

VIRTUE AND ITS ABSENCE IN XENOPHON'S *ANABASIS*:
TALKING ABOUT GOOD BEHAVIOUR AMONG ROYAL PERSIANS
AND MERCENARY GREEKS

CHRISTOPHER J. TUPLIN

Abstract: This essay approaches the role of cardinal virtues in Xenophon's *Anabasis* through three salient passages: Xenophon's speech to Seuthes in Book VII, the obituary of Menon in Book II, and the obituary of Cyrus in Book I. It shows that these passages are informed by the same rather selective framework of virtues and offers an explanation of the generally low incidence of classic virtue words in *Anabasis*.

Keywords: *Arete*, Truth, Generosity, Justice, Stylistic register

Anabasis is full of leadership and hence of good and bad behaviour in various political environments. But there are few passages which talk about leadership in general terms. What we get is description or exemplification of leadership in action in specific circumstances. Obvious exceptions are the obituary notices of Cyrus, Clearchus, Proxenus and Menon, which offer generalizing analyses of the leadership of four individuals (1.9.1–31, 2.6.1–30). A less obvious example is Xenophon's speech to Seuthes late in Book VII in which he advises him how to behave through generalizations about how leaders should behave. In this essay I use these passages as a way into cardinal and other virtues in *Anabasis*. In doing so, I am particularly interested in the use of virtue-words as such – their identity and the frequency and context of their appearance. Xenophon is the philosopher-soldier *par excellence*. Confronted with a quintessential philosopher's topic – virtue – it is natural to investigate how it plays in the work in which we see Xenophon the soldier more extensively than in any other.¹

c.j.tuplin@liverpool.ac.uk, University of Liverpool, England, United Kingdom.

¹ A much fuller version of this discussion appears as Tuplin 2024. I am grateful both to the editors of the volume in which that essay appears and to the editors of the present volume for their willingness to permit this partial duplication. I am also very grateful to Maria Elena De Luna, Antonio Panaino and Matteo Zaccarini for the invitation to the 2022 conference and a further opportunity to renew my acquaintance with Ravenna more than a half century after my first visit there.

1. The speech to Seuthes

I start with Seuthes.² Two structurally inter-related passages from the start and end of Xenophon's speech to Seuthes present us with *alētheia*, *gennaiotēs*, *dikaiousunē* and *aretē* as significant moral concepts. Truth will give power against enemies, just as the expectation of truthfulness gave him mercenaries who made him king; and *aretē*, *dikaiousunē* and *gennaiotēs* will make him friends, which is what the soldiers once were: for Xenophon had made Seuthes a gift of himself and the soldiers as loyal friends (7.3.30).

Four leadership qualities, then. *Dikaiousunē* is a cardinal virtue, and *aretē* is virtue itself. Both would be at home in heavy-duty philosophical discourse. The other two are different. About *gennaiotēs* I merely note that Xenophonic *gennaiotēs* is sometimes associated with generosity, something appropriate to the Seuthes context.³ More immediately interesting is truth – or «those who practice truth» (*hoi alētheian askountes*: 7.7.24).

The phrase is unusual: it appears only twice more in pre-Roman-era texts. The first is Herodotus 7.209, where Demaratus faces a huge struggle (*agōn*) to practice

² 7.7.22–24: πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ οἶδα μετὰ τοὺς θεοὺς εἰς τὸ φανερόν σε τούτους καταστήσαντας, ἐπεὶ γε βασιλέα σε ἐποίησαν πολλῆς χώρας καὶ πολλῶν ἀνθρώπων· ὥστε οὐχ οἷόν τέ σοι λανθάνειν οὔτε ἦν τι καλὸν οὔτε ἦν τι αἰσχρὸν ποιήσης. τοιοῦτῳ δὲ ὄντι ἀνδρὶ μέγα μὲν μοι ἐδόκει εἶναι μὴ δοκεῖν ἀχαρίστως ἀποπέμψασθαι ἄνδρα εὐεργέτα, μέγα δὲ εὖ ἀκούειν ὑπὸ ἑξακισχιλίων ἀνθρώπων, τὸ δὲ μέγιστον μηδαμῶς ἀπίστον σαυτὸν καταστήσαι ὃ τι λέγοις. ὁρῶ γὰρ τῶν μὲν ἀπίστον ματαίους καὶ ἀδυνάτους καὶ ἀτίμους τοὺς λόγους πλανωμένους· οἱ δ' ἂν φανεροὶ ὧσιν ἀλήθειαν ἀσκοῦντες, τούτων οἱ λόγοι, ἦν τι δέωνται, οὐδὲν μείον δύνανται ἀνύσασθαι ἢ ἄλλων ἢ βία· ἦν τέ τινας σωφρονίζειν βούλονται, γινώσκω τὰς τούτων ἀπειλὰς οὐχ ἦτον σωφρονιζούσας ἢ ἄλλων τὸ ἥδη κολάζειν· ἦν τέ τῷ τι ὑπισχνῶνται οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἄνδρες, οὐδὲν μείον διαπράττονται ἢ ἄλλοι παραχρήμα διδόντες («You're a prominent figure and (the gods aside) it was these soldiers who brought this about – after all, they made you king over an extensive well-populated region. So you can't do anything, good or bad, without people noticing. [23] Since that's the position you're in, it's important, I think, not to give the impression that you get rid of benefactors without showing gratitude. It's also important to retain the good opinion of a group of 6,000 men, and extremely important never to make people think they can't trust what you say. [24] In my experience the words of untrustworthy men are futile and ineffective and command no respect – because you don't know where you are with them. But when you've got people who obviously work hard at truth it's a different matter: if they make a request they get what they want just as much as other people do by using force; if they want to bring someone into line their threats are (in my judgment) no less chastening than the actual punishment inflicted by others; and when men of this sort make a promise they achieve as much as other people do with an on-the-spot gift»). 7.7.41–42: ἐγὼ δέ, ὦ Σεῦθη, οὐδὲν νομίζω ἀνδρὶ ἄλλως τε καὶ ἄρχοντι κάλλιον εἶναι κτῆμα οὐδὲ λαμπρότερον ἀρετῆς καὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ γενναιοῦτος. ὁ γὰρ ταῦτα ἔχων πλουτεῖ μὲν ὄντων φίλων πολλῶν, πλουτεῖ δὲ ἄλλων βουλομένων γενέσθαι, καὶ εὖ μὲν πράττων ἔχει τοὺς συνησθησομένους, ἐὰν δέ τι σφαλῇ, οὐ σπανίζει τῶν βοηθησόντων («My view is that a man – particularly a man in authority – can have no finer or brighter possession than virtue, justice and nobility (*aretē kai dikaiousunē kai gennaiotēs*). Someone with these qualities is richly provided with actual friends and with people who want to become his friends. If things go well for him, there will be people to share his pleasure, and if something goes wrong, he will not be short of help»).

