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THE LIFE OF SOCRATES: PLATO, XENOPHON, AND THE UNTAPPED  
POTENTIAL OF THE SOCRATIC PROBLEM

by

Abigail R. Fritz

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Ancient Languages and Cultures

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2022

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## ABSTRACT

The Life of Socrates: Plato, Xenophon, and the Untapped  
Potential of the Socratic Problem

by

Abigail R. Fritz, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2022

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This thesis focuses on the Socratic problem, the question of the relationship between the historical Socrates and what ancient authors wrote about him. The first chapter argues that the Socratic writings of Xenophon are valuable sources on the historical Socrates, despite the popular view that Xenophon is historically and philosophically unreliable compared to Plato. The second chapter focuses on the *daimonion*, or divine sign, of the historical Socrates; this chapter finds that the *daimonion* was an important part of Socrates' life, that the historical Socrates did not view the *daimonion* as a threat to his rationality, and that there is good reason to doubt that the *daimonion* of the historical Socrates was exclusively apotrepitic, as Plato maintains. The third chapter analyzes Socrates' military and political activities as they are described by Plato and Xenophon and finds that, since Socrates and his contemporaries viewed philosophy as a way of life, and not merely as a collection of abstract theories, these activities are relevant to the study of the philosophy of the historical Socrates. This thesis

concludes that Xenophon is a valuable source on the historical Socrates, and that approaches to the Socratic problem that dismiss Xenophon are flawed. By emphasizing Xenophon's contribution to the Socratic problem, and by expanding the scope of the Socratic problem to include Socrates' military and political activities, this thesis challenges the approaches to the Socratic problem that have dominated the field of Socratic studies since the late nineteenth century.

(109 pages)

## PUBLIC ABSTRACT

The Life of Socrates: Plato, Xenophon, and the Untapped  
Potential of the Socratic Problem

Abigail R. Fritz

The primary objectives of this thesis are to argue for an approach to the Socratic problem that (1) examines Xenophon's Socratic writings along with those of Plato, and (2) analyzes the Socratic problem with a view to the ancient conception of philosophy as a way of life. To achieve these objectives, the introductory chapter provides an overview of scholarly approaches to the Socratic problem, which have tended to favor Plato as the only reliable source on the historical Socrates. This chapter argues that such approaches are flawed, and that both authors are important sources on the historical Socrates.

The second chapter demonstrates Xenophon's value when it comes to the Socratic problem by using Xenophon's *Memorabilia* to elucidate Socrates' religious worldview. Analyzing Plato and Xenophon side by side shows that Socrates' *daimonion*, (i.e., Socrates' divine sign), was an important part of the historical Socrates' life, that the *daimonion* did not interfere with Socrates' rationality, and that there is good reason to doubt Plato's claim that Socrates' *daimonion* was exclusively apotrepic, meaning that it only turned him away from action and never toward it.

The third chapter argues that, since philosophy was conceived as a way of life by Socrates and his contemporaries, the scope of the Socratic problem should not be limited to Socrates' theoretical philosophical views, but should include his actions, including his military and political activities.

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Abigail R. Fritz

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CHAPTER I  
APPROACHES TO THE SOCRATIC PROBLEM

**Introduction**

Socrates wrote nothing himself, yet he profoundly influenced Plato and Xenophon, whose *Sokratikoi logoi*, (i.e. dialogues or other written works featuring Socrates) continue to be studied and enjoyed by modern readers.<sup>1</sup> The question of where the literary Socrates ends and the historical Socrates begins, known as the Socratic problem, has been hotly debated since Socrates' lifetime.<sup>2</sup> Since the early twentieth century, the overwhelming tendency of scholars has been to accept the reliability of Plato's account of Socrates while dismissing that of Xenophon. Near the start of the twentieth century, John Burnet and A.E. Taylor went so far as to argue that all the philosophical content within Plato's dialogues represents either the views of the historical Socrates or else Plato's more developed version of those views (Taylor 1911, ix; 67-89; Burnet [1914] 1968, 125-126). This rather extreme reading of Plato lacks scholarly support today, but it was a precursor to a now widely accepted approach to the Socratic problem known as developmentalism. Developmentalism uses the chronological ordering of Plato's dialogues established by stylometry, the study of stylistic elements in a body of

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle uses the term *Sokratikoi logoi* to refer to this genre at *Poet.* 1.1447a28-b13 and *Rh.* 3.16.1417a18-21.

<sup>2</sup> In Plato's *Apology* (19c1-8), Socrates references the way in which he is portrayed in Aristophanes' *Clouds* to explain the reputation he has acquired for being a sophist and a natural philosopher (the *Clouds* was first produced in 423 B.C., when Socrates was about 47 years old). The fact that Socrates was publicly satirized by Aristophanes indicates that the task of distinguishing the literary Socrates from the historical Socrates was a challenge even before he died.

texts, to trace Plato's philosophical development over time. Proponents of the most common version of this approach hold that Plato's "early" dialogues represent the philosophical views of the historical Socrates, whereas his "middle" and "late" dialogues represent Plato's own philosophy. This approach, which is focused on deriving Socrates' philosophy from Plato's early dialogues, has practically become synonymous with the Socratic problem itself, even though it represents only one part of the Socratic problem and only one strategy for addressing it. For example, those who advocate for a unitarian reading of Plato, such as Charles Kahn and Robert Talisse, do not accept that the ordering of Plato's dialogues proves the evolution of his thinking; rather, unitarians stress the coherence and continuity of Plato's thought throughout the Platonic corpus (Kahn 1996; Talisse 2002). Approaches that dismiss Xenophon's Socratic works, especially variations on developmentalism, have dominated the academic discourse on this subject for so long (the dismissal of Xenophon began in the nineteenth century, and developmentalism been the standard approach since the 1990s) that some critics of this approach, including Louis-André Dorion, have even proposed that the Socratic problem be completely abandoned (Dorion 2011). But this solution is extreme. While the implications of developmentalism have been thoroughly explored, recent scholarship reveals that the potential for Xenophon's Socratic writings to help with the Socratic problem has not been fully realized. This thesis seeks to demonstrate Xenophon's value on the subject of the historical Socrates by using both Plato and Xenophon to analyze questions about Socrates' *daimonion* as well as his military and political service. This thesis also argues that, since the ancients viewed philosophy as a way of life, it is not only Socrates' theories, but also his actions, that are at issue when it comes to the Socratic problem.

### What is the Socratic problem?

The Socratic problem is the question of the relationship between the historical Socrates and the ways in which ancient authors portrayed him (Guthrie 1971, 6; Prior 1996, 17). Three such authors, Plato, Xenophon, and Aristophanes, were contemporaries of Socrates. Later authors, including Aristotle, also wrote about him (Döring 2011).<sup>3</sup> Within the domain of the Socratic problem belongs the question of which philosophical doctrines, if any, Socrates taught. Other considerations pertaining to the Socratic problem include whether and in which battles Socrates fought as a hoplite, whether he ever held political office, and whether his claim to possess a divine sign was at odds with his apparent commitment to reason.

These questions and others like them are difficult to answer because Socrates left no written record of his own, and the things that others wrote about him contain both inconsistencies and outright contradictions. For example, while both Plato and Xenophon agree that Socrates claimed to have a *daimonion*, or divine voice, that guided him, their descriptions of how the *daimonion* functioned directly contradict one another. Plato explicitly states that Socrates' *daimonion* was exclusively apotrepic, meaning that it only steered him away from action and never directed him toward action (Plat. *Apol.* 31c8-d4). Xenophon, on the other hand, explicitly states that Socrates' *daimonion* was both apotrepic *and* protrepic, meaning that the *daimonion* functioned both to prevent Socrates from acting and to turn him toward action (Xen. *Apol.* 12; Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.4;

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<sup>3</sup> In addition to Plato and Xenophon, several of Socrates' other students wrote Socratic dialogues. Of the Socratic writings by authors other than Plato and Xenophon, only fragments survive. These fragments are now collected in Giannantoni (1990).

Xen. *Mem.* 4.8.1). This is just one of many divergences between the accounts provided by Plato and Xenophon.<sup>4</sup> While some scholars have zealously pursued the Socratic problem in recent decades, others have argued that it is insoluble and should be abandoned.

Whether or not these questions can be answered with a satisfying degree of certainty, Socrates inspired thinkers whose influence continues today. The question of the historical Socrates' thoughts and actions is important because the answer informs how modern readers approach ancient authors, and how the Greek intellectual tradition is understood more broadly. In addition, questions about Socrates' life get at the heart of the perennial and widespread curiosity about Socrates, which is at least partly due to his legacy, not only as a theoretical innovator, but as a person who lived in accordance with his philosophical convictions. This chapter will provide an overview of the major approaches to the Socratic problem, followed the summary of the approach that will be used in this thesis. This chapter will conclude with a preview of the chapters to follow.

### **Approaches to the Socratic problem**

#### Pre-19<sup>th</sup> century

Before looking at twentieth century approaches to the Socratic problem, it is important to understand the changing opinion of Xenophon that began in the nineteenth century, before which time Xenophon's works were popular and well-respected throughout Europe. For example, during the Renaissance, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* was

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<sup>4</sup> For a list of differences between Plato's and Xenophon's portrayals of Socrates, see Dorion (2006).

widely read, and was translated into Latin, Italian, French, German, English, and Spanish (Hobden 2020, 115-116). At this time Xenophon was also seen as a philosopher and a loyal disciple of Socrates (Humble 2018, 577-8). And his popularity as an author continued during the eighteenth century. As Tim Rood writes, “the high status of Xenophon’s writings in the early modern period is shown by the fact that, up to the end of the eighteenth century, the only Greek authors to receive more English editions were Homer and Aesop” (Rood 2017, 439). Xenophon’s texts were valued for a range of reasons, including their usefulness for teaching Greek language, their insight on political leadership, and their philosophical content (Rood 2017; Hobden 2020). However, during the nineteenth century, regard for Xenophon’s writings began to decline; when it came to the study of Socrates, scholars began to doubt Xenophon’s philosophical acumen and historical reliability, and argued that Plato’s Socratic writings were superior on both counts. Xenophon came to be seen as unphilosophical, unintelligent, and unreliable when it comes to providing evidence about the historical Socrates (Humble 2018, 578).

#### 19<sup>th</sup> century: Schleiermacher

Heinrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) was a chief driver of the movement to discredit Xenophon as a reliable source on Socrates. In his treatise, “On the Worth of Socrates as a Philosopher,” he argues against the historicity of Xenophon’s portrait of Socrates and in favor of the historicity of Plato’s (Dorion 2011, 2; Danzig 2018, 8; Schleiermacher [1815] 1852). His treatise convinced others to doubt the account provided by Xenophon and instead to look primarily to Plato for information regarding the philosophy and character of the historical Socrates. Schleiermacher’s most influential arguments in this vein are summarized below.

First, Schleiermacher argues that Xenophon's characterization of Socrates is inconsistent with the philosophical legacy traditionally attributed to him (Schleiermacher [1815] 1852, cxxix). That is, while there is a tendency to treat Socrates as the father of Western philosophy, this legacy is difficult to square with the ideas (1) that Socrates eschewed "physical investigations," and (2) that with regard to ethical questions, he "did not by any means aim at reducing them into a scientific shape, and that he established no fixed principle for this, any more than for any other branch of human knowledge" (Schleiermacher [1815] 1852, cxxx). Instead, Xenophon's Socrates was concerned with religion and with benefiting the state and the people around him. Such a person might indeed have been useful and a good citizen, but would have been unlikely to inspire philosophical innovation in others or accomplish it himself (Schleiermacher [1815] 1852, cxxx). For Schleiermacher, it cannot be true both that Socrates' thought inspired the philosophical developments found in the writings Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics *and* that Xenophon's portrait of Socrates is accurate (Schleiermacher [1815] 1852, cxxxiii).

Schleiermacher's big worry is that the disjunction between Socrates' reputation and Xenophon's portrait of him might lead some to conclude that Socrates was not, in fact, a philosophical innovator, and that Plato merely used the character of Socrates as a mouthpiece for his own philosophy. To defend Socrates' status as a philosopher rather than a mere purveyor of moralizing advice, Schleiermacher considers the nature of the accounts provided by Plato and Xenophon. First, he acknowledges that Plato's Socratic dialogues do, in fact, contain Plato's own philosophy, and that his works should not be regarded strictly as representations of Socrates' teachings (Schleiermacher [1815] 1852, cxxxvii). "But as on the one hand it would be too much to assert that Socrates actually

thought and knew all that Plato makes him say: so on the other hand it would certainly be too little to say of him, that he was nothing more than the Socrates whom Xenophon represents” (Schleiermacher [1815] 1852, cxxxviii). Schleiermacher goes on to explain that because Xenophon was not a philosopher, he was ill-equipped to explain Socrates’ philosophical teachings. Therefore, Xenophon stuck to what he did understand when writing about Socrates (Schleiermacher [1815] 1852, cxxxviii). Schleiermacher further hypothesizes that Xenophon may have limited his discussion of Socrates to topics that were most effective in terms of his apologetic goals; if Xenophon’s purpose in writing was to prove Socrates’ innocence, it makes sense that Xenophon was more interested in demonstrating Socrates’ piety and the ways in which he benefited those around him than he was in showing Socrates discussing metaphysical questions (Schleiermacher [1815] 1852, cxxxviii-cxxxix).

Another problem with Xenophon’s Socrates, Schleiermacher adds, is that if Socrates only discussed the topics presented in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*, he would have repelled potential interlocutors and would certainly have failed to attract the interest of Critias, Alcibiades, and Plato (Schleiermacher [1815] 1852, cxxxix-cxl). Schleiermacher suggests that Xenophon gives us a picture of Socrates minus his philosophy: “And is not this just the impression which Xenophon’s conversations make? philosophical matter, translated into the unphilosophical style of the common understanding, an operation in which the philosophical base is lost” (Schleiermacher [1815] 1852, cxl). Thus Xenophon, wishing to defend Socrates but not being a philosopher himself, left the philosophy out of his writing (Schleiermacher [1815] 1852, cxl).

Schleiermacher concludes that, since Xenophon does not provide a complete picture of the historical Socrates, scholars must use Plato to fill in the blanks. But it would be wrong to accept as Socratic only the philosophical content that both Plato and Xenophon attribute to Socrates; this would still result in an insufficiently philosophical portrait of Socrates:

For if in all that Plato has left we are to select only what is least speculative, least artificial, least poetical, and hence, for so we are taught, least enthusiastic, we shall indeed still retain much matter for this more refined and pregnant species of dialogues, to season Xenophon's tediousness, but it will be impossible in this way to discover any properly philosophical basis in the constitution of Socrates. For if we exclude all depth of speculation, nothing is left but results, without the grounds and methodical principles on which they depend, and which therefore Socrates can only have possessed instinctively, that is without the aid of philosophy. (Schleiermacher [1815] 1852, cxli-cxlii)

For Schleiermacher, the common ground between the accounts of Plato and Xenophon is unphilosophical, since it is limited by Xenophon's unspeculative, unmethodical account, and thus fails to make sense of the idea that Socrates was a philosopher in his own right.

In light of these problems, Schleiermacher proposes the following approach to accounting for the philosophical influence of the historical Socrates:

“The only safe method seems to be, to inquire: What may Socrates have been, over and above what Xenophon has described, without however contradicting the strokes of character, and the practical maxims, which Xenophon distinctly delivers as those of Socrates: and what must he have been, to give Plato a right, and an inducement, to exhibit him as he has done in his dialogues?”  
(Schleiermacher [1815] 1852, cxlii)

In other words, it must be admitted that Xenophon's Socrates does not account for the historical Socrates' philosophical influence. Scholars interested in the historical Socrates, therefore, need to look to Plato for the full picture.

In sum, Schleiermacher's main arguments are (1) that Xenophon's portrait does not explain the seminal role in the history of philosophy that is so often attributed to

Socrates, (2) that Xenophon's account of Socrates' philosophy is not reliable because his goals in writing about Socrates were first and foremost apologetic, not philosophical, and because Xenophon was not a philosopher at all, and (3) that Xenophon's Socrates would never have attracted people like Critias, Alcibiades, and Plato because his interests were so banal. Schleiermacher concludes that the historical Socrates must have been more than Xenophon's *Sokratikoi logoi* suggest.

### Responses to Schleiermacher

Schleiermacher's first two arguments are related to one another; both depend on the idea that Xenophon was not a philosopher. There are good reasons to doubt this view of Xenophon, however. First, Louis-André Dorion notes that "Schleiermacher's criticism presupposes that philosophy is essentially a speculative activity" (Dorion 2011 2-3). Yet, as Dorion points out, for Socrates and his contemporaries, philosophy was viewed as a way of life; when this is understood, it makes sense that Xenophon emphasized the ways in which Socrates benefited his friends and the state (Dorion 2011, 3).<sup>5</sup> It is quite plausible that Socrates inspired Plato because of the way he lived his life, even if he did not put forth complex theoretical doctrines himself.

Noreen Humble, too, challenges the claim that Xenophon was not a philosopher (Humble 2018). She analyzes not only Xenophon's Socratic writings (the *Apology*, *Memorabilia*, *Symposium*, and *Oeconomicus*), but the entire Xenophontic corpus. Humble also taps into the intertextual relationship between Plato and Xenophon to piece together a general picture of Socratic philosophy. She identifies the following features as

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<sup>5</sup> The concept of philosophy as a way of life will be discussed in greater detail in the third chapter of this thesis.

genuinely Socratic on the grounds that both Plato and Xenophon associate them with Socrates: (1) the role of wonder in philosophical inquiry, (2) the use of dialectic, (3) the adoption of different rhetorical approaches to suit different audiences, (4) the themes of leadership and education, (5) the emphasis on self-examination, and (6) the claim that Socrates benefited those around him (Humble 2018, 580-594).

Humble demonstrates the influence of Socrates' philosophy on Xenophon by identifying the presence of these Socratic elements throughout Xenophon's non-Socratic writings, including the *Cyropaedia*, *Spartan Constitution*, *De vectigalibus*, *Cynegeticus*, *De equitandi ratione*, *De equitum magistro*, *Hellenica*, *Anabasis*, *Agesilaus*, and *Hiero*. In so doing, Humble problematizes the claim that Xenophon was not a philosopher. On the contrary, she shows that Xenophon was so thoroughly steeped in Socrates' philosophy that Socratic themes and methods pervade even his non-Socratic writings:

...Xenophon...consciously chose to pursue a way of life that involved ongoing self-examination and philosophical inquiry on how best to live a useful, active political life. The results of this inquiry he disseminated through his manifold literary experiments, by means of which he aimed to be useful to others and to encourage others to reflect on their own actions in the light of his analyses. (Humble 2018: 595)

Xenophon's broad application of Socratic philosophy demonstrates, not only that he was capable of philosophical understanding, but also that he is a valuable source when it comes to the Socratic problem.

The idea that Xenophon's Socrates is not historically plausible because the content of his discussions is not stimulating enough to have attracted intelligent students such as Plato, Critias, and Alcibiades, is also problematic. Gabriel Danzig notes that this argument can be reversed; if Plato's Socrates were historically accurate, why would a person as traditional and practical as Xenophon have been attracted to him (Danzig 2018,

11)? Since the historical Socrates *did* attract both Plato and Xenophon, it makes more sense to ask what kind of person Socrates must have been to draw people as different as Plato and Xenophon into his circle (Danzig 2018, 18).

In spite of the problems with Schleiermacher's arguments, by the early twentieth century, they had significantly influenced scholarship dealing with the Socratic problem, and the dismissal of Xenophon in favor of Plato had gained traction. In his 1914 monograph, *Greek Philosophy: from Thales to Plato*, John Burnet echoes Schleiermacher's arguments, asserting that the explicitly apologetic nature of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* should lead readers to doubt the truth of his account. For Burnet, Xenophon's bland portrait of Socrates shows that his desire to prove his teacher's innocence superseded any desire he may have had to tell the truth; in addition, Xenophon's Socrates is historically implausible for Burnet since he was not nearly provocative enough to have been brought to court in the first place, much less sentenced to death (Burnet [1914] 1968, 120). Burnet also adds that Xenophon is likely not an independent source, but seems to have gotten most of his material from Plato (Burnet [1914] 1968, 120).

Both Burnet and A.E. Taylor adopted an extremely Plato-centric stance on the Socratic problem. Taylor expresses his view clearly in the introduction to his 1911 book, *Varia Socratica*: "...the portrait drawn in the Platonic dialogues of the personal and philosophical individuality of Socrates is in all its main points strictly historical, and capable of being shown to be so" (Taylor 1911: ix). Both authors go so far as to attribute the theory of Forms to Socrates (Taylor 1911, 67-89; Burnet [1914] 1968, 125-126).

Interestingly, Burnet explicitly refers to the shifting view of philosophy after the eighteenth century: “It is quite intelligible that the eighteenth century should have preferred the Sokrates of the *Memorabilia* to that of the Platonic dialogues; for he comes much nearer the idea then current of what a philosopher ought to be” (Burnet [1914] 1968, 103). Burnet theorizes that eighteenth century thinkers trusted Xenophon because his account of Socrates fit well with the eighteenth century view of philosophy. He does not seem to realize that he himself might have preferred Plato because of how well Plato’s presentation of philosophy fit with the view of philosophy that was prominent in Burnet’s own lifetime.

#### Developmentalism and unitarianism

##### *Developmentalism: Gregory Vlastos*

By far the most influential twentieth century scholar who has written on the Socratic problem is Gregory Vlastos. His approach to the Socratic problem is less extreme than that of Burnet and Taylor, but he follows Schleiermacher in trusting Plato implicitly while all but dismissing Xenophon. Vlastos’ approach, which is based on the belief that Plato’s early dialogues reflect Socrates’ philosophical views, has been widely adopted. Vlastos’ work has inspired much scholarship focused on Socrates, and familiarity with his arguments is essential for anyone who wishes to follow the academic conversation surrounding the Socratic problem that has taken place over the last fifty years.<sup>6</sup> There is not enough space in this chapter to give a full and detailed account of

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example: Morrison (2011); Prior (1996).

Vlastos' arguments, which are elaborate and complex. The following is an overview of his key points.

Before diving into Vlastos' arguments, however, it is necessary to be familiar with the role of stylometry in his approach to Plato. Since the nineteenth century, stylometrists have statistically analyzed occurrences of unconscious elements of Greek style in Plato's works (such as the use of certain particles) with the goal of establishing the chronology of the composition of Plato's dialogues (Kahn, 1990, 93). While an exact chronology has not been established, stylometrists have made a compelling case for an approximate chronology, in which Plato's writings are divided into three groups: early, middle, and late (Kahn 1990, 93-7). Vlastos maintains that the early dialogues are Socratic, meaning that they reflect the teachings of the historical Socrates. The following is Charles Kahn's summary of the most likely groupings established based on stylometry alone (Kahn 1990, 94):

**Group One:** *Apology, Charmides, Crito, Cratylus, Euthydemus, Euthyphro, Gorgias, Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Lysis, Menexenus, Meno, Phaedo, Protagoras, Symposium*

**Group Two:** *Phaedrus, Republic, Parmenides, Theaetetus*

**Group Three:** *Sophist, Statesman, Philebus, Timaeus–Critias, Laws*

Vlastos and other scholars use this basic framework while making minor adjustments based on philosophical content. Vlastos' groupings are as follows (Vlastos 1991, 46-47):

**Group One a) Elenctic Dialogues:** *Apology, Charmides, Crito, Euthyphro, Gorgias, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Protagoras, Republic I*

**Group One b) Transitional Dialogues:** *Euthydemus, Hippias Major, Lysis, Menexenus, Meno*

**Group Two:** *Cratylus, Phaedo, Symposium, Republic II-X, Phaedrus, Parmenides, Theaetetus*

**Group Three:** *Timaeus, Critias, Sophist, Statesman, Philebus, Laws*

The groupings accepted by Kahn and Vlastos are slightly different, but the approximate ordering is similar.<sup>7</sup>

In *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (1991), Vlastos defends the claim that the philosophical doctrines contained in Plato's early dialogues can be attributed to the historical Socrates (Vlastos 1991, 45, 81). To do this, he argues that the stylistic shift that occurs between the early and middle dialogues coincides with a distinct shift in philosophical content (Vlastos 1991, 46-50). For Vlastos, this coincidence is best explained in terms of Plato's philosophical development over time. He theorizes that Plato's early dialogues, written in the newly conceived literary genre of the *Sokratikos logos* were heavily influenced by the teachings of the historical Socrates (Vlastos 1991, 52-3). When Plato began exploring and developing his own ideas in the middle dialogues, he continued to use the format of the *Sokratikos logos* to explore his own views (Vlastos 1991, 52-3).

