

## WHAT THE RULERS WANT: XENOPHON ON CYRUS’ PSYCHOLOGY\*

### ABSTRACT

*This article presents an interpretation of Cyrus’ psychology in Xenophon’s Cyropaedia. Its point is that Cyrus’ psychological structure is composed by a set of three desires (philotimía, philanthrōpía, philomátheia) given by nature and a set of virtues (sōphrosúnē and enkráteia) acquired by education. The paper will argue that Cyrus, as an enkratic ruler, does not long for any kind of honours, but is guided by true philotimía, that is, the desire for true honours—honours freely given by gratitude or admiration. philanthrōpía is the key to achieve these honours, since it naturally prompts a benevolent and generous behaviour. At the same time, philomátheia provides the desire of knowledge necessary to acquire the techniques in order to accomplish ambitious and philanthropic deeds. Therefore, confronting those who have posed negative interpretations of Cyrus, the article will argue that the uncommon combination of these psychological predispositions makes Cyrus a virtuous and effective ruler.*

**Keywords:** *Cyropaedia*; psychology; politics; Xenophon; Socratics

The last three decades have seen an increase in studies on *Cyropaedia*, which is slowly recovering its historical importance.<sup>1</sup> These investigations have focussed on how we should understand Cyrus and his imperial project. In general, we can speak of a spectrum of positions that vary between understanding Cyrus as a wicked despotic tyrant and as a straightforward positive figure.<sup>2</sup> Since Xenophon praises Cyrus explicitly,

\* The first steps of this paper were undertaken in the *Kommission für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* thanks to the support of the *Elise und Annemarie Jacobi Stiftung*; I thank all the staff there, especially Director Christof Schuler and Isabelle Mossong. I also acknowledge valuable comments on preliminary versions from Claudia Mársico, Gabriel Danzig, Daniel Rossi Nunes Lopes, *CQ*’s anonymous referee and *CQ*’s editor, Patrick Finglass. This article was written with support from the Israel Science Foundation.

<sup>1</sup> See J. Tatum, *Xenophon’s Imperial Fiction*. On The Education of Cyrus (Princeton, 1989), 3–35 and, especially for the eighteenth century, D. Ahn, ‘The politics of royal education: Xenophon’s *Education of Cyrus* in early eighteenth-century Europe’, *The Leadership Quarterly* 19 (2008), 439–52.

<sup>2</sup> Just to name some examples of this debate, in the negative side of the spectrum: P. Carlier, ‘The idea of imperial monarchy in Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*’, in V. Gray (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies. Xenophon* (Oxford, 2010), 327–66; W.R. Newell, ‘Tyranny and the science of ruling in Xenophon’s “Education of Cyrus”’, *The Journal of Politics* 45 (1983), 889–906 and id., *Tyranny. A New Interpretation* (Cambridge, 2013), 186–270; D. Johnson, ‘Persian as centaurs in Xenophon’s “Cyropaedia”’, *TAPhA* 135 (2005), 177–207, at 204; J. Reiser, ‘Ambition and corruption in Xenophon’s *Education of Cyrus*’, *Polis* 26 (2009), 296–315; L. Field, ‘Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*: educating our political hopes’, *The Journal of Politics* 74 (2012), 723–38. The positive side of the spectrum has more nuances: Tatum (n. 1); B. Due, *The Cyropaedia. Xenophon’s Aims and Methods* (Aarhus, 1989); D. Gera, *Xenophon’s Cyropaedia: Style, Genre, and Literary Technique* (Oxford, 1993); V. Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes. Reading the Reflections* (Oxford, 2011), 246–90; G. Danzig, ‘The best of the Achaemenids: benevolence, self-interest and the “ironic” reading of *Cyropaedia*’, in F. Hobden and C. Tuplin (edd.), *Xenophon: Ethical Principles and Historical*

negative interpretations are largely influenced by ‘ironic’ readings, as initiated by Leo Strauss.<sup>3</sup>

While there have been scholars who have argued that Cyrus has a completely corrupt *psychē*,<sup>4</sup> others have offered mixed or ambivalent evaluations.<sup>5</sup> I propose an explanation for Cyrus’ psychology based on three natural desires (*philotimía*, *philanthrōpía*, *philomátheia*)<sup>6</sup> and two acquired virtues (*sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia*). Cyrus’ political exceptionality lies in his psychological structure, which establishes a course of action where the pursuit of his desires necessarily leads to a political practice—the establishment of benevolent and stable rule. Cyrus’ aim is not altruistic or naïve, and his activity is marked by calculation and manipulation, but precisely these characteristics of his political practice bring well-being not only to himself but also to the society that he rules.

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RULERS

At the beginning of the *Cyropaedia*, Xenophon explains the reason for his work: Cyrus is the only example of a successful ruler he manages to find. Xenophon insists that we must look for Cyrus’ exceptional nature in the essential traits of his person, in his physical and psychological nature (1.2.2), as summarized in 1.2.1:<sup>7</sup>

As to his nature, even now Cyrus is still described in word and song by the barbarians as having been most beautiful in form and most benevolent in soul, most eager to learn, and most ambitious, with the result that he endured every labor and faced every risk for the sake of being praised.

