

The Politics of Socratic Humor

John Lombardini



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

The Politics of Socratic Humor

The Joan Palevsky



Imprint in Classical Literature

In honor of beloved Virgil—

“O degli altri poeti onore e lume . . .”

—Dante, *Inferno*

*The publisher and the University of California Press
Foundation gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the
Joan Palevsky Imprint in Classical Literature.*

The Politics of Socratic Humor

John Lombardini



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

University of California Press, one of the most distinguished university presses in the United States, enriches lives around the world by advancing scholarship in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Its activities are supported by the UC Press Foundation and by philanthropic contributions from individuals and institutions. For more information, visit www.ucpress.edu.

University of California Press
Oakland, California

© 2018 by The Regents of the University of California Library
of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Names:

Lombardini, John, author.

Title: The politics of Socratic humor / John Lombardini.

Description: Oakland, California : University of
California Press, [2018] | Includes bibliographical
references and index. |

Identifiers: LCCN 2018011950 (print) | LCCN 2018016651
(ebook) | ISBN 9780520964914 (ebook) | ISBN
9780520291034 (cloth : alk. paper) Subjects: LCSH:
Socrates. | Greek wit and humor—Political aspects. |
Irony—Political aspects. | Greek wit and humor—
Philosophy.

Classification: LCC B318.I7 (ebook) | LCC B318.I7 L66
2018 (print) | DDC 183/.2—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018011950>

Manufactured in the United States of America

25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

[*Acknowledgments*](#)

[Introduction](#)

1. [Aristophanes and Socratic Mockery](#)
2. [Plato and Socratic *Eirōneia*](#)
3. [Xenophon, Socratic Mockery, and Socratic Irony](#)
4. [Aristotle, *Eutrapelia*, and Socratic *Eirōneia*](#)
5. [Socratic Humor in the Hellenistic Period](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[Notes](#)

[Bibliography](#)

[Index](#)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing a scholarly monograph can often feel like a lonely endeavor, but these acknowledgments are a testament to the fact that such a project is impossible without a large community of colleagues, friends, mentors, and family members.

First, though this book is not a revised version of my doctoral dissertation, I would never have been able to produce it without the guidance and support I received from friends and mentors as a graduate student in the Politics Department at Princeton University. I am especially grateful to Eric Beerbohm, John Cooper, Michael Frazer, Katie Gallagher, Luca Grillo, Nate Klemp, Ben McKean, Kevin Osterloh, Jess Paga, David Stevens, David Teegarden, and Ian Ward. Patrick Deneen first encouraged me to pursue the topic of humor for my dissertation, and I would like to thank him for all of his

support during my time in graduate school. Sankar Muthu brought a keen set of eyes to my dissertation project, and has been an invaluable source of advice and support. Finally, Josh Ober agreed to chair my dissertation despite the fact that he was on his way to Stanford, and has been an enthusiastic supporter of my work ever since. He has been a model for how to bridge the worlds of classics and political science, and I am truly grateful for all of the advice, feedback, and support he has generously provided in both graduate school and after.

A fellowship at the Columbia Society of Fellows provided me with the time to conceive of the book project as it currently stands, and provided an ideal intellectual environment for starting other new projects as well. Thanks are due in particular to Joshua Dubler, Marcus Folch, Elizabeth Irwin, David Johnson, Elisabeth Ladenson, Elizabeth Scharffenberger, Melissa Schwartzberg, Katharina Volk, Nancy Worman, and Jim Zetzel.

I also had the pleasure of spending a pre-tenure sabbatical year at Washington University in St. Louis, during which I finished the first draft of the book manuscript. My thanks to both the Political Science and Classics Departments for providing a welcoming environment in which to work and grow as a scholar. In particular, I would like to thank Eric Brown, Bill Bubelis, Clarissa Hayward, Cathy Keane, Frank Lovett, Tim Moore, and George Pepe.

My friends and colleagues at the College of William & Mary have been a constant source of support since I first joined the faculty there. In particular, I would like to thank Bill Hutton, John McGlennon, Chris Nemacheck, John Oakley, Ron Rapoport, Joel Schwartz, Simon Stow, and Kristin Wustholz.

Special thanks are due to Simon Stow for his friendship, and for all of his help in navigating the tenure process.

Finally, I am deeply thankful to everyone who has taught me Greek over the years, in particular Mark Buchan, Pedro de Blas, Alan Fishbone, Hardy Hansen, Colin King, Vicki Pedrick, Jonathan Ready, and Froma Zeitlin. This work would have truly been impossible, nor would it have ever been something I would have conceived of doing, had it not been for the love of the Greek language they imparted to me.

Many other individuals have read drafts of earlier versions of the manuscript. In particular, I would like to thank Ali Aslam, Ross Carroll, Jill Frank, Seth Jaffe, Dan Kapust, Joel Schlosser, Rachel Templer, Doug Thompson, and John Zumbrunnen.

Parts of the book have appeared in print in other venues previously. Much of chapter 4 appeared as “Civic Laughter: Aristotle and the Political Virtue of Humor,” *Political Theory* 41.2 (2013): 203–30. A large part of chapter 1 was published in *The Political Theory of Aristophanes* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014), 13–27, as “Seeing Democracy in the *Clouds*.” Another part of chapter 1 appeared in “Comic Authority in Aristophanes’ *Knights*,” *Polis* 29.1 (2012): 130–49. My thanks for the permission to reprint these works here.

At the University of California Press, I have had the tremendous good fortune to work with Eric Schmidt. Eric was a supporter of my project long before even the first draft of the manuscript was completed. He has been continually kind, generous, and patient during the long process from first draft to print, and I know that I would never have completed this project without his support. Thanks are also due to Maeve Cornell-Taylor, Cindy Fulton, Archana Patel, Marian Rogers, and

Jolene Torr for their editorial assistance, and to Roberta Engleman for her work on the index to the book. Finally, I am especially grateful to the anonymous readers of the manuscript, who provided invaluable constructive feedback. It is certainly a better book because of their gracious and careful reading of my work.

Finally, I am deeply grateful for the love and support of my close friends and family, without which none of my professional achievements would have been possible. Thanks to Glenn Koslowsky, David Stevens, and Ian Ward—I could not have asked for better friends. Thanks to my parents, Dianne and John, and my sister, Kim, for their unconditional love and support. Most of all, I would like to thank my wife, Jess Paga. In addition to reading countless drafts of the manuscript, she has been the best interlocutor, friend, and companion that I could ever have hoped for.

Introduction

In Plato's *Theaetetus* (174a4-176a1), Socrates relates the tale of how Thales of Miletus, busy gazing into the heavens in order to examine the stars, fell into a well. Upon observing his predicament, a certain Thracian servant-girl mocked (*apokōpsai*) Thales, noting that while he was eager to know about things up in the heavens, he failed to perceive that which was (quite literally!) right below his feet. The same joke (*skōmma*), Socrates explains, can be applied to all of those who spend their lives engaged in philosophical pursuits. For the philosopher not only fails to notice what his neighbor does; he also has no idea, Socrates continues, whether his neighbor is a human being or some other kind of creature. Rather, the philosopher's attention is occupied with more abstract phenomena, with questions like "What is man?" and "What makes him different from other creatures?" Thus, whenever the philosopher is compelled to attend to more mundane matters, his lack of experience with such affairs makes him an object of laughter (*gelōta parechei*), not just among Thracian servant-girls, but among the many as well.

Yet, while the philosopher is ridiculed (*katagelatai*) by the many for his ignorance and puzzlement concerning worldly affairs, he in turn regards their obsession with such matters as

laughable. The philosopher laughs (*gelōn*) when he hears some tyrant or king being praised, or those who own a large amount of land, or those who boast of their noble lineage and birth. And just as he himself may appear ridiculous to the many when he is forced to engage in practical pursuits, it is the nonphilosopher who appears laughable to him when the former is forced to contend with philosophical matters. Thus when those versed in the legal and political affairs of the *polis* are compelled to answer abstract questions like “What is justice?” they become dizzy (*eillingiōn*) and anguished (*adēmonōn*), and being at a loss they stammer about, becoming laughable (*gelōta . . . parechei*) not in the eyes of Thracian servant-girls or any other uneducated person, but in the eyes of those who are philosophically minded.

This description of the philosopher’s experience mirrors, of course, that of Socrates. The joke Socrates recounts about Thales revolves around the same theme that animates much of the humor depicted in Aristophanes’ *Clouds*; just as the pedestrian servant-girl serves as a foil for Thales’ high-minded stargazing, so the single-minded practicality of the middle-brow Strepsiades in that play calls into sharp relief the uselessness of the intellectual activities undertaken by Socrates and his students at the *phrontistērion*. The philosopher’s inexperience with legal matters alludes to Socrates’ own trial, and his execution by the democratic city of Athens in 399 B.C.E. And as Socrates observes in book 5 of the *Republic*, the philosophical ideas that he espouses threaten to drown him in a wave of ridicule and contempt (*kuma ekgelōn kai adoxiai*, 473c8).

That at least some of Socrates’ fellow citizens laughed at him

and viewed him as ridiculous is uncontroversial; what is less clear is whether Socrates laughed at his fellow citizens. In Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Socrates deploys a harsh, derisive form of mockery against Strepsiades, ridiculing him for his intellectual ineptitude. In Xenophon, Socrates is also willing to mock and humiliate his interlocutors, though he does so with the goal of their moral improvement in mind. In the Platonic dialogues, however, Socrates laughs only twice, and on both occasions, he is described as doing so "gently" and "quietly" (*Phaedo* 84d, 115c). And while Socrates' irony is a prominent aspect of Plato's depiction of his teacher, such irony is quite distinct from the overt laughter described in the *Theaetetus*. In short, the extant depictions of Socrates we have from his contemporaries disagree over the nature and purpose of his humor.

Yet, whether or not the historical Socrates did in fact laugh at and mock his fellow citizens, there is evidence that suggests that he was suspected of doing so. Xenophon, in the *Memorabilia*, records the accusation that Socrates "taught his companions to despise (*huperoran*) the established laws by saying that it would be foolish (*mōron*) to appoint magistrates by lot when no one would want to choose a pilot or a builder or a flute player by lot or for any other such task, though the harms committed when someone errs in those things are far lesser than those concerning the city" (1.2.9). Diogenes Laertius, in his *Life of Socrates*, claims that Socrates' accusers were motivated by the ridicule he directed both at them and at the practitioners of their respective crafts (2.38-39). And Libanius, in his *Apology of Socrates*, notes that Anytus accused Socrates of being a "hater of the *dēmos* (*misodēmos*)" and of

persuading his companions “to mock (*katagelan*) the democracy” (54). In short, Socrates was accused of ridiculing not only his fellow citizens, but the institutions of Athenian democracy as well.

It is my contention in this book that such concerns over Socratic humor, broadly understood, played an important role in shaping the depictions of Socrates that we find among our ancient sources. In particular, I argue that we can view these sources as engaged in a debate concerning the nature and purpose of Socratic humor, a debate whose contours were shaped by the political context in which the earliest Socratic literature was written. Socrates’ use of humor was a contested practice precisely because it raised certain democratic anxieties about its antidemocratic implications; more specifically, it was interpreted by some as reflecting Socrates’ sense of his own intellectual superiority, and hence, as expressing a derisive attitude toward both his fellow citizens and the institutions of Athenian democracy. Such derisive mockery sat in tension with an Athenian democratic ideology that placed great value on the collective wisdom of the *dēmos* and the ability of ordinary citizens to participate in the political process.

That Socratic humor was a contested practice in antiquity is a claim that can be fully demonstrated only through the analyses in the following chapters. The goal of this introduction is to set out in further detail the approach to the study of Socratic humor that will be deployed in this book. The first section offers a brief case study that illustrates the political dimensions of humor that will be the focus of this book. The second section outlines the methodological approach that will

be deployed. Finally, the third section provides a conspectus of the chapters of the book.

THE POLITICS OF HUMOR

To argue that “humor” has a “politics” would be oversimplification, one that ignores the diversity among different forms of humor, accounts of what makes something funny, and their social and political implications, to briefly mention just a few considerations. This book does not seek to offer a comprehensive overview of these issues. The question of what makes something laughable has been debated with great vigor since at least Plato’s *Philebus*, and the three main scholarly theories—the superiority, incongruity, and relief theories—have already received more than ample scholarly attention.¹ Nor does this book provide a synoptic account of the practices of humor and laughter in antiquity; those looking for this can turn to the recent studies by Stephen Halliwell and Mary Beard on Greek and Roman laughter, respectively.² While the present study draws upon and is informed by such issues and concerns, its scope is more specialized: it focuses on how the various depictions of Socratic humor we find in our classical sources were shaped by the democratic context in which they were constructed. The analysis that follows is thus directed toward the specific concern that Socratic humor and irony constituted expressions of superiority that sat in tension with Athenian democratic ideals. The following example offers a starting point for identifying and unpacking this democratic anxiety concerning the practice of humor.

Demosthenes 54, Against Konon

In Demosthenes' prosecution speech, *Against Konon*, the victim, a man named Ariston, recounts the assault he suffered at the hands of a fellow citizen, Konon, and Konon's son. Ariston informs the jury that he was thrown to the ground, his lip was split open, and his eye was swollen shut as a result of the attack. To add (quite literally) insult to injury, Konon and his son began mocking Ariston until Konon "celebrated, imitating victorious fighting cocks, and his companions encouraged him to strike his elbows against his chest, as if they were wings" (9). In retaliation, Ariston prosecutes Konon on a charge of assault (*dikē aikeias*).

While Ariston formally charges Konon with assault, he repeatedly emphasizes that Konon's actions warranted prosecution under the much more serious charge of *hubris*.³ In democratic Athens, the public charge of *hubris* (*graphē hubreōs*) was applicable in cases of verbal and/or physical assault where the deliberate intent was the dishonoring or disrespecting of another.⁴ As David Halperin argues, *hubris* was the "antidemocratic crime *par excellence*."⁵ It was integrally connected to the sacrosanctity of the individual citizen body, or, as Josiah Ober puts it, to the democratic "right" to individual personal security, understood as "living without fear of being constrained by the actions of stronger persons within one's own society."⁶ It was also considered a public crime insofar as an assault against one citizen was viewed as an assault against the citizen body as a whole, and, in particular, as subverting the ability of all male citizens to

participate on equal terms in the political life of their city. To treat a democratic citizen hubristically was to treat him like a slave, or to treat him in the same manner a wealthy ruler would treat a member of the disenfranchised lower classes within an oligarchy.⁷ In short, to treat a democratic citizen hubristically was to deny that individual the equal respect and equal dignity he deserved *qua* democratic citizen.⁸

While Ariston is subjected to physical violence, the verbal abuse he suffers at the hands of Konon and his companions is an important piece of evidence that he uses in court to frame Konon's actions as hubristic. In particular, Ariston argues that Konon's imitation of a victorious fighting cock is a sign and sure proof (*sēmeion kai tekmērion*) of the latter's *hubris* (9). Given that *hubris* entailed the deliberate intent to dishonor or disrespect someone, demonstrating that one was the victim of *hubris* required more than just proof that an assault occurred; rather, it entailed establishing that the deliberate intent driving such assault was to cause dishonor. Ariston's argument, then, is that the ridicule and humiliation he experienced at the hands of Konon were constitutive of the hubristic nature of his opponent's actions.

Ariston anticipates that Konon, however, will offer his own interpretation of such ridicule, and warns the jurors to resist it: "Indeed I want to tell you what I have heard that he is prepared to say; he will attempt to lead the discussion away from *hubris* and from the deed that was committed and downplay it as one of laughter and jesting" (13).⁹ Konon, he continues, will cast the incident as the playful antics of young men who, having given themselves nicknames such as the Erect Phalluses

(*ithuphalloi*) and Masturbators (*autolēkuthoi*), rove about and often come to blows over courtesans with whom they have fallen in love (14). Worst of all, Konon will attempt to move the jurors to laughter over the incident and his description of it. Ariston insists, however, that none of them would have laughed had they been present during the assault, and that none of them should laugh now in the courtroom (20). What is thus at stake is the nature of such laughter and ridicule—whether it expresses the hubristic treatment that Ariston believes he suffered at the hands of Konon, or whether it is merely a kind of playful jesting that falls far short of meriting legal prosecution.¹⁰

In this respect, Ariston's claim that the jurors would not have laughed had they been present at the incident, and that they should not laugh now in the courtroom, raises both the question of the nature of such laughter and ridicule, and the appropriateness of such laughter and ridicule when it is deployed by one democratic citizen against another.¹¹ It would be inappropriate, Ariston argues, for the jurors to laugh at the humiliating treatment he received; to do so would recreate within the courtroom the hubristic treatment he suffered in the streets of Athens.¹² Such laughter would itself constitute a further assault against Ariston's status as an equal democratic citizen: it would publicly mark Ariston as an inferior who could be abused at will, severely compromising his ability to exercise equal agency within the public sphere of democratic Athens.

Politics, Humor, and Democratic Anxieties

Demosthenes' *Against Konon* thus highlights a key set of tensions involved in the practice of humor within a democratic society. While humor can often be a "weapon of the weak" used to challenge and potentially unsettle hierarchical power structures,¹³ it can just as easily serve as a weapon of the strong in establishing and maintaining such inequalities. What this example illustrates, in part, is how our conceptions of what counts as a normatively legitimate expression of humor reflect the anxieties surrounding such inequalities between democratic citizens. Demosthenes' speech is indicative of a competing set of norms concerning laughter and humor within Athenian political discourse. For Konon (in Ariston's reckoning), such ridicule is an acceptable practice between young men, one that hardly warrants legal action; for Ariston, such ridicule subverts the egalitarian distribution of political power central to Athenian democratic ideology.¹⁴

This example in *Against Konon* allows us to identify a key democratic anxiety surrounding the practice of humor, one that revolves around the power of humor to alter the social relationships between citizens. More specifically, while the use of humor to ridicule and humiliate does not erase the formal, legal relationship between democratic citizens, it can subvert the social recognition that underpins that legal relationship by marking the victims of such ridicule and humiliation as unfit to exercise their formal rights as citizens. As Josiah Ober has recently argued in relation to the place of dignity within democracy, "When citizens live with indignity, or live with the knowledge that by exercising participation rights they risk indignity, they are unable to make effective use of political

liberty. Even if they are equal to one another in formal participation rights and before the law, citizens suffering or at high risk of indignity do not enjoy the high standing necessary for true collective self-governance.”¹⁵ Ober thus emphasizes how the exercise of political agency is not just dependent on the legal rights enjoyed by democratic citizens. The ability to exercise political agency effectively is shaped by the social recognition that citizens are fit to exercise such political power, and the ridicule and humiliation conveyed by certain forms of humor risk undermining that social recognition.

THE POLITICS OF SOCRATIC HUMOR

This book argues that we can think about the depictions of Socratic humor we find in Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, and the Cynics as part of a larger debate, one that encompasses both the nature of Socratic humor and its political significance, as well as the broader questions of the ethics and politics of humor during the classical and Hellenistic periods. In particular, it argues that the kinds of democratic anxieties outlined above shaped the depictions of Socratic humor that we find in our classical sources, and that similar concerns regarding the relationship between humor, power, and agency continued to shape such depictions during the Hellenistic period. In short, if we want to understand the phenomenon of Socratic humor, we need to attend to how these authors participated in these debates, and how their respective depictions of Socrates may have been shaped by it.

Methodological Approach

Before attempting to reconstruct this debate, it is worth pausing to note the methodological approach to the study of Socratic humor that will be deployed in this book. The language of a historical “debate” about Socratic humor is not meant to suggest that the goal of this analysis is a better understanding of the historical Socrates. Rather, the following study reflects the increasing tendency within the literature on Socrates to eschew the Socratic problem¹⁶—the question of who the historical Socrates really was—and to focus instead on how our sources present us with distinct representations and interpretations of Socratic philosophical practice.¹⁷ This move has been prompted by the recognition that those authors who constructed literary accounts of Socrates did not do so with the goal of historical fidelity in mind; rather, their depictions are fictional accounts that were shaped by a variety of contextual factors, and by their own substantive intellectual concerns. This does not mean, of course, that there are not some important similarities between the different depictions of Socrates that we find in Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle; to focus on such agreement, however, overlooks the distinct interpretations of the significance of these practices provided by these authors.

