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Persians As Centaurs in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*

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SUMMARY: Cyrus depends on the traditional virtues of the Persians, but must introduce a new understanding of virtue to make them an imperial people, coupling Median luxury with Persian restraint. The collapse of this unstable combination immediately following Cyrus' death is therefore natural enough. The *Cyropaedia* is thus a guide both to how to found an empire and to why not to found an empire.

AT THE OUTSET OF THE *CYROPAEDIA*, Xenophon found himself considering how often democracies are undone by those who do not wish to live in democracies, and how often monarchies and oligarchies are overthrown by the *dêmos*, which prefers democracy. And any men who manage to rule as tyrants for any time whatsoever are wondered at for their wisdom and good fortune. Even masters with a few slaves often have difficulty in keeping them obedient. Animals are far easier to rule, even though their rulers profit from them by taking their products and making use of them as they see fit. But the example of Cyrus made Xenophon think that ruling was nothing hard after all, so long as one goes about it knowledgeably. Cyrus was able to cover a vast terrain with such fear that no one would raise a hand against him; he was able to inspire such desire to favor him that all deemed him worthy to govern. Xenophon therefore decided to investigate Cyrus because he was worthy of wonder (1.1.6 ὡς ἄξιον ὄντα θαυμάζεσθαι).

Much of this seems to support the traditional view that Xenophon considered Cyrus a positive paradigm.[1] But wonder need not be positive;

[1] Recent examples of the positive view of Cyrus, to mention only the books, include Tatum, Due, Gera, and Mueller-Goldingen. Tatum and Gera clearly identify negative aspects in Xenophon's Cyrus, but do not fully discard the traditional positive view. For Gera

Xenophon has just said that tyrants are objects of wonder.[2] He has also made it clear that while Cyrus' subjects willingly obey him, they do so largely out of fear. And the comparison with herdsmen suggests that Cyrus treats men like animals. Of course the comparison between ruling men and ruling animals is as old as Greek literature, and need not be negative. But Xenophon's reference to herdsmen making use of the products of their charges as they see fit (1.1.2) cannot but remind one of the Thrasymachean understanding of sheep and shepherds (Pl. *R.* 1.343a–b). Does Cyrus treat his followers as animals by exploiting them as Thrasymachean shepherds exploit their flocks? I argue that he not only treats his followers like animals but transforms them into animals, and I even venture to identify the species: the centaur.

About halfway through the *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus proposes that the Persians become horsemen. The Persian peer Chrysantas seconds his proposal. Chrysantas first says that on horseback he will think that he has sprouted wings, a common enough image (*X. Eq.* 8.3, 8.6; Pl. *R.* 5.467d–e). But he goes on to say that he envies centaurs, who are able to reason and make use of hands as men are, but who have the speed and strength of horses. Centaurs, however, do not have the best of reputations, and Chrysantas delicately alludes to this when he notes that it is better for man and horse not to be permanently bound together (4.3.19–20).[3]

> For I think that centaurs are at a loss as to how they ought to make use of many of the good things that have been discovered for people, and also as to how they should enjoy many of the things naturally pleasant for horses. But if I learn to ride, whenever I'm on horseback I'll no doubt do the things that centaurs do, and when I dismount, I'll dine and dress and sleep just like other people do. What other result could there be than that I would become a centaur who can be taken apart and then put back together again?

When all the Persians in attendance eagerly support the proposal to develop cavalry of their own, Cyrus takes Chrysantas' comparison with the centaur one step further (4.3.22–23).

296–99, Cyrus becomes a despot, but remains benevolent. Tatum shows how Machiavellian Cyrus is throughout the *Cyropaedia*, but he is ultimately more interested in showing how all successful leaders "create power on the grand scale by the invention of fictive roles" (34) than in investigating Xenophon's judgment on Cyrus.

[2] Xenophon begins the *Memorabilia* with his wonder at how the Athenians could have convicted Socrates; the bulk of the work does not, of course, show that the Athenians' verdict was praiseworthy. The wonder at the power of Sparta at the outset of the *Spartan Constitution* seems more positive, but see Humble 2004 and forthcoming.

[3] I translate the text of Bizos (books 1–5) and Delebecque (6–8).

> "So," he said, "since we're so strongly of this view, what if we were to make it our custom that it be shameful for anyone I provide with a horse to be seen going on foot, whether it's a long or short journey that he must undertake, so that people may think that we really are centaurs?" So Cyrus proposed, and all approved. Thus, even now, from that time, the Persians follow this custom, and no Persian *kalokagathos* is willing to be seen going anywhere on foot.

As far as Cyrus is concerned, there is more to be gained in appearing to be a centaur than would be lost in acting as a centaur whenever one goes anywhere. He does not seem concerned, as Chrysantas had been, to ensure that the Persians are only temporary centaurs who can fully return to their human form whenever they wish to. Cyrus also neglects the fact that there are times when a *kalokagathos* ought to be seen going somewhere on foot, as Xenophon does to inspire his hoplites (*An.* 3.4.46–49, 7.3.45; cf. Plu. *Art.* 24.10–11). Elsewhere Xenophon tells us that Agesilaus was able to inspire contempt for the Persians by showing Persian prisoners naked, revealing that they were flabby from always riding about in carriages (*Ages.* 1.28, *H.G.* 3.4.19).

But of course Chrysantas' speech is rather droll. One detects some sign of this in the great eagerness of Chrysantas and the rest (4.3.21).

> "So," he said, "put me down among those super-eager (ὑπερεπιθυμούντων) to learn to ride."
> "By Zeus," said all the others, "we too!"

Cyrus could not have really expected anyone to mistake the Persians for centaurs, as the peoples he will come into contact with are familiar with horses.[4] Presumably Cyrus intends to encourage the Persians to practice riding at every opportunity, as he will later do by his own example (4.5.58). But all this could well have been done without alluding to centaurs. It therefore seems clear that Xenophon meant Cyrus' proposal to remind readers of the artistic convention in which Persians were portrayed as centaurs. The mere allusion to centaurs could simply show that the Persians "thought it amusing that the Greeks should regard them as terrifying as centaurs" (Spivey 142). But Chrysantas' reference to the difficulties centaurs encounter in enjoying themselves suggests that something more is going on here.

Certainly this comparison with centaurs is an odd touch in a work usually taken to portray Cyrus as a positive paradigm. The most obvious problem with the traditional reading of the *Cyropaedia* is Xenophon's scathing critique of Persia after Cyrus in the last chapter of the work. If we grant that that chapter

[4] In the Americas, on the other hand, the appearance of Europeans on horseback was quite a shock (an observation I owe to an anonymous reader for *TAPA*).

is authentic, as do most, there are at least three responses to it.[5] First, defenders of the positive view of the *Cyropaedia* regard the final chapter as a reverse proof of Cyrus' unique perfection (Due 16–22, Mueller-Goldingen 262–71), an awkward but perhaps necessary return from utopia to historical reality (Tatum 215–39), or both (Sage). But Cyrus' utter failure to secure a peaceful succession hardly contributes to a positive portrait; Plato (*Lg.* 3.694a–96a), whether in response to the *Cyropaedia* or independently, criticized Cyrus on precisely this ground.[6] Even if at the end of the *Cyropaedia* Xenophon felt an obligation to return to historical reality or to what he took to be historical reality, he hardly needed to claim that the Persian decline began immediately after the death of Cyrus.[7] A second approach is to argue that Xenophon changed his mind about Cyrus or began to emphasize his negative side only late in the *Cyropaedia*, in the final chapter or when he began to describe the

[5] Hirsch 91–97 argues forcefully that the epilogue is inauthentic, but what he proves is rather that the epilogue cannot be squared with a positive reading of the rest of the *Cyropaedia*.

[6] Plato's attack is usually taken to be aimed at Xenophon (Hirsch 96–100, Tatum 225–34). Hirsch makes the *Laws* passage his capping argument against the authenticity of the final chapter of the *Cyropaedia*: were the final chapter part of the *Cyropaedia*, Plato's criticism of Xenophon would have been senseless. But on a more critical reading of the *Cyropaedia*, Plato is merely making explicit what Xenophon had left implicit until the final chapter. Alternatively, Plato may be reading the *Cyropaedia* sloppily or polemically (Tuplin 1996: 94), or may not primarily be responding to the *Cyropaedia* at all (Tuplin 1996: 66).

[7] "Yet when Cyrus died, at once (εὐθύς) his sons fell out with one another, at once (εὐθύς) cities and nations went into revolt, and everything turned to the worse" (8.8.2). The historical reality of Persian decline is highly debatable, of course, whether we speak of the aftermath of Cyrus' death or of Xenophon's own day. When it comes to the vexed issue of the historicity of the *Cyropaedia*, I will assume here what I take to be a moderate position on which there is something like a consensus. Xenophon's primary intention in the work is didactic rather than historical in the sense that he is interested in teaching us something by using Cyrus as an example more than he is interested in getting at the truth about Cyrus for its own sake (contrast Herodotus on the birth of Cyrus at 1.95). Whether or not Xenophon viewed the materials that he used to construct his paradigmatic Cyrus as historical or not, i.e., whether he limited himself to choosing between existing traditions and elaborating τὰ δέοντα (Th. 1.22) as a historian might, or instead invented or deliberately transformed entire episodes, can largely be left to the side for present purposes. Either way, Xenophon had considerable control over what his Cyrus did and said, as even if he did not invent events out of whole cloth, he could choose what events to report, and he had a considerable number of variants to choose between for those events he reported. Consider the varied accounts of Cyrus' death known to us from Xenophon, Ctesias, and Herodotus (who was himself aware of many other accounts: 1.214). Discussions of the historicity of the *Cyropaedia* include: Breitenbach 1709–17; Hirsch 61–91; Stadter 461–64; Tuplin 1996: 95–154.

organization of the empire at 7.5.37 (Carlier, Gera 285–99, Tuplin 1996). But while this may be a more natural reading of the end of the *Cyropaedia*, it risks leaving the work incoherent as a whole.