³ Generosity: *Cyr.* 8.3.38; *Oec.* 15.4 and 12; 19.17; *Hell.* 7.2.16. *Gennaion* is the opposite of *adikon* in *Ages.* 4.5, while in *Cyr.* 8.3.38 *gennaiotēs* is the generosity that gives more than would strictly be *dikaion*. Elsewhere Xenophonic *gennaiotēs/gennaios* connotes high-mindedness or an appropriate sense of one's status (*Ages.* 9.7; *Symp.* 8.16; *Ap.* 34).

truth before Xerxes – i.e. to persuade Xerxes that the Thermopylae Spartans doing gymnastics and combing their hair will actually fight. In Herodotus *askein* interacts with *agōn*: Demaratus has to be an athlete of truth-speaking, as the Spartans are athletes of war. In Xenophon, *askein alētheian* evokes the Xenophontic-Socratic idea that virtue must be constantly exercised to remain fresh,⁴ but what is specially interesting is that the other pre-Roman attestation also occurs in *Anabasis*, in the obituary of Menon, a man who treated devout truth-practisers as unmanly (*anandrois*: 2.6.25). The rarity of the phrase suggests there is a conscious echo. That there is also talk of just behaviour in the same passage strengthens this belief. It is time, therefore, to examine Xenophon's account of Menon.

2. The Menon obituary

The Menon passage is the third of three interconnected obituaries of generals arrested by the Persians in autumn 401. They are all flawed leaders, in an ascending order of awfulness: Clearchus very effective when there is a war going on, Proxenus not a bad man but a weak and inadequate leader, Menon irredeemably wicked.

The first part of the account of Menon is a ring-composition which stresses two summary statements about his character:

2.6.22: He considered that the quickest route to fulfilling his desires was through perjury, lies and deception. Straightforwardness and truth were in his view tantamount to idiocy.⁵

2.6.26: Where ordinary people pride themselves on reverence for god (*theosebeia*), truth and justness (*dikaiotēs*), Menon prided himself on his capacity for deception, fabrication of lies and contempt for his friends. Anyone who was not a villain he always regarded as uneducated.⁶

Between the two statements Menon's moral view is exemplified with a series of paradoxes about friends and enemies ending with the words already mentioned:

2.6.25: people whom he saw to be perjurers and criminals he feared on the grounds that they were well armed, but those who were devout truth-practisers he regarded as unmanly, and he sought to exploit them.⁷

⁴ *Mem.* 1.2.19–23; 2.6.20 and 39; 3.5.14; 3.9.1–3; *Symp.* 8.27. See also *Cyr.* 1.5.8, 9, 11; 2.3.4; 3.3.50–55; 7.2.24; 7.5.71, 75, 77, 79, 85; 8.1.5 and 12, 30, 32; 8.2.26; *Ages.* 10.2; *Lac. Resp.* 10.1, 4, 7.

⁵ ἐπὶ δὲ τὸ κατεργάζεσθαι ὧν ἐπιθυμοίη συντομωτάτην ᾗετο ὁδὸν εἶναι διὰ τοῦ ἐπιπορκεῖν τε καὶ ψεύδεσθαι καὶ ἐξαπατᾶν, τὸ δ' ἀπλοῦν καὶ ἀληθές τὸ αὐτὸ τῷ ἡλιθίῳ εἶναι.

⁶ ὥσπερ δὲ τις ἀγάλλεται ἐπὶ θεοσεβείᾳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ, οὕτω Μένων ἡγάλλετο τῷ ἐξαπατᾶν δύνασθαι, τῷ πλάσσεσθαι ψεύδη, τῷ φίλους διαγελᾶν· τὸν δὲ μὴ πανοῦργον τῶν ἀπαιδευτῶν αἰεὶ ἐνόμιζεν εἶναι.

