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THE *BIOS EUDAIMON* IN XENOPHON'S *CYROPAEDIA*[1]

One of the great stories of Greek literature is Herodotus' anecdote of the encounter between Croesus and Solon and that between Croesus and Cyrus. The influence of this story on later authors, such as Plato, Xenophon, Diogenes Laërtius, Diodorus of Sicily, Plutarch and Lucian is undisputable.[2] An important feature of this anecdote is that it combines older traditions with new questions. Quite early on, encounters between sages and powerful tyrants became a distinctive aspect of the tradition of the Seven Sages.[3] It is seen first in Herodotus, where four of the sages, who are always counted among the Seven, converse with Croesus.[4] An important feature of wisdom literature is the depiction of the *sophòs* as immune to the temptations of tyrannical rule, because he remains adherent to the rule of law and the common good. Its purpose is to expose the fallacious nature of the widespread opinion that tyrants are most fortunate because they enjoy great power, wealth, and pleasure.[5] While this message is typical of wisdom literature, one of its aspects anticipates elements of Socratic literature and the Mirror of

[1] This paper is a part of a larger study on Xenophon's political thought.
[2] Hdt. I 29-33, 86-91; see Weissbach 1931, 455-472, esp. 463, 471-472; Due 1989, 90, 122; Gera 1993, 219, 265-267, 269; Lefèvre 2010, 401-417, esp. 402-403; Jordović 2019, 131-136; Jordović 2020, 29-34.
[3] See Gray 1986, 118-121.
[4] Bias, Pittacus (Hdt. I 27, 2-5; cf. Diod. IX 25; IX 27, 3-4); Solon (Hdt. I 29-33; cf. Diod. IX 1, 2-2, 4; IX 27, 1-2); Thales (Hdt. I 75, 3-6); cf. also Diod. Sic. IX 2, 1-4, 26, 1-27, 4; cf. Leão 2010, 407-408.
[5] Sol. fr. 33 W; Aesch. *Pers*. vv. 709-714; Bacchyl. V 49-55; Pind. *Pyth*. I 46; Soph. vv. *Ant*. 506-507; *OT*. vv. 525-1526; Hdt. I 30, 2-4, 32-33; 3, 40-44, 1; Eur. *Alc*. vv. 653-654; *Phoen*. v. 506, v. 549; fr. 286, 605; DK II B F 251.

Tyrants.[6] Though Herodotus introduces Solon as a former lawgiver, he portrays him during the conversation with Croesus as an *idiòtes*, that is, as sort of *apràgmon*. Solon has distanced himself from active political life to the extent that he gives clear precedence to the life of the *idiòtai* over all the blessings of *bìos tyrannikòs*.[7] It is the combination of the question of the tyrant's happiness with the dichotomy *bìos idiotikòs – bìos tyrannikòs* that stands out from the ordinary. Before and after Herodotus it is not common in wisdom literature. Hence, it is noteworthy that the dichotomy *týrannos – idiòtes* represents a distinctive feature of the Mirror of Tyrants. In addition, this genre explicitly links the antithesis with the question of human happiness.[8]

I have discussed in detail elsewhere how Plato gave the main impetus for this development,[9] so will only briefly outline some of the aspects here. The contrast tyrant (tyrannical man) – philosopher is omnipresent in the *Gorgias*, appearing for the first time in the discussion between Socrates and Polus. The sophist eulogizes the omnipotence of the rhetor (statesman) which manifests itself above all in the possibility *to do what one pleases*, like a tyrant. For this reason rhetors and tyrants enjoy happiness.[10] On the other hand, Socrates, who embodies and advocates the *bìos philosophikòs*, affirms that doing injustice is worse than to suffer it. Accordingly, he denies that he would choose the life of a tyrant and declares that the unpunished tyrant is wretched (*àthlios*) beyond other men.[11] The same contrasts (tyrant – philosopher; unjust life – just life) also occupy a prominent place in the debate between Callicles and Socrates and in Socrates' Afterlife Myth. In both cases these dichotomies are basically subsumed under the dichotomy *bìos praktikòs – bìos theoretikòs*, that is, politically active life *vs*. politically inactive life.[12]

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[6] For the notion Mirror of Tyrants and its relation to the Mirror of Princes, see Jordović 2019, 11-14, 160-164.

[7] See Jordović 2019, 133-134.

[8] Isoc. II, 2-6; IX 40, 71-72; XV 69; Xen. *Hier*. I 1-10; *Cyr*. I 1, 1; see Jordović 2019, 74 with notes 137-138, 77-79; Jordović 2020, 41-44, 53-57.

[9] See Jordović 2018; Jordović 2019; Jordović 2020, 40-48, 53-58.

[10] Pl. *Grg*. 466b-e, 469c, 470d-471d, 473b-d; see Jordović 2019, 58-74, 77-79.

[11] Pl. *Grg*. 466b-470e, 472c-479e.

[12] Ivi, 481c-482c, 484c-486d, 492d, 493c-494b, 499e-500d, 506b-511c, 513a-d, 515a-519d, 521b-522e, 523a-b, 524e-525a, 525d-e, 526b-e.

Both Callicles and Socrates claim that only their path leads to genuine *eudaimonìa*.[13] By this analogous application of several dichotomies Plato makes clear that the traditional *bìos praktikòs* (*politikòs*) ultimately leads to the *bìos tyrannikòs*. Consequently, traditional politics must be rejected and replaced with *bìos philosophikòs* (*theoretikòs*), which most people wrongly denounce as *bìos idiotikòs*. Thus, in Plato's view only philosophy, as genuine *politikè tèchne*, can lead to true *eudaimonìa*, while traditional politics, with its focus on omnipotence, results only in a deceptive and harmful illusion of happiness.[14] With this in mind, it seems justified to approach the meeting the question of the *bìos eudàimon* and Cyrus in the *Cyropaedia* in light of the contrast politically active life *vs*. politically inactive life.