Finally, it is possible to argue, as I do below, that the whole of the *Cyropaedia* is critical of Cyrus. The decline in the Persian character begins not after Cyrus' death, or even with his organization of his empire, but with Cyrus' initial transformation of the Persians into an army of conquest, a transformation that corrupts the pristine Persia of Cyrus' youth. Others, most of them inspired by Leo Strauss's work on Xenophon, have argued along similar lines.[8] My reading, while informed by those in the Straussian tradition, differs from most such work in three ways.[9] First, I aim to make the notion of corruption more precise by arguing that Cyrus' transformed Persians are inherently unstable. Cyrus attempts to retain Persian virtues in himself and his entourage despite his adoption of Median ways—he and his companions are to be impressive both in their showy Median garb and for their willingness to work up a traditional Persian sweat, for example (Azoulay 2004). But this combination cannot last. The end of the *Cyropaedia*, which depicts the immediate breakup of Cyrus' Median-Persian hybrid, is thus not fundamentally at odds with the rest of the work. Second, I break with mainline Straussian readings in seeing no critique of the Persia of Cyrus' youth, and more generally in denying that Xenophon was a radical who was critical of "political life in the classical world *tout court*" (Nadon 178). Finally, I will suggest that Xenophon did not write esoterically in order to conceal his dangerous thinking from the many. Rather, Xenophon was a thoughtful traditionalist whose understated method of writing can be better understood as part of his Socratic heritage.

My chosen entrée to a critique of the *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus' development of the Persian cavalry, will seem paradoxical to many, given Xenophon's fondness for things equestrian. It might seem more prudent to attack features of Cyrus' empire that would have been suspect to his Greek audience—say, Cyrus' cast of eunuchs, or his adoption of deceptive Median clothing and makeup.

[8] Strauss' clearest account of the *Cyropaedia* is the sketch he provides in his "Restatement on Xenophon's *Hiero*" (Strauss 2000: 180–82, originally published in 1954). Straussian readings of the *Cyropaedia* include Glenn, Pangle, Nadon, and Ambler. Higgins, on the other hand, while indebted to Strauss, is nonetheless positive on Cyrus. Recent non-Straussian critics of Cyrus include Tuplin 1996 and Too, both of whom stress Cyrus' failure as an educator; see also Carlier.

[9] My general thesis, that Cyrus' military reforms transform the Persians for the worse, is essentially that of Nadon's second chapter. But as we often differ not only on the basic points enumerated below but also on the details of the transformation, my argument should provide an independent proof of this thesis.

But these features come late in the work, and any attack on them can be met, at least in part, by the argument that Xenophon was forced to defend actual features of Persian monarchy as best he could.[10] The adoption of cavalry comes fairly early in the *Cyropaedia*, and if it can be demonstrated that Xenophon gives a negative turn to what he could have presented as a practical and positive change in tactics, this will do more to illustrate his critical view of Cyrus' imperialism than any further argument about the last chapters of the *Cyropaedia*. In fact investigation of Cyrus' transformation of the Persians must begin earlier still, with his first set of reforms, the arming of the commoners (*dêmotai*) as heavy infantry.

1. INFANTRY

In the Persia of Cyrus' youth the peers, *homotimoi*, are the center of Persian society. Their training in justice, moderation, endurance, and obedience is designed to promote the common good by making the peers the best men they can be (1.2.2–15). If they pass successfully through their years as boys, youths, and mature men, the peers as elders hold the public offices in Persia. The duties of the king are largely restricted to war. The Persian *homotimoi* and limited monarchy are obviously similar to the Spartan system with its peers, the *homoioi*, but it is probably safer to say that they are a Xenophontic idealization drawn from many sources.[11] Certainly the training of the Persian

[10] Nor are more ambitious defenses of Cyrus' last moves lacking; see Ajoulay 2000 and 2004 and Breebart.

[11] So Tuplin 1994; cf. Mueller-Goldingen 69–75. Nadon similarly argues that Old Persia is an improved version of Sparta but also claims that it is marred by tension between commoners and the peers, whose skill at arms is needed to keep the commoners in their place (29–42; cf. Strauss 1939: 509, 2000: 181). Economic realities do impinge on Xenophon's idealized Old Persia, as only a minority can afford to become peers. But there is little evidence for any tension between the two classes in the *Cyropaedia* itself. The closest thing to such evidence comes at 2.1.3, where Cyrus reassures Cyaxares about the strength of the Persian expeditionary force by noting that the peers, while few, easily manage to rule all the rest of the Persians. As Cyrus will soon ask Cyaxares to arm the Persian commoners as the peers are armed, Cyrus presumably wants Cyaxares to assume that the peers rule largely through their monopoly on heavy arms. But Cyrus says what he says to convince Cyaxares, rather than to portray accurately the reality of Old Persia, which may therefore differ; and Cyrus' remark that the peers rule *easily* suggests an absence of tension. Rule of the few, if those few are the best, would probably not have troubled Xenophon. The analogous ill-will between helots and Spartiates may seem to support Nadon's position, but Old Persia is an improvement on Sparta, and doubts have been raised of late about whether the Spartiates themselves or honorary Spartan insiders like Xenophon were troubled by this tension (Whitby).

peers differs from that of the Spartans in emphasizing justice and *sôphrosynê* in place of the Spartan emphasis on warfare, which is carried so far as to encourage boys to steal (*Lac.* 2.6–9). Any Persian is welcome to give his son this education, but only a minority can afford to release their sons for the full-time pursuit of virtue, and thereby to qualify for the most honorable roles in warfare and the political life of the state. Xenophon does not depict a Spartan style effort to ensure that the Persian peers share equal wealth and an equivalent lifestyle (contrast *Lac.* 7, with Tuplin 1994: 143). But until they are fifty the peers are required to report to the Free Square daily for public service, for ten years as youths they are expected to sleep there, and on campaign the peers will expect equal division of the plunder (1.2.3–4; 2.2.2–4, 18). Thus the peers are indeed roughly equal in status. As boys and youths the future peers train with spear and bow, but once they reach maturity, they are armed with a breastplate, shield, and sword for close order fighting. With these weapons they constitute a fighting force unmatched by any of the Persians' neighbors. We are told of no special training in such fighting, for the peers' superiority here consists in their strength of character, not in any technical skill. The rest of the Persians, the commoners who are unable to afford the education of the peers, fight at a distance, with bows, slings, or javelins, and are apparently no better fighters than their more numerous neighbors. The Persians of old have no cavalry, we are later told, for Persia is too rough a land to support horses (1.3.3).

When Assyria threatens Media, Cyaxares, king of the Medes, calls for Persian help, and Cyrus is chosen to lead an expeditionary force of 30,000, including 1,000 peers (1.5.2–5). But even with these Persian reinforcements, the combined Median and Persian force will be greatly outnumbered by the Assyrians and their allies. Cyrus tells Cyaxares that when it comes to fighting by missile fire, the larger force will always be victorious: apparently skill here is of no avail. Cyaxares' response is to ask Cyrus to send to Persia for more troops, but Cyrus convinces him to use his own resources to equip the Persian commoners with the heavy weapons of the peers (2.1.2–10).[12] When Cyrus announces this plan to the peers, they are pleased at the thought of having more heavily-armed comrades in battle (2.1.11–12). Cyrus also readily convinces the commoners to take up arms like those of the peers. While they were not as skillful with the bow and javelin as the peers, this, he says, is readily explained by their lack of time to practice with these weapons; fighting at close hand, however, requires not skill but merely daring, desire for victory, and strength (2.1.14–19). We see already how Cyrus modulates his message to fit

[12] This is sometimes taken to be parallel to Sparta's arming helots as hoplites. This parallel could be troubling (cf. Th. 4.80), but, like most parallels with Sparta in the *Cyropaedia*, it is rather loose (Tuplin 1994).

his audience: he tells Cyaxares that fighting with missiles is a simple matter of numbers, while he tells the Persian commoners that it requires skill (cf. Nadon 61–66). We cannot assume that Cyrus says what he believes, and attempt to reconstruct his principles, much less Xenophon's principles, from isolated remarks; we must consider Cyrus' intention in each context.

