

Plato and Xenophon

Comparative Studies

Edited by

Gabriel Danzig
David Johnson
Donald Morrison



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Contents

Acknowledgements IX

Abbreviations X

Notes on Contributors XI

Introduction to the Comparative Study of Plato and Xenophon 1

Gabriel Danzig

Introduction to This Volume 31

David M. Johnson

PART I

Methods

Comparative Exegesis and the Socratic Problem 55

Louis-André Dorion

Xenophon's Intertextual Socrates 71

David M. Johnson

Division and Collection: A New Paradigm for the Relationship
between Plato and Xenophon 99

William H.F. Altman

Xenophon and the Socratics 115

James M. Redfield

Xenophon on "Philosophy" and Socrates 128

Christopher Moore

Xenophon and the *Elenchos*: A Formal and Comparative
Analysis 165

Geneviève Lachance

PART 2***Ethics***

- Laughter in Plato's and Xenophon's *Symposia* 187
Katarzyna Jazdzewska
- Socrates' Physiognomy: Plato and Xenophon in Comparison 208
Alessandro Stavru
- Xenophon's Triad of Socratic Virtues and the Poverty of Socrates 252
Lowell Edmunds
- Pity or Pardon: Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle on the Appropriate Response to Intentional Wrongdoing 277
Roslyn Weiss
- Mechanisms of Pleasure according to Xenophon's Socrates 318
Olga Chernyakhovskaya
- Plato, Aristotle and Xenophon on the Ends of Virtue 340
Gabriel Danzig
- Socrates *Erotikos*: Mutuality, Role Reversal and Erotic *Paideia* in Xenophon's and Plato's *Symposia* 365
Francesca Pentassuglio
- Socratic Economics and the Psychology of Money 391
Tazuko Angela van Berkel

PART 3***Friendship and Politics***

- Xenophon's Conception of Friendship in *Memorabilia* 2.6 (with Reference to Plato's *Lysis*) 433
Melina Tamiolaki
- Socrates' Attitude towards Politics in Xenophon and Plato 461
Fiorenza Bevilacqua

**Plato and Xenophon on the Different Reasons that Socrates Always
Obeys the Law** 487

Louis-André Dorion

Plato's *Statesman* and Xenophon's *Cyrus* 510

Carol Atack

PART 4

History

Sparta in Xenophon and Plato 547

Noreen Humble

Plato, Xenophon and Persia 576

Christopher J. Tuplin

The Enemies of Hunting in Xenophon's *Cynegeticus* 612

David Thomas

Index of Passages 641

General Index 668

Laughter in Plato's and Xenophon's *Symposia**

Katarzyna Jazdzewska

With its relaxed atmosphere, wine, light-hearted conversations, and all sorts of entertainment, the ancient banquet was a natural place for laughter.¹ Laughter, after all, is a phenomenon that occurs predominantly in a social setting, facilitating conversations, creating social bonds, and resolving interpersonal tensions; it accompanies teasing and joking, and, as the ancients were well aware, is stimulated by alcohol consumption.² It is, therefore, not surprising that laughter recurs in descriptions of banquets from the beginnings of Greek literature. Book 1 of the *Iliad* ends with a burst of laughter from the banqueting gods, the feasting suitors laugh in the *Odyssey*, and Theognis repeatedly mentions laughter in a sympotic context.³

Yet, while carefree, bonding laughter is a recurrent feature of an ideal *symposion*,⁴ Greek authors from Homer onwards are also well aware of laughter's ambiguous nature, both in a sympotic setting and elsewhere. The positive associations of laughter with mutual affinity, joyfulness, and innocent joking are counterbalanced in Greek literature by some serious concerns arising from it. In a face-to-face sympotic context, laughter can serve as a deceptive cloak for friendliness (Halliwell 2008: 120). It can also accompany derision and mockery, and this led the ancients to express concern about the thin line between innocent teasing and offensive ridicule.⁵ As scholars have observed, Homer's ban-

* This research was supported by a grant from the Foundation for Polish Science.

1 For various aspects of the ancient Greek *symposion*, see Murray 1990, Slater 1991, Wecowski 2014.

2 Hom. *Od.* 14.463–465: 'It must be the wine befuddling me, which gets even sensible men singing and laughing and up to dance' (trans. S. Lombardo); see also a comment on this Homeric passage in Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 645a: 'For song, laughter, and dancing are characteristic of men who drink wine in moderation' (trans. P.A. Clement). Plutarch 'corrects' Homer here by emphasizing that it is drinking moderately (*metriōs*) that causes these, in his view innocent, behaviours.

3 For the theme of the divine laughter, see Gilhus 1997; for a general discussion of sympotic laughter, see Halliwell 2008: 100–154 (110–125 on Theognis).

4 Halliwell (2008: 117) points out the gap between the ideal and real *symposion* and various types of laughter associated with them: 'The ideal symposium is a dream, even hallucination, of perfection. Sympotic texts recognize the risk of a gap between ideal and reality into which ambiguous manifestations of laughter can insidiously find their way'.

5 An in-depth discussion of proper, inoffensive joking (*skōmma*) appears in Plut. *Quaest. conv.*

queting suitors are the most frequently laughing characters, but their laughter is derisive and indicative of their (false) feeling of security and superiority. Going beyond sympotic texts and settings, we observe that in Herodotos laughter typically indicates the ignorance, madness, arrogance, and misguided sense of superiority of those laughing; in the tragic poets, it is usually malevolent and derisive; in Aristophanes, the majority of laughter-references refer to laughter of derision.⁶ In the major works of Greek literature—epic poems, tragedy, comedy, and historiography—laughter tends to be associated with morally problematic attitudes and is used not infrequently to negatively characterize the person who is represented as laughing.

Taking into account the association of laughter with banquets and their literary representations, on one hand, and its ambiguous character in Greek literature, on the other, this contribution discusses laughter in Plato's and Xenophon's *Symposia*.⁷ It will examine laughter-vocabulary in both texts and draw attention to differences between the two texts in this respect; it will discuss the frequency and character of laughter-episodes, as well as the author's insight into the nature of the phenomenon of laughter, particularly in the case of Xenophon. The third part of the paper will discuss similarities and differences in the treatment of laughter by the two authors and reflect on their rapport with the above-mentioned traditions of laughter-representation in Greek literature, as well as compare the treatment of laughter in Plato's and Xenophon's *Symposia* and their other works.

Laughter in Plato's *Symposium*

Plato's *Symposium*, as has long been acknowledged, contains a significant comic element.⁸ Aristophanes' hiccups, the figure of the uninvited guest, the drunk-

631c–640a. Though Plutarch is not exclusively concerned with humour in a sympotic setting, the setting of a drinking-party reappears in the background of his thoughts (see, e.g., 631c: ἐν οἴνῳ).

6 On laughter in Homer, see, e.g., Levine 1982; Colakis 1986; in Herodotos, Lateiner 1977; in the tragic poets, Dillon 1991; in Aristophanes, Sommerstein 2009.

7 An overview of sympotic literature and its conventions can be found in Relihan 1992 and Gera 1993: 142–148. In this paper, I refrain from the much discussed issue of the relative chronology of Plato's and Xenophon's *Symposia* and the possibility of one text's influence on the other. For a recent discussion of the relationship between the two dialogues, see, e.g., Danzig 2005, Hobden 2013: 195–246.