As an ally of the Assyrian king, Croesus joins the war against the Medes but fails to distinguish himself either in courage or ability. The choice of Croesus as supreme commander will show itself to be a poor one, since he is soundly defeated in the decisive battle.[15] He then flees to his capital, but very soon both Lydia and Sardes are conquered and he himself is taken into captivity.[16]

The portrayals of the encounters between Croesus and Cyrus (Solon) in the *Histories* and *Cyropaedia* show certain commonalities, but also noticeable differences. Xenophon diverges both from Herodotus and historical reality when he places the war between Croesus and Cyrus in the context of the conflict between the Medes and the Assyrians. The confrontation between Persia and Lydia took place in the year 547-546 B.C., while the destruction of the Neo-Assyrian Empire occurred in the last years of the seventh century B.C. Even more striking is that Xenophon merges Croesus' meetings with Solon and Cyrus from the *Histories* into one encounter between the Lydian king and the victorious Persian leader.[17] Unlike Cyrus in the *Histories*, the founder of

[13] Ivi, 491e, 492c, 492e, 493d, 494a, 494c, 494d, 495a, 497c, 507c, 507d, 508b, 525e.
[14] See Jordović 2019, 54-56, 108-119, 132-134, 155-164.
[15] Xen. *Cyr*. I 5, 3; II 1, 5; III 3, 29; IV 1, 8; IV 2, 29; VI 2, 9-10; VI 2, 19; VII 1, 23-45; VII 2, 1.
[16] Ivi, VII 2, 1-5, 9.
[17] See Due 1989, 90, 122; Gera 1993, 219, 265-267, 269; Lefèvre 2010, 401-417, esp. 402-403.

the Persian Empire in the *Cyropaedia* is not the restless conqueror who is driven by boundless ambition.[18] From the beginning and in accordance with his philanthropy, he treats his former enemy very humanely.[19] With both Herodotus and Xenophon, Croesus' hubris lured him into testing the Delphic Oracle. The consequence is a misinterpretation of the received prophecies which leads to his inevitable downfall.[20] However, Xenophon's Croesus, after the defeat, does not require another answer from Pythia to recognize the real dimensions of his blindness.[21]

Despite these differences, in describing Croesus' infatuation with his own happiness and his terrible downfall, both Herodotus and Xenophon address the question of what comprises a happy life, that is, how should one live. While this question is approached in the *Histories* by way of Solon's responses, in the *Cyropaedia* it is achieved by Pythia's answer to Croesus that self-knowledge (*gnòthi sautòn*) is the precondition for *bìos eudàimon*.[22] After the final defeat, Xenophon's Croesus recalls her words and blames his overweening egotism and self-confidence for his fate. To Herodotus' Solon such an explanation would certainly be more than acceptable, yet he would find it hard to accept what Xenophon's «enlightened» Croesus considers to be a happy life. When Cyrus tells him that he will out of compassion return to him his family, friends and servants and at the same time free him of battles and wars, Croesus replies that he will now enjoy the life which others consider most blissful. To Cyrus' question of who lives such a life of bliss, Croesus replies: my wife. She always shared equally with him wealth, luxuries and all the joys, without ever experiencing the anxieties of acquiring them, nor had she seen war or battle. Croesus thus reveals that he has not yet penetrated the essence of a happy life. His understanding of *bìos eudàimon* comes down in effect to a feminine

[18] See Bischoff 1932, 42-45; Due 1989, 129; Mueller-Goldingen 1995, 13; Bichler 2000, 266-269.
[19] Hdt. I 86; Xen. *Cyr.* VII 2, 10; see Due 1989, 126-127; Mueller-Goldingen 1995, 17-18; Lefèvre 2010, 404.
[20] Hdt. I 34, 1; I 46-48; I 55, 1; I 90, 2-91; Xen. *Cyr.* VII 2, 16-25; see Due 1989, 127; Gera 1993, 271-273; Mueller-Goldingen 1995, 19-20; Lefèvre 2010, 406-407.
[21] Hdt. I 90, 2-91; Xen. *Cyr.* VII 2, 16-18; see Gera 1993, 271.
[22] Xen. *Cyr.* VII 2, 20-25; see also *Mem*. IV 2, 24-29; cf. Gera 1993, 273-275; Lefèvre 2010, 409; Gray 2010, 151, 154-155.

life (*bìos gynaikòdes*), which is geared towards material well-being and whose chief measure is personal, not general welfare. Such an apolitical life is not only contrary to Xenophon's *philoponìa* ideal, but also incompatible with the life of a man, that is, citizen. Moreover, it is necessary to take into account that Croesus' *bìos eudàimon* totally depends on the good will of Cyrus. It is not the outcome of his activity; in the same way Croesus' wife's happy life is the result of her husband's efforts. Therefore Cyrus says nothing regarding Croesus' reply, but only marvels (*thaumàzein*) at his good spirits.[23]

Besides his wonder, there are other indicators of the unacceptability of such a way of life for Cyrus. There is firstly Croesus's realization that he had not fulfilled the necessary conditions to become the most powerful man in the world, for he not only allowed himself to be blinded by power, wealth, and the obsequiousness accorded him, but also lacks good lineage (divine and royal) such as Cyrus enjoys, and is not practiced in virtue since childhood.[24] Ultimately, despite gaining some self-knowledge, Croesus remains insufficiently enlightened. Each time thereafter when he gives advice to his new master, he manifests once more an insufficient understanding of the principles of good leadership. This is especially obvious when he gives priority to the accumulation of wealth and thereby contradicts Cyrus' view of friends as the most valuable asset.[25]