The commoners are now armed as the peers, and are presumably to share equally in the rewards of victory. But the peer Chrysantas complains that the equal distribution of goods, the norm among the peers themselves, will be unjust now that the army is to include a wider range of men, and Cyrus calls an assembly of the entire army to discuss whether it would be preferable to distribute goods in accord with merit (2.2.17–21; 2.3.1–4). Chrysantas, who is very prudent but appears to be neither tall nor strong, implies that others who are swifter and stronger than he is will win greater rewards under the new arrangement, even if they are not peers. The commoner Pheraulas argues that fighting at close hand comes naturally, and that the commoners have gained the ability to endure hunger and thirst by years of hard work at home, so that they will have a fair chance at winning a good share of the spoils (2.3.5–16). The speeches at this assembly perhaps lead the commoners to be too sanguine about their ability to compete with the peers, but under Cyrus they certainly do seem to improve their lot in life. The peers also get what they want, as they assume, rightly enough, that they will gain the greatest share of the rewards. Thus the meritocracy seems to be in the interest of all.

Earlier, Xenophon had carefully depicted Cyrus' techniques for training the commoners, techniques that are in many ways exemplary (2.1.20–31). And by arming the commoners to fight at close range Cyrus makes much more efficient use of his manpower. It is with this new army that Cyrus subdues the Armenian revolt and crushes the Assyrian army in the first great battle. Xenophon's praise for Cyrus' troops as they advance against the Assyrians is very high indeed (3.3.59).

> As soon as the paean had been sung, the peers moved forward, radiant, and looking to one another and calling by name those who stood beside or behind them, they encouraged one another to follow by again and again saying this: "Come on, friends! Come on, brave men!" Those who were behind them heard them and in turn encouraged those in front to lead the way forcefully. And the army of Cyrus was full of enthusiasm, ambition, strength, boldness, encouragement, moderation, and obedience: this, I think, is the most terrifying thing for the enemy.

The Assyrians are soon routed, and the only dangerous moment comes when Cyrus' troops are at risk of advancing too quickly into the camp of the Assyrians. Cyrus orders a retreat (3.3.70).

> There indeed one could recognize that the peers were educated as one ought to be, for they themselves quickly obeyed, and quickly told the others to do likewise.

Xenophon's praise here is directly largely at the peers and their lengthy education at home, not at the newly armed commoners. In our first passage it is the peers who are radiant and who exhort one another, though those behind them, who may not be peers, follow their example. In the second it is the peers who are singled out for their ability to execute that most difficult of maneuvers, a retreat under fire, and their leadership again provides the example for the rest.

Xenophon does also praise the whole of the army in terms that would apply most of all to the commoners and their recent training: this had given them the ability to march in good order, as well as the desire to vie with one another and the understanding that the best way to attack lightly armed troops is to engage them quickly in hand to hand combat (3.3.57). But without the educated valor of the peers the new-found skills and opinions of the commoners would not have sufficed. Xenophon makes this clear in a rather curious exchange between Cyrus and Chrysantas just before the battle begins. Chrysantas asks Cyrus why he is not exhorting his troops as the Assyrian king is doing. Cyrus argues that such exhortations are of little value; one cannot make good troops out of poor ones in a single speech. He says that laws, teachers, and officials must teach and accustom men to consider that those who are good and honored are truly the happiest of men, and that such men live free and honorable lives, while those who fail to toil and face danger for the sake of praise are left with lives that are not worth living (3.3.49–54). Cyrus adds that the commoners who have been training with the peers would not themselves be steadfast were it not for the peers' example (3.3.55). The education here, with its emphasis on law and on a lengthy education at the hands of multiple teachers and officials, is clearly the education the peers received in Persia, not the basic training the commoners have received under Cyrus.[13]

Cyrus' rejection of exhortation here appears to be inconsistent with his many exhortations in the *Cyropaedia* and with the speeches Xenophon himself gives in the *Anabasis* (Gera 110–11). Gera suggests that Xenophon wished to distinguish Cyrus from the Assyrian, and could hardly do so by having both

[13] Mueller-Goldingen 168–69 assimilates the education spoken of here to the training offered by Cyrus. But he misreads 3.3.52–53 as giving two alternatives, law or teaching, rather than two steps in one process. And he believes that by teachers and leaders (3.3.53) Cyrus means his own example as leader, where it is rather the peers that he has in mind (cf. 3.3.55).

of them exhort their troops, for "the two opponents, Assyrians and Persians, go to war according to the same rules and share the same values" (112).[14] Thus Xenophon justifies Cyrus' decision to remain silent despite the Assyrian's exhortation by attributing to Cyrus the Socratic sentiment that empty rhetoric is no substitute for virtue. For Gera the scene is disappointing: "Xenophon writes here with a heavy hand and Cyrus merely serves as a mouthpiece for his author's ideas, at the price of his own consistency as a character" (115). Cyrus, however, is again saying what the situation demands. His speech serves to reassure the peers with him about the superiority they owe to their education. For the best way for Cyrus to exhort the most important part of his army, the peers, is precisely to say that exhortation is useless without the sort of education the peers have received.

Thus there is no real inconsistency; Cyrus' only steady principle is to do and say what it takes to achieve empire, usually by getting others to do their utmost to help him secure that empire. In this case, however, Cyrus' words do pretty clearly reflect Xenophon's own ideas. As we have seen, it is the peers who play the crucial role in the battle. While exhortation has its place, it cannot replace education. The sort of exhortation fit for men like the peers is the exhortation they give to one another as they march forward. This sort of praise and the peers' own example can also be of some limited value to the commoners, who have taken up the arms of the peers and been trained in their use, but have not been educated as the peers were. But without the peers the commoners could not be counted on.

It is ironic that it is Cyrus who gives the fullest praise to the education of the peers—the very education that he will make obsolete by arming the commoners as peers. Just as he here argues that soldiers cannot gain virtue in a day, Cyrus had earlier argued that the Armenian king could not become moderate (σώφρων) at once, if this required that he become prudent (φρόνιμος, 3.1.17). But Cyrus allowed himself to lose the argument about the Armenian, as wining the argument was counter to his interest. What he needed was not a virtuous subordinate but one who could quickly provide him with troops and cash (cf. Tatum 134–45; Gera 78–98; Tuplin 1996: 83–85). Cyrus is quite capable of mouthing Socratic arguments, but he is governed by them only when it suits him.

[14] It is true, as Mueller-Goldingen 167 points out, that the Assyrian fails to mention the importance of virtue in deciding the outcome of the battle. But the Assyrian cannot appeal to a virtue that his troops do not possess, and the central principle of the Assyrian's speech, the rule that to the victor go the spoils, is shared by Cyrus (7.5.73). The relevant difference is that between the virtuous peers and the Assyrians, not that between Cyrus and the Assyrian king.

Even if Cyrus' army still needs the peers and their traditional education, Cyrus' reforms seem to have produced an ideal combination of peers, who provide it with leadership and elite fighters, and newly armed commoners, who give the army enough bulk to take on much larger forces. But arming the commoners in this way results in a fundamental transformation of the Persian community, and comes at a cost. Cyrus has replaced the egalitarian ethos of the peers of Old Persia, who lived as equals once they had completed their strenuous education and who believed that virtue was its own reward, with a meritocracy in which those whose deeds are more deserving get a larger share of the rewards. The notion of assigning rewards in proportion to merit seems unimpeachable in itself. But it must undo the old ideal of equality, and, as we will see, both the sort of merit under consideration (loyalty to Cyrus) and the rewards it will bring (plunder) are questionable. Cyrus made it clear enough that he had some such transformation in mind when he was still forming his army in Persia. He told the peers that he thought that their ancestors, while virtuous, could be rightly criticized for foolishness (ἀφροσύνη), as their efforts led to no reward for the city or for themselves: they were like farmers who carefully sowed a crop, only to leave it unharvested (ἀσυγκόμιστον, 1.5.8–10). Cyrus would therefore have them put this virtue to use on campaign. But the peers did receive a reward for their virtue, as Cyrus himself reveals (1.5.12).

> And you have harvested (συγκεκόμισθε) the finest and most warlike possession in your souls, for you delight more in being praised than in anything else. And lovers of praise necessarily endure every toil and every danger with pleasure.

The peers have been educated to regard honor and praise as the highest rewards, and their special status within Old Persia institutionalized their honor. When Cyrus arms the commoners as the peers are armed, and makes the commoners eligible for the same rewards in battle, the peers no longer receive any special status thanks solely to their education under the laws. Once they have lost their traditional status, the peers will have to find what reward they can from other sources. In place of the praise of the society as a whole, exemplified on the battlefield by their praise of one another, the peers will have to rely on praise from Cyrus. And as a concrete sign of their status, in place of the special arms that gave them a more honorable and more crucial role when the Persians went to war, the peers will strive to receive a greater share of the plunder distributed by Cyrus. Xenophon seems to hint at the blurring of the lines between the peers and the rest of the Persians by sometimes suggesting that the commoners armed as peers may become peers, rather than

remaining a separate class.[15] At 2.1.13 an anonymous peer encourages Cyrus to offer the commoners arms himself, rather than leaving it to the peers. He says that the commoners "established as peers" (εἴς τε τοὺς ὁμοτίμους καθιστάμενοι) will regard it as more permanent if Cyrus grants them this status rather than having the peers do it. In speaking of the commoners as established peers, however, he may be referring primarily to the commoners' understanding of what is going on, and his reference to the commoners' doubting the permanence of their new status indicates that that status was not obviously secure. The anonymous peer also says that men value gifts from those in power more highly than gifts from those who are of a similar status (τὰ παρὰ τῶν ὁμοίων), even if their gifts are greater. This implies that adoption into the ranks of the peers would be a greater gift were it offered by the peers themselves, and that the peers and commoners were already of similar status, inasmuch as they are both already subject to Cyrus. In another passage, 3.3.40, it is unclear whether the rear guard is made up of old or new peers. Elsewhere, however, the distinction between the classes seems to be preserved (as at 3.3.59 and 3.3.70, discussed above). The ambiguity is due to the transitional nature of Cyrus' army, in which the class distinctions of Old Persia still matter but are being transformed. This ambiguous transitional phase helps to explain why the peers so readily allow the commoners to be armed as they are, despite the fact that this will mean the loss of their special status; the peers do not fully understand that the transition is underway until it has been completed.[16] By the end of the *Cyropaedia*, the transition is complete. But it is not so much that the commoners have become peers as that the peers have lost their special status as equals. For following Cyrus' organization of his empire, there are no longer peers, i.e., men of equal honor (*homotimoi*), but only men in honor (*entimoi*) whose relative ranking is determined by their loyalty to Cyrus.[17]

[15] For a different account of this matter see Tuplin 1990: 18–20.