Xenophon’s treatment of *akrasia* (weakness of will) provides a good illustration of this interpretive shift. For Gregory Vlastos, Xenophon’s treatment of Socrates’ beliefs concerning *akrasia* is at worst grossly confused, providing contradictory accounts of whether Socrates denied the possibility of *akrasia*

at all.¹⁸ At best, his report is “defectively incomplete” insofar as he neglects to mention that Socrates denied the possibility of *akrasia* for both the temperate and the intemperate: an omission that likely resulted from the fact that Xenophon “does not understand it himself.”¹⁹ By contrast, Louis-André Dorion has demonstrated that the differences between Plato’s and Xenophon’s reports concerning Socrates’ denial of *akrasia* can be better explained by their respective treatments of *enkrateia* (mastery of oneself). For the Platonic Socrates, *enkrateia* is superfluous; since *sophia* is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for virtuous action, there is no need for *enkrateia*. The Xenophontic Socrates, by contrast, maintains both the possibility of *akrasia* and the need for *enkrateia*, and it is this position that Vlastos finds either incoherent or inconsistent. As Dorion demonstrates, however, it is neither. While for the Platonic Socrates *enkrateia* is a consequence of *sophia*, for the Xenophontic Socrates it is a precondition of *sophia*.²⁰ Xenophon’s Socrates thus maintains the impossibility of knowing the good and acting contrary to it, yet he believes that such knowledge of the good is possible only after one has attained mastery over oneself. This key difference further tracks the central importance the Xenophontic Socrates places on *enkrateia* for a whole host of ethical topics.²¹

Our sources also agree that Socrates deployed humor in his engagements with his interlocutors. Beyond that, however, there is little agreement between them concerning the nature and purpose of such humor. In Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, Socrates’ humor takes the form of a direct, and harsh, mockery of his primary interlocutor, Strepsiades: Socrates repeatedly berates

Strepsiades for his ignorance and his inability to comprehend the sophisticated (if somewhat silly) arguments the former makes concerning meteorology, grammar, and other matters. In Plato's dialogues, by contrast, Socrates' humor is typically ironic and self-effacing; and while such irony may vary in its directness, the direct forms of abuse and mockery on display in *Clouds* are absent. In Xenophon's Socratic works we encounter yet another distinct portrait. Xenophon's Socrates, unlike his Platonic counterpart, does deploy forms of abusive mockery against his interlocutors; yet, unlike his Aristophanic counterpart, such mockery is depicted as serving a clear pedagogical purpose, one that benefits, rather than simply denigrates, his conversational partners. Xenophon's Socrates (as I will argue in chapter 3) also consistently deploys a type of irony while in conversation with his interlocutors; nonetheless, it is a mode of irony that is quite distinct from that of the Platonic Socrates, particularly in its greater transparency. In short, while the depictions of Socrates we find in Aristophanes, Plato, and Xenophon all "agree" that humor was a central characteristic of Socratic practice, they each disagree concerning the nature of such humor; and, as we will see in more detail in the chapters that follow, they also disagree about the potential pedagogical and political purposes of such humor.

These authors' representations of Socratic humor are closely linked, moreover, with their respective interests in humor and its ethical and political significance. For Aristophanes, the depiction of Socratic humor in *Clouds* is part of a larger attempt to identify and justify the benefits that comic poetry, and the forms of humor associated with Attic Old Comedy,

provided to Athenian citizens. For Plato, the question of Socratic humor and irony is bound up with Plato's own concerns about the pedagogical effects of poetry, and the ways in which laughter and humor can shape (and corrupt) the education of citizens. Xenophon's depiction of Socratic humor, for its part, is bound up with his analysis of the qualities needed for effective leadership,²² and the question of how humor can be used effectively is a persistent theme throughout his representation of both Socrates and a host of other exemplary figures.

Finally, Aristotle's treatment of *eirōneia* generally, and Socratic *eirōneia* in particular, are linked to his analysis of *eutrapelia* (wittiness); as will be argued in chapter 4, Aristotle's conception of *eutrapelia* can be read, in part, as a response to, and critique of, his conception of Socratic *eirōneia*. In sum, the respective depictions of Socratic humor in Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle cannot be read as straightforward attempts to offer a historically accurate portrait of Socrates; while they may, to some extent, be rooted in some basic historical facts, the details of their portraits are deeply shaped by these authors' own concerns about humor and its ethical and political significance.

With these concerns in mind, the methodological approach deployed in this book is that of a comparative exegesis of our main classical sources for the theme of Socratic humor.²³ While this approach will not yield an answer to the question of what Socratic humor really was as it was practiced in fifth-century Athens, it can provide us with a sense of how the legacy of Socratic humor developed in the period following

Socrates' death and was shaped by a constellation of concerns, including those outlined above. The following section offers a brief sketch of our evidence for the claim that a concern with the ethics and politics of Socratic humor may in fact have influenced the treatments of that theme that we find in our principal sources.

A Classical Debate

As Louis-André Dorion has noted, there were three sets of accusations to which the earliest writers of Socratic literature felt compelled to respond: (1) the attack made against Socrates in Aristophanes' *Clouds* in 423; (2) the formal accusations by Meletus, Lycon, and Anytus that gave rise to Socrates' trial and execution in 399; and (3) the *Accusation of Socrates* produced by Polycrates around 393, in which Socrates was accused of having been the inspiration for Critias and Alcibiades, and having taught his companions to despise the institutions of the democracy, such as selection of magistrates by lot.²⁴ From the start, then, the literature that emerges on Socrates in the fourth century is engaged in responding to these concerns; the goal of this book is to bring to the fore the role that Socrates' use of humor may have played in these debates, and how it may have intersected with certain anxieties about the political implications of Socratic questioning.

As Stephen Halliwell notes in his extensive study of Greek laughter, the distinct representations of Socratic humor by Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle may have been part of a larger debate concerning what Halliwell terms

Socrates' gelastic practices—that range of activities centering around laughter and humor. Halliwell observes that the ambiguity surrounding the Socratic practice of humor in the Platonic dialogues is perhaps indicative of the contested legacy of Socratic humor during the fourth century. While, as Halliwell argues, the Platonic Socrates does not engage in overt, face-to-face mockery, he does deploy irony as a mode of tacit ridicule, tends to be more critical of individuals in both his unspoken thoughts and those concerning interlocutors who are absent, and is often harsh in mocking himself and the arguments in which he participates. What Plato offers us, in sum, is “an ambiguous, double-sided figure where laughter is concerned” and that “it is probable . . . that this ambiguity was part of Plato’s conscious response to a larger, ongoing contest for the memory and posthumous image of the man himself.”²⁵ We can discern the evidence for such a debate, Halliwell contends, if we attend to the contrasting accounts of Socratic humor that we find in Aristophanes, Xenophon, and the Peripatetics. The Aristophanic Socrates displays a “mocking *hauteur*” in his engagement with Strepsiades; Xenophon’s Socrates “has no qualms about showing Socrates availing himself of the social power of humiliating laughter” in questioning the young Euthydemus; and Aristoxenus (a fourth-century Peripatetic) is reported to have labeled Socrates hubristic and abusive.²⁶

There is also evidence beyond our principal fourth-century sources that the Socratic practice of humor was a topic of concern during Socrates’ trial and its aftermath. In Diogenes Laertius’ *Life of Socrates*—an admittedly late source—Socrates’

primary accuser is described as motivated by the mockery that he suffered at the hands of Socrates. Diogenes writes: “For this man [Anytus], unable to bear the ridicule (*chleuasmon*) of Socrates, first set those around Aristophanes against him, and then persuaded Meletus to indict him on charges of impiety and of corrupting the youth” (2.38). Diogenes later returns to this theme, noting that each of Socrates’ prosecutors, and the groups they represented, had been the victims of Socrates’ ridicule: “Anytus was angered on behalf of the craftsmen and politicians; Lycon on behalf of the orators; and Meletus on behalf of the poets, all of whom Socrates ridiculed (*diesure*)” (2.39). While Socrates indicates, in Plato’s *Apology*, that his cross-examination of his fellow citizens has often aroused their anger and resentment (21b–23b), Diogenes’ account highlights the gelastic dimensions of these reactions.

While Diogenes’ account of the origin of Socrates’ trial points to the potential ridicule Socrates deployed against his interlocutors, Libanius’ *Apology of Socrates* suggests that such mockery may have also been directed at Athens’ democratic institutions. Libanius’ text, which is constructed as a response to the speech that Anytus purportedly delivered at Socrates’ trial,²⁷ contains the following accusation: “He [Socrates] is a hater of the *dēmos*, he [Anytus] says, and he persuades his companions to mock (*katagelan*) the democracy” (54). Though found in another late source, this remark resonates with some of the accusations recorded in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*. In particular, Xenophon notes that Socrates’ accuser said that “he [Socrates] taught his companions to despise (*huperoran*) the established laws, saying how it would be foolish (*mōron*) to

appoint magistrates by lot when no one would want to choose a pilot or a builder or a flute player by lot or for any other such task, although the harms committed when someone errs in those things are far lesser than those concerning the city” (1.2.9).²⁸ While it is not possible to assess the historical accuracy of such charges, they do seem to indicate that some individuals believed Socrates thought that his fellow citizens harbored ridiculous beliefs and that the principles underlying Athenian democratic institutions were themselves laughable.

While these later sources suggest how the Socratic practice of humor may have raised such political concerns, there is also evidence within the Platonic dialogues that is indicative of a rivalry between Socrates’ heirs concerning the nature and purpose of Socratic humor. The following case study, drawn from Plato’s *Euthydemus*, illustrates this distinct aspect of the debate surrounding Socratic humor in antiquity, and how we might situate it within Plato’s broader treatment of humor in the dialogues.

• • •

Commentators on Plato’s *Euthydemus* have long recognized the contrasts Plato draws between Socrates and the brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus in that dialogue. The two brothers possess an affinity with Socrates insofar as they claim to improve their interlocutors through the practice of refutation. Yet the technique deployed by Euthydemus and Dionysodorus is labeled as “eristic,” which is used in Plato as a term of abuse identifying its practitioners as seeking only victory, rather than truth, in argument.²⁹ The eristic nature of

their arguments is indicated by their expressed goal of refuting Cleinias regardless of the truth or falsity of his responses. Of central concern in the dialogue is thus this distinction between Socratic dialectic and sophistic eristic.

This distinction is connected with Plato's depiction of the gelastic dimensions of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus' eristic practices. Euthydemus and Dionysodorus begin their conversation with Socrates by laughing at him for thinking that they still concern themselves with instructing others in martial matters (273d1). Their companions, moreover, laugh at both of the refutations to which Cleinias is subjected during their first conversation (276b7, d1). Having witnessed Euthydemus and Dionysodorus in action, Socrates then compares their techniques to someone who pulls the chair out from under someone who is about to sit down and then laughs at him when he falls (278c1). Determined to illustrate the kind of protreptic he was hoping the two brothers would deploy, Socrates asks Euthydemus, Dionysodorus, and their companions not to laugh at him and Cleinias, even if they should converse in a laughable way (278d5-6, e1). During this conversation with Cleinias, Socrates does worry that he and Cleinias have become laughable (278e4, 279d1, 4), and he expresses the same suspicion to Crito during the brief interlude at 290e-293b (291b1); yet, Socrates, unlike the brothers and their companions, does not laugh. Ctesippus, the *erastēs* of the young Cleinias, does laugh when he manages to score some argumentative points against Euthydemus (298e9, 300d6), and Cleinias joins in with him (300e1). Though it is deployed against the two brothers, Socrates identifies such laughter as akin to the same practice; Socrates narrates that Ctesippus

seemed to him to be a scoundrel (*panourgos*), and that he had likely picked up the arguments he deployed against Euthydemus and Dionysodorus from the brothers themselves (300d7-9). Finally, when Socrates is refuted at the end of the dialogue by Dionysodorus, he reports that there was no one present who did not laugh, perhaps implying that even Cleinias and Ctesippus joined in with the brothers and their companions at this point (303b1-3).³⁰

This brief survey of laughter in the *Euthydemus* illustrates that part of the distinction Plato draws between Socrates and the two brothers concerns the way the latter explicitly mock those they have refuted. Lingering in the background of this contrast, however, is the connection between the Socratic *elenchus* and ridicule that is developed elsewhere in Plato's dialogues. In particular, Socrates' discussion of comic pleasure at *Philebus* 48a-50b evokes the spectacle of the *elenchus* as it is depicted by Plato.³¹ In that passage, Socrates argues that the laughable (*to geloion*) arises from self-ignorance and, most commonly, from self-ignorance concerning wisdom. Though the connection between the *elenchus* and this conception of *to geloion* is not drawn in the *Philebus* itself, it suggests that Socrates makes his interlocutors appear laughable by exposing their self-ignorance. Such a recognition of the gelastic dimensions of the *elenchus*, moreover, might lie behind Socrates' observation that many people enjoy (*chairousin*) listening to him when he questions others, since such examinations are "not unpleasant" (*ouk aēdes*, *Ap.* 33c). At the same time, this connection between the discussion of *to geloion* in the *Philebus* and Socrates' description of the *elenchus* in the

Apology creates a potential puzzle. In the *Philebus*, Socrates also claims that such laughter is an unjust expression of envy (*phthonos*, 49c-e): thus, if Socrates is aware that these spectators are pleased by the laughable appearance of his refuted interlocutors, might that not make him complicit in the unjust pleasure those spectators experience?³² This puzzle might lead us to conclude that the relationship between Socrates and ridicule is likewise problematic.

Yet, the *Euthydemus*, along with the *Laches*, suggests an alternative conclusion. In the latter dialogue, Plato indicates an awareness of the implications of the connection between the definition of *to geloion* in the *Philebus* and his depiction of the Socratic *elenchus*. In particular, the *Laches* contains an exploration of a very similar dynamic in its depictions of Socrates' two interlocutors, Nicias and Laches. As the dialogue progresses, Nicias and Laches swap roles as spectator and interlocutor, and that alternation allows us to see two distinct modes of being a spectator of a Socratic refutation. While Nicias remains a silent spectator during Socrates' examination of Laches, Laches continually interrupts, claiming not to know what Nicias means, stating that he is speaking strange things (*hōs atopa legei*, 195a2) and is speaking nonsense (*lērei*, 195a6). In a manner reminiscent of the *Euthydemus*, Socrates tells Laches that they ought, in that case, to teach (*didaskōmen*) Nicias, rather than abuse him (*loidorōmen*, 195a7). After Nicias has been refuted, Laches notes, sarcastically, that he had believed that Nicias would have discovered what courage is, and held great hope (*megalēn elpida*) that he would do so (199e13-200a3).³³ Nicias responds

with the observation that Laches does not care if he himself is ignorant, as long as others are also found to be ignorant; Nicias adds that when he becomes sure about these matters, he will teach Laches and not be envious (*didaxō kai se, kai ou phthonēsō*), perhaps associating the latter with such envy (200a-c). The incorrect lessons that Laches draws from the *elenchus* thus stem, as in the *Euthydemus*, from a lack of any genuine concern with the truth.

This brief exploration of the *Laches* does not solve the puzzle mentioned above, but it does suggest that not all of Socrates' spectators will react in the way that Laches does. It further suggests that there are important distinctions to be drawn between the exposure of self-ignorance, witnessing such an exposure, and actually taking pleasure in it, distinctions that point toward an important difference between what Socrates does and what individuals like Euthydemus and Dionysodorus do. While the two brothers appear to take great pleasure in refuting others, and their companions show no restraint in laughing at those who are refuted, Socrates appears averse to both. Though Socrates observes, in the *Euthydemus*, that he and Cleinias appear laughable, he does not laugh.³⁴ Socrates' discussion of the laughable in the *Philebus*, moreover, would seem to support this distinction: while Socrates maintains that *the laughable (to geloion)* is defined as a kind of vice wherein self-ignorance is mixed with weakness and the inability to take revenge, *the act of laughing (gelōmen, 49e9)* entails being pleased by the self-ignorance of others. What is problematic, then, is not finding others laughable, but taking pleasure in such recognition—the expression of which is the act of

laughing. Socrates does not practice such laughter, and he advises others not to do so either.³⁵

As will be argued more extensively in chapter 2, this contrast is part of Plato's more general portrait of a Socrates who does not engage in direct forms of mockery and ridicule. Yet the distinction that Plato draws in the *Euthydemus* is not just a theoretical one; rather, there is evidence that suggests that in distinguishing between the gelastic practices of Socrates and those of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, Plato is engaged in a dispute concerning Socrates' legacy among his fourth-century followers. In particular, Louis-André Dorion has argued that Euthydemus and Dionysodorus were not fifth-century sophists and contemporaries of Socrates but fourth-century philosophers of the Megarian school.³⁶ If Dorion is correct,³⁷ then the contrasts Plato draws between Socrates and Euthydemus and Dionysodorus ought to be understood as part of a debate concerning Socrates' legacy among his immediate successors. The contrasts Plato draws also appear to provide evidence for the broader claim that there was a more general debate during the fourth century concerning Socrates' gelastic tendencies. The Megarians could, through Euclid, declare a Socratic pedigree for their philosophical practices, and the affinity between the Socratic *elenchus* and the method of refutation practiced by Euthydemus and Dionysodorus is perhaps a testament to that fact. By staging the encounter between Socrates and these Megarian philosophers in the *Euthydemus*, Plato may be suggesting that the Megarians drew the wrong lessons from Socrates, especially concerning the goal of the *elenchus*. And if the Megarians were associated

with the gelastic practices on display in the *Euthydemus*,³⁸ then Plato may also be criticizing their misplaced focus on deploying such refutations for the purpose of ridicule, and the vicious pleasure they took in laughing at their opponents.

Plato's engagement with the Megarians over the legacy of Socratic humor in the *Euthydemus* offers one key example of how this phenomenon may have been treated as a contested practice during the classical period. Demonstrating that the wider Socratic literature of this period reflected such concerns, however, will be the work of the core chapters of this book. The final section of this introduction offers a brief overview of these chapters, while indicating how the largely ethical concerns surrounding Socratic humor discussed above carry with them important political implications.

OVERVIEW

This book presents a new narrative account of Socratic humor, but it does not pretend to offer a comprehensive account of every major example of Socratic humor in our ancient, or even classical, sources. Once one dives into the extant Socratic literature with an eye toward the themes of humor and irony, the issue that quickly emerges is not a dearth of evidence, but an overabundance. To provide a comprehensive treatment of these themes in Plato alone would require detailed attention to every dialogue—even in the *Laws*, where Socrates does not appear, there are important discussions of comedy and laughter that ought to be considered in order to properly frame Plato's treatment of these themes. The same could be said of

Xenophon. While Xenophon's Socratic works account for a much smaller percentage of his overall corpus, humor is a persistent theme throughout his works.³⁹ This larger context is important for judging Xenophon's treatment of the theme of Socratic humor, precisely because it is often argued that Xenophon transposes his own concerns and ideas onto his portrait of Socrates. Thus, while the analysis offered in the following chapters is informed by an understanding of the available evidence, it does not attempt to be exhaustive.

The study of Socratic humor in this book begins with Aristophanes' *Clouds*. I argue that Aristophanes presents a democratic critique of Socratic philosophy and the particular form of Socratic mockery with which it is associated in the play. This critique focuses on a specific democratic anxiety concerning the threat Socratic intellectualism poses to the operation of democratic authority in classical Athens. Drawing on the work of Josiah Ober and Danielle Allen (as well as contemporary treatments of authority by Robert Brandom and Jeffrey Stout), a notion of democratic authority is sketched that emphasizes the fact that each democratic citizen is authorized to hold their fellow citizens to account. I argue that Socrates' use of mockery in *Clouds* subverts this notion of democratic authority by ridiculing those who do not possess his intellectual sophistication, and in doing so, marking them as unfit to hold him accountable. It is this notion of superiority, coupled with a mockery of his intellectual inferiors, that Strepsiades learns from Socrates and deploys against his creditors.

While previous interpretations of *Clouds* have generally focused on Socrates' education of Pheidippides, and the danger

this education poses to the traditional forms of authority located in the gods, the city, and the family,⁴⁰ the interpretation presented in this book is unique in its emphasis on the danger Socratic education poses to a democratic notion of authority. Given this central democratic anxiety surrounding the Socratic practice of humor, chapters 2 and 3 situate Plato's and Xenophon's respective portraits of Socratic humor and irony as responses to this concern. It is my contention that these depictions, in various ways and to various extents, attempt to defend Socrates from the accusation that he practiced a form of humor that reflected antidemocratic beliefs and practices. While this approach reflects recent work that emphasizes the apologetic nature of the Socratic literature,⁴¹ the arguments of these chapters further suggest how both Plato and Xenophon use the figure of Socrates to reframe their readers' conceptions of democratic citizenship and the practices of humor that might be associated with them. In other words, while both the Platonic dialogues and Xenophon's Socratic works suggest that Socratic philosophical practice may have been more consonant with Athenian democratic norms and practices than Socrates' accusers had maintained, both authors also seek to refigure the horizons of what a democratic mode of citizenship might look like and how democratic citizens might laugh and joke with and at each other.