In addition to the meeting of Cyrus and Croesus, there are three other episodes in the *Cyropaedia* which may be taken as dialogues on *bìos eudàimon*. On the eve of the first battle with the Assyrians a brief exchange of opinions takes place between Chrysantas and Cyrus about whether it was possible with one speech to impress courage and self-sacrifice on soldiers' hearts. While the Persian nobleman is convinced that this is possible, Cyrus argues that laws, teachers and leaders are what instruct and accustom men to the right way. The Persian prince also

[23] Xen. *Cyr.* VII 2, 20-29, esp. 26-29; cf. Breitenbach 1967, 1720-1721; Due 1989, 88-89; Gera 1993, 206, 277-278; Mueller-Goldingen 1995, 23, 66; see also Lefèvre 2010, 408-410, 413-414; Gray 2010, 155; Azoulay 2018, 34-35.

[24] Xen. *Cyr.* VII 2, 23-24; see Isoc. IX 12-25; cf. Gera 1993, 275-276; Mueller-Goldingen 1995, 21; cf. Erasmus 1954, 121-125.

[25] Xen. *Cyr.* VII 4, 12-13; VIII 2, 15-23; see also *Mem*. II 4, 5-7; III 11, 5.

makes it clear that training can triumph over fear in the presence of the enemy only if men are taught to distinguish between two ways of life. One is honorable (*èntimos*) and free (*elèutherios*) and is lived by good (*agathòi*) and famous men, who are therefore considered to be the happiest (*eudaimonèstatoi*). The other way of life brings humiliation and misery. This life, which is not worth living (*abìotos*), is lived by the bad (*kakòi*) and the infamous, because of which they are considered to be the most wretched (*athliòtatoi*) of all people. In the context of this distinction, Cyrus underlines that Persian peers must lead commoners in battle by example.[26] Cyrus' words do away with the possibility that he could find any attraction in the way of life advocated by Croesus. The usage of the contrast *agathòi – kakòi* is also noteworthy, as it has been characteristic of antidemocratic discourse.[27] Admittedly, the distinction peers-commoners echoes it to some extent, as it also presupposes a difference in quality between two social groups. And yet, a major difference can be observed. The peers have evidently internalized the right path, because of which they can lead by example. The same obviously cannot be said of the commoners. Nonetheless, Cyrus is quite explicit that low social origin and status is not an insurmountable barrier to achieving the happiest life. Any person can attain it as long as he is courageous and prepared to commit himself to the common good, which in this case is embodied by the army.

The second dialogue occurs between Cyrus and his uncle Cyaxares, again the prototype of the eastern despot. The conversation takes place after the first victory over the Assyrians, when Cyrus wants to pursue the enemy who have abandoned camp and are on the run. Yet, the Median king strongly opposed this undertaking. He was partly motivated by jealousy that his nephew was first to broach the matter. More importantly, Cyaxares was sincerely averse to exposing himself to danger again because, like many other Medes, he preferred feasting and merrymaking (*euthymìa*).[28] He therefore answers Cyrus by telling him that he knows well that the Persians are more careful than other people

[26] Xen. *Cyr.* III 3, 51-55.
[27] See Donlan 1978, 95-111, esp. 96-100, 104-105, 108; Donlan 1980, 125-138, 144-145.
[28] Xen. *Cyr.* IV 1, 9-13.

never to be insatiate in the pursuit of any pleasure (*hedonè*), and that he himself believes it best for a man to be moderate (*enkratès*) even in the greatest pleasure (*meghìste hedonè*). However, the greatest satisfaction a man can have is brought by good fortune (*eutychìa*), which has now befallen them. If they prudently enjoy their success, they will grow to old age without risk to their happiness (*eudaimonoûntes*). If, however, out of avarice they intemperately risk their current good fortune and continue to pursue one success after another, they could be overtaken by the fate of many mariners who had good fortune (*eutychèin*), but did not give up seafaring until they drowned. In the same way, many who succeeded in winning one victory strove towards another and so have lost even what they gained by the first.[29] The Median king then begins to speak of their current position and why it is dangerous to go in pursuit of the enemy. He completes his speech by saying that he has no intention of forcing the Medes to expose themselves to danger when he can see them making merry.[30] Cyaxares' explanation seems reasonable and completely in sync with the traditional Greek wisdom of nothing in excess (*medèn àgan*).[31] This impression is strengthened if we consider that Herodotus gives the example of the Oriental rulers to show how insatiable expansionism leads to downfall.[32] Cyrus himself does not in the least dispute Cyaxares' argument, but persuades him to allow him to take with him any Medes who volunteer for the pursuit.[33]

However, Xenophon quickly reveals the extent of Cyaxares' misjudgment: almost all the «merry» Medes voluntarily join the Persian prince in the pursuit and a series of ensuing victories additionally confirms Cyrus' decision.[34] Moreover, there are strong signs that Cyaxares, like Croesus, stands for the *bìos gynaikòdes*. He, too, seeks enjoyment devoid of fear and danger. His effeminate behaviour becomes even more