[16] Strauss 2000: 182 makes the peers' willingness to quickly abandon their former way of life an indication that Old Persia is not a "true aristocracy." I would emphasize the cunning of Cyrus, and perhaps the intrinsic attractions of empire, rather than the fragility of the Old Persian regime.

[17] The only sure reference to *homotimoi* following Cyrus' establishment of himself at king at 7.5.37 comes at 8.5.21, and refers to those who have stayed behind in Persia, which largely retains its old values despite the changes introduced by Cyrus. At 7.5.85, according to the family of manuscripts followed by Delebecque (γ), Cyrus says that "just as among the Persians the *homotimoi* pass their time in government buildings, so we too, who are the *homotimoi* here, must do everything they do there." As Cyrus' audience includes not only Persian *homotimoi* but select allies (7.5.71–72), men who are not *homotimoi* in the

In the absence of the traditional special status of the peers, praise and blame will not be enough; more tangible rewards will be required. In the long run, then, Cyrus' new army of peers combined with commoners cannot last, for egalitarianism and meritocracy are an unstable combination. And while Cyrus' new army can break any barbarian army that could face it, it has a flaw. For the tangible reward for merit is that brought by success at war, plunder. And Cyrus' new army does not yet have the cavalry it takes to acquire adequate plunder on its own. This results in a second transformation of the Persian army.

2. CAVALRY

Many of the Assyrians escape after the first battle, and as the Persians do not have any cavalry of their own, they cannot themselves chase down the best of the Assyrians, who flee on horseback. Cyrus therefore needs allied cavalry to help him, and turns to Cyaxares and the Medes (4.1.10–12). Cyaxares is reluctant to push on the campaign, and, ironically enough, given his unsympathetic presentation elsewhere in the work, he here presents creditable arguments for moderation in victory (4.1.13–18). But he is brilliantly outmaneuvered by Cyrus, who appeals to the Medes' desire for plunder to entice almost all of the Median horsemen to continue under his command (4.1.19–24; 4.2.10–11; Nadon 89–92, Gera 104–6, Tatum 123–25). Cyrus, however, is not content with having allied cavalry, even when they are willing volunteers as are the Medes and the Hyrcanians, longtime victims of the Assyrians who had providentially joined Cyrus at this time (4.2.1). It is observing these allies bringing in plunder that leads Cyrus to an apparent moment of self-doubt (4.3.3).

> As Cyrus saw what the Medes and Hyrcanians were doing, he found fault, as it were, both with himself and with those with him, as it was others who seemed to be doing their all more than they themselves were, and to be gaining something in addition, while they remained in a place where there was nothing to do.

Cyrus assembles his officers and argues that by securing "the things now appearing before us" (τὰ νῦν προφαινόμενα), i.e., the sort of plunder the allies are bringing in, all the Persians would greatly benefit, and especially those who

traditional sense, Cyrus with this text redefines the term *homotimoi*. The other family of manuscripts (z) has Cyrus call his audience *entimoi*, the term used of those who form his court (8.1.6). Certain egalitarian elements do survive under Cyrus; one example is his practice of sharing with all he invites to his tent the same food that he eats himself. But these equal portions are handed out only to those Cyrus chooses to honor, and thus the system is fundamentally meritocratic (Grottanelli 197–98).

had won the plunder. As things stand, Cyrus is troubled by the attitude of the allies, who think that the spoils they have ridden down belong as much to them as to the Persians who won the victory over the Assyrians in the first place. With cavalry of their own the Persians will have little need of these allies, and will have an indisputable claim to the plunder they gather themselves (4.3.4–7). But for the meantime Cyrus needs to retain the allied cavalry, so he continues an elaborate display of Persian moderation to show the allies that they need not fear that mounted Persians would deprive them of their plunder; the only thing the Persians ask for is the horses captured from the Assyrians (4.2.38–47; 4.5.1–4, 37–54). But even as he is arranging all of this, Cyrus sends home for more Persians and reveals more clearly than before his desire that the Persians secure for themselves rule over Asia and the profit that will bring (4.5.16 τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς Ἀσίας αὐτοῖς καὶ τὴν κάρπωσιν; cf. Nadon 103–6). This empire demands cavalry.

There are, of course, other explanations for Xenophon's interest in Cyrus' cavalry. The most obvious is Xenophon's personal interest in cavalry and horsemanship (on which see Anderson 1961; Delebecque 1978b: 4–8; Rahe; Spence xxi–xxv). Xenophon does have Cyrus note the military importance of cavalry by telling the Persians that Assyrian archers, light infantry, and cavalry need not fear to approach the Persians to do them harm, as they can easily escape from the Persian heavy infantry, who are rooted to the ground like trees (4.3.5). But Cyrus emphasizes the rewards cavalry can bring, not the dangers facing an army without cavalry.[18] And this is reasonable enough. For the Persians need not fear such hit and run tactics so long as they retain loyal allies with light infantry and cavalry. And there seems little reason to suspect that the allies will not remain loyal, given Cyrus' success with them so far, unless the Persians decide to mistreat them. Nor is there much need for cavalry in hilly Persia itself, where the rough terrain makes riding difficult (1.3.3); cavalry is required to give the Persians rule over the plains (cf. 8.5.23).

[18] Those dangers are real enough, of course, as Xenophon demonstrates in the *Anabasis*, after himself giving a speech in which he downplayed the importance of cavalry (3.2.18–19; 3.3). Nadon 101 suggests that Cyrus, with his initial reform of the Persian infantry, intentionally weakened his army by eliminating archers and javelin men, leaving it vulnerable to attack by light troops and cavalry. The Persians' belated awareness of this vulnerability would aid Cyrus in his attempt to transform them into horsemen who will be unable to return to their old ways in horseless Persia. But this seems too cynical even for Cyrus; the additional heavy infantry were necessary for the first victory over the Assyrians, and there are plenty of light-armed Persians left at home. It is presumably such troops that Cyrus sends for in 4.5.16. As we shall see, it is not the absence of light infantry that threatens to undermine Cyrus' new army but the absence of high quality heavy infantry.

Another factor behind Xenophon's portrayal of Cyrus' cavalry is the Persian reputation for superior horsemanship (Hdt. 1.136), and Xenophon's own respect for Persian horsemen, particularly for their weaponry. At *Peri hippikês* 12.12 Xenophon advises cavalrymen to arm themselves as the Persians do, with considerable armor and stout spears suitable for fighting at close quarters or at a distance (cf. *An.* 1.8.3, 6–7; *Cyr.* 7.1.2). It is the Persian cavalry that plays the decisive role at Xenophon's depiction of the battle of Thymbara (7.1), at which Cyrus defeats a huge allied army under Croesus. But the differences between Thymbara and the first battle with the Assyrians are also instructive. Thymbara is a brilliant victory for Cyrus, but it is won more by superior tactics than by superior troops. It therefore allows one to wonder how effective the new Persian army would be under less inspired leadership.

At Thymbara Cyrus outmaneuvers Croesus by outflanking the troops Croesus had meant to outflank him (Anderson 1970: 165–91). In this battle there is little comparable to the praise of the Persian peers Xenophon gave us before the first battle against the Assyrians. The troops who are the closest match for the peers are the Egyptian infantry who fight against Cyrus, and do not give way even after Cyrus' cavalry and chariots have routed the rest of Croesus' army (7.1.41, 46). Cyrus' cavalry performs the best on the Persian side, and it does do hard fighting (7.1.46). Cyrus himself is unhorsed, and rescued at once by his men. Here, Xenophon notes, one can recognize the value of being loved by one's troops (7.1.38). Now both sides "thrust forward, are thrust back, strike, are struck," as Xenophon puts it in a particularly vivid passage (7.1.38; Due 231–32). But Cyrus soon withdraws from this vigorous fight, and instead relies on missile fire to subdue the Egyptians. At last, "admiring them and pitying them because they were good men who were perishing" (7.1.41), he disengages and sends a herald to secure their surrender. They ask for and receive generous terms, including the opportunity for service under Cyrus, so long as it is not against Croesus.