⁷ καὶ ὅσους μὲν αἰσθάνοιτο ἐπιόρκους καὶ ἀδίκους ὡς εὖ ὠπλισμένους ἐφοβεῖτο, τοῖς δὲ ὁσίοις καὶ ἀληθείαν ἀσκοῦσιν ὡς ἀνάδροις ἐπειράτο χρῆσθαι.

A number of observations can be made.

1) Idiocy in § 22 corresponds to being uneducated in § 26. Conventional morality is an intellectual failure. This echoes references to education in the accounts of Clearchus (whose sternness is that of a teacher: 2.6.12) and Proxenus (who bought teaching from Gorgias: 2.6.17). Menon saw himself as educated: is Xenophon tacitly reminding us that Menon was a failed pupil of Socrates?

2) Menon's fundamental vice is untruthfulness. And its centrality is reflected in a Xenophontic joke in 2.6.28, where the notoriety of Menon's sexploitation is underlined thus: «It would, of course, be possible to *pseudesthai* about Menon in areas where the facts are unclear». Whether *pseudesthai* is «be mistaken» or «tell lies», this way of contrasting what is certain and uncertain about Menon charmingly echoes the man's central fault.

3) *Alētheian askousi* is verbally unusual. But so are *theosebeia* and *dikaiotēs*. *Theosebeia* has fewer than 20 attestations before the Hellenistic era and perhaps underlines better than *eusebeia* that Menon was defying the gods. *Dikaiotēs* is even rarer: the only other pre-Hellenistic examples are two in Plato, where the ending is picked for a play in sound with *hosiotēs* and *kosmiotēs*, and two other Xenophon passages, where there is no obvious reason.⁸ I shall make a suggestion about the present passage later.

4) In Menon's moral scheme truth is contrasted with lying, *theosebeia* with deception (perhaps presuming the deception of oath-breaking) and *dikaiotēs* with contempt for friends, which seems much less obvious – but actually makes sense in context. For the *adik-* root in the Menon passage is specifically tied to *philoī*: he wants to be friends with the powerful to avoid punishment for *adikia* (2.6.21) and seeks obedience, respect and service by displaying his exceptional will and capacity for *adikein* (2.6.26–27). So, the contrast of justness with mistreatment of friends is in line, and this leads to two further observations. (i) First, it underlines the role of transgressive social relations in the delineation of Menon's moral failings: that is a feature that returns in §§ 26–29 and echoes the presentation of Clearchus and Proxenus: there too what is crucial is relationship to subordinates and the malformation of friendship. That focus is underlined in the coda about Agias and Socrates at the end of the chapter: «no one ever scorned these men as cowards in war or found fault with them in matters of friendship» (2.6.30). (ii) Second, it recalls Seuthes, who was told that *dikaioṣunē* is something that makes friends. So, this is another link between the two passages.

A feature of Menon's unjust behaviour towards friends is that he steals their property. The setting of the speech to Seuthes is that Seuthes had effectively stolen the army's property by withholding wages. The association of justice specifically with money is strong across Xenophon's oeuvre, where money is often a prereq-

⁸ Plato: *Prot.* 331B, *Gorg.* 508A. Xenophon: *Cyr.* 8.8.13: children used to learn *dikaiotēs* by judging cases (in 1.2.6–7 this is how they learn *dikaioṣunē*); *Cyn.* 1.2: Cheiron was given hunting as a reward for *dikaiotēs*. There are only some 70 examples of *dikaiotēs* in TLG.

uisite, a consequence or an area for display of justice.⁹ We encounter a variant of this in my third showcase passage, the obituary of Cyrus (1.9.1–31, esp. 16–19).

3. The Cyrus obituary

Here the primary thing is not Cyrus' just dealing with money, but his using money to reward those who care for justice – but, since care for justice includes proper acquisition of *prosodoi* (1.9.19), the former is not absent. Notable also is that the army Cyrus got by ensuring that subordinates behaved justly is called *alēthinon* (1.9.17). This is generally taken to mean «genuine» (an army worth the name), which matches other uses of *alēthinos* in Xenophon. But David Thomas translates it «honest army»,¹⁰ and there is much to be said for this, not only because it echoes the theme of trustworthiness in the obituary (1.9.7–10) but also because of the association of *alētheia* and justice in the Seuthes speech and the Menon passage: a similar framework of virtues underlies all three passages, and the arresting phrase *alēthinon strateuma* (the only occurrence of the *alēth-* root in the obituary) suggests we are meant to make the connection.

Meanwhile, where Clearchus, Proxenus and Menon provide brief demonstrations of the importance of a correct relationship with friends and subordinates, the Cyrus obituary provides an extensive demonstration of the proposition: his reward of those who served him well, his place in a network of gift-receipt and gift-giving, and his solicitude for his *philoï* are the dominant element in Cyrus' activity as satrap of Lydia, Greater Phrygia and Cappadocia (1.9.7–10, 14–15, 20–31). Indeed it reaches its climax with the judgement that no one was ever more loved by more Greeks or barbarians (1.9.28).

But we are not done with Cyrus. Education is passingly present in the obituaries of the generals. The Cyrus obituary has twenty lines about it (1.9.2–6). And this is where we encounter a new cardinal virtue (*sōphrosunē*) and a conundrum about one we have already seen (*dikaïosunē*).