[29] Ivi, IV 1, 14-15.
[30] Ivi, IV 1, 16-18.
[31] See Mueller-Goldingen 1995, 174-175; Nadon 2001, 89-91.
[32] See Bichler 2000, 244-253 (Croesus), 266-269 (Cyrus), 270-272 (Cambyses), 292-297, 317 (Dareios), 318-333 (Xerxes); cf. also Jordović 2005, 163-164, and 204 with note 203.
[33] Xen. *Cyr.* IV 1, 19-21.
[34] Ivi, IV 2, 11; see Mueller-Goldingen 1995, 176.

obvious after Cyrus' victorious return. The Persian prince gives him the tent of the infamous Assyrian despot, splendidly furnished and with a lady accompanied by her music girls. The Median volunteers brought many gifts such as a handsome cup-bearer, a fine cook, a baker, a musician, cups, goblets, fine raiment, etc.[35] Interestingly, neither Cyrus nor the volunteers presented Cyaxares with fine weapons, armour or for that matter any kind of military equipment. This is quite revealing, especially in light of the fact that the Median king is formally leading the entire campaign. Cyaxares' subsequent acts exclude any possibility that this might be coincidence or oversight. On receiving the gifts, he immediately betakes himself to the banquet, leaving the council that will decide whether or not to continue the campaign till the following morning. Cyrus, on the other hand, as a true leader gathers his friends and the ablest men to instruct them on how to inspire their allies to new war efforts.[36] This move essentially decides the future of the campaign. On the following morning, while Cyaxares still dressed and adorned himself, a large number of allies gathered in front of his tent. Cyrus, who was not late, was approached by the allies requesting not to disband the army but to wage war. When Cyaxares, sumptuously dressed, finally emerged from his tent, a council was held. At this meeting the Median king was essentially presented with a *fait accompli*, since all participants had already made up their minds in favour of continuing the campaign.[37] Thereupon, most of the army sets off with the Persian prince, while Cyaxares, who first called to arms against the Assyrian king, ceases to participate in the ongoing military operations. He remains in the rear with a third of the Medes so that his kingdom is not left unprotected.[38] It is striking that in doing so, Cyaxares not only tacitly waives his status as supreme commander, but that he is the only leader to return home. Military considerations can only have been a pretext, since all other leaders accept Cyrus' logic that pushing forward to engage the enemy on his own territory is the most promising strategy

[35] Xen. *Cyr.* V 5, 2, 38-40.
[36] Ivi, IV 5, 41-45; see Azoulay 2018, 37.
[37] Xen. *Cyr.* VI 1, 1-24, esp. 1-6.
[38] Ivi, VI 3, 2.

and the best way to protect their own territories from counterattack.[39] In other words, the Median king, like Croesus' wife, devolves all risks of war to others so that he can enjoy a peaceful life at home. This is further corroborated by Cyrus' first visit to his uncle Cyaxares after he has won the war and become the Great King. The first thing that Cyrus tells his uncle is that a palace and estate have been selected for him in Babylon, so that he may have a residence of his own whenever he comes there. This is followed by the giving of many splendid gifts.[40]

At the heart of the conversation between Cyaxares and Cyrus lies the question of a proper relationship between expansionism and happiness. Cyrus' successes show that his path is no contradiction to *bìos eudàimon*. Moreover, the encounters with Cyaxares and Croesus suggest that his understanding of happiness diverges from that of the typical oriental despot. Cyrus' mind and body are not susceptible to effeminacy, as in the case of the two other kings. On the contrary, he never forgets his responsibilities as a ruler and is willing to endure toil and danger in order to meet them. On the one hand, Cyrus, unlike Croesus, knows his limits and never goes beyond them. Accordingly, he never exhibits the spirit of boundless expansionism in the manner of Herodotus' Cyrus.[41] On the other, the Persian prince is not content with preserving the inherited position, as Cyaxares is, but strives for more.

The third dialogue is between Pheraulas and a young Sacian. Here we should say something about Pheraulas himself and his role in the *Cyropaedia*.[42] The importance of this dramatic character is that he appears in the *Cyropaedia* for the first time in the context of Xenophon's support for a meritocracy. At the beginning of the campaign, Cyrus decides that all Persians should be armed as the *homòtimoi*, i.e. as the Persian nobility. The reason is simple: the need for as large a number of well-armed soldiers as possible so that the Persians could contend with the more numerous enemy. The peers accept Cyrus' decision gladly.[43] And when the Persian prince explains his decision to the common Persians,

[39] Ivi, VI 1, 12-18; see also 10.
[40] Ivi, VIII 5, 17-19; esp. 17.
[41] See Bichler 2000, 266-269; Lefèvre 2010, 415-417.
[42] See Due 1989, 73-75.
[43] Xen. *Cyr.* II 1, 9-12.

he represents a view which might easily be interpreted as support for the principles of meritocracy. The *demòtai* were born and bred upon the same soil as the *homòtimoi*. Their bodies (*sòmata*) and mind (*psychè*) are not inferior to that of the peers. The only reason why the common people did not enjoy the same rights is that they had no leisure, since they were compelled to earn their livelihood. However, if they armed to the same level as the peers, fought with the same zeal, then they would be counted worthy of an equal share.[44] Xenophon in this way addresses the issue of whether arithmetical or geometrical equality is better.[45] Yet, his answer is not one-dimensional. On the one hand, he gives clear preference to geometrical equality and never questions the principle of social stratification. On the other, he makes unequivocally clear that absolute precedence should be given to the principle of merit and that many people find themselves at the bottom of the social ladder due to circumstances for which they ultimately are not responsible.