Cyrus' decision to subdue the Egyptians through missile fire is prudent, as it means that he is able to defeat the Egyptians without further losses on his side. But it also shows that Cyrus has, at least in this crucial moment, reverted to a tactic he had once scorned. Cyrus had once praised an officer who taught his new infantrymen to reject missile fire by showing them that it was no more effective than were clods of earth (2.3.17–20). He had prepared his cavalry to fight hand to hand by giving them armor and a single sturdy spear (παλτόν) that could be used in hand to hand combat (6.2.16, 7.1.2, 8.8.22).[19] But by

[19] The παλτόν could indeed be used as a missile weapon, as Cyrus notes at 4.3.9, where he tells his troops that many παλτά are at hand, and can be used either by hurling or by

giving them only one spear, Cyrus not only prepared his cavalry to fight at close quarters, he made it impractical for them to fight at long range. For if they hurl their single spear, they are left essentially defenseless. In *Peri hippikês* (12.12), Xenophon more sensibly recommends that cavalrymen carry two spears, and use one as a missile weapon. Xenophon is clearly up to something, for he well knew from personal experience that Persian cavalry did make effective use of their spears as missiles. One might suspect that Cyrus armed his tyro horsemen with but one spear because they were unable to throw spears accurately from horseback. But in this case we would expect him to eventually train them to fight with missiles, and this he never does. Rather, it seems that Cyrus is attempting to produce hybrid troops who combine the hand to hand valor of the hoplite with the mobility and striking power of cavalry. But to do so he resorts to providing his cavalrymen with artificial valor by forcing them to fight at close quarters if they are to be of any use in battle at all. At Thymbara, Cyrus' cavalry easily routs Croesus' horsemen, but soon enough disengages from the stiff battle against the Egyptians. Cyrus' decision ultimately results, Xenophon claims, in cavalry that are of no use, as Cyrus had stopped them from shooting from a distance (8.8.22 ὁ Κύρος τοῦ μὲν ἀκροβολίζεσθαι ἀποπαύσας), arming them instead for fighting hand to hand, which they were unwilling to do after his death.

Another important difference between Thymbara and the first battle fought by Cyrus' army is the performance of the Persian infantry. At Thymbara they are pushed back by the Egyptians, despite the elaborate measures, including siege-towers, that Cyrus had taken to back them up; this grieves Cyrus (7.1.36). His army is now unbalanced in another way: rather than lacking cavalry of its own, it lacks any good infantry. The valiant Egyptians are won as allies, but allied infantry are no more reliable than allied cavalry. Of course the Persian army of Xenophon's day did have an elite infantry force, the 10,000 Immortals, and Xenophon credits Cyrus with their formation, as he credits Cyrus with so many of the features of the Persian empire. When Cyrus sets up his

holding, i.e., holding for hand to hand combat. The discrepancy is perhaps due to Cyrus' desire not to reveal to future cavalrymen that they are to engage mainly in high-risk hand to hand combat. Cyrus' cavalry may use missiles at the final stage of the battle of Thymbara (7.1.39), where Cyrus orders Hystaspas and Chrysantas, who were commanding cavalry engaged in fighting the Egyptian infantry at close quarters, to withdraw and strike them from afar with arrows and spears. But as the Persian cavalrymen had but one παλτόν each and no bows whatsoever, Cyrus presumably meant his chief subordinates to lead the whole of the army in engaging the Egyptians with missile fire, while he mounted a siege tower and surveyed the battlefield as a whole.

empire after the capture of Babylon, he forms a corps of 10,000 from Persians who had heretofore lived in abject poverty at home (7.5.66–68). They are to guard Cyrus outside as his eunuchs guard him indoors. But the comparison with the eunuchs makes clear the limitations of the Immortals as Xenophon presents them. They lack any pretense to the sort of education the peers of old had received, and even their poverty is not said to have hardened them (as Pheraulas claims on behalf of the commoners in Cyrus' original army at 2.3.13–14) but to give them good reason to be loyal to Cyrus, just as the vulnerability of the eunuchs makes them loyal. Loyalty was certainly highly prized by Persian kings (as in Darius' Behistun inscription, §4), and comes in for much praise in the *Cyropaedia* itself (as in Chrysantas' ode to obedience in 8.1.1–5). Nor is obedience absent from the qualities inculcated by the education of Old Persia, though it receives no special prominence there.[20] But here loyalty has become the only virtue that counts. Thus the rise of the Persian cavalry coincides with the fall of the Persian infantry and the decline of the virtues embodied by the peers of Old Persia.

The negative results of the transformation of the Persians into cavalrymen are already hinted at when Cyrus is first introduced to horsemanship at the court of his grandfather Astyages. Cyrus' education takes place as much in Media as it does in Persia. His boyish chatter before Astyages is charming, but it also clearly reveals the distinction between the austere traditions of Persia and the luxury of Media, and shows that the youthful Cyrus found certain Median ways attractive. Astyages gives Cyrus a fine robe and jewelry, and allows him to ride on a horse with a golden bit whenever his grandfather goes for a ride himself (1.3.3).

> Cyrus, as he was a boy who was fond both of beautiful things and of honor, was pleased with the robe, and took great delight in learning how to ride. For among the Persians, since it is difficult to support horses and to ride in a country that is mountainous, it was very rare even to see a horse.

Xenophon thus introduces horsemanship as something foreign to Persia, as are fine garments. In attributing to Cyrus the first widespread introduction

[20] Obedience is mentioned at 1.2.5 and 1.2.8. Xenophon emphasizes, for the boys, education in justice, gained, somewhat oddly, through their leaders putting them on trial (1.2.6–7; cf. 1.4.16–18), and, for the young men, the warlike traits nurtured by hunting (1.2.9–11). It is possible, as Briant 329–30 speculates, that what Xenophon here presents as an interest in justice and what appears elsewhere in Greek sources as an emphasis on truthfulness (Hdt. 1.136; cf. *Cyr.* 1.6.31–34) reflects the historical Persian concern with loyalty to the king (the "truth," Persian *arta*). But for our purposes the Greek interpretation of the Persian concept is more important than the Persian original.

of horses to Persia, Xenophon diverges from Herodotus (1.136) and, in all likelihood, from historical fact.[21] It is of course possible that Xenophon here makes use of a Greek or Persian source otherwise unknown to us. But whether through invention or by choosing among the traditions available to him, Xenophon chooses to credit Cyrus with introducing the horse to Persia, and by having Cyrus learn to ride at the same time he learns of Median luxury, he associates horsemanship with the luxuries of the Medes. The contrast between a mountainous homeland unsuitable for the raising of horses and a more fertile land where horses are at home reminds one of Odysseus' rugged Ithaca, which was no place for horses but a good nurse for men: thus Telemachus turns down Menelaus' gift horses and chariot, and Odysseus contrasts his rugged land with the luxurious island of the effete Phaeacians (Hom. *Od.* 4.600–608, 9.21–28; cf. 13.237–49). The belief that geography dictates character is a commonplace of Greek thinking: "those who inhabit a rough, mountainous country, at a high elevation, and well watered, where the changes of season are great, will likely be of a large build naturally suited for hardihood and bravery."[22] The same rugged climate that makes horses impractical makes for virtuous men. A race of horsemen is thus likely to lack certain virtues. By having Cyrus teach the Persians to ride Xenophon not only credits him with another military innovation but also implies that Cyrus introduced a foreign, and dubious, element into the Persian national character.[23]

3. CENTAURS

We can better understand these negative connotations by returning to the centaurs we began with. For the most part, centaurs appear in Greek myth as enemies to mankind, as in their battles against the Lapiths, Peleus, and

[21] Briant 19–20 argues that Xenophon can hardly be right to attribute the origin of cavalry to the historical Cyrus, who could not have conquered the Medes without cavalry; a seal taken to represent Cyrus' Persian grandfather shows a horseman riding over two fallen warriors and threatening a third (Briant 90–91).

[22] *Airs, Waters, Places* 24, though the author is discussing mountainous terrain in Europe. For the most part, the author argues that Asia has a pleasant, equable climate, which lacks an invigorating change of seasons and produces soft men; cf. Arist. *Pol.* 7.7.1327b18–33. Arrian (*An.* 5.4.5) follows Xenophon in saying that the Persian homeland was a difficult one, and says that this led to customs similar to those of the Spartans.

[23] Cyrus' move to develop the Persian cavalry has also been compared to Agesilaus' development of a cavalry wing for his army in Asia Minor (Due 196), but the differences between the Spartan and Persian experience with cavalry are more illustrative than the similarities (Tuplin 1994: 148). Agesilaus armed foreigners, not Spartans, and the Spartans' own cavalry was not of terribly high quality (*H.G.* 6.4.10–11; Spence 2–4).