8 For a discussion of the mixed tragic and comic character of Plato's *Symposium*, see, e.g., Clay 1975.

en Alcibiades, teasing and banter among the banquet participants, and finally, Socrates' discussion of comedy at the end of the text—all these elements point to Plato's interest in the comic and humorous. There is, however, relatively little laughter-representation in the dialogue—as we will see, there is only one burst of shared laughter and two passages in which an individual character (one of whom is Diotima, and therefore not a *symposion* guest) is specified as laughing (compare this with, for instance, the *Phaedo*, in which named interlocutors laugh five times).⁹ Laughter-related vocabulary, however, is quite frequent, in particular the adjective *geloios* and the adverb *geloion* (meaning 'amusing' but also 'ridiculous', nine times), the verb *katagelaō* ('to laugh at, deride', four times), and the verbal adjective *katagelastos* ('ridiculous, absurd', twice). These terms tend to appear in expressions of fear that one will appear silly or become an object of ridicule. Other laughter-words include the verb *gelaō* (three instances), the noun *gelōs* (twice), and the verb *gelōtopoieō* (once).¹⁰

The terms *geloios* and *geloion* are used in the *Symposium* in three main senses: 'amusing', 'ridiculous', and 'absurd'. In 174e, Aristodemos enters the house of Agathon and realizes that he is alone: Socrates, who might have provided an excuse for his showing up uninvited, has lingered behind. Consequently, *τι ἔφη αὐτόθι γελοῖον παθεῖν*, 'he said that he found himself in a rather ridiculous position' (trans. after Lamb). In 199d, a question about whether Eros is the love of a mother or father is called *γελοῖον ἐρώτημα*, 'absurd question'. To speak *ἐπι τὰ γελοιώτερα* or *τοῦ γελοίου ἔνεκα* (214e–215a) means 'with a mocking intention'. Although Aristophanes in 189b makes a clear distinction between things that are *geloia* ('funny') and *katagelasta* ('ridiculous'), the distinction is not maintained throughout the *Symposium*, in which *geloios* and *katagelastos* are frequently close in meaning. The latter term and the verb from which it derives (*katagelaō*) are unambiguous and strongly associated with scorn and insult, *hybris*, rather than with the physical phenomenon of laughter. Two passages in which the verb *katagelaō* appears are revealing in this respect. When speaking of a lover remaining under the influence of the heavenly Aphrodite, Pausanias ensures that such a person will share his whole life with his beloved and will not deceive the boy and 'make a mock of him' (181d: *καταγελάσαντες*) by running to another one. In another passage, Alcibiades says that Socrates 'disregarded, mocked, and insulted his youthful beauty' (219c: *κατεφρόνησεν καὶ κατεγέλασεν τῆς ἐμήs ὥρας καὶ ὕβρισεν*).

9 See below, 201 and footnote 37.

10 A useful index of laughter- and comedy-related vocabulary in Plato's dialogues can be found in Mader 1977: 130–132.

Laughter-related vocabulary in the *Symposium* is associated predominantly with three characters: Aristophanes, who is willing to provide the company with laughter and who, therefore, parallels Philip the jester in Xenophon's *Symposium*; Alcibiades, who is drunk and nonchalantly unconcerned that he may provoke laughter from the more sober symposiasts; and Socrates, who expresses anxiety at the prospect of being laughed at, though he is also aware that he cannot escape such laughter, as this is the cost he pays for being truthful to himself.

Aristophanes, according to Alcibiades, 'is and wishes to be *geloios*' (213c), and is accused of buffoonery by Eryximachos (189a: γελωτοποιεῖς).¹¹ In response, Aristophanes says with laughter (καὶ τὸν Ἀριστοφάνη γελάσαντα εἰπεῖν) that he is afraid not so much of saying things that are *geloia*, but rather things that are *katagelasta* (189b). This passage is the only instance in which Plato represents a specific, named banquet participant as laughing, and it is undoubtedly not accidental that it is Aristophanes, who is singled out as the laugher.¹² Aristophanes' laughter accompanies the playful tenor of his words and announces the humour of his speech. Yet, his distinction between things funny and ridiculous indicates that he is not free of concern about his reputation: while he is dedicated to making people laugh, he is not indifferent to being laughed at.¹³

The second character around whom the laughter-vocabulary centres is the drunk Alcibiades, who is aware that he will be laughed at, but in his inebriation is nonchalantly unconcerned about it (212e–213a: ἄρα καταγελάσεσθέ μου ὡς μεθύοντες; ἐγὼ δέ, κἂν ὑμεῖς γελάτε, ὅμως εἰδ' ὅτι ἀληθὴ λέγω). It is after his speech that the second laughter-occurrence in the *symposion* takes place; this time it is shared laughter. Plato uses laughter here to render the reaction of the company to Alcibiades' words: they are amused at his frankness (222c: εἰπόντος δὴ ταῦτα τοῦ Ἀλκιβιάδου γέλωτα γενέσθαι ἐπὶ τῇ παρρησίᾳ αὐτοῦ), which, the narrator observes, showed that he was still in love with Socrates. Taken more generally, the laughter expresses the mood of amusement and indulgence with which the company reacts to Alcibiades' presence and his unusual speech.

Alcibiades' momentary lack of concern about the prospect of being laughed at is in contrast with his acute awareness of the ludicrousness of the figure

11 The verb *gelōtopoieō* creates a clear link between Plato's Aristophanes and Xenophon's *gelōtopoios* Philip. See Xen. *Symp.* 1.11, 1.13, 3.11 (Philip's pride on account of his laughter-making, ἐπὶ τῷ γελωτοποιεῖν), 4.50.

12 Xenophon's Philip makes others laugh, but is not represented by Xenophon as laughing himself.

13 Contrary to Xenophon's Philip, who does not mind being laughed at.

of Socrates and his conversational style. Socrates' *logoi*, he says, seem utterly ridiculous at first (221e: φανεῖν ἄν πάνυ γελοίοι τὸ πρῶτον). Socrates uses the ludicrous examples of asses, smiths, cobblers, and tanners; in effect, the ignorant men jeer at his words (221e–222a: ὥστε ἄπειρος καὶ ἀνόητος ἄνθρωπος πᾶς ἄν τῶν λόγων καταγελάσειεν), yet under this absurd surface there is sense, reason (νοῦς), and images of virtue (ἀγάλαματ' ἀρετῆς). Alcibiades seems to imply that this outward ludicrousness, which he calls 'a hide of a hybriatic satyr' (221e), is a sort of Socratic interpersonal strategy.

Alcibiades' comments lead us to the third character around whom laughter-vocabulary centres, namely Socrates, whose complex attitude to laughter in the Platonic corpus has been discussed by scholars (Halliwell 2008: 276–302). In the *Symposium*, he expresses several times a somewhat disingenuous fear that he will become an object of mockery. In 198c, after the speech of Agathon, Socrates admits that he has realized that it was ridiculous (*katagelastos*) to agree to join the company in praising Eros, and a little later, in 199b, he says that he will not try to compete with other speakers, but rather speak in his usual way; otherwise his speech would raise laughter (ἐθέλω εἰπεῖν κατ' ἑμαυτόν, οὐ πρὸς τοὺς ὑμετέρους λόγους, ἵνα μὴ γέλωτα ὄφλω¹⁴). He is a misfit, and whatever he does, he will appear laughable. His fears that the speeches about Eros were to be concerned with truth make him seem ridiculous; he is also worried that if he attempts to follow the others and their manner of praising Eros, he will be laughed at, for he is unable to do it with a skill comparable to that of the others. In 214e, he suspects that Alcibiades, who is about to praise him, will make fun of him (τί ἐν νῶ ἔχεις; ἐπὶ τὰ γελοιώτερά με ἐπαινέσαι;). In response, Alcibiades ensures that he will speak 'for truth and not for laugh' (215a: οὗτος μὲν οὖν ἴσως οἴησεται ἐπὶ τὰ γελοιώτερα, ἔσται δ' ἢ εἰκῶν τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἕνεκα, οὐ τοῦ γελοίου).