The somatic characteristics (the ability to withstand fatigue and dangers) respond to the psychological ones, which are presented as the fundamental basis of Cyrus’ nature. There are three superlative psychological features that indicate a particular orientation of the desiderative structure: generosity, altruism or love for humanity (*philanthrōpía*), ambition or love for honours or recognition (*philotimía*), and love for learning, knowledge or study (*philomátheia*). The exceptional disposition of Cyrus’ political nature is defined by a *psychē* shaped by these three powerful desires.<sup>8</sup> The relevance of this

*Enquiry* (Leiden, 2012), 499–540; and N. Sandridge, *Loving Humanity, Learning, and Being Honored. The Foundations of Leadership in Xenophon’s Education of Cyrus* (Princeton, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> L. Strauss, ‘The spirit of Sparta or the taste of Xenophon’, *Social Research* 6 (1939), 502–36; cf. L.-A. Dorion, ‘L’exégèse straussienne de Xénophon: le cas paradigmatique de *Mémorables* IV 4’, in M. Nancy and A. Laks (edd.), *Figures de Socrate* (Villeneuve-d’Ascq, 2001), 87–117 and D. Johnson, ‘Strauss on Xenophon’, in F. Hobden and C. Tuplin (edd.), *Xenophon: Ethical Principles and Historical Enquiry* (Leiden, 2012), 123–59.

<sup>4</sup> Reiser (n. 2); C. Whidden, ‘The account of Persia and Cyrus’ Persian education in Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*’, *The Review of Politics* 69 (2007), 539–67.

<sup>5</sup> R. Faulkner, *The Case for Greatness: Honorable Ambition and its Critics* (New Haven, 2007); Danzig (n. 2); R. Bartlett, ‘How to rule the world: an introduction to Xenophon’s *The Education of Cyrus*’, *American Political Science Review* 109 (2015), 143–54; L. Smith Pangle, ‘Xenophon on the psychology of supreme political ambition’, *American Political Science Review* 111 (2017), 308–21.

<sup>6</sup> In his well-known monograph, Sandridge (n. 2) has thoughtfully analysed these three virtues, which are presented as the basis of Cyrus’ leadership. Although I take here a different approach, I have benefited greatly from his detailed work.

<sup>7</sup> Transl. W. Ambler, *Xenophon. The Education of Cyrus* (Ithaca, NY and London, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> The extraordinary nature of Cyrus’ *psychē* is also recognized by some characters in *Cyr.* 4.2.14 and 4.4.11. See Faulkner (n. 5), 135.

psychology for the character of the good ruler also appears in the *Agesilaus*. The performance that makes the Spartan king a figure worthy of praise has its cause in a virtuous psychological structure, marked by a proper desiderative predisposition of his *psychē* (*Ages.* 3.1.4–2.1).

The issue of a ruler's *psychē* is also developed in the *Hiero*. In the beginning, Simonides the poet proposes a differentiation between individuals according to their political role. Common citizens and rulers present two different kinds of life, two ways of processing pleasures and pains—primordial sensations that organize life. These sensations can be experienced by the body, by the *psychē*, or by both (*Hier.* 1.5). For example the displeasure of extreme cold is perceived by the body, while kind words are lived as pleasurable by the *psychē*, and a literal backstab of a friend is suffered by both the body and the *psychē*. This distinction between desires in the *Hiero* is important because of the philosophical context in which Xenophon writes. Aristippus claimed that there are only somatic pleasures (Diog. Laert. 2.86–8 = *SSR*<sup>9</sup> 4.A.172), and this leads to abandon all political participation (*Mem.* 2.1.1–7). Xenophon introduces the distinction to assert that a ruler with a proper orientation of the soul could live a pleasant life according to his desires, achieving pleasures that, unlike Cyrenaic pleasures, are not only somatic but also psychological. From this differentiation, the dialogue presents a debate about who lives a life of greater pleasure, a common citizen (*Hiero*'s posture) or the ruler (Simonides' posture: *Hier.* 1.7–9).

Although at first the differentiation between these human types appears exclusively related to the individuals' living conditions, it soon becomes evident that the social context organizes the demands and perceptions of desires and their satisfaction, effectively shaping the psychological structure.<sup>10</sup> Since the *psychē* is the basis and origin of ἐπιθυμήματα (*Hier.* 1.23), an important part of the psychological structure changes according to experiences that are different for rulers and for common citizens. There is, however, a desire or impulse which is more powerful in the rulers (and in those who aspire to rule), independently of their context: the desire for honour (7.1–3). This is a natural psychological trait of those who rule, and the pursuit of this supreme pleasure is the reason why a ruler undergoes all kinds of sorrows. It serves as a response and reformulation to the initial question asked by Simonides: 'Why do many desire to rule?' (1.9.2). In fact, this desire of the majority is based on a false image of ruling, which is presumed to be pleasant; after the exposition of *Hiero*, it is clear that there is nothing desirable in ruling, and *philotimía* seems to raise a new, tacit question: 'Why should ruling be an object of desire to the ruler?' (cf. 7.3–4).

Hence in *Hiero*, the psychological structure of the ruler has two desiderative levels: (a) a stable section, given by nature, marked by the desire for honours, which promotes the pursuit of ruling, and (b) a broad mutable section, altered by experience and dependent on the ability to control unnecessary desires. While (a) refers to a trait inherent to an individual and given by *physis*, (b) alludes to psychological characteristics modified by the accumulation of impressions. This last section is easily explained by the example of feasting (*Hier.* 1.17–19)—anyone who attends feasts everyday will not feel any special enjoyment when eating a good meal (and to achieve any enjoyment will have to have food that is more and more splendid), while someone ascetic in his alimentation will

<sup>9</sup> G. Giannantoni, *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae* (Naples, 1990). Cf. C. Mársico, *Los filósofos socráticos*, 2 vols. (Buenos Aires, 2013–14).