Just before the first clash with the enemy, Cyrus tests his friends by asking whether the courage of a soldier increases if he is promised that the spoils will be divided equally among all or distributed according to valor shown in battle.[46] The first to speak is Chrysantas, Cyrus' right-hand man. He steps forward on behalf of the *homòtimoi* as someone who is preeminent in wise judgment (*phrònesis*). Chrysantas is utterly opposed to the idea that an equal part (*ìson èchein/isomorèin*) in the booty be allotted to both good (*agathòi*) and bad (*kakòi*) alike.[47] After him comes Pheraulas, who before he utters a word, is presented as the embodiment of meritocracy. Though one of the Persian commoners, he was an old acquaintance of Cyrus and a gentleman in body and spirit.[48] Pheraulas says that both classes are now starting on an equal footing in a contest of merit. The *demòtai*, like the *homòtimoi*, were trained to endure hunger, thirst, and cold, but theirs was the best of teachers:

[44] Ivi, II 1, 15; see also I 2, 15; II 1, 16-19; cf. Danzig 2009, 272-273.
[45] Xen. *Cyr.* II 2, 2-9, 18-30; see Pl. *Grg.* 508a; *R.* 558c; *Leg.* 757a-758a; Arist. *Pol.* 1284a15-23; Isoc. *Or.* II 14-6, III 14; VII 21-23; see Gera 1993, 164; Mueller-Goldingen 1995, 136-139, 215.
[46] Xen. *Cyr.* II 3, 1-6; see Mueller-Goldingen 1995, 142-143.
[47] Xen. *Cyr.* II 3, 6; see Gera 1993, 163-164: Mueller-Goldingen 1995, 144.
[48] Ivi, II 3, 7; see Gera 1993, 176-177.

necessity. In this contest the commoners can only gain, because though the same prizes are offered to all, the stakes differ. The *demòtai* stand to lose a life of ignominious toil, while the peers risk a life of honor. Because of all this, Pheraulas advocates that each should be rewarded according to his merit.[49]

Pheraulas next appears in the *Cyropaedia* in reference to a solemn procession in Babylon, during which Cyrus appears in public for the first time as the Great King. The honor of organizing this procession is given to Pheraulas, a man of the people (*demòtes*). Cyrus entrusts him with this important and prestigious task, knowing to be intelligent (*sýnetos*), to have an eye for beauty (*philòkalos*) and order (*èutaktos*), to be inclined to please him in every respect (*charìzesthai*) and to have supported his proposal that each man is honored according to his merit. Furthermore, Cyrus, has issued orders for all to obey Pheraulas in regard to the ordering of the procession. He then gave tunics and cavalry mantles to Pheraulas to distribute them among the officers, the idea being that the latter would obey him better. When Pheraulas took them to the commanders, one of them objected, saying he had become a great man who could now order even them about. However, the quick-witted Pheraulas managed to soothe his envy by replying that this was not the case since in fact he was a mere porter.[50] This response showed presence of mind and shrewdness, but also the ability to bridle his sense of self-importance in the interests of carrying out the task entrusted to him.

Another noteworthy event during the festivity is Pheraulas' encounter with a young Sacian. The young man won a horse race by several lengths. When Cyrus asks him whether he would exchange his horse for a kingdom, the youth replies that he would not, but that he would be willing to give it in exchange for the gratitude (*charìs*) of an excellent man.[51] Cyrus then replies that he will take the young Sacian to a place where he can identify an excellent man with his eyes closed, and takes him to a spot where most of his friends are standing. He then asks the youth to throw a clod without looking, which he does. The clump of

[49] Ivi, II 3, 7-15; see Mueller-Goldingen 1995, 144-148.
[50] Xen. *Cyr.* VIII 3, 5-8.
[51] Ivi, VIII 3, 25-26.

earth hits Pheraulas, who happens to be riding by in a great hurry. This was the gods' way of announcing that he was the *anèr agathòs*. The accuracy of this decision is confirmed at the same moment by his reaction. Though Pheraulas was struck by the clod in the face, he continues diligently to carry out his duty of managing the procession.[52] When he finds out why he has been hit and why he was presented with a horse, his first reaction is to say modestly to the Sacian that if he had been wise he would have given the horse to a richer man. Nevertheless, Pheraulas accepts the gift and prays to the gods who had ordained that he should be struck, to enable him to return the favor to the Sacian, so that the latter may not regret his choice. As the festivity is still in progress, Pheraulas agrees with the Sacian to meet again later. And indeed, when everything is over, Pheraulas treats his benefactor to his hospitality. On this occasion a conversation develops between the two of them, which has interesting commonalities with the dialogue in Xenophon's *Hiero*. The theme of both is how one should live, that is, what kind of life is best and happiest. The young Sacian, like the poet Simonides, extols the benefits a privileged position brings to his interlocutor, while Pheraulas, like the Syracusan tyrant, constantly points out its shortcomings and weaknesses.[53] Another remarkable concurrence is the contrast between the politically active and inactive life. While in the *Hiero* it appears as the dichotomy *bìos tyrannikòs – bìos idiotikòs*,[54] in this encounter it takes the form of the antithesis *homo politicus – homo oeconomicus*.