Vlastos tries to show that the philosophical views contained in the early dialogues are not only distinct from those contained in the middle and later dialogues; they are also incompatible with them (Vlastos 1991, 45-6). He lists ten distinctions between the philosophical content in the early dialogues and that of the two latter groups, but his primary focus is on demonstrating four key differences: (1) the Socrates of the early dialogues does not espouse the theory of Forms, while the Socrates of the middle and late

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<sup>7</sup> This chapter is not the place for an in-depth look at Vlastos' use of stylometry, but it is worth noting that in Vlastos' chronology, some dialogues that would have been considered "Socratic" if they had been included in Group One (i.e. the *Cratylus*, *Phaedo*, and the *Symposium*) have been moved to Group Two on the basis of philosophical criteria (Vlastos 1991: 47 n. 8). The tweaking of stylometrically-defined groupings based on philosophical content is highly controversial (Kahn 1990).

dialogues does espouse the theory of Forms (Vlastos 1991, 48; 53-80). (2) The Socrates of the early dialogues is interested in moral questions only, whereas the Socrates of Plato's middle and late dialogues is also interested in a wide variety of philosophical topics, including metaphysics (Vlastos 1991, 47-8). (3) The Socrates of Plato's early dialogues claims ignorance, even after apparent progress toward knowledge, whereas the Socrates of Plato's middle and late dialogues does not do this (Vlastos 1991, 85). (4) The Socrates of the early dialogues does not espouse a three-part model of the soul, whereas the Socrates of the middle and late dialogues does (Vlastos 1991, 82-91).

Vlastos acknowledges that without any evidence beyond Plato, both sets of philosophical doctrines could be understood as Plato's own views from different stages in his philosophical development (Vlastos 1991, 81). To demonstrate that Plato's early dialogues reflect the views of the historical Socrates, Vlastos turns first to Aristotle. In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle contrasts Socrates' pursuit of definitions and his preoccupation with moral questions with the study of the theory of Forms pursued by Plato and his followers, specifically stating that “ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν Σωκράτης τὰ καθόλου οὐ χωριστὰ ἐποίει οὐδὲ τοὺς ὀρισμούς/ Socrates did not consider universals or definitions as separately existing things.” (Vlastos 1991, 91; Arist. *Metaph.* 1078b30).<sup>8</sup> Aristotle also attributes to Socrates the view of the soul and the habitual claims to ignorance identified by Vlastos as characteristic of Socrates in Plato's early dialogues (Vlastos 1991, 94-97). Thus, Aristotle's descriptions of the philosophical doctrines of Socrates and Plato align with Vlastos' distinctions between the philosophies of Plato's early and middle dialogues, respectively. The reliability of Aristotle on Socrates is controversial, in part because he

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<sup>8</sup> All translations from Greek are my own unless stated otherwise.

was born after Socrates' death. Nevertheless, Vlastos maintains that Aristotle's description should carry some weight because when Aristotle was a student at Plato's Academy, he would have interacted with both Plato and others who knew Socrates (Vlastos 1991, 97-98). Thus, Aristotle would have been able to talk to people who had first-hand knowledge of Socrates and his philosophical views.

Next, Vlastos turns to Xenophon.<sup>9</sup> For Vlastos, Xenophon's account of Socrates' philosophy, which conflicts with Plato's account, is suspect because Xenophon's presentation of Socratic philosophy lacks sufficiently substantive and detailed explanations. This shortcoming makes sense, Vlastos argues, if it is accepted that Xenophon, unlike Plato and Aristotle, lacked philosophical understanding (Vlastos 1991, 99). To demonstrate that this is the case, Vlastos contrasts Xenophon's account of Socratic philosophy with those of Plato and Aristotle, documenting places where Xenophon's account is less specific and more superficial (Vlastos 1991, 99-101). Although Xenophon's Socratic writings are not reliable when it comes to the details of Socrates' philosophy, Vlastos argues, they can nevertheless confirm the rough outlines of his philosophy as it is depicted in Plato's early dialogues (Vlastos 1991, 102). Vlastos takes Xenophon's Socratic writings to confirm the conception of Socratic psychology present in Plato's early dialogues as well as to confirm the notion that Socrates was concerned solely with moral questions (and not concerned with the theory of Forms, or metaphysics generally) (Vlastos 1991, 102-3). Vlastos points out that Xenophon's Socrates does not appear to corroborate the characteristic claim to ignorance displayed by

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<sup>9</sup> Xenophon represents Socrates' philosophical views in his *Apology*, *Symposium*, *Memorabilia*, and *Oeconomicus*.

Plato's Socrates (Vlastos 1991, 103). Nevertheless, other sources confirm this characteristic, leading Vlastos to conclude that the weight of evidence suggests that the habitual claim to ignorance can be attributed to the historical Socrates (Vlastos 1991, 103-106).<sup>10</sup>

In sum, the distinctions Vlastos makes between the philosophical content of the early and middle dialogues more or less align with a style-based chronology of Plato's dialogues and with Aristotle's account of Socratic versus Platonic philosophy. Vlastos argues that Xenophon's testimony, which presents a different picture of Socratic philosophy from what is found in Plato's early dialogues, is unproblematic if his limits as a philosopher are understood. Therefore, Vlastos' theory of Plato's philosophical development is as follows: Plato started writing dialogues when his views were still heavily influenced by his teacher, Socrates. As he developed his own theories, he continued writing in the same genre – that of the *Sokratikos logos* – but supplanting Socrates' ideas with his own.

Vlastos' arguments have inspired a great deal of scholarship that seeks to understand the philosophy of the historical Socrates. Academic philosophers have explored the implications of these arguments, launching numerous investigations that begin with the assumption that, if the doctrines of Socrates are accessible to modern readers, it is through Plato's early dialogues. This has resulted in a number of interesting and important studies. However, the dominance of Vlastos' approach to Plato has overshadowed other lines of inquiry regarding Socrates and the Socratic problem.

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<sup>10</sup> Vlastos uses fragments attributed to Aeschines Socraticus (Dittmar 1912: fr. 11C), Aelius Astrides (*Or.* 45.2, W. Dindorff II 1829: 25), and Cicero (*Acad.* 1.4.16) as well as a passage from Plutarch (*adv. Colot.* 1117D).

Scholars critical of Vlastos call for new directions for future work in the field of Socratic studies. I will present two unitarian alternatives to Vlastos' approach below: those of Charles Kahn and Robert Talisse.

*Unitarianism: Kahn and Talisse*

Charles Kahn argues for a reading of Plato that stresses the continuity of thought between the early and middle dialogues. Kahn's view is that changes in the philosophical content portrayed in various dialogues do not provide evidence of changes in Plato's thought; rather, Plato deliberately revealed his philosophy gradually for the benefit of his readers. Kahn argues that "at least half a dozen dialogues, from the *Laches* and *Euthyphro* to the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, can be read as the progressive exposition of a single, complex philosophical view of essential Forms, a view different aspects of which are displayed in different contexts" (Kahn 1996, 367-8). On Kahn's reading, Plato builds a foundation for his complex metaphysical theory in the "threshold dialogues" (i.e., *Laches*, *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, *Protagoras*, *Meno*, *Lysis*, and *Euthydemus*), a foundation which is designed to prepare his reader for the content of the *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic* (Kahn 1996, 41). For Kahn, while the theory of Forms is absent from several early dialogues, the manner in which Plato's Socrates seeks definitions of terms in these dialogues lends itself to the eventual revelation of the theory of Forms. One benefit of Kahn's analysis is that it treats Plato as the architect of an elaborate series of dialogues with a coherent underlying structure. This view grants more credit to Plato than the developmentalist theory does.

While it may not be possible to completely disprove the developmentalist reading of Plato's dialogues, as Kahn himself admits, it is worth noting that Vlastos' view that the

philosophy of Plato's early dialogues is incompatible with the philosophy of his middle and late dialogues is controversial (Kahn 1996, 65). In addition, developmentalism presents only one possible explanation for the shifts in style and philosophical content that occur between the early and middle dialogues. Kahn's suggestion that "Plato's philosophical concerns could operate on several tracks at the same time," and that he intentionally withheld his most complex theories for the sake of his pedagogical goals is another possible explanation (Kahn 1996, 364).

In "Misunderstanding Socrates," Robert Talisse, too, presents reasons to doubt that the philosophical content of the early dialogues is as different from the content of the middle and late dialogues as Vlastos claims (Talisse 2002). Talisse argues that the Socrates of the early dialogues is not concerned solely with moral questions, as Vlastos maintains, but operates within the metaphysical and epistemological framework put forth in Plato's middle and late dialogues (Talisse 2002, 48).

Talisse first argues that the aim of the Socratic elenchus, Socrates' method of questioning interlocutors, is epistemological at its core. Rather than aiming to disprove an interlocutor's definition of a given term, such as piety, Socrates' goal in the elenchus is to show whether the interlocutor has knowledge. Moreover, the epistemological framework implied by the elenchus is consistent with Plato's later doctrine of the unity of knowledge, in which knowing something means being able to "give a complete *logos*", of that topic. (Talisse 2002, 53). In other words, for Socrates, the ability to give superficial definitions does not demonstrate knowledge; rather, he requires his interlocutor to satisfactorily answer all of his questions about the topic at hand before accepting that the interlocutor understands it.

Next, Talisse argues that Socrates' conception of universal definitions in the early dialogues relies upon Plato's theory of Forms, an epistemological and metaphysical theory which Vlastos claims does not appear until Plato's middle dialogues (Talisse 2002, 53). Socrates' conception of universal definitions requires that his interlocutor provide an account of the term in question, (e.g. justice, piety, or virtue) that would also satisfy the requirements for demonstrating knowledge of a Platonic Form (Talisse 2002, 53). This suggests that the Socrates of Plato's early dialogues is not concerned solely with moral questions, but has a robust interest in epistemology and metaphysics as well (Talisse 2002, 54).

Kahn and Talisse show that Vlastos' arguments are controversial and have not been fully proved. This suggests the need to adjust the course for future scholarship in this area. If the Platonic corpus does not, in fact, contain the philosophical doctrines of two people, but rather the evolving philosophy of one man, it no longer makes sense to assume that the key to unlocking the philosophy of the historical Socrates lies in Plato's early dialogues. This may mean that our knowledge of the philosophy of the historical Socrates is likely to be far more limited than Vlastos and his followers claim.

### *Developmentalism in the 21st century*

The assumption that Xenophon was not a philosopher and that Plato therefore provides a more accurate picture of Socrates' philosophy is crucial to Vlastos' version of developmentalism. In addition, developmentalists who follow Vlastos accept the speculative theory that shifts in philosophical content within Plato's *Sokratikoi logoi* reflect changes in Plato's philosophy over time. But as shown above, the arguments for the dismissal of Xenophon are flawed, and there are at least two plausible explanations

for the shifts in Plato's philosophy besides developmentalism: (1) Kahn's view that Plato's philosophy remained consistent, but that he introduced it in stages for pedagogical purposes, and (2) Talisse's view that the metaphysical and epistemological concepts discussed thoroughly in Plato's middle dialogues are implied, although they are not explicitly addressed, in Plato's early dialogues. Developmentalism rests on a shaky foundation, yet it continues to be the standard position for academic philosophers who study the historical Socrates.

Unfortunately, developmentalists have not risen to the task of defending their approach. Instead, the most common response to the problems with developmentalism raised in this chapter is to continue using the same methods while claiming that the goal is no longer to discover the philosophical views of the historical Socrates. Take, for example, William J. Prior's 2019 monograph, *Socrates* (Prior 2019). Prior professes ignorance on the Socratic problem, insisting that it has no solution (Prior 2019, ix; 18-19). Yet his book focuses on Plato's early dialogues, which Prior terms the "elenctic dialogues," and Prior refers to the philosophies contained in these dialogues as those of Socrates. If his goal is not to discover the philosophical doctrines of the historical Socrates, how does Prior defend these decisions?

When it comes to the primary task of this work, which is the understanding of the philosophy of Socrates, we need not answer the question of what views the historical Socrates held and what methods he practiced. The philosophy of Socrates that has captivated interpreters in the past and continues to captivate them today is, by and large, the philosophy presented in the works of Plato. There have been moments in the history of Western culture when Xenophon's works were held in as high esteem as Plato's, or even higher, but for the most part it has been Plato's portrayal of Socrates that has been preeminent. (Prior 2019, 19)

In other words, Prior's stated goal is to understand the philosophy, not of the historical Socrates, but of Plato's Socrates. And Plato's Socrates is the focus of Prior's book, not

because Prior believes that his Socrates is more likely to be historical than Xenophon's Socrates, but because Plato's Socrates has captivated more people more recently than has Xenophon's.

Yet Prior's insistence that the aim of his book is not to address the Socratic problem is belied by his methodological choices. If his goal were truly to discuss the most captivating version of Socrates, why would he not expand his discussion of Plato's Socrates to include the entire Platonic corpus? Plato's Socrates entertains fascinating philosophical themes in the middle and late dialogues; does Prior truly limit his scope to the elenctic dialogues on the grounds that they contain the most stimulating philosophical content? Prior explains that he limits his discussion of Socrates to Plato's early dialogues because of passages in which Aristotle distinguishes the philosophies of Socrates from those of Plato (Prior 2019, 20-21). For Prior, Aristotle's testimony indicates that Plato's early dialogues represent the philosophical views of Socrates, while Plato's middle and late dialogues present Plato's own philosophy. But by using Aristotle in this way, Prior *does* engage in the Socratic problem. Either Prior is not concerned with the Socratic problem *or* he hopes to distinguish Plato's philosophy from that of Socrates; both cannot be true.

Prior is not alone in adopting this absurd combination of claiming not to engage with the Socratic problem while using a method that is good for nothing if not establishing distinctions between the philosophy of the historical Socrates and that of Plato. The *Cambridge Companion to Socrates* (2011), for example, contains several

articles that do the same thing.<sup>11</sup> It is difficult to tell whether those who use this approach do so because they are sincerely confused about what they are doing or because they simply wish to evade the responsibility of defending their methods. In any case, this approach is untenable; those who maintain this developmentalist position must either admit that they are indeed trying to talk about the historical Socrates and defend this choice or else they should stop using this approach.

Dorion: “The rise and fall of the Socratic problem”

For Dorion, the issues associated with efforts to resolve the Socratic problem are insurmountable. In “The Rise and Fall of the Socratic Problem,” he argues that the quest for Socrates’ philosophical views should be set aside, and explicitly advocates for the dismissal of the Socratic problem altogether (Dorion 2011, 18-21). Dorion exhorts scholars to turn instead to what he calls the comparative exegesis of the writings of Plato and Xenophon (Dorion 2011, 18-19). This method emphasizes the differences between the authors’ portraits of Socrates and their respective goals, and it treats the genre of the *Sokratikos logos* as an essentially creative one. In Dorion’s view, the authors wrote *Sokratikoi logoi* not in order to convey factual information about the historical Socrates, but to explore their own philosophical ideas.

Xenophon-friendly approaches to the Socratic problem

Although nineteenth and twentieth century approaches to the Socratic problem have overwhelmingly tended to favor Plato while dismissing Xenophon, it is not true that

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, McPherran (2011, 111-137), Rowe (2011, 201-214), and Bett (2011, 215-236).

all attempts to address the Socratic problem are doomed to repeat this pattern. A recent increase in studies that treat Xenophon more charitably has started to reverse this trend. This resurgence, far from curbing interest in the Socratic problem, has revealed a wealth of unexplored territory related to the topic. Take, for example, the scholarship of David M. Johnson.

Johnson proposes an approach to the Socratic problem that does not rely on the dismissal of Xenophon. In his 2018 chapter, “Xenophon’s Intertextual Socrates,” Johnson argues that the comparative approach advocated by Dorion, which focuses on the differences between what Plato and Xenophon have to say about Socrates, is not the best way to understand Xenophon. Johnson does acknowledge a major benefit of this approach: “A great achievement by those who have, like Dorion, worked in the comparative mode advocated by Vander Waerdt, has been to treat Xenophon as an author with his own agenda, rather than a would-be Plato who wasn’t up to the job” (Johnson 2018, 74). Recognizing that Xenophon’s writings are different from Plato’s because he had different goals (and not just because Xenophon was less brilliant than Plato) is important. Nevertheless, Johnson maintains, it is also important to recognize the intertextual nature of Xenophon’s Socratic writings. Unlike Plato, Xenophon refers to other authors and their work both explicitly and implicitly (Johnson 2018, 79). In addition, Xenophon uses his references to other authors’ works to explain his own literary goals (Johnson 2018, 80). In other words, it would be a mistake to isolate the study of Xenophon from the study of Plato and other contemporary authors, since Xenophon aims to respond to these writers.

Johnson also argues that scholars should read Xenophon's Socratic writings with a view to the ways in which he aims to supplement other portraits, including that of Plato. For example, in the *Memorabilia* (1.2.36-7), Xenophon indicates that Socrates has a tendency to question others while withholding his own views, a characteristic frequently attributed to Socrates by Plato but rarely referenced by Xenophon (Johnson 2018, 82-85). Johnson suggests that this apparent contrast between Plato and Xenophon occurs because Xenophon wishes to supplement what other authors have said about Socrates (Johnson 2018, 84). In this case, since Plato has already shown Socrates questioning others without revealing his own views, Xenophon focuses on revealing a side of Socrates not described by Plato. If this is indeed Xenophon's goal in writing, then it would be wrong for scholars to view divergences between Plato and Xenophon strictly as competing accounts that cannot be reconciled, as Dorion does. Instead, it would be more productive to dig in to the intertextual relationship between Plato and Xenophon in an effort to flesh out a more complete picture of Socrates.

In short, Johnson proposes a more charitable reading of Xenophon. Johnson argues that scholars should pay attention to the goals that Xenophon explicitly expresses in his Socratic writings, taking Xenophon at his word when he indicates that he wishes to correct and supplement an intertextual portrait of Socrates. Johnson also rejects Dorion's assertion that the Socratic problem should be abandoned, and instead insists that, while the differences between the writings of the two authors are important, the similarities between the accounts of Plato and Xenophon are too many and too significant to be ignored. In his 2017 chapter, "Xenophon's *Apology* and *Memorabilia*," Johnson sums up his view of Xenophon nicely: "It is often the case that Xenophon's portrait of Socrates is

compatible with Plato's, even where they emphasize different things. This suggests that historical reconstruction need not be in vain – though it is certainly perilous enough, given the complex relationship between our sources” (Johnson 2017, 123).

### **Methods**

This thesis accepts that the objections to the developmentalist reading of Plato put forth by scholars such as Kahn and Talisse cast considerable doubt on Vlastos' theory that the stylistic shift between Plato's early and middle dialogues indicates a distinct turn in Plato's philosophical development. In addition, this thesis accepts that, as scholars such as Johnson and Humble have shown, the dismissal of Xenophon is not an effective starting-point for pursuing questions about the historical Socrates. This thesis, therefore, does not designate Plato's early dialogues as the most reliable sources for the philosophical views of the historical Socrates, nor does it treat Xenophon's writings as less reliable than Plato's. Instead, the aim of the chapters that follow is to analyze Plato and Xenophon with a view to their own literary and philosophical goals as well as to emphasize the considerable common ground that these two authors share. Therefore this thesis does not follow Dorion in exhorting scholars to abandon the Socratic problem. While it is clear that Plato and Xenophon took some creative liberties in their portraits of Socrates, the many similarities between their accounts indicate that both authors, to some degree, did describe the historical Socrates. The truth is that neither author provides either a fully factual or a fully fictional account of Socrates. For this reason, questions about the historical Socrates are complex and should be treated accordingly. Below is a preview of how my thesis will use Plato and Xenophon to analyze questions about

Socrates' *daimonion* as well as the significant ethical choices that he made in regard to his military and political service.

### **Preview of Chapter Two: The Divine Sign and the Historical Socrates**

The second chapter of this thesis addresses three questions related to the historical Socrates' *daimonion*, the divine sign that weighed in on his decisions according to both Plato and Xenophon. First, was the *daimonion* an important part of Socrates' personality? Second, did the *daimonion*'s influence on Socrates pose a threat to his rationality? Finally, was the *daimonion* exclusively apotrepetic (meaning that it only turned Socrates away from actions that he was about to take and never prompted him to take action), as Plato claims, or did it also turn Socrates toward positive action, as Xenophon claims?

A look at the rhetorical strategies employed in the *Apologies* of Plato and Xenophon is useful in establishing the importance of the *daimonion* to the historical Socrates. In addition to responding to the charges for which Socrates was tried in 399 BC, (impiety and corrupting the youth), Plato and Xenophon also used their *Apologies* to weigh in on the post-trial debate about how Socrates handled his defense (Danzig 2003). In particular, each author dedicated a significant portion of his *Apology* to justifying Socrates' boastfulness (μεγαληγορία) during his trial (Danzig 2003). The efforts that Plato and Xenophon took to defend Socrates' boastful speech suggest that Socrates did, in fact, speak boastfully during his defense. Both Plato and Xenophon show Socrates using his *daimonion* to boast in their *Apologies*, with each author making an effort to defend him for doing so (Plat. *Apol.* 31c4-32a3; Xen. *Apol.* 11-13). This chapter argues that Plato and Xenophon felt compelled to defend Socrates' boastfulness regarding the

*daimonion* because this was, in fact, one of the ways in which the historical Socrates boasted in his trial, and that, given the stakes of appearing impious in this context, the *daimonion* was likely important to Socrates.

Although Plato and Xenophon unequivocally depict Socrates as claiming to possess a divine sign that guided his actions, many interpreters put a great deal of effort into qualifying and downplaying the role of the *daimonion* in Socrates' decision-making, largely because of the perception that being too heavily influenced by a divine force would have conflicted with Socrates' apparent commitment to make decisions based solely on reason.<sup>12</sup> However, the idea that Socrates commits himself to act on reason alone is based on a misreading of *Crito* 46b4-6. In addition, the tendency to assume that Plato's early dialogues hold the key to the Socratic problem has contributed to a tendency to dismiss Xenophon's Socratic writings. Yet Xenophon's discussion of the separate realms of human knowledge and divine revelation at *Mem.* 1.1.6-9 provides a useful and culturally relevant framework for analyzing Socrates' relationship to his divine sign. By explaining the widespread misreading of *Crito* 46b4-6 and by providing an overview of *Mem.* 1.1.6-9, this chapter shows that the perceived conflict between Socrates' commitment to reason and his obedience to the *daimonion* is a false problem.

When it comes to how the *daimonion* functions, Plato and Xenophon explicitly disagree. For Plato, the *daimonion* is exclusively apotreptic, meaning that it only turns Socrates away from, and never toward, action (Plat. *Apol.* 31c8-d4.). For Xenophon, the *daimonion* is both apotreptic and protreptic, and thus it also turns Socrates toward action (Xen. *Apol.* 12; *Mem.* 1.1.4; *Mem.* 4.8.1). When considering which of the two

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example: Vlastos (1991); Brickhouse and Smith (2005); Senn (2012).

descriptions may be more historically accurate, recent scholarship tends to assume that Plato's version is more plausible than Xenophon's.<sup>13</sup> There is good reason to doubt this, however. This paper proposes that Plato's *daimonion* functions in a way that fits so well with Plato's literary and philosophical goals that scholars should consider whether Plato may have molded his description of the *daimonion* to support these goals.