With these considerations in mind, chapter 2 focuses on the use of the word *eirōneia* in the Platonic dialogues as a framework for evaluating Plato's presentation of Socratic humor and irony. While Plato's engagement with Socratic

humor and irony extends well beyond his limited use of this word, the use of *eirōneia* and its cognates to describe Socrates and his actions is absent from the representations found in Aristophanes and Xenophon.⁴² Plato's use of the word *eirōneia* is thus unique, and it provides a road map for understanding Plato's somewhat ambiguous presentation of the implications of Socratic humor and irony.

Demonstrating that argument, however, requires attention to the meaning of the word *eirōneia* and its cognates in the classical period. This is especially important, given that recent work by Michel Narcy and Melissa Lane has challenged the idea that *eirōneia* signifies irony and that it ought to be translated as such.⁴³ Focusing on Demosthenes' use of *eirōneia*, I argue that *eirōneia* is best understood as a solipsistic form of irony, one in which the ironist herself is the primary, if not sole, audience for the irony. In this sense, *eirōneia* resembles a kind of practical joking, one in which the *eirōn*'s interlocutor is made the unwitting butt of the *eirōn*'s joke. The practice of *eirōneia* does constitute a type of mockery, though one that is far more indirect than that practiced by the Aristophanic Socrates.

Having established that *eirōneia* constitutes a distinct type of ironic humor, the chapter then turns to Plato's use of the term and its cognates throughout the dialogues. I argue that Plato's depiction of Socratic *eirōneia* is bound up with the question of Socrates' relationship to sophistry; on this reading, whether Socrates' interlocutors perceive him to be practicing *eirōneia* (understood as the kind of solipsistic irony described above) is thus a product of their perception of Socratic practice more

generally. This reading is developed by focusing on two groups of passages where Plato uses the term *eirōneia* and its cognates: first, its use in the *Sophist*, *Euthydemus*, and *Cratylus*, where the practice of *eirōneia* is associated with sophistry and the sophists; and, second, its use in the *Apology*, *Republic*, *Gorgias*, and *Symposium*, where Socrates' interlocutors accuse him of speaking and/or acting with *eirōneia*. While Plato seems to discredit the reliability of those who charge Socrates with *eirōneia* by depicting these accusations as themselves ironic, his illustration of the difficulties in distinguishing between Socrates and the sophists in later dialogues like the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* reveal an essential ambiguity at the heart of the Socratic practice of both *eirōneia* in particular and irony more generally. More specifically, whether Socrates' interlocutors perceive him to be practicing *eirōneia* (like Thrasymachus) or a more transparent and playful form of irony (like Phaedrus in the dialogue that bears his name) depends on what they take to be the nature and purpose of Socratic philosophy.

Plato's depiction of Socratic *eirōneia* (and irony and humor more generally) thus complicates the portrait we find in Aristophanes' *Clouds*. Whereas the humor of the Aristophanic Socrates is a direct, abusive form of mockery, one that is used to express superiority over others, the ironic humor of the Platonic Socrates is far more indirect, and its perceived purpose varies from interlocutor to interlocutor. For those who understand the driving goal of Socratic questioning to be winning the argument, Socrates appears to be deploying *eirōneia* in order to mock and ridicule them; those who take Socrates to be genuinely motivated by a search for the truth, in

contrast, view Socrates as engaged in a more transparent, and less vicious, form of irony, one that is both more playful and reciprocal than that associated with *eirōneia*. In Plato, then, Socratic humor (in the form of *eirōneia*) does have the potential to exacerbate certain anxieties about equality and inequality within a democratic community; at the same time, Plato's depiction suggests that the nature and purpose of Socratic humor is not as univocal as Aristophanes' portrait suggests. Plato's depiction of Socratic *eirōneia* ultimately highlights how the relationship between Socrates and his interlocutors shapes the effects of its practice, and further, its potential political implications. This analysis of the political dimensions of Socratic humor is developed through attention to Socrates' interpretation of the Delphic oracle in the *Apology*.

Chapter 3 begins by situating Xenophon's depiction of Socratic humor within two main contexts: first, the accusation, recorded by Xenophon at *Memorabilia* 1.2.58, that Socrates would quote *Iliad* 2.188-202 in support of the idea that it is praiseworthy to abuse, both physically and verbally, ordinary citizens; second, the symposia scenes in the *Cyropaedia* (2.2, 8.4), in which Xenophon illustrates Cyrus' attempts to navigate the political anxieties surrounding the practice of humor. Taken together, these passages demonstrate Xenophon's attentiveness to the political dimensions of humor and suggest that his depiction of Socrates' gelastic practices is part of his more general effort to defend Socrates from his accusers. The remainder of the chapter illustrates how Xenophon's distinctive portrait of Socratic humor is connected with his emphasis on Socrates' usefulness to his fellow citizens and the city of Athens.

The humor of Xenophon's Socrates differs from that of his Platonic counterpart in two main respects: first, Xenophon's Socrates engages in the abusive forms of mockery and ridicule that are eschewed by the Platonic Socrates (but are practiced by the Aristophanic Socrates); second, while Xenophon's Socrates uses irony, it is a form of irony that is distinct from both *eirōneia* and the other forms of irony associated with the Platonic Socrates. I argue that this distinctive type of irony is connected with the crucial role that *enkrateia* (mastery of oneself) plays in the pedagogical approach deployed by Xenophon's Socrates. It also tracks the specific kinds of Socratic conversations emphasized by Plato and Xenophon, respectively; while the irony of the Platonic Socrates is linked to his practice of the *elenchus*, that of the Xenophonic Socrates is connected with those protreptic conversations in which Socrates attempts to lead his interlocutors toward virtue. Thus, while the Platonic Socrates deploys irony specifically to draw his interlocutors into conversation, Xenophon's Socrates does so in order to reveal the gap between the noble goals to which his interlocutors aspire and their abilities to achieve those goals. This interpretation is developed through close attention to Socrates' conversations with his fellow citizens at *Memorabilia* 3.1-7.

While the first three chapters of the book focus on the depictions of Socratic humor offered by Socrates' contemporaries, chapters 4 and 5 turn to Aristotle and the Hellenistic schools. Though neither Aristotle nor the thinkers discussed in chapter 5 are directly concerned with the specific democratic anxieties that constitute the focus of the first three chapters, their discussions of the ethics and politics of humor

revolve around similar concerns. In particular, their analyses illustrate how humor can be used to explore, navigate, and contest the operations of power, and in doing so testify to the fact that Socrates' legacy continued to shape philosophical discussions of humor in the later classical period and beyond.

Aristotle critically engages with ideas that he identifies as Socratic throughout his philosophical writings, and it has long been acknowledged that his treatment of *eirōneia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* was shaped in part by his understanding of the Socratic practice of *eirōneia*. I argue that we can interpret Aristotle's conception of *eutrapelia* (the virtue pertaining to laughing and joking well) as an alternative to his mainly negative assessment of Socratic *eirōneia*. Aristotle's association of *eirōneia* with magnanimity does qualify his classification of *eirōneia* as a vice; at the same time, it highlights the element of superiority connected with the practice of *eirōneia*. As a hierarchical practice, *eirōneia* sits in tension with the "social virtues" Aristotle identifies at *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.6–8—friendliness, truthfulness, and wittiness; in particular, it is distinct from the kind of reciprocity involved in *eutrapelia*, which requires the ability both to laugh and joke well and to endure the laughter and joking of others. While this does not make *eutrapelia* a democratic virtue, it does lend it a certain democratic potential, one that is unpacked through a return to Demosthenes' *Against Konon* along with an analysis of the use of the term *eutrapelia* during the classical period.

The fifth and final chapter explores the legacy of Socratic humor and irony in the Hellenistic schools, with a particular focus on Diogenes of Sinope and the Cynic practice of humor.

The chapter begins with an overview of discussions of Socratic humor and irony within Stoic and Epicurean philosophy in order to establish the continued disagreement concerning the nature and purpose of Socratic humor and irony in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The chapter then turns to the Cynic practice of humor and its connection to the Cynic goal of living in accordance with nature. I argue that Cynic humor does have a Socratic pedigree, one that we can trace by attending to Xenophon's depiction of Antisthenes in the *Symposium*. The remainder of the chapter explains how the Cynic practice of humor, in both its mockery of others and its endurance of the mockery of others, was deeply connected with a practice of self-cultivation that attempted to enable the true Cynic to resist conventional norms and ways of life that sought to prevent him or her from living in accordance with nature.

The conclusion brings together the distinct depictions of Socratic humor developed in the previous chapters. Rather than arguing that Socratic humor is a singular phenomenon with one particular political meaning and purpose, I argue that what the study of Socratic humor reveals are the sites at which power is reinforced, contested, and/or negotiated. In particular, it illustrates how attempting to make sense of the political implications of Socratic philosophy requires attending to how our sources depict Socrates as deploying humor in ways that both work within and challenge Athenian democratic ideology. The result is neither a democratic nor an antidemocratic reading of the politics of Socratic humor, but one that can explain both its challenge to democratic politics and its potential as a resource for reimagining democratic practices.

CHAPTER ONE

Aristophanes and Socratic Mockery

For I, along with all of the Greeks, assert that the Athenians are wise. So I see, when they gather together in the Assembly, that when the city needs to accomplish a deed concerning buildings, architects are sent for as advisers in matters concerning building, and when the concern is shipbuilding, shipwrights are sent for; and so forth in all other matters, as many as are believed to be learnable and teachable. But if another person attempts to advise them whom they do not think to be a skilled workman, even if he is exceedingly handsome and wealthy and one of the nobles, in no way do they ever receive him, but they laugh and raise a clamor until the one trying to speak, having been shouted down, goes away himself, or the archers drag or carry him away on orders of the prytanies. This, therefore, is the way in which they proceed in matters they consider technical. But when there is a need for the city to be advised in some matter concerning the administration of the city, just as a carpenter, standing up, advises them concerning these matters, so can a blacksmith, cobbler, merchant, ship captain, wealthy man, poor man, noble man, or man of low birth, and when he attempts to offer his advice, no one rebukes him in these things because he never learned these things or never had a teacher, just as the ones mentioned before. For it is

clear that they do not believe that this is teachable.

Plat. *Prot.* 319b3–d7¹

In the above epigraph, Socrates reflects on the nature and place of authority in Athens' democratic assembly. In technical matters, the Athenians request advice from those possessing the corresponding *technē*; it is they whom the *dēmos* believes to be qualified to offer advice on such matters, and not those who may make competing claims to authority based on their physical attractiveness, wealth, or noble birth. In political matters, in contrast, there is no comparable authoritative *technē*, the possession of which serves as a criterion for restricting the deliberative circle; hence, it is permissible for anyone to offer advice without rebuke. Though legally any adult, male Athenian citizen was entitled to speak regardless of the matter under discussion, Socrates' analysis points to a set of cultural norms that regulated how discursive authority was distributed in democratic Athens.

Those who violate these norms, Socrates notes, will meet with the laughter of their fellow citizens. Their laughter, in the scenario Socrates describes, serves to puncture the speaker's pretension to a type of knowledge he does not have, or to a type of authority that only the possession of such knowledge could grant. If we complete Socrates' hypothetical scenario, we can envision a second moment of laughter. Imagine the

Athenians needed advice on a political matter, and an individual rose (let us call him Protagoras), addressed the Assembly, and declared that he alone possessed the political *technē* necessary to give advice on such matters. Protagoras announces that anyone else who lacks this technical knowledge should relinquish their desire to speak since they lack the competency to do so. We can imagine the Athenians laughing just as hard, if not harder, at Protagoras' claims: he would be attempting to exclude others from deliberation based on his claim to possess a type of knowledge they do not even believe exists.

In this chapter, I argue that we can use this (hypothetical) second moment of laughter as a lens to interpret Aristophanes' critique of Socrates in *Clouds*.² At the core of Aristophanes' critique of Socrates is a democratic anxiety concerning the antidemocratic authority of Socratic intellectualism.³ This anxiety comes to the fore if we focus on Socrates' education of Strepsiades, what the latter learns from Socrates, and how he deploys this knowledge against his creditors. Just as Socrates mocks Strepsiades for failing to understand his teachings, so Strepsiades exploits these same arguments in order to mock his creditors. Yet, the latter scene carries with it an important twist: Strepsiades interprets the intellectual inferiority of his creditors as marking them as unfit to hold him accountable for his actions. Knowledge, in the form of technical knowledge of subjects like meteorology and grammar, is understood by Strepsiades as a necessary prerequisite for being entitled to challenge him.

To read *Clouds* in this way is to shift our interpretive focus from the threat Socrates poses to traditional authority—represented by the divine authority of Zeus and the parental authority of Strepsiades—to the danger his intellectualism poses to the specifically *democratic* operation of authority in ancient Athens. In the play, of course, Socrates worships the clouds rather than the gods of the traditional pantheon, and the style of argumentation Pheidippides learns from the Weaker Argument he then uses to undermine his father's authority. Given the legal charges later made against Socrates—that he did not believe in the same gods the Athenians believed in, but introduced new gods, and that he corrupted the youth—this focus makes good sense. My argument here is not that this is an unimportant aspect of Aristophanes' depiction of Socrates; rather, it is that the emphasis on Socrates' challenge to traditional authority has obscured this other dimension of Aristophanes' critique.

This chapter begins by grounding this distinction between traditional and democratic authority through an analysis of the operations of authority in democratic Athens. In contrast to the traditional forms of authority wielded by the gods, the authority wielded by political actors in democratic Athens—like the *rhētor* and *ho boulomenos*—was far more contingent on the performance of certain socially constructed roles. The construction of such democratic authority, and the place of ordinary citizens within its operation, will be the subject of the first section of this chapter. The second section turns to the play itself, providing an overview of the education of Strepsiades at the *phrontistērion* and his use of what he learns against his creditors. The third addresses the role that mockery

plays in both the interactions between Socrates and Strepsiades and those between Strepsiades and his creditors. Attending to such mockery illustrates how Socrates and Strepsiades deploy sophistical knowledge to discredit the authority of others. The fourth section contrasts this Socratic form of mockery with that deployed by Aristophanes himself in order to clarify the potential political dimensions of such humor. The conclusion outlines the implications of this analysis for the vision of Socratic humor that emerges from reading *Clouds* in this way.

DEMOCRATIC AUTHORITY IN CLASSICAL ATHENS

The principle of *isēgoria* stood at the center of Athenian democratic ideology, so much so that Herodotus, writing in the second half of the fifth century, could use it as a synonym for *dēmokratia* (5.78). Commonly translated as the “equal right to speak,” *isēgoria* stood for each adult male citizen’s ability to address the Assembly. While under the sixth-century Solonian constitution all Athenian citizens were permitted to attend the Assembly (and hence, the vote of the *dēmos* was held to be sovereign—*kurios*), only elites were entitled to speak (most likely, those of the top two socioeconomic classes introduced by Solon’s reforms). In the fifth-century democracy, in contrast, every adult male citizen in good standing was entitled to address his fellow citizens, a “right” enshrined in the question that initiated meetings of the Assembly, “Who wishes to speak?” (*tis agoreuein bouletai*);⁴

Nonetheless, there were real distinctions in the authority wielded by Athenian citizens in democratic Athens. While every male citizen could speak in the Assembly, it is unlikely they all did. As M.H. Hansen explains, when thinking about democratic Athens, it is useful to distinguish between different forms of political participation.⁵ Only a small number of citizens regularly addressed meetings of the Assembly, while a slightly larger group might have done so on a less frequent basis; most citizens, however, participated through listening and voting. This ability to speak, hence, was most often exercised by a small number of wealthy elites—professional politicians known as *rhētores*—which, in turn, gave rise to certain norms governing who was held to possess the authority to speak.

Up through the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, the path to becoming an orator passed through the office of the generalship. The ten generals (one from each Cleisthenic tribe) were elected, rather than selected by lot—the only officials (until the mid-fourth century) so chosen under the democracy. During this period, Athenian generals all hailed from aristocratic families: Pericles, the best-known example, was a member of the prominent and powerful Alcmaeonid family from which Cleisthenes, whose late sixth-century reforms started Athens down the path toward democracy, also descended. Cleon, his most (in)famous successor, did not share such a pedigree. Emblematic of the “new politicians” of the late fifth century, to borrow W.R. Connor’s phrase, Cleon was a nonaristocrat, a tanner by trade, albeit a wealthy one.⁶ In Aristophanes’ *Knights*, his questionable ancestry serves as both a standin for questioning his authority, and an explanation for

his base activities. Thus, while every Athenian citizen was entitled to speak, social status was an important factor in assessing the authority that such speech held.⁷

The fact that most of the citizens who addressed and offered advice to the *dēmos* were elites of some stripe stood in tension with the egalitarian *ethos* that underpinned Athenian democratic practice. This anxiety was heightened by the fact that elite orators had been trained in the arts of persuasion, which they could potentially deploy to deceive assemblymen and jurors and disrupt the ability of the *dēmos* to exercise sound political judgment.⁸ Yet, as Josiah Ober has demonstrated, the ability of elite orators to offer advice to, and especially to criticize, the *dēmos* was effectively controlled via a mass ideology that channeled elite competition over the favor of the people into public benefits.⁹ The various “dramatic fictions” that elite orators and ordinary citizens “conspired to maintain”—such as the rhetorically trained orator’s portrayal of himself as an ordinary citizen—both functioned as a check on the ambitions of elites and simultaneously authorized their ability to oppose and critique the will of the people.¹⁰ In this way, the Athenians managed to harness elite learning and harmonize it with a strong belief in the wisdom of the masses to best decide matters of public policy.

We can observe a similar dynamic at work in the judicial sphere. There was no public prosecutor in the Athenian judicial system; public cases could be prosecuted by any citizen who was willing—*ho boulomenos*.¹¹ While legally any male Athenian citizen in good standing could try such cases, there were fairly clear social criteria for determining who counted as

a legitimate prosecutor. In particular, as Danielle Allen has argued, the legitimate citizen prosecutor was one who was personally connected to, and hence, justly angered by the crime that had taken place.¹² These cultural norms served to distinguish between a legitimate prosecutor, on the one hand, and a sycophant, on the other hand. Though both had some personal interest in the case they were prosecuting, the latter's interest was perverted by the quest for pecuniary gain, a misuse of anger, or some combination of the two.¹³ Thus, though each citizen had the equal ability to prosecute such cases, not all willing prosecutors were viewed as equally legitimate.

The type of authority exercised in democratic Athens, then, was certainly distinct from the type of traditional authority that has a prominent place in *Clouds*; it is also distinct from the authority that would be wielded, for example, by the philosopher-kings of Plato's hypothetical Kallipolis. While all three are types of authority, they can be distinguished along two dimensions: (1) the norms that determine who is entitled to authority; and (2) the amount of deference such authority commands. The traditional authority of the gods, for example, is grounded in the obedience owed to time-honored rules and practices, and the deference it commands is unlimited.¹⁴ The authority of the philosopher-kings, in contrast, was epistemic—it was grounded in the knowledge of the Forms that only philosophers could possess—and, as with traditional authority, the deference it commanded was total—no one else in the Kallipolis would have the knowledge necessary to challenge the authority of the philosopher-kings. Finally, the authority of the

orator was governed by norms dictating that he must demonstrate his friendliness to the *dēmos* in order for his speech to carry weight. In contrast to both traditional forms of authority and the authority of the philosopher-kings, however, the deference such authority commanded was far more defeasible.¹⁵

Within a democratic context, like that of fifth-century Athens, each citizen is authorized to track the commitments and entitlements of his fellow citizens; it is precisely through this process of “keeping score” that authority is constructed. If Cleon, for example, convincingly demonstrates his affection for the *dēmos*, and has given good advice in the Assembly in the past, I may be willing to defer to his authority in deciding what course of action the city should take. Yet, if his policies start to produce deleterious consequences for the city, or I happen to witness Cleon treating an ordinary citizen hubristically, I may no longer be willing to act in such a way that his advice counts as authoritative for me. That I have the authority to track Cleon’s commitments in this way neither indicates nor is predicated upon the truth of my assessments (perhaps Cleon’s policies will turn out to be beneficial in the long term, or what I witnessed was actually Cleon retaliating against a prior assault made against him); I possess such authority simply as a member of a democratic political community.¹⁶ For the operation of authority to remain democratic, however, it requires that citizens exercise this authority to track each other’s commitments and entitlements; this, in turn, demands that we recognize our fellow citizens as fit to hold each other accountable in these ways.

It is this last point in particular that can illuminate the dimension of Aristophanes' critique of Socrates that I wish to draw out in this chapter.¹⁷ What Strepsiades learns from Socrates is that those without the knowledge he acquired at the *phrontistērion* are not fit to hold him accountable for his actions. To demonstrate this point, we must now turn to the play itself.