Heracles. But there are exceptional centaurs who play a positive role: the wise Cheiron, who educates heroes, and the moderate Pholus, who entertains Heracles and can hold his liquor. Centaurs are therefore the sort of mythological creature that is "good to think with," i.e., tough to pin down. If one emphasizes their bestial half and their often bestial behavior, centaurs can stand in for the various "others" confronted by Greek heroes, including the barbarian Persians (duBois 1982). But if one emphasizes their dual nature, or the fact that there are good centaurs as well as bad, one ends up with a more complex commentary on nature and culture, or on human nature, the nature both of Greeks and barbarians (Kirk 152–62, Osbourne 1994). Of course these views need not be mutually exclusive. It seems to me that both have some validity for Xenophon's centaurs. As we have seen, Chrysantas emphasizes the dual nature of centaurs, who share the speed and strength of horses with the intellectual capacity of men; but it is precisely this duality that gets centaurs into trouble, for they are unable to enjoy properly the pleasures of men or of horses. Many Greek monsters are hybrids of man and beast, or, more frequently, woman and beast, so that while pointing out that a monster is half human does allow one to emphasize its ambivalence, it also explains why the monster is monstrous.

Let us first consider the bestial side of the centaur, and the evidence for connecting centaurs with Persians. Our most important evidence comes from art, and it has been well studied recently by Castriota 34–43. In the Archaic period centaurs seem mainly to symbolize the violent natural world as opposed to civilized restraint; hence they are often pictured fighting with tree trunks and the like against human warriors armed with spears or swords. But early in the Classical period the ethical implications of the struggle between centaurs and men are brought to the fore; now, in place of a generalized battle outdoors, we see centaurs battling at the wedding feast of Peirithous and attempting to rape the Lapith women. Wine and women bring out the beast in these centaurs. These themes were already present, of course, in the story of the centaurs overcome by the bouquet of the wine Pholus serves Heracles, and the attempted rape of Deianeira by the centaur Nessus. But the savagery of the centaurs is now given a more ethical turn. The principal vice of the centaur is hubris, which is so often connected with wine, and centaurs have their equine halves to blame. In the *Hiero*, Xenophon has Simonides note that some people, just like horses, get more hubristic the more they satisfy their needs (10.2). While justifying Cyrus' use of eunuchs, Xenophon notes that hubristic stallions can be improved by castration (7.5.62). It is perhaps horses' inability to enjoy wine or women properly that Chrysantas was alluding to when he spoke of their shortcomings.

Emphasizing the bestial hubris of centaurs makes it natural enough to see them as representatives of the barbarian other, including the Persians. Herodotus' account of a Persian embassy to Macedonia may provide some support for this view (Woodford 162; Castriota 41). According to Herodotus, the Persian ambassadors demand and receive the submission of the Macedonian king Amyntas, who also accedes to their request that they be allowed to dine with the wives and sisters of their Macedonian hosts. The drunken Persians soon begin to fondle the Macedonian women, but Alexander, Amyntas' son, has the women sent off to bathe, and replaces them with young men in disguise, who slaughter the Persians (5.18–21). The tale is roughly parallel to the story of the Lapith wedding, but the disguised men are an important difference, and the story (complete with the disguises) crops up again in enough different contexts, including one from Xenophon, so as to suggest that it may have been an independent folktale with a life of its own.[24] Be this as it may, the Persians committed enough real-world rapes (Hdt. 8.33) to make the mythical translation to centaurs an easy one.

The strongest evidence tying Persians to centaurs (apart from our *Cyropaedia* passage, 4.3) comes from the centauromachies so prominent in Classical art. While there is no explicit reference to Persians in the scenes themselves, the context of some of these scenes does give us strong evidence for interpreting them in terms of the conflict with Persia. Xenophon alludes to paintings of armed Persians at *Cyropaedia* 1.2.13, and must have been familiar with the painting of the battle of Marathon in the Stoa Poikile, which also housed paintings of a Gigantomachy and an Iliupersis, two other mythical glosses for the Persian wars (Castriota 76–89). The Stoa Poikile did not include a centauromachy, but centauromachies decorated the Theseion and the south metopes of the Parthenon, both monuments we have good reason for associating with the conflict with Persia, and both monuments adorned with Amazonomachies, another mythological allusion to the struggle with Persia.[25] The myth of the Amazon attack on Athens (rather than Greek offensives against the Amazons led by Heracles and Theseus) first appears after the Per-

[24] Xenophon's account of the liberation of Thebes (*H.G.* 5.4.2–8) may have been modeled on Herodotus' story (so Gray 65–70); similar tales are told of Messenians and Spartans (Paus. 4.4.3) and Athenians and Megarians (Plu. *Sol.* 8; Polyaen. 1.20).

[25] The Theseion housed the relics of Theseus Cimon had brought back from Scyros, which had been ruled by pro-Persian Dolopians. Castriota 33–95 persuasively argues that the decoration of the Theseion, like that of other monuments built under the influence of Cimon, was inspired by the conflict with Persia. Some have questioned the importance of the struggle with Persia to the Parthenon (e.g., Osbourne 71), but see Castriota 134–83.

sian Wars, and seems to have been tailored to make the Amazons a mythical analogue to the Persians (Castriota 43–58). Amazons are horsy: they have horsy names and they are often depicted on horseback fighting Greeks on foot. This is natural enough, as women are themselves horsy, unbroken, unyoked colts until they are tamed by marriage—where, however, they are likely to continue their equine antics, if in a different role, by riding their husbands (Ar. *Lys.* 676–78). We may add that women, like Persians and like centaurs, were thought to have a weakness for wine (Just 162–63, 186–87). We are clearly enough dealing with a complex series of oppositions between Greek male citizens and their "others," beasts, women, and barbarians. The traits of the various others tend to coalesce, so that women are beastly, and barbarians (at least of the eastern sort) effeminate, and so on. In this context, Xenophon's comparing the Persians to centaurs is loaded, and he must have known as much.

But, of course, Xenophon's Cyrus does not fall prey to lust or drink, nor do the Persians—so long as Cyrus is there to rule them. Just as there are a few centaurs, like Cheiron and Pholus, who avoid the vices of their race, so too, perhaps, Cyrus is the exceptional Persian, so exceptional that he could lead his Persians on their ride to empire without allowing himself to fall prey to the vices such success usually brings. This view would allow us to reconcile the belief that Xenophon is usually critical of Persia with a positive interpretation of his Cyrus and the *Cyropaedia*; Cartledge (45) well characterizes this apparent inconsistency as the "some of my best friends are Persians" syndrome. While most Persians of Xenophon's day were worthless drunks who brought their women to war with them, Cyrus the Elder, perhaps much like Xenophon's onetime leader Cyrus the Younger, does not fall prey to wine or women, though he faces many an occasion for such temptations. Cyrus thus does not even gaze upon the beautiful and virtuous Pantheia, his captive, so long as her husband is alive. And the symposia he hosts are so restrained that there is not only no drunkenness but almost no mention of wine at all (Gera 148–54).

Thus by alluding to centaurs, only to show Cyrus acting in a most sober manner, Xenophon could be showcasing Cyrus' unique virtue. A critical reading of the *Cyropaedia* cannot therefore be based solely on the notion that centaurs are vicious beasts routinely undone by wine and women. Centaurs of that sort, after all, would never have managed to acquire an empire. But the second way of reading centaurs, the reading that stresses the hybrid nature of the centaur, may be more fruitful. Here Cyrus provides the restraint the run of the mill centaur lacks, and Persia under him seems to gain the superhuman strength of the centaur without falling prey to its subhuman vices. But does Cyrus present us with a workable, human model to emulate? The

epilogue would seem to show that the combination of Cyrus' severe sobriety with imperial luxury cannot last for long. If this is Xenophon's point, however, we ought to see it coming before the epilogue. And there is no better place to look for flaws in Cyrus and Cyrus' Persia than the most famous episode of the *Cyropaedia*, the romance of Pantheia.

4. ROMANCE

Xenophon skillfully weaves the tale of Pantheia, the most beautiful woman of all Asia, into the middle of the *Cyropaedia*.[26] Cyrus' men pick out Pantheia to be part of Cyrus' share of the plunder (4.6.11). But Cyrus not only does not take her for his own, he does not even look upon her. As he explains to Araspas, the young Mede he assigns to protect Pantheia, Cyrus fears that he will be overpowered by her beauty and thus led to neglect what he should be doing (5.1.8). Araspas argues that love is voluntary, at least for those who are *kalokagathos* and self-controlled; Cyrus replies that love is as dangerous as fire, and that lovers are essentially slaves to those they love (5.1.9–16). When Araspas reassures Cyrus that he would not do anything wrong even if he were never to cease looking upon Pantheia, Cyrus sends him off to guard her (5.1.17). But Cyrus' parting comment that the woman's arrival may turn out to be advantageous reveals that he is already planning how to make use of her. Whether or not he is wrong about love, Araspas is certainly wrong about himself, as Cyrus knows full well. Araspas not only falls in love with Pantheia (perhaps nothing to wonder at, as Xenophon comments at 5.1.18) but also threatens her with violence if she persists in her virtuous rejection of his advances. Pantheia only now sends one of her eunuchs to Cyrus with a report of Araspas' unwelcome advances; she had not reported him earlier out of fear of coming between Cyrus and his friend. But for Cyrus all is going according to plan, and he laughs when he hears that Araspas has been brought to this state. Cyrus does not need to rebuke Araspas himself, for Cyrus knows that his own frustrated lover, Artabazus, whom he sends to summon Araspas, will be severe enough of his own accord. When the contrite Araspas arrives, Cyrus is all forgiveness, and Araspas is ideally positioned to go as a spy to the Assyrians, who will welcome him on the assumption that he has been dismissed by Cyrus. Pantheia now is driven to send for her husband, Abradatas, to join Cyrus as an ally and replace the friend she believes he has lost. Cyrus has gained a spy and an ally; he has acted not out of chivalry but out of policy (6.1.31–51).