As Halliwell (2008: 284–285) observes, here as elsewhere in Plato's dialogues Socrates oscillates between a disregard for and an anxiety about the possibility of derision. Derisive and critical laughter is famously imagined in Plato's *Republic* as the expected reaction to the truth, which defies customs and conventions: this appears in the image of the 'wave of laughter' in book 5 and in the cave metaphor, in which the man returning from the surface becomes the object of ridicule of the other prisoners.¹⁵ In both the image of the wave of

14 The phrase γέλωτα ὄφλειν appears also in Aristophanes; see a comment by Sommerstein 2009: 110.

15 For the waves of laughter, see *Resp.* 457a–c, 473c. The actual metaphor of a 'wave of laughter' (*kuma ekgelōn*, literally 'the wave that laughs out') appears only in 473c, when Socrates talks about the third, biggest wave of objections he is expecting (in 457b–c, though laughter is mentioned as expected reaction to Socrates' propositions, the wave is not specified

laughter and in the cave metaphor there is an embedded conviction that the philosopher has to confront laughter, however violent and destructive it may be:

Ἐπ' αὐτῷ δὴ, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, εἰμί ὃ τῷ μεγίστῳ προσηκάζομεν κύματι. εἰρήσεται δ' οὖν, εἰ καὶ μέλλει γέλωτί τε ἀτεχνῶς ὥσπερ κύμα ἐκγελῶν καὶ ἀδοξία κατακλύσειν.

Well, I've now come to what we likened to the greatest wave. But I shall say what I have to say, even if the wave is a wave of laughter that will simply drown me in ridicule and contempt.

Resp. 473, trans. GRUBE, REEVE

Still, derisive laughter is not always imagined as destructive and violent; sometimes it is perceived as a relatively mild reaction of the masses when compared with the prospect of real, serious violence (which Socrates will eventually face). In *Euthyphro* 3b–e Socrates says that τὸ μὲν καταγελασθῆναι ἴσως οὐδὲν πρᾶγμα, 'to be laughed at is not a problem'; he would not be troubled if the Athenians were intending just to laugh at him in the court, but if they would be serious, this might lead to a real problem.¹⁶ The *Symposium* depicts Socrates as being aware that he is a likely object of laughter; he exemplifies a proper response by the philosopher—endurance—in a situation in which he is threatened with ridicule.¹⁷

To make the discussion of laughter in the *Symposium* inclusive, let us briefly discuss Diotima's laughter. This is not an instance of 'sympotic laughter', as Diotima is not a banquet participant but appears in Socrates' account of his

as a 'wave of laughter'). For a discussion of the phrase *kuma ekgelōn*, which has disturbed some scholars and was excised by more radical ones, see Adam 1902: 361–362. Laughter in the cave metaphor: *Resp.* 517a: ἀρ' οὐ γέλωτ' ἂν παράσχοι, 517d: φαίνεται σφόδρα γελοῖος, 518b: καὶ εἰ γελᾶν ἐπ' αὐτῇ βούλοιοτο, ἦττον ἂν καταγέλαστος ὁ γέλωτος αὐτῷ εἴη ἢ ὁ ἐπὶ τῇ ἄνωθεν ἐκ φωτός ἡκούση. For the fear of becoming the butt of jokes (*skōmmata*), which has to be overcome, cf. also *Resp.* 452c.

16 Pl. *Euthyphro*. 3d–e: εἰ μὲν οὖν, ὃ νυνδὴ ἔλεγον, μέλλοιέν μου καταγελᾶν ὥσπερ σὺ φῆς σαυτοῦ, οὐδὲν ἂν εἴη ἀηδὲς παίζοντας καὶ γελῶντας ἐν τῷ δικαστηρίῳ διαγαγεῖν· εἰ δὲ σπουδάσονται, τοῦτ' ἤδη βπῆ ἀποβήσεται ἀδηλον πλὴν ὑμῖν τοῖς μάντεσιν. Notice how Socrates downplays here the hostility implied by the term *katagelaō*, 'to laugh at', as he implies it is interchangeable with *paizō* and *gelaō*.

17 Cf. with Epict. *Ench.* 22, 29.6, where the philosopher is imagined as being ridiculed and laughed at by the crowd.

encounter with her. She is represented as laughing in 202c, in one of the very few moments in Socrates' account in which narratorial interventions go beyond the occasional 'she said' and 'I said'.¹⁸ Let us examine the passage (*Symp.* 202b–c):

Καὶ μὴν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὁμολογεῖται γε παρὰ πάντων μέγας θεὸς εἶναι. Τῶν μὴ εἰδόντων, ἔφη, πάντων λέγεις, ἢ καὶ τῶν εἰδόντων; Συμπάντων μὲν οὖν. Καὶ ἡ γελάσασσα, Καὶ πῶς ἄν, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὁμολογοῖτο μέγας θεὸς εἶναι παρὰ τούτων, οἳ φασιν αὐτόν οὐδὲ θεὸν εἶναι; Τίνες οὔτοι; ἦν δ' ἐγώ. Εἷς μὲν, ἔφη, σύ, μία δ' ἐγώ.

'Yet everyone agrees he's a great god,' I said. 'Only those who don't know?' she said. 'Is that how you mean 'everyone'? Or do you include those who do know?' 'Oh, everyone! And she said with a laugh, 'Socrates, how could those who say that he's not a god at all agree that he's a great god?' 'Who says that?' I asked. 'You, for one,' she said, 'and I for another.'

trans. NEHAMAS AND WOODRUFF, modified

Halliwell interprets Diotima's laughter as derisive,¹⁹ which seems to me a too strong interpretation of what goes on in the passage. We can identify at least two possible reasons for Diotima's laughter: on the one hand, it may be interpreted as her amusement at the naiveté of Socrates, who is quick to generalize and would rather do without complicating distinctions; on the other, it goes hand in hand with the playfulness with which she steers the conversation in such manner that it is about to make the surprised Socrates disagree with 'everyone'. Her laughter is the laughter of one who is in control of the conversation and who sees clearly and effortlessly the things that are hidden to her interlocutor.

Laughter in Xenophon's *Symposium*

I turn now to Xenophon's *Symposium* and laughter-representation in this dialogue. Compared with Plato's text, laughter is significantly more prominent in Xenophon, who represents the *symposium* guests as laughing more frequently

18 Another instance is in Pl. *Symp.* 207a, where Socrates moves to another conversation, and in 208b–c, in which he describes his reaction (wonder) to her words.

19 Halliwell 2008: 286: 'In Plato's dialogues Socrates is openly derided in conversation on a number of occasions (...) also (...) by a dialectically impatient Diotima at *Symp.* 202b'.

than Plato does; moreover, his characters, in particular Philip the jester, comment several times on laughter and draw attention to its curious nature.²⁰

Let us begin with an examination of laughter vocabulary in the dialogue. We find the verb *gelaō* eleven times, *anagelaō* ('to laugh loud') once, and *ekkekchazō* ('burst out with laughter') also once. The adjective *geloios* and adverb *geloion* are used five times; *gelōs* four times; and there is one instance of *gelōtopoios*, *gelotopoiein*, and *gelōtopoia*. What is remarkable in comparison with Plato's *Symposium* is the absence of the verb *katagelaō* and the verbal adjective *katagelastos*. In fact, real or feigned anxiety about being laughed at, so prominent in Plato, is almost absent from Xenophon's dialogue.²¹ The terms *geloios* and *geloion*, the meaning of which in Plato oscillates between 'ridiculous' and 'amusing', in Xenophon typically mean 'amusing, funny'. They are used in the narrator's description of Philip's efforts to make the symposiasts laugh (in 1.14 (twice) and 2.22) and by Philip himself (1.13); only once, in the expression δόξα γελοία, does the meaning come close to 'ridiculous' (4.8).