### **Preview of Chapter Three: Socrates' Military and Political Activities**

The third chapter of this thesis discusses the importance of Socrates' military and political activities to the Socratic problem. This chapter argues that, since the ancients viewed philosophy not as a collection of abstract theories, but as a way of life, Socrates' military and political actions, and the ethical choices in made in regard to those actions, are important to the study of his philosophy. In addition, Xenophon's status as a philosopher can be defended when it is understood that he and his contemporaries viewed philosophy as a way of life; while Xenophon's *Sokratikoi logoi* do not focus on philosophical theories as much as Plato's do, Xenophon discusses the practical side of the philosophical life extensively. In addition, the high likelihood that Plato and Xenophon describe genuine episodes from the historical Socrates' life problematizes the claim (by Dorion and others) that the *Sokratikoi logoi* of Plato and Xenophon should be regarded as fiction; in reality, what Plato and Xenophon provide in their Socratic dialogues is a mix of fact and fiction.

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example: Nussbaum (1985); Vlastos (1991); McPherran (2005).

## CHAPTER II

## THE DIVINE SIGN AND THE HISTORICAL SOCRATES

**Introduction**

This chapter will address three questions related to the historical Socrates' *daimonion*. First, was the *daimonion* an important part of Socrates' personality? Second, did the *daimonion*'s influence on Socrates pose a threat to his rationality? Finally, was the *daimonion* apotreptic only (meaning that it only turned Socrates away from actions that he was about to take and never prompted him to take action), as Plato claims, or did it also turn Socrates toward positive action, as Xenophon claims? Although Plato and Xenophon unequivocally depict Socrates as claiming to possess a divine sign, or voice, that weighed in on his decisions, scholars debate whether these are genuine characteristics of the historical Socrates' religion. In addition, many interpreters put a great deal of effort into qualifying and downplaying the role of the *daimonion* in Socrates' decision-making, largely because of the perception that being too heavily influenced by a divine force would conflict with Socrates' apparent commitment to make decisions based solely on reason. Unsurprisingly, there is also a tendency in recent scholarship to accept that Plato's characterization of the *daimonion* as apotreptic only is more likely true of the historical Socrates, while Xenophon's characterization of the *daimonion* as both protreptic and apotreptic is seen as historically less plausible.

**Question #1: Was the *daimonion* an important aspect of the historical Socrates' personality?**

This section deals with the question of whether the *daimonion* was an important aspect of the personality of the historical Socrates. In what follows, I will summarize Gabriel Danzig's analysis of the ways in which Plato and Xenophon participated in the post-trial debate about Socrates in their *Apologies*. Next, I will argue that Plato and Xenophon participated in that debate by showing Socrates using the *daimonion* to boast in their *Apologies* and making an effort to defend him for boasting in this way. Finally, I will conclude that Plato and Xenophon felt compelled to defend Socrates' boastfulness regarding the *daimonion* because this was, in fact, one of the controversial ways in which the historical Socrates boasted in his trial, and that given the stakes of appearing impious in this context, the *daimonion* was important enough to Socrates for him to take this risk.

Danzig summary

Gabriel Danzig analyzes the *Apologies* of Plato and Xenophon with a view to their rhetorical goals, arguing that the two authors used their *Apologies* to participate in a debate about Socrates and his behavior in court that took place after he was executed (Danzig 2003, 283). Danzig's evidence for this thesis is that the *Apologies* of Plato and Xenophon focus heavily on defending Socrates, not only against the charges for which he was brought to court, but for criticisms regarding how he carried out his defense, namely "mishandling his defense," "speaking arrogantly," and "suffering a miserable fate" (Danzig 2003, 288). In other words, the *Apologies* of Plato and Xenophon are concerned not only with the official charges for which Socrates was tried, but also with addressing the Athenian audience's perceptions of how Socrates handled the defense itself.

*Evidence for a post-trial debate*

Danzig notes that there was a public debate about Socrates in the years following his trial, evidenced not only in the *Sokratikoi logoi* of Plato and Xenophon (as well as passages within the non-Socratic writings of Xenophon), but also by the orator, Polycrates', scathing criticisms of Socrates referenced in Isocrates' *Busiris* and Diogenes Laertius' *Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers* (Danzig 2003, 285; D.L. 2.39; Isoc. *Bus.* 4-5). Danzig argues that Plato and Xenophon used the *Sokratikoi logoi*, including their *Apologies*, to weigh in on this debate; as supporters of Socrates, they aimed to defend his reputation, although the two authors used different strategies.

*Xenophon's explicit reference to the post-trial criticisms of Socrates*

Xenophon explicitly refers to the post-trial debate about Socrates at the beginning of his *Apology*:

Σωκράτους δὲ ἄξιόν μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι μεμνήσθαι καὶ ὡς ἐπειδὴ ἐκλήθη εἰς τὴν δίκην ἐβουλεύσατο περὶ τε τῆς ἀπολογίας καὶ τῆς τελευτῆς τοῦ βίου. γεγράφασι μὲν οὖν περὶ τούτου καὶ ἄλλοι καὶ πάντες ἔτυχον τῆς μεγαληγορίας αὐτοῦ: ᾧ καὶ δῆλον ὅτι τῷ ὄντι οὕτως ἐρρήθη ὑπὸ Σωκράτους. ἀλλ' ὅτι ἤδη ἑαυτῷ ἠγείτο αἰρετώτερον εἶναι τοῦ βίου θάνατον, τοῦτο οὐ διεσαφήνισαν: ὥστε ἀφρονεστέρα αὐτοῦ φαίνεται εἶναι ἢ μεγαληγορία.

It seems right to me to remember Socrates and how, when he was brought to trial, he deliberated concerning both his defense and the end of his life. Others have written about this and all of them have mentioned his boastfulness. For this reason, it is clear that Socrates spoke in this way in reality. But that he already believed that death was more desirable than life for himself, this the other writers have not made clear, so that as a result his boastfulness seems to be foolish. (Xen. *Apol.* 1)

Danzig notes that in this introduction, Xenophon reveals his intention to respond to three criticisms of Socrates (1) that he fumbled his defense, (2) that he spoke boastfully, and (3) that the outcome of his trial was a shameful loss for Socrates (Danzig 2003, 288).

Xenophon largely accomplishes all of these goals by claiming that Socrates intentionally spoke boastfully because he *wanted* to die; thus, (1) his defense was not a failure but a success, since Socrates achieved his desired outcome, (2) Socrates' boastfulness was not a problem, since it was the deliberately chosen means to his desired end, and (3) Socrates' execution was not shameful, since he died on his own terms and at the right time (Danzig 2003, 287-8).

*Plato's implicit references to the post-trial criticisms of Socrates*

Failure

Next, Danzig argues that Plato's *Apology* responds to the same concerns about Socrates' defense to which Xenophon's *Apology* responds. But Plato, who does not write as a first-person narrator, does not clearly state his rhetorical goals at the beginning of his *Apology*. Instead, Plato has the character of Socrates engage indirectly with the post-trial debate (Danzig 2003, 295-6). According to Danzig's argument, Plato's Socrates responds to the first criticism, the accusation that he failed to give an adequate defense, in three places: (1) at the start of the *Apology* (17a-18a), where Socrates apologizes for his unplanned and unconventional manner of speaking (Danzig 2003, 297-9); (2) during his dialogue with Meletus (24c4-28a2), in which Socrates seems to put more effort into demonstrating that the prosecution is a failure than he puts into clearing his own name (Danzig 2003, 299-300); and (3) after his conviction (38d-e), when Socrates explains that he has lost the trial, not because his arguments have failed, but because he has refused to debase himself by begging that the jury spare his life (Danzig 2003, 296-7).

### Shameful outcome

When it comes to the third criticism, the accusation that Socrates' conviction and death sentence constituted a shameful loss, Plato's responses include shifting the blame for this outcome away from Socrates and denying defeat altogether.<sup>14</sup> Danzig argues that Socrates' references to the earlier charges (18a-20c), in which he claims that years of slander against him have led to his being brought to trial, are an attempt by Plato to blame Socrates' conviction on this slander (Danzig 2003, 309). Likewise, Socrates' complaint that he does not have enough time to mount a decent defense (19a2, 24a1-3, 37a-b) shifts blame away from Socrates and onto Athenian legal conventions (Danzig 2003, 310). In addition, Socrates indicates that good people cannot survive human politics (31e, 32e), thus "Plato ... blamed the nature of human political life" (Danzig 2003, 311). Finally, Plato denies that Socrates has lost at all by arguing that, for Socrates, death is preferable to life (41d-e) (Danzig 2003, 313-14).

### Boastful speech

Danzig identifies three glaring instances of Socrates' boastfulness within Plato's *Apology*: first, that Socrates refuses to beg for leniency (and declines to bring his family to court to beg); second, that Socrates uses the Delphic Oracle to boast; and third, that when asked to propose a counter-penalty, Socrates suggests instead that he should be honored with free meals in the *prytaneum* for his service to Athens. But Danzig argues that, unlike Xenophon, Plato tries to downplay Socrates' boastfulness while simultaneously justifying it (Danzig 2003, 301). Plato's Socrates defends his decision not

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<sup>14</sup> Danzig also argues that Plato tries to neutralize the shame of defeat by framing the outcome of the trial as a victory for Socrates (2003, 315-16).

to beg and not to bring his family to court to beg on his behalf (34b-36b; 38d-39b), stating explicitly that he has not made this decision out of arrogance or dishonor (34d) (Danzig 2003, 302). Plato's Socrates also uses the Delphic Oracle story (20d-21a) to boast about his superior wisdom while simultaneously downplaying that wisdom: "Plato capitalizes on the negative language of the Oracle, using it to turn Socrates' boasting into a display of humility" (Danzig 2003, 303). Finally, whereas Xenophon's Socrates does not suggest a counter-penalty following his conviction, Plato's Socrates proposes that he should be rewarded instead of punished (36b-37a). Danzig points out that Socrates tempers this shocking suggestion somewhat by mentioning his poverty (36e) and then suggesting instead that he pay a fine in lieu of the death penalty (37a) (Danzig 2003, 307). For Danzig, each of these examples of Socrates' boastful speech reflect Plato's contribution to the post-trial debate; in each instance, Plato acknowledges that Socrates behaved boastfully, yet he tries to defend Socrates despite his arrogant behavior.

Danzig's discussion of Socrates' boastful manner of speaking in the *Apologies* of Plato and Xenophon has especially important historical implications. Danzig observes that both Plato and Xenophon make an effort to respond to the perception that Socrates spoke boastfully, which suggests that this is a criticism rooted in the conduct of the historical Socrates during his trial. As noted above, in his *Apology*, Xenophon concludes that Socrates must have spoken boastfully, since all of the accounts of the trial that he has read agree on this point. Danzig also points out that, when it comes to Xenophon's characterization of the public reaction to Socrates' defense speech, it makes sense for scholars to accept Xenophon's historical reliability, since "it would be pointless and self-defeating to make implausible statements about contemporary criticisms of Socrates and

absurd to devote his work to responding to such non-existent criticism” (Danzig 2003, 286). In other words, why would Xenophon fabricate criticisms of Socrates only to try to neutralize those very criticisms? Therefore, Xenophon’s acceptance in his *Apology* that Socrates must have spoken boastfully “in reality” (τῶ ὄντι) seems quite likely to point to the conduct of the historical Socrates, or at least to the way that Socrates’ conduct was construed by some people (Danzig 2003, 287).

Danzig makes a similar observation about the way Plato handles Socrates’ boastfulness. While Plato’s response to this criticism is less direct than Xenophon’s, Danzig observes several passages in which Plato addresses it. Again, this suggests that the historical Socrates indeed spoke boastfully:

It is difficult to imagine that Plato has invented Socrates’ arrogance out of whole cloth, for this would imply that Xenophon made the colossal mistake of believing a Platonic invention without checking any other independent sources, despite telling us that he did check more than one. It would also be hard to believe that Plato created a fictitiously arrogant Socrates who was subsequently adopted by all the sources Xenophon read. And anyway, why would Plato invent this trait, which was destined, according to Xenophon, to bring Socrates into disgrace? And if he did not care about that, why, after inventing the arrogance, would he devote extensive efforts to explaining, toning down, and justifying the very arrogance he has invented? (Danzig 2003, 300-301)

The fact that Plato portrays Socrates boasting throughout his *Apology*, yet tries to cast this boastfulness in a favorable light, indicates that like Xenophon, Plato wishes to address the perception that Socrates spoke boastfully to mitigate the negative consequences of this perception.

#### *Anachronism argument*

Danzig argues further that, insofar as Plato and Xenophon were participating in the post-trial debate about Socrates in their *Apologies*, it is anachronistic to construe the

words they put in Socrates' mouth as things that he could have actually said during his trial (Danzig 2003, 283-4; 288-9; 301, etc.). That is, Danzig believes that Socrates could not have said in court what Plato and Xenophon make him say to respond to post-trial criticisms, (for example, Danzig thinks that it would be anachronistic to accept that during his defense speech, Socrates actually explained his choice not to bring his family to court to beg for his life), because Socrates could not have yet been aware of the controversies that resulted from his speech (Danzig 2003, 289). Therefore, Danzig concludes, such defenses could not have been made by the historical Socrates.

But this is not necessarily the case. Not only is it possible that Socrates could have suspected that his provocative behavior might be received poorly, it would be strange if it did not occur to him that using the Delphic Oracle to boast about himself, declining to bring his family to court to beg for his life, and either proposing no counter-penalty at all, or else proposing a reward instead of a punishment, would be likely to be seen as audacious behavior by his fellow citizens. Danzig may be correct that Plato and Xenophon focus more on defending Socrates' speech than the historical Socrates likely would have done himself, but the claim that it is impossible for Socrates to have addressed his controversial behavior in court does not hold. More likely, the *Apologies* of Plato and Xenophon present readers with a more complex mix of fact and fiction than this part of Danzig's argument allows for.

#### Conclusion to danzig summary

Danzig shows that Plato and Xenophon felt compelled to address the aspects of Socrates' performance in court that struck his audience as boastful; he further concludes that Plato and Xenophon likely felt this need because they were supporters of Socrates

who wanted to explain the aspects of his behavior that gave rise to criticisms of him following his trial. Although I disagree with Danzig's further argument that Socrates' references to these criticisms are anachronistic, his insight that the boastful elements of both *Apologies* are historically grounded is valuable. Danzig's thesis that Socrates' failure to beg for mercy or to bring his family in to court to beg, his boastful story about the Delphic Oracle, and his handling of the counter-penalty are likely grounded in the historical Socrates' speech and life, has important implications.

One of these implications is that other boastful elements of Socrates' defense speech may also be grounded in the historical Socrates' behavior in court; while Danzig has identified some of the most striking examples of Socrates' boastfulness in the two *Apologies*, he has not addressed every instance. Importantly, Plato and Xenophon also depict Socrates using his *daimonion* to boast, and each author treats this element of Socrates' defense speech differently. I will argue that Socrates' boastful references to his *daimonion* in the *Apologies* of Plato and Xenophon indicate that the *daimonion* was likely a controversial element of the historical Socrates' defense speech that his supporters, including Plato and Xenophon, felt the need to defend after his death. In addition, I will argue that the *daimonion* was an important aspect of the historical Socrates' personality.

### **Socrates' boastfulness in court and the *daimonion***

Before turning to Socrates' references to the *daimonion* in the two *Apologies*, it is important to note that both Plato and Xenophon indicate that Socrates' claim to possess a *daimonion* was common knowledge among Athenians. In the *Memorabilia*, Xenophon

states: “διετηθρύλητο γὰρ ὡς φαίη Σωκράτης τὸ δαιμόνιον ἑαυτῷ σημαίνειν: ὅθεν δὴ καὶ μάλιστα μοι δοκοῦσιν αὐτὸν αἰτιάσασθαι καινὰ δαιμόνια εἰσφέρειν./It had been commonly reported that Socrates said that the *daimonion* gave him signs: indeed, it seems to me that he was accused of bringing in new gods especially because of this” (Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.2). In Plato’s *Apology*, when explaining why he has avoided a political career, Socrates says: “τούτου δὲ αἴτιόν ἐστιν ὃ ὑμεῖς ἐμοῦ πολλάκις ἀκηκόατε πολλαχοῦ λέγοντος, ὅτι μοι θεῖόν τι καὶ δαιμόνιον γίγνεται/You have heard me stating the reason for this many times, in many places, namely that something divine and spiritual comes to me...” (Plat. *Apol.* 31c7-d1). This, too, lends itself to the view that Socrates’ claim to experience a divine sign was common knowledge. And in Plato’s *Euthyphro* (Plat. *Euthyphro* 3b), after Socrates informs Euthyphro that he has been charged with bringing in new gods, Euthyphro’s response is that this must be because of Socrates’ *daimonion*. It would be odd, even in a fictitious scenario, for Socrates’ interlocutor to assume that the *daimonion* had something to do with this charge if this were not something that people typically associated with Socrates. In addition, both Plato and Xenophon allude more than once to the possibility that the *daimonion* is the reason why Socrates was accused of introducing new gods.<sup>15</sup> Even if one or both of these authors doubted that the *daimonion* was the real reason for this accusation, their willingness to consider the possibility indicates that Socrates was known for his claim to have a *daimonion*.

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<sup>15</sup> In addition to the two passages already referenced (Plat. *Euthyphro* 3b, Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.2), Plato’s Socrates states that Meletus cited the *daimonion* in his indictment of Socrates (Plat. *Apol.* 31d), and in Xenophon’s *Apology*, Socrates assumes that he is accused of bringing in new gods on the grounds that he claims to have a *daimonion* (Xen. *Apol.* 12).

It seems likely, then, that Socrates' jury, being aware of the *daimonion* and suspecting its relevance to the charges, would have expected him either to defend this idiosyncrasy or at least to avoid speaking provocatively about it. The jury would also have expected Socrates to try to show that he was not a threat to Athens, whether through his influence on the youth or through his claims about the divine. Instead, both Plato and Xenophon portray Socrates invoking the *daimonion*'s divine authority to support boastful claims about his superiority over his fellow Athenians, including members of the jury, in terms of piety in Xenophon's *Apology*, and justice in Plato's *Apology*.

#### Xenophon and Socrates' use of the *daimonion* to boast

Xenophon's Socrates (*Apol.* 11-13) goes beyond refuting the formal charge that he does not believe in the city's gods and that he brings in new *daimonia*; he also uses the *daimonion* to boast about his superior piety:

Ἄλλ' ἐγώ, ὦ ἄνδρες, τοῦτο μὲν πρῶτον θαυμάζω Μελήτου, ὅτω ποτὲ γνοῦς λέγει ὡς ἐγὼ οὐς ἡ πόλις νομίζει θεοὺς οὐ νομίζω· ἐπεὶ θύοντά γέ με ἐν ταῖς κοιναῖς ἑορταῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν δημοσίων βωμῶν καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι οἱ παρατυγχάνοντες ἐώρων καὶ αὐτὸς Μέλητος, εἰ ἐβούλετο. καινὰ γε μὴν δαιμόνια πῶς ἂν ἐγὼ εἰσφέροιμι λέγων ὅτι θεοῦ μοι φωνὴ φαίνεται σημαίνουσα ὅ τι χρῆ ποιεῖν; καὶ γὰρ οἱ φθόγγοις οἰωνῶν καὶ οἱ φήμαις ἀνθρώπων χρώμενοι φωναῖς δήπου τεκμαίρονται. βροντὰς δὲ ἀμφιλέξει τις ἢ μὴ φωνεῖν ἢ μὴ μέγιστον οἰωνιστήριον εἶναι; ἢ δὲ Πυθοῖ ἐν τῷ τρίποδι ἰέρεια οὐ καὶ αὐτὴ φωνὴ τὰ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ διαγγέλλει; ἀλλὰ μέντοι καὶ τὸ προειδέναι γε τὸν θεὸν τὸ μέλλον καὶ τὸ προσημαίνειν ᾧ βούλεται, καὶ τοῦτο, ὡσπερ ἐγὼ φημι, οὕτω πάντες καὶ λέγουσι καὶ νομίζουσι. ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν οἰωνοὺς τε καὶ φήμας καὶ συμβόλους τε καὶ μάντεις ὀνομάζουσι τοὺς προσημαίνοντας εἶναι, ἐγὼ δὲ τοῦτο δαιμόνιον καλῶ, καὶ οἶμαι οὕτως ὀνομάζων καὶ ἀληθέστερα καὶ ὀσιώτερα λέγειν τῶν τοῖς ὄρνεσιν ἀνατιθέντων τὴν τῶν θεῶν δύναμιν. ὡς γε μὴν οὐ ψεύδομαι κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦτ' ἔχω τεκμήριον· καὶ γὰρ τῶν φίλων πολλοῖς δὴ ἐξαγγείλας τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ συμβουλεύματα οὐδεπώποτε ψευδάμενος ἐφάνην.

But I, O men, am amazed at Meletus first in respect to this, the grounds on which he says that I do not acknowledge the gods which the city acknowledges, since both others happening to be nearby, and Meletus himself, if he wished, used to see me sacrificing in the common festivals and on the public altars. How would I bring in new gods (δαιμόνια), saying that the voice of the god (φωνὴ θεοῦ) makes known to me what I should do? For those using the sounds of birds and the

utterances of men clearly use voices to form judgments. Would anyone dispute whether thunder has a voice or whether it is a most important omen? And doesn't the priestess herself, too, on her tripod at Delphi, relay messages from the god with her voice? Indeed, this is just as I say, that all people both say and acknowledge that the god both knows in advance what is about to happen and forewarns whomever he pleases. **But while those people believe that birds and utterances and prophets foretell the future, I call this thing the *daimonion*, and by believing this, I think that I say something more true and more pious than those attributing the power of the gods to birds.** I have this proof, too, that I do not lie against the god: for having relayed messages from the god to many of my friends, I never gave advice in error. (Xen. *Apol.* 11-13; emphasis mine)

Xenophon's Socrates argues that his divine voice is essentially the same as other modes of divination: bird signs, prophecies, omens such as thunder, and the Oracle at Delphi. The difference is that most people falsely attribute divine warnings to the phenomena sent by the gods, whereas Socrates correctly attributes these warnings to the divine source itself. Socrates boasts that his belief is "more true" (*ἀληθέστερα*) and "more pious" (*ἁσιώτερα*) than the terminology used by others. He further boasts that he has never been wrong when giving advice to his friends based on the *daimonion*'s guidance.

Xenophon's words are not only boastful per se, but also because of their implications and context. While Socrates claims that his *daimonion* is essentially the same as other forms of divination, he contrasts his manner of describing this religious activity with the terminology used by other people. The implication is that most, if not all Athenians who use divination do not use Socrates' 'more pious' terminology. This would surely include members of the jury. In addition, Xenophon's Socrates behaves this way while on trial for impiety; he does not merely criticize others for misunderstanding divination, but he also has the audacity to level this criticism as one accused of behaving impiously. Thus, by criticizing his fellow Athenians as well as those on his own jury, and by using the *daimonion* to boast, Xenophon's Socrates provocatively flouts the

Athenians' expectations as to how he ought to behave in court. Of course, for Xenophon, Socrates' boastfulness in this regard makes perfect sense given his previous decision to aim for the death penalty.