[26] 4.6.11, 5.1.2–18, 6.1.31–51, 6.3.14–20, 6.3.35–36, 6.4.2–11, 7.1.29–32, 7.3.2–16. For the structure see Stadter 480–84.

Partisans of Cyrus make the Pantheia episode evidence of his continence (Mueller-Goldingen 211, Due 173–74; cf. *Ag.* 5.4–6). Gera more specifically speaks of his "Socrates-like moderation in sexual matters" (228), and Socrates does indeed advise some of his followers to avoid the beautiful, advice based on an analysis of love similar to that Cyrus offers to Araspas. It is Xenophon himself, in his one appearance in the *Memorabilia*, who benefits from this advice. When Socrates learns that Xenophon would be all too willing to kiss the handsome son of Alcibiades, Socrates tells him that he must run away headlong from anyone handsome whom he happens to meet. But Socrates himself is so immune to the charms of the beautiful that he can resist the beautiful as well as others can resist the ugly; his advice is directed at those who lack his self-control, and he need not follow it himself (*Mem.* 1.3.8–15). Cyrus does not rise to this level. "To use the Aristotelian terms, whereas Cyrus is continent, Socrates is temperate or moderate" (Strauss 2000: 126 n. 60). Thus when one of Socrates' companions comes to tell him of a most beautiful woman, the hetaira Theodote, Socrates, unlike Cyrus, goes to visit the beauty at once, together with his friends (*Mem.* 3.11). During the visit he reveals to his friends the techniques Theodote ought to use to win her "friends," and he thus effectively immunizes his friends against the likes of Theodote. Cyrus does warn Araspas of the dangers of love, but ineffectively, and deliberately so, the better to put not only Araspas but Pantheia and her husband Abradatas in his debt when Araspas threatens the woman he was supposed to be protecting. Once again Cyrus' arguments are superficially Socratic, but as in his argument with the Armenian Tigranes (3.1), Cyrus argues not to convince his friend of the truth of what he says but to put him further in his debt after Cyrus allows himself to lose the argument. Araspas is a Mede, not a Persian, but his resort to the threat of violence does not speak well for the virtue of Cyrus' followers. Not only does Cyrus lack Socratic moderation, he lacks any interest in educating his friends. The analogy with Socrates, or with the wise teaching centaur Cheiron, fails.

Cyrus does eventually go to see Pantheia, rushing to her side when he learns of the death of her husband. If Cyrus was truthful when he told Araspas that he feared that seeing Pantheia would lead to his being overcome by love, he must now judge that being overcome by love for her is less dangerous than it was before. As her husband is dead, he is no longer of any use to Cyrus as an ally; and Cyrus has already made use of Araspas' services as a spy. Cyrus has defeated Croesus and his vast allied army, the major threat to his rule of Asia, and with his rule secure, he perhaps sees the opportunity to give his attention to something other than empire. Thus it seems plausible to me, as it does to Gera 242, that in Cyrus' final exchange with Pantheia we have a hint that he hoped that she would choose him as her new mate (7.3.12–13).

> "And you," he said, "will not be abandoned, but I, on account of your moderation and complete virtue, will honor you in every way, including arranging to have someone escort you to wherever you yourself wish to go." "Just show me," he said, "who it is that you wish to be brought to." And Pantheia said, "But be of good heart, Cyrus: I shall not hide from you the one to whom I wish to go."

But Pantheia is going to join her dead husband. As she had largely blamed Cyrus for her fate, Cyrus should have known better, and perhaps did know better, but was already being overcome by seeing Pantheia, who was never more beautiful than in mourning. Cyrus had taken hold of the dead man's hand to give him the last handshake we see so often on Attic grave monuments, but the hand falls off. One effect of this gruesome bit must be to bring home the ugly reality of his death, in contrast to his beautiful entrance into battle, glorious death, and sumptuous burial. Cyrus the Younger's body was similarly mangled, and Abradatas' death is parallel to his in many ways (Gera 240–41, Tatum 181–82). Cyrus the Elder is no such hero.

Pantheia replaced her husband's hand and turned to Cyrus (7.3.10).

> "The rest, Cyrus, is the same way. But why must you look? And I know," she said, "that he suffered these things not least because of me, and perhaps no less through you, Cyrus. For I, fool that I am, would often tell him to act in such a way that he would show himself a worthy friend to you; and he, I know, did not think about what would happen to him, but about what he could do to please you. And so," she said, "he, faultless, is dead, but I, who bid him on, sit living by his side."

Pantheia has come to reject the friendship of Cyrus as a worthy basis for the sacrifices it demands. While she has perhaps not seen through the complete extent of his manipulation of her, she understands the essence of things. In response Cyrus can only mouth conventional pieties and offer her dead husband gifts and a monument (7.3.11).

> "But he, lady, has met the most beautiful of ends, for he met his end in victory. You, then, receive these things from us—Gobryas and Gadatas were at hand, with much lovely adornment—and adorn him with them. And next," he said, "be assured that he will lack honor in no other respect, but many men will pile up a monument worthy of us and will make sacrifices for him as befits a good man."

Cyrus is not only conventional but self-serving. For the gifts, as Xenophon reminds us, came from Gadatas and Gobryas, not from Cyrus (cf. 7.3.7), and Cyrus would comfort Pantheia by telling her that her husband's monument will be worthy "of us," i.e., of Cyrus.

If it is right to see Cyrus as hoping for a romance with Pantheia, this humanizes him, showing that he does after all have desires beyond that for power. But his utter failure to understand Pantheia's response and to anticipate her suicide make it clear how limited his humanity is. "The tragedy of Pantheia and Abradatas draws attention to the cold, unerotic, and perhaps even truncated nature of Cyrus's soul, and reminds the reader of a dimension of human experience outside the range of his proper activities as a ruler" (Nadon 155).[27] Cyrus' eventual marriage is a political affair, and his unnamed wife is important to him only for her dowry, Media (8.5.19–20, 28; 8.7.28). The closest things he has to love affairs with men are also entirely lacking in romance. Artabazus, who has loved Cyrus since his youth, is going to have to wait thirty years for his next kiss from Cyrus (1.4.27–28, 8.4.26–27). Chrysantas gets a kiss, but only after he is mocked for his hook nose, short stature, and large belly.[28] Other men, like the Armenian Tigranes, can love their own courageous wives (3.1.36, 43; 8.4.24). And still others, like Gobryas, whose son was murdered by the Assyrian, and Gadatas, who was castrated by the Assyrian, can long for sons and treat Cyrus as if he were their son. Cyrus has sons, but turns to them only when he is sure that he is on his deathbed (8.7.5–28), and then only in a vain attempt to secure a peaceful succession. Not all of the readers of the *Cyropaedia* would have carefully compared Xenophon's Cyrus with his Socrates and found Cyrus wanting. But surely it is not too much to suggest that they would have found Cyrus wanting in comparison with the more fully human characters of the *Cyropaedia* itself. And Cyrus' human limitations have political consequences. For in an hereditary monarchy, the well-being of the kingdom depends on the well-being of the royal family, and Cyrus' failure to see to the education of his sons and followers leads directly to the decline of

[27] Much of Nadon's analysis of the tale of Pantheia is acute, but he seems to me wrong to argue that Pantheia and Abradatas are not in any sense superior to Cyrus, since their love for one another "thrives on its public character, and their desire to be together is strictly limited by considerations of appearance" (155). Xenophon does emphasize how both figures appear, and how Pantheia beautifies Abradatas with the garb he dies in, but Nadon too readily assumes that appearances must contrast with reality. Xenophon recognizes the problem of false appearances, and therefore often stresses that the best way to appear good is to really be good (cf. 1.6.22, 5.2.9–12; *Mem.* 1.7, 2.6.36–39; *Ag.* 3.5). But we are given no reason to doubt either the virtue or the love of Pantheia and Abradatas.

[28] Compare the Persian Sambaulas and his ugly, hairy companion, who lies at his side, and, Cyrus jokes, is his beloved in the Greek mode; Sambaulas explains his choice by noting how obedient his ugly partner is (2.2.28–31). Chrysantas is an even better follower, because he anticipates his leader's needs (8.4.11); this perhaps explains why he, unlike Sambaulas' beloved, gets a kiss.

Persia that Xenophon depicts in the last chapter of the *Cyropaedia*. The *Cyropaedia* is famous for two ideals, the romance of Pantheia and the leadership of Cyrus. But the two ideals are in conflict. Cyrus' treatment of Pantheia not only shows how a cunning leader can turn romance to his advantage, it shows the limitations of the sort of leader who does so.