Cyrus' education took place at the royal court, whose primary characteristic is being a place where one could discern a lot of *sōphrosunē* and nothing improper is seen or heard (1.9.3). Whether this is a direct statement that children learn *sōphrosunē* or a statement that their environment is full of it, the virtue is given a very high profile. This recalls the end of *Cyropaedia*, where Cyrus' mission-statement for the new imperial elite and the education of their children has a place for *sōphrosunē* and neither seeing nor hearing anything *aiskhron*.¹¹

⁹ Justice and money: e.g. *Vect.* 1.1–2; *Ages.* 4.1–6; 8.8; 11.3; *Symp.* 4.1–5; *Oec.* 5.12; 9.13; 14.9; *Hier.* 9.6; *Ap.* 14. In *Ages.* 4.1–6 praise of Agesilaus' *dikaïosunē* is entirely about his dealings with money. Perhaps the *laudator* felt some awkwardness in praising Agesilaus for justice on a wider front, given his involvement in what Xenophon calls the most unjust trial-verdict in Spartan history: *Hell.* 5.4.22.

¹⁰ Brennan, Thomas 2021, 43.

¹¹ It is necessary to practice (*askein* again!) *sōphrosunē*, *enkrateia* and *alkē*; retaining the empire requires *sōphrosunē*, *enkrateia* and *epimeleia* (7.5.75–76). Elite children will turn out well, «neither seeing nor hearing anything improper (*aiskhron*) and passing their days in activities that are *kala kagatha*» (7.5.86).

But, if one looks at the Persian educational system in *Cyropaedia* I, still in force in the new order of things, and compares it with Cyrus' education in *Anabasis* 1.9.2–6, one discovers something strange. In *Cyropaedia* I training in *dikaiosunē* is central (like reading and writing), there is an associated rule that forbids teaching boys anything but to tell the truth, not to deceive and not try to take advantage (*alētheuein kai mē exapatan kai mē pleonektein*), and this grounding in justice is a fundamental distinction between Persia and the bad model that is Media.¹² But in the younger Cyrus' education *dikaiosunē* and truth-telling (a classic of Persian education since Herodotus 1.136) are conspicuously absent. Of course, the post-education section of the obituary shows Cyrus as trustworthy (1.9.7–10) and an admirer of *dikaiosunē* (1.9.16–19). But that underlines the point rather than controverting it.

So why does Xenophon grandstand *sōphrosunē*? One clue is that something similar happens in the description of elite behaviour at satrapal courts in *Cyropaedia* 8.6.10: the only ethical component of that behaviour is *sōphrosunē*. And, back in Book I, *sōphrosunē* does also stand out among other virtues inasmuch as it needs further attention among ephebes – it is not the first-mentioned element of the education of *paides* (that is justice) but it remains on the curriculum for longer (1.2.9). Both facts suggest it has a special importance. And the same may emerge in *Cyropaedia* 3.1.16: there is no value in any other *aretē* without *sōphrosunē*, for the man who is strong, courageous, rich or politically powerful is no good if not *sōphrōn*, but with *sōphrosunē* every friend is useful, every servant good. Does this amount to a claim that *sōphrosunē* is a *sine qua non* of virtuous activity (vying with *sophia*)? One might compare *Memorabilia* 4.3.1 or *Oeconomicus* 21.2, where ruling willing subjects is something god-like (*theion*) given to initiates of *sōphrosunē*. A similar notion is perhaps entailed in the fact that *sōphrosunē* can be defined in association with or contrast to quite diverse vices and virtues:¹³ the list includes *aidōs* and obedience, highlighted in Cyrus' education (1.9.4), and justice and *enkrateia* – virtues from *Cyropaedia* 1.2.8, notably absent in *Anabasis* 1.9.3–7.

Perhaps, then, *sōphrosunē* seemed to Xenophon the best single term to capture an ethically good environment: *sōphrosunē* is a single-virtue word, but has an open focus that distinguishes it from *eusebeia*, *dikaiosunē*, *sophia*, *andreia* or the

¹² Justice in Persian education: *Cyr.* 1.2.6 (below); 1.3.16–18. Rule about truth-telling: *Cyr.* 1.6.33. Median justice is merely the whim of the ruler/tyrant: *Cyr.* 1.3.18.

¹³ (1) Associative definition of *sōphrosunē*. Obedience: *Mem.* 3.5.21. *Aidōs*: *Mem.* 2.1.22; *Symp.* 1.8; *Lac. Resp.* 3.4 (and cf. *Ages.* 6.7; *Mem.* 4.2.6; *Lac. Resp.* 13.5; *Symp.* 1.10). Sexual restraint: *Cyr.* 6.1.17; *Ages.* 5.4; *Mem.* 1.3.8–9; *Symp.* 4.26. *Enkrateia* etc.: *Mem.* 1.2.21–23 and 26; 2.1.15–16; 4.5.7. Moderation: *Cyr.* 4.1.15. Piety: *Mem.* 1.1.2; 4.3.1 and 18. Justice: *Mem.* 4.3.1; *Hell.* 7.3.6; *Cyn.* 12.7. Protection and ethical enhancement of property: *Oec.* 7.14–15; 9.19. (2) Contrasting definition: *ponēria* (wickedness: *Hell.* 7.3.6), *aiskhron thrasos* (vile effrontery: *Cyn.* 13.15), *aphrosunē* (mindlessness) or madness (*Cyr.* 3.1.17–18; *Mem.* 1.1.16), *akrasia* (dissoluteness: *Mem.* 4.5.7), *hubris* (insulting behaviour: *Mem.* 1.2.19; *Cyr.* 3.1.21; 8.1.30; 8.4.14; 8.6.16; *Ages.* 10.2; *Ap.* 19), idleness (*Hier.* 9.8; cf. *Mem.* 2.7.8).