WHAT STREPSIADES LEARNS FROM SOCRATES

As noted in the introduction, most commentators on *Clouds* focus on Socrates' education of Pheidippides rather than his relationship with Strepsiades. Given the historical fact that Socrates was prosecuted in 399 B.C.E. on the charge of corrupting the youth, combined with Socrates' identification of Aristophanes as one of the individuals responsible for this public perception (Plat. *Ap.* 18d), this emphasis is unsurprising. It is Pheidippides, of course, who deploys the teachings of the Weaker Argument to question the authority of the gods, the city's laws, and his parents; the potential danger of sophistical teaching is thus forcefully displayed in this depiction of his corruption. Yet, it is Strepsiades, and not Pheidippides, who successfully fends off his creditors at 1214–1302, despite the fact that the latter is sent to the *phrontistērion* for precisely this purpose.¹⁸ Strepsiades' use of Socrates' teachings, moreover, presents its own challenge to authority—the equal authority of democratic citizens to hold each other accountable. It is Strepsiades' challenge to the operation of democratic authority thus understood, and its connection to

what he learns from Socrates at the *phrontistērion*, that will be the focus of the following analysis.

When Strepsiades first attempts to persuade his son to become a student at the *phrontistērion*, he indicates that the students there engage in two types of intellectual activity. The first type is what we would call scientific: they “argue persuasively that the sky is a stove lid, and that it lies around us, and that we are the charcoals” (95–97); the second type is rhetorical: “These people teach, if someone gives them money, how to win any lawsuit, both right or wrong” (97–99). It is the latter that most interests Strepsiades, as is indicated by his frustration at the seemingly pointless intellectual exercises to which Socrates subjects him (655–56, 693, 738–39), and his professed desire to learn the weaker argument in order to escape repaying his debts (244–45). Still, these two types of intellectual activity are not as disconnected as they might appear; indeed, the argument that the sky is a barbecue lid is an example of how Socrates and his ilk are able to make the weaker argument appear the stronger.¹⁹

What, then, is Strepsiades actually taught when he enrolls as a student at the *phrontistērion*? After observing the intellectual activities undertaken at the school, the first thing Strepsiades is taught by Socrates is knowledge of divine matters (*ta theia pragmat'*, 250). He learns that the clouds are the only gods (365), and that Zeus, along with the other Olympian gods, does not exist (367). Given that Zeus does not exist, this prompts Strepsiades to ask who makes it rain, which leads to the second subject he is taught: meteorology. Socrates explains that rain, thunder, and lightning are all caused by the physical motions of

the clouds, and that these motions themselves are caused, not by Zeus, but by heavenly whirl (*aitherios dinos*, 379). Finally, Strepsiades is taught grammar; Socrates attempts to teach Strepsiades to identify the proper genders of nouns and proper names (658–93).

To claim, of course, that Strepsiades truly learns what Socrates attempts to teach him would be something of an overstatement. On this point, Strepsiades' assessment of Socrates' atheism is illustrative. When Socrates explains that it is Whirl, rather than Zeus, that forces the clouds to crash against each other and produce thunder, Strepsiades immediately personifies Whirl, thinking that Whirl has replaced Zeus—Whirl now rules as king (*Dinos nuni basileuōn*)—in much the same way that Zeus replaced his father Cronos (379–82). At the end of the play, Strepsiades reveals the full extent of his misunderstanding, having not simply personified the abstract concept of Whirl, but having taken Socrates to mean that an earthenware cup controlled the cosmos (1470–74).²⁰ Strepsiades' inability to think abstractly is further on display when Socrates attempts to instruct him in measurement and rhythm. With the former, Strepsiades can only think of grain measurements (639–40); with the latter, he mistakes the metrical finger (*daktulon*) for the fingers on one's hand (649–53). Thus, some of what Socrates attempts to teach Strepsiades fails to learn; other subjects he appears to have learned yet does not fully comprehend. In the end, this intellectual incompetence results in his expulsion from the *phrontistērion*.²¹

Yet, despite his ineptitude, Strepsiades successfully deploys the same arguments he is taught at the *phrontistērion* in fending off his creditors. When the first creditor arrives and demands payment, Strepsiades chastises the man for his belief in the traditional gods. While he begins by commenting on the creditor's laughable belief in the gods (*kai Zeus geloios omnumenos tois eidosin*, 1241), he continues by evincing the creditor's ignorance about the grammatical teachings Strepsiades learned at the Thinkery. When the first creditor asks whether Strepsiades will pay back the money, Strepsiades grabs a kneading trough, and asks his creditor to name the object. The creditor responds that the object is a kneading trough (*kardopos*), to which Strepsiades indignantly replies: "And you are demanding repayment, although being such a person? I would never pay back even an obol to anyone who would call a kneading *troughette* (*kardopēn*) a kneading *trough* (*kardopon*)" (1249-51).²² The test that Strepsiades lays out for the creditor cleverly recalls his own education in grammar at the *phrontistērion*, and castigates the creditor for "incorrectly" calling the kneading trough by a male name instead of a female one.

Strepsiades further displays his learning in his encounter with the second creditor. When the creditor asks Strepsiades if he will repay the money he owes, Strepsiades asks "whether you think that Zeus, on each occasion, causes new water to rain or that the sun drags this same water back again from below" (1279-81). And when the creditor replies that he neither knows nor cares which is the correct explanation, Strepsiades comments on the gall of one who dares to ask for

his money back, though being ignorant of meteorological matters (*tōn meteōrōn pragmatōn*, 1284).²³ When the creditor then asks that Strepsiades at least pay him back the interest on what he owes, Strepsiades pleads ignorance as to the nature of interest. The creditor then explains, quite simply, that it is the process by which money increases month by month and day by day, at which point Strepsiades embarks on an extended scientific analogy intent on proving that this creature (*thērion*) called interest does not exist. Noting that the sea is the same height as it was before, despite the fact that rivers are flowing into it, Strepsiades highlights the absurdity behind the idea that money should increase in such a way when even the sea does not (1293–97). Strepsiades’ interactions with his creditors thus demonstrate that he is at least competent at remembering and reconstructing the arguments he encountered at the *phrontistērion*.²⁴

Crucial, however, are the implications Strepsiades draws from these encounters. For Strepsiades, the ignorance of his creditors counts as a justification for refusing to repay his debts: their ignorance makes them unfit to hold him accountable for his actions. This is evident if we attend to the precise language used by Strepsiades. With the first creditor, as cited above, he declares: “And you are demanding repayment, *although being such a person (toioutos ōn)*? I would never pay back even an obol to anyone who would call a kneading *troughette (kardopēn)* a kneading *trough (kardopon)*” (1249–51). His language is similar with the second creditor: “How could you be just in demanding repayment (*pōs oun apolabein targurion dikaios ei*) if you know nothing of

meteorology?” (1283–84). What these scenes illustrate is not that those with expert knowledge should rule in place of ordinary citizens who lack such knowledge; rather, it is that Strepsiades deems his creditors unfit to hold him accountable based on their lack of such knowledge. It is this attitude of intellectual superiority and arrogance that Strepsiades ultimately learns from Socrates.

SOCRATIC MOCKERY AND DEMOCRATIC AUTHORITY

Strepsiades’ refusal to recognize his creditors as equals is connected with his mockery of them: to him, his creditors are not just ignorant, but laughable on account of their ignorance. Strepsiades’ mockery of his creditors, in turn, is connected with Socrates’ use of abusive language against him during his education at the *phrontistērion*. When Strepsiades declares that it is obvious that Zeus hurls down lightning bolts to incinerate perjurers, Socrates calls him a fool (*ō mōre*) for not recognizing that this idea flatly contradicts their observations concerning lightning strikes (398). Socrates later calls Strepsiades ignorant and barbaric (*amathēs houtosi kai barbaros*, 492), accuses him of speaking nonsense (*lēreis*, 499), tells him to stop blathering (*ou mē lalēseis*, 505), refers to him as the most boorish, inept, stupid, and forgetful person (*ouk eidon houtōs andr’ agroikon oudamou oud’ aporon oude skaion oud’ epilēsmona*, 628–29) he has ever known, calls him a brainless lout (*agreios ei kai skaios*, 655), base (*ō ponēre*, 688), and twice curses him (*eis korakas*, 646; *apolei kakist’*, 726).

After he is completely fed up with Strepsiades' inability to learn he commands him to leave the *phrontistērion*, calling him a most forgetful and idiotic old man (*epilēsmotaton kai skaiotaton*, 790). Socrates' abuse of Strepsiades, in short, is grounded in the latter's intellectual incompetence; Strepsiades appears ridiculous to Socrates precisely because he is his intellectual inferior, unable to comprehend his subtle teachings about the gods, grammar, and so forth.

From Socrates, then, Strepsiades learns not only the intellectual matters outlined in the previous section, but further to treat those ignorant in such matters with ridicule and contempt. The first evidence of this in the play is Strepsiades' behavior toward Pheidippides after the former is banished from the *phrontistērion*. When his son swears by Zeus, Strepsiades calls him a fool (*tēs mōrias*) for still believing in Zeus at his age (817-18), and Pheidippides responds by asking his father why he is mocking him for this (*ti de tout' egelasas eteon*; 819). When Pheidippides then questions the worth of learning from people like Socrates, Strepsiades goes on to exclaim how ignorant and thick-witted (*hōs amathēs ei kai pachus*) his son is (842). Finally, when Pheidippides refers to both a cock and a hen by the same name, Strepsiades calls him ridiculous (*katagelastos ei*, 849). Strepsiades later subjects his creditors to the same abusive language. He mocks the first creditor's rotundity with a joke about turning his gut into a wineskin (1237-39), and, as with Pheidippides, he tells him that swearing by the gods is laughable (*geloios*, 1241-42). He accuses the second creditor of speaking nonsense (*ti dēta lēreis*, 1273), and the second creditor accuses him of mocking his woes (*mē skōpte m'*, 1265-66).

Strepsiades' encounter with the second creditor culminates in a threat to prosecute Strepsiades on a charge of *hubris*; though linked specifically to Strepsiades' physical assault of the creditor, the idea of *hubris* well captures his general treatment of, and attitude toward, both the creditors. As was noted in the introduction,²⁵ the charge of *hubris* (*graphē hubreōs*) was applicable in cases of verbal and/or physical assault where the deliberate intent was the dishonoring or disrespecting of another. Strepsiades demonstrates, through both his mockery and physical assault against his creditors, that he considers them to be his inferiors, neither fit to hold him accountable for his actions nor worthy of being treated with equal respect and dignity. This disdain for ordinary citizens is thus one of the key things Strepsiades learns from Socrates.²⁶

Of course, Strepsiades' mockery of his creditors captures only one aspect of the humor contained in this scene. While Strepsiades mocks his creditors for their lack of learning, Strepsiades himself is construed as an object of laughter to the audience of the play. To a large extent, what makes Socrates and the intellectual activities at the *phrontistērion* laughable are their perceived uselessness—what practical benefit could one gain from knowledge of the orifice from which a gnat hums? Or from calling a kneading trough by its proper gender? Strepsiades' use of this knowledge to beat back his creditors is even more ridiculous, however, since it is predicated on the claim that knowledge of such useless matters is of the utmost importance to practical affairs. This is most apparent from Strepsiades' denial of the existence of interest, which he

demonstrates using an analogy with the flowing of rivers into the sea (1285–96). As noted above, when the second creditor, exasperated, pleads with Strepsiades to at least pay back the interest he owes, Strepsiades asks what sort of creature (*ti thērion*) this thing called interest is, to which the creditor responds that it is the process according to which an amount of money grows bigger each day as time flows (*huporreontos*). Strepsiades then asks whether the sea is bigger now than it had been previously, and the creditor answers that it is equal in size, since it would not be right (*dikaion*) for it to be larger. As noted above, Strepsiades concludes that if it is not right for the sea to increase, even though rivers flow into it (*epirreontōn*), then the creditor has no right to demand that his money so increase. What makes Strepsiades' argument laughable is his attempt to deny the existence of interest—a social practice governed by Athenian laws and customs—on the basis of the movements of the seas. From the perspective of an ordinary Athenian citizen, such arguments would likely have appeared ridiculous.²⁷

Ultimately, however, what makes Strepsiades laughable is his belief that those who lack the knowledge he gained at the *phrontistērion* are unfit to participate in the exchanging of reasons that is at the heart of the practice of democratic citizenship. Looking back to the epigraph with which this chapter begins, the audience's laughter at Strepsiades is like that of the hypothetical laughter the Athenians might direct at someone who claimed to possess a political *technē* that ordinary citizens did not possess and without which they would not be competent to participate in political discussion. If we

view such laughter within this framework, then it perhaps reflects a democratic anxiety concerning the competency of the *dēmos* as a whole to govern the city, and, more specifically, the ability of individual ordinary citizens to participate in the practices of reason giving that are constitutive of the operation of democratic authority. If, as Strepsiades' arguments suggest, *nomos* is ultimately dependent upon *phusis*, then scientific knowledge concerning the operations of nature can be construed as a qualification for such participation. Thus, the actions of Strepsiades directly challenge an Athenian democratic ideology that places central value upon the wisdom of ordinary citizens.²⁸ The laughter of the audience at Socrates and Strepsiades, then, can be interpreted, at least in part, as an expression of laughter that seeks to reinforce this democratic ideology by ridiculing the challenge posed by Socratic intellectualism to the democratic operation of politics in Athens.

SOCRATIC MOCKERY AND ARISTOPHANIC COMEDY

We can thus see that the mode of humor practiced by Socrates in *Clouds* is direct and abusive. It is not ironic,²⁹ and its purpose is to establish superiority over its target. Yet, it is worth pausing here to consider in more detail precisely what might make such humor troubling from a democratic perspective. This is especially necessary given the fact that much of the humor found in Aristophanic comedy (and Old Comedy more generally) displays similar characteristics. In the *parabasis* of *Knights*, for example, Aristophanes abusively

mocks his comic rivals in order to establish his superiority over them; and in *Wasps*, Philocleon's verbal abuse spills over into physical abuse, leading, as it does with Strepsiades, to a charge of *hubris* (1417–18). Thus, while *Clouds* paints a critical portrait of Socrates, are we justified in viewing the kind of humor Socrates deploys in the play as part of that critique?

The abusive mockery deployed by Socrates in *Clouds* can be classified as a form of *aischrologia* (shameful speech), which is characteristic of both Aristophanic comedy in particular and Old Comedy more generally.³⁰ *Aischrologia* involves a host of related practices, including foul speech (*kakologia*), slander (*kakēgoria*), abuse (*loidoria*), and blasphemy (*blasphēmia*).³¹ It is speech that is shameful in the sense that it can both bring shame upon the one who uses it, and be used to project shame onto others.³² For example, it may be regarded as shameful to mention certain bodily practices (such as defecation), or to speak of them in a particularly crude way; it might further bring shame on someone else to accuse him of defecating in a particular manner. *Aischrologia* also contains class overtones; it is a type of speech associated especially with lower-class citizens and with the activities of the agora.³³

It is, further, a type of speech that exists in an ambiguous relationship with democratic norms and practices, and in particular with the norm of *parrhēsia*.³⁴ To speak frankly might involve speech that is offensive (and perhaps even risible); it might also involve speech that is painful to its listener(s). It is the potential overlap between the social effects of *parrhēsia* and those of *aischrologia* that creates such ambiguity and raises the question, How does one draw the line

between frank speech (which is democratically valuable) and shameful speech (that might be ethically inappropriate from a democratic standpoint)?³⁵

This is an important question, but one that cannot be fully answered within the scope of the analysis pursued in this book. For present purposes, it will be sufficient to address how Aristophanes appears to navigate this ambiguity, and in doing so, deploys such “shameful speech” in a way that is distinct from the manner in which it is used by Socrates in *Clouds*. Key here is the manner in which Aristophanes deploys mockery and abusive speech in order to demonstrate his superiority over his rivals, and hence establish his authority to advise the *dēmos*. This is a dynamic that we can observe most clearly in the *parabases* of *Knights* and *Clouds*.³⁶

In the *parabasis* of *Knights*, Aristophanes establishes his superiority over his main comic rivals, both past and present: Magnes, Cratinus, and Crates. The discussion of Cratinus in the *parabasis* has garnered the most scholarly attention, given the preservation of some fragments and an ancient summary of Cratinus’ *Pytine* (*Wine-Flask*), which offers a comic rebuttal of Aristophanes’ mockery.³⁷ What, however, are the “charges” Aristophanes levels against Cratinus in the *parabasis* of *Knights*? The relevant passage runs as follows: Then he recalled Cratinus, who once rode the high wave of your applause and coursed through the open plains, sweeping oaks, plane trees, and enemies from their moorings and bearing them off uprooted. At a party there was no singing anything but “Goddess of Bribery with Shoes of Impeach Wood” and “Builders of Handy Hymns,” so lush was his flowering! But now

you see him driveling around town, his frets falling out, his tuning gone and his shapeliness all disjointed, but you feel no pity; no, he's just an old man doddering about, like Conn-ass wearing a withered crown and perishing of thirst, who for his earlier victories should be getting free drinks in the Prytaneum, and instead of driveling should be sitting pretty in the front row next to Dionysus. (526–37, trans. Henderson) We should not be taken in, of course, by the veneer of sympathy.³⁸ First, though Cratinus is sandwiched between Magnes and Crates, both of whom were retired by the time *Knights* was performed in 424, Cratinus was also competing at the Lenaea that year, and would best Aristophanes' *Clouds* in the following year with *Pytine*. Far from lamenting Cratinus' treatment, Aristophanes is mocking his rival by depicting him (falsely) as a washed-up has-been. Second, the metaphor of the rushing stream is likely a parody of a boast Cratinus had made in an earlier play about his poetic style (and one that he will make again in *Pytine*).³⁹ Finally, Aristophanes mocks Cratinus as a drunkard, subtly altering the well-known civic reward of free meals in the Prytaneum to free *drinks* in the Prytaneum.⁴⁰

It is this caricature of Cratinus' drunkenness that forms the core of his self-defense in *Pytine*. According to the scholiast on *Knights*, Cratinus himself appeared as a character in the play. His wife, Comedy, was suing for divorce on grounds of mistreatment, since he had taken up with a new mistress, Drunkenness (*tēi methēi*, fr. 193–95).⁴¹ While earlier treatments of the *Pytine* speculated that Cratinus emerged at the end of the play cured of this vice (fr. 200), it is perhaps more plausible that Cratinus was “indulging in self-mockery by

extending the caricature,” reveling in his reputation as the drunken poet and articulating his comic genius as deriving from Drunkenness (fr. 203).⁴² In contrast to the “euriparistophanists,” who rely on technical skill in composing their poetry, Cratinus plays up his “relationship” with alcohol as indicative of the superiority of his own approach: divine inspiration.⁴³ This comic reversal is further exemplified in the boastful premise of the play: that Cratinus himself, and Cratinus alone, has a special connection with the comic art.⁴⁴

This brings us to the *parabasis* of Aristophanes’ *Clouds*. With the original version of *Clouds* being defeated by *Pytine* in 423, the *parabasis* of the revised version that has come down to us laments the earlier version’s defeat and chastises the audience for failing to recognize its author’s comic genius. As in the *parabasis* of *Knights*, Aristophanes glorifies his own abilities (this was “the most sophisticated of my comedies”) while denigrating his opponents (I was “defeated by vulgar men”) (520–25). He goes on to illustrate just how sophisticated and unvulgar his comedy is: She hasn’t come with any dangling leather stitched to her, red at the tip and thick, to make the children laugh; nor does she mock bald men, nor dance a *kordax*, nor does an old man, while speaking his lines, cover up bad jokes by beating the interlocutor with his stick; nor does she dash onstage brandishing torches, nor yell “ow ow.” On the contrary, she has come relying only on herself and her script. And I myself, being a poet of the same kind, do not act like a bigwig, nor try to fool you by presenting the same material two or three times. (537–46, trans. Henderson) These claims to superiority, however, are heavily undercut by the fact that

Aristophanes does almost all of these things in the revised version of *Clouds*. The most glaring claim, of course, is that, in a revised version of an earlier play, he claims to never have represented the same material! Thus, while Aristophanes boasts of his own poetic prowess in the *parabasis* of *Clouds*, these boasts are undercut in the very act of being made, both drawing attention to the fact that they are boasts and, in doing so, inviting the laughter of the audience.⁴⁵

It is this self-revealing boastfulness that is the comic thread running through *Knights*, *Pytine*, and *Clouds*, and in fact, perhaps through the comic *parabasis* itself.⁴⁶ The poet claims authority for himself vis-à-vis other rival poets while simultaneously undercutting such authority.⁴⁷ In *Clouds*, it is the interplay between Aristophanes' claims to sophistication and novelty and the vulgarity and repetitiveness of the play; in *Pytine*, it is the claim to a special relationship with comedy that is undermined by Cratinus' own unfaithfulness to his art; and, in *Knights*, it is Aristophanes' boastful claim to superiority masked as humility. These are all carefully constructed jokes, intended to raise the laughter of the audience.⁴⁸ This dynamic suggests, then, that Aristophanes is not so much claiming authority for himself as mocking those who attempt to claim such authority. By mocking the very act of claiming authority, however, Aristophanes is still asserting a claim to authority. This authority is not grounded in any claim that he is experienced in his craft or knowledgeable about what the city needs; rather, it is grounded in the act of mocking such claims. In other words, it is by *not* claiming authority, or by refusing to

do so seriously, that the comic poet stakes a claim to his voice having authority.⁴⁹

In this respect, we might compare Aristophanes' strategy for constructing his own authority with that of Demosthenes in *Against Meidias*. While Demosthenes does distinguish himself from Meidias' elite attributes, he also emphasizes the *dēmos*' need for elite citizens such as himself. Ordinary citizens, Demosthenes stresses, do not have the power and the resources to combat arrogant elites like Meidias; those who do so, like the poor Strato, whom he puts on display to the jurors (95–96), risk the same disenfranchisement (*atimia*). The *dēmos* needs elites like Demosthenes, then, to protect them from elites like Meidias. In this sense, Demosthenes' elite attributes are used as a justification for his authority to advise and defend the *dēmos*.⁵⁰ Aristophanes' strategy is quite different; though he does cast himself as a superior adviser of the *dēmos*, he does so in an openly ridiculous way, calling attention to the potentially risible nature of all such claims to authority. His strategy, then, is to refuse to acknowledge seriously that he is playing the same game.⁵¹ And while he does deploy abusive language, the purposes toward which it is directed are quite different from those of Socrates and Strepsiades in *Clouds*.⁵² Aristophanes' use of mockery and abusive language is deployed against other elites on behalf of the *dēmos*, rather than against ordinary citizens.