#### Plato and Socrates' use of the *daimonion* to boast

In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates first mentions the *daimonion* after he tells the jury about his divine mission from the Delphic Oracle. He thinks that the jury is probably wondering why he has chosen to serve Athens by questioning individuals about their perceived wisdom instead of by engaging in politics, a far more conventional approach to benefiting the state:

ἴσως ἂν οὖν δόξειεν ἄτοπον εἶναι, ὅτι δὴ ἐγὼ ἰδίᾳ μὲν ταῦτα συμβουλεύω περιϋῶν καὶ πολυπραγμονῶ, δημοσίᾳ δὲ οὐ τολμῶ ἀναβαίνων εἰς τὸ πλῆθος τὸ ὑμέτερον συμβουλεύειν τῇ πόλει. τούτου δὲ αἰτίον ἐστὶν ὃ ὑμεῖς ἐμοῦ πολλακίς ἀκηκόατε πολλαχοῦ λέγοντος, ὅτι μοι θεῖόν τι καὶ δαιμόνιον γίνεταί, ὃ δὴ καὶ ἐν τῇ γραφῇ ἐπικωμῶδῶν Μέλητος ἐγράψατο. ἐμοὶ δὲ τοῦτ' ἐστὶν ἐκ παιδὸς ἀρξάμενον, φωνή τις γιγνομένη, ἣ ὅταν γένηται, αἰεὶ ἀποτρέπει με τοῦτο ὃ ἂν μέλλω πράττειν, προτρέπει δὲ οὐποτε. τοῦτ' ἐστὶν ὃ μοι ἐναντιοῦται τὰ πολιτικὰ πράττειν, καὶ παγκάλως γέ μοι δοκεῖ ἐναντιοῦσθαι· εὐ γὰρ ἴστε, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, εἰ ἐγὼ πάλαί ἐπεχείρησα πράττειν τὰ πολιτικὰ πράγματα, πάλαί ἂν ἀπολώλη καὶ οὐτ' ἂν ὑμᾶς ὠφελήκη οὐδὲν οὐτ' ἂν ἐμαυτόν. καὶ μοι μὴ ἄχθεσθε λέγοντι τάληθῆ· οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ὅστις ἀνθρώπων σωθήσεται οὔτε ὑμῖν οὔτε ἄλλῳ πλήθει οὐδενὶ γνησίως ἐναντιούμενος καὶ διακωλύων πολλὰ ἄδικα καὶ παράνομα ἐν τῇ πόλει γίνεσθαι, ἀλλ' ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστι τὸν τῷ ὄντι μαχοῦμενον ὑπὲρ τοῦ δικαίου, καὶ εἰ μέλλει ὀλίγον χρόνον σωθήσεσθαι, ἰδιωτεύειν ἀλλὰ μὴ δημοσιεύειν.

Perhaps it might seem strange that I, going around, advise about and meddle in these things privately, but publicly I do not dare to go up before your majority to advise the city. But the reason for this is that which you have often heard me saying in many places, namely that something god-sent (θεῖον) and divine (δαιμόνιον) comes to me, about which Meletus, ridiculing me, indicted me. And this started when I was a child: a certain voice arises which, whenever it comes, always turns me away from doing the thing that I am going to do, but never urges me on. This is what prevented me from doing politics, and it seems to me to have opposed me rightly; for you know well, Athenian men, that if I had tried to do political business long ago, I would have been killed long ago, and I would have benefited neither you nor myself. And do not be vexed at me for speaking the truth: for no one will be safe who has nobly opposed either you or any other multitude and who prevents many unjust and illegal things from happening in the

city. But it is necessary for a person who fights for justice in reality to have a private station and not to be in the public service, if he intends to be safe even for a little while. (Plat. *Apol.* 31c4-32a3)

Socrates' answer is that his *daimonion* turned him away from pursuing politics because, had he done so, he would have been killed for defending justice. Socrates goes on to give evidence for the claim that he would not survive a public life, citing his opposition to trying the Arginusae generals as a group when he served as a *prytanis* in 406, and his refusal to arrest Leon of Salamis under the Thirty Tyrants in 404 (Plat. *Apol.* 32a4-32e1). In both cases, he says, his opposition to injustice put his life in danger.<sup>16</sup>

The claim that Socrates was right not to pursue politics because no one who truly fights for justice can survive public life has at least three boastful implications. The first is that Socrates truly fights for justice. The second is Socrates' criticism of the Athenian political environment; according to Socrates, Athens is so intolerant of those who fight for justice that such individuals literally risk death when they engage in politics. The third is Socrates' implicit accusation that anyone active in Athenian politics who *does* survive for a long time does not truly fight for justice. The third implication would have been a scathing criticism of men esteemed by the jurymen, and perhaps of some of the jurymen themselves. Socrates not only claims to be just, but also that in being just, he is *unlike* his fellow Athenians.

Although Socrates' words and their implications are boastful *per se*, the context in which he uses them makes them even more provocative. It is one thing to criticize Athenian politics using language that carries antidemocratic undertones; it is quite

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<sup>16</sup> The third chapter of this thesis will discuss in greater detail Socrates' role in the trial of the Arginusae generals in 406 BC as well as Socrates' resistance to the Thirty Tyrants in 404 BC.

another to do so when on trial before a democratic jury of Athenian citizens. Moreover, Socrates was charged with impiety. His claim to possess a divine sign was public knowledge and was suspected to be a reason for the impiety charge. Yet instead of downplaying the *daimonion*, Plato's Socrates uses it as evidence both of his own justice and of the injustice of the institution of Athenian democracy and the people who comprised it, as well as of the inherent problems with democracy everywhere.

Importantly, however, Plato does not simply portray Socrates' use of the *daimonion* to boast about his superior justice; Plato also tries to show that these boastful claims are true using concrete examples from Socrates' life. Immediately following the passage quoted above, Socrates continues: “μεγάλα δ’ ἔγωγε ὑμῖν τεκμήρια παρέξομαι τούτων, οὐ λόγους ἀλλ’ ὃ ὑμεῖς τιμᾶτε, ἔργα./And I will provide great proofs of these things to you, not words, but what you honor, deeds” (Plat. *Apol.* 32a4-5). Socrates proceeds to tell the jury that he and the members of his tribe were serving as *prytanes* after the naval battle of Arginusae (406 BC), when a motion was raised to put the Athenian generals on trial as a group for their failure to aid their disabled ships and to collect their fallen troops. Socrates says that he opposed the motion on the grounds that it was illegal to try the generals together instead of giving each one a separate trial. He continues:

τότ’ ἐγὼ μόνος τῶν πρυτάνεων ἠναντιώθην ὑμῖν μηδὲν ποιεῖν παρὰ τοὺς νόμους καὶ ἐναντία ἐψηφισάμην· καὶ ἐτοίμων ὄντων ἐνδεικνύναι με καὶ ἀπάγειν τῶν ῥητόρων, καὶ ὑμῶν κελευόντων καὶ βοώντων, μετὰ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τοῦ δικαίου ᾤμην μᾶλλον με δεῖν διακινδυνεύειν ἢ μεθ’ ὑμῶν γενέσθαι μὴ δίκαια βουλευομένων, φοβηθέντα δεσμὸν ἢ θάνατον.

At that time, I alone of the *prytaneis* opposed your doing anything against the laws and I voted against it. And with the orators being ready to inform against me and to arrest me, and with you shouting and bidding them to do this, I thought that, together with the law and justice, I should run all risks rather than to plan

unjust things with you, although I feared imprisonment or death. (Plat. *Apol.* 32b5-c3)

Socrates indicates that he risked his life when he refused to go along with this illegal and unjust motion. Next, Socrates narrates his encounter with the Thirty Tyrants (404 BC), who commanded him, along with four other men, to arrest Leon the Salaminian, who was to be executed. Socrates says that he refused to do so, again risking his life: “καὶ ἴσως ἂν διὰ ταῦτα ἀπέθανον, εἰ μὴ ἡ ἀρχὴ διὰ ταχέων κατελύθη./And perhaps I would have died on account of these things, if their rule had not been abolished quickly” (Plat. *Apol.* 32d7-8). These two examples show that Socrates may be boasting by claiming that his divine sign indicated to him that he is too just to survive a political life, but the *daimonion* is not wrong. It is also worth noting that, by showing Socrates upholding justice by opposing injustice, Plato infuses these examples with humility; Socrates’ great deeds in defense of justice amount to his refusal to commit unjust deeds. Thus, here again, Plato’s Socrates both speaks boastfully and tries to justify and soften his boastfulness at the same time.

Although Xenophon and Plato go about it differently, both authors portray Socrates using his *daimonion* to boast in his defense speech. Xenophon’s Socrates, on trial for impiety, boasts about his piety while criticizing his fellow Athenians for their lack of piety. Plato’s Socrates boasts about his justice while criticizing the Athenians and Athenian politics more broadly for being enemies of justice. Importantly, Plato provides specific evidence to support Socrates’ claim: Socrates had, in fact, become involved in Athenian politics twice before, and he seems to have narrowly escaped death in both cases.

Socrates' use of the *daimonion* to boast would have stoked the post-trial debate surrounding Socrates' defense, and it appears that Plato and Xenophon felt compelled to defend this aspect of Socrates' speech because it was, in fact, one of the controversial ways in which the historical Socrates boasted in his trial, and was subsequently a subject of criticism. In addition, neither Plato nor Xenophon makes a single attempt to deny either that Socrates claimed to possess a *daimonion*, or that Socrates made this claim sincerely; on the contrary, both authors provide numerous references to the *daimonion* and its important role in Socrates' life in their *Apologies* and thought throughout their other writings. The controversy with which Plato and Xenophon are concerned here is clearly not the question of whether Socrates believed that he had a *daimonion*; rather, taking this for granted, each author presents his explanation as to why Socrates used the *daimonion* to boast during his trial. Given the stakes of appearing impious, it is reasonable to conclude that the *daimonion* was important enough to Socrates for him to speak about it the way he did.

**Question #2: Did the *daimonion* pose a threat to Socrates' rationality?**

Another puzzle regarding the historical Socrates' *daimonion* has to do with a perceived conflict between Socrates' rationality and his obedience to the *daimonion*. That is, some scholars worry that if he obeyed a divine voice, Socrates appears to have betrayed his commitment to rationality, which seems to be an essential aspect of his character. Brickhouse and Smith describe the conflict this way: "The problem, of course, is that Socrates is supposed to be a paragon of rationality – an exemplar of 'the examined life', who, we must surely *not* suppose, would allow irrational nonsense (such as

paranormal phenomena) to influence his thoughts or actions. Yet, in his many references to his *daimonion*, Socrates seems to allow just that” (Brickhouse and Smith 2005, 43). To solve this problem, some scholars propose that the *daimonion* is best understood in non-religious terms, while others, accepting Socrates’ sincerity about this religious phenomenon, either argue that he had a rational basis for his trust in the *daimonion* or that the cultural context in which Socrates operated made rational justification of this kind unnecessary. Below I will first briefly summarize the perceived conflict and various attempts to resolve it. Then I will offer a solution found in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*. I will conclude that the evidence found in Xenophon supports the view that the perceived conflict between Socrates’ rationality and his obedience to the *daimonion* is not a genuine problem.

#### What is the problem?

Plato and Xenophon unequivocally depict Socrates as claiming to possess a divine sign, or voice, which guides him.<sup>17</sup> Yet some commentators worry that Socrates’ obedience to the *daimonion* appears to compromise his rationality. As a textual basis for Socrates’ commitment to rationality, many scholars cite the following passage from

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<sup>17</sup> Places where Plato and Xenophon characterize the *daimonion* as a voice (ἡ φωνή): Plat. *Apol.* 31d2-4; Plat. *Phaedrus* 424c; Xen. *Apol.* 12. Places where Plato characterizes the *daimonion* as a sign: *Apol.* 40b2 (τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ σημεῖον), 40c3 (τὸ εἰωθὸς σημεῖον); *Phaedrus* 242b8 (τὸ εἰωθὸς σημεῖον); *Euthydemus* 272e (τὸ εἰωθὸς σημεῖον τὸ δαίμονιον).

Plato's *Crito* (46b4-6).<sup>18</sup> Here is the relevant quotation translated by Thomas C.

Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith:<sup>19</sup>

ἐγὼ οὐ νῦν πρῶτον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀεὶ τοιοῦτος οἶος τῶν ἐμῶν μηδενὶ ἄλλῳ  
πειθεσθαι ἢ τῷ λόγῳ ὃς ἂν μοι λογιζομένῳ βέλτιστος φαίνεται.

I am not just now but in fact I've always been the sort of person who's persuaded by nothing but the reason that appears to me to be best when I've considered it. (Brickhouse and Smith 2005, 43)

The standard interpretation of this passage is that it expresses Socrates' commitment to make decisions using reason alone. Mark L. McPherran characterizes this statement by Socrates at *Crito* (46b4-6) as Socrates' "Rationality Principle," and Scott J. Senn calls it "Autonomous Rationalism" (McPherran 2011, 114; Senn 2012, 12). This interpretation of *Crito* (46b4-6) leads many scholars to conclude that there is, at least on a superficial level, a conflict between Socrates' commitment to be persuaded by reason alone and his apparently blind obedience to the *daimonion*, and that this conflict must be explained so as to "preserve the rationality of Socrates' trust in the *daimonion*" (Brandt 2017, 415).

How have scholars tried to resolve the problem?

### *Reductionist solutions*

Scholarship that seeks to resolve this tension tends to fit into one of three categories: reductionist solutions, minimalist solutions, and contextualist solutions.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example: Vlastos (1991: 157), Kahn (1996: 97), Brickhouse and Smith (2005:43), Long (2006: 63-73), McPherran (2011: 114), and Senn (2012: 10). These are just a few of the many scholars who use this passage to establish Socrates' commitment to act on reason alone.

<sup>19</sup> I will provide my own translation and interpretation of this passage later.

<sup>20</sup> These categories are informed especially by Brickhouse and Smith (2005, 44-49), Lännström (2012, 37), and Brandt (2017). The reductionist category is borrowed directly from Brickhouse and Smith. The minimalist category is inspired by Lännström's characterization of what she calls the "standard accounts" that aim to preserve Socrates'

Reductionist solutions view Socrates' religious language as non-literal and explain the *daimonion* as a figurative way for Socrates to talk about his rational process. In the widely cited "Commentary on Edmunds," Martha Nussbaum puts forth a reductionist explanation of the *daimonion*:

I believe...that the *daimonion* of Plato's Socrates is no standard tutelary deity at all, but an ironic way of alluding to the supreme authority of dissuasive reason and elenctic argument... The *daimonion* is called *daimonion*, a divine thing, because human reason *is* a divine thing, a thing intermediary (as a *daimon* is intermediary) between the animal that we are and the god that we might be. (Nussbaum 1985, 234)

In this view, the *daimonion* represents reason; when Socrates says "divine thing," he is speaking metaphorically of his rational activity, the elenchus, which is negative just like the apotreptic *daimonion* (Nussbaum 1985, 234). Of course, if Socrates' divine sign *is* his reason, there is no conflict to resolve between his *daimonion* and his rationality.

Roslyn Weiss provides another example of the reductionist view. She argues that "the *daimonion*, as Socrates sees it, is not something that he has *qua* Socrates but something that he has *qua* a just man or *qua* man with a sense of justice, something he shares potentially with all just men or with all men with a sense of justice, however few" (Weiss 2005, 82). In Weiss's view, the *daimonion* is a "natural phenomenon" experienced by anyone who is just, and Socrates uses divine language to describe it partly to emphasize how unusual just men really are, and partly to account for the fact that this phenomenon is experienced as if it has an external source (Weiss 2005, 84-5).

Importantly for Weiss, however, the *daimonion* does not have an external source:

The *daimonion* is not then a voice independent of Socrates' own thinking and intuition that instructs him to contravene their guidance, but rather a voice

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rationality (2012, 37-8). Finally, Brandt's discussion of the "perspectival notion of rationality" contributed to my development of the third category.

inspired by Socrates' thinking and intuition, that is, by beliefs that are for the moment insufficient on their own to guide him aright...The *daimonion* helps him to see more clearly what he already believes and to hang tough. (Weiss 2005, 88-9)

Again, the reduction of the *daimonion* to an aspect of the rational process – in this case a kind of “intuition” that checks Socrates when he is about to do something contrary to his rationally justified beliefs – helps to explain away the apparent tension between Socrates' *daimonion* and his rationality. One problem with the reductionist view is that, as Bridger Ehli points out, in Plato's *Euthydemus* (272e1-4), the *daimonion* warns Socrates not to leave the Palaestra, and Socrates immediately obeys the *daimonion*, not understanding why until Euthydemus and his companions arrive (Ehli 2018, 229-31). This example shows that, for Plato, the *daimonion* is not merely a figurative way for Socrates to describe his rationality. Rather, it is a genuine religious belief.

#### *Minimalist solutions*<sup>21</sup>

Minimalist solutions acknowledge that Socrates is speaking literally about his religious experience with the *daimonion*, but propose various means of minimizing the role of the *daimonion* in Socrates' decision-making so as to maximize the role of his reasoning. Gregory Vlastos, for example, argues that in Socrates' view, divination of all kinds – dreams, oracles, signals from the *daimonion*, etc. – only yields content that Socrates must process rationally in order to understand it (Vlastos 1991, 167-71). That is, it is the use of reason to interpret divine signs, not the signs themselves, that brings about knowledge. “So all [Socrates] could claim to be getting from the *daimonion* at any given

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<sup>21</sup> There are too many minimalist solutions to discuss them all here. See also McPherran (1996, 175-246); (2011), Senn (2012), and Joyal (2005).

time is precisely what he calls the *daimonion* itself – a ‘divine sign,’ which allows, indeed requires *unlimited scope for the deployment of his critical reason* to extract whatever truth it can from those monitions” (Vlastos 1991, 170; emphasis original). In other words, Socrates’ *daimonion* does not limit the role of reason in his pursuit of knowledge, because the *daimonion* does not supply Socrates with knowledge at all. This view minimizes the sort of content that the *daimonion* can transmit in order to preserve Socrates’ rational autonomy.

Brickhouse and Smith respond to Vlastos’ minimalist solution before putting forth their own. For Brickhouse and Smith, Vlastos’ insistence that Socrates relies on “the exclusive authority of reason to determine questions of truth or falsehood” is problematic, since Plato’s Socrates obeys the signals of his *daimonion* without first interpreting what they mean (Vlastos 1991, 170; Brickhouse and Smith 2005, 49-50). This is most apparent in Plato’s *Euthydemus* (272e1-4, discussed above), in which Socrates is about to depart the palaestra, but stays when he senses the *daimonion* cautioning him against leaving. It is not until after a group of men arrive, including Euthydemus, that Socrates realizes why he needed to remain in the palaestra (Brickhouse and Smith 2005, 47; 49-50).

To rationalize Socrates’ *daimonion*, Brickhouse and Smith propose what they call an “empiricist interpretation,” in which they argue that Socrates’ trust in the *daimonion* is justified through inductive reasoning (Brickhouse and Smith 2005, 58). That is, since Socrates claims to have received signals from the *daimonion* frequently throughout his life, beginning in childhood, he has experiential evidence to support the *daimonion*’s reliability. Anna Lännström points out that this view has “a secular accent,” with Brickhouse and Smith imagining that Socrates reacted to the *daimonion* with skepticism

at first, and only began to trust it after testing its reliability over time (Lännström 2012, 36). In this way, Brickhouse and Smith, too, downplay the *daimonion*'s influence by attributing to Socrates a secular mindset in which he treated his *daimonion* with suspicion until its trustworthiness was empirically established (Lännström 2012, 35-9).

Luc Brisson provides yet another minimalist solution. Before he makes his argument rationalizing Socrates' *daimonion*, he sets several strict limitations on the nature of the *daimonion* and how Socrates experiences it. Brisson starts by arguing that the *daimonion* should be regarded as nothing more than a sound heard by Socrates. From Aristotle's distinction in the *Politics* between language (λόγος) and the sorts of sounds that both animals and humans are capable of making (φωνή), Brisson concludes that the sound made by the *daimonion*, a φωνή, "is not necessarily articulated" (Brisson 2005, 2; Arist. *Pol.* I 1, 1253a9-15). That is, the minimal interpretation of Plato's use of the word φωνή is that the *daimonion* did not use language when communicating to Socrates, but merely non-verbal sounds.<sup>22</sup> He also notes that in some places, Plato uses the word *daimonion*, an adjective meaning "divine" to modify the noun "sign" (σημείον), and claims that whenever Plato uses the adjective *daimonion* without also supplying the word σημείον, *daimonion* should not be read as a substantive, an adjective that functions as a noun, i.e. "divine thing"; instead, the word σημείον is implied.<sup>23</sup> Thus, Brisson seeks to

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<sup>22</sup> Brisson also suggests (2005, 2) that perhaps the signal was a single Greek word, such as μή, meaning "don't." But of course μή *is* articulated speech in ancient Greek.

<sup>23</sup> Brisson attempts to defend this position. There is not enough space to outline and respond to his full argument here, but I will note that Plato indisputably uses the word *daimonion* (in its plural form) as a substantive at 24b8-c1: "Σωκράτη φησὶν ἀδικεῖν τοὺς νέους διαφθείροντα καὶ θεοὺς οὐκ ἢ πόλις νομίζει οὐ νομίζοντα, ἕτερα δὲ δαιμόνια καὶνὰ./They say that Socrates does injustice by corrupting the youths and by not believing in the gods in which the city believes, but in other, new gods (*daimonia*)."  
There is no other way to understand the word *daimonia* here than to translate it as a

minimize the *daimonion* from a divine entity to a mere transmission from a divine source. Other limitations on the *daimonion* also apply in Brisson's view: the signal comes upon Socrates without him ever seeking it, it only ever weighs in regarding particular scenarios, never imparting theoretical information, and it is apotroptic only (Brisson 2005, 5-6). These limitations serve to support Brisson's overarching argument that the *daimonion* does not violate Socrates' "moral autonomy" (Brisson 2005, 1). Instead, Socrates' task in interpreting the divine sign becomes quite significant in light of these heavy restrictions on the *daimonion*'s ability to communicate.

#### *Contextualist solutions*

Contextualist solutions emphasize the need to evaluate Socrates' rationality in terms of the religious and cultural context in which he lived. Anna Lännström presents one version of this approach. Lännström criticizes minimalist solutions for their assumption "that Socrates thought he needed some sort of external justification (argument or empirical evidence) for his trust in the *daimonion* to be rational" (Lännström 2012, 35). She argues that Socrates had a religious worldview, not a secular one, and that, within traditional Greek religion, divine signs were regarded as a trustworthy (albeit often opaque) source of truth (Lännström 2012, 35-42). For Lännström, "What makes holding a belief rational is how the belief coheres with the person's worldview and with the evidence available to him" (Lännström 2012, 44). In

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substantive. Brisson's resistance to translating the word *daimonion* as a substantive does not align with Plato's other uses of the same word within the same document.

other words, Socrates' trust in the *daimonion* was rational in light of his religious context.<sup>24</sup>

Jared Brandt, too, argues for a contextualist solution. He notes that there is confusion among scholars seeking to rationalize the *daimonion* because they fail to explain what they mean by rationality (Brandt 2017, 422). And rationality can have one of two meanings: "On the first, rationality is a quality that human beings display when their actions are in accord with the demands of reason. Since reason is objective and universal, rationality, on this view, is objective and universal" (Brandt 2017, 422). Brandt identifies this as the Enlightenment definition of rationality. He quotes Alasdair McIntyre's description of Enlightenment rationality: "Rational justification was to appeal to principles undeniable by any rational person and therefore independent of all those social and cultural particularities which the Enlightenment thinkers took to be mere accidental clothing of reason in particular times and places" (MacIntyre 1988, 6; Brandt 2017, 422). Defending the rationality of a proposition under this definition requires universally applicable arguments that transcend the context of a person's life. But, Brandt continues, rationality may also be defined in terms of one's context: "The second account of rationality recognizes the importance of a perspectival dimension. Thus, human beings display the quality of rationality when their actions are in accord with the demands of reason, *as they appear to them*" (Brandt 2017, 422; emphasis original). Under this definition, defending the rationality of a proposition requires showing that it is consistent with the other beliefs one holds, which are often informed by one's context. Brandt notes

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<sup>24</sup> For another example of a contextualist solution, see Long (2006). Long discusses Plutarch's dialogue, *De genio Socratis*, in which there is a fascinating discussion regarding the relationship between reason and divine revelation.

that some scholars make the error of defaulting to the Enlightenment conception of rationality without making a conscious choice to use it (Brandt 2017, 421-7).<sup>25</sup> Brandt then argues that Plato's Socrates himself expresses a contextualist view of rationality, which is informed by his beliefs about human and divine wisdom (Brandt 2017, 427-9). "...Socrates recognizes that the human perspective brings certain limitations that the divine perspective lacks. In fact, these limitations might be an important reason for Socrates' trust in the *daimonion*" (Brandt 2017, 428). Socrates' perspective includes both a belief in the gods and a recognition of the limitations of human wisdom. Thus, Brandt argues, in agreement with Lännström, that Socrates does not need to prove that the *daimonion* is reliable in order for his trust in the *daimonion* to be rational.