Socratic triad (*autarkeia*, *enkrateia*, *karteria*), and so is suitable to play an overarching role in the moral universe.¹⁴

4. *Aretē*

The word one might expect to play that role is *aretē*, and, since in the Seuthes speech *aretē* is something that will gain friends (7.7.41–42), we must consider how *aretē* plays in *Anabasis*.

The Seuthes passage says that «a man – particularly a man in authority – can have no finer or brighter possession than *aretē*, justice and generosity». *Aretē* is treated as a distinct quality, alongside *dikaiosunē* and *gennaïotēs*, not something of which they are subsets. That is true elsewhere in *Anabasis*.

The *aretē* that attracted mercenaries to Cyrus (6.4.8) can be the same sort of thing as the *aretē* proper to a leader in the Seuthes passage. It is true that in theory the former produces employees, the latter friends. But Proxenus promised to make Xenophon Cyrus' friend (3.1.4), and the comment in 6.4.8 implicitly adopts that perspective on the reason people joined Cyrus, even while certainly stressing financial profit. So far as the Seuthes passage is concerned, *dikaiosunē* and *gennaïotēs* regularly belong in contexts that make them appropriate to the issue of wages. Perhaps *aretē* moves a bit away from those associations: one might compare *Memorabilia* 3.2.4, where the *aretē* of a leader is making those he leads *eudaimones* – prosperous, even happy, not just rich. Cyrus' *aretē* appears earlier in Book I (1.4.8–9). Cyrus decided not to pursue and punish the defectors Xenias and Pasion in recognition of their earlier *aretē* to him; and the other soldiers are duly impressed by Cyrus' *aretē* and feel happier about the march inland from Myriandus. We might call Cyrus' behaviour generous or forbearing. He might have seen it as an example of the Persian principle of weighing past benefit against present crime before responding to the latter – a species of justice perhaps.¹⁵ The soldiers perceive a specific but less circumscribed quality. How we might gloss that quality is suggested by two further passages dealing with the aspiration for *aretē*.

In 3.1.24 Xenophon says «let us not wait for others to exhort us to the finest deeds but ourselves begin inciting others *epi tēn aretēn*». *Aretē* is the quality of those who do the finest deeds, though it may be something grander than just doing them and is certainly a grander way of describing it. In 4.7.12 Callimachus, Aristonymus and Eurylochus «lay claim to *aretē*» as they compete to be the first into an enemy stronghold. A similar phrase appears at 5.2.11, but here *aretē* is replaced by *andragathia* – the quality of being an *anēr agathos*. This interchangeability of *aretē* and *andragathia* – a phenomenon visible elsewhere in Xenophon¹⁶ –

¹⁴ For more on *sōphrosunē* in Xenophon see Moore 2024 and Danzig 2024.

¹⁵ Hdt. 1.137; Diod. 15.10–11. This resonates with Darius' attitude to crime and co-operation in DNB §§ 3–6 (Kuhrt 2007, 504–505, §§ 2a–e), as Briant 2002, 317, noted.

¹⁶ *Ages*. 10.2 (*aretē* as an example to those wishing to practise *andragathian*); *Symp*. 8.43 («... if people see that you working at virtue (*aretēs epimeloumenon*), not in pretence, but in reality. For false reputation

would suit the setting of Xenophon's words at 3.1.24: it is a matter not just of the finest deeds but of being *andres agathoi* – men who would do them because it is in their nature. A few lines earlier (3.1.21) he remarks that provisions that were previously only accessible under a truce are now competition-prizes for the «better men» (*andres ameinones*). It is to the prospect of being superlative *andres agathoi* that Xenophon wants to call the army. The programmatic importance of the point is underlined by the end of his next speech – «you must be *andres agathoi* yourselves and encourage everyone else to do the same» (3.1.44) – while his final appeal to the army (closing a circle that starts at 3.1.3 with the belief that they will never see fatherland, parents, wives or children again) is «whichever of you wishes to see his family again must remember to be an *anēr agathos*» (3.2.39).

The other army-member who talks about *aretē* is Theopompus (2.1.12–13):

We have no good thing (*agathon*) but weapons and *aretē*. While we have our weapons we can also use our *aretē* but if we hand them over we will lose our bodies as well.

The King's agent Phalinus picks up on *aretē* both explicitly («you are mad if you think your *aretē* can overcome the king's power») and implicitly in «you seem to be a *philosophos*, young man, and speak rather charmingly» – a comment that reflects the implicit soul-body contrast (a philosophic trope) as well as using the word *aretē*. The contrast between speculative talk and hard reality anticipates the role of *aretē* and being a «good man» in Book III, where what Phalinus sees as a matter of philosophy is crucial to the way the Greeks take hold of reality, and Theopompus' promise to fight «about your assets» is echoed intratextually in the competition over goods (*agatha*) in 3.1.21. It is clear that Theopompus' *aretē* is the same as Xenophon's *aretē-andragathia* – and I have no doubt that the same goes for the *aretē* of Cyrus, of Xenias and Pasion, and of the ruler in the Seuthes passage: indeed the *aretē* of Xenias and Pasion towards Cyrus (1.4.8–9) recalls Xenophon's observation that his fellow-soldiers had been *andres agathoi* in supporting Cyrus' rebellion.