The theme of laughter makes its first appearance in Xenophon's text when an uninvited guest, Philip the laughter-maker (*gelōtopoios*), appears at the banquet (1.11).²² Kallias, the host, welcomes him gladly, for, as he observes with some disappointment, the guests are 'deficient in laughter' (1.13). The following scene, in which Philip, without much success, attempts to make the company laugh, offers some glimpses into the complex nature of laughter. Laughter is expected and welcomed at a *symposion*, but it is not always easily generated. Philip, who is a performer and resembles Aristophanic comic characters, attempts to induce the guests to laugh at him: his strategy is to offer himself as the butt of jokes.²³ Thus, he proclaims that he comes uninvited and with an empty stomach, parodying the familiar figure of the parasite (1.11–13), weeps

20 Cf. a comment by Strauss (1972: 145) on Xenophon's *Symposium*: "Beauty and love", "laughter", and "wisdom" are the three themes of the work'.

21 The exception is chapter 1.5, where Socrates suspects Kallias, who was trained by celebrities such as Protagoras, Gorgias, and Prodikos, of making fun of him (the verb ἐπισκώπτω is used: ἀεὶ σὺ ἐπισκώπτεις ἡμᾶς καταφρονῶν).

22 On the figure of the sympotic joker, see Bremmer 1997; Halliwell 2008: 286.

23 The symposiasts laughing at Philip: ἐπ' αὐτῷ (1.14), ἐπὶ τῷ οἰκτισμῷ αὐτοῦ (1.16), ἐπὶ σοί (2.23). For characters turning laughter at themselves in Aristophanes, see Sommerstein 2009: 111–112. There is some resemblance between Philip's unsuccessful efforts to make other characters laugh and the opening of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where Xanthias wants to tell jokes that would induce the audience to laugh; not allowed to do so by Dionysos, he expresses regret (13–15, 19–20). Cf. also Quint. *Inst.* 6.3.23: '(...) we seek to raise a laugh either at the expense of others, or at our own, or out of neutral circumstances' (trans. D.A. Russell).

exaggeratedly and wipes his nose (1.1.15–16), and mimics the dance of the entertainers (2.22–23). What is notable about the jester-figure, and what sets him apart from the other banqueters, is that he is not troubled by being laughed at: he seeks it, for his occupation relies on raising laughter at his own expense. Philip's atypical relationship with laughter locates him on the social margins. In Xenophon's portrait, Philip breathes and lives on laughter: 'I could no more turn serious than I could become immortal', he says (1.15). The prospect of a world bereft of laughter alarms him: there would be no place for him in it, he says, covering his head in a symbolic gesture (1.14–16, he uncovers his head only when he hears laughter).²⁴ Bearing in mind the ambivalent position of laughter in Greek literature and the thin line between innocent teasing and offensive ridicule, we can observe that the presence of the jester, who raises laughter at his own expense, ensures the presence of 'safe' laughter, one which does not entail the risk of antagonizing or offending the *symposion* participants.

There is an additional observation regarding the nature of laughter this scene allows us to make. As Philip laments that the company is not prone to laughter, they comfort him and promise that they 'will laugh the next time' (1.16: πάντες μὲν οὖν παρεμυθοῦντό τε αὐτὸν ὡς ἀθίς γελασόμενοι). The absurdity of this promise draws attention to the fact that laughter is a spontaneous behaviour; premeditated laughter is not real laughter. Therefore, it is not surprising that the promise does not comfort Philip, who uncovers his head only when his exaggerated weeping extracts a real guffaw of laughter from Kritoboulos.

Another passage in which Philip comments on the nature of laughter comes in chapter 4.50, where he explains why he is proud of his profession. He remarks that people who are happy invite him to join them, while people who have experienced bad luck avoid him, for they are afraid that they will laugh against their will (φοβούμενοι μὴ καὶ ἄκοντες γελάσωσι). This observation, again, acknowledges the curious nature of laughter: one can laugh against one's will, and even in sad circumstances; there are occasions when people may wish not to laugh, but may not be able to control themselves.²⁵

From these glimpses into the nature of laughter provided by Philip, let us turn now to laughter-episodes in the *Symposium*. Kritoboulos' laughter at

24 For the gesture, its meaning, and parallels in other texts, see Huss 1999a: 113. Halliwell (2008: 144, n. 102) sees here an allusion to Hom. *Od.* 8.83–84, 92.

25 A similar thought appears in Quint. *Inst.* 6.3.8–9: 'Now, though laughter may seem to be a trivial matter, aroused often by buffoons, actors of farce, or indeed fools, it nevertheless possesses perhaps the most commanding and irresistible force of all. It often breaks out against our will, and not only forces the face and the voice to confess it, but convulses the whole body with its violence' (trans. D.A. Russell).

Philip's weeping in 1.16 is the only instance when a named character is represented as laughing. With considerable dramatic skill, Xenophon depicts Philip lamenting, together with nose-wiping and the real sound of crying (ἄμα λέγων ταῦτα ἀπεμύττετό τε καὶ τῆ φωνῇ σαφῶς κλαίειν ἐφαίνετο). The company feels sorry for him and attempts to console him; Kritoboulos, however, finds the whole situation comic and bursts out in loud laughter at Philip's weeping (Κριτόβουλος δὲ καὶ ἐξεκάρχησεν ἐπὶ τῷ οἰκτισμῷ αὐτοῦ).²⁶ The scene draws attention to the contrast between laughter and lament, laughing and crying, and to the emotional responses they elicit.

In all the other (four) laughter-episodes, Xenophon depicts shared laughter directed at one of the guests. Philip, as Kallias informs us, raised much laughter with his mock-dance (2.23–24: Νῆ Δί, ἔφη ὁ Καλλίας, καὶ ἡμῖν γε, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἡμεῖς διψῶμεν ἐπὶ σοὶ γελῶντες).²⁷ Like in 1.16, where Philip's excessive weeping raised Kritoboulos' laughter, here also laughter is raised by distorting and exaggerating imitation.²⁸

Socrates is another character who raises laughter in the *Symposium*: like Philip, he becomes twice the object of the company's amusement. First, in chapter 2.16, after praising the dance of an entertainer, Socrates declares that he would like to learn dance moves from the boy's trainer. When asked what use he would make of them, he announces in all seriousness: Ὀρχήσομαι νῆ Δία ('I will dance, by Zeus'). His declaration raises everyone's laughter; in response, Socrates, asks with a straight face why they are laughing and in a series of questions ('Is it because I want to exercise to better my health? Or because I want to take more pleasure in my food and my sleep?' etc.) demonstrates the senselessness of their laughter. He enumerates reasons why he might have wished to practice dancing and implies that there is nothing laughable here. Yet, despite his straight face, Socrates is clearly joking. It is evident from his questions that draw the company's attention to his physicality: he draws attention to his

26 As scholars have observed, there may be a connection between Kritoboulos' burst of laughter and a passage in Xenophon's *Oec.* 3.7., where he is portrayed by Socrates as a lover of comedy; see Strauss 1972: 145; Huss 1999a: 116. The compound verb *ekkachazō* is rare in Greek prose; Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 1150b) uses it in reference to a burst of laughter after one has tried to restrain oneself for a long time.

27 There is a nice sense of balance here between Philip, who becomes thirsty after dancing, and the symposiasts, who become thirsty after laughing at him.