### Problems with the problem

*Does Crito 46b4-6 commit Socrates to a "Rationality Principle"?*

But these attempts to resolve the tension between Socrates' rationality and his obedience to the *daimonion* are based on the acceptance of an incomplete translation of *Crito* 46b4-6. Here is the Greek again, along with my own translation:

ἐγὼ οὐ νῦν πρῶτον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀεὶ τοιοῦτος οἶος **τῶν ἐμῶν** μηδενὶ ἄλλῳ  
πείθεσθαι ἢ τῷ λόγῳ ὃς ἂν μοι λογιζομένῳ βέλτιστος φαίνεται.

I am not now for the first time, but have always been the sort of man who is persuaded by nothing else **of my own things** other than the reason that seems best to me while I am deliberating.

I have bolded "τῶν ἐμῶν/of my own things," because Brickhouse and Smith leave these words untranslated. They are among many others who make the same omission.<sup>26</sup> The

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<sup>25</sup> Brandt shows that Brickhouse and Smith (2005) and McPherran (1996, 2005) default to Enlightenment rationalism in their analyses.

<sup>26</sup> Kahn (1996, 97), McPherran (2011, 114), and Ehli (2018, 226) are among many others who make the same omission.

inclusion of these words, however, has the potential to make a significant difference in the meaning of this statement. Plato's Socrates does not appear to be committing himself to always being persuaded by reason alone; rather, he is saying that, *when it comes to his own things*, he is always persuaded by the reason that seems best. What does Plato's Socrates mean by this? I propose that "my own things" refers to thoughts of which Socrates is the author and originator, and that the implied category of "not my own things" refers to reasons originating from some other source, such as the Delphic Oracle or the *daimonion*.

Burnet's commentary on Plato's *Crito* supports this reading. Burnet points out that Plato makes similar uses of the genitive plural at *Crito* 47c5 and 47e8. Leading up to 47c5-6, Socrates and Crito are discussing the harm that would befall an athlete who conducted his training based on the opinion of the many instead of based on the opinion of an expert on physical fitness. Socrates asks Crito, "Τί δ' ἔστι τὸ κακὸν τοῦτο, καὶ ποῦ τείνει, καὶ εἰς τί τῶν τοῦ ἀπειθοῦντος;/And what is this harm, and where does it aim, and against which of the disobedient man's things?" Crito replies: "δῆλον ὅτι εἰς τὸ σῶμα: τοῦτο γὰρ διόλλυσι./Clearly against the body, for this is what it destroys." And at 47e8-9, Socrates asks Crito, "ἢ φαλότερον ἡγούμεθα εἶναι τοῦ σώματος ἐκεῖνο, ὅτι ποτ' ἔστι τῶν ἡμετέρων, περὶ ὃ ἢ τε ἀδικία καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη ἐστίν;/Or do we think that that thing of ours, whatever it is, which is concerned with injustice and justice, is more insignificant than the body?" These two usages of the genitive plural refer to the body and soul respectively, that is, the parts, or "things" belonging to a human being. From these usages, Burnet concludes that τῶν ἐμῶν at 46b5 includes Socrates' body and soul, his physical possessions and his own "thoughts and feelings" (Burnet 1924, 46b5,

ad loc.). Thus, at *Crito* 46b4-6, “my own things” refers to the thoughts that originate from the human mind. The category “my own things,” meaning thoughts that come from human beings, implies the category “not my own things,” meaning thoughts that come from some other source, such the Delphic Oracle or the *daimonion*.

This interpretation is further supported by Xenophon’s description of Socrates’ beliefs about divination. In the passage below, Xenophon delineates Socrates’ view of the realms of human and divine wisdom as well as his view of the appropriate modes for pursuing each type of wisdom:

ἀλλὰ μὴν ἐποίει καὶ τάδε πρὸς τοὺς ἐπιτηδείους. τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἀναγκαῖα συνεβούλευε καὶ πράττειν ὡς ἐνόμιζεν ἄριστ’ ἂν πραχθῆναι· περὶ δὲ τῶν ἀδήλων ὅπως ἀποβήσοιτο μαντευσομένους ἔπεμπε, εἰ ποιητέα. καὶ τοὺς μέλλοντας οἴκους τε καὶ πόλεις καλῶς οἰκήσειν μαντικῆς ἔφη προσδεῖσθαι· τεκτονικὸν μὲν γὰρ ἢ χαλκευτικὸν ἢ γεωργικὸν ἢ ἀνθρώπων ἀρχικὸν ἢ τῶν τοιούτων ἔρτων ἐξεταστικὸν ἢ λογιστικὸν ἢ οἰκονομικὸν ἢ στρατηγικὸν γενέσθαι, πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα μαθήματα καὶ ἀνθρώπου γνώμη αἰρετὰ ἐνόμιζεν εἶναι· τὰ δὲ μέγιστα τῶν ἐν τούτοις ἔφη τοὺς θεοὺς ἑαυτοῖς καταλείπεσθαι, ὧν οὐδὲν δῆλον εἶναι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις. οὔτε γὰρ τῷ καλῶς ἀγρὸν φυτευσάμενῳ δῆλον ὅστις καρπώσεται, οὔτε γὰρ τῷ καλῶς οἰκίαν οἰκοδομησαμένῳ δῆλον ὅστις ἐνοικήσει, οὔτε τῷ στρατηγικῷ δῆλον εἰ συμφέρει στρατηγεῖν, οὔτε τῷ πολιτικῷ δῆλον εἰ συμφέρει τῆς πόλεως προστατεῖν, οὔτε τῷ καλῆν γῆμαντι, ἴν’ εὐφραίνηται, δῆλον εἰ διὰ ταύτην ἀνιάσεται, οὔτε τῷ δυνατοῦς ἐν τῇ πόλει κηδεστὰς λαβόντι δῆλον εἰ διὰ τούτους στερήσεται τῆς πόλεως. τοὺς δὲ μηδὲν τῶν τοιούτων οἰομένους εἶναι δαιμόνιον, ἀλλὰ πάντα τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης γνώμης, δαιμονῶν ἔφη· δαιμονῶν δὲ καὶ τοὺς μαντευσομένους ἂ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἔδωκαν οἱ θεοὶ μαθοῦσι διακρίνειν (οἷον εἴ τις ἐπερωτῶν πότερον ἐπιστάμενον ἢ νιοχεῖν ἐπὶ ζευγος λαβεῖν κρεῖττον ἢ μὴ ἐπιστάμενον, ἢ πότερον ἐπιστάμενον κυβερνᾶν ἐπὶ τὴν ναῦν κρεῖττον λαβεῖν ἢ μὴ ἐπιστάμενον), ἢ ἂ ἔξεστιν ἀριθμήσαντας ἢ μετρήσαντας. ἢ στήσαντας εἰδέναί· τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα παρὰ τῶν θεῶν πυνθανομένους ἀθέμιτα ποιεῖν ἠγεῖτο. ἔφη δὲ δεῖν, ἂ μὲν μαθόντας ποιεῖν ἔδωκαν οἱ θεοί, μανθάνειν, ἂ δὲ μὴ δῆλα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐστί, πειρᾶσθαι διὰ μαντικῆς παρὰ τῶν θεῶν πυνθάνεσθαι· τοὺς θεοὺς γὰρ οἷς ἂν ὧσιν ἴλεω σημαίνειν.

But in fact, he would do the following things with regard to his friends: he would advise them to do necessary things as he deemed best; but concerning things that were unclear as to how they would turn out, he would send his friends to consult the oracle as to whether they should be done. And he said that, on the one hand, those intending to manage homes and cities well had a need for divination: to become a carpenter, or a smith, or a farmer, or a ruler of men, or an inquirer into these occupations, or a mathematician, or a household manager, or a general, all things of such a sort he believed were learned and understood by human reason.

But on the other hand, he said that the gods kept the greatest things in these matters for themselves, none of which are clear to human beings. For neither is it clear to the one planting a field well who will reap the fruits, nor is it clear to the one building a house well who will live in it, nor is it clear to the general if it benefits him to command, nor is it clear to the politician if it benefits him to govern the city, nor is it clear to the one having taken a beautiful wife, in order to enjoy her, if he will grieve on account of this woman, nor is it clear to the one having acquired strong men in the city as in-laws if on account of these men he will lose his city. But he said that those who think that none of these sorts of things are divine, but that all belong to human reason, are mad. But those seeking oracles regarding things which the gods have granted to human beings to interpret by learning are mad, too, as, for example if someone were to make an inquiry of this sort: “Is it better to get someone who knows how to hold the reins on a carriage or to get someone who doesn’t?”; or “Is it better to get someone who knows how to steer on a ship or to get someone who doesn’t?” Or things which are possible to know by counting or measuring or weighing: he believed that those inquiring from the gods about things of such a sort behaved contrary to what is right. And he said that it is necessary to learn the things which the gods have granted us to do by learning, and the things which are not clear to humans it is necessary to try to learn from the gods through divination. For to those to whom they are gracious, the gods give signs. (Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.6-9)

In other words, for Xenophon’s Socrates, human reason (ἀνθρώπου γνώμη) is effective and appropriate when it comes to certain kinds of questions (e.g. practical questions about various professions, mathematical questions, questions about the size and weight of objects, etc.) whereas some subjects are divine (δαμόνιον) and require input from the gods (e.g. questions pertaining to the future). For Xenophon, not only did Socrates advise his friends to use the proper modes for seeking information, but he thought that those who used the wrong modes were mad (δαμονῶν). That is, according to Xenophon, Socrates considered it wrong either to ask the gods for help with questions that human reason is equipped to answer, or to try to use *reason alone* to solve problems outside the realm of human wisdom.

Xenophon and *Crito* 46b4-6

In light of Xenophon's outline of the realms of human and divine wisdom, it seems that what Plato's Socrates really means at *Crito* 46b4-6 is that, when it comes to his own things, such as his own thoughts and arguments (as well as the thoughts and arguments expressed to Socrates by other human beings that he accepts as his own), he always acts in accordance with the best reason he has. But when it comes to things that are not his own, such as signs from the gods, he can be persuaded to act differently. The question is, does Xenophon's explanation account for how Socrates and his *daimonion* are described throughout Plato's dialogues?

Plato has the *daimonion* weigh in on Socrates' decisions in six places.<sup>27</sup> In four of the six (*Apol.* 31c3-32a3, *Euthydemus* 272e3-3a, *Republic* VI.496c3-5, *Theaetetus* 151a2-5), the *daimonion* warns Socrates not to undertake a certain action because that action will have an unfavorable future result for Socrates. According to the standards laid out by Xenophon, this is a totally appropriate use of divine wisdom; in fact, there is no other way that Socrates could discover whether his present actions will bring about favorable results than by receiving divine input.

The fifth Platonic reference to the *daimonion* is somewhat different, but it still fits well within Xenophon's framework. At *Apol.* 40a-41d, after being sentenced to death, Socrates interprets the *daimonion*'s silence throughout his trial as confirmation that death is not the evil that most people believe it to be. Here, Socrates is not merely drawing conclusions about his own future; he is drawing general conclusions about the nature of

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<sup>27</sup> Because the authenticity of *Alcibiades I* and the *Theages* is disputed, I have excluded these dialogues from my analysis.

death. Again, this accords with Xenophon's description of the appropriate modes for seeking wisdom. Socrates uses the *daimonion* to understand a matter that human wisdom cannot possibly discover using reason alone, and one that would therefore require divine revelation.

The sixth and final Platonic reference occurs at *Phaedrus* 242b8-c3. After he gives a speech on love, Socrates' *daimonion* prevents him from leaving the place where he and Phaedrus have been conversing. Socrates tells Phaedrus that the *daimonion* is preventing him from leaving because he has spoken impiously and he needs to correct his error before departing. This example is different from the others, as the *daimonion* is indicating to Socrates that an action he has already taken was impious. However, piety, which deals with the appropriate behavior of human beings with regard to the gods, is also an area in which humans require divine help.

#### Xenophon and Socrates' worldview

Importantly, Xenophon provides a culturally appropriate framework for understanding the relationship between Socrates' *daimonion* and his rationality. Brisson's description of the conflict between Socrates' rationality and his trust in the *daimonion* clearly demonstrates the need for such a framework. Brisson describes the problem as "that of the compatibility, in Socrates, between this divine signal and 'moral autonomy'" (Brisson 2005, 1). In a note appended to the quoted sentence, Brisson admits: "This term is not found as such in ancient Greece: the terms *autonomia* and *autonomos* are applied to cities and not to human beings. Following Kant, I understand moral autonomy as the ability to determine one's actions by means of reason alone" (Brisson 2005: n1). In the absence of an ancient Greek term for the principle that he is using to evaluate Socrates'

rationality, Brisson plugs in a term borrowed from Kant and moves ahead with his analysis. Indeed, in so doing Brisson commits the error of defaulting to the Enlightenment view of rationality that Brandt identifies in the work of other scholars. But while Brisson may be correct that the Greeks did not have a term equivalent to Kant's concept of "moral autonomy," he misses out on the fact that they nevertheless had their own means of evaluating the proper modes for pursuing knowledge.

Indeed, the reductionist and minimalist solutions outlined above fall short of accounting for Socrates' rationality using a measure that might have been familiar to him. Reductionist solutions propose that Socrates understood his *daimonion* in secular terms, but this is directly at odds with the fact that that Plato and Xenophon repeatedly attribute religious beliefs to Socrates as well as the fact that he lived in a religious culture, not a secular one. Minimalist solutions admit that Socrates spoke sincerely about his divine sign, but they evaluate Socrates based on a standard of rationality – Enlightenment rationality – for which Brisson admits the ancient Greeks had no word (Brisson 2005, 1, n. 1). And while contextualist solutions take a productive approach, those who use this approach would benefit from taking into account that *Crito* 46b4-6 has been mistranslated and that Xenophon can add to our understanding of Socrates' worldview.<sup>28</sup>

### Possible objections

Some of the scholars who engage with the problem of Socrates' rationality as described above might object that the framework laid out in *Mem.* 1.6-9 has no bearing

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<sup>28</sup> Neither Lännström (2012) nor Long (2006) uses Xenophon to enhance their understanding of Socrates' worldview. While Brandt (2017) recognizes the importance of evaluating Socrates' rationality in terms of his own worldview, he, too, fails to recognize Xenophon's value in this area.

on their discussions of Socrates' rationality because they are only discussing Plato's Socrates and thus make no claims about the historical Socrates. However, Xenophon's discussion of human and divine wisdom is not only relevant to those who wish to understand the relationship between the historical Socrates' sense of rationality and his obedience to the *daimonion*, but also to those who wish to understand the issue as it pertains to Plato's Socrates, because, as I have argued above, the historically appropriate framework for evaluating Socrates' use of divine revelation, provided in *Mem.* 1.1.6-9, helps to make sense of how Plato's Socrates interacts with the *daimonion*.

Another possible objection to this analysis of the *Crito* passage is that some scholars have accounted for τῶν ἐμῶν in their translations, yet this has not prevented them from following the standard interpretation. For example, Gregory Vlastos translates τῶν ἐμῶν as "in me": "Not now for the first time, but always, I am the sort of man who is persuaded by nothing in me except the proposition which appears to me to be the best *when I reason* (λογιζομένῳ) about it" (Vlastos 1991, 157; emphasis original). But "in me" is not an available interpretation of τῶν ἐμῶν; the grammar and the context show that τῶν ἐμῶν is a partitive genitive that sets a limit on Socrates' commitment to obey the reason that seems best to him. In addition, Vlastos does not discuss what is meant by "in me." If he believes that Socrates views dreams, oracles, and the divine sign as belonging to the category of τῶν ἐμῶν, he does not provide an argument for this reading.

Scott J. Senn also accounts for τῶν ἐμῶν in his translation of *Crito* 46b4-6: "I – not now for the first time, but actually always – am the sort of man such as to be persuaded by/obey none of my own things other than the statement (*logos*) that to me, when I reason (*logizomai*), appears best" (Senn 2012, 10). But although Senn translates

the passage correctly, his interpretation of it is that Socrates refuses to be persuaded by anyone or anything else's reasons until he has processed those reasons for himself:

“[Socrates] invokes this principle in this context in order to let Crito know that he will not be persuaded by/obey even his dear friend, but will only be persuaded when he has reasoned the matter through for himself; what determines his decisions is always and *only* the conclusion of his own argument” (Senn 2012, 10; emphasis original). While Senn cites Burnet's commentary on this passage, he does not explain the distinction between Socrates' “own things” and “not his own things.” Instead, Senn interprets this statement as if the τῶν ἐμῶν were not there at all, and adopts the standard interpretation of *Crito* 46b4-6. Although Vlastos and Senn try to account for the τῶν ἐμῶν in their translations, they do not realize the implications of these words. Thus, the evidence from *Xen. Mem.* 1.6-9 together with the corrected translation of *Crito* 46b4-6 show that the standard interpretation of the *Crito* passage is incorrect.

### **Question #3: Was the *daimonion* exclusively apotreptic?**

The final section of this chapter addresses the fact that Plato and Xenophon agree that Socrates claims to have a *daimonion*, but disagree about how the *daimonion* functions. For Plato, Socrates' *daimonion* is apotreptic only, meaning that it only prevents Socrates from acting, and never encourages him to act. Plato explains this clearly in his *Apology*:

μοι θεῖόν τι καὶ δαιμόνιον γίγνεται, ὃ δὴ καὶ ἐν τῇ γραφῇ ἐπικωμῶδῶν Μέλητος ἐγράψατο. ἐμοὶ δὲ τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἐκ παιδὸς ἀρξάμενον, φωνὴ τις γιγνομένη, ἣ ὅταν γένηται, ἀεὶ ἀποτρέπει με τοῦτο ὃ ἂν μέλλω πράττειν, προτρέπει δὲ οὔποτε.

Something god-sent and divine comes to me, about which Meletus, ridiculing me, indicted me. And this started when I was a child: a certain voice arises which,

whenever it comes, always turns me away from doing the thing that I am going to do, but never urges me on. (Plat. *Apol.* 31c8-d4)

Throughout the Platonic corpus, the influence of the *daimonion* is consistently portrayed as apotretic.<sup>29</sup>

According to Xenophon, however, the *daimonion* also provides Socrates with both positive and negative promptings:

καὶ πολλοῖς τῶν συνόντων προηγόρευε τὰ μὲν ποιεῖν, τὰ δὲ μὴ ποιεῖν, ὡς τοῦ δαιμονίου προσημαίνοντος: καὶ τοῖς μὲν πειθομένοις αὐτῷ συνέφερε, καὶ τοῖς δὲ μὴ πειθομένοις μετέμελε.

And [Socrates] used to tell many of his associates in advance what to do, and what not to do, with the *daimonion* forewarning him. And it was profitable for those obeying him, but for those not obeying him, it was a cause for regret. (Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.4)

Here, Xenophon explicitly states that the *daimonion* signaled to Socrates what he (and his associates) ought *and* ought not to do. In the next passage, Xenophon makes a similar statement:

εἰ δέ τις, ὅτι φάσκοντος αὐτοῦ τὸ δαιμόνιον ἑαυτῷ προσημαίνειν ἅ τε δέοι καὶ ἅ μὴ δέοι ποιεῖν ὑπὸ τῶν δικαστῶν κατεγνώσθη θάνατος, οἶεται αὐτὸν ἐλέγχεσθαι περὶ τοῦ δαιμονίου ψευδόμενον, ἐννοησάτω πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι οὕτως ἤδη τότε πόρρω τῆς ἡλικίας ἦν, ὥστ', εἰ καὶ μὴ τότε, οὐκ ἂν πολλῶ ὕστερον τελευτῆσαι τὸν βίον.

But if anyone thinks Socrates was convicted of lying about the *daimonion* because, although he said that the *daimonion* forewarned him about what to do and what not to do, he was sentenced to death by the jurors, let him consider first that Socrates was already so advanced in age that if his life had not ended then, it would not have ended much later. (Xen. *Mem.* 4.8.1)

Xenophon again states clearly that the *daimonion* gave Socrates both negative and positive guidance. Finally, the following passage from Xenophon's *Apology*, Socrates refers only to the *daimonion*'s protreptic function:

καινὰ γε μὴν δαιμόνια πῶς ἂν ἐγὼ εἰσφέροιμι λέγων ὅτι θεοῦ μοι φωνὴ φαίνεται σημαίνουσα ὅ τι χρὴ ποιεῖν;

<sup>29</sup> See also: *Phaedrus* 242b8-c3, *Theaetetus* 151a2-5, *Euthydemus* 272e3-3a, and *Republic* 496c3-5.

And how could it be that I bring in new gods (*daimonia*) by saying that the voice of a god appears to me, indicating what I should do? (Xen. *Apol.* 12)

This passage again contradicts Plato's description of the *daimonion*. Here, Xenophon not only states clearly that the *daimonion* tells Socrates what to do, but he also refrains from mentioning the apotreptic function entirely.

Plato and Xenophon are both explicit about this aspect of Socrates' *daimonion*. For Plato, the *daimonion* is apotreptic only, and for Xenophon, the *daimonion* is both apotreptic and protreptic. This is a clear discrepancy between their accounts. When it comes to the historical Socrates, it may be impossible to determine which of the two descriptions of the *daimonion* comes closest to the truth. However, whereas recent scholarship tends to accept that Plato's version is more historically plausible than Xenophon's, there is good reason to doubt this view.<sup>30</sup> The analysis below hypothesizes that Plato's *daimonion* functions in a way that fits so well with Plato's literary and philosophical goals that scholars should suspect Plato of molding his description of the *daimonion* to meet these goals.

#### Plato's apotreptic *daimonion*

Plato consistently portrays Socrates' virtue as consisting in his restraint. In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates does not demonstrate that he is wise and that he upholds justice by teaching and by taking action, but rather by refraining from claiming to possess knowledge that he lacks and by refraining from taking unjust actions. This is clear in Plato's discussion of the Delphic oracle, as well as in his discussions of Socrates' refusal

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<sup>30</sup> This is especially true of scholars who take a developmentalist approach to Plato. See, for example, Nussbaum (1985), Vlastos (1991), McPherran (2005).

to support the illegal motion to try the Arginusae generals as a group as well as his refusal to arrest Leon of Salamis when he was ordered to do so by the Thirty Tyrants.

*Socratic wisdom and restraint*

At *Apol.* 20c4-24b2, Plato's Socrates responds to what he calls the accusations of his former accusers; he states that he has acquired the false reputation of being a sophist and a natural philosopher, then he endeavors to show *how* he acquired this reputation. To do this, Socrates tells the story of Chaerephon's consultation of the Delphic Oracle on his behalf and his own efforts to understand what the Oracle said about him: "ἤρετο γὰρ δὴ εἴ τις ἐμοῦ εἶη σοφώτερος. ἀνεῖλεν οὖν ἡ Πυθία μηδένα σοφώτερον εἶναι./For [Chaerephon] asked if there was anyone wiser than me. And the Pythia replied that there was no one wiser" (Plat. *Apol.* 21a5-7). Socrates explains that, while he did not consider himself to be wise, he knew that the oracle must be true in some sense (Plat. *Apol.* 21b1-7). So to tease out the meaning of the oracle, Socrates says that he questioned a politician who seemed wise. The man turned out to lack the wisdom he thought he had, leaving Socrates to conclude:

πρὸς ἐμουτὸν δ' οὖν ἀπιὼν ἐλογιζόμην ὅτι τούτου μὲν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐγὼ σοφώτερός εἰμι· κινδυνεύει μὲν γὰρ ἡμῶν οὐδέτερος οὐδὲν καλὸν χάγαθὸν εἰδέναι, ἀλλ' οὗτος μὲν οἶτεί τι ἰδέναί οὐκ εἰδώς, ἐγὼ δέ, ὥσπερ οὖν οὐκ οἶδα, οὐδὲ οἶομαι· εἴοικα γοῦν τούτου γε μικρῶ τι ἀτῶ τούτῳ σοφώτερος εἶναι, ὅτι ἂ μὴ οἶδα οὐδὲ οἶομαι εἰδέναι.