• • •

The strategy outlined above allows Aristophanes to navigate the potential tension between mockery and democratic

ideology. Mockery entails the assertion of a kind of superiority, one that verges on *hubris*, and carries with it the potential to undermine the sense of equality central to Athenian democratic ideology. The *parabases* of *Knights* and *Clouds* confront this tension directly, casting the sense of superiority such mockery creates as a transparently boastful comic mask, one that allows us to laugh at (and with) the comic poet. In this sense, Aristophanic comedy does establish a kind of “negative equality,”⁵³ though with an important twist: the poet himself is enmeshed within the same nexus of comic leveling.

In contrast, then, the Aristophanic Socrates deploys mockery in order to demonstrate his superiority over ordinary citizens in a way that suggests that those citizens ought not to wield the authority they do in democratic Athens.⁵⁴ It is thus both the kind of mockery that the Aristophanic Socrates deploys and the purpose toward which it is directed that illustrate the political significance of Socratic humor in *Clouds*. While Socrates does not directly mock the Athenian democracy in the play, as Anytus evidently contended in his prosecution speech,⁵⁵ his mockery can be construed as directed against the ideological foundations of Athenian democratic practice. It is in that sense that we can interpret such mockery as troubling from a democratic standpoint.⁵⁶ In the following chapter, we will see how Plato responds to such concerns surrounding the Socratic practice of humor through his representation of Socratic *eirōneia*.

CHAPTER TWO

Plato and Socratic *Eirōneia*

While the focus of this chapter is Plato's depiction of Socratic *eirōneia*, it will be helpful to situate his handling of this theme within his broader treatment of humor. Plato's engagement with humor operates on a number of often intersecting levels, each of which will be briefly addressed below. First, on a literary level, Plato draws on the genre of comedy in constructing his philosophical dialogues. While Plato's engagement with tragedy¹ has generally received more attention than his engagement with comedy,² it is clear that Plato both appropriates *topoi* found in the works of Attic Old Comedy and parodically adapts the works of individual playwrights. In the *Gorgias*, for example, Plato reworks the metaphors of food and sex deployed by Aristophanes in *Knights* to construct his critiques of the conventional practice of rhetoric and Athenian democracy;³ and scholars have recognized Socrates' description of the sophists gathered at the house of Callias in the *Protagoras* as a parodic adaptation of a scene from Eupolis' *Flatterers*.⁴ In both examples, we can see Plato's willingness to adopt and adapt material from comic poetry in constructing his own critiques of rhetoric and

sophistry.⁵

Second, Plato's dialogues engage substantively with the topic of humor, offering both analytic and normative treatments of the subject of laughter. As was discussed in the introduction, the *Philebus* offers a conception of the laughable as arising from self-ignorance. And in the *Republic*, Socrates draws an important distinction between reasonable and unreasonable laughter, one that he uses to clarify the nature of the threat that his three proposals in book 5 might drown him in waves of laughter. In drawing this distinction, Socrates uses the following example: the Greeks used to think that it was shameful and laughable (*aischra kai geloia*) for men to exercise naked, but when they discovered that this was the better practice, "what was laughable to the eyes was made to melt away by the revelation by arguments of what was best" (452c). Likewise, whoever thinks that something other than what is truly bad and shameful is ridiculous, or attempts to laugh at some such thing, is himself foolish (*mataios*): only what is truly bad and shameful is laughable. Thus, just as reason was able to dispel the apparent laughableness of the custom of men exercising naked, Socrates hopes that his own arguments will have the power to dispel the apparent laughableness of his own proposals.⁶

This distinction between reasonable and unreasonable laughter resonates beyond the confines of its original context in book 5 of the *Republic*. It informs, for example, Socrates' remark to Euthyphro that being laughed at is perhaps nothing important (3c); "perhaps" because whether one should be concerned about such laughter is dependent upon whether it is

reasonable or not. Thus, in the *Gorgias*, Socrates chastises Polus for laughing at him as if laughter itself constituted a form of refutation (473e2-3). This laughter, as Polus makes clear, arises from Polus' belief that Socrates has already refuted himself by making the kinds of claims that no other human being would make (473e4-5)—namely, that it is better to suffer injustice than to commit it. For Socrates, this is further evidence of the rhetorical mode of refutation that Polus repeatedly deploys during their conversation: Polus appeals to the strangeness (473a1) of Socrates' arguments as evidence that they are irrational when measured against the standard of popular morality.⁷ Yet, for Socrates, to be the object of such laughter, divorced as it is from an understanding of what is truly bad and shameful, is not a matter worthy of concern.

This last point connects directly with Plato's third main concern about humor: the worrisome influence that theatrical comedy exerts over its audience. This concern is tightly linked with the criticisms of Attic tragedy in both the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*. In the former dialogue, Socrates applies his critique of rhetoric as a form of pandering to the genre of tragedy—tragedies, when stripped of melody, rhythm, and meter, are nothing more than speeches, and hence tragic poetry is a form of popular oratory (502c5-12). This critique of tragedy as a form of flattery is further developed in the *Republic*, where it is both provided with an epistemological foundation and expanded to include comedy. Since both tragic and comic poets lack knowledge of the Form of the good, their poetic imitations risk disrupting the healthy psychic balance that constitutes individual human flourishing and provides the foundation for

the flourishing of the city. In line with this general framework, Socrates recognizes that laughter has the power to produce great changes within the soul of the individual who laughs, and for this reason, the young men who are educated to be the future guardians of Kallipolis ought not to be lovers of laughter (338e4). The danger of misplaced laughter, for both the young and the old, is that it carries with it the potential to unseat reason from its position of psychic rule by enticing us to take pleasure in things we ought not to take pleasure in, and in doing so, strengthens the appetitive part of our soul.

From this brief overview, it is evident that Plato's depiction of humor—of characters who, for example, laugh, find things ridiculous, and are mocked—carries both ethical and political significance. In the previous chapter, we saw that the Aristophanic Socrates engages in abusive forms of mockery that emanate from an attitude of superiority directed against his intellectual inferiors. It is this type of mockery that Strepsiades learns from Socrates and deploys against his creditors, doing so in a way that might be viewed as troubling from a democratic standpoint. In Plato, however, the portrait we find of Socratic humor, and its relationship to Athenian democracy, are radically different. For the most part, Plato's Socrates does not directly mock his interlocutors, nor does he use abusive language to describe them. Though there are some exceptions—for example, Socrates is occasionally more willing to mock interlocutors in the narrated parts of the dialogues or interlocutors who are not actually present—in neither case does the Platonic Socrates (in contrast to his Aristophanic counterpart) mock an interlocutor to his face.⁸ This reticence

when it comes to directly mocking others is connected with the laughter of the Platonic Socrates—or perhaps one should say the absence of laughter. As we saw in the introduction, though Socrates does refer to himself as laughable, and sometimes includes his interlocutors in that assessment, he almost never actually laughs. It is only in the *Phaedo* that he does so, and on these occasions he is described as laughing “gently” (84d) and “quietly” (115c). When he does refer to his interlocutors as laughable, his inclusion of himself in that assessment—for example, at the end of the *Protagoras* (361b)—suggests that this recognition is not an expression of superiority.

There are exceptions, however, and the *Gorgias* might be taken as one of them. In that dialogue, Socrates’ argument that rhetoric is akin to cookery has clear comic overtones. In his discussion with Callicles, Socrates emphasizes the ridiculous implications of his interlocutor’s claims—consider, for example, Socrates’ question as to whether Callicles believes that (since the better ought to have a greater share and the more intelligent are the better) a cobbler ought to walk around wearing the greatest number of shoes (490e). Socrates’ use of such examples, moreover, is viewed as crude and shameful by Callicles, particularly when Socrates likens the hedonistic way of life condoned by Callicles to that of a catamite (494e).⁹ Socrates even goes so far as to suggest that no one has been able to speak against his opinion that it is better to suffer injustice than to commit it without appearing ridiculous (*katagelastos*, 509a). Importantly, however, he notes that his own remarks in this regard are “rather rude” (*agroikoteron ti*,

509a), and on the whole, the harsh exchanges with Polus and Callicles in this dialogue are atypical.¹⁰

This general reticence toward engaging in direct and abusive forms of mockery resonates with what is often taken to be the most characteristic aspect of Socratic humor in Plato—irony. At a very basic level, irony constitutes a form of indirect speech—the classical conception of irony found in Quintilian, for example, entails conveying the opposite of what is said (*in utroque enim contrarium ei quod dicitur intellegendum est, Inst. Orat. 9.2.44*).¹¹ As such, irony generally involves some form of pretense—the ironist pretends to mean what she says, while attempting to convey something other than what she says to her audience.¹² And while not all forms of irony are humorous,¹³ the Socratic practice of irony in the Platonic dialogues has often been associated with various forms of humor. By comparison with the direct form of mockery practiced by the Aristophanic Socrates, however, the gelastic practices of Socrates constitute a “hidden” kind of laughter,¹⁴ one that in many cases remains undetected by Socrates’ interlocutors.

That the practice of Socratic irony in the Platonic dialogues is at least formally distinct from the Socratic mockery found in Aristophanes’ *Clouds* is relatively noncontroversial; more controversial is the question of the nature and purpose of Socratic irony. For Gregory Vlastos, Socrates uses irony to mock his interlocutors, but he also practices a form of “complex irony” that provokes those interlocutors to discover for themselves the meaning of his paradoxical statements.¹⁵ For Alexander Nehamas, it is a reflection of Socrates’ silence:

it constitutes a mask that makes Socrates strange, complex, and mysterious.¹⁶ For Peter Euben, Socrates' use of irony is a means to reconcile the fact that he himself "held strong views strongly, yet sought to teach others to be teachers of themselves so that political education could be reciprocal."¹⁷ For Gerald Mara, it is a playful mode of acknowledging the tentativeness of his own arguments.¹⁸

For Elizabeth Markovits, irony is a technique for sparking reflection in Socrates' interlocutors, and for combating the vicissitudes of a democratic political discourse centered around the principle of *parrhēsia*.¹⁹ For Christina Tarnopolsky, it is a "negative and painful stance toward others," one that Plato represents in a critical light, and opposes to his own form of irony—Platonic myth.²⁰ In contrast to Nehamas, Tarnopolsky contends that it is Socrates' strangeness that makes him ironic, not his irony that makes him strange.²¹

This chapter offers a different approach to Socratic irony, one that situates the irony of the Platonic Socrates within a larger debate about the politics of Socratic humor. Thus, it attempts to move beyond the self-contained interpretations of Socratic irony above, all of which focus exclusively on the Platonic dialogues, in order to suggest that Plato's depiction of Socratic irony was shaped by this larger debate, and, more specifically, by the suspicion that the Socratic practice of humor carried with it antidemocratic implications. Just as Plato addresses the accusations that the practice of philosophy is either useless or dangerous (*Rep.* 487a-d), his portrait of Socratic irony possesses apologetic dimensions. Rather than unequivocally defending the Socratic practice of irony,

however, it is my argument in this chapter that Plato presents Socratic irony as an inherently ambiguous practice, the assessment of which is intimately connected to the question of the nature and purpose of Socratic philosophy more generally. By doing so, Plato explains why the Socratic practice of irony elicits the range of responses it does.

This interpretation is developed by focusing on Plato's limited use of the word *eirōneia* and its cognates. I argue that the word *eirōneia*, in both Plato and other classical texts, signifies a type of solipsistic irony, one in which the primary audience for such irony is the ironist herself. This interpretation of *eirōneia* helps us to understand what it is that Socrates is being accused of when some of his interlocutors label him an *eirōn*. At the same time, Plato's broader use of this word indicates how the question of whether Socrates was an *eirōn* is linked with the question of how to distinguish between Socratic philosophy and sophistry. It is by attending to the difficulty in distinguishing Socrates from the sophists that we can account for both the diverse ways in which Socrates' interlocutors experience and interpret the phenomenon of Socratic irony, and the range of its political implications.²²

The next two sections address the question of whether Socrates was an *eirōn* and develop the interpretation of *eirōneia* mentioned above. The sections that follow on those then turn to Plato's use of *eirōneia* and its cognates. The final two sections of the chapter indicate how Plato's use of *eirōneia* is connected with his depiction of Socratic irony more generally, while drawing out the political implications of this portrait.

SOME ASPASIAN REFLECTIONS

In his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the second-century C.E. Peripatetic Aspasius²³ offers the following intriguing discussion of the ethics of Socratic *eirōneia*: And he [Aristotle] named all those speaking big about themselves to be boasters, and the vice boastfulness, and those reducing their own qualities toward the lesser in speech and pretending to have less than that which exists in them (and they are depraved, for all earnestness concerning falsehood is depravity) he called *eirones*, and the vice *eirōneia*. But *eirōneia* seems not to be a vice to some; for they say that Socrates was an *eirōn*. But Socrates was never an *eirōn*. Proof of this is that none of his companions refer to him in this way, but the many who are thoroughly mistaken about him, like Thrasymachus and Meno. But he was saying, as it seems, that he himself knew nothing, comparing human wisdom with that of the god; for these things are also said in the *Apology* of Plato. But perhaps he was guarding against the base and offensive, and was speaking less of himself not on account of love for falsehood, which is not *eirōneia*. Or perhaps there are two modes of *eirōneia*: a blameworthy mode that consists in pretending to something and cultivating falsehood; the other mode is similar to wit, when someone guards against what is offensive in their speeches. How these things hold it is necessary to consider.²⁴ After providing the Aristotelian definition of *eirōneia* as a vice,²⁵ Aspasius notes that some people do not think that *eirōneia* is a vice on the grounds that Socrates was an *eirōn*. This would seem to indicate that at least some of those who defended Socrates in antiquity felt the need to account for

what appeared to be one of his vicious characteristics—namely, his *eirōneia*—and they did so by denying that *eirōneia* was a vice.

Aspasius himself, however, deploys a different strategy, at least initially. Rather than denying that *eirōneia* is a vice, Aspasius denies that Socrates was an *eirōn*. Though this claim might seem far-fetched, Aspasius provides an intriguing piece of evidence as justification: none of Socrates' companions ever refer to him as an *eirōn*, only those who are mistaken about him do so, like Thrasymachus and Meno. This point does capture a significant aspect of Plato's depiction of Socratic *eirōneia*: only Thrasymachus, Calicles, and Alcibiades ever accuse Socrates of speaking and acting with *eirōneia*.²⁶ As will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, Plato presents these accusations themselves in an ironic light, casting doubt on their reliability in a way that perhaps led Aspasius to suggest that Socrates was not an *eirōn*.²⁷ What these accusers appear to have been mistaken about, according to Aspasius, was Socrates' motivation in downplaying his own wisdom: it was not due to any affection for falsehood that he did so, but in order to avoid speaking in a manner that would be base or offensive.

Aspasius suggests, however, a third alternative. Rather than denying that *eirōneia* is a vice, Aspasius raises the possibility that there are vicious and nonvicious forms of *eirōneia*. Socrates was thus engaging in a form of *eirōneia* in downplaying his wisdom, but this was not the blameworthy form of *eirōneia* (which involves pretense and falsehood), but a praiseworthy, playful (*charientismōi*) kind, one that is deployed

in order to avoid offending others. In line with this distinction, Aspasius later proposes that perhaps those who deploy *eirōneia* for this latter reason, like Socrates, are not reproachable (124.17-18). And this is the explanation, ultimately, that Aspasius most closely associates with Aristotle: in considering Aristotle's claim that the magnanimous man will speak truthfully, except for those things that he says ironically, Aspasius notes that "Aristotle did not think that all *eirōneia* is base" (114.10).

Though a commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aspasius' treatment of Socratic *eirōneia* in this passage may reveal a broader concern with the ethics of Socratic *eirōneia* during the period in which Aspasius wrote. As the above analysis indicates, only his third explanation of *eirōneia* has a firm basis in Aristotle's text. Aristotle never denies that *eirōneia* is a vice, nor does he ever claim that Socrates was not an *eirōn*. In stating the first explanation, moreover, Aspasius claims that "it seems to some people (*tisi*) that *eirōneia* is not a vice." Who are these people to whom Aspasius refers? Was there another group that denied that Socrates was an *eirōn*? There are hints in other parts of Aspasius' text that his commentary was shaped by contemporary concerns, and it is possible that his decision to include a discussion of Socratic *eirōneia* was motivated by the interest in the figure of Socrates during this period.²⁸ The Stoic Epictetus, for example, mentions Socrates nearly three times more than any other figure in the texts of the *Handbook* and *Discourses* that his student Arrian recorded.²⁹ Socrates is also the philosopher most often mentioned in the orations of Dio of Prusa, two of

which cast Socrates as the protagonist.³⁰ While such a claim is necessarily speculative, Aspasius' text may indicate the continued existence of debate concerning whether Socrates was an *eirōn*. More specifically, it speaks to the continued need, on the part of the defenders of Socrates, to account for his *eirōneia*. From this perspective, Aspasius' commentary may contain an anatomy of the strategies deployed toward that purpose during the time in which he wrote.³¹

While this later legacy of Socratic *eirōneia* will be addressed in chapter 5, the current chapter traces the ancient discussion of Socratic *eirōneia* back to its source in Plato's dialogues. Doing so, however, requires that we first attend to the meaning of *eirōneia* and its cognates during the time in which Plato wrote in order to assess more precisely what was at stake when Socrates' interlocutors accused him of being an *eirōn*. The following section thus turns to an examination of two recent arguments concerning the meaning of *eirōneia* by Michel Narcy and Melissa Lane, both of whom argue that *eirōneia* is not irony and ought not to be translated as such. Drawing on the work of G.R.F. Ferrari,³² I argue, by contrast, that *eirōneia* is best understood as a solipsistic form of irony, one in which the ironist "pulls one over" on his interlocutor for his own amusement. This understanding of *eirōneia* as a type of ironic mockery helps us to situate Plato's depiction of Socratic irony as part of a larger debate concerning Socratic humor.

EIRŌNEIA AND IRONY

That the Socratic practice of *eirōneia* became part of that contested legacy is perhaps not surprising, especially in light of the fact that *eirōneia*, from its earliest attestations, carried a pejorative connotation.³³ The word first appears in Aristophanes' *Clouds* as one of the many negative characteristics Strepsiades will acquire should he study at the *phrontistērion* (449); elsewhere in Aristophanes it signals a kind of sly and deceitful behavior (*Wasps* 174; *Birds* 1211). In Plato, as was noted above, the term is only ever applied to Socrates by his opponents (*Gorg.* 489e1; *Symp.* 216e4, 218d6; *Rep.* 337a4, 6), and they use it as a term of abuse.³⁴ While Aristotle's analysis of *eirōneia* comes closest to offering a positive reevaluation of the concept, even here it is questionable as to whether Aristotle goes even as far as Aspasius claims in reassessing the value of *eirōneia*: though Aristotle does indicate that some forms of *eirōneia* may appear more refined (*chariesteroi*) than others, he never concludes that such forms of *eirōneia*, not even that which he identifies with Socrates, are not vicious (*EN* 4.7). In Demosthenes' *First Philippic*, the orator uses the term *eirōneia* to accuse his audience of deploying cowardly dissimulation to mask their unwillingness to defend their allies from the encroachments of Philip of Macedon (7.5, 37.5). And in Theophrastus' *Characters*, the *eirōn* is a thorough scoundrel who appears to enjoy messing with others just for the sake of messing with others (1).