<sup>10</sup> e.g. *Hier.* 1.23.

be amazed and satisfied by a banquet. The debate on rulers' pleasures revolves around this last point, since Hiero says that it is the ruler's very lifestyle—negatively altering the experience of pleasures—that corrupts his *psychē*. In fact, Simonides' overriding proposal in his 'guide to political rule' (9–11) is to establish a political course that supports development of the pleasures of level (b) and, more importantly, achieves the desire for honours of level (a) through the most authentic honour—genuine love from his subjects (11.15.2–4):<sup>11</sup>

And if you do all these things, rest assured that you will be possessed of the fairest and most blessed possession in the world; for none will be jealous of your happiness.

Furthermore, the good ruler that Socrates presents in *Mem.* 2.1.1–7 (and that Aristippus, despite identifying this ruler as 'foolish', recognizes as the best possible ruler)<sup>12</sup> is marked by the way in which he manages his desires, that is, his psychological structure.

### THE DESIRE TO RULE: *PHILOTIMIA*

One of the three superlative desires that characterize the nature of Cyrus' extraordinary *psychē* forms, according to *Hiero*, the distinctive basis of rulers' psychology: *philotimia*. In chapter 7 of this dialogue, Simonides accepts the long-suffering role of the ruler proposed by Hiero and puts forward *philotimia*—the extraordinary drive for a pleasure which is more divine than human and which differentiates rulers from other people—as a reason for pursuing rule despite all the troubles that come with it (7.3).

*philotimia* involves love not only for honours but also for approval (7.3.5–7). We are therefore faced with a desire concerned with form (gestures of reverence, performance of submission, etc.) and, fundamentally, with content: the *philótimos* finds pleasure in the authentic recognition of others. This makes it possible to draw a distinction between the desire for false honours (hence, false *philotimia*)—those honours which are delivered out of obligation—and the true honours which are the ambition of true *philotimia* (7.9):<sup>13</sup>

For whenever men feel that some person is competent to be their benefactor, and come to regard him as the fountain of blessings, so that henceforward his praise is ever on their lips, every one of them looks on him as his peculiar blessing, they make way for him spontaneously and rise from their seats, through love and not through fear, crown him for his generosity and beneficence, and bring him freewill offerings, these same men, in my opinion, honour that person truly by such services, and he who is accounted worthy of them is honoured in every deed.

The *philótimos* ruler is virtuous through his own desire: honours are true only if they are freely given, and, therefore, achieving them requires exemplary behaviour marked by good social deeds. Although Xenophon does not speak explicitly of rulers without

<sup>11</sup> In *Mem.* 4.6.12–13 tyranny is distinguished from monarchy for two reasons: the tyrant rules without consent and he acts outside the law. The advice of Simonides seems to lead to a hybrid between tyranny and monarchy, where the ruler is above the law (*Cyr.* 1.3.18) or is the law (8.1.22), but some kind of consent also exists, with its origin in the good deeds of the ruler.

<sup>12</sup> R. Illarraga, 'Enkrátēia y gobierno. El gobernante insensato de Aristipo y su aparición en *Ciropeia*', *Méthexis* 30 (2018), 1–24.

<sup>13</sup> Reisert (n. 2), 300 suggests that Hiero 'longs to be loved indiscriminately by the human beings in his city'. Rather, Hiero wants to be loved not indiscriminately but for his good deeds.

*philotimía* in the *Hiero*, we can consider them none the less. Since *philotimía* is the desire to rule in spite of its intrinsic difficulties, there are two possible cases of non-ambitious rulers: (a) naïve rulers, ignorant of the problems they will face and without desires that encourage their resolution (and thus the continuity of their rule), and (b) rulers with false *philotimía*, whose unjust desires lead to socially despised courses of action. In both cases the complex situation (ruling without a good desire) is eventually perceived, but it is impossible to abandon ruling itself: what has been done to obtain and maintain the power generates a resentment that makes it impossible for the ruler to return to the situation of vulnerability and defencelessness of the common citizen (7.11–12).

The previous description of *philotimía* corresponds to the political notions held by the *philotimótatos* Cyrus. The type of honours sought by him and the means to achieve them are consistent with the ‘political programmes’ recommended by Cambyses to Cyrus, who maintains the importance of giving the governed a good life (1.6.7–8), and by Cyrus to his children (8.7.7, 13). In this last section, in a more pragmatic way than that of the *Hiero*, the old king insists on how *euergesía*, and not violence, is the foundation for the recognition and fidelity of the ruled.

The exceptional nature of Cyrus appears already in his early years, to the point that his reputation reaches the court of his grandfather Astyages. After his arrival at Media, Cyrus’ *philotimía* manifests itself in his equestrian practice, something foreign to the Persian world (1.3.3). This childhood version of *philotimía* still does not represent a political development and remains in a personal sphere, but its form is already virtuous: Cyrus seeks the true honours that are obtained from effective practices (in this case, through the constant practice of horse-riding that will make him a competent horseman: 1.3.15), when he could have been satisfied with enjoying the courtly compliments derived from being the king’s grandson.