And so departing, I considered to myself that I was wiser than this man; for neither of us is likely to know anything fine and good, but this man, although not knowing, thinks that he knows something, whereas just as I do not know, I do not think that I know; at any rate, I seem to be wiser than this man at least in this small thing itself: that I do not think that I know the things which I do not know. (Plat. *Apol.* 22d2-6)

After the politicians, Socrates says that he moved on to questioning the poets and the craftsmen, ultimately realizing that he did, in fact, possess some sort of wisdom: "τὸ δὲ

κινδυνεύει, ὧ ἄνδρες, τῷ ὄντι ὁ θεὸς σοφὸς εἶναι, καὶ ἐν τῷ χρησμῷ τούτῳ τοῦτο λέγειν, ὅτι ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία ὀλίγου τινὸς ἀξία ἐστὶν καὶ οὐδενός./And it is likely, men, that the god is wise in reality, and that in this oracle he means this: that human wisdom is worthy of something small or of nothing at all” (Plat. *Apol.* 23a5-7) For Plato, Socrates is wise in the sense that he realizes the limits of his own wisdom and refrains from claiming to know things that he does not know.

### *Socratic justice and restraint*

Plato also demonstrates Socrates’ justice in negative terms. At Plat. *Apol.* 31c4-33b8, Socrates explains why he tries to improve the state by questioning people individually instead of through a political career. Here he says that his *daimonion* is what prevents (ἐναντιοῦται) him from entering into politics, since he would surely die if he tried to live a public life. He adds:

καὶ μοι μὴ ἄχθεσθε λέγοντι τᾶληθῆ · οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ὅστις ἀνθρώπων σωθήσεται οὔτε ὑμῖν οὔτε ἄλλῳ πλήθει οὐδενὶ γνησίως ἐναντιούμενος καὶ διακωλύων πολλὰ ἄδικα καὶ παράνομα ἐν τῇ πόλει γίγνεσθαι, ἀλλ’ ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστι τὸν τῷ ὄντι μαχούμενον ὑπὲρ τοῦ δικαίου, καὶ εἰ μέλλει ὀλίγον χρόνον σωθήσεσθαι, ἰδιωτεύειν ἀλλὰ μὴ δημοσιεύειν.

And do not be annoyed at me for speaking the truth; for no one will be safe who lawfully opposes (ἐναντιούμενος) either you or any other majority and who hinders many injustices and illegalities that arise in the city, but it is necessary for a man truly fighting for justice, if he is to be safe even for a short time, to be a private citizen and not to be in public service. (Plat. *Apol.* 31e1-32a3)

Socrates then cites two examples from his life in which he risked his life to fight for justice. The first occurred when Socrates was serving on the *Boule* after the naval battle of Arginusae (406 BC). Socrates explains that after the Athenians had failed to collect their fallen men following the battle, there was an illegal motion to put the Arginusae

generals on trial as a group instead of individually. Socrates alone opposed (ἠναντιώθη) this motion, even though this opposition put his life in danger:

καὶ ἐτοίμων ὄντων ἐνδεικνύμαι με καὶ ἀπάγειν τῶν ῥητόρων, καὶ ὑμῶν κελευόντων καὶ βοώντων, μετὰ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τοῦ δικαίου ὄμην μᾶλλον με δεῖν διακινδυνεύειν ἢ μεθ' ὑμῶν γενέσθαι μὴ δίκαια βουλευομένων, φοβηθέντα δεσμὸν ἢ θάνατον.

And with the orators being ready to inform against me and to arrest me, and with you shouting and bidding them to do this, I thought that, together with the law and justice, I should run all risks rather than to plan unjust things with you, although I feared imprisonment or death. (Plat. *Apol.* 32b7-c3)

For Plato, it is Socrates' opposition to injustice that makes his behavior in this situation just. The same is true in the next example.

After telling the jury about his opposition to trying the Arginusae generals as a group, Socrates says that when the Thirty Tyrants were in power, they summoned him and four other men and commanded them to arrest Leon of Salamis, who was to be executed.

τότε μέντοι ἐγὼ οὐ λόγῳ ἀλλ' ἔργῳ αὖ ἐνεδειξάμην ὅτι ἐμοὶ θανάτου μὲν μέλει, εἰ μὴ ἀγροικότερον ἦν εἰπεῖν, οὐδ' ὀτιοῦν, τοῦ δὲ μηδὲν ἄδικον μηδ' ἀνόσιον ἐργάζεσθαι, τούτου δὲ τὸ πᾶν μέλει.

Then however, not in word but in deed, I again showed that I do not care about death whatsoever, if it is not too uncultivated to say, but I care entirely about not doing anything unjust or impious. (Plat. *Apol.* 32c8-d3)

Socrates disobeyed the Thirty Tyrants; he did not join the other men when they went to arrest Leon of Salamis, but instead went home. Again, Plato demonstrates how Socrates fought for justice using an example of Socrates refraining from doing something unjust.

*Why does Plato present the daimonion as exclusively apotreptic?*

Throughout Plato's *Apology*, Socratic wisdom and justice consist in his restraint.

This is a clear parallel to Plato's description of the apotreptic *daimonion*; just as the

*daimonion* guides Socrates by preventing him from taking actions that will turn out badly, Socrates pursues wisdom and justice – both for himself and for the polis – by refraining from claiming knowledge that he lacks (and discouraging others from claiming knowledge that they lack) and by refraining from taking unjust actions (and discouraging others from taking unjust actions). It is also interesting to note that Plato uses the same verb (ἐναντιόομαι) to describe the *daimonion*'s opposition to Socrates' going into politics (31d5), to explain that no one fighting for justice who opposes a crowd is safe (31e3), and to describe Socrates' opposition to the motion to try the Arginusae generals as a group (32b6). That is, in addition to drawing a parallel between the activity of the *daimonion* and that of Socrates, Plato uses the same verb to express what the *daimonion* and Socrates are doing.

How do the above observations inform the question of whether Plato's apotretic *daimonion* is more historically plausible than Xenophon's apotretic and protretic *daimonion*? Throughout Plato's *Apology*, Socrates demonstrates his virtue by refraining from making assertions or taking actions. His wisdom consists in his realization of what he does not know. Furthermore, the oracle gives a negative proclamation about Socrates; the oracle does not say that Socrates is the wisest, but rather that no one is wiser than he. And finally, Socrates' justice is demonstrated by his resistance to the crowd when he was on the Council during the trial of the Arginusae generals and his resistance to the orders of the Thirty Tyrants (404 BC).<sup>31</sup> The apotretic *daimonion* neatly aligns with Plato's

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<sup>31</sup> Perhaps it is worth clarifying that I think that these two episodes are likely historical; it is not the episodes themselves so much as Plato's framing of these examples of Socrates' inaction as proofs of his justice that mark them as Platonic. Socrates' interactions with the Thirty Tyrants in 404 BC will be discussed in more detail in the third chapter of this thesis.

overarching philosophical messages about Socratic wisdom and justice. For Plato, Socratic virtue means refraining from vice; this theme of restraint is mirrored by the fact that in Plato, the *daimonion* helps Socrates to do the right thing by *preventing* him from doing the wrong thing. Thus, even if the historical Socrates spoke of his *daimonion* as being both apotreptic and protreptic (or if perhaps he never gave his disciples a straightforward account of the nature of the *daimonion*'s influence on his life), Plato has a literary motive to make the divine sign apotreptic only to create an aesthetically pleasing and philosophically consistent portrait of Socrates. Of course, the idea that Plato has a literary reason to make Socrates' *daimonion* exclusively apotreptic does not prove that Plato invented this quality. But it does give scholars a reason not to assume that Plato's portrait is historically accurate in this regard.

### *Conclusion*

There is a clear discrepancy between Plato and Xenophon when it comes to the function of Socrates' *daimonion*. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the overwhelming tendency in recent scholarship is to accept that Plato's characterization of the *daimonion* is more historically plausible than Xenophon's.<sup>32</sup> However, the analysis above reveals that there is good reason not to defer to Plato on this point. Plato's emphasis on Socratic wisdom and justice as consisting in restraint rather than positive action suggest that Plato's apotreptic *daimonion* reflects his literary and philosophical goals.

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example: McPherran (2005), Van Riel (2005), Nussbaum (1985).

## Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the *daimonion* that Plato and Xenophon attribute to Socrates was an important part of the historical Socrates' life. Both authors take care to address the perception that Socrates used the *daimonion* to boast about his superior virtue in court, which suggests that this perception arose as a result of the historical Socrates' public speech. Neither author denies that Socrates claimed to possess a *daimonion*; rather, both Plato and Xenophon justify his use of the *daimonion* to boast in their own ways. I have also argued that Socrates' obedience to the divine sign is not in conflict with his rationality. Scholarship that accepts this as a potential problem tends to do so because of (1) the widespread misreading of *Crito* 46b4-6, and (2) ignorance of Xenophon's explanation as to the relationship between human reason and divine revelation at *Memorabilia* 1.1.6-9. Finally, I have argued that Plato's characterization of the *daimonion* as exclusively apotrepic fits so well with his overarching literary and philosophical goals that scholars should consider whether Plato may have molded his description of the *daimonion* to meet those goals.

## CHAPTER III

## SOCRATES' MILITARY AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

**Introduction**

The Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC), a prolonged series of conflicts between Athens and Sparta and their respective allies, occurred during Socrates' lifetime (c.470-399 BC). In several places throughout their *Sokratikoi logoi*, Plato and Xenophon reference the roles that Socrates was called upon to play in this war as a citizen of Athens. Plato's dialogues specify that Socrates fought as a hoplite, i.e., a foot soldier carrying a shield and spear, in three of the war's campaigns: Potidaea (432 BC),<sup>33</sup> Delium (424 BC),<sup>34</sup> and Amphipolis (422 BC).<sup>35</sup> In Plato's *Symposium*, Alcibiades says that Socrates saved his life in battle at Potidaea, and that at Delium, Socrates rescued Laches, who had served as a general in 427/6 and 426/5.<sup>36</sup> Off the battlefield, Plato and Xenophon reference Socrates' opposition to a popular motion during his term on the Athenian *Boule* (406 BC) to try by a single vote all of the generals who had commanded the Athenian fleet in the naval battle of Arginusae.<sup>37</sup> Finally, Plato and Xenophon characterize Socrates as behaving defiantly toward the Thirty Tyrants, the despotic oligarchy installed by the Spartans after the Athenians' ultimate loss of the war in 404 BC. Both authors reference

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<sup>33</sup> Plat. *Apol.* 28d10-29a1; Plat. *Sym.* 219e5-220e7; Plat. *Charm.* 153a1-153d1. See also Plut. *Alc.* 7. and D.L. 2.5.22-23.

<sup>34</sup> Plat. *Apol.* 28d10-29a1; Plat. *Sym.* 220e7-221c1; Plat. *Lach.* 181a-b. See also Cic. *Div.* 1.54.123; Strab. 9.2.7; Plut. *De Genio Socr.* 11; Plut. *Alc.* 7; D.L. 2.5.22-23.

<sup>35</sup> Plat. *Apol.* 28d10-29a1.

<sup>36</sup> Plat. *Sym.* 220d5-221c1. For Laches' terms as general, see Thuc. 3.86.1, 3.90.2, 3.103.3; D.S. 12.54.4.

<sup>37</sup> Plat. *Apol.* 32a4-c3; Plat. *Gorg.* 473d6-474b3; Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.14-15; Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.17-18; Xen. *Mem.* 4.4.1-4.

an episode in which Socrates disobeyed an order by the Thirty to participate in the arrest of Leon of Salamis, who was to be executed. Xenophon also portrays Socrates as disobeying the Thirty's order to stop conversing with the youth (Plat. *Apol.* 32c3-e1; Xen. *Mem.* 4.4.1-4; Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.32-38). This chapter will discuss the significance of these events when it comes to the Socratic problem. Did the historical Socrates do these things? Does it matter, and if so, why?

### **Philosophy as a Way of Life**

Much of the scholarship dealing with the Socratic problem has paid little attention to the biographical details of Socrates' life, including his military and political activities, and has instead focused on questions pertaining strictly to what philosophical theories, if any, he taught. For example, here is how Charles Kahn articulates what he sees as the most pressing question pertaining to the Socratic problem: "We know, or may reasonably believe, a great deal about Socrates as a human being. What can we know about Socrates as a philosopher?" (Kahn 1996, 75). And William Prior writes, "we know a good deal about the life, character, philosophical interests and method of the historical Socrates. Unfortunately, our knowledge does not extend to what doctrines, if any, he may have professed, which is just what contemporary philosophical scholars want to know" (Prior 2006, 25).<sup>38</sup> The idea that it is Socrates' doctrines, rather than the facts of his life, that are philosophically relevant, is indicative of a failure to understand the ancient Greek conception of philosophy as a way of life.

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<sup>38</sup> For a similar formulation of the Socratic problem, see Vlastos (1991).

Pierre Hadot discusses this topic extensively in his monographs, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (1995) and *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* (2002).<sup>39</sup> He states, “in general, historians of philosophy pay little attention to the fact that ancient philosophy was, first and foremost, a way of life. They consider philosophy as, above all, philosophical discourse” (Hadot 1995, 269). Before the development of the conception of philosophy as a strictly theoretical activity, however, the ancient Greeks and Romans regarded philosophy as a practical endeavor as well: “...philosophy was a mode of existing-in-the-world, which had to be practiced at each instant, and the goal of which was to transform the whole of the individual’s life” (Hadot 1995, 265).

Hadot also points out that a key difference between modern and ancient philosophy is that, whereas modern philosophers tend to first reason abstractly to universal conclusions, which subsequently have implications for how human beings should live, ancient philosophers began by making decisions about what constitutes the good life, and then developed theories through philosophical discourse to understand those decisions and to aid in the pursuit of the good life (Hadot 2002, 2-3). That is, for the ancients, “philosophical theories are in the service of the philosophical life” (Hadot 1995, 267). In this view, the theoretical and the practical were both regarded as indispensable parts of philosophy, so that “philosophy was a way of life, both in its exercise and effort to achieve wisdom, and in its goal, wisdom itself. For real wisdom

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<sup>39</sup> Cooper (2007); Dorion (2006, 2011); and Urstad and Freyr (2010) are among those who follow Hadot in accepting that the ancient Greeks viewed philosophy as a way of life. Anderson (2005), too, recognizes this concept and discusses what Socrates’ service as a hoplite says about his views on harming one’s enemies.

does not merely cause us to know: it makes us ‘be’ in a different way” (Hadot 1995, 265).

Another important feature of this conception of philosophy is its implications for the philosopher’s responsibility to society. “[A]n essential place is accorded to the duty always to act in the service of the human community; that is, to act in accordance with justice....This concern for living in the service of the human community, and for acting in accordance with justice, is an essential element of every philosophical life” (Hadot 1995, 274). This chapter will look at key passages in which Plato and Xenophon show Socrates exemplifying the philosophical life by engaging with his community through military and political activities. These passages show that Plato and Xenophon seek to demonstrate Socrates’ worth as a philosopher by emphasizing his excellence, not only when it comes to his philosophical discourse, but also when it comes to his actions. The first two passages are from Plato’s *Apology* (28d6-29a6; 32a4-e1). The third is from Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (4.4.1-4). The final two passages from Plato’s *Symposium* (219e5-221c1) and Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (1.6.1-10) will be examined side by side.

### **Textual Analysis<sup>40</sup>**

#### Plat. *Apol.* 28d6-29a6

As part of his defense speech in Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates lists three campaigns in which he was a soldier during the Peloponnesian War: Potidaea (432 BC), Delium (424

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<sup>40</sup> This section will include several quotes that are lengthier than those typically found in academic writing. This is necessary here because the quoted passages demonstrate the ways in which Plato and Xenophon understood the relationship between Socrates’ political and military activities and his philosophy.

BC), and Amphipolis (422 BC). But these details are not the main focus of what Socrates is saying. Rather, the overarching point is that Socrates is, and always has been, concerned with whether his behavior is just, without regard for his personal safety. Socrates makes this clear when, just before the passage in question, he considers that someone might wonder whether he is ashamed to have conducted himself in such a way that his life is now on the line. Socrates responds to the imaginary interlocutor (Plat.

*Apol.* 28b5-9):

οὐ καλῶς λέγεις, ὦ ἄνθρωπε, εἰ οἶει δεῖν κίνδυνον ὑπολογίζεσθαι τοῦ ζῆν ἢ τεθνάναι ἄνδρα ὅτου τι καὶ σμκρὸν ὄφελός ἐστιν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐκεῖνο μόνον σκοπεῖν ὅταν πράττῃ, πότερον δίκαια ἢ ἄδικα πράττει, καὶ ἀνδρὸς ἀγαθοῦ ἔργα ἢ κακοῦ.

You do not speak well, O man, if you think that a man who is good for anything should take into account life or death, and should not consider, whenever he acts, only whether he behaves justly or unjustly, and whether he does the deeds of a good man or the deeds of a bad man.

Socrates adds that Achilles did not shy away from death when his mother, Thetis, warned him that he would die if he killed Hector to avenge Patroclus (Plat. *Apol.* 28c9-29d5).<sup>41</sup>

Then he compares his duty to obey his commanders in battle to his duty to obey the god at Delphi:

οὕτω γὰρ ἔχει, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, τῇ ἀληθείᾳ· οὐκ ἂν τις ἑαυτὸν τάξῃ ἡγήσάμενος βέλτιστον εἶναι ἢ ὑπ' ἄρχοντος ταχθῆ, ἐνταῦθα δεῖ, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, μένοντα κινδυνεύειν, μηδὲν ὑπολογιζόμενον μήτε θάνατον μήτε ἄλλο μηδὲν πρὸ τοῦ αἰσχροῦ. ἐγὼ οὖν δεινὰ ἂν εἶην εἰργασμένος, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, εἰ ὅτε μὲν με οἱ ἄρχοντες ἔταπτον, οὐς ὑμεῖς εἴλεσθε ἄρχειν μου, καὶ ἐν Ποτειδαίᾳ καὶ ἐν Ἀμφιπόλει καὶ ἐπὶ Δηλίῳ, τότε μὲν οὐ ἐκεῖνοι ἔταπτον ἔμενον ὡσπερ καὶ ἄλλος τις καὶ ἐκινδύνευον ἀποθανεῖν, τοῦ δὲ θεοῦ τάπτοντος, ὡς ἐγὼ φήθην τε καὶ ὑπέλαβον, φιλοσοφοῦντά με δεῖν ζῆν καὶ ἐξετάζοντα ἑμαυτὸν καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους, ἐνταῦθα δὲ φοβηθεῖς ἢ θάνατον ἢ ἄλλ' ὅτιοῦν πρᾶγμα λίποιμι τὴν τάξιν. δεινόν τ' ἂν εἶη, καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς τότ' ἂν με δικαίως εἰσάγοι τις εἰς δικαστήριον, ὅτι οὐ νομίζω θεοὺς εἶναι ἀπειθῶν τῇ μαντείᾳ καὶ δεδιῶς θάνατον καὶ οἰόμενος σοφός εἶναι οὐκ ὄν. τὸ γάρ τοι θάνατον δεδιέναι, ὦ ἄνδρες, οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἐστὶν ἢ δοκεῖν σοφὸν εἶναι μὴ ὄντα· δοκεῖν γὰρ εἰδέναί ἐστιν ἄ οὐκ οἶδεν.

<sup>41</sup> Plato is referencing *Iliad* xviii.94.

For here's the truth, Athenian men: wherever someone stations himself, having deemed it best, or wherever he is stationed by a commander, it is necessary, as it seems to me, for him to run the risk of remaining, not at all taking into account either death or anything else other than shame. Therefore I would have acted terribly, Athenian men, when my commanders, whom you have chosen to command me, stationed me at Potidaea and at Amphipolis and at Delium, if I remained where they stationed me just as anyone else, and ran the risk of dying, but when the god commanded me that I must live my life philosophizing and examining myself and others, as I think and suppose that he has done, if I abandoned my station, fearing either death or any other matter whatsoever. It would be terrible, and truly then someone would bring me in to court justly on the grounds that I do not believe in the gods, disobeying the oracle and fearing death and thinking myself wise although I am not wise. For to fear death, men, is nothing other than to think oneself wise although not being wise; for it is to think that one knows things which one does not know. (28d6-29a6)

As stated above, Plato's reference to Socrates' military service is not the focus of this passage. Instead, this reference serves to explain Socrates' commitment to the philosophical life. Here Plato draws parallels between Socrates' military service and his philosophical discussions. First, both activities benefit the city. Second, death is a risk associated with both activities, which suggests that courage plays a role in Socrates' commitment to philosophize. It is noteworthy that Plato could have drawn these parallels without listing the specific campaigns in which Socrates fought. Indeed, before giving these details, Plato provides a mythological example to show that people should care about whether their behavior itself is virtuous instead of worrying about life and death. It seems that Plato makes a point to place Socrates at Potidaea, Amphipolis, and Delium to emphasize that Socrates did not just theorize about justice, courage, and wisdom; he also lived his life according to these virtues.

Plat. *Apol.* 32a4-e1

Leading up to the next passage, in which he mentions his specific political experiences, Socrates explains why he seeks to benefit the city by examining himself and

others through dialogue; after all, a more conventional approach to benefiting the city would have been to pursue a political career (Plat. *Apol.* 31a2-c7). The reason he gives for his decision to avoid politics is that his *daimonion* has always warned him that if he were to go into politics, he would die. In fact, no one who stands up for justice against a majority is likely to survive for long (Plat. *Apol.* 31c7-32a3).<sup>42</sup> To substantiate these claims, Socrates provides two examples of his involvement in politics in which he risked his life by fighting for justice: his involvement in the trial of the naval generals after the battle of Arginusae in 406 and his disobedience to the Thirty Tyrants in 404. The passage will be divided into two parts below. The first part (Plat. *Apol.* 32a4-c4) will be introduced by a brief overview of the battle of Arginusae and the subsequent trial of the generals. The second part (Plat. *Apol.* 32c4-e1) will be introduced by a brief overview of the rule of the Thirty Tyrants.

Plat. *Apol.* 32a4-c4

*The battle of Arginusae and the trial of the generals*

The battle of Arginusae was one in a long series of naval battles between the Athenians and the Spartans during the ongoing Peloponnesian War.<sup>43</sup> In 406, eight Athenian generals, Protomachus, Aristogenes, Pericles the Younger, Diomedon, Lysias, Aristocrates, Thrasyllus, and Erasinides, set out with a fleet of over 150 ships to rescue

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<sup>42</sup> Socrates' *daimonion* and his decision to avoid a political career have been discussed in Chapter Two.

<sup>43</sup> The two ancient accounts of this event, provided by Xenophon and Diodorus Siculus, do not totally agree regarding the details of the battle and its aftermath. My summary will point out relevant disagreements as they arise. However, the differences between the two accounts have little or nothing to do with Socrates' role in the trial of the generals. For a discussion of the controversies surrounding the divergences between the two versions, see Kagan (1991: 325-375).