28 On the type of humour generated by jesters and buffoons, cf. Cic. *De or.* 2.251; Quint. *Inst.* 6.3.29: 'exaggerated features and gestures (the sort of thing which raises a laugh in a mime) are quite unsuitable to an orator. Totally foreign to his personality also is the rough humour of the buffoon or the stage' (trans. D.A. Russell).

advanced age, claims that he wishes to have a body symmetrically developed in all parts (ἐπιθυμῶ (...) παντὶ διαπονῶν τῷ σώματι πᾶν ἰσόρροπον ποιεῖν), makes the company imagine he is searching for an exercise partner, stripping down before the crowd (με συγγυμναστήν ζητεῖν, οὐδ' ἐν ὄχλῳ πρεσβύτην ὄντα ἀποδύεσθαι), dancing and sweating in a room similar to the one they are dining in (ἀρκέσει μοι οἶκος ἐπτάκλινος, ὥσπερ καὶ νῦν τῷδε τῷ παιδί ἤρκεσε τόδε τὸ οἴκημα ἐνιδρώσαι), and, finally, draws their attention to his large abdomen (μεῖζω τοῦ καιροῦ τὴν γαστέρα ἔχων μετριωτέραν βούλομαι ποιήσαι αὐτήν).²⁹ While seemingly defending himself against this laughter, Socrates spells out the implicit reasons for it.

The second passage in which Socrates becomes an object of laughter is in chapter 3.10. It is similar to the first one: when asked what he is proud of, Socrates makes a serious face and answers that he is proud of *mastropeia*, 'pandering'. This raises a general laugh (ἐγέλασαν ἐπ' αὐτῷ); Socrates, as in 2.17, is unmoved and implies that the company's laughter is unreasonable ('Υμεῖς μὲν γελάτε, ἔφη, ἐγὼ δὲ οἶδ' ὅτι καὶ πάνυ ἂν πολλὰ χρήματα λαμβάνοιμι, εἰ βουλοίμην χρῆσθαι τῇ τέχνῃ). Again, it is the contrast between Socrates' apparent seriousness and his unexpected answer that provokes laughter.³⁰ The humorous character of this passage announces the jocular mood of chapters 4.56–64, in which the theme of Socrates' *mastropeia*, 'this disreputable profession' as Kallias euphemistically calls it (4.56), returns, and in which Xenophon provides his readers with an amusing parody of a Socratic dialogue.³¹

29 For interpretation of this passage, see also Huss 1999b, with whom I fully agree about its jocular character. Huss (1999b: 388) points out other markers of Socrates' humorous intentions: 'Socrates' insistence on the topic he has brought up and the laughter of his listeners are emphasized by the repetition of γελάτε at the beginning of three passages (...). See also Huss 1999a: 153–155 on the humorous character of the passage and of some specific expressions (ἐνιδρώσαι, μεῖζω τοῦ καιροῦ τὴν γαστέρα ἔχων). The word *gastēr* is not a frequent occurrence in Plato's and Xenophon's dialogues, but is at home in comedy. Remarkably, in Plato the noun appears only seven times, three of which come from Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium* (190e–191a). Cf. also Quint. *Inst.* 6.3.112, who comments on one of Cicero's witticisms: 'stomachus enim ille habet aliquid ioco simile'.

30 The two laughter-episodes involving Socrates are examples of incongruity as a source of laughter. Aristotle in *Rhetoric* 1412a talks about surprise and frustration of expectation as the principle of certain type of jokes. For a short overview of the incongruity theory of laughter in subsequent philosophical traditions, see, e.g., Morreall 1983: 15–19.

31 See Huss 1999a: 304–308. Huss sees here a parody of a Plato-style dialectic and observes that the phrase πάνυ μὲν οὖν, which is repeated by Socrates' interlocutors, is more Platonic than Xenophontic. Yet, in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, the expression appears twenty-five times, by no means infrequently! It seems quite possible to me that Xenophon's Socrates

The two scenes clearly show Socrates ἐν ταίς παιδιαίς, amid joking, and we can conclude that his joking consists of resolutely raising laughter at his own expense. There is, then, some resemblance between Philip and Socrates, who both produce laughter by making themselves its objects. Some scholars have argued that, as if in some sort of a competition, Socrates here displaces Philip as the laughter-maker, and that Philip's burlesque-type of humour is inferior to Socrates'.³² Yet I believe that the jester's role should not be marginalized: he is the one who introduces the theme of laughter into the dialogue, emphasizes its importance, and provides reflections on its complex, curious nature.

The last laughter-episode in Xenophon's *Symposium* occurs in chapter 4.45, in which Nikeratos, in response to Antisthenes' praise of poverty, admits to his fondness of money. With a remarkable sense of humour, Nikeratos visualizes himself as a never-satisfied greedy man, always counting his riches. He says that he would like to get some of Antisthenes' indifference towards material goods, but even at that very moment, reaches for a metaphor having to do with money (he wants to 'borrow' some of it, δανεισόμενος). Everyone laughs, and the narrator informs the reader about the reason for their laughter: ἐνθα δὴ ἀνεγέλασαν ἅπαντες, νομίζοντες τὰ ὄντα εἰρηκέναι αὐτόν ('A burst of laughter from the whole company greeted this admission; for they considered that he had told nothing more than the truth'). Laughter is here a response to Nikeratos' frankness and admission of weakness; therefore, it is somewhat reminiscent of the burst of laughter after Alcibiades' speech in Plato's *Symposium*. The self-deprecating humour of Nikeratos is reminiscent of Socrates: like Socrates in the passage concerning dancing, Nikeratos here presents the company with a humorous, exaggerated picture of himself.

As we consider all five laughter-episodes in Xenophon's *Symposium* together, we can see a repeated pattern. Xenophon steers clear of higher-risk jokes and

here parodies himself as well, just as he raises laughter at his own expense in 2.16 and 3.10. Cf. Pangle 2010: 140, who calls Xenophon's *Symposium* a 'gentle Socratic self-satire'.

32 For attempts to interpret Philip's kind of humour as inferior, see, e.g., discrediting comments on Philip's dancing by Strauss (1972: 149): 'He [i.e., Xenophon—κ] did not say that they all laughed: did Socrates laugh? Philippos' performance—in contradistinction to the performances which he parodied—did not induce anyone to draw a serious-playful lesson from it'. Similarly, Halliwell (2008: 147–151) suggests that Xenophon presents some sort of competition between Philip and Socrates, in which Socrates 'discreetly displaces Philippos (...) in the role of "laughter-maker"' and by doing it, 'partly transforms the function of laughter itself, turning it from a self-sufficient goal (which the "hired" jester will do anything to achieve) into a defter, more delicate mediating factor in relations between the guests at the party' (151).

laughter raised at the expense of others, thereby avoiding the slippery ground of potentially offensive interactions. Instead, he depicts people arousing laughter at their own expense: in all five cases, the characters who are objects of laughter (Philip, Socrates, Nikeratos), make it clear by their words and behaviour that it is their purpose to elicit laughter from the company.

Laughter in Plato's and Xenophon's *Symposia* in Context

The examination of laughter-representation in Plato's and Xenophon's *Symposia* shows a marked difference in both the laughter-vocabulary used by the two authors and in their approach to laughter more generally. In terms of the laughter-related vocabulary, I have already pointed out that Plato uses more laughter-words carrying associations with derision: *katagelaō* and *katagelastos*, which occur altogether six times in Plato, are absent from Xenophon; also, contrary to Xenophon, Plato uses the words *geloios* and *geloion* more frequently with the meaning 'ridiculous' rather than 'amusing, funny.' Xenophon, on the other hand, uses the simple verb *gelaō* much more frequently (eleven instances, as compared with two in Plato), and, moreover, reaches for two other verbs of laughing, with slightly different meanings: *anagelaō* and *eklagchzō*. These observations suggest that Xenophon's *Symposion* is more interested in exploring the phenomenon of playful, good-natured laughter than Plato's; this is also confirmed by the reflections on laughter Xenophon puts into Philip's mouth. Plato, on the other hand, reveals significantly more concern with the dark side of laughter and its associations with mockery: there is more anxiety expressed about the possibility of derision.