With the passing of the years and the advent of adolescence, Cyrus’ *philotimía* acquires political (or, at least, proto-political) scopes—the desire for honours and the means to acquire them now operate on the large group of the prince’s companions, who were educated in the royal palace, and also on their well-off parents (1.4.1). Cyrus is well received and recognized by this group thanks to a remarkable example of *euergesía*, with a great dedication of time and effort; for example he makes visits where he shows his affection, earns for them the king’s favour, and obtains those things that they request. All of these practices (together with his repulse of the Assyrians’ attack, 1.4.18–24) accomplish his quest for honours and recognition: years later Cyrus leaves Astyages’ kingdom surrounded by a Median court which said goodbye to him with tears and gifts.

The proposal of Due,<sup>14</sup> that the first speech to the peers or *homótimoí* (1.5.12) represents *philotimía*, fits perfectly with the appearance of that expression at *Hier.* 7.3.4–5. In *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus says (1.5.12):

You rejoice more than all other men when you are praised. Those who long for praise necessarily undertake all toil and danger with pleasure because of this.

The words of the young prince to the Persian peers at the beginning of the military campaign contain the same spirit as those spoken by Simonides, especially if we bear in mind that the *homótimoí* are the Persian ruling class. As in the case of *Hiero*’s rulers,

<sup>14</sup> Due (n. 2), 182.

the desire of approval or social recognition leads necessarily and pleasantly to the pursuit of an arduous, laborious<sup>15</sup> course of action. The receipt of well-deserved praise after hard effort is a source of rejoicing for those marked by a virtuous psychological commitment.<sup>16</sup>

*philotimía* in its superlative degree also has a pejorative appearance in the *corpus Xenophonticum*.<sup>17</sup> In *Mem.* 1.2.14, it is said that Alcibiades and Critias were the most *philótimoí* of the Athenians, which impelled them to seek to be the masters of politics of their city and pursue fame. The peculiarities of the specific context in which this is said makes it necessary to linger here, given our previous virtuous characterization of *philotimía*. We must point out the difference that exists in how *philotimía* develops in the interaction between equals, and how it develops in a hierarchical political framework. Xenophon describes the role of Alcibiades and Critias in the Athenian democracy of his time, a political system of relative equality. In *Cyr.* 3.3.10, *philotimía* also appears as a cause of rivalry and conflict on a horizontal social plane: the army in times of peace. Without conflicts that displace the search for honours onto an external object and, more importantly, without a clear verticality reproduced permanently, the desire to stand out and to be recognized becomes perverted and translates into confrontations. Identifying the positive power behind this *philotimía*, Cyrus performs a double movement: in addition to initiating the military campaign to displace rivalry over enemies, he organizes the army so that hierarchies are well established and there are no ambivalences or voids in the chain of command (*Cyr.* 3.3.11). This virtuous reconversion of corrupted *philotimía* is possible because of a context of clear hierarchy, and contrasts with the more horizontal Athenian democracy, where the perverted *philotimía* of Alcibiades and Critias develops unconstrained.<sup>18</sup>

A second point is related to the distinction we have made between false *philotimía* and true *philotimía*. As we have pointed out, true *philotimía* contemplates not only the form of the honours received (as false *philotimía* does) but also the content, that is, that honours are authentic and freely given. The way to reach them is, as Cyrus' words and actions show, through *euergesía*—exemplary behaviour focussed on performing good acts for the community. The attitude of Alcibiades and Critias, who do terrible damage to Athens (*Mem.* 1.2.12), is the reverse of Cyrus'. Unconcerned with good actions, Critias and Alcibiades are a living example of perverted, false *philotimía*: they desire only false, forced honours.

What separates the desire for true honours from the desire for false ones? Where is the psychological difference between Cyrus and Critias or Alcibiades? Xenophon himself answers this question, identifying the main virtue that Socrates should have taught to his companions (*Mem.* 1.2.17–19): in *sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia* lies the power to guide the desires correctly, maintaining virtuous *philotimía*.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. M. Tamiolaki, 'Emotion and persuasion in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*', *Phoenix* 70 (2016), 40–63, at 58–9.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Hell.* 6.1.6 for the characterization of Jason of Pherae as φιλότιμος (also 6.1.15–16).

<sup>17</sup> J. Farber, 'The *Cyropaedia* and Hellenistic kingship', *AJPh* 100 (1979), 497–514, at 505 has given excessive relevance to this passage, reading *philotimía* as an ambivalent trait. See also W. Schubart, 'Das hellenistische Königsideal nach Inschriften und Papyri', *APF* 12 (1937), 1–27, at 8.

<sup>18</sup> Proper leadership that can reorient false *philotimía* to transform it into a positive force also appears in *Mem.* 3.1.10 and *Oec.* 12.15.

THE VIRTUES THAT CAN BE LEARNED: *SŌPHROSUNĒ* AND *ENKRATEIA*

In the *Hiero*, Xenophon differentiates between a stable section of psychological structure that is given by nature, and another section that is mutable and alterable by experience. If Socrates could have taught *sōphrosúnē* to Critias and Alcibiades (*Mem.* 1.2.17), these psychological virtues are part of that section of the *psychē* that can be modified and trained. Indeed, the notion that only through intense and persistent exercise is it possible to maintain the good condition of the *psychē* appears in *Mem.* 1.2.19–23 and 2.1.29–33 as well as in *Cyr.* 7.7.75. This is consistent with the characterization of Cyrus: although the prince's enkratic character is emphasized throughout the *Cyropaedia*, it is not listed among the natural features of his *psychē* in 1.2.1 but as one of those virtues achieved through training. In this way, *sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia* appear in the narration of the formation of the prince and, specifically, in the description of Persian education.