The conversation opens with a question by the young Sacian of whether Pheraulas has always been as rich as he is now. Pheraulas replies that he is actually of lowly origin, that he comes from very modest circumstances and that all that he has he got from Cyrus. The young Sacian then tells Pheraulas that he is a blessed man (*makàrios*), the more so since he was once poor, because of which he can enjoy his wealth all the more. The Persian, however, does not agree with this conclusion at all. He says that he neither eats, nor drinks nor sleeps with any more zest than before. The only gain which wealth has brought him is that he is obliged to take care of more and to distribute more to others. Consequently, he now has

[52] Ivi, VIII 3, 25-31.
[53] Xen. *Hier*. I 1-8, II 3-5; esp. I 7-8, II 3-4; see Jordović 2020, 53-57.
[54] Xen. *Hier*. I 1-3; see Jordović 2020, 40-41.

more worries than when he was poor. To a remark by the other that at least at moments when all is as it should be he feels more happiness (*euphràinein*) than he (the Sacian) does, Pheraulas replies in the negative. The pleasure that the possession of wealth gives is not at all proportional to the grief caused by its loss. Therefore happiness does not disrupt the sleep of a single wealthy man, while the one who has lost his wealth cannot close the eyes. The young Sacian then replies that no one drops asleep when he is winning. Pheraulas does not contradict this view, but he differentiates between having (*èchein*) and getting (*lambànein*). The rich have much, but they are forced to spend a lot on the gods, friends and guests. Hence, anyone who takes intense pleasure in his wealth is also intensely distressed by the spending of it. When the young Sacian replies that his idea of *eudaimonìa* is to have much and to spend much, Pheraulas to his surprise gives him his wealth to use as he pleases. The Persian asks in return to be treated as a guest, and even more sparingly than a guest, because he will be content to share whatever the Sacian has. Pheraulas will even intercede with Cyrus for the young Sacian not to have to serve either in court or in the army, but rather stay at home and take care of his wealth. The agreement of the young Sacian to this offer and his belief that he has found happiness (*eudàimon*) due to his mastery of much wealth, shows that he is the embodiment of a *homo economicus*. It also explains why he had originally refused to exchange his horse for a kingdom. Pheraulas, on the other hand, is a true *homo politicus*. He considers himself most blessed (*makariòtatos*) to have found a steward who will relieve him of the burden of wealth and provide him with the leisure (*scholè*) to do what he liked best. By the latter he is obviously thinking of his dedication to his official duties. The first sign of this is his readiness to carry out the young Sacian's duties at court and in the field while giving him everything he earns in this service. The second is Pheraulas' explanation that in taking care of his wealth, the young Sacian will be doing a great favor not only to him but to Cyrus, which confirms once more that Pheraulas intends to use his leisure time in the service of the Great King.[55] Xenophon, at the end of the encounter, observes that both of them were happy with their new way of living.[56]

[55] Xen. *Cyr.* VIII 3, 35-48, esp. 46-48; Gera 1993, 178-179.
[56] Xen. *Cyr.* VIII 3, 48.

This may seem confusing, since it could lead to the conclusion that Xenophon equates the life of the *homo politicus* with that of the *homo oeconomicus*. This is incompatible not only with the dialogue between Croesus and Cyrus about *bios eudàimon*, but also with the message of the entire *Cyropaedia*. Xenophon lets it be known in numerous ways that he would not agree with this conclusion. The first is the many connections drawn between leisure (*scholè*) and Pheraulas' duties.[57] To mention leisure here is important insofar as both Xenophon and Cyrus say that *demòtai* do not enjoy the same honors as the *homòtimoi*, not because the former are inferior, but because they do not have leisure to devote themselves to public affairs.[58] This circumstance is interesting because the notion of leisure as a condition for a politically active life was an important part of the anti-democratic discourse.[59] Accordingly, Pheraulas' eagerness to exchange wealth for leisure in order to lead a politically active life should be taken as a highly positive act.[60] His realization that wealth also fetters a man and should just be a means to an end is all the more praiseworthy because he himself comes from very humble origins.

The second way in which Xenophon suggests that Pheraulas' choice is one to imitate is the praise which comes at the end of the dialogue. Here Xenophon says that Pheraulas was a loving comrade (*tròpos philetàiros*) and that it seemed to him most pleasant and useful to do favors for other people. For he held man to be noblest and most grateful of all creatures, since he recognized that praise will reap counter-praise, kindness will stir goodwill in return and that men cannot dislike those who love them. All other creatures, compared to man, were lacking in gratitude (*acharistòtera*) and heart (*aghnomonèstera*).[61] The emphasis on reciprocation as a basic principle of interpersonal relations is relevant insofar as the conversation between Pheraulas and the Sacian is as much about reciprocity as it is about the type of life one should lead. It

[57] Ivi, VIII 3, 47-48, 50.
[58] Ivi, I 2, 15; II 1, 15-19.
[59] Thuc. II 40, 2; Eur. *Supp.* vv. 410-422; Isocr. VII 24; Arist. *Pol.* 1277b34-1278a10; 1292b22-1293a11; 1328b34-1329a2; 1334a20-23; 1337b5-10; see also Pl. *Apol.* 23c.
[60] See Mueller-Goldingen 1995, 238-239.
[61] Xen. *Cyr.* VIII 3, 49.

starts with the exchange of a horse for gratitude and ends with the exchange of wealth for leisure. In addition, it is made clear that Pheraulas maintains a reciprocal relationship with Cyrus, too.[62] This is reflected in the fact that in doing a favor to Pheraulas, the Sacian is doing also a favor to the Great King and that Pheraulas receives material rewards from Cyrus for his services, which in turn he is willing to consign to the Sacian. In this way it is shown that to act according to the principle of reciprocity constitutes one of the cornerstones of happiness. This assessment of Pheraulas' character shows that he has completely adopted Cyrus' understanding of friendship, *philanthropìa* and gratitude. Since Pheraulas is the personification of Persian meritocracy, a true *homo reciprocus* who does not permit himself to be blinded by wealth, his striving towards the life of a *homo politicus* should be seen as proof that, in Xenophon's eyes, this way of life represents *bìos eudàimon*.[63]