Conon, an Athenian general blockaded by Spartan forces at Mytilene, a port city located near the south-eastern coast of Lesbos.<sup>44</sup> The night before the battle, the Athenians and their allies camped on the Arginusae Islands just off the coast of Asia Minor, and the Spartan fleet, led by Callicratidas, camped at Cape Malea, at the south-eastern-most point of Lesbos (*Xen. Hell.* 1.6.26). The two sides fought at dawn, and the Athenians were victorious.

The events that took place immediately after the battle led to the Athenian generals being brought to trial. According to Xenophon, after defeating the Spartans, the generals decided that the majority of the remaining Athenian ships would sail to Mytilene, and that two trierarchs, Theramenes and Thrasybulus, along with forty-seven ships, would stay behind to pick up both the survivors who were stranded on disabled ships and the bodies of those who had died at sea.<sup>45</sup> But a severe storm prevented ships from sailing to Mytilene (although Conon was ultimately able to escape) and made it impossible to collect either the living or the dead from the wreckage. Although details

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<sup>44</sup> *Xen. Hell.* 1.6.24-25. *Diod.* 13.97.2 states that the total number of Athenian and allied ships was 150.

<sup>45</sup> *Xen. Hell.* 1.6.35; *Diod.* 13.100-101. Xenophon does not explicitly mention the Athenians' failure to collect the dead. According to Xenophon, Thrasybulus and Theramenes were charged with helping the disabled ships and the sailors aboard them (*Hell.* 1.6.36). Diodorus Siculus, on the other hand, emphasizes the Athenians' failure to collect the dead (*Diod.* 13.100.1-4). No doubt both survivors and corpses needed to be retrieved from the wreckage after the battle, and the fleet's failure to collect either the living, the dead, or both, would have been devastating news to Athenians at home. Another difference between Xenophon and Diodorus Siculus on this part of the narrative is that Diodorus Siculus does not recount the generals' plan to assign the responsibilities of rescuing Conon and tending to the shipwrecked men to different groups; he merely states that the storm prevented ships from sailing to Mytilene and that "the soldiers, on account of the suffering caused by the battle and on account of the magnitude of the waves, objected to picking up the dead./τοὺς στρατιώτας διὰ τε τὴν ἐκ τῆς μάχης κακοπάθειαν καὶ διὰ τὸ μέγεθος τῶν κυμάτων ἀντιλέγειν πρὸς τὴν ἀνάίρεσιν τῶν νεκρῶν" (*Diod.* 13.100.2).

vary, according to both Xenophon and Diodorus Siculus, the Athenians brought the generals to trial because they were angered by the generals' failure to assist the disabled ships and recover the bodies of the fallen soldiers (Xen. *Hell.*1.7.4; Diod. 13.101.1).<sup>46</sup> In spite of the opposition of a few men, including, according to Xenophon's *Hellenica*, Socrates (Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.15), the Athenians were persuaded to determine by a single vote whether the generals were to be executed for this failure, and they condemned all six of the generals who were in Athens (Protomachus and Aristogenes did not return after the battle) to be executed and to have their property confiscated.<sup>47</sup> Plato and Xenophon indicate that this trial was illegal because the generals were condemned jointly instead of being given separate trials.<sup>48</sup> But in addition to being illegal, the trial also seems to have been unjust in that each of the generals had a different role to play in what happened, so that each of them should have been held to account separately. For example, in Xenophon's telling, Euryptolemus spoke against the joint trial, citing (among other reasons) that one of the generals on trial had *himself* needed to be rescued from a disabled ship (Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.32). Xenophon and Diodorus Siculus state that the Athenians regretted executing the generals not long afterward (Xen. 1.7.35; Diod. 13.103.1-2).

Below, Plato's Socrates narrates his role in opposing the joint trial of the generals:

μεγάλα δ' ἔγωγε ὑμῖν τεκμήρια παρέξομαι τούτων, οὐ λόγους ἀλλ' ὃ ὑμεῖς τιμᾶτε, ἔργα. ἀκούσατε δὴ μοι τὰ συμβεβηκότα, ἵνα εἰδῆτε ὅτι οὐδ' ἂν ἐνὶ ὑπείκαθιμι παρὰ τὸ δίκαιον δείσας θάνατον, μὴ ὑπείκων δὲ ἀλλὰ κἂν ἀπολοίμην. ἐρῶ δὲ ὑμῖν φορτικά μὲν καὶ δικανικά, ἀληθῆ δέ. ἐγὼ γάρ, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ἄλλην μὲν ἀρχὴν οὐδεμίαν πώποτε ἦρξα ἐν τῇ πόλει,

<sup>46</sup> Kagan (1991: 354-362) discusses the generals' responsibility for this failure.

<sup>47</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.1, 34-5; Diod. 13.101.

<sup>48</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.23-25; *Mem.* 1.1.17-19; Plat. *Apol.* 32a4-c4. MacDowell (1978: 186-9) observes that Plato and Xenophon seem to consider the motion to try the generals as a group to be illegal because each general was legally entitled to a separate trial. However, MacDowell notes that, outside of the testimonies of Plato and Xenophon, there is no evidence of a written law to this effect.

ἐβούλευσα δέ· καὶ ἔτυχεν ἡμῶν ἡ φυλὴ Ἀντιοχίς πρυτανεύσουσα ὅτε ὑμεῖς τοὺς δέκα στρατηγοὺς τοὺς οὐκ ἀνελομένους τοὺς ἐκ τῆς ναυμαχίας ἐβουλεύσασθε ἀθρόους κρίνειν, παρανόμως, ὡς ἐν τῷ ὑστέρω χρόνῳ πᾶσιν ὑμῖν ἔδοξεν. τότε ἐγὼ μόνος τῶν πρυτάνεων ἠναντιώθην ὑμῖν μηδὲν ποιεῖν παρὰ τοὺς νόμους καὶ ἐναντία ἐψηφισάμην· καὶ ἐτοίμων ὄντων ἐνδεικνύμαι με καὶ ἀπάγειν τῶν ῥητόρων, καὶ ὑμῶν κελευόντων καὶ βοώντων, μετὰ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τοῦ δικαίου ᾧμην μᾶλλον με δεῖν διακινδυνεύειν ἢ μεθ' ὑμῶν γενέσθαι μὴ δίκαια βουλευομένων, φοβηθέντα δεσμὸν ἢ θάνατον. καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ἦν ἔτι δημοκρατουμένης τῆς πόλεως·

And I will provide to you great evidence of these things, not words, but what you honor, deeds. Now listen to the things that happened to me, so you may know that I would not, although I feared death, yield to one person contrary to justice, but that I would rather die not yielding. I will tell you common and hairsplitting things, but they are true. For I, Athenian men, have never held another public office in the city, but I did serve on the *Boule*; and my tribe, Antiochis, happened to be serving as *prytaneis* [presiding officers] when you decided to put on trial the ten generals, who did not collect those who had fallen in the sea-battle, all together, illegally, as it seemed to you all later. At that time, I alone of the *prytaneis* opposed your doing anything against the laws and I voted against it. And with the orators being ready to inform against me and to arrest me, and with you shouting and bidding them to do this, I thought that, together with the law and justice, I should run all risks rather than to plan unjust things with you, although I feared imprisonment or death. These things happened while the city was still a democracy.

Even when the majority of those around him got caught up in the moment and behaved in a way that they later regretted, Socrates maintained his composure, and was not convinced to go along with what the people wanted. Socrates' actions, informed by his clear thinking in a difficult circumstance and his complete commitment to justice, are what Plato emphasizes when he distinguishes between *logos* (word/argument) and *ergon* (deed) at the start of this passage. Here, it is not Socrates' arguments that prove his dedication to upholding justice; it is his ethical choices and his life itself. Socrates did not succumb to the unjust demands of the majority even when they threatened his safety.<sup>49</sup> In

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<sup>49</sup> Xenophon states (*Hell.* 1.7.14) that when the *prytaneis* opposed the motion for the collective trial, the people threatened to try the *prytaneis* on the same charges as the generals.

this passage, Plato uses Socrates' political activities to demonstrate his commitment to the practical side of the philosophical life.

Plat. *Apol.* 32c4-e1

*The rule of the Thirty Tyrants*

About two years after the trial of the generals, the Peloponnesian War ended in 404 BC with the defeat of Athens. After a months-long siege in which many Athenians starved, the city had no choice but to surrender under the Spartans' terms (*Xen. Hell.* 2.2.20-23). After Athens' surrender, the Spartans supported the installation of an oligarchic regime led by thirty men, known as the Thirty (τριακοντα) at Athens, or the Thirty Tyrants. This oligarchy ruled murderously, executing the political and personal enemies of its leaders as well as anyone whose property they wished to confiscate (*Xen. Hell.* 2.3.11-23). The reign of the Thirty ended in 403 after a bloody civil war between the democrats and the oligarchs. After deposing the oligarchy, the Athenians agreed to an amnesty that prevented vengeance against those who had supported the oligarchy, including political trials, against anyone except the Thirty themselves, the Eleven (the officials in charge of imprisonment and execution), and the Ten (those who had ruled at the Piraeus).<sup>50</sup> Socrates' own trial took place in 399 BC, only about four years after the Thirty were overthrown. In the passage below, Plato's Socrates tells the jury about how

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<sup>50</sup> *Xen. Hell.* 2.4.38; *Ath. Pol.* 39.6. In addition to Xenophon's *Hellenica* and the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia*, sources on the civil war include Diodorus Siculus and Plutarch's *Alcibiades* and *Lysander*. As noted by Wolpert (2001), these accounts diverge in many places. Although a cursory version of events is sufficient for the purposes of this chapter, it should be noted that there is much controversy and complexity surrounding the details of this period in Athenian history.

he reacted when the Thirty ordered him to participate in the arrest of Leon of Salamis so that he could be executed (Plat. *Apol.* 32c4-e1):

ἐπειδὴ δὲ ὀλιγαρχία ἐγένετο, οἱ τριάκοντα αὖ μεταπεμψάμενοί με πέμπτον αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν θόλον προσέταξαν ἀγαγεῖν ἐκ Σαλαμίνος Λέοντα τὸν Σαλαμίνιον ἵνα ἀποθάνῃ, οἷα δὴ καὶ ἄλλοις ἐκεῖνοι πολλοῖς πολλὰ προσέταττον, βουλόμενοι ὡς πλείστους ἀναπλήσαι αἰτιῶν. τότε μέντοι ἐγὼ οὐ λόγῳ ἀλλ' ἔργῳ αὖ ἐνδειξάμην ὅτι ἐμοὶ θανάτου μὲν μέλει, εἰ μὴ ἀγροικότερον ἦν εἰπεῖν, οὐδ' ὀτιοῦν, τοῦ δὲ μηδὲν ἄδικον μηδ' ἀνόσιον ἐργάζεσθαι, τούτου δὲ τὸ πᾶν μέλει. ἐμὲ γὰρ ἐκείνη ἡ ἀρχὴ οὐκ ἐξέπληξεν, οὕτως ἰσχυρὰ οὔσα, ὥστε ἄδικόν τι ἐργάσασθαι, ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ ἐκ τῆς θόλου ἐξήλθομεν, οἱ μὲν τέτταρες ὄχοντο εἰς Σαλαμίνα καὶ ἤγαγον Λέοντα, ἐγὼ δὲ ὄχόμην ἀπιὼν οἴκαδε. καὶ ἴσως ἂν διὰ ταῦτα ἀπέθανον, εἰ μὴ ἡ ἀρχὴ διὰ ταχέων κατελύθη. καὶ τούτων ὑμῖν ἔσονται πολλοὶ μάρτυρες.

But when the oligarchy came about, the Thirty, having summoned me, as the fifth man, to the tholos, ordered us to bring Leon the Salaminian from Salamis in order that he be executed, one of many such things which those men also ordered many other people to do, wishing to implicate as many people as possible. At that time, however, I showed again, not in word, but in deed that I have no concern for death whatsoever, if it is not too bold a thing to say, but am altogether concerned with doing nothing unjust or impious. For that regime did not frighten me, although being very powerful, so as to cause me to do anything unjust, but when we departed from the tholos, the other four men went to Salamis and arrested Leon, but I, departing, went home. And perhaps I would have died on account of these things, if their regime had not been abolished so quickly. And you will have many witnesses of these things.

Plato again distinguishes between *logos* and *ergon* here, and Socrates' life is again offered as proof that Socrates did not merely employ arguments about what is just through philosophical discourse; he also lived every moment of his life according to what he believed to be just, even when doing so meant risking his life. It is also worth noting that Plato juxtaposes the example of Socrates taking a stand against the democracy in the trial of the generals to that of Socrates resisting the orders of the oligarchy. By placing these two examples side by side, Plato emphasizes that Socrates' primary allegiance was to justice rather than to one political faction or the other.

Xen. Mem. 4.4.1-4

The following passage comes near the end of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. In it, Xenophon mentions Socrates' military service as well as his stint on the *Boule* in 406 BC and his interactions with the Thirty Tyrants in 404 BC. It is worth noting that Xenophon specifies that Socrates was in fact serving as *epistates*, the official responsible for overseeing the prytany, when the issue of whether to try the Arginusae generals collectively arose. A new *epistates* was chosen each day from among the *prytaneis*, which explains why Socrates was single-handedly, but only temporarily, able to prevent the motion from going to a vote.<sup>51</sup> It is also noteworthy that in his description of Socrates' disobedience to the Thirty Tyrants, Xenophon includes an episode not mentioned by Plato, in which Socrates defies an order by the Thirty to stop conversing with the youth (*Mem.* 4.4.1-4).<sup>52</sup>

Ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ περὶ τοῦ δικαίου γε οὐκ ἀπεκρύπτετο ἢν εἶχε γνώμην, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔργῳ ἀπεδείκνυτο, ἰδίᾳ τε πᾶσι νομίμως τε καὶ ὠφελίμως χρώμενος καὶ κοινῇ ἄρχουσὶ τε ἃ οἱ νόμοι προστάττειεν πειθόμενος καὶ κατὰ πόλιν καὶ ἐν ταῖς στρατείαις οὕτως ὥστε διάδηλος εἶναι παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους εὐτακτῶν, καὶ ὅτε ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις ἐπιστάτης γενόμενος οὐκ ἐπέτρεψε τῷ δήμῳ παρὰ τοὺς νόμους ψηφίσασθαι, ἀλλὰ σὺν τοῖς νόμοις ἠναντιώθη τοιαύτη ὀρμῇ τοῦ δήμου ἢν οὐκ ἂν οἶμαι ἄλλον οὐδένα ἄνθρωπον ὑπομείναι· καὶ ὅτε οἱ τριάκοντα προσέταττον αὐτῷ παρὰ τοὺς νόμους τι, οὐκ ἐπέιθετο· τοῖς τε γὰρ νέοις ἀπαγορευόντων αὐτῶν μὴ διαλέγεσθαι καὶ προσταξάντων ἐκείνῳ τε καὶ ἄλλοις τισὶ τῶν πολιτῶν ἀγαγεῖν τινα ἐπὶ θανάτῳ, μόνος οὐκ ἐπέισθη, διὰ τὸ παρὰ τοὺς νόμους αὐτῷ προστάτεσθαι· καὶ ὅτε τὴν ὑπὸ Μελήτου γραφὴν ἔφευγε, τῶν ἄλλων εἰωθότων ἐν τοῖς δικαστηρίοις πρὸς χάριν τε τοῖς δικασταῖς διαλέγεσθαι καὶ κολακεύειν καὶ δεῖσθαι παρὰ τοὺς νόμους, καὶ διὰ τὰ τοιαῦτα πολλῶν πολλάκις ὑπὸ τῶν δικαστῶν ἀφιεμένων, ἐκεῖνος οὐδὲν

<sup>51</sup> Xenophon also states that Socrates opposed this motion as *epistates* at *Mem.* 1.1.17-19. At *Hell.* 1.7.14-15, Xenophon says that Socrates was the only one of the *prytaneis* to oppose the motion, but does not specify here that he did so as *epistates*.

<sup>52</sup> Elsewhere in the *Memorabilia* (1.2.32-38), Xenophon also provides an anecdote in which Socrates is summoned to appear before two of the Thirty Tyrants, Critias and Charicles, who, because they have found out that he is openly criticizing their regime, demand that he stop conversing with the young men in the city. This passage includes a brief dialogue between Socrates and Charicles on the subject of which specific topics Socrates is forbidden from discussing with the youth.

ἠθέλησε τῶν εἰωθότων ἐν τῷ δικαστηρίῳ παρὰ τοὺς νόμους ποιῆσαι, ἀλλὰ ῥαδίως ἂν ἀφεθεῖς ὑπὸ τῶν δικαστῶν, εἰ καὶ μετρίως τι τούτων ἐποίησε, προείλετο μᾶλλον τοῖς νόμοις ἐμμένων ἀποθανεῖν ἢ παρανομῶν ζῆν.

And truly he did not hide his opinion concerning what is just, but he demonstrated it by his actions, conducting his private life in every way lawfully and helpfully, and in his public life obeying the rulers in respect to what the laws command, and behaving in the city and on campaigns, in such a way that he was distinguished from the other men for his discipline. And when he was *epistates* in the assembly, he did not allow the people to hold an illegal vote, but, siding with the laws, he opposed the people's motion, which I do not think any other man has endured. And when the Thirty ordered him to do something illegal, he did not obey; for when they ordered him not to converse with the youth and commanded him, together with other citizens to arrest a certain man to be executed, he alone disobeyed, because what they commanded him to do was against the law. And when he was prosecuted by Meletus, although in the courts others were accustomed to speak to the jury so as to gain their favor and to flatter them and to beg, which was illegal, and although many people were often acquitted by the jury on account of such things, Socrates was not willing to do the customary things in court that were illegal. But although he could have easily been acquitted by the jury, if he had even done these things to a limited degree, he chose rather to die abiding by the laws rather than to live breaking the laws.

At the start of this passage, Xenophon explicitly states that Socrates exhibited his views about justice by the way he conducted himself in his military and political service to Athens. While Xenophon does not list the specific campaigns in which Socrates fought, he does attribute to Socrates exemplary behavior as a soldier on those campaigns. And Xenophon's description of Socrates' role in the trial of the generals and his resistance to the Thirty are compatible with Plato's account in his *Apology* (quoted and discussed above), which suggests that these events are likely historical.

For Xenophon, Socrates' political actions show that he was so committed to upholding the laws that he would rather risk his life than break them. And immediately following this passage, Xenophon has Socrates argue, in a dialogue with Hippias of Elis, that what is lawful (νόμιμον) is the same as what is just (δίκαιον) (Xen. *Mem.* 4.5.5-25). Near the start of the exchange between Hippias and Socrates, Hippias accuses Socrates of

being unwilling to share his own view of what justice is. Here is Socrates' response

(*Mem.* 4.4.10):

τί δέ, ὦ Ἱππία; ἔφη, οὐκ ἤσθησαι ὅτι ἐγὼ ἂν δοκεῖ μοι δίκαια εἶναι οὐδὲν παύομαι ἀποδεικνύμενος; καὶ ποῖος δὴ σοι, ἔφη, οὗτος ὁ λόγος ἐστίν; Εἰ δὲ μὴ λόγῳ, ἔφη· ἀλλ' ἔργῳ ἀποδείκνυμαι· ἢ οὐ δοκεῖ σοι ἀξιοτεκμαρτότερον τοῦ λόγου τὸ ἔργον εἶναι;

“How so, Hippias?” said Socrates, “Have you not noticed that I never stop showing what I think is just?” “And of what sort is this account of yours?” said Hippias. “If I don’t show it in word,” said Socrates, “I show it in deed. Or don’t actions seem to you to be better proof than words?”

Socrates uses his deeds to indicate to others what he thinks. Xenophon, then, like Plato, shows that Socrates' actions in the political and military sphere are of the utmost importance to his philosophical life.

Plat. *Sym.* 219e5-221c1 and Xen. *Mem.* 1.6.1-10

The two final passages to be analyzed come from Plato's *Symposium* and Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. Both excerpts connect Socrates' philosophical way of life, that is, his study and practice of virtue, to the character of the exemplary soldier. A common element in both excerpts is Socrates' self-control, which Plato calls *sophrosyne* and Xenophon calls *enkrateia*. Noreen Humble provides a useful characterization of the relationship between the two terms:

It is certainly true that, in general terms, there is some overlap in meaning between *sophrosyne* and *enkrateia*: both can be used to refer to physical control over pleasures and pains, such as hunger, thirst, and lust, and so can be and are translated as self-control or self-restraint....However, the two terms are not entirely interchangeable. The meaning of *enkrateia* does not stretch beyond physical self-control whereas *sophrosyne* encompasses a much wider range of meanings....To make the distinction more clear, *sophrosyne* can be used in a general moral sense to refer to self-control in matters of diet, pain and the like, i.e. as equivalent to *enkrateia*, but *enkrateia* cannot be used in the wider intellectual/prudential sense, i.e. to mean prudence, good sense, wisdom, or even knowledge itself (a definition of *sophrosyne* which Plato reaches in the

*Charmides*). *Enkrateia* is not, in other words, an absolute synonym of *sophrosyne*. (Humble 1999, 340)

In the following passages, both Plato and Xenophon emphasize Socrates' self-control with regard to physical pleasures. That is, while the terms *sophrosyne* and *enkrateia* are not always interchangeable, the present passages deal with an aspect of self-control that is covered by both terms.