Moreover, I also have little doubt that this approach to *aretē* works across the Xenophontic corpus. *Aretē* is the state of being good or the capacity/will/activity involved in doing good and is quite frequently contextually associated not only

is soon exposed when tried by experience, whereas true *andragathia* [...] confers ever more and more brilliant glory when tested by actual deeds»; *Lac. Resp.* 4.2 (getting young men to strive for *aretē* would bring them to the greatest degree of *andragathia*); *Cyr.* 3.3.55 (a mere word cannot bring *eis andragathian* those completely untrained in *aretē* any more than a well sung song brings to music those untrained in music); *Cyr.* 7.5.77 (we should practise *aretē* more than before: cf. 71) with 7.5.82 (we must strain for *andragathia*). Cf. also *Hell.* 7.5.16; *Ages.* 1.1; 2.8; 8.2; 9.5; 11.14; *Cyn.* 13.1–5; *Oec.* 11.6–7 in reference to *andres agathoi/anēr agathos*. The language is not only Xenophon's, of course. Public discourse spoke of (and honoured) *aretē* or *aretē kai andragathia* towards the state: *Andoc.* 1.150; *Aeschin.* 3.42 and 49; *Hyp.* 6.40; *IG* II² 107.14 (= Rhodes, Osborne 2003, no. 31); 456b.25–26; 500.30–31; 694.5–6 (= *IG* II³ 937.5–6); 1209.16–17; *SEG* 3.83.10–11; 23.78.21–22. I am not persuaded by David Whitehead's claim that *aretē* and *andragathia* represent distinct qualities (Whitehead 1993 and 2009).

with *andragathia*, *andres agathoi* and *anēr agathos*¹⁷, but also with *kalokagathia* (and *kaloskagathos*) and with other words designating good behaviour or people.¹⁸ It is true that in a particular discursive setting *aretē* can be expressed or evidenced in more specific good qualities. It can therefore be imagined as containing various good behaviours/dispositions¹⁹ or be said to have an essential link with other virtues: it is founded on *enkrateia*, entails *sophia*, is useless without *sōphrosunē*.²⁰ There is a hierarchy of good behaviour in relation to *aretē*. But, in the end, *aretē* is *aretē*: as an attribute it is functionally analysable, but essentially single. And, when one speaks of someone's *aretē* (rather than justice or wisdom or self-control), what one is affirming is a global goodness. Attempts are sometimes made to draw a distinction in Xenophon between a political-military and a moral *aretē*: I suggest that this is a false dichotomy.²¹

5. The low incidence of cardinal virtues

Investigation of Xenophon's advice to Seuthes about *aretē* has shown that he was inviting the Thracian to be an *anēr agathos*. That investigation took us to a further seven occurrences of the word in five distinct passages. By contrast the occurrences (one each) of *dikaiousunē* and *sōphrosunē* discussed above are the only ones in *Anabasis*. *Theosebeia* is the closest we get to *eusebeia*, and the Socratic triad (*autarkeia*, *enkrateia*, *karteria*) never appear. Two cardinal virtues remain, *sophia* and *andreia*, and they too make little lexical impact. The musical competition between Apollo and Marsyas (1.2.8) is a contest about *sophia*, but that is skill, not wisdom – and the only person called *sophos* is Cyrus' Phocaeen concubine (1.10.2): the connotations are contextually opaque and whether they reflect upon her owner is quite uncertain. *Andreia* («bravery») is, like *eusebeia*, entirely absent,²² but there is one occurrence of *andreiotēs* («braveness») and one of *andreios*.

Both occur in Xenophon's exhortations before a high-profile battle near Calpes Limen. He starts with the observation that he has not habitually enter-

¹⁷ See *supra*, n. 13.

¹⁸ *Aretē* associated with *kalokagathia* etc.: *Mem.* 1.2.2–3; 1.2.7–8; 1.2.17; 2.6.20–23; 3.5.7 and 14–15; 3.8.5; 4.8.11; *Lac. Resp.* 10.1 and 4; *Oec.* 7.43; *Symp.* 8.26–27; *Cyr.* 1.5.8–9; 2.3.5; 8.1.12 and 22; 8.2.26. (It is worth stressing that *kalokagathia* and the *kalos kagathos* are a major distinctive feature of the moral landscape of Socratic texts and *Cyropaedia*: Bevilacqua 2024.) *Aretē* associated with other good behaviour/people: *Mem.* 1.2.20; 1.4.1; 1.5.4; 1.6.14; 1.7.1; 2.1.27–28, 32; 2.6.20–23, 39; 3.2.4; 3.5.3 and 7–15; 4.1.2; 4.2.9; *Lac. Resp.* 9.2; 10.1; *Cyn.* 12.9; 13.1–5; *Ap.* 16; *Symp.* 8.26–27 and 41; *Cyr.* 2.2.27; 8.6.12; *Ages.* 3.1.