Regardless of the differences in laughter-representation in Plato's and Xenophon's *Symposia*, there are also some resemblances, which become apparent when we consider the dialogues in the broader context of laughter-representation in other genres. In comparison with the use of laughter in epic poetry and Herodotos, the two authors are rather reluctant to represent individual symposiasts as laughing, and neither of them uses laughter consistently to characterize the laughing interlocutors. It is certainly not accidental that Aristophanes is the one who is laughing in Plato, and Kritoboulos' burst of laughter possibly reflects his personality as well, but these are isolated occurrences. Xenophon makes use of laughter for the sake of characterization, but not the characterization of a laugher himself, but of those who willingly make themselves objects of laughter. Unlike Homer, Herodotos, and Greek dramatists, neither Plato's nor Xenophon's *Symposium* depicts malicious or derisive laughter, laughter of superiority and arrogance, or the laughter of deception.

It may now be useful to consider the use of laughter in both *Symposia* in the broader context of Plato's and Xenophon's works. Plato's restraint concerning laughter-representation in the *Symposium* is congruent with the misgivings about laughter expressed in the *Republic*, *Philebus*, and the *Laws*.³³ We can identify several objections against laughter raised or implied in these dialogues. First, Plato associates laughter with ignorance: as we have seen above, he repeatedly anticipates derisive laughter as the reaction of men without proper understanding when they hear philosophical ideas (e.g., *Resp.* 452c, 457b–c, 473c, 517a, d, 518b; *Leg.* 789e, 790a, 800b, 830b). As I pointed out above, such ignorant laughter appears in the cave metaphor and in the image of the 'wave of laughter' in the *Republic*. This derisive laughter of the ignorant is a potential stumbling block for the philosopher, who must overcome the fear of being ridiculed and not to allow it to stop him from telling the truth.

However, not only being laughed at is problematic, but also laughing. Strong laughter (ισχυρός γέλως) that overwhelms men (ἀνθρώπους κρατουμένους ὑπὸ γέλωτος) creates a strong change (ισχυράν μεταβολήν) in the laughter's soul (*Resp.* 388e–389a). Laughter, then, regardless its character—whether it is derisive and malicious or playful and innocent—is problematic as a bodily reaction, a physical perturbation which disturbs the soul.³⁴ This is why Plato condemns the famous Homeric passage from book one of the *Iliad*, in which the banqueting gods laugh at the limping Hephaistos (*Il.* 1.599–600, cf. *Resp.* 389a).

Strong laughter is also symptomatic of strong emotions, and these emotions, as well as their expression, should be suppressed. These emotions may be of a different sort. In the *Laws*, we read that 'excessive laughter and tears must be avoided ... one should try to behave decently by suppressing all extremes of joy and grief' (732c: γελῶτων τε εἴργεσθαι χρὴ τῶν ἐξαισιῶν καὶ δακρῶν ... καὶ ὄλην περιχάρειαν πᾶσαν ἀποκρυπτόμενον καὶ περιωδυνίαν εὐσχημονεῖν πειρᾶσθαι). In the *Philebus*, on the other hand, when discussing comedy, Plato associates laughter with malice, *phthonos*, and with malicious pleasure at others' misfortunes (*Phlb.* 48–50).³⁵ In the *Laws*, he distinguishes between ridicule with and without anger (935d–e: μετὰ θυμοῦ, ἄνευ θυμοῦ), and strictly forbids the former. Laughter is problematic as an expression of one's emotions, *inter alia* emotions entailing hostility towards someone. We can suppose that it is the

33 For a general overview of laughter in Plato, see de Vries, 1985.

34 One of the most vivid ancient stories visualizing the violent, physical nature of laughter is Diogenes Laertios' account of Chrysis' death, which was the result of a violent fit of laughter (7.185).

35 For a discussion of laughter in the *Philebus*, see, e.g., Fortenbaugh 2003, Wood 2007.

incongruity of laughter with proper control over one's emotions and with decorous behaviour (*Leg.* 732c εὐσχημονεῖν) that leads the Athenian in the *Laws* to prohibit the practice of comedy by citizens and jokes at citizens' expense (*Leg.* 816d–e, 935c–e).³⁶

These objections against laughter might have influenced Plato's restraint in depicting laughter in the *Symposium*. Yet, it should be noted that such restraint is not maintained throughout the Platonic corpus. There is, in fact, a sharp contrast between Plato's *Symposium*, almost bereft of laughter, and the *Phaedo*, in which the interlocutors, in spite of gloomy circumstances, laugh surprisingly often.³⁷ Laughter in the *Phaedo* balances the tragic circumstances of Socrates' last conversation and emphasizes the affinity between Socrates and his companions—only his close, philosophically minded friends present—and this, as Halliwell observes, conveys 'a Socratic defiance, an emotional transcendence, of death'.³⁸ Paradoxically, the *Phaedo* offers conditions that neutralize the risks associated with laughter: the company present consists only of Socrates' close friends, whose keen interest in philosophy precludes the unreasonable, mocking laughter of those who have no share in real understanding. That the laughter is not violent and overwhelming, Plato reminds the reader by modifying the verb γελᾶω with expressions meaning 'gently, quietly' (*Phd.* 84d: ἡρέμα, 115c: ἡσυχῆ). Contrary to the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium* with its assorted company and undercurrent rivalry does not offer ideal conditions for good laughter, as is visible in the recurrent motif of the fear of appearing ridiculous. But also, from a compositional perspective, we can notice that while in the *Phaedo* Plato counterweights the gravity of the dialogue with laughter, in the *Symposium* he confronts a different challenge, namely, not let the seriousness of the dialogue become overshadowed by comic elements.

Turning now to Xenophon, the best *comparandum* for laughter-representation in the *Symposium* will be his *Cyropaedia*. Regardless of the genre-difference, there are numerous affinities between this text and Xenophon's Socratic writings; Xenophon's depictions of banquets in the *Cyropaedia* are particu-

36 Note, however, that the Athenian in the *Laws* maintains that it is impossible to learn the serious (*ta spoudaia*) without learning the comic and laughable (*geloia*), and that one has to learn to recognize buffoonery in order to avoid it (*Leg.* 816d–e).

37 Pl. *Phd.* 62a (Kebes) 64a (Simmias), 84d (Socrates), 101b (Kebes), 115c (Socrates) (I list only the passages in which an individual is presented as laughing, not all the passages in which laughter occurs or is mentioned). For a discussion of laughter in the *Phaedo*, see de Vries 1985: 380, Halliwell 2008: 278–284.

