

XENOPHON AND SOCRATES

BRENNAN (S.) *Xenophon's Anabasis. A Socratic History*. Pp. xvi + 287, ills, map. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022. Cased, £90. ISBN: 978-1-4744-8988-1.

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No surviving fourth-century Greek author experimented with genre as much as Xenophon. As Xenophon is attracting more scholarly attention now than he has in decades (B. provides a concise history of his rehabilitation on pp. viii–x), it is not surprising that scholars have wondered how to interpret his diverse writings. Recent work has demonstrated that themes such as the problem of leadership run throughout Xenophon's corpus, and a particular strand of this research aims at uncovering Socratic features in Xenophon's non-Socratic works (as N. Humble does in A. Stavru and C. Moore [edd.], *Socrates and the Socratic Dialogue* [2018]). B. attempts to do this for the *Anabasis*, arguing that the work is best understood as 'Socratic history'. For B., the *Anabasis* is not, or not only, a record of the march. It is a sustained reflection on the problem of leadership that serves as an *apologia* for both Xenophon and Socrates, while demonstrating the value of Socrates and his teaching.

B. provides an effective introduction to the *Anabasis* and many of the scholarly debates surrounding the text. After a preface and an introduction, which situate the book in its scholarly landscape and preview its arguments, Chapter 1 surveys with clarity the sparse and problematic evidence for Xenophon's life and the composition of his corpus. B. identifies three factors that influenced Xenophon's world view and writings: his association with Socrates; the Peloponnesian War and the ensuing civil war in Athens; and his exile from Athens. These factors contextualise the book's argument that the key themes of the *Anabasis* are military leadership and *apologia*.

Chapter 2 approaches the *Anabasis* from historiographical and literary perspectives to uncover its nature and purpose. B. asks what kind of work the *Anabasis* is – a question that has generated a wide range of answers (see p. 54 n. 17 for examples) – and ultimately argues that we should consider the *Anabasis* as 'Socratic history' (p. 57). What this means, however, is not fully explained until Chapter 5. Here, B. instead discusses the influence of Socrates on the *Hellenica* and *Cyropaedia* to legitimise the generic category 'as referring to a recognizable historiographical text that is influenced at a fundamental level by an implicit effort on the part of the author to perpetuate Socratic values' (p. 62). The remainder of the chapter surveys Xenophon's use of exemplarity and literary *apologia*, which B. returns to in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

Chapter 3 compares leadership styles in the *Anabasis* from a didactic perspective. B. argues that Xenophon engages in 'didaxis' by inviting readers to assess how a leader deals with a problem or opportunity. On this method of reading, the character 'Xenophon' emerges as an ideal leader by comparison with other flawed leaders in the text: Cyrus the Younger and the Spartans Clearchus and Chirisophus. The ideal leadership that 'Xenophon' embodies has its roots in Athenian democracy and in Socrates. B. argues for the former especially by comparison with Pericles' Funeral Oration and for the latter by pointing out apparent similarities with Socrates' conversations about military leadership in *Memorabilia* 3.1–5.

Chapter 4 returns to the theme of *apologia*. B. demonstrates how the *Anabasis* defends 'Xenophon' against charges (such as hubris or corruption) made internally in the narrative, and discusses the possibility that Xenophon wrote the *Anabasis* in response to external

criticisms of Xenophon and the Ten Thousand (such as those made by Isocrates). This section complements nicely the discussion of compositional issues in Chapters 1 and 2.

In Chapter 5 B. elaborates on the Socratic aspect of the *Anabasis*. He argues that the character 'Xenophon' exemplifies Socratic virtues as found in the *Memorabilia* and should be seen as the product of Socratic teaching, and that the *Anabasis* is thus an endorsement of and education in Socratic values. A conclusion is followed by two appendices on major historical events in Xenophon's lifetime and on Xenophon's writings. There is a general index, but, unfortunately, no *index locorum*.

Like the *Anabasis*, B.'s book is rich, containing many thought-provoking readings and arguments. Of its intertwined but distinct theses that the *Anabasis* is a work concerned with leadership and *apologia* and that it 'was written principally to reflect and promote the author's image of Socrates' (p. 3), I find the former more persuasive. This is not to deny that Socrates is important for understanding the *Anabasis*, even if he only appears at one point in the story (*Anab.* 3.1.4–7, which B. discusses thoughtfully in several places). However, I find B.'s Socratic thesis put too strongly and his Socrates too dogmatic.

In Chapter 3 B. argues that the character 'Xenophon' exemplifies Socrates' military 'teaching' in *Mem.* 3.1–5. B. extracts lessons on topics such as logistics, tactics and exhortation from Socrates' conversations and pairs them with passages in the *Anabasis* that show 'Xenophon' apparently following these lessons. However, in extracting lessons from their dialogic context, B. seems to me to run the risk of losing what is 'Socratic' in these conversations. One example: on pp. 128–9 B. takes Socrates to teach (at *Mem.* 3.1.11) that an army should be flexible in its formation and use of tactics. He then discusses occasions in the *Anabasis* where Xenophon demonstrates such flexibility, and argues that this is part of what makes Xenophon a model 'Socratic commander'. But it seems odd to call flexibility a particularly 'Socratic' teaching. In the dialogue Socrates is conversing with a young companion who received military instruction for a fee from the sophist Dionysodorus. Socrates' companion is ambitious for political distinction, and Socrates' aim in the conversation is to show him the limits of his knowledge and the inadequacy of Dionysodorus' lessons – not, primarily, to put forward specific military teachings. As such, I am sceptical that the passages B. cites from the *Anabasis* give the work a Socratic flavour or even refer to the *Memorabilia*.

B. applies the same method in Chapter 5, with a focus on Socratic ethics and argumentation instead of military instruction. Here, the Socratic thesis is most fully spelt out: B. states that the *Anabasis*' philosophical (or Socratic) element resides (among other places) 'in the implicit encouragement to readers to contemplate the value of the virtues' (p. 202). B. proceeds to show how virtues important to Xenophon's Socrates, such as self-control (*enkrateia*), self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*) and piety, are exemplified in the figure of 'Xenophon' in the *Anabasis*. I agree that such virtues, even if they are not named or discussed, are on display in the *Anabasis* and that readers are invited to contemplate their value. However, given the importance of this section for B.'s argument, I would have liked to see more analysis of the virtues themselves in the Socratic works and of their applicability to a martial context. For example, if the army's self-sufficiency (which B. discusses on pp. 224–6) relies on plundering, would Socrates still endorse this as virtuous behaviour? In terms of argumentation, B. claims that features such as the *elenchus*, analytical thinking and the use of analogy in speeches made by 'Xenophon' further add to the Socratic nature of the *Anabasis*. Here, too, consideration of the gulf between the purposes of Socratic conversation and military speech-making could prove fruitful. I also wonder to what extent these are necessarily Socratic features, given the presence of similar modes of argumentation in, for instance, Thucydides and Isocrates.

Ultimately, I would agree with B. that Socrates influenced the way in which Xenophon thought about topics such as leadership and virtue, and this is reflected in the *Anabasis*'s explorations of these topics. If, in my opinion, B. pushes the Socratic thesis too far, the book is nevertheless a thoughtful example of how we might read across Xenophon's corpus.

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