that Xenophon, not Euthydemus, was the target of Socrates's genuine education. What did Xenophon learn? Surely, he learned about moral, political, and theological matters—the last Sebell stresses. But if Sebell is correct, and Socrates might teach a good nature such as Xenophon that we cannot depend on providential gods to look after us, this seems to raise the stakes of engaging in politics.

Sebell is at his most interesting and persuasive when dealing with Socrates's theology, especially in his account of Socrates's supposed argument for intelligent design with Aristodemus in Book I, perhaps the first such argument in recorded history, and in his account of a similar conversation with Euthydemus in IV.3. Sebell convincingly calls into question the widespread view that Socrates supports an argument for a god or the gods on the basis of intelligent design, and he argues that Socrates insinuates his genuine view of god or the gods in the midst of a conversation purportedly meant to demonstrate that there is a providential god. While, on the surface, Socrates tells Aristodemus and Euthydemus in separate passages that we are the work of a benevolent craftsman who made a world conducive to

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human flourishing, Socrates surreptitiously points his attentive auditors to the opposite conclusion. Humans, according to Socrates, need sun for light, earth for sustenance, water for sustaining ourselves and our produce, fire, and heat from the sun, and he asserts that the gods have provided humans with these abundantly. Socrates's inclusion in this list of fire is curious, and Sebell reminds us that human reliance on fire for things like light and heat—and as a stand-in for the arts generally—shows that we are not sufficiently provided for by the gods (Sebell's passing reference to Protagoras's Prometheus myth in Plato's *Protagoras* is helpful). Air alone among the elements seems to have been provided sufficiently, and Sebell helpfully notes that Socrates passes over this element in silence as if to amplify the greater point. According to Sebell, Socrates's natural theology reveals that humans are alone and that the universe is indifferent to human flourishing, if not downright hostile to it. Sebell shows that Aristodemus and Euthydemus fail to grasp the deficiencies in these theological arguments, but he also reminds us that Xenophon indicates his presence on both occasions (I.4.2, IV.3.2).

The seriousness with which Pangle and Sebell treat Xenophon shows us that studying his Socratic works is essential for someone who seeks to understand Socrates. Xenophon helps us to see that Plato distorted Socrates—as Plato himself admits in his Second Letter (314c). But Xenophon also distorts him, and, like Plato, he does so intentionally. Both Plato and Xenophon distort Socrates, because it is necessary to preserve Socrates's (and thus philosophy's) reputation. The authors cannot rely solely upon other philosophers and potential philosophers for their works to survive. Unalloyed Socratism could not survive through the ages, perhaps it could not even be captured adequately in writing. Thus, Plato and Xenophon each present an exoteric and an esoteric account of Socrates. The esoteric account is the same in each case; it is the exoteric accounts that differ. Plato presents Socrates as extraordinarily elevated, quasi-religious, and even mystical, but Xenophon presents him more as a resourcefully prudent and down-to-earth sage (*SFPP*, 180). Pangle also suggests that Plato's distortion may be more problematic than Xenophon's, since Plato's account of Socrates "certainly helped to inspire later neo-Platonic mysticism and crucial elements of Christian theology" (*SFPP*, 179).

Xenophon's Socrates was intended to be attractive to gentlemanly types. As Pangle says, "The strategy of making Hermogenes the transmitter of a major aspect of the Socratic legacy is part of the grander and more complex Xenophontic-Socratic rhetorical strategy" (*SFPP*, 156). Xenophon's choice of Hermogenes for his report of the *Apology* represents his larger strategy and provides readers with a glimpse of his method of preserving Socrates's legacy. Men like Thomas Jefferson and the Earl of Shaftesbury, who viewed themselves as gentlemen or natural aristocrats, preferred Xenophon to Plato, even going so far as to disparage Plato's fantastically mystical Socrates. As Pangle argues, Xenophon's non-Socratic works establish the authority of his Socratic writings, and these gentlemanly types helped to perpetuate Socrates's legacy.

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Further, as Pangle points out, Xenophon's distorted image of Socrates consciously undertook to counterbalance Plato's distortion of Socrates. Xenophon's missing presentation of a conversation between Plato and Socrates in Book III "is one of Xenophon's more explicit indications that his oeuvre as a whole presupposes, and complements, the Platonic oeuvre" (*SWL*, 139). Pangle's footnote indicates the agreement on this point of famed classicist John Burnet, and we find in this context Xenophon's sole mention of Plato (III.6.1). Again, we can see why Pangle turns to Xenophon; he is guided, at least in part, by the recognition that Xenophon's account of Socrates presupposes Plato's, serves to counterbalance it, and thus facilitates arriving at a genuine view of the philosopher.

Plato's Socrates survives the ages by appearing even more elevated than he actually was (though Pangle rightly notes that Plato himself counterbalances these exalted claims to seemingly divine knowledge with Socrates's famous claims of ignorance); Xenophon and his Socrates survive by appearing more pedestrian than they were in fact. As Strauss says of Xenophon, "For such a man was he that he preferred to go through the centuries in the disguise of a beggar rather than to sell the precious secrets of Socrates' quiet and sober wisdom to a multitude which let him escape to immortality only after he had intoxicated it by his artful stories of the swift and dazzling actions of an Agesilaus or a Cyrus, or a Xenophon" (Strauss, "The Spirit of Sparta of the Taste of Xenophon," 1939). In many ways, Xenophon concedes Plato's superiority as a student, but if Pangle's interpretation is correct, and Xenophon saw his account of Socrates as a correction of Plato's, one cannot help but wonder if Xenophon's deference was partly ironic.

Further, Xenophon's apparently prosaic manner of writing may be a sign of philosophic excellence; on this Pangle and Sebell agree:

> As bad—unsafe and contrary to nature—as it may be to tell the truth in the simplest and clearest manner, to write the truth in the simplest and clearest manner is worse, much worse. . . . And the steps that Xenophon took when writing down his recollections of Socrates (1.3.1), both to conceal from bad natures and to reveal to good ones his teacher's wisdom, have made it abundantly clear that he did not take this responsibility lightly. Xenophon's writing, like Socrates himself, did not approach all natures in the same way. (*XSE*, 64)

It is possible that Xenophon revealed even more about his master's wisdom than his classmate did. Xenophon presents a more human Socrates, a Socrates who laughs, who seeks revenge, and who even gets drunk—well, at least tipsy, an obvious correction of Plato's *Symposium*. Presenting Socrates as less lofty allows Xenophon to drop the veil from time to time, with less risk. Xenophon's Socrates may encourage minding your mother and may promote physical exercise, but he also conducts reading groups, admits being a teacher, and evinces a persistent interest in natural science.

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Finally, while these three books are excellent, they will appeal to different readers. Sebell's intelligent, precise study of Book IV of the *Memorabilia* will be of great interest to academics doing research on Xenophon and those students of the classics already invested in the study of his works. Pangle's books, on the other hand, would be the right place to start for someone who has not studied Xenophon but who wants to hear a convincing account of why one should consider studying him. This may be especially true for Plato scholars who sense there may be something worthwhile in Xenophon's Socratic writings. But Pangle's thoughtful, engaging, readable books are not merely that; they offer deep insights and cut to the heart of Xenophon's thought. In a way, therefore, Pangle writes like the author he treats; he appeals to a broader audience of interested scholars and intelligent laymen. Taken together, these three books provide excellent interpretations of Xenophon's Socratic works, make a compelling case to take his Socratic works seriously, and uncover the core of Socratic philosophy.

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