38 Halliwell 2008: 283. See also 301–302, where Halliwell calls laughter in the *Phaedo* 'one of the supreme paradoxes of Socrates' final hours'.

larly well suited for comparison with the *Symposium*:³⁹ as has been observed, numerous elements of the *Symposium* are found in the banquet depictions in the *Cyropaedia*, such as the combination of serious and frivolous themes (*spoudaiogeloion*), didactic passages, competition among guests, references to matchmaking and love (both heterosexual and homosexual), and a discussion of wealth and poverty.⁴⁰

From the perspective of our study, Xenophon's description of Cyrus' dinner with his officers in 2.2.1–2.3.1, in which laughter becomes a topic of discussion, is of particular interest. Xenophon introduces the account with a statement that Cyrus took care that dinner conversations were both entertaining (εὐχαριστότατοι) and incited to good (παρορμῶντες εἰς τὰγαθόν). He opens one conversation by asking the company whether the commoners who had joined the army were equal in social manners and military skills to the peers, *homotimoi*. Two participants relate stories that elicit laughter from the company and Cyrus himself, both at the expense of the commoners: one showing a commoner's greediness at a meal, the other one an absurd, literal exactness in following orders.⁴¹ The laughter is indicative of the bond and understanding between Cyrus and the *homotimoi* and their distinction from the commoners. We can suspect that Cyrus asks his opening question well aware of the frictions between the peers and the commoners, and that he does so in order to provide the peers with a space for light-hearted criticism and complaint.

Yet one of the taxiarchs, Aglaïtadas, known for his sour and austere character (2.2.11: τὸν τρόπον τῶν στρυφνοτέρων ἀνθρώπων), accuses the two men who related the stories of not telling the truth and of making the stories up in order to raise a laugh (γέλωτα ποιεῖν ἐθέλοντες). The two men are, according to him, braggers, by which he seems to mean that they distort the truth for self-serving purposes—to appear better by denigrating others. Cyrus defends them:

39 Banquets in the *Cyropaedia*: 1.3.4–12, 2.2.1–2.3.1, 5.2.5–22, 8.3.35–50, 8.4.1–27. For a detailed analysis of banquets in the *Cyropaedia* and their relation with, *inter alia*, Socratic literature and Xenophon's *Symposium*, see Gera 1993: 132–191. See also Huss 1999b: 395: '[T]he symposia of the *kalos kagathos* Cyrus are an important point of comparison in interpreting the humorous symposium at Kallias' house, at which the *kalos kagathos* Sokrates plays the leading role'. The *Symposium* and the Persian banquets of the *Cyropaedia* are also mentioned together by Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 630a.

40 Gera 1993: 135–138.

41 The stories, as has been observed, depict the stock figures of a parasite and an 'over-obedient, literal-minded man' (Gera 1993: 161–162).

καὶ ὁ Κύρος, Εὐφήμει, ἔφη, μηδὲ λέγε ἀλαζόνας εἶναι τούτους. ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἀλαζῶν ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ ὄνομα κείσθαι ἐπὶ τοῖς προσποιουμένοις καὶ πλουσιωτέροις εἶναι ἢ εἰσὶ καὶ ἀνδρειότεροις καὶ ποιήσιν ἂ μὴ ἱκανοὶ εἰσιν ὑπισχνουμένοις, καὶ ταῦτα φανεροῖς γιγνομένοις ὅτι τοῦ λαβεῖν τι ἔνεκα καὶ κερδᾶναι ποιοῦσιν. οἱ δὲ μηχανώμενοι γέλωτα τοῖς συνοῦσι μήτε ἐπὶ τῷ αὐτῶν κέρδει μήτ' ἐπὶ ζημίᾳ τῶν ἀκουόντων μήτε ἐπὶ βλάβῃ μηδεμιᾶ, πῶς οὐχ οὔτοι ἀστεῖοι ἂν καὶ εὐχάριτες δικαιότερον ὀνομάζοντο μᾶλλον ἢ ἀλαζόνες; ὁ μὲν δὲ Κύρος οὕτως ἀπελογήσατο περὶ τῶν τὸν γέλωτα παρασχόντων (...)

Hush, said Cyrus, don't call these men braggers. For to me, the name 'bragger' seems to apply to those who pretend that they are richer than they are or braver than they are, and to those who promise to do what they cannot do, and that, too, when it is evident that they do this only for the sake of getting something or making some gain.⁴² But those who produce laughter from their companions not for their own gain nor with damage to their hearers nor with any injury whatsoever, why should these men not be called 'witty' and 'entertaining' rather than 'braggers'? Thus Cyrus defended those who had furnished laughter (...)

Cyr. 2.2.12–13, trans. W. MILLER, adapted

Cyrus' apology for the two men who, he does not deny, might have embellished their accounts to some degree in order to raise laughter, is not concerned with the truth; rather, he offers a defence of laughter and laughter-making. He is not unaware of the ambivalent character of laughter: the tricolon μήτε ἐπὶ τῷ αὐτῶν κέρδει, μήτ' ἐπὶ ζημίᾳ τῶν ἀκουόντων, μήτε ἐπὶ βλάβῃ μηδεμιᾶ specifies three cases in which raising laughter might be problematic. These resemble the acts of a braggart: when it is produced for one's gain, when it causes harm to the hearers, or leads to some other injury (possibly an injury to an absent person who is the object of laughter). Cyrus apparently believes that neither of these took place in the situation under discussion.

The exchange between Aglaïtadas and Cyrus is next followed by an exchange between Aglaïtadas and the two officers he criticized. One of them tells Aglaïtadas that his intention was to entertain and amuse the company (εὐφραίνειν), and that Aglaïtadas should find fault with people who make others weep rather than with those who make others laugh. The conversation turns towards a discussion of the value and usefulness of laughter. Aglaïtadas launches a direct attack

42 For a comparison, see the characterization of ἀλαζῶν in Theophrastos' *Characters*, chapter 23.

on laughter: making friends laugh is worse than making them weep. Weeping is useful in the process of education and in keeping justice in the city. By means of weeping, fathers instil in their sons moderation and self-control (*sōphrosunē*), teachers teach students good lessons, and laws induce citizens to justice (*dikaïosunē*). Laughter, on the other hand, brings nothing good either to bodies or to minds, and does not help one to become better in the management either of one's own affairs or those of the state. Aglaïtadas finds laughter not to be in harmony with moral uprightness and moral seriousness. Although he does not elaborate on what harm laughter brings, the contrast between the worthlessness of laughter and the usefulness of weeping indicates that he considers the frivolity of laughter to be, at best, a distraction from important, serious moral and political concerns.

One's interpretations of the figure of Aglaïtadas may vary depending on one's overall reading of the *Cyropaedia*.⁴³ Is Aglaïtadas' point of view to be dismissed altogether as indicative of his grouchiness and lack of sense of humour, or is he saying something of importance?⁴⁴ In the light of Xenophon's embracement of laughter in the *Symposium*, I find it difficult to see Xenophon as wholeheartedly siding with *πολέμιος τῷ γέλωτι*, 'foe to laughter' (*Cyr.* 2.2.16).⁴⁵ Xenophon's interest in mixing the serious with the amusing and laughable, both in the *Cyropaedia* (3.1: *γελοία καὶ σπουδαία*) and in the *Symposium* (1.1: *τὰ μετὰ σπουδῆς πραττόμενα ... καὶ τὰ ἐν ταῖς παιδιαῖς*), indicates that he believed that an admixture of laughter does not impair or annihilate seriousness and decency.

On the other hand, even without wholehearted adherence to a 'dark' and subversive reading of the *Cyropaedia*, one can notice that Aglaïtadas raises important questions regarding the usefulness of laughter and playfulness in

43 For a thoughtful discussion of contemporary approaches to Xenophon, see the Introduction to Hobden and Tuplin 2012.

44 As Hobden and Tuplin (2012: 34) observe, the name 'Aglaïtadas', raising associations with a Greek noun *ἀγλαΐα*, 'splendor, glory', is probably not chosen arbitrarily by Xenophon; they suggest that his name can indicate that he is not 'wholly in the wrong'. Nadon (2001: 75–76) points out that Aglaïtadas questions Cyrus' reforms and defends the ancestral way of life. Gera (1993: 162–163) draws a parallel between Aglaïtadas and Hermogenes in Xenophon's *Symposium* (the unsociable symposiast). For Aglaïtadas' remarks interpreted as Xenophon's reflection on the theory of fiction, see Reichel 2010: 436–437.