Yet, beyond the fact that *eirōneia* was a term of abuse, what exactly did it mean to accuse someone of speaking or acting with *eirōneia*?³⁵ In the remainder of this section, I argue that

eirōneia signifies a solipsistic form of irony, one in which the ironist himself is the audience for his irony. This understanding of *eirōneia* helps illustrate its gelastic dimensions; while not all *eirōneia* involves humor, those forms of *eirōneia* that do involve humor can be best understood as forms of practical joking in which the *eirōn* deploys pretense in order to “pull one over” on his target, thereby making the victim appear laughable to the *eirōn*. What is amusing for the *eirōn*, according to this interpretation, is his ability to trick his target into believing that whatever pretense he deploys is sincere.³⁶

In justifying this interpretation, it will be useful to focus on two recent arguments against interpreting and translating *eirōneia* as irony, and Socratic *eirōneia* as Socratic irony—those of Michel Narcy and Melissa Lane. Narcy in particular argues that *eirōneia*, unlike irony, is not connected with humor,³⁷ and takes Demosthenes’ use of *eirōneia* to be indicative of both the meaning of Socratic *eirōneia* and *eirōneia* more generally. The key passage is from the *First Philippic*: If, men of Athens, you were also willing to come to such a judgment now, since you were not before, and each of you would make himself useful to the city however he is able and in whatever is necessary—throwing away the pretense that you are prepared to act (*apheis tēn eirōneian hetoimos prattein huparxēi*)—those having money by paying taxes, those in the prime of life by serving as soldiers, in short if you are simply willing to become yourselves, and cease hoping that each can do nothing while his neighbor does everything on his behalf, then you will preserve what is your own, if god wills it, and you will take back the things you lost through carelessness, and

that man [Philip] will be punished. (7) For Nancy, Demosthenes is accusing the Athenians of shirking their military and fiscal responsibilities to support the fight against Philip of Macedon, and it is this shirking of one's obligations (*se dérober*) that Nancy argues best captures what is meant when Socrates is accused of being an *eirōn*.³⁸ Thus, when Thrasymachus accuses Socrates of acting with his habitual *eirōneia* at *Republic* 337a, Nancy argues that Thrasymachus' accusation has nothing to do with a concern for sincerity/dissimulation, but with Socrates' refusal to play the role of respondent in a dialectical exchange.³⁹ For Nancy, this interpretation is further supported by Aristotle's reference to Socratic *eirōneia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which he interprets as a refusal to assent to commonly held, reputable opinions (*ta endoxa*).⁴⁰

Nancy thus makes two claims that need to be addressed: first, that *eirōneia* is not connected with humor and, second, that it should be understood as constituting a shirking of one's obligations. On the first point, it is useful to turn to Aristotle's analysis of *eirōneia*. As is evident from Aspasius' commentary, Aristotle identifies *eirōneia* as one of the vices connected with the virtue of truthfulness, and in doing so offers the example of Socrates as an *eirōn*. In that passage, Aristotle does not connect *eirōneia* with humor; and in the following chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle discusses *eutrapelia* and its connected vices—buffoonery (*bōmolochia*) and boorishness (*agroikia*)—there is no mention of *eirōneia*. In the *Rhetoric*, however, Aristotle does connect *eirōneia* with humor. Having commended Gorgias' advice to defeat one's opponent's seriousness (*spoudēn*) with laughter (*gelōti*) and their laughter

with seriousness, he goes on to suggest that an orator must choose the kinds of jokes that are best suited to his character: as an example of this principle, he states that “*eirōneia* is more suitable to a free man than buffoonery (*tēs bōmoloχias*), for the former produces laughter for one’s own sake, while the latter does so for the sake of another” (1419b9–11).⁴¹ Here, Aristotle blurs the divisions erected in the *Nicomachean Ethics* between *eirōneia*, as a vice related to truthfulness, and buffoonery, as a vice related to wittiness, and instead treats these two vices as lying upon the same spectrum. Aristotle further indicates that *eirōneia* was one of the forms of jesting (*eidē geloiōn*) that he discussed in the now-lost second book of the *Poetics* (1419b6–7).

This relationship between humorous and nonhumorous forms of *eirōneia* can be unpacked further if we attend to the second use of *eirōneia* in Demosthenes’ *First Philippic*: And yet why do you think, men of Athens, that the festivals of the Panathenaea and the Dionysia take place at the appropriate time, whether experts (*deinoi*) or private citizens are chosen to take charge of them, when more money is spent on them than on any single naval expedition, and I don’t know of any of all such festivals that involve such a mass of people and such preparation, but all your naval expeditions arrive after the opportune moment—the one to Methone, the one to Pagasae, the one to Potidaea? It is because all these things [i.e., the festivals] have been arranged by law, and each of you knows beforehand who will be choregos and gymnasiarch of the tribe, and what he needs to receive, and when he needs to receive it and from whom, and what he needs to do—nothing is left unexamined or uncertain.

But in those concerning war and the preparation for this, everything is disordered, unset, and uncertain. Therefore as soon as we have heard some report and appointed trierarchs and carried out exchanges of property for these and examined the provision of money, and after these things we resolve to man the ships with metics and those slaves who live apart from their masters, and then in turn we decide to man them ourselves, and then make another substitution, and then insofar as these things are delayed, the object of our expedition is destroyed. For we spend the time when we should act on preparation, and the fitting moments for such deeds do not wait on our slowness and dissimulation (*eirōneian*). (35–37) By invoking this comparison with the organization of the festivals, Demosthenes criticizes the comparative lack of organization within Athens' military. Yet, what is it about Athens' military preparations that strike Demosthenes as an example of *eirōneia*? Demosthenes' point seems to be that despite all of the outward appearances of preparation, the Athenians do not really intend to go to war—if they were serious about military matters, Demosthenes implies, then they would organize them as efficiently as they organize the festivals.⁴² And while he does seem to be accusing them of shirking their military obligations, *eirōneia* here does not signify that act of evasion itself, but the *manner* of that evasion. That manner is one of pretense—they pretend to get ready for war by doing things like appointing trierarchs, but they do so in such a way that they are able to stall and delay until the time for action has passed. Hence, their *eirōneia* consists in preparing for war in such a way that others believe that their actual intention in

acting is to prepare for war (when in fact they have no such intention).

In this passage, as elsewhere,⁴³ *eirōneia* indicates a deceptive kind of pretense. Yet this passage also allows us to see the potential connection between nonhumorous forms of *eirōneia* and humorous forms. Had Aristophanes lived during the mid-fourth century, we might imagine him deciding to write a comedy, or a scene in a comedy, based on precisely this premise. And we can further imagine him trying to decide between two approaches to creating the scene's humorous dimensions. The first might depict the Athenians sincerely preparing for war, but being foiled because of the inefficiency of their military organization and/or inadequacy of their democratic procedures. In that scenario, the ridicule would be directed at the institutions of the Athenian democracy and at the Athenians themselves for their naïveté and/or false confidence in their democratic system. The second might depict the Athenians, or at least some of them, as *eirōnes*: they engage in some of the activities involved in preparing for war, though they perform such actions only to pretend that they are preparing for war, and they use such pretense in the hopes of delaying the act of going to war altogether. Aristophanes might illustrate the insincerity of these ironic Athenians in a number of ways, perhaps depicting a series of whimsical policy changes—"we decide to embark the metics and the slaves who live apart from their masters, then ourselves, then we change the crew again," in the words of Demosthenes—that illustrate that their real purpose is delay. We might also imagine an exchange between a sincere Athenian and an Athenian *eirōn*, one in

which the latter hints at his insincerity in ways that are recognizable to the audience but remain beyond the recognition of the former. In this second scenario, the audience might laugh both at and with the Athenian *eirōn*: they might laugh at the moral depravity of the *eirōn*, but they might also laugh at the *eirōn*'s ability to pull one over on the sincere Athenian by getting him to believe that he too is sincere.

It is this last source of laughter, that in which the sincere Athenian is the butt of the *eirōn*'s joke, that I would argue best captures the humorous dimensions of *eirōneia*. In this sense, *eirōneia* is a kind of practical joking, one in which the *eirōn* fools his target into believing that his words or actions are sincere.⁴⁴ This conception of *eirōneia* as a kind of practical joking is applicable, importantly, to Plato's use of the term. At *Euthydemus* 302b, Socrates notes: "And he [Dionysodorus], pausing very *eirōnikōs* as if he were considering some great matter, said, 'Socrates, do you have an ancestral Zeus?'" (302b2-3). This passage occurs toward the end of the dialogue—in fact, it is the start of the final exchange between Socrates and Dionysodorus. At this point, both the reader and Socrates himself are quite familiar with the eristic tactics deployed by Dionysodorus and his brother, which are clearly illustrated by the first series of questions they direct to the young Cleinias (275d-276d). In that exchange, Euthydemus asks Cleinias which are the men who learn, those who are wise or those who are ignorant. Before Cleinias delivers his first answer, Dionysodorus turns to Socrates and whispers that whatever answers Cleinias gives, he will be refuted. In what follows, Cleinias first answers that it is the wise who learn, and is

refuted by Euthydemus; when Cleinias then admits that it is the ignorant who learn, Dionysodorus refutes him, getting him to revert to his original claim that it is the wise who learn. As Dionysodorus informs Socrates, all the questions they ask are of this inescapable (*aphukta*) sort (276e).⁴⁵ Indeed, as Socrates notes after Dionysodorus asks him whether he has an ancestral Zeus, he felt as if he were already caught in his trap.

What then is it that Socrates means when he states that Dionysodorus paused in a way that was very *eirōnikōs*? At one level, Socrates appears to be claiming that Dionysodorus' pause is a pretense designed to give Socrates the impression that the question Dionysodorus is about to ask is quite complicated, and hence, requires a great deal of consideration before it is asked. This pretense is designed to remain hidden from Socrates—otherwise it would not produce the above-mentioned effect of tricking Socrates into believing that the question actually demanded such weighty consideration; at the same time, Socrates, in stating that Dionysodorus pauses very *eirōnikōs*, claims to have seen through such pretense.

By contrast, Melissa Lane finds evidence in this passage for her argument that *eirōneia* does not mean irony in Plato and ought not to be translated as such.⁴⁶ For Lane, there is a sharp distinction between the ironist, who attempts to *convey* what is not said, and the *eirōn*, who attempts to *conceal* what is not said.⁴⁷ Thus, she writes: To translate *eirōnikōs* here as “ironically” would be to have Socrates describing Dionysodorus as intending to convey the gap between his purportedly pregnant pause and his empty eristic line of argument, which makes no sense. But on our reading of *eirōnikōs* as “concealing

by feigning,” it rather indicates Socrates’ accusation (as narrator) that Dionysodorus has feigned a pregnant pause concealing (absent) profound thought, in order to build up the audience’s respect for the eristic argument to follow. . . . It is the unmasking of this feigning, unintended by Dionysodorus, that Socrates signals in diagnosing his behavior as *eirōnikōs*.⁴⁸ I agree with Lane that Dionysodorus is attempting to conceal something from Socrates in the above passage. I would argue, however, that such intent in itself is not sufficient to demonstrate that *eirōneia* in this passage does not signal a type of irony. First, that Dionysodorus is attempting to conceal his pretense from Socrates does not mean that he is attempting to conceal it from everyone. Dionysodorus may in fact expect that his brother, as well as his other companions, will get the joke that he is playing on Socrates. Indeed, this dynamic is central to much of the humor surrounding the two brothers in the dialogue—it is their companions, for example, who break out into laughter after Cleinias falls victim to their eristic tricks. Second, even if Dionysodorus does not intend to convey the fact that he is deploying a pretense to anyone, we might still consider him to be the audience for his own irony. In that scenario, we could think of such *eirōneia* in this passage as a practical joke of which Socrates is the intended victim—Dionysodorus makes fun of Socrates, for his own amusement, by getting him to think that his pregnant pause is an indication of his intellectual prowess.

Both of these alternatives to Lane’s analysis blur the distinction she draws between irony as conveying what is not said and *eirōneia* as concealing what is not said. Most

importantly, recognizing *eirōneia* as a form of solipsistic irony indicates that the ironist need not convey, or attempt to convey, what is not said to others: as the audience for such irony, the solipsistic ironist need only convey such information to herself.⁴⁹ This view of *eirōneia* as a solipsistic form of irony, moreover, appears to find support in Aristotle's description of *eirōneia* in the *Rhetoric*. As mentioned above, Aristotle distinguishes between the *eirōn*, who produces laughter for his own sake (*hautou heneka poiei to geloion*), and the buffoon, who jokes for the sake of others. What Aristotle appears to be suggesting here is that the *eirōn* makes jokes for his own amusement,⁵⁰ whereas the buffoon does so for the amusement of others. While this does not entail that the *eirōn* always jokes *only* for his own amusement, it does imply that he does do so in a way that is compatible with the solipsistic understanding of *eirōneia* described above.⁵¹

Having explored the use of *eirōneia* and its cognates during the classical period, we are now in a better position to answer the question concerning what was at stake in accusing Socrates of being an *eirōn*, or in defending him from this charge. As Demosthenes' use of *eirōneia* in the *First Philippic* indicates, *eirōneia* could be used to indicate a type of nonhumorous deception or dissembling. At the same time, the type of pretense involved in *eirōneia* can be deployed toward humorous purposes. This humorous mode of *eirōneia* constitutes a solipsistic mode of irony, one in which the ironist deploys pretense in order to mock his interlocutor for his own amusement. This conception of *eirōneia* can explain what is at stake when Socrates' interlocutors accuse him of being an

eirōn, and its implications for Plato's broader treatment of Socratic irony. It is to this analysis that we now turn.

THE EIRONIC ATHEIST

In book 10 of Plato's *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger and his two interlocutors draft the laws concerning impiety for their hypothetical city.⁵² In a typically lengthy preamble, they identify and discuss three categories of impious belief: (1) that the gods do not exist; (2) that they do exist, but do not care about human affairs; and (3) that the gods can be bought off by bribes. While these three categories delineate the substantive divisions between varieties of impiety, the Athenian Stranger adds a further distinction describing the manner in which such impious beliefs can be held: either parrhesiastically or ironically.

The Athenian Stranger explicates this final distinction with reference to the first category of impiety—the “complete” atheist who does not believe the gods exist.⁵³ There is one kind of complete atheist who has a naturally just character and is not tempted to commit injustice. This type of atheist will freely discuss his beliefs with others, and mock the piety of others in an attempt to convert them to his beliefs; it is his frank discussion of his atheism that earns him the label *parrhēsiastēs*. The second type of complete atheist uses his cunning—by practicing divination, for example—to conceal his atheism from others. He is drawn to political power, and is the type of person who invents the tricks (*mēchanai*) of the sophists. For the interlocutors in the *Laws*, this latter form of

atheism constitutes a far more serious crime; while the parrhesiastic atheist should be incarcerated and reeducated, the eironic atheist deserves to die many times for his errors (*Leg.* 908a7–e5).

Looking to Plato's *Apology*, this category of the eironic atheist resonates with the only use of *eirōneia* in that work. During the sentencing phase of his trial, Socrates entertains the hypothetical suggestion that he be allowed to live and remain in Athens under the condition that he agrees to cease questioning others. He offers the following response: This indeed is the most difficult thing of all to persuade some of you [about]. For if I say that this would be to disobey the god and on account of this I am unable to lead a quiet life, you will not be persuaded by me, thinking that I am being eironic (*ou peisesthe moi hōs eirōneuomenōi*). If, on the other hand, I say that this thing happens to be the greatest good for a human being—to engage in speeches every day concerning virtue and concerning the other things which you hear me discussing, testing both myself and others, and that the untested life is not worth living for a human being—concerning these things you will be persuaded by me even less (*tauta d' eti hētton peisesthe moi legonti*). (*Ap.* 37e4–38a7)

Here, Socrates outlines two possible explanations, neither of which he anticipates will prove successful. If he argues that the unexamined life is not worth living, and, hence, that to give up philosophizing in exchange for his life would be an unacceptable exchange, he does not think they will be persuaded *that he is correct concerning the worthlessness of the unexamined life*. If, on the other hand, he claims he would be acting impiously by agreeing to such a deal they will not be

persuaded *that he is being sincere*. Why will the jurors think that this claim is eironic? They might, of course, believe that Socrates' piety is sincere, but that this particular claim is so exaggerated that even he himself cannot ultimately believe it; in other words, they will not be persuaded that his philosophical questioning constitutes service to the gods. Yet it is more likely, given both the formal charges against him and Meletus' conviction that Socrates is an atheist, that Socrates fears that the jurors doubt his piety altogether. If this is indeed the case, then the accusation of *eirōneia* that Socrates anticipates is driven by the suspicion that he is attempting to conceal his atheism by eironically professing his devotion to Apollo. From this perspective, Socrates anticipates that the jurors believe he is an eironic atheist in the sense in which that term is used in *Laws*.

On this reading, moreover, we can see how this suspicion of *eirōneia* on the part of the jurors may entail the kinds of comic overtones discussed in the previous section. As was noted in the introduction, Socrates was accused of behaving arrogantly at his trial, and it is likely that some of the jurors would have thought that his interpretation of the Delphic oracle expressed his belief in his own superiority. In this context, Socrates anticipates that his outward expression of piety might appear as a joke at their expense, one in which he takes pleasure in his ability to dupe the gullible jurors into believing that such piety is sincere.

Socrates, however, insists that he is expressing his sincerely held beliefs, and if we take him at his word, we might just as well argue that Socrates merely *appears* eironic to the

jurors.⁵⁴ Their dismissal of the claim that it would be impious for Socrates to live a quiet life as eironic and insincere results, on this reading, in a refusal to consider the idea that such philosophical questioning could be an act of piety. In this respect, their attribution of *eirōneia* to Socrates precludes an exploration of the content of Socrates' piety, one that might force them to engage with the challenge it poses to more traditional conceptions of piety. As Gregory Vlastos and Mark McPherran have argued,⁵⁵ the conception of the gods voiced by Socrates in the *Euthyphro* and *Apology* is distinct from that associated with ordinary religious belief in classical Athens.⁵⁶ Socrates claims that the gods are fully wise, and, thus, are fully virtuous. Since they are fully virtuous, they can be only the cause of good things, and never the cause of bad things. Socrates thus rejects traditional myths that portray a pantheon of feuding gods who regularly deceive and harm human beings, offering in their place a vision of a fully rational, and hence, fully benevolent god.

Socrates' defense of his philosophical activity is linked both to this revisionary theology and to his concomitant reinterpretation of the concept of piety. Socrates, as Vlastos argues, conceives of piety as "doing god's work to benefit human beings," and interprets his own activities to be pious in the sense that he is assisting Apollo by endeavoring to rouse others to cultivate self-knowledge, and, in so doing, to care more about their own souls.⁵⁷ For Socrates, the oracle received by Chaerephon was not meant only for him; rather, Socrates believed that Apollo was using him as a model (*paradeigma*) to demonstrate the need for self-knowledge to all

human beings: “This one of you, men, is wisest who, like Socrates, recognizes that in truth he is worthless when it comes to wisdom” (*Ap.* 23b2-4).⁵⁸ It is thus necessary for Socrates to communicate this divine message by questioning others. Socrates’ conception of piety, therefore, is more demanding than the traditional notion of piety as “saying and doing what is pleasing to the gods by praying and sacrificing” (*Euth.* 14b); it requires that he actively serve the gods in his everyday words and deeds.

By interpreting the claim that he is serving Apollo through his philosophical questioning as eironic, Socrates anticipates that the jurors will disregard his religious convictions. From this perspective, the attribution of *eirōneia* to Socrates is portrayed by Plato as itself ironic (in the broader, more general sense of the term): while those who accuse Socrates of being eironic do so with the conviction that they are exposing his true beliefs, it may actually signal their refusal to engage with those sincerely held beliefs. Assuming that Socrates is speaking eironically is of course easier than attempting to interpret charitably what he says: it prevents his interlocutors from the potential psychic pain of discovering the insufficiency of their own beliefs. In this respect, it is not surprising that others might use the charge that Socrates is speaking eironically as a type of defense mechanism.⁵⁹

While it is perhaps inevitable that such a defense would be met with disbelief and the suspicion of *eirōneia*, Plato’s use of the word *eirōneia* in the *Apology* exhibits a pattern that is also in evidence on the three occasions where Socrates is explicitly

accused of *eirōneia* by his interlocutors. It is to these passages that we now turn.