It has been argued that *sōphrosúnē* 'appears in Xenophon as a perfect synonym of *enkráteia*'.<sup>19</sup> Both concepts are the condition for the realization of good deeds and, therefore, appear as the centre of human virtue,<sup>20</sup> as the Armenian prince Tigranes says (*Cyr.* 3.1.16, regarding *sōphrosúnē*) and as Socrates says to Euthydemus (*Mem.* 4.5.2, regarding *enkráteia*). In the Xenophontic corpus these two concepts appear differentiated, yet their close relationship is undeniable.

Their origin as sources of all good actions makes *sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia* capital virtues for political life, and especially for rulers, whose individual behaviour has repercussions throughout society.<sup>21</sup> This is demonstrated in the discussion between Socrates and Aristippus on how to educate the ruler so that he has the correct psychological structure. It is established there that the ruler must have the enkratic ability to set aside the satisfaction of his own pleasures to pursue the satisfaction of the common good (*Mem.* 2.1.1–6). The desires that the ruler must be able to relegate are especially somatic (food and drink, 2.1.2; rest and sexual appetites, 2.1.3), which may well be attributed to the context of the debate with Cyrenaic philosophy.<sup>22</sup> However, it is legitimate to ask about the desire for honours—is it necessary to postpone that desire as well? As we have seen, what is necessary is to exercise *philotimía* with *sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia*, to eliminate the desire for false honours.<sup>23</sup> These false desires are the ones that should be put aside by exercising self-control. What guides the natural condition of *philotimía* (that is, whether an individual will direct his desire to true honours or false honours) lies in education and permanent training in *sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia*. With *sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia*, *philotimía* is the cause of *euergesía*. Agesilaus' self-control illustrates this (*Ages.* 5.1–5): his ability to give away his own

<sup>19</sup> L.-A. Dorion, *Xénophon. Mémoires. Livre I* (Paris, 2000), 87, my translation. For a different view, see N. Humble, 'Sōphrosynē and the Spartans in Xenophon', in A. Powell and S. Hodkinson (edd.), *Sparta: New Perspectives* (Swansea, 1999), 339–53.

<sup>20</sup> Due (n. 2), 180.

<sup>21</sup> E. Biondi, 'Ciro pastore nella *Ciropedia* senofontea: I significati di un'immagine', *Mediterraneo antico* 17 (2014), 609–32, at 623.

<sup>22</sup> On the role of Aristippean philosophy here, see D. Johnson, 'Aristippus at the crossroads: the politics of pleasure in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*', *Polis* 26 (2009), 204–22 and Illarraga (n. 12).

<sup>23</sup> Tamiolaki (n. 15), 58 has shown how the *Cyropaedia* and the *Memorabilia* shared the distinction between noble and depraved pleasures, where long-term pleasure, the consequence of virtue and toil are positive pleasures. We could associate false honours with depraved pleasures, and true honours with noble pleasures. Cf. *Hell.* 6.1.15, where Jason of Pherae teaches his soldiers how hard work brings indulgence.

food to honour his guests (5.1), his abstinence from sleep when necessary (5.2), and all his hard work along with his soldiers (5.3) obtain admiration and recognition from the Spartan king.<sup>24</sup>

Cyrus is the best example of the impact of *sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia* in the good ruler, to the point that, when organizing the Persian empire, his own self-control functions as a moral guide that teaches the court to reject reprehensible acts and promote good deeds (*Cyr.* 8.30–3). The gestation of this virtue in Cyrus is (as Socrates proposes to Aristippus) caused by his education. The exhaustive formation of Persian children is based in part on the teaching of *sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia* (1.2.8; cf. 8.8.15). The education of the Persian *homótimoi* is a permanent exercise, not restricted to a rigid curriculum but covering every aspect of life.<sup>25</sup> In this way, learning is carried out through exemplary models (teachers and elders) and unfolds in all everyday areas (such as meals and dinners). So strong is the concern for these virtues that Cyaxares mentions how Persians stand out above all peoples in this respect (4.1.14).

After a life marked by *sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia*, Cyrus dedicates his final moments to advising his sons and heirs. His words start from his own experience and, therefore, are also an evaluation of his own political career. When Cyrus describes to his son Tanaoxares the future life of his brother Cambyses, who will occupy the throne, *sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia* appear tacitly. This characterization of Cyrus' rule in *Cyr.* 8.7.13 summarizes what is stated in *Mem.* 2.1.1–6: the ruler must set aside his own pleasures in pursuit of the common good. This idea about the ruler's task is similar, in turn, to the task that Cyrus holds in the conversation with his father Cambyses early in his life (*Cyr.* 1.6.8).

#### TO PERSUADE WITH GENEROSITY: *PHILANTHRŌPIA*

In the same way that, in the *Hiero*, *philotimía* appears as a human desire akin to that of the gods (*Hier.* 7.4), *philanthrōpía* is also a characteristic of the gods (*Mem.* 4.3.6).<sup>26</sup> It is not, however, exclusive to them.<sup>27</sup> This concept, which in Xenophon means 'showing affection, being kind, beneficent and generous',<sup>28</sup> is attributed both to Socrates (*Mem.* 1.2.60) and to Xenophon's model rulers Agesilaus and Cyrus.

