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Almost half a century after Leo Strauss's *Xenophon's Socrates* (1972), P. publishes a new Straussian commentary on Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. Since his paper dedicated to the *Constitution of the Athenians* (*Social Research* 6 [1939], 502–36), Strauss's work on Xenophon has been groundbreaking in proportion to the discredit Xenophon was suffering at that time. Strauss was the first twentieth-century commentator of Xenophon who was not trapped by the seeming mundanity of Xenophon's Socrates. His two books devoted to Xenophon's Socratic writings (besides the one mentioned above, *Xenophon's Socratic Discourse: an Interpretation of the Oeconomicus* [1970]) call attention to textual clues such as contradictions, unusual parataxis, unexpected silences – either of the character Socrates or of the author Xenophon. As a result of this way of reading, Xenophon is no longer the writer indulging in platitudes he was taken for in the mid-twentieth century, nor is his Socrates the conformist bourgeois he looks like in some sketches of *Memorabilia*. Instead, the latter appears as upsetting and thought-provoking as the *atopos* Platonic Socrates. Thus, thanks to Strauss, prejudices about Xenophon and his Socrates were dispelled, at least in part, and scholars' attention called back to Xenophon's Socratic writings.

Quite ironically, nowadays it is Strauss's turn to be the subject of prejudice. His exegetic method consisted of paying careful attention to connotations revealed by such details as the above-mentioned ones. Applied to an author as laconic as Xenophon, this method turns out to be quite fruitful. Nevertheless, Strauss may be blamed for having exposed this approach to criticism through a double exaggeration. On the one hand, instead of an effect of Xenophon's admiration for Sparta, he viewed his laconic style as the 'art of writing' that needed classical ancient philosophers, who were at risk of being persecuted because of their scission from prevailing opinion, like Socrates. In this view, Xenophon's style appears to be a way of concealing one's thought instead of expressing it, with a continual risk of over-interpretation. On the other hand, already in his introduction to his commentary on the *Oeconomicus*, Strauss maintained a systematic organisation of Xenophon's Socratic writings. This view was grounded merely in one phrase of the *Memorabilia* and an alleged parallel in the *Anabasis* (*Xenophon's Socratic Discourse*, p. 86 n. 7). Given as a preliminary, this makes the exegesis of Xenophon's Socratic writings dependent on what is once again an over-interpretation. Thus, through his tendency to generalise simple details, Strauss himself played his part in overlooking the heuristic capacity of his own method.

In the book under review there is not much for reducing the ostracism Strauss or his legacy are suffering. Indeed, in the structuring and layout of his commentary, P. follows closely the course

of the *Memorabilia*. Like most scholars, he divides the work into two parts, very unequal in length. The first (1.1–2) aims at exonerating Socrates from the charges brought against him, and the second (1.3–4.8) aims at explaining, chapter after chapter, how much he benefited his companions, ‘alike by actions and by his conversation’ (*Mem.* 1.3.1). In order to avoid any equivocality, every chapter title of P.’s commentary reminds the reader of what that particular part of Xenophon’s book aims at: ‘Socrates was not guilty of ...’ (ch. 1–2) for the first part, ‘How Socrates benefited ...’ (ch. 3–5) or ‘Socrates as Beneficial Tutor’ (ch. 6) for the second part. At first sight, the reading of *Memorabilia* that P. displays is literal enough to spare him being reproached for reading between the lines instead of reading the very lines, as Strauss was blamed for. A large number of notes (at the end of the book) are added to the commentary. In these notes, P. proves to be very well informed about what was written on the *Memorabilia* during the last half-century. What is more, occasionally he does not hesitate to stand with scholars he classifies as ‘conventional’, i.e. non-Straussians; for example, note 9 of ch. 22, p. 226, in accordance with recent trends, denies any textual basis to the traditional identification of the ‘anonymous accuser’ (*Mem.* from 1.2.9) with the sophist Polycrates – P. prefers to talk of ‘ventriloquism’ (p. 25).

These notes (48 pages out of 288, in small print), the titles given to chapters and the 15 pages of bibliography are a clear difference between P.’s volume and Strauss’s *Xenophon’s Socrates*. Unlike Strauss, so extremely concise as to force his readers to read him as he himself wished ancient authors to be read, P. offers a guidebook to the *Memorabilia*, waymarked with titles and subtitles, without anything unsaid: in short, a guidebook written in such a way that readers will never be at risk of getting lost.

But the difference from Strauss is limited to this. On the substance, P.’s commentary is in every respect faithful to Strauss’s one. In the introduction P. endorses the Straussian classification of Xenophon’s Socratic writings. *Oeconomicus*, *Symposion* and the *Apology of Socrates to the Jury* deal with, respectively, Socrates’ words, deeds and thoughts, whereas the *Memorabilia* makes a show of his justice. Believing that this demonstration is limited to the first two chapters (*Mem.* 1.1–2) would be wrong. Already in 1970 Strauss claimed that Socrates’ justice is also the target of the second part, without any more argument than a hint to ‘the peroration of the *Memorabilia*’ (*Xenophon’s Socratic Discourse*, p. 85). According to his own rule, P. makes the reference explicit: it is the last paragraph (*Mem.* 4.8.11) where Xenophon claims that Socrates was ‘so just as to harm no one, even a little, but to benefit in the greatest ways those who made use of him’.

The claim is that Xenophon, who first talked only of Socrates’ beneficence (1.3.1), is now concluding by identifying this beneficence with Socrates’ justice. Assuming this identity, does it follow that the *Memorabilia* deals only with Socrates’ ‘justice-beneficence’? And that according to Xenophon this is the only ‘memorable’ feature of Socrates? This is at least uncertain, since ‘justice-beneficence’ is only one of the virtues that Xenophon credits Socrates with. Socrates, Xenophon says in the same sentence, was also pious, self-controlled, prudent, able to judge by himself about noble and base, as well as to put on the path of virtue those who were erring. P. circumvents this difficulty by asserting that in the *Memorabilia* these other virtues are ‘to some extent put into the background’ (p. 5). But why should it be so?

Because, we can guess, this is the necessary condition for claiming that Socrates, such as he is pictured in the *Memorabilia*, is not Socrates himself, i.e. in relation to himself, but such as he was in relation to others. Here is what Socrates’ justice means for Strauss and P.: his public behaviour, which explains how he can say to Hippias (*Mem.* 4.4) that not infringing the law is

a sufficient proof of justice. In other words, the Socratic way of life, as runs the title of the book, is nothing more than the way in which Socrates gave in to the demands of social life; nothing more than the 'political' mask of Socrates.

The problem is that this is not what we read. In recapitulating Socrates' virtues and closing the *Memorabilia* (4.8.11), Xenophon claims that he has shown him 'such as he was', which implies that Socrates' justice was a component of his character for the same reasons as his other virtues (piety, self-control, prudence) were a component of who he was, and that these other virtues are as 'memorable' as his justice.

This volume is an excellent companion to Strauss's *Xenophon's Socrates* (at least the part dealing with the *Memorabilia*), of which he makes the full details clear. As far as Strauss's interpretation of the *Memorabilia* is misunderstood, P.'s book brings the reader every useful explanation: Straussians have no reason to be disappointed. Nor anti-Straussians: by documenting Strauss's reasonings, the book brings to light their weaknesses. While it makes Strauss easier to understand, it adds nothing new to the debate on his interpretations nor any incentive to reopen it, as far as some take it to be closed.