45 Aglaïtadas is reminiscent of later figures, cf., e.g., Ael. *VH* 8.13 *Ἀναξαγόραν τὸν Κλαζομέτιον φασὶ μῆτε γελῶντά ποτε ὀφθῆναι μῆτε μειδιῶντα τὴν ἀρχήν. λέγουσι δὲ καὶ Ἀριστόξενον τῷ γέλωτι ἀνά κράτος πολέμιον γενέσθαι (...)*. Plato, according to Diogenes Laertios 3.26 (whose source is Herakleides), was never seen laughing excessively (*μηδέποτε ὀφθῆναι γελῶν ὑπεράγαν*) in his youth.

education and state- and home-management—and thus supplements the reflection on the nature of laughter in the *Symposium* with a moral and political perspective (2.2.14)—and that his arguments are not countered by other interlocutors. Reichel proposed that Xenophon is responding here to Plato's *Republic*, and suggested that Aglaïtadas stands for Plato.⁴⁶ Whether we accept his proposition (which I find stimulating) or not, Aglaïtadas' insistence on the truth (2.2.11: Ἦ γὰρ οἶει, ἔφη, ὦ Κῦρε, τούτους ἀληθῆ λέγειν ταῦτα; 2.2.14: εὐρήσεις δὲ καὶ σύ, ἦν ὀρθῶς λογίζῃ, ἐμὲ ἀληθῆ λέγοντα) as well as his focus on the moral and the political (seen in his concern with σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη) brings a philosophical dimension to the discussion of laughter and marks some problematic points.

Considered together, then, the *Symposium* and *Cyropaedia* 2.2 reveal Xenophon's interest in laughter and his awareness of philosophical discussions regarding its nature and value. In the serio-comic context of a banquet, two of his characters, Philip and Aglaïtadas, raise a number of points regarding the nature and usefulness (or lack thereof) of laughter. Probably neither Philip nor Aglaïtadas—representing two extremes, as a laughter-maker and a foe of laughter—is to be identified straightforwardly with Xenophon. Yet Xenophon's view that mixing the serious with the playful can have some usefulness, as well as his willingness to represent Socrates resolutely raising laughter at his own expense—suggests a fair dose of acceptance of laughter, though he is not unaware of potential problems.

Plato's mistrust towards laughter influenced subsequent authors. The stock figure of a philosopher who never laughs recurs in ancient texts; Plato's dialogues—above all the *Republic* and the *Philebus*—must have also been influential in shaping the tradition of theoretical reflection on *to geloion*, 'the laughable', which began to flourish in the classical period.⁴⁷ But Xenophon's embracement of laughter was not lost on later writers, and some even declared Platonists tempered the Platonic sobriety with an admixture of Xenophonic approval of laughter. Such is the case of Plutarch, who in the *Quaestiones convivales* (the first *quaestio* of book 2) explicitly discusses jokes and laughter and singles out Xenophon as the author of both the *Symposium* and the *Cyropaedia* as the main reference point in his discussion.⁴⁸

46 Reichel 1997, Reichel 2010: 436–437. For ancient authors drawing a link between *Cyropaedia* and Plato's *Republic*, see Gera 1993: 12–13.

47 For an attempt to reconstruct Aristotle's and Theophrastos' ideas on laughter, see Fortenbaugh (2003).

48 See, e.g., Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 629c, 629e–f, 630a, 632a–b, 632e.

Works Cited

- Adam, J. ed. 1902. *The Republic of Plato*. Vol. 1. Cambridge University Press.
- Bremmer, J. 1997. "Jokes, Jokers and Jokebooks in Ancient Greek Culture." In J. Bremmer and H. Roodenburg eds. *A Cultural History of Humour*. Polity Press. 11–28.
- Clay, D. 1975. "The Tragic and Comic Poet of the *Symposium*." *Arion* 2: 238–261.
- Colakis, M. 1986. "The Laughter of the Suitors in 'Odyssey.'" *CW* 79: 137–141.
- Danzig, G. 2005. "Intra-Socratic Polemics: The *Symposia* of Plato and Xenophon." *GRBS* 45: 331–357.
- Dillon, M. 1991. "Tragic Laughter." *CW* 84: 345–355.
- Fortenbaugh, W.W. 2003. "An Aristotelian and Theophrastean Analysis of Laughter." In W.W. Fortenbaugh. *Theophrastean Studies*. Franz Steiner Verlag. 91–106.
- Gera, D.L. 1993. *Xenophon's Cyropaedia: Style, Genre, and Literary Technique*. Clarendon Press.
- Gilhus, I.S. 1997. *Laughing Gods, Weeping Virgins: Laughter in the History of Religion*. Routledge.
- Halliwell, S. 2008. *Greek Laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hobden, F. 2013. *The Symposion in Ancient Greek Society and Thought*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hobden, F. and C. Tuplin eds. 2012. *Xenophon: Ethical Principles and Historical Enquiry*. Brill.
- Huss, B. 1999a. *Xenophon's Symposium: Ein Kommentar*. B.G. Teubner.
- Huss, B. 1999b. "The Dancing Sokrates and the Laughing Xenophon, or the Other 'Symposium.'" *AJP* 120: 381–409.
- Lateiner, D. 1977. "No Laughing Matter: A Literary Tactic in Herodotus." *TAPA* 107: 173–182.
- Levine, D.B. 1982. "Homeric Laughter and the Unsmiling Suitors." *CJ* 78: 97–104.
- Mader, M. 1977. *Das Problem des Lachens und der Komödie bei Platon*. Verlag W. Kohlhammer GmbH.
- Morreall, J. (1983) *Taking Laughter Seriously*. State University of New York Press.
- Murray, O. ed. 1990. *Symptica: A Symposium on the Symposion*. Oxford University Press.
- Nadon, C. 2001. *Xenophon's Prince. Republic and Empire in the Cyropaedia*. University of California Press.
- Pangle, T.L. 2010. "Socratic Political Philosophy in Xenophon's 'Symposium.'" *American Journal of Political Science* 54: 140–152.
- Reichel, M. 1997. "Eine übersehene Reaktion auf Platons Dichterkritik: Xenophon, *Kyropädie* 2.2." In H.-C. Günther and A. Rengakos eds. *Beiträge zur antiken Philosophie: Festschrift für Wolfgang Kullmann*. Franz Steiner Verlag. 103–112.

- Reichel, M. 2010. "Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and the Hellenistic Novel." In V.J. Gray ed. *Xenophon*. Oxford University Press. 418–438.
- Relihan, J.C. 1992. "Rethinking the History of the Literary Symposium." *ICS* 17: 213–244.
- Slater, W.J. 1991. *Dining in a Classical Context*. University of Michigan Press.
- Sommerstein, A.H. 2009. "Talking about Laughter in Aristophanes." In A.H. Sommerstein ed. *Talking about Laughter and Other Studies in Greek Comedy*. Oxford University Press. 104–115.
- Strauss, L. 1972. *Xenophon's Socrates*. Cornell University Press.
- Vries de, G.J. 1985. "Laughter in Plato's Writings." *Mnemosyne* 38: 378–381.
- Wecowski, M. 2014. *The Rise of the Greek Aristocratic Banquet*. Oxford University Press.
- Wood, J.L. 2007. "Comedy, Malice, and Philosophy in Plato's *Philebus*." *AncPhil* 27: 77–94.