Finally, in his last speech to his sons, friends and Persian dignitaries, Cyrus himself makes a brief, but important statement on the nature of happy life.[64] In ordering the sequence of succession, the Persian king announces to his second-born son that royal power will pass to Cambyses as the elder. Yet, he is bequeathing happiness (*eudaimonìa*) with fewer cares to Tanaoxares, who will not lack any of the human joys. The burden of kingship inevitably goes in hand in hand with the craving for difficult undertakings, plots and counterplots, many cares and the restless passion to rival Cyrus' achievements. All this leaves little leisure (*ascholìa*) for happiness (*euphrànein*).[65] These words, however, do not go to show that the founder of the Persian Empire at the end of his life had suddenly changed his mind, as may be seen from several instances. In the same speech he urges those present always to remember him as blessed (*eudàimon/makarìzein*): as the years passed, his strength grew with them; he succeeded in all his undertakings; he has made his friends happy while subjugating his enemies; he leaves Persia, once of no account in Asia, at the height of its power; he has held on to everything he won; throughout his whole life he has fared

[62] See Azoulay 2018, 57-58, 225-226.
[63] See Due 1989, 73-75, esp. 75.
[64] Xen. *Cyr.* VIII 7, 6-26, esp. 2, 6-12; see Due 1989, 133-135.
[65] Xen. *Cyr.* VIII 7, 11-12.

as he would have wished; fear of seeing, hearing or suffering evil was his loyal companion, never letting him become presumptuous (*mèga phronèin*) or extravagantly happy (*euphràinesthai ekpeptamènos*); he feels deep gratitude; and his children survive him.[66] It is also worth noting that Tanaoxares will not lead an idle life, but will be satrap to the Medes, Armenians and Cadusians.[67] All this shows that in addressing his second-born son, Cyrus wishes to offer him comfort for not having precedence in the succession, and to reduce the possibility of animosity and envy between the brothers.[68]

In the four conversations on the happy life examined here, there are certain ambiguities which at first might lead us to conclude that *bìos eudàimon* is a life that rejects political activity, but Xenophon's ambiguity is essentially quite simple. By seeming to support another way of life from the one embodied by Cyrus, he effectively demonstrates the extent to which that other way is wrong. In fact, this is merely a more perfected version of the method applied in the dialogue between Croesus and Solon.

Xenophon's notion of *bìos eudàimon* speaks unequivocally in favor of a politically active life. His disapproval of the apolitical life is most vividly expressed when he denounces it as a feminized life. In Ancient Greece women were not only considered inferior to men, they were, regardless of the form of constitution, excluded from political life. It is therefore not surprising that those who strongly advocated a politically active life, such as Plato's Callicles and Thucydides' Pericles, asserted that it is characterized by courage (*andrèia*), absence of softness (*malakìa*) and *eudaimonìa*, while simultaneously reprimanding the *bìos idiotikòs* (*theoretikòs*) as unmanly (*ànandros*).[69] In this context, Xeno-

[66] Ivi, VIII 7, 2-3, 6-9; see Gera 1993, 121.
[67] Xen. *Cyr.* VIII 7, 11.
[68] Ivi, VIII 7, 9, 15-17.
[69] *Anandrìa* (Pl. *Grg.* 485c, 485d, 492b); *malakìa* (Thuc. II 40, 1-2; Pl. *Grg.* 491b) *andrèia* (Thuc. II 39, 1; Pl. *Grg.* 491b-c, 491e-492a, 495c-d, 498a-499a); *eudaimonìa* (Thuc. II 43, 4; Pl. *Grg.* 491e, 492c); cf. Jordović 2019, 115-116, 166-168. The depiction of Charmides in the *Memorabilia* as a genuine *apràgmon* is also noteworthy. Although far more capable than the contemporary politicians, he hesitates to enter public life and handle the matters of state. Xenophon's Socrates points out to him that man who shrinks from public affairs could be rebuked for being soft (*malakòs*) and

phon's explanation of the decline of the Persian Empire is also noteworthy. According to him, the principal reason was the moral decay that set in after the death of Cyrus.[70] A prominent symptom was effeminacy, manifest primarily in the renouncement of Persian education (*paidèia*) and self-mastery (*enkràteia*), and the adoption of Median dress (*stolè*), luxury (*habròtes*) and softness (*malakìa*). As a consequence of moral degradation the Persians lost their power of endurance (*karterìa*), became inferior in military prowess and less manly (*ànandros*).[71]

The episodes on *bìos eudàimon* in the *Cyropaedia* show that Xenophon associates it with striving for power (expansionism), courage, self-knowledge, moderation, the principle of merit and reciprocity. Courage is not only an important personal quality of Cyrus, but is named by him as a distinctive feature of the right path, trod by free, honorable men and those that are happiest. The importance of courage is also reflected in the fact that both Cyrus and Pheraulas postulate it as one of the pillars of the rule of merit. The circumstance that Croesus and Cyaxares are contrasted with Cyrus, and that in this context these two oriental rulers fail to grasp fundamental ethical principles such as self-knowledge and moderation, suggest that these values represent a vital prerequisite for the *bìos eudàimon* and are internalized by the Persian ruler. Thus, the founder of the greatest Empire up to that time can serve as a paradigm for the *bìos eudàimon*, as he embodies not only the successful quest for power, but the possibility of exercising absolute power without being corrupted by it.[72] A further proof of this is Cyrus' statement that he never became overweening or excessively happy, because he was inhibited by fear of seeing, hearing, or suffering evil. Pheraulas' modesty in the conversation with the young Sacian and his ability to restrain his sense of self-importance in the encounter

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a coward (*deilòs*), and urges him to become politically active because this is in his own best interest (Xen. *Mem*. III 7, 1-9; see also *Smp.* IV 29-23). In the eponymous dialogue, Plato associates Charmides with the definition of *sophrosýne* as doing his own work (*tà hautoû pràttein*) and knowing oneself (*Chrm*. 161b-165b; see also Ar. *Nu*. 1006-1007); cf. Jordović 2019, 158-159, 166-167 with note 168, and 175.