¹⁹ So one can talk of the greatest *aretē* (*Cyr.* 3.3.54, 8.1.29; *Mem.* 4.2.11) or the finest and grandest *aretē* (*Mem.* 1.2.64) or every *aretē* (*Ages.* 10.2, *Lac. Resp.* 10.7, *Mem.* 3.9.5, *Symp.* 4.15, *Cyr.* 7.3.12), and the authorial voice very occasionally explicitly speaks of *aretai* in the plural: *Lac. Resp.* 10.4, *Cyr.* 8.1.29, something that is also a matter of common parlance (*Mem.* 2.6.39) and appears in Ischomachus' voice (*Oec.* 7.43).

²⁰ *Enkrateia*: *Mem.* 1.5.4, 4.5.1–2. *Sophia*: *Mem.* 3.9.4–5. *Sōphrosunē*: *Cyr.* 3.1.15.

²¹ Tamiolaki 2012, 565.

²² It can be elusive elsewhere in the corpus too: see Johnson 2024.

tained them to gratuitous danger: «for I can see too well that what you want is survival, not a reputation for bravery» (6.5.14). The tacit assumption is that achieving safety entails bravery and an adequate chance of glory. Then, as the soldiers go into battle, he urges them to call on one another by name: «it is truly a pleasant thing to say and do something courageous and fine amongst those in whose memory one wishes to live on» (6.5.23–24). Again, glory is involved. The encounter is a make-or-break battle fought «at the gates of Greece», so it is reasonable that bravery and glory should surface and perhaps it makes sense that it is here alone that abstract bravery-terminology appears. But even then things are not straightforward. The word used is *andreiotēs*, not *andreia*, and *andreiotēs* is otherwise found only three times between Xenophon and the fourth century AD.

The oddity of *andreiotēs* recalls (indeed exceeds) that of *theosebeia* and *dikaioiōs* (see above). We thus have three cardinal virtues that only appear in lexically unusual form. I suggest that this says something about stylistic register. *Andreia* is fine in Socratic discourse or the rhetorical *laudatio* of *Agésilas* but not in a battle-field speech, and even *andreiotēs* only gets in because we are at a dramatic turning-point. Meanwhile, even in a rhetorical *vituperatio*, Xenophon shies away from *eusebeia* and *dikaioiōs*. What Menon despises are «god-reverence» and «justness», philosophers' virtues but linguistically focalised through Menon's contempt – as though we hear the echo of his impatience with someone who goes on about the gods or about being *dikaioi*.

And it is perhaps a different conscious decision about stylistic register that produces *sōphrosunē* and *dikaioiōs* in the Cyrus passage. The opening statement about the *sōphrosunē* of the Persian court (1.9.3) is paradoxical (what Greek would naturally think the Persian court a place of moral virtue?) – paradoxical enough to be a declaration that what follows is conceived on an almost improbably elevated plane of moral discourse. That this allows *dikaioiōs* is no surprise. But that other cardinal virtues (*sophia*, *andreia*, *eusebeia*) are absent, then becomes noticeable. There are near-approaches. Cyrus is *philokindunotatos*. But love of danger is not *andreia*, especially when only exemplified in relation to animals. He is *philomathestatos* about bows and javelins: perhaps skill at those (and horse-riding) would be *sophia* like Marsyas and Apollo's musical skill (1.2.8), but to think of it in those terms is not natural. And any pious overtones to Cyrus' aversion to deception or oath-breaking are even more hidden.

Xenophon has avoided framing the laudation in terms of cardinal virtues, by contrast with e.g. the way his encomium of *Agésilas* is conceived. The effect is that the praise is not as wholehearted as one might expect when dealing with someone who was «second only to the Elder Cyrus in kingliness and worthiness to rule» (1.9.1). Perhaps this is not because Xenophon doubts Cyrus' multi-faceted virtue but because it does not suit his purpose to highlight it. The obituary notices on Clearchus, Proxenus and Menon are not multi-faceted portraits but single-focused critical evocations of flawed leaders. The obituary notice of Cyrus is not a multi-faceted portrait but the encomiastic evocation of a good leader that focuses on a few good qualities. What is interesting is that the chosen ones

are trustworthiness, *dikaiousunē* and reward- and gift-giving – and that these take us back to where we started, Xenophon's pitch at Seuthes. This is not entirely surprising: Cyrus, we are told in *Anabasis* 1.2.11, was upset when he could not pay the troops' wages, it not being his *tropos* to withhold the money if he had it, and Xenophon's aim in Book VII had been to make Seuthes feel the same. Indeed we might even conceive Cyrus' generosity as exemplifying that *gemnaiotēs* of which Xenophon spoke to Seuthes. In any case, the choices made about how to play Cyrus in the laudation are governed by the same selective framework of virtues implicit in the Menon obituary and Xenophon's advice to Seuthes – three assorted literary confections informed by the same judgement of what matters most in a leader.²³ At the risk of slight digression I note one incidental consequence of this. It is sometimes suggested that there is a significant overlap between the virtues of Cyrus in the laudation and those of King Darius in the tomb inscription at Naqš-e Rostam.²⁴ I think this requires caution in any case: there are several elements in the laudation not echoed at Naqš-e Rostam and *vice versa*. But, among points on which overlap can be detected, it turns out that truthfulness, justice and generosity are stressed because they belong to a Xenophontic leadership scheme. This enjoins further caution about the impact of a Persian Mirror of Princes upon Cyrus' obituary.²⁵