SOCRATES AS *EIRŌN*

As was noted above, Thrasymachus, Callicles, and Alcibiades are the only three interlocutors in the Platonic corpus to use the term *eirōneia* to describe Socrates and his actions. These three interlocutors, moreover, express ideas and possess characteristics that permit us to classify them as a distinct group: scholars have long recognized, for example, the echoes between the accounts of justice offered by Thrasymachus and Callicles. Why, though, is it only these three interlocutors who accuse Socrates of *eirōneia*?⁶⁰ One could say that all three are more clever than Socrates' other interlocutors, and hence, better able to recognize the *eirōneia* that others miss. While this explanation does capture an important aspect of Plato's presentation of Thrasymachus, Callicles, and Alcibiades, it also too readily assents to these interlocutors' own self-characterizations. While each believes that he has uncovered some truth about Socrates that others have missed, Plato frames these accusations in ways that cast doubt on their accuracy.

This is most evident in Plato's depiction of Alcibiades in the *Symposium*. Alcibiades is confident that no one else really understands Socrates (*eu gar iste hoti oudeis humōn touton gignōskei*), and claims that he will disclose the truth about Socrates to those gathered at the house of Agathon (*Symp.* 216c7-d1). Alcibiades' need to explain what he takes to be the

truth about Socrates is driven by the powerful effect Socrates has on him: Socrates' words have the power to throw him into a frenzied corybantic state, to make him feel that his life is no better than that of a slave, to make him feel shame, and even to reduce him to tears. The utter strangeness of this effect provides further motivation: on their surface, Socrates' arguments appear completely laughable (*geloioi*, 221e1-2), just as Socrates himself is ridiculous and grotesque in his outward appearance. Why then have they had such an effect on Alcibiades? Because, as Alcibiades explains, their outward appearance is deceptive. Socrates' arguments are actually the only arguments that make sense, but few people have seen past their outer appearance to the inner beauty they contain (222a1-6). This itself is not surprising, since Socrates "spends his whole life being eironic and jesting (*eirōneuomenos de kai paizōn*)" (216e4), with the result that few if any have seen the beauty both inside him and within his arguments—a beauty that is evident during those rare moments when he is serious and opens up (*spoudasantos de autou kai anoichthentos*, 216e5-6).

From the start, then, Plato highlights Alcibiades' reasons for giving the speech he does, reasons that also inform his reference to Socrates' *eirōneia*. Alcibiades does observe a connection between Socrates' *eirōneia* and his disavowal of knowledge (*agnoei panta kai ouden oiden*, 216d3-4) that will also be important in his second use of the term later in his speech; yet, at this point, Alcibiades has something more specific in mind. In fleshing out his comparison between Socrates and the Silenus, he emphasizes Socrates' pursuit of beautiful boys—he appears to be erotically disposed toward

attractive young men (*horate gar hoti Sōkratēs erōtikōs diakeitai tōn kalōn*) and always hangs around them, appearing to be overcome with desire (*ekpeplēktai*) for them (216d2-4). This, however, is only his outward appearance; on the inside, he is exceedingly moderate (*gemei . . . sōphrosunēs*, 216d6-7). He does not care for physical beauty; he disdains (*kataphronei*) those honors that most people cherish, such as physical beauty and wealth. In fact, he considers such things to be worthless, along with those who possess them (216d7-e4). It is not just Socrates' profession of ignorance, then, that Alcibiades is thinking of when he refers to Socrates' *eirōneia*, but more specifically the way in which he pretends to care about physical beauty, and, in doing so, mocks both the importance others place on such physical beauty and those who believe that he sincerely cares for such things.

This last point is initially lost on Alcibiades, who thinks that Socrates is attracted to his beauty and hopes he will be able to use this to his advantage in order to acquire wisdom from him. Alcibiades' physical beauty is something on which he prides himself (*ephronoun gar dē epi tēi hōrai thaumasion hoson*, 217a5-6), so he figures that he can sit back and let Socrates come to him. When this fails, he decides to take a more aggressive approach, first inviting Socrates to wrestle at the gymnasium, and then to his home for a private dinner. After convincing Socrates to stay the night, Alcibiades reveals his intentions, explaining that Socrates can do with him what he will, since it is his desire to become the best man he can be. Socrates' response occasions Alcibiades' second use of *eirōneia* during the speech—he notes that Socrates responded very ironically and very much in his usual manner (*mala eirōnikōs*

kai sphodra heautou te kai eiōthotōs, 218d6–7): Dear Alcibiades, you are probably not foolish, if what you say about me happens to be true and there is some power in me through which you might become better; for it must mean that you see in me an indescribable beauty far different than the beauty that resides in you. If indeed, having recognized it, you are attempting to strike a bargain with me and exchange one beauty for another, not by a little do you intend to get the greater share than me, but you are attempting to acquire the truth of beautiful things in exchange for opinion and you think to exchange “bronze for gold.” Yet, blessed one, you should reconsider, lest you overlook the possibility that I am worth nothing. The mind’s sight begins to see sharply when that of the eyes starts to decline from its height; but you are still far from these things. (218d7–219a4)

What is Alcibiades referring to when he comments that Socrates’ response was eironic? First, Socrates claims that Alcibiades is “probably not foolish,” and Alcibiades might think that the implication here is that Socrates does in fact think he is foolish. It is unlikely, however, that this exhausts what Alcibiades takes to be eironic about Socrates’ response.⁶¹ Socrates’ next move is seemingly to pretend that he does in fact possess the wisdom that Alcibiades insists that he does, and, taking this as a premise, protests the unfairness of the exchange Alcibiades is proposing. Finally, Socrates teases Alcibiades about his ability to judge competently the prudence of his proposed bargain—it may have escaped him that Socrates is in fact worthless.⁶² It is likely this last remark that prompts Alcibiades’ observation concerning Socrates’ *eirōneia*.

Alcibiades is already convinced, and he remains convinced, that Socrates possesses some great wisdom; given Alcibiades' conviction, it would not make sense for him to think that Socrates is pretending to have knowledge he does not possess. Rather, he believes that Socrates' claim that he might in fact be worthless is ironic.⁶³

Alcibiades never does consider, however, whether Socrates might be worthless.⁶⁴ In fact, Socrates' rejection of Alcibiades' physical advances retrenches his original certainty about Socrates' wisdom. When his attempt at physical seduction fails, he chalks this up to Socrates' insolence (*hubrisen*, 219c5);⁶⁵ he emphasizes that Socrates has disdained and mocked his beauty (*katephronēsen kai kategelasen tēs emēs hōras*, 219c4), and he feels dishonored (*hēgoumenon . . . ētimasthai*, 219d3-4) at being spurned in such a fashion. Nevertheless, he cannot help but to continue admiring Socrates' moderation and courage (*sōphrosunēn kai andreian*), and he doubts that anyone could ever encounter a man with such prudence and endurance (*phronēsin kai eis karterian*, 219d5-7). Indeed, Alcibiades goes on to give an account of just how virtuous Socrates is. At Potidaea, he was better able to endure the hardships of the campaign than anyone in the army; he could easily endure both hunger and cold, and remained unaffected by alcohol. Moreover, he showed his bravery both in saving Alcibiades at Potidaea and for his composed and orderly retreat at Delium (219e-221d).

Much of this praise, however, is self-referential and self-serving. Alcibiades is clearly distraught that Socrates has rejected him; yet, while this rejection might be taken as a

suggestion that his physical beauty is not as valuable as he holds it to be, this is not the conclusion that Alcibiades draws. Quite the contrary—his praise of Socrates’ virtues reinforces his judgment concerning the worth of his own beauty, and the popular judgment concerning the value of physical beauty more generally. Alcibiades is so confident about his good looks that he knows that only someone who was exceedingly, indeed, perhaps even superhumanly, temperate could possibly resist his charms. By praising Socrates as exceedingly virtuous—and, in particular, temperate and resistant to the lures of pleasure—Alcibiades is able to save face in front of his peers by rationalizing his inability to win the affections of Socrates. The military examples he provides demonstrate, moreover, that the virtue Socrates displayed in spurning Alcibiades’ advances is not an isolated incident; it is just another example of his exceeding (and exceedingly strange) virtue.

Thus, while thinking that he has exposed the true Socrates behind the eironic mask, Alcibiades has in fact explained why it is he insists that Socrates is an *eirōn*, and why it is that he interprets Socrates’ *eirōneia* in the way he does. For Alcibiades, Socrates’ denial of knowledge *must* be eironic; otherwise he would be at a complete loss to explain why it is that Socrates has rejected him and left him so humiliated. Socrates must have the wisdom he denies having—how else could he be so sure that Alcibiades’ beauty and life are so worthless? From this perspective, Alcibiades’ accusation of *eirōneia* appears to be a defensive maneuver, one that resembles the use of *eirōneia* at *Apology* 38a. It is psychologically less demanding for Alcibiades to continue to insist that Socrates’ disavowal of knowledge is eironic than to

grapple with the potentially unsettling consequences that would follow from Socrates' sincerity.⁶⁶ From this perspective, Alcibiades' understanding of Socratic *eirōneia* appears as an attempt to tame him, rather than to reveal the truth about him.⁶⁷

A similar dynamic is at work in Thrasymachus' accusation in the *Republic*. Thrasymachus has just reproached Socrates and Polemarchus for acting like fools (*euēthizesthe*, 336c1-2) by giving in to each other in their discussion of justice, and he accuses Socrates in particular of misrepresenting his desire to know what justice is; if he was sincere, Thrasymachus explains, then he would provide his own answers, rather than just asking questions. For Thrasymachus, Socrates' refusal to provide his own answers reveals his real motive in engaging in such conversations—to win honor for himself by refuting others (336b7-c6). He concludes with the demand that Socrates state what he thinks justice is.

Socrates claims that any mistake he and Polemarchus made in their investigation is the result of their incompetence, rather than a lack of seriousness in trying. He then pleads with Thrasymachus not to be hard on them (*mē chalepos hēmin*), explaining that it would be much more fitting for a clever man like him to pity them rather than to treat them harshly (336e2-337a2). Socrates then narrates Thrasymachus' response: And upon hearing this he gave a very sarcastic laugh and said: "By Heracles!—this is the usual *eirōneia* of Socrates about which I had already informed these men here, that you would be unwilling to answer but would eironize (*eirōneusoio*) and would

do anything rather than answer if someone asked you something.” (337a3-7)⁶⁸

Like Alcibiades, Thrasymachus points to a specific example of Socrates’ *eirōneia*, and evinces from this evidence Socrates’ habitual *eirōneia*. Unlike Alcibiades, Thrasymachus does not think that Socrates is hiding any great wisdom. Rather, Thrasymachus is accusing Socrates of hiding his *lack* of wisdom by refusing to assume the role of answerer in a dialectical discussion.⁶⁹ It is the specific way in which Socrates conceals this lack of wisdom that Thrasymachus identifies as ironic; Socrates has pretended that he thinks that Thrasymachus is clever while downplaying his own intellectual abilities.⁷⁰

This is not to say, of course, that Thrasymachus thinks that Socrates lacks an answer to the question “What is justice?” Rather, Thrasymachus thinks that Socrates lacks a *good* answer, and, because of that, he refuses to give that answer in order to avoid being refuted by Thrasymachus.⁷¹ Thrasymachus assumes that Socrates is motivated by the same love of honor (*philotimia*) that he is; his *eirōneia* is hence a trick designed to defeat Thrasymachus in verbal combat by forcing him to answer. Here it is important to stress that Socrates has not had the same effect on Thrasymachus as he did on Alcibiades: his words have not thrown Thrasymachus into a corybantic frenzy or reduced him to tears. What Thrasymachus sees in Socrates is someone like himself, and whose motivation for engaging in verbal contestation is no different from his own. Thrasymachus’ account of Socrates’ *eirōneia*, in this sense, appears to be more a projection of his

own motivations than an accurate revelation of Socrates' character.

Finally, Callicles' accusation in the *Gorgias* most closely resembles that of Thrasymachus in the *Republic*. Callicles emphatically asserts that we must look to nature to determine what is just, and that the equality legislated by convention is unjust. What is just by nature is that the better rule and have a greater share than the worse. Having staked out this position in his speech at 482c-486d, Socrates then asks Callicles to clarify his meaning—by better, does he mean the superior, the better, the stronger? Do these terms have the same meaning, or different ones? Callicles asserts that these terms all have the same meaning, which provides the opening for Socrates to advance the argument that since the many are stronger than the few, and the many make the laws that state everyone should have an equal share, then that is what is just by nature. Callicles vociferously objects to such an interpretation of his argument, stating that Socrates should know from what he has already said that the type of superiority he is referring to is not that of the superior strength of the many over the few. Rather, by the superior he means the better, and not a group of worthless men like slaves and the poor (488b-489c). After Socrates confirms Callicles' assent to this more specific definition of the superior he goes on to say: But I myself had earlier guessed, O divine one, that you were saying that the stronger was some such thing, and it is because I am eager to know clearly what you are saying that I am questioning you [about these things]. For I did not suppose that you, at any rate, thought that two are better than one, or that your slaves are better than you because they are stronger than you. But

once more, from the beginning, say what you mean by the better, since it is not the stronger. And, you wondrous man, instruct me more gently, lest I cease to attend your school. (489d1–8) Callicles responds by accusing Socrates of being eironic, to which Socrates replies that it is in fact Callicles who had been eironic with him by invoking the character Zethus in their earlier conversation.

This is only one of three places where Socrates uses the word *eirōneia*. It is, moreover, one of only two instances where he accuses someone else of acting with *eirōneia*, and it is the only place where he accuses someone of *eirōneia* to their face. Thus, it is worth pausing to consider what Socrates means by it. Earlier in the dialogue, Callicles had invoked the mythical figures Amphion and Zethus to frame the advice he gives Socrates—that he should abandon philosophy and take up oratory, lest he find himself the victim of an unjust prosecution. Callicles’ reference is to a now-lost play by Euripides, the *Antiope*, in which Amphion and Zethus, two brothers, argue respectively for the intellectual life and the practical life.⁷² Why does Socrates think this invocation to be eironic? It is not so much framing their debate with reference to Amphion and Zethus that Socrates find eironic, I would argue, but the feeling of goodwill it implies exists between them, and that Callicles explicitly states. For Socrates, Callicles’ desire to help Socrates is insincere—what he really wants to do is win the argument.

Like Socrates, Callicles is accusing Socrates of being insincere, but about what? He cannot be accusing Socrates of being insincere in supposing that Callicles meant by the superior the superior strength of the many; Socrates has just

explicitly stated that he did not think that this was what Callicles meant, implying that he already suspected so before he initiated his line of questioning. It would make no sense for Callicles to be accusing Socrates of something to which he had just previously admitted. What is more likely is that Callicles is accusing Socrates of being insincere in his plea that the former be more gentle with him, and in positioning himself as Callicles' inferior. Callicles thinks Socrates is being insincerely self-deprecating, but he also thinks that Socrates is being insincere when he states that he anticipates learning something from Callicles. As with Thrasymachus, Callicles accuses Socrates of being motivated by his desire to win the argument (*philonikos ei, ō Sōkrates*, 515b5), and accuses Socrates of playing the demagogue with his rhetoric (*dēmēgoreis*, 482c5). Callicles is convinced, as is Thrasymachus, that Socrates is playing the same game that he is.

While Callicles might begin by questioning whether Socrates is being serious or joking (481b-c), he does not seem to remain undecided for long. As he tells Socrates, if he is serious that it is better to suffer injustice than commit it, and if he is right, then the whole world will be turned upside down, and they will be doing the opposite of what they should be doing (481c). We should not interpret Callicles' question concerning Socrates' sincerity as expressing any deep puzzlement; rather, Callicles seems to be saying that Socrates *must* be joking, since his argument is so strange that there is no way he could really mean what he says. Callicles considers Socrates' arguments nonsense, and he thinks Socrates refutes others with verbal tricks. Callicles thinks Socrates must be joking, since he

already believes that his arguments make no sense; and his arguments are so absurd that he refuses to consider that Socrates is truly interested in the truth, or is interested in learning anything from him at all. For Callicles, Socrates wants to win, just as he does, and his absurd arguments and faux earnestness are all part of that game.

In Callicles' case, then, the attribution of *eirōneia* to Socrates represents a deliberate refusal to grapple seriously with the truly challenging arguments Socrates is making. Socrates' claim that it is better to suffer injustice than commit it does not produce any instant *aporia* in Callicles;⁷³ rather, it triggers the assumption that Socrates must be joking. Again, what is ironic about Callicles' accusation that Socrates is being eironic, as Plato presents it, is that he thinks he has figured out Socrates' game, when he may have only projected his own desires and values onto Socrates. In this sense, Callicles' attribution of *eirōneia* to Socrates is part of his more general refusal to grapple with Socrates' argument that it is worse to commit injustice than suffer it, a belief that Socrates appears to count as a very firm commitment (508d6–509a7).⁷⁴ As with Alcibiades, we can interpret this refusal as a psychological defense mechanism—it prevents Callicles from grappling with the consequences that would follow if Socrates were correct, consequences that would lead to the conclusion that Callicles' choice of the political life over the philosophical life has been based on faulty arguments.

Thus, in all three cases, we see that Plato depicts Socrates' accusers as unreliable witnesses to Socrates' supposed *eirōneia*; in particular, rather than Socrates' supposed *eirōneia*

giving rise to his perceived strangeness, in these examples it is the strangeness of Socrates' beliefs and practices that give rise to the perception that he is engaging in *eirōneia*.⁷⁵ Attributing *eirōneia* to Socrates is a means for these interlocutors to make sense of the nature and purpose of Socratic cross-examination. What Callicles and Thrasymachus perceive as Socratic *eirōneia* is a deceptive misrepresentation of his abilities and motives, and for them the mockery associated with its practice is a sign that Socrates' primary motivation is to defeat his dialectical opponents. For Alcibiades, attributing the practice of *eirōneia* to Socrates allows him to avoid confronting the possibility that he does not possess the characteristics on which he prides himself; at the same time, the mockery entailed in such pretense is experienced by Alcibiades as particularly cruel and hubristic. By depicting the accusations of Thrasymachus, Callicles, and Alcibiades in this way, Plato seems to cast doubt on the accuracy of their explanations of the nature and purpose of Socratic *eirōneia*.

One possible conclusion we might draw from this analysis, then, is that Socrates was not in fact an *eirōn*, and that the above-named interlocutors are simply mistaken about him. The following section suggests that we ought to resist this conclusion. When we look to Plato's use of *eirōneia* in the *Euthydemus*, *Cratylus*, and *Sophist*, we see that Plato's association of *eirōneia* with sophistry in those dialogues casts the attribution of *eirōneia* to Socrates by his interlocutors as reflecting the broader question of whether Socrates ought to be classified as a sophist. Examining the uses of *eirōneia* in these later dialogues indicates how the epistemological and

ontological arguments treated in the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* illustrate the difficulty in drawing a clear distinction between Socratic philosophy and sophistry, and, as a consequence, of identifying the nature and purpose of Socratic *eirōneia*. Doing so, moreover, illustrates how Plato's depiction of Socratic *eirōneia* is more ambiguous than the above passages alone may suggest.

THE EIRONIC IMITATOR: OR, THE SOPHIST

While the passage from the *Laws* discussed above already establishes the link between *eirōneia* and sophistry, the use of *eirōneia* in the *Sophist* deepens this connection.⁷⁶ The Eleatic Visitor employs the term *eirōneia* to construct the seventh, and final, definition of the sophist in the dialogue. Having demonstrated the possibility of speaking and thinking that which is not—an argument necessary to establish that imitation is possible—the Visitor revives his previous effort to define the sophist as a type of imitator (*Soph.* 235a ff.). To isolate the sophist from other types of imitators, the Visitor distinguishes between imitation produced through belief (*meta doxēs*)—which he names “belief-mimicry” (*doxomimētikēn*)—and imitation produced through knowledge (*epistēmēs*)—which he calls some kind of imitation based on inquiry (*historikēn tina*)—and classifies the sophist as belonging to the former class. The Visitor then further divides the class of belief-mimics into the simple (*haploun*) imitator and the eironic (*eirōnikon*) imitator: while the former is foolish (*euēthēs*) and thinks he knows things that he has only beliefs about (*oiomenos eidenai tauta*

ha doxazei), the latter, from his experience in discussions, is suspicious and fearful that he is ignorant concerning the things that he pretends to know. The sophist, the Visitor decides, is one of these eironic imitators, and, specifically, an eironic imitator who uses short speeches to force others to contradict themselves (*Soph.* 267e–268d).