5. CONCLUSION

Xenophon's Cyrus is no blood-thirsty tyrant; he indeed has many virtues and few vices, at least few vices not necessary to the single-minded pursuit of his goal, empire.[29] He is, at bottom, a rather colorless figure, even a frigid one, as Chrysantas and Hystaspas dare to tell him at one point (8.4.22–23). Were Cyrus a figure of flesh and blood, with active desires beyond that for power, he would have not been capable of the perfect acquisition of rule. Had he been vicious, had he had the faults of a Xerxes, Xenophon's critique would be only of a single leader or a single people, not of the concept of empire itself. If even the empire founded by this Cyrus must decline at once, every empire is doomed. Cyrus' empire is doomed because it requires an inhuman mixture of continence and greed. For greed is needed to motivate and reward followers who have left behind the traditions of a conservative homeland, and their greed can only be kept in check by the continence of a leader who lacks any of the redeeming human qualities Xenophon so vividly portrays in the minor characters of the *Cyropaedia*. One cannot be both an idealized old-time Persian and an imperial Mede, any more than one can be both man and horse. The decline of Cyrus' empire is no more surprising than the behavior of centaurs when women and wine are introduced.

There is nothing novel in the idea that the pursuit of empire is inherently corrupting, nor about using Persians as the prime example of this corruption, as Aeschylus' *Persians* and Herodotus' history make amply clear. We know that Persia had much success using cash and diplomacy to keep the Greeks divided in Xenophon's day; and of course Xenophon and his contemporary readers did not know that Alexander was coming. But the final chapter of the *Cyropaedia* shows that Xenophon believed that the Persians of his day were

[29] The youthful Cyrus seems to suffer from something like blood-lust and thus has to be forcefully brought back to his grandfather as he delights in looking upon the bodies of those killed by his cavalry charge (1.4.24). The adult Cyrus admits that he is as prone as others to the desire for wealth, but adds that he differs in realizing that the best way to remain secure in one's wealth is to win faithful friends by giving much of it away, and in believing that it is not the man who has the most who is happiest, but he who justly acquires and nobly uses the most (8.2.20–23). Both vices, if they are such, may well be necessary in one who is to found an empire.

corrupt and weak. And if we strip away its rather superficial Persian décor (Tuplin 1990) and read the *Cyropaedia* as a work on empire rather than a work on Persia, there is no reason to be surprised to find Xenophon being critical of empire. For recent interpretations of the *Hellenica* make it out to be a critique of Spartan imperialism and indeed of imperialism as a whole (Tuplin 1993, Dillery). Xenophon was an Athenian conservative who was brought up to be critical of Athenian expansionism, and who lived to see the Sparta that had sheltered him brought low thanks to her own imperial ambitions. What may seem more unlikely to many is that Xenophon would choose to attack imperialism with such subtlety that most modern readers have taken him to be giving a positive portrayal of Cyrus and his empire—or that Xenophon would be capable of such subtlety even if he chose to proceed in this way. But the worry that Xenophon is incapable of such sophistication can be allayed by any sympathetic reading of the *Cyropaedia*, even readings that retain the idea that Cyrus is meant as a positive paradigm. Cyrus' brilliant manipulation of his uncle Cyaxares is one clear case in point (Tatum 115–33, Nadon 87–100), and is all the more remarkable in that it seems to be entirely Xenophon's invention. Surely Xenophon is capable of as much cunning as his Cyrus is.

And Xenophon was rather fond of presenting readers with seemingly ideal characters or regimes, only to undercut them, or to allow readers' knowledge of later history to do the undercutting for him. The critical penultimate chapter of the *Spartan Constitution*, often compared to the ending of the *Cyropaedia*, is only the most obvious example of this trait in Xenophon.[30] Compare the historical scandals that befell Ischomachus and his wife, and Callias and his beloved Autolycus, despite their apparently rosy portrayals in the *Oeconomicus* and the *Symposium*. The last chapters of the *Hiero* provide a similar reversal, albeit one that seems to redeem a regime previously critiqued, tyranny. Xenophon likes puzzles, and often begins his works by noting his wonder about a paradox, such as how the Athenians could have convicted Socrates, or how Sparta, despite her small population, achieved such great power. In the *Cyropaedia* he wonders at how difficult it is to rule human beings, and at Cyrus' remarkable success despite that difficulty. Xenophon's habit, though, is not simply to resolve all such puzzles; he is not adverse to ending with puzzles as well as beginning with them.

This still leaves the question of why Xenophon chose to be so reserved in making his specific point about empire in the *Cyropaedia*. In the clearest par-

[30] For arguments that the penultimate chapter of the *Spartan Constitution* is in keeping with the rest of the work see Humble 2004 and forthcoming.

allel case, Xenophon's implicit criticism of Sparta in the *Hellenica* and the *Spartan Constitution*, Xenophon's gratitude toward Sparta for providing him with his home at Scillus can help explain his reticence. But there is nothing in what we know of Xenophon's life or the contemporary situation to explain reticence in criticizing Persia or imperialism. Those following in the footsteps of Strauss will have a ready explanation: as Xenophon's ultimate message was not only a critique of this or that regime but of political life in general, his unsettling message could not be entrusted to the many (Strauss 1939: 535; 2000: 27; Nadon 161–64). But in the *Cyropaedia* Xenophon criticizes empire, not political life in general. And Xenophon's messages about Sparta and Persia would have been more readily recognized by his original audience. All of them would have been well aware of the decline of Sparta and many would have shared Xenophon's low opinion of contemporary Persia. Cyrus the Great was treated as a positive paradigm in other Greek works, of course.[31] But even in works that do treat him positively, Cyrus is first and foremost a positive *Persian*, a contrast with corrupt contemporary Persians, whether they be the Xerxes of Aeschylus' *Persians* or Xenophon's contemporary, Artaxerxes. Thus Xenophon's writings were far less esoteric for his original readers than they are today.

In place of Strauss's concern that subversive ideas not fall into the hands of the many, I would suggest that Xenophon recognized, following Socrates, that his audience would best learn lessons by having to think them through for themselves. As Tuplin (1993: 168) remarks concerning the *Hellenica*, "Xenophon very probably considered that 'story-telling' was the most effective method of persuasion in contexts other than the purely technical." Strauss of course also recognized the value of promoting independent thinking, but

[31] Most important may have been Antisthenes' work, or works, on Cyrus, but the fragments of Antisthenes' work are too fragmentary to allow us to draw any detailed conclusions. Mueller-Goldingen 25–44 stresses Antisthenes' importance, and notes that both Xenophon and Antisthenes believed that the good leader requires both wisdom and πόνος, and that both, unlike Plato, emphasized leaders rather than constitutions. But the fragments from the one work Antisthenes probably wrote on Cyrus the Elder do not seem strikingly similar to anything in the *Cyropaedia*. Antisthenes evidently made Cyrus an example of the positive power of πόνος, and the barbarian counterpart to Heracles (Giannantoni [henceforth *SSR*] VA.85); had him note that it is royal to do good deeds, but to have a bad reputation (*SSR* VA.86); and had him say that the most essential part of education is to unlearn vice (*SSR* VA.87 ἀπομαθεῖν τὰ κακά). Hard work is one characteristic of Xenophon's Cyrus, but he has few vices to unlearn, and has no problem with his reputation. Due 139–41 also rejects any close correspondence between Antisthenes and Xenophon.

his belief that the truth would undermine not only imperialism or tyranny but any constitutional order led him to consider esotericism a duty, and to argue that the wise writers of the past wrote accordingly.[32] In Strauss' reading Xenophon's subtlety is over-determined; we may perfectly well explain Xenophon's reticence by noting the transformative power of the independent thought it can produce.

Xenophon's readers would have been less surprised than we by the epilogue, then. But they may still have been surprised, given the apparent success of Cyrus in the rest of the *Cyropaedia*. They would thus be forced to re-evaluate Cyrus after they had reached the end of the work. Rather like readers of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, perhaps, they may have found themselves rooting for the wrong side. Milton, on this reading, would have his readers fall as the angels did, thanks to their sympathy for the apparently heroic Satan, the better to understand their need for divine grace (Fish). Xenophon would similarly have his readers recognize the perilous attractions of empire, for both rulers and subjects, by falling prey to those attractions themselves. In this way Xenophon's manipulation of his readers is every bit as cunning as Cyrus' manipulation of his allies and subjects. Like Milton's original readers, though, who knew the difference between devils and angels, Xenophon's Greek readers would always have been conscious, despite the glitter of empire, of the traditional vices of the Persians. Xenophon could have expected readers to be tempted but to recognize, with the aid of the last chapter of the *Cyropaedia*, that they should not give way to their temptation. Xenophon chose to set his tale of empire in Persia, but the Persian veneer of his tale is largely superficial (Tuplin 1990). He chose Persia to remind readers of the vices of empire. He made the Persian setting superficial to allow his lessons about empire to apply universally. Those lessons include both how to found an empire and why not to found an empire.[33]

[32] Strauss is often criticized (as by Too 287–88; Azoulay 2004: 333) for his claim that wise writers "teach the truth according to the rule of moderation, i.e., they teach the truth exclusively between the lines" (Strauss 1939: 521). But of course any interpretation that does anything more than repeat the text (which is, ironically enough, what Strauss' later and less forthcoming works on Xenophon often seem to be doing) is guilty of reading between the lines in some sense. And Strauss was willfully exaggerating, as so often; responding to the potential criticism that he was arguing from silence, Strauss earlier in his article vowed to "limit our further discussion of Xenophon's descriptions of Spartan virtue as strictly as possible to his explicit statements" (514).

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