[70] Xen. *Cyr.* VIII 8.

[71] Ivi, 8, 8-9; 15-20, 27.

[72] Pind. *Pyth*. III 85-106; Hdt. I 32,4; cf. Lefèvre 2010, 409; Mueller-Goldingen 1995, 174-175.

with the commanders send a similar message. The *homo novus* serves further as living proof of the importance of the principle of merit for the *bìos eudàimon* and that this precept for Cyrus is not just an empty word. The conversation between Pheraulas and the Sacian confirms the instrumental nature of reciprocity for the *bìos eudàimon*. This is further corroborated by Cyrus' belief expressed in his last speech that he should be remembered as blessed, because he has made his friends happy while subjugating his enemies.

An important aspect of the *bìos eudàimon* in the *Cyropaedia* is that it depends on the welfare of others. Accordingly, courage and merit are mentioned in connection with the willingness to risk one's life for the sake of others. Reciprocity serves as a prime example of the interdependence between *eudaimonìa* and meeting the needs of others. From this it may be inferred that the person who seeks happiness has a direct and intrinsic motive to promote the welfare of others. In other words, Xenophon accepts that self-interest should be an important criterion of human action. However, he simultaneously makes it clear that the form of egotism that takes only self-interest into account is irreconcilable with *bìos eudàimon*. The examples of Croesus, Cyaxares and even the Sacian demonstrate that individuals whose life tends towards material well-being and enjoyment are under the misconception of leading a happy life. Their actions are so self-centered that they fail to recognize how this exaggerated concern with their own well-being has made them dependent on the goodwill of others – the «happy life» they lead is in fact the result of other people's activity, not their own.[73]

Finally, while Xenophon's notion of *bìos eudàimon* exhibits substantial differences to Plato's understanding of *eudaimonìa* in the *Gorgias*, it also displays some similarities. The most obvious discrepancy is that for Xenophon the traditional political active life brings happiness. Cyrus' *bìos eudàimon* is intrinsically linked to war, the establishment of an empire and the exercise of supreme political authority in a more or less traditional manner. The most notable similarity between Xenophon and Plato is that both share the viewpoint that those who have «great power» (to use Polus' phrase) have to reject extreme egotism. The ruler

[73] See Azoulay 2018, 34-37.

cannot, like a typical tyrant, exercise power only to his own benefit and to the detriment of others, since this is ultimately not in his self-interest. However, this is the point where overlap ends. Plato argues that with the well-being of the soul in mind, it is better to suffer injustice than to commit it.[74] Xenophon never depicts Cyrus as someone who is inflicting or suffering injustice. Cyrus' last speech, delivered from his deathbed, emphasizes for one last time his righteousness: a figure of more than human majesty appeared to him in a dream and announced that he will soon depart to the gods; he is convinced to have enjoyed a blissful life; he believes that after death the soul leaves the body and does not perish with it; and he has no doubt that gods behold everything, including wickedness in thought, word and deed.[75] The circumstance that Cyrus has defeated and subjugated all his enemies, who in the *Cyropaedia* are depicted as more or less unjust, is sufficient proof that he never turned the other cheek to injustice. Yet, it is hard to imagine that Plato would ever characterize military conquest and the subjection of large parts of the world as an act of justice. While Polus refers to the Great King as happy and Callicles' regards the expansionism of the Persian rulers as paradigmatic,[76] Plato's Socrates argues in the Afterlife Myth that the judges of the dead see easy through the naked souls of men and that the soul of the Great King, as utterly corrupted, will inevitably end in the Tartaros.[77] Plato's belief that absolute power corrupts absolutely is reflected also in Socrates' words that it is very hard to live the whole life justly when one has freedom to do what's unjust («great power») and that such men appear rarely.[78]

[74] See notes 10-12.
[75] Xen. *Cyr.* VIII 2-3, VII 6-8, 21-23.
[76] Pl. *Grg.* 470e; 483d-e, 492b.
[77] Ivi, 470e, 523c-524e. The Greeks perceived the Great King as the tyrant *par excellence*; see Jordović 2019, 61, note 81.
[78] Pl. *Grg.* 525d-526b.

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Keywords

Xenophon; Cyrus; *bìos eudàimon*; politically active life; politically inactive life; Plato

Abstract

The question of *bìos eudàimon* takes an important position in Greek thought, as shown by Herodotus and in Plato's *Gorgias*. Thus, it comes as no real surprise that it also plays a significant role in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. However, the usual focus of modern scholars is mainly directed on the encounter of Cyrus with Croesus. The present article attempts to overcome the shortcomings of this approach by

also exploring other episodes in *Cyropaedia* which refer directly or indirectly to the question of *bìos eudàimon*. Apart from the encounter between Cyrus and Croesus, three other encounters will be examined: the brief exchange of opinions between Chrysantas and Cyrus; the dialogue between Cyrus and Cyaxares; the conversation between Pheraulas and the young Sacian; and the last speech of Cyrus. The analyses will elucidate that Xenophon by *bìos eudàimon* implies a politically active life which is simultaneously directed to the welfare of others. Finally, a comparison with Herodotus' and Plato's views aims at exploring the similarities and differences between these authors with respect to the *bìos eudàimon*.

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