Socrates' *philánthrōpos* character is shown by his generosity and the lack of interest in obtaining economic benefit from his disciples, attitudes which make the Athenian philosopher renowned (*Mem.* 1.2.61). These positive consequences of a psychology marked by *philanthrōpía* make it an essential virtue for the good ruler, as Simonides

<sup>24</sup> The fact that *sōphrosúnē* governs *philotimía* undermines the argument of Whidden (n. 4), 564: 'Persia's inability to satisfy Cyrus's indiscriminate, immoderate, and infinite desire for honor raises the question of whether the honors bestowed by any single regime short of a world-state could have satisfied him.' If it is conceded that Cyrus learns *sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia* in his youth, as Whidden (n. 4), 545 concedes, *enkráteia* must rule over any desire. Cyrus' enkratic deeds make it inaccurate to talk about 'indiscriminate, immoderate and infinite desires'.

<sup>25</sup> W. Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian: The Problem of the Individual and the Society of the Polis* (Albany, 1977), 54; Due (n. 2), 15; R. Illarraga, 'El extraño reino de un joven príncipe. Política, educación y justicia en la sociedad persa de la *Ciropedia* (1, 2, 2–16)', *QUCC* 116 (2017), 81–102. Cf. Gera (n. 2), 50.

<sup>26</sup> O. Gigon, *Kommentar zum zweiten Buch von Xenophons Memorabilien* (Basel, 1956), 90–1; cf. *Cyr.* 8.7.25.

<sup>27</sup> Dorion (n. 19), 120 n. 173.

<sup>28</sup> Due (n. 2), 167.



knows: when the people find someone competent and generous who can give them a good life, they recognize this man as their political leader (*Hier.* 8.9). This political capacity also makes *philanthrōpía* a *desideratum* for the ruler for dealing with otherwise unconquerable rivals, as is shown by Agesilaus: his humanitarian attitudes and his good dealings with enemies achieved the submission of citadels impossible to take by force (*Ages.* 1.22).

The first moment when we see Cyrus' *philanthrōpía* is during his youth at the court of Media: the young prince's successful efforts to achieve the affection of his noble companions and of their parents (*Cyr.* 1.4.1). These actions have their origin in *philotimía* and *philanthrōpía*, in an interaction between virtues that achieves the 'true honours' of the *Hiero* (7.9). If true *philotimía* (that is, *philotimía* guided by *sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia*) desires recognition and approval from *euergesía*, it is necessarily a psychological character that encourages generosity and good deeds, and this psychological trait is precisely *philanthrōpía*.

The next mention of *philanthrōpía* in the *Cyropaedia* refers directly to the friendships developed in Media obtained by Cyrus' benevolence: thanks to his past generosity Cyrus manages to gather volunteers for the continuation of his successful campaign, which will itself be a source of honours and recognition (*Cyr.* 4.2.10). This consequence can also be observed in Agesilaus' case: the generosity that opens the doors of impregnable citadels also brings the honour of taking that fortress. Also, the Spartan king's compassionate attitude towards his enemies will be the same as that of Cyrus when he invades Armenia (2.4.32, 3.1.3). That merciful behaviour toward the defeated enemy is a clear signal of *philanthrōpía* (7.5.73): since taking possession of bodies and people defeated in combat is, strictly speaking, an act of justice, not doing so is a great feat of benevolence, as well as a useful act.

*philanthrōpía* recurs in two episodes in the last book of the *Cyropaedia*, when Xenophon describes the debates around the organization of the Persian empire. In its first appearance, Xenophon addresses the problem of the empire's security or stability (*ἀσφάλεια*). Cyrus has realized that, with his enemies defeated, there is no external enemy that can attack the polity which he has organized. On the contrary, the danger comes from his own powerful commanders who may harbour the idea that they would be competent rulers (8.1.45–6). Cyrus evaluates the correct course of action. To dissolve their armies and deprive them of their command would damage the military power of the Empire, while being openly suspicious would lead to a civil war (8.1.47). The answer lies in *philanthrōpía*—this is the means of securing strong bonds of friendship with Cyrus himself, which in turn prevents the emergence of powerful links between potential contenders that would lead to dangerous coalitions between intriguers (8.1.48–8.2.1).<sup>29</sup> The potential of *philanthrōpía* is indeed a powerful one (8.2.1):

In the first place, he continually made his benevolence of soul every bit as visible as he could, for he believed that just as it is not easy to love those who seem to hate you, or to be well disposed toward those who are ill disposed toward you, so also those known as loving and as being well disposed could not be hated by those who held that they were loved.

<sup>29</sup> V. Gray, 'Xenophon's *eudaimonia*', in F. de Luise and A. Stavru (edd.), *Studies on Socrates, the Socratics, and the Ancient Socratic Literature* (Sankt Augustin, 2012), 56–67, at 64.

At a dinner with his most faithful friends, Cyrus is approached by the noble elder Gobryas, deserter of the Assyrian army. Gobryas is truly amazed by Cyrus' generosity (8.4.7–8):

'Cyrus, I held before that you most surpassed human beings in being the most skilled general. Now I swear by the gods that you seem to me to surpass them more by your benevolence than by your generalship.'

'Yes, by Zeus', said Cyrus. 'And I display the works of benevolence with much more pleasure than those of generalship.'

'Why?' said Gobryas.

'Because one must display the one by harming human beings, the other by benefiting them.'