The excerpt below begins with Alcibiades' account of Socrates' self-control (*sophrosyne*) while on campaign in Potidaea. Alcibiades marvels at Socrates' ability to easily go without the comforts that the other soldiers crave, including food, drink, warm clothing, and shoes. And not only can Socrates live without these things; he seems to do better than everyone else. Socrates is not an ascetic; he enjoys feasts more than others do, and he can drink more than anyone else without getting drunk. But he does not need physical comforts; he can withstand the cold with his threadbare cloak more readily than those with thick cloaks, and he can get around more easily with no shoes than the men who have them can. Alcibiades also describes two situations in which Socrates displayed courage in battle. He rescued Alcibiades at the Battle of Potidaea (432 BC), and he protected Laches, who had himself served as a general in 427/6 and 426/5, and who appears in Plato's *Laches*, from harm during the army's retreat at the Battle of Delium (424 BC) (*Sym.* 219e5-220c1; 220d5-221c1) (Plat. *Lach.*; Thuc. 3.86.1, 3.90.2, 3.103.3; D.S. 12.54.4):

ταῦτά τε γάρ μοι ἅπαντα προὔγεγόνη, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα στρατεία ἡμῖν εἰς Ποτειδαίαν ἐγένετο κοινὴ καὶ συνεσιτοῦμεν ἐκεῖ. πρῶτον μὲν οὖν τοῖς πόνοις οὐ μόνον ἐμοῦ περιῆν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων — ὅπότε ἄναγκασθεῖμεν ἀποληφθέντες πού, οἷα δὴ ἐπὶ στρατείας, ἀσιτεῖν, οὐδὲν ἦσαν οἱ ἄλλοι πρὸς τὸ καρτερεῖν — ἔν τ' αὖ ταῖς εὐωχίαις μόνος ἀπολαύειν οἷός τ' ἦν τὰ τ' ἄλλα καὶ πίνειν οὐκ ἐθέλων, ὅποτε ἀναγκασθεῖη, πάντας ἐκράτει, καὶ ὁ πάντων θαυμαστότατον, Σωκράτη μεθύοντα οὐδεὶς πώποτε ἑώρακεν ἀνθρώπων. τούτου μὲν οὖν μοι δοκεῖ καὶ αὐτίκα ὁ ἔλεγχος ἔσεσθαι. πρὸς δὲ αὖ τὰς τοῦ χειμῶνος καρτερήσεις — δεινοὶ γὰρ αὐτόθι χειμῶνες — θαυμάσια ἠργάζετο

τά τε ἄλλα, καί ποτε ὄντος πάγου οἴου δεινοτάτου, καὶ πάντων ἢ οὐκ ἐξιόντων ἔνδοθεν, ἢ εἴ τις ἐξίοι, ἡμφιεσμένων τε θαυμαστά δὴ ὅσα καὶ ὑποδεδεμένων καὶ ἐνειλιγμένων τοὺς πόδας εἰς πῖλους καὶ ἀρνακίδας, οὗτος δ' ἐν τούτοις ἐξήκει ἔχων ἱμάτιον μὲν τοιοῦτον οἴονπερ καὶ πρότερον εἰώθει φορεῖν, ἀνυπόδητος δὲ διὰ τοῦ κρυστάλλου ῥῶον ἐπορεύετο ἢ οἱ ἄλλοι ὑποδεδεμένοι, οἱ δὲ στρατιῶται ὑπέβλεπον αὐτὸν ὡς καταφρονούντα σφῶν...<sup>53</sup> εἰ δὲ βούλεσθε ἐν ταῖς μάχαις —τοῦτο γὰρ δὴ δίκαιόν γε αὐτῷ ἀποδοῦναι — ὅτε γὰρ ἡ μάχη ἦν ἐξ ἧς ἐμοὶ καὶ τὰριστεῖα ἔδοσαν οἱ στρατηγοί, οὐδεὶς ἄλλος ἐμὲ ἔσωσεν ἀνθρώπων ἢ οὗτος, τετρωμένον οὐκ ἐθέλων ἀπολιπεῖν, ἀλλὰ συνδιέσωσε καὶ τὰ ὅπλα καὶ αὐτὸν ἐμέ. καὶ ἐγὼ μὲν, ὦ Σώκρατες, καὶ τότε ἐκέλευον σοὶ διδόναι τὰριστεῖα τοὺς στρατηγούς, καὶ τοῦτό γέ μοι οὔτε μέμνη οὔτε ἐρεῖς ὅτι ψεύδομαι· ἀλλὰ γὰρ τῶν στρατηγῶν πρὸς τὸ ἐμὸν ἀξίωμα ἀποβλεπόντων καὶ βουλομένων ἐμοὶ διδόναι τὰριστεῖα, αὐτὸς προθυμότερος ἐγένου τῶν στρατηγῶν ἐμὲ λαβεῖν ἢ σαυτὸν. ἔτι τοίνυν, ὦ ἄνδρες, ἄξιον ἦν θεάσασθαι Σωκράτη, ὅτε ἀπὸ Δηλίου φυγῆ ἀνεχώρει τὸ στρατόπεδον· ἔτυχον γὰρ παραγενόμενος ἵππον ἔχων, οὗτος δὲ ὅπλα. ἀνεχώρει οὖν ἐσκεδασμένων ἤδη τῶν ἀνθρώπων οὗτος δὲ ὅπλα. ἀνεχώρει οὖν ἐσκεδασμένων ἤδη τῶν ἀνθρώπων οὗτός τε ἅμα καὶ Λάχης· καὶ ἐγὼ περιτυγχάνω, καὶ ἰδὼν εὐθὺς παρακελεύομαι τε αὐτοῖν θαρρεῖν, καὶ ἔλεγον ὅτι οὐκ ἀπολείψω αὐτῷ. ἐνταῦθα δὴ καὶ κάλλιον ἐθεασάμην Σωκράτη ἢ ἐν Ποτειδαίᾳ — αὐτὸς γὰρ ἦττον ἐν φόβῳ ἢ διὰ τὸ ἐφ' ἵππου εἶναι — πρῶτον μὲν ὅσον περιῆν Λάχης τῷ ἔμφρων εἶναι· ἔπειτα ἔμοιγ' ἐδόκει, ὦ Ἀριστόφανες, τὸ σὸν δὴ τοῦτο, καὶ ἐκεῖ διαπορεύεσθαι ὡσπερ καὶ ἐνθάδε, "βρενθυόμενος καὶ τῷφθαλμῷ παραβάλλον," ἡρέμα παρασκοπῶν καὶ τοὺς φίλους καὶ τοὺς πολεμίους, δηλὸς ὢν παντὶ καὶ πάνυ πόρρωθεν ὅτι εἴ τις ἄψεται τούτου τοῦ ἀνδρός, μάλα ἐρρωμένως ἀμυνεῖται. διὸ καὶ ἀσφαλῶς ἀπῆει καὶ οὗτος καὶ ὁ ἑταῖρος· σχεδὸν γάρ τι τῶν οὕτω διακειμένων ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ οὐδὲ ἄπτονται, ἀλλὰ τοὺς προτροπάδην φεύγοντας διώκουσιν.

For all these things had occurred beforehand, and afterward was the campaign into Potidaea, common to both of us, and we used to mess together there. First, he would surpass in our toils not only me, but also all of the other men – whenever we were forced, being cut off anywhere, to fast, the sort of thing which happens on campaign, the others were not at all near to enduring this, [unlike Socrates]. And moreover in the feasts, he alone was able to enjoy them, both in other respects and, although not wishing to drink, whenever he was compelled, he used to outdo everyone, and the most amazing thing of all is that no one ever saw Socrates drunk. There will be proof of this, it seems to me, straightaway. But moreover, in respect to his endurance of winter – for the winters were terrible there – he accomplished other marvelous things, and once when there was a most terrible frost, and all men either did not go outside, or if someone did go out, he did so being clothed (it's amazing indeed how much), and wearing shoes, and with his feet being wrapped in wool and fleece. But Socrates would go out in these conditions wearing a cloak the sort of which he was accustomed to wear before, and although he was not wearing shoes, he would move through the ice more easily than the others who were wearing shoes. And the soldiers eyed him suspiciously, thinking that he looked down on them.... And if you wish [to hear

<sup>53</sup> Text has been omitted from 20c1-d5 because it does not add to the present discussion of Socrates' military activities.

about his courage], in battle – for it is right to render this to him indeed – when the battle happened for which the generals gave me the prize for valor, none other than Socrates saved me, since he was unwilling to abandon me when I was wounded, but he helped save both my arms and me myself. And I, Socrates, at that time bid the generals to give the prize for valor to you, and do not blame me or say that I lie. But in fact, when the generals were considering my status and wanted to give the prize to me, you yourself were more eager than the generals that I take the prize instead of you. And in addition, men, Socrates was worthy to be seen, when the army withdrew from Delium in flight; for I happened to be present on horseback, he as a hoplite. Since the men were already scattering, Socrates retreated together with Laches; and I happened upon them, and seeing them I urged them at once to take courage, and I said that I would not leave them. Then indeed I saw Socrates act more nobly than he did at Potidaea – for I was less in fear than he on account of being on horseback. First, how much he surpassed Laches in keeping his wits about him. Then, as it seems to me at least, Aristophanes, as this verse of yours says, he proceeded there [in retreat from battle] just as he does here [on the streets of Athens], “swaggering and casting his two eyes from side to side,”<sup>54</sup> calmly casting sidelong glances at both friends and enemies. And so it was obvious to everyone even from far away that if anyone should touch this man [Laches], Socrates would ward him off very vigorously. And on account of this both he and his companion departed safely; for in war, men practically never touch those being so disposed, but they pursue those fleeing headlong.

Alcibiades paints a remarkable picture of Socrates’ behavior at Potidaea and Delium.

Socrates could handle the challenges that all soldiers faced, such as fasting and enduring cold weather. But he could also endure more than what was required of the typical soldier, which he showed by going barefoot and without a warm cloak when it was cold out. These “feats of endurance”/καρτερήσεις (220a6) demonstrate not only Socrates’ mastery of *sophrosyne*, a virtue about which Plato has Socrates theorize elsewhere, but also the practical benefits that this virtue brings.<sup>55</sup> In addition, Alcibiades depicts Socrates courageously saving his life, and then showing no interest in accepting a material token of this courage in the form of the prize for valor, but rather urging the generals to give the

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<sup>54</sup> Aristophanes, *Clouds* 362.

<sup>55</sup> Plato’s Socrates also discusses *sophrosyne* in the *Charmides* and the *Phaedrus*.

prize for valor to Alcibiades instead (which, according to Alcibiades, he did not deserve). And at Delium, Alcibiades portrays Socrates fighting calmly (ἡρέμῳ) and maintaining his composure (ἔμφορον) during a retreat, while others were running for their lives. Socrates' insistence that Alcibiades take the prize for courage, rather than himself, and his ability to think clearly in combat, as well as his risking his life to save his two, more famous comrades (Alcibiades and Laches), all demonstrate his strong desire to act virtuously regardless of what might happen to him as a result.

It is important to note that the context of this speech within Plato's *Symposium* is Alcibiades' explanation to his fellow symposiasts regarding the fact that he has actively pursued a romantic relationship with Socrates (Pl. *Sym.* 215a4-219e5), who has repeatedly rejected his advances, even though Alcibiades is young and beautiful, and Socrates is old and ugly.<sup>56</sup> The displays of Socrates' self-control and courage that Alcibiades recounts in the passage above explain Alcibiades' strong attraction to Socrates; it is Socrates' exemplary life that Alcibiades finds so irresistible.

*Xen. Mem.* 1.6.1-4, 1.6.8-10<sup>57</sup>

The next passage, from Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, also shows the importance of Socrates' self-control (*enkrateia*) when it comes to handling the difficulties of military campaigns. Xenophon shows Socrates in dialogue with Antiphon the sophist, who accuses Socrates of being unhappy, and of making his companions unhappy by

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<sup>56</sup> This reversal of the traditional Greek roles of elder and younger men in a romantic relationship is striking, especially since Socrates rejects Alcibiades' sexual invitations. For an overview of the traditional role of an older man as *erastes* (lover) and the younger man as *eromenos* (beloved), see Halperin (2012: 702).

<sup>57</sup> Instead of quoting *Xen. Mem.* 1.6.5-7, I will summarize it below.

encouraging them to live frugally as he does, because he denies himself the pleasures of good food and drink, money, shoes, and a decent cloak. Socrates replies that his self-control enhances his enjoyment of food and drink without making him a slave to these things. Likewise, he claims that he can be comfortable and can get around just as easily as anyone else without shoes and nice clothes, no matter the weather. Moreover, he argues, people who live as he does are better prepared to serve in the military, since they can go without the comforts that are often unavailable on campaigns. Like Alcibiades' speech in Plato's *Symposium*, this passage from Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (1.6.1-10) connects Socrates' exceptional self-control to the ideal character of a soldier. Below is the first part of the exchange between Antiphon and Socrates:

Ἄξιον δ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἂν πρὸς Ἀντιφῶντα τὸν σοφιστὴν διελέχθη μὴ παραλιπεῖν. ὁ γὰρ Ἀντιφῶν ποτε βουλόμενος τοὺς συνουσιαστὰς αὐτοῦ παρελέσθαι προσελθὼν τῷ Σωκράτει παρόντων αὐτῶν ἔλεξε τάδε· ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐγὼ μὲν ὥμην τοὺς φιλοσοφοῦντας εὐδαιμονεστέρους χρῆναι γίγεσθαι· σὺ δέ μοι δοκεῖς τάναντία τῆς φιλοσοφίας ἀπολελαυκέναι. ζῆς γοῦν οὕτως ὡς οὐδ' ἂν εἷς δούλος ὑπὸ δεσπότη διαιτώμενος μείνειε· σῖτά τε σιτῆ καὶ ποτὰ πίνεις τὰ φαυλότατα, καὶ ἱμάτιον ἠμφίεσαι οὐ μόνον φαῦλον, ἀλλὰ τὸ αὐτὸ θέρους τε καὶ χειμῶνος, ἀνυπόδητός τε καὶ ἀχίτων διατελεῖς. καὶ μὴν χρήματά γε οὐ λαμβάνεις, ἃ καὶ κτωμένους εὐφραίνει καὶ κεκτημένους ἐλευθεριώτερόν τε καὶ ἥδιον ποιεῖ ζῆν. εἰ οὖν ὥσπερ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἔργων οἱ διδάσκαλοι τοὺς μαθητὰς μιμητὰς ἑαυτῶν ἀποδεικνύουσιν, οὕτω καὶ σὺ τοὺς συνόντας διαθήσεις, νόμιζε κακοδαιμονίας διδάσκαλος εἶναι.

And it is right also not to omit Socrates' conversations with Antiphon the sophist. For once Antiphon, wishing to draw away Socrates' companions, approached Socrates with those companions being present and said the following things: "Socrates, I thought that people ought to become happier by doing philosophy; but you seem to me to have gotten the opposite out of it. For you live as not even a slave being led by a master would allow: you eat the worst food and drink the worst drink, and not only do you wear a poor cloak, but you wear the same cloak both in summer and in winter, and you continue to live unshod and without a tunic. And moreover, you do not take money, which cheers those acquiring it and makes those who have it live more freely and more pleasantly. And so if, just as the teachers of other occupations make their students imitators of themselves, you too will so influence your companions, you must regard yourself as a teacher of unhappiness." (Xen. *Mem.* 1.6.1-4)

It is interesting that Antiphon's critique of Socrates' philosophy is a critique of his way of life. For Antiphon, doing philosophy is supposed to make people happy, and Socrates is getting the philosophical life wrong because his frugal lifestyle seems unlikely to produce happiness. Socrates does not disagree that happiness is the goal of philosophy; rather, he defends his own way of life and takes issue with the notion that Antiphon's lavish lifestyle produces happiness. Socrates and Antiphon disagree profoundly about the best way to live, but they agree that philosophy is a way of life and that its goal is happiness.

In response to Antiphon's challenge, Socrates thoroughly refutes the idea that his way of life has made him unhappy. On the contrary, he points out that since he does not accept payment in exchange for his conversation, he is not obligated to talk with anyone, but is free to speak with whomever he wishes. In addition, his diet, while less expensive and less luxurious than Antiphon's, is just as nourishing and pleasant to Socrates as Antiphon's diet is to him: "Don't you know that the man who enjoys eating the most needs sauce the least, and the man who enjoys drinking the most craves it the least when a drink is not ready at hand? /οὐκ οἶσθ' ὅτι ὁ μὲν ἥδιστα ἐσθίων ἥκιστα ὄψου δεῖται, ὁ δὲ ἥδιστα πίνων ἥκιστα τοῦ μὴ παρόντος ἐπιθυμῆι ποτοῦ;" Moreover, Socrates continues, whereas others wear shoes to help them get around, and change their cloaks on account of the heat and the cold, his mobility is not impeded by his lack of shoes, and he can endure the heat and the cold without special clothing. In addition, since Socrates exercises diligently, he is stronger than Antiphon, who does not exercise. Socrates concludes:

καὶ μὴν τοῦτό γε οἶσθα, ὅτι οἱ μὲν οἰόμενοι μηδὲν εὖ πράττειν οὐκ εὐφραίνονται, οἱ δὲ ἠγούμενοι καλῶς προχωρεῖν ἑαυτοῖς ἢ γεωργίαν ἢ ναυκληρίαν ἢ ἄλλ' ὅ τι ἂν τυγχάνωσιν ἐργαζόμενοι ὡς εὖ πράτοντες εὐφραίνονται. οἷε οὖν ἀπὸ πάντων τούτων τσαύτην ἡδονὴν εἶναι ὅσην ἀπὸ τοῦ ἑαυτόν τε ἠγεῖσθαι βελτίω γίγνεσθαι καὶ φίλους ἀμείνους κτᾶσθαι; ἐγὼ

τοίνυν διατελῶ ταῦτα νομίζων. ἐὰν δὲ δὴ φίλους ἢ πόλιν ὠφελεῖν δέη, ποτέρῳ ἢ πλείων σχολὴ τούτων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, τῷ ὡς ἐγὼ νῦν ἢ τῷ ὡς σὺ μακαρίζεις διαιτωμένῳ; στρατεύοιτο δὲ πότερος ἂν ῥᾶον, ὁ μὴ δυνάμενος ἄνευ πολυτελοῦς διαίτης ζῆν ἢ ὃ τὸ παρὸν ἀρκοίη; ἐκπολιορκηθεῖ δὲ πότερος ἂν θάπτον, ὁ τῶν χαλεπωτάτων εὐρεῖν δεόμενος ἢ ὁ τοῖς ῥάστοις ἐντυγχάνειν ἀρκούντως χρώμενος; ἔοικας, ὦ Ἀντιφῶν, τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν οἰομένῳ τρυφὴν καὶ πολυτέλειαν εἶναι· ἐγὼ δ' ἐνομίζον τὸ μὲν μηδενὸς δεῖσθαι θεῖον εἶναι, καὶ τὸ μὲν θεῖον κράτιστον, τὸ δ' ἐγγυτάτῳ τοῦ θείου ἐγγυτάτῳ τοῦ κρατίστου.

And truly you know this at least: that those thinking that they do nothing well are not happy, but those thinking that things are going well for them either in farming, or voyaging, or any other thing they happen to be doing, are happy because they are doing well. Therefore do you think that from all these things there is a pleasure as great as one's belief that he is becoming better and acquiring better friends? I have this belief all the time. But if indeed there is a need to help one's friends or the city, who has more leisure to take care of these things, one who leads his life as I do now, or one who leads his life in such a way that you would deem him happy? And who would serve more easily in the army, one who is unable to live without an expensive diet, or one who is satisfied by whatever is available? And who would be forced to surrender under siege more quickly, one who desires to find the most difficult things, or one who enjoys things that are easy to come by? You seem, Antiphon, to think that happiness is to live extravagantly and at great expense; but I regard needing nothing to be divine, and needing as little as possible to be as near as possible to the divine, and I think that what is divine is best, and that what is nearest to the divine is as near as possible to what is best. (Xen. *Mem.* 1.6.8-10)

Antiphon's critique of Socrates is that people are supposed to become happier by philosophizing, and that Socrates' lack of indulgence when it comes to food, drink, shoes, warm clothes, and money must make him rather unhappy. Socrates' response shows that his philosophical way of life does no such thing; not only does self-control allow those who practice it to experience physical pleasures more than those who do not, it also makes them better prepared for military service than those who do not exercise self-control. For Xenophon's Socrates, the practical exercise of *enkrateia*, a subject that Socrates discusses throughout the *Memorabilia*, produces the sort of person who can fight for his city.

### Did the Historical Socrates Do These Things?

So far this chapter has argued that Plato and Xenophon place a great deal of weight on Socrates' military and political activities; both authors use these episodes to show that Socrates was not only an exemplary philosopher in terms of his theories, but also in terms of his actions. Plato and Xenophon use Socrates' commitments never to abandon his station in battle and not to be complicit in the injustices perpetrated either by the Athenian democracy or by the oligarchic regime of the Thirty to illustrate his commitment to wisdom, courage, justice, and temperance. The important role of these events in the *Sokratikoi logoi* of Plato and Xenophon suggests that the question of whether the historical Socrates actually did these things is vitally important as well.

Regarding Socrates' military activities, Plato and Xenophon provide a wide range of material, from Xenophon's minimal and unspecific reference to Socrates' exemplary behavior while “ἐν ταῖς στρατείαις/on campaigns” to Plato's detailed description of Socrates' courageous conduct on the battlefield at both Potidaea and Delium. In particular, Plato's statement in the *Apology* that Socrates fought at Potidaea, Delium, and Amphipolis seems unlikely to be fabricated. This is because the invention of these details seems more likely to hurt Plato's argument than to help it. Plato had already drawn the parallel between Socrates' duty to philosophize and one's duty on the battlefield by referencing Achilles' choice to avenge Patroclus even though killing Hector meant that he himself would die. Why weaken this argument with a falsehood about Socrates that Plato's Athenian readership would have recognized as such? And when it comes to the

acts of heroism attributed to Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*, it is at least possible that these episodes – or some version of them – happened.<sup>58</sup>

The political actions attributed to Socrates by Plato and Xenophon also seem very likely to be true of the historical Socrates. Regarding his opposition to putting the Arginusae generals on trial jointly, both Plato and Xenophon provide basic versions of this story, with very little variation between the two accounts. In addition, Xenophon attributes the same behavior to Socrates in his historical work, the *Hellenica* (Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.15) as he does in his *Memorabilia* (Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.17-19; 4.4.2-3). And Xenophon indicates that this episode was a matter of common knowledge (Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.17-19). When it comes to Socrates' resistance to the Thirty Tyrants, Plato and Xenophon provide consistent accounts of one episode: Socrates' refusal to arrest Leon of Salamis. Xenophon's basic story about Socrates continuing to converse with the youth in defiance of the Thirty Tyrants' orders seems plausible as well, even if the dialogue between Socrates and Charicles may be partly (or completely) invented.

### Conclusion

For both Plato and Xenophon, Socrates' military and political activities are indicative of his philosophy as a way of life. At Plat. *Apol.* 28d6-29a6, Plato lists the three campaigns in which Socrates fought as a hoplite to demonstrate that Socrates did not just talk about courage; he behaved courageously as well. At Plat. *Apol.* 32a4-e1,

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<sup>58</sup> Mavrogordatos (2011) and Anderson (2005) hold that Socrates could have served as a hoplite in spite of his poverty. In addition, his age during the campaigns at Delium (424 BC; thirty-seven years old) and Amphipolis (422 BC; forty-seven years old) lies within the range of hoplite eligibility stipulated at *Ath. Pol.* 53.4, i.e. 18-59 years old (Christ 2001). Indeed, Nails (2002: xxxvii, 265), and Anderson (2005) accept as historical that Socrates rescued Alcibiades at Potidaea and Laches at Delium.

Plato uses Socrates' opposition to the motion to try the Arginusae generals jointly and his disobedience toward the Thirty Tyrants to show that Socrates did not just talk about justice; he behaved justly as well. Xenophon explicitly states that Socrates' political and military service demonstrate his views on justice at Xen. *Mem.* 4.4.1-4. Finally, both Plato and Xenophon show that Socrates did not regard self-control (for Plato, *sophrosyne*, and for Xenophon, *enkrateia*) as merely a speculative, theoretical concern; rather, he practiced self-control fastidiously, and this made him an ideal soldier.

## CHAPTER IV

## CONCLUSION

Xenophon's value when it comes to the Socratic problem is evidenced by the contributions of his *Apology* and *Memorabilia* to discussions pertaining to the *daimonion* of the historical Socrates. First, comparing the *Apologies* of Plato and Xenophon is useful in establishing the importance of the *daimonion* to Socrates. Second, Xenophon's *Mem.* 1.1.6-9 is useful to the ongoing scholarly debate regarding whether Socrates' rationality was compromised by his obedience to the *daimonion*, with Xenophon's explanation of Socrates' views on divination providing a historically relevant framework for evaluating the relationship between human reason and divine wisdom. Importantly, this framework also serves to explain passages in the Platonic corpus in which the *daimonion* warns Socrates away from taking certain actions. Third, comparing the differences between how Plato and Xenophon characterize Socrates' *daimonion* opens up a discussion regarding whether Plato's claim that Socrates' *daimonion* was exclusively apotropaic is historically reliable. The use of Xenophon to understand Socrates' divine sign shows that treating Xenophon as a serious source on Socrates is conducive to reaching a better understanding, not only of Socrates, but also of Plato.

In addition, those interested in the philosophy of the historical Socrates should realize that the theoretical content attributed to him by Plato and Xenophon is not the only relevant information on this subject. Rather, Socrates' military and political activities are also philosophically relevant, since Plato and Xenophon repeatedly connect Socrates' behavior in these contexts to the subjects of his philosophical discourse. Indeed, Xenophon's portrait of Socrates appears to be far more philosophically valuable when the

ancient Greek conception of philosophy as a way of life is understood.<sup>59</sup> It has been argued that Xenophon's Socrates is not theoretically interesting or innovative enough to have attracted and influenced someone as sophisticated as Plato (Schleiermacher [1815] 1852; Vlastos 1971, 2-3; Brickhouse and Smith 2000, 43). But since both Plato and Xenophon place such significance on Socrates' philosophy as a way of life, it is likely that both authors were drawn to Socrates not only because of his philosophical discourse, but also because of his exemplary life.

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<sup>59</sup> Dorion makes the point that Xenophon's Socratic writings are devalued in recent scholarship in part because of the modern view of philosophy as "an essentially critical and speculative activity" (2006, 94); see also Dorion (2011, 3).

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