6. Concluding remarks

The search for cardinal virtues in *Anabasis* draws attention to a small number of interconnected passages: that is, I think, an interesting result. It also draws attention to the almost total absence from the text of these and other high-profile virtue words. *Anabasis* is full of virtuous behaviour, much of which could be categorized in terms of cardinal or Socratic virtues, but that is not how *Anabasis* goes about its business as a historical record and pedagogic enterprise. The outcome of the story does suggest that Phalinos was wrong to insinuate that talking about *aretē* was a philosophical self-indulgence irrelevant to the army's real circumstances (see above), but the telling of the story embodies this proposition by avoiding the verbal and analytical terms of abstractly philosophical or formally encomiastic discourse: Phalinos' position was not just wrong but categorically inapposite, in reality and in the representation of that reality. Although one could pigeon-hole elements of the text in the categories of moral philosophy, the reader is normally deflected from doing so, because

²³ Grethlein 2012, 35, notes the resonance between Cyrus and Seuthes (though his primary interest is the overlap between Xenophon-the-narrator and Xenophon-the-character and the way the story starts and ends with the army's employment by power-hungry barbarian princes), but not that with Menon.

²⁴ Kuhrt 2007, 507; Waters 2014, 151. For a translation of Darius' inscription (DNb) see Kuhrt 2007, 503–505 (11.C.17). The contents recur exactly in a text from Persepolis (XPl), where they are applied to Xerxes. We are dealing with a transferable ideological statement.

²⁵ I hope to discuss this in more detail elsewhere.

Anabasis is a historiographical narrative not an ethical treatise or (apart from two short self-conscious passages) an exercise in encomium or denunciation: virtue-words suit discourses of that sort because they trade in ideals, but *Anabasis* is about the real world.

Anabasis is a testimony to the dependence of collective achievement on leadership: «without leaders nothing *kalon* or *agathon* would ever happen» (3.1.38). You do not need virtue-labels to describe this: it is a story about leadership, not about virtuous behaviour as such, even though leadership exemplifies the useful purpose towards which virtuous activity needs to be directed. The overarching message in 3.1–2 it is that the soldiers must aim to be good men. That is important enough to merit a small amount of repetition. But the repetitions are few in number, and the narrative is mostly conducted in a sober and objective fashion. *Oratio recta* sections have more rhetorical colour (*Anabasis* obeys the generic rules of classical historiography) but they try to keep something of the down-to-earth character proper to a military audience, and the analysis of what is happening in the story that they contain (another feature of classical historiography) does not compromise the ‘show, not tell’ character of the story-telling.

Xenophon-the-character sets forth into the story with the (problematized) blessing of Socrates (3.1.5–7). That tempts the reader to ask what sort of Socratic pupil he proves to be, and even puts everything that follows into a philosophical perspective.²⁶ But, if the question is framed, the answer is that he is a very practical pupil, and, considering we are dealing with an artificial literary creation, the book produced by his namesake is a notably realistic and robustly unphilosophical piece of story-telling.

Bibliography

- Bevilacqua F. (2024), *Kalokagathia in Xenophon. Is it a virtue?*, in *Xenophon's Virtues*, 159–182.
- Brennan S. (2022), *Xenophon's Anabasis. A Socratic History*, Edinburgh.
- Brennan S., Thomas D. (2021), *The Landmark Xenophon's Anabasis*, New York.
- Briant P. (2002), *From Cyrus to Alexander. A History of the Persian Empire*, Winona Lake [Paris 1996].
- Buzzetti E. (2014), *Xenophon the Socratic Prince. The Argument of the Anabasis of Cyrus*, New York.
- Danzig G. (2024), *Sōphrosunē and enkrateia in Xenophon's writings*, in *Xenophon's Virtues*, 275–314.
- Grethlein J. (2012), *Xenophon's Anabasis from character to narrator*, «JHS» 132, 23–40.
- Johnson D.M. (2024), *Courage in Xenophon*, in *Xenophon's Virtues*, 75–110.
- Kuhrt A. (2007), *The Persian Empire. A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Empire*, London.

²⁶ For this perspective see e.g. Brennan 2022 or, in a rather different interpretive mode, Buzzetti 2014.

- Moore C. (2024), *Sōphrosunē and self-knowledge in Xenophon and the fourth century*, in *Xenophon's Virtues*, 255–274.
- Rhodes P.J., Osborne R. (2003), *Greek Historical Inscriptions, 404–323 BC*, Oxford.
- Tamiolaki M. (2012), *Virtue and leadership in Xenophon: ideal leaders or ideal losers?*, in *Xenophon. Ethical Principles and Historical Enquiry*, ed. by F. Hobden, C.J. Tuplin, Leiden, 563–589.
- Tuplin C.J. (2024), *The cardinal (and other) virtues in the story of the Ten Thousand*, in *Xenophon's Virtues*, 41–74.
- Waters M. (2014), *Ancient Persia. A concise history of the Achaemenid Empire, 550–330 BCE*, Cambridge.
- Whitehead D. (1993), *Cardinal virtues. The language of public approbation in democratic Athens*, «C&M» 44, 37–75.
- (2009), *Andragathia and aretē*, in *Greek History and Epigraphy. Essays in honour of P.J. Rhodes*, ed. by L. Mitchell, L. Rubinstein, Swansea, 47–58.
- Xenophon's Virtues*, ed. by G. Danzig et al., Berlin – Boston 2024.