The importance of *philanthrōpía* that Gobryas notices and which Cyrus explains is the benefit that it brings to the ruled. The capabilities and consequences of war are not denied but placed in the background: if he could choose, Cyrus would prefer to do good rather than harm. This brief intervention explains the dynamics between generosity and fear that mark Cyrus' political career, described in the *proemium* (1.1.5), in the dialogue between Cambyses and Cyrus (1.6.2–46), and in Cyrus' last words to his sons (8.7.7–13). In those passages there are exhortations to benefit friends and to harm enemies that show the reach, and the limits, of *philanthrōpía*: anyone who truly cannot be convinced by the generosity is an enemy and therefore must be annihilated.

#### TO RULE WITH KNOWLEDGE: *PHILOMATHEIA*

As a child, Cyrus speaks constantly, to the point that Xenophon calls him 'very talkative'; his permanent questioning and seeking for the causes results from his *philomathēs* personality (1.4.3). *philomátheia* implies curiosity, the recognition of personal limits, the need to consult those who already have knowledge and, in general, dialogue, exchange of opinions, and 'the ability to excel in contest of learning and to pick up lessons quickly'.<sup>30</sup> The importance of noticing one's own ignorance and, therefore, the need to seek advice from those who have knowledge is a characteristic that Cambyses sees in his son (1.6.43). Even after having demonstrated his enormous capacity to conquer and rule, Cyrus continues to ask his subordinates to teach him what he does not know, as shown in the discussion about how a beautiful parade should be performed (8.3.2). In this sense, *philomátheia* not only encourages Cyrus to be open to words but also prompts him to involve himself with those who show knowledge and the ability to transmit it—characteristics which Cyrus praises in Chrysantas during an intimate meeting with Cyrus' closest commanders (8.4.11).

The desire for knowledge and the enjoyment of knowledge are fundamental characteristics of the philosopher (*Oec.* 16.9). For Socrates (and for Xenophon in *Cyr.* 1.2.1), this enjoyment and the desire to learn are found in the *psychē* and are specially linked with the passion for acquiring knowledge useful for the good management of cities and men (*Mem.* 4.1.2).<sup>31</sup> This knowledge leads to the ability to confer *eudaimonia* on others, whether individuals or societies, and also makes the

<sup>30</sup> Sandridge (n. 2), 49.

<sup>31</sup> This passage explains why Cyrus, in the last moments of his life, is concerned with matters concerning the future good of the Empire, rather than with metaphysical speculations; *contra*, Whidden (n. 4), 550.

ruled more obedient (*Cyr.* 1.6.22). In other words, the political power of philosophy lies in a *philomátheia* oriented towards a formal knowledge with positive practical consequences for the society.<sup>32</sup> This effective, practical aspect of *philomátheia* also has a creative aspect. This is directly presented in Cambyses' pieces of advice to Cyrus on how to face enemies: it is necessary not to confine oneself to established knowledge but also to invent, to create (*Cyr.* 1.6.38). This interaction between knowledge acquisition and the conception of new practices is a central characteristic of Cyrus' ascent to and consolidation of power, observable in his interest in learning how to ride (1.3.3, 1.3.15), the creation of a Persian cavalry corps (4.3.4), the expansion of the army on the basis of arming *homótimoi* (2.1.9), his supervision of the invention of new tactics (2.3.17–20), and the creation of the infamous scythed chariots (6.1.28).

### THE INTERACTION BETWEEN VIRTUES

The interaction between the three virtues by nature (*philotimía*, *philanthrōpía* and *philomátheia*) and the set of virtues by learning (*sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia*) marks Cyrus' psychology, which is the origin of his political career. This relationship, schematically, could be represented as follows:

*sōphrosúnē* & *enkráteia* { (→) *philotimía* ↔ (*philomátheia*) ↔ *philanthrōpía*}

*sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia*, virtues learned through education, guarantee the good behaviour of the whole system, but they have a more direct impact on *philotimía*, since they orientate that desire towards the search for true honour. The ambition for true honour contributes the passion necessary for the pursuit of the *euergesía* proper to *philanthrōpía*. In turn, *philomátheia* allows the gathering of knowledge necessary both for the performance of good deeds that arise from *philanthrōpía* and for the techniques necessary to obtain honours. This psychological scheme of three closely related natural desires and a guiding virtue allows us to solve the problem of priorities between Cyrus' impulses.<sup>33</sup>

The particular balance that occurs in Cyrus' *psychē* is the origin of its exceptionality and helps to explain features that have concerned some scholars. Faced with positions

<sup>32</sup> Taking as his point of departure Araspas' reflection on having 'philosophized' with Eros (6.1.41), Bartlett (n. 5), 153 holds that Cyrus, being a 'cold king' (8.4.22–3), has never experienced any erotic passion and therefore has never philosophized, and for that reason has not followed the Delphic–Socratic dictum 'Know thyself' (*Mem.* 4.2.24). See also Whidden (n. 4), 549. This argument is doubtful for at least three reasons. (a) These words are spoken by Araspas, a young man deeply in love who also wants to show Cyrus that he can carry out the mission entrusted. Although there is no reason to distrust him, neither is any reason to think he is right—Araspas is not a person characterized as particularly capable in philosophy. (b) Araspas does not say that there is philosophizing *by* Eros but *with* Eros. Therefore, the erotic impulse is not presented as a necessary condition for philosophizing. (c) Finally, Eros is characterized as 'unjust'—so how could Araspas reach correct conclusions given that he philosophized with an unjust and powerful partner? Although it is never said that Cyrus philosophizes, the intimate link between *philomátheia* and *philosophía* as well as the repeated and proven *philomathēs* character of Cyrus mean that he is not an unthinking individual. See also Gray (n. 29), 60–1 for a Cyrus both eudaimonic and with knowledge of himself.

<sup>33</sup> Sandridge (n. 2), 38–40, for example, has raised the possibilities of hierarchy between *philotimía* and *philanthrōpía*, opting for the priority of the latter. Our alternative allows us to maintain the fundamental weight of *philanthrōpía* at the same level of Cyrus' paramount *philotimía*.

that highlight Cyrus' self-interest,<sup>34</sup> Danzig has responded that self-interest and *philanthrōpia* are not mutually exclusive traits, and is correctly pointing out that 'self-less behaviour is not a standard to be found in Xenophon, so it would be wrong to criticize Cyrus for lack of it'.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the psychological scheme we have presented shows that self-interest is necessary for a political project that aims to improve the life of the society ruled. There are two reasons for this. The most obvious is that *philanthrōpia*—the force that leads to good deeds—is a personal desiderative impulse, proper to the *psychē* of an individual and not an external imposition. The second reason is that the strong and constant pursuit of the common good can be achieved only through an exhausting degree of political effort, as Hiero and Aristippus insist. The incentive necessary to undertake this task lies in the ambition for true honour—that is, honours that have their origin in a philanthropic impulse.

### CONCLUSION

Cyrus rules and dies happy (8.7.26–8). During his reign, thanks to his *philanthrōpia*, he discouraged any potential rival from wanting to take his place (8.1.45–8). We must understand, then, that Simonides' 'guide to political rule' has achieved its results, since Cyrus achieves the goal that the poet proposes to Hiero—Cyrus has ruled by doing good to his friends so that his enemies cannot face him, and therefore has had the best of rewards, to be happy without being envied (*Hier.* 11.15).

Cyrus' good deeds, marked by his *philanthrōpia*, have achieved for him solid and compact support, both from the people as well as from his soldiers and his commanders, even those who once might have wished to take his place. The effective functioning of Cyrus' psychological structure is consistent with the pursuit of *eudaimonia* as described by Gray: '[t]he motive for the leader to foster this *eudaimonia* to followers is the pursuit of his own *eudaimonia* because he must use them for success ... Because Xenophon's rulers are dependent on followers to flourish, they have a vested interest in giving them *eudaimonia*, because this means the capacities that will best assist in furthering the leader's success.'<sup>36</sup> Cyrus' *psychē* is marked by this virtuous interaction between the pursuit of individual and of social *eudaimonia*, also proposed by Simonides in the search for a good and happy ruler.

Nobody envies Cyrus. As the Socratic ruler of *Mem.* 2.1.1–6, Cyrus lives without any of what other men understand as pleasures, to the point of being called by Chrysantas a 'cold king' (*Cyr.* 8.4.22). But, despite what Chrysantas thinks (or Aristippus in the *Memorabilia*), Cyrus' extraordinary *psychē* allows him to make this postponement of pleasures a virtuous characteristic in regard of his own *eudaimonia*: having *sōphrosúnē* and *enkráteia* and being simultaneously *philanthrōpōtatos*, *philomathéstatos* and *philotimōtatos* configure a *psychē* where self-interest and social interest converge. More *eudaimonia* for the ruled society means, in turn, more *eudaimonia* for Cyrus.

It has been said that Xenophon praises Cyrus 'because he "forgets" every political good higher than stability'.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Cyrus is praised for this very reason. But, as

<sup>34</sup> V. Azoulay, *Xénophon et les grâces du pouvoir* (Paris, 2004), 323 n. 229; Carlier (n. 2), 153; Barlett (n. 5), 146, 153.

<sup>35</sup> Danzig (n. 2), 509.

<sup>36</sup> Gray (n. 29). For the opposite position, see Faulkner (n. 5), 170–2.

<sup>37</sup> Barlett (n. 5), 153.

we have seen, for Xenophon stability can only be the consequence of a benevolent rule that favours the common good. Cyrus highlights this in the last moments of his life: a ruler can have stability only through faithful followers, and they can be won only through generosity (8.7.13). For a ruler to be as beneficent as Cyrus is, he must possess the complex psychological structure that we have analysed. It is almost what Johnson has pointed out: an 'inhuman mixture of continence and greed'.<sup>38</sup> It is indeed an extraordinary mixture but not an impossible one. The complex mixture, Cyrus' *psychē*, is not inhuman—after all, Cyrus needs time to learn, makes mistakes and dies—but it is rare. It is so uncommon that Xenophon finds only in Cyrus' *psychē* the unlikely coincidence of a correct predisposition by nature and a good education. It is so unusual that after his death the polity which he has built goes into decline. The fundamental lesson that Xenophon teaches in the *Cyropaedia* is how exceptional the psychological conditions are which permit a stable (and therefore good) ruler: contrary to any romantic views, we have to take account of the limits that society and human nature impose on politics.

*Bar Ilan University / University of Buenos Aires*

RODRIGO ILLARRAGA  
[rodrigoillarraga@filo.uba.ar](mailto:rodrigoillarraga@filo.uba.ar)

<sup>38</sup> Johnson (n. 2), 303.