Central to the *Sophist* is the question of the relationship between Socrates and the sophists, a concern that is highlighted both by Socrates' contribution at the beginning of the dialogue and the links between the *Sophist* and the *Theaetetus*. The dialogue begins with Socrates' remarks concerning the difficulty of distinguishing counterfeit philosophers from real philosophers (*hoi mē plastōs all' ontōs philosophoi*, 216c6), likening the task to that of discerning the presence of gods among men. Due to the ignorance of others, philosophers seem to take on many different appearances; to some they appear worthless (*tou mēdenos timioi*), while to others they seem worthy of everything (*axioi tou pantos*); sometimes they appear as statesmen (*politikoi*), other times as sophists (*sophistai*), and sometimes they even appear entirely mad (*manikōs*) (216c2–217a2). Socrates' claim that ignorance (*agnoian*, 216c5) causes the philosopher to appear different to different people is a reminder of the difficulty his fellow citizens had in distinguishing his philosophical practice from the sophistry of men like Protagoras, Gorgias, and Hippias. With this in mind, Socrates asks the Eleatic Visitor to explain whether he himself thinks that sophistry, statesmanship, and philosophy are each distinct practices or not.

The Visitor's final definition of the sophist appears to provide a clear distinction between Socratic philosophy and sophistry:

the sophist pretends to have knowledge that he does not possess, while Socrates repeatedly, and insistently, disavows the possession of any certain knowledge. This distinction appears even starker if we consider it in light of Plato's reassessment of Socratic philosophy in the *Theaetetus*. In that dialogue, Socrates deploys the analogy of the midwife to describe his philosophical practice, an image that reinforces his disavowal of knowledge. While he himself is barren, he is capable of helping those who are pregnant in soul give birth to their ideas and test whether they are true or mere "wind-eggs"; those who are not pregnant in this way he sends to the sophist Prodicus.⁷⁷ As in the *Apology*, Socrates construes his midwifery as divinely mandated: "The god compels me to attend to the travail of others, but has forbidden me to procreate" (*Tht.* 150d).⁷⁸ He also highlights the disapprobation that attends his midwifery: some reproach him for always questioning others and never revealing his own beliefs; others treat him harshly when he tries to take their children from them, refusing to believe that he is acting out of goodwill (151c-d). In short, the dialogue both recasts the image of Socrates we get from the so-called early Platonic dialogues, and places it in conversation with the attempts to distinguish between the sophist, statesman, and philosopher in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*.⁷⁹ The problem of distinguishing these practices is thus bound up with the question of where to place Socrates.

In both dialogues, however, these distinctions are closely linked to a number of important epistemological and ontological questions. Crucial to Socrates' deployment of the

midwife analogy in the *Theaetetus* is the claim one can distinguish between true and false beliefs. As the dialogue makes clear, this is not an uncontroversial claim. The first definition of knowledge tested in the dialogue is the Protagorean claim that knowledge is perception. If knowledge really was equivalent to perception (as that claim is interpreted by Socrates in the dialogue), then false belief would be impossible. If, for example, a wind feels cold to Socrates but hot to Theaetetus, then it *is* cold for Socrates and *is* hot for Theaetetus. If the wind itself is neither hot nor cold, then neither Socrates nor Theaetetus would be incorrect in their judgment of the wind's temperature (152a-d). The problem this conception of knowledge would pose, if correct, to the account of Socratic philosophical practice as midwifery is clear: if knowledge is perception, as Protagoras maintains, then false belief is impossible; if false belief is impossible, then the practice of sorting between true and false beliefs is also impossible.⁸⁰ Thus, Socratic questioning would be little more than a series of verbal tricks designed to trip up one's interlocutors and make them look foolish. If Protagoras is right, then the midwife analogy in the *Theaetetus* would not make sense, and it could not provide a clear way to distinguish between what Socrates does and what the sophists do.

Establishing the possibility of false belief, however, is itself insufficient for fully explicating the distinction between Socrates and the sophists. Returning to the *Sophist*, we see that the sixth appearance of the sophist in the dialogue bears a striking resemblance to Socrates himself.⁸¹ This type of sophist cleanses the soul of his interlocutor by refuting his false

belief in his own wisdom (230a ff.). Though the Visitor is hesitant to label such a practice sophistry—thinking this would award too high an honor to the sophists—he eventually settles on labeling it noble sophistry (*gennaia sophistikē*, 231b8). At this point, the dialogue takes a distinct turn. Theaetetus, the Eleatic Visitor’s interlocutor in the dialogue, confesses his confusion: given the many appearances of the sophist in their discussion up to this point, he is at a loss (*aporō*) concerning the truth about the sophist (231b9–c2). To clarify Theaetetus’ confusion, the Visitor turns to the expertise sophists possess in disputatious argumentation (*tēs antilogikēs technēs*)—they are able to contradict anyone about anything and, because of this, are able to convince others that they are wise (232e–233b). They do so, the Visitor argues, through a type of imitation. Yet, if the sophists are imitators, then imitation must be possible; but for imitation to be possible, one must be able to say that which is not. To demonstrate the possibility of imitation, then, the Eleatic Visitor must refute the argument of “father Parmenides” (*ton tou patros Parmenidou logon*, 241d5).⁸² What follows is a lengthy argument demonstrating both that that which is not is, and that one can speak of it.

By demonstrating the possibility of imitation, the Eleatic Visitor is able to offer his final definition of the sophist as an eironic imitator, one that, as noted above, would seem to exclude Socrates: while both engage in question and answer, rather than in long speeches, the sophist pretends to know things he does not. This shift in the classification of Socratic philosophy highlights the crucial role of the Eleatic’s apparent act of intellectual parricide.⁸³ An orthodox Eleatic, one who

closely adheres to Parmenides' injunction against the existence of, and ability to speak, that which is not, could not allow for the existence of imitation and, thus, could not define the sophist as an eironic imitator. Without the Visitor's willingness to refute the founder of his philosophical school, we could imagine the dialogue ending with the sixth definition of the sophist, and with Theaetetus at a loss concerning the truth about the sophist. If this had been the case, then it would be difficult not to classify Socrates as a sophist;⁸⁴ indeed, not just the sixth appearance of the sophist, but almost all of the previous appearances of the sophist bear at least some resemblance to the Socrates we see elsewhere in Plato, from the sophist's first appearance as the hunter of young men to his last appearance as a type of magician (*goēta*, 235a8).⁸⁵

This excursus on the connection between the epistemological and ontological questions of the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* and the relationship between Socrates and the sophists ought to inform our understanding of Plato's depiction of Socratic *eirōneia*. While a number of earlier dialogues draw contrasts between Socrates and other sophists (such as Protagoras, Hippias, and Gorgias), the arguments in the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* indicate the difficulties involved in offering a philosophical justification for such a distinction.⁸⁶ While we may surmise that Alcibiades, Thrasymachus, and Calicles are mistaken about who Socrates is and what he does, the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* indicate that their judgments reflect a broader ambiguity surrounding Socratic philosophical practice. The conception of midwifery in the *Theaetetus* requires maintaining certain beliefs about what knowledge is, and the

discussion of knowledge in that dialogue that might underwrite such a distinction ultimately ends in *aporia*. That the Eleatics could distinguish between Socrates and the sophists only by abandoning one of their core beliefs, moreover, speaks to the range of individuals for whom this distinction was unclear. Thus, while we may have reason to doubt the accuracy and sincerity of the judgments of those interlocutors who accuse Socrates of being an *eirōn*, the above analysis suggests that we ought not to dismiss them altogether. In fact, what they may point to is how the phenomenon of Socratic irony more broadly is bound up with the perceptions of his interlocutors.⁸⁷

SOCRATIC *EIRŌNEIA* AND SOCRATIC IRONY

The word *eirōneia* and its cognates appear only thirteen times in the entirety of the Platonic corpus, and, if the argument above is correct, the word signifies not irony generally but a specific form of solipsistic irony. It would thus be myopic to claim that the use of this term can fully account for the wide array of phenomena generally associated with the concept of Socratic irony in Plato. For starters, there are examples in the Platonic corpus where we may suspect that Socrates is deploying *eirōneia* without the word or its cognates being used. While an exhaustive account of such passages is beyond the scope of this chapter, the following remarks from the *Meno* are representative in this regard. Having claimed that if Meno wanted to become a doctor they ought to send him to study with a doctor who charges fees for his instruction, and that the same would hold true should Meno wish to learn any of the

other *technai*, Socrates asks whether they ought to send Meno to those who profess to be teachers of virtue and charge a fee for their instruction—namely, the sophists (90c–91b). Anytus responds that he thinks it would be madness (*mania*) to send anyone to the sophists (90c). Socrates then asks whether it is the case, then, that the sophists, of all those who claim to have knowledge, to teach it, and to charge a fee for it, actually corrupt those with whom they associate? And is it also the case, he continues, that they have managed to avoid censure for doing, and in fact, like Protagoras, have been held in high regard by all of Greece for their wisdom (90c–92a)? Anytus continues to maintain that those who willingly pay fees to the sophists are mad (92b).

It is true that in both cases Socrates is asking Anytus a question; he is thus not explicitly claiming to agree with the judgment of “all of Greece” concerning the sophists. Yet these questions are of such a form that it appears that Socrates is affirming that they ought to send Meno to the sophists, and that it would be strange if the sophists alone corrupted those they taught.⁸⁸ That Anytus thinks that Socrates believes that they ought to send Meno to learn from the sophists is thus an understandable reaction, and not one that we can easily dismiss by claiming that Anytus misunderstands the intention behind Socrates’ questions. Readers of Plato’s dialogues will doubt, based on the views Socrates expresses concerning sophistry elsewhere, that Socrates believes that the sophists teach wisdom, or that the popularity of the sophists is a reliable indicator of the benefit they provide to those they instruct. In this sense, it would not be unreasonable for readers of the

dialogue to believe that Socrates is deploying *eirōneia* against Anytus in this passage from the *Meno*.⁸⁹

There are also other examples where we may suspect that Socrates is practicing a form of irony, but where this form of irony ought not to be categorized as *eirōneia*. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates' first speech at 238d-241d, which denigrates the lover, entails a form of irony that is perhaps intended to be more transparent to his interlocutor. Socrates prefaces his speech by stating that Phaedrus ought not to be surprised if he becomes frenzied (*numpholēptos*), and claims that he is already on the verge of speaking in dithyrambs (238c9-d3); after concluding his speech, he notes how he has broken into epic verse, and claims that if he continued his speech he would be completely possessed by the Nymphs (241e1-5). Afterward, Socrates goes on to criticize this speech as terrible (*deinon*), foolish (*euēthē*), and somewhat impious (*ti asebē*, 242d4-7), since it attributed bad things to something that is divine—namely, *erōs*. In light of these remarks, we might view the enthusiasm of Socrates' speech as a pretense that mocks those, such as Phaedrus, who are sincerely enthusiastic concerning such matters.

Yet, Socrates' speech ought to be situated in the context of the playful pretense, initiated by Phaedrus, with which the dialogue begins. Phaedrus has just come from a meeting with Lysias, and is eager to share with Socrates the speech he has just heard (227c). While Socrates appears equally eager to hear the speech, Phaedrus demurs, claiming that the ability to recite Lysias' speech from memory in a manner that would do it justice is beyond him (227d). Socrates, however, is convinced

that Phaedrus' hesitation is a pretense (*ethrupteto*, 228c2), and that his interlocutor has both heard and read the speech many times, and is eager to recite it. When Phaedrus still insists that he has not memorized the speech word for word, but will do his best to recite it from memory, Socrates requests that Phaedrus show him what he is concealing under his cloak (228d-e), which turns out to be Lysias' speech. This playful jesting, initiated by Phaedrus at the beginning of the dialogue, frames Socrates' later use of irony. Just as Socrates doubts Phaedrus' sincerity, Phaedrus doubts Socrates' claim that he has been overcome with Bacchic frenzy upon hearing Phaedrus recite Lysias' speech (234d). Phaedrus also questions Socrates' initial unwillingness to contribute a speech of his own, noting in Socrates' denial that he could match Lysias' wisdom the same coyness Socrates initially accused him of demonstrating (*ethrupteto*, 236c6). Read in this context, Socrates' mock enthusiasm during his first speech is an attempt to further tease Phaedrus for the latter's own enthusiasm for Lysias' speech; yet its spirit is good-natured, and it is part of a series of mutual and reciprocated joking.

Socrates' playful and humorous engagement with Phaedrus is quite distinct from his encounter with Anytus, or from those with Thrasymachus and Callicles. At the same time, the types of behaviors that Socrates engages in with each of these interlocutors are quite similar. With both Thrasymachus and Phaedrus, for example, Socrates downplays his own intellectual abilities; with both, he also highly praises the intellectual ability of his interlocutors. What distinguishes these encounters, then, is not simply Socrates' comportment with his interlocutors, but the relationship between Socrates and his

interlocutor, as well as how these interlocutors perceive their relationship with Socrates and the stakes of their encounter. In particular, it is indicative of the fact that Phaedrus does not seem to view himself as engaged in the kind of zero-sum dialectical *agōn* that Thrasymachus believes he is engaged in with Socrates.

There are other examples that illustrate the range of reactions the kinds of statements generally associated with Socratic irony may elicit—Euthyphro, for example, remains unaware of the irony Socrates deploys against him. Yet, what this range of reactions suggests is that Socratic irony itself does not consist solely in what Socrates does or does not intend to say. Rather, it suggests that the nature and purpose of Socratic irony are constituted by the relationships between Socrates, his interlocutors, and the audience present at any supposedly ironic speech act. Thus, the potential ridicule and mockery bound up with such irony are also products of these relationships. In this respect, Plato's treatment of Socratic humor broadens our perspective to include not just the humorous actions and utterances of Socrates, but the ways in which the meanings of these actions and utterances depend, at least in part, on the characters of Socrates' interlocutors and the perceptions of the audience.⁹⁰

THE POLITICS OF SOCRATIC *EIRŌNEIA* AND IRONY

In the previous chapter, we saw how Aristophanes depicts Socrates as engaging in a form of mockery that derides his intellectual inferiors. Socrates ridicules Strepsiades for his

inability to comprehend the abstract lessons he provides, and Strepsiades in turn deploys his rather spotty understanding of these matters in order to ridicule his creditors and dismiss their claims. In this scenario, the mockery and ridicule of Socrates and Strepsiades are not only derisive, but also attempts to use humor to reshape the operation of power between the participants in the humorous exchange. Strepsiades uses the knowledge he acquires from Socrates to establish his own authority over his creditors; his mockery of them is not just an expression of that perceived authority, but an attempt to create such authority; more specifically, it is an attempt to transform his relationship with his creditors from that of democratic citizens who are equally authorized to hold each other accountable, to one in which those who possess specific forms of knowledge are rendered unaccountable to their intellectual inferiors. The Socratic mockery we find in Aristophanes' *Clouds* thus operates both within and upon these relations of power in ways that appear disruptive to the horizontal distribution of political power within democratic Athens.

In Plato's dialogues, Socrates does not engage in the kinds of direct mockery and ridicule deployed by his Aristophanic counterpart. This difference appears to be closely connected to the fact that the Platonic Socrates does not claim for himself the kind of expertise, either scientific or moral, that the Aristophanic Socrates does. While Socrates may believe in the possibility that human beings can possess such moral expertise,⁹¹ he repeatedly denies that he himself possesses such wisdom; he further eschews the study of the natural world

in which the Aristophanic Socrates engages (*Phaedo* 96b–100b). If, then, the mockery of the Aristophanic Socrates is an expression of the authority and superiority such expertise conveys, it is perhaps unsurprising that it is absent from Plato’s depiction of Socrates. Rather than claiming authority for himself, the Platonic Socrates appears to efface whatever authority he might possess, and his ironic mode of humor appears as a tool for practicing a type of pedagogy that emphasizes the moral autonomy of the student.⁹² From this perspective, the Socratic practice of irony actually resembles the Aristophanic denial of authority outlined at the end of the previous chapter.⁹³

At the same time, Plato illustrates how the force of such ironic humor is more complicated than the above sketch suggests. For interlocutors like Thrasymachus, the effacement of authority represented by what he terms Socrates’ *eirōneia* is nothing but a pretense. It is a pretense, moreover, that is designed to provide Socrates with an advantage in their dialectical contest. Socrates’ eironic denial that he possesses an answer to the question of what justice is, in the eyes of Thrasymachus, is an attempt by Socrates to monopolize the seemingly advantageous role of questioner. Not only is the mockery involved in such eironic humor an expression of superiority, it is also a tool for establishing dominance over one’s interlocutors.⁹⁴

For interlocutors like Phaedrus, by contrast, such ironic humor carries with it neither an expression of superiority, nor the desire to assert such dominance. It constitutes instead a more egalitarian mode of laughing and joking with, rather than

at, others. This form of irony, which is both reciprocal and reciprocated, creates the framework for an alternative to the zero-sum *agōn* in which Thrasymachus views himself as engaged in with Socrates. Read against the eironic form of humor that appears to be associated with the sophists in Plato, the humor found in Socrates' engagement with Phaedrus is somewhat transgressive insofar as it seeks to disrupt and reshape the parameters of such contests: to paraphrase Socrates, the "loser" of such contests still wins in that he discovers the limits of his own knowledge (*Gorg.* 457d-458b, 470c, 487a-488b). As some scholars have recently contended, this reimagined model of philosophical investigation constitutes an alternative to the standard practices of political engagement and debate in democratic Athens; at the same time, it is a mode of engagement that is both distinct from, and yet in some ways a continuation of, the democratic principles that animated these institutions.⁹⁵

Between these two interpretations lies the question of the nature and purpose of Socrates' cross-examination of his interlocutors. Though it may be tempting to conclude that Socrates' encounter with Phaedrus is more representative of the true nature of Socratic philosophical practice, Plato's depiction of a wide range of reactions to Socratic questioning, coupled with the ambiguities and difficulties surrounding the attempt to distinguish Socrates from the sophists, suggests that Plato's "defense" of Socratic practice is not that straightforward. We might draw a comparison here with how Plato's *Apology* responds to Polycrates' accusation that Socrates conducted himself arrogantly during his trial.

Socrates' interpretation of the oracle is at once both arrogant and humble: arrogant in that it still asserts that he is the wisest of the Athenians; humble in the sense that it interprets this superior wisdom as inferior to that which is conventionally understood as wisdom. In short, the speech depicted in Plato's *Apology* does not provide any straightforward answer to the question of whether Socrates behaved arrogantly at his trial or not; rather, Socrates' speech problematizes the accusation itself by raising the question of the nature and legitimacy of the kinds of claims to superiority that may provoke accusations of arrogance. Rather than attempting to conceal such potential arrogance from readers of the text, Plato offers his readers a framework for investigating these claims. [96](#)

In much the same way, while the accusations made by Thrasymachus, Callicles, and Alcibiades may not reveal the truth about Socrates, that does not mean that they do not reveal something important about his practice of irony. Plato's Socrates denies that he has wisdom, and he denies that he is a teacher; his irony is thus bound up with what appears to be an effacement of authority, and a denial of any intellectual superiority. Yet these "complex ironies," as Vlastos terms them, may not efface authority so much as they reposition and refound it. On this understanding, Socrates' intellectual superiority does not lie in his possessing knowledge that others do not possess; rather, it lies in possessing the self-knowledge that others lack. Socratic "authority," in this sense, is not predicated on the possession of knowledge in the conventional sense. Socrates' discussion of Athenian decision-making in the *Protagoras*, discussed at the beginning of the previous chapter,

is helpful for elucidating this distinction. The type of authority vested in possessing knowledge that others do not possess is displayed in those discussions that the Athenians consider to be technical; while any adult male Athenian citizen in good standing is legally permitted to speak concerning any matter, during technical discussions, only those who possess the relevant *technē* are held to possess the authority to advise the *dēmos*. The Socratic mode of authority, in contrast, is not founded on the possession of that kind of knowledge, but of knowledge of oneself. At the same time, it may provide the basis for justifying a type of Socratic authority, one in which Socrates' intellectual superiority is founded upon his possession of self-knowledge (in contrast to his self-ignorant interlocutors and his fellow citizens).

This latter notion of authority is implicit in Socrates' cross-examination of Meletus in Plato's *Apology* (24c-25c). When Socrates asks Meletus who it is that cares for and improves the young in Athens, Meletus responds that it is the laws, the 6,000 potential jurors who have sworn the Heliastic oath (*dikastai*), those nonjurors who attend trials, members of the Council of 500, and those who attend the Assembly—in short, all Athenians except for Socrates improve the young. Hearing this response, Socrates attempts to demonstrate the absurdity of Meletus' claim, using the training of horses as an analogy. In horse training, Socrates asks, is it the one or few who are experts that improve horses, or the many who are not experts? He then concludes from Meletus' agreement that it is the former, that Meletus is clearly mistaken in thinking that the many—in the sense of the Athenian jurors, assemblymen, councilmen, and so on—improve the young, while the “one”—in

this case Socrates—corrupts them. Socrates’ analogy implicitly frames his own activities as those of an expert educator, akin to the expert horse trainer. At the same time, the kind of educational expertise Socrates implicitly claims for himself is quite distinct, as is evident from the second equine analogy Socrates draws in the *Apology*—that which casts the city of Athens as a horse and Socrates as a gadfly (30e). According to this latter analogy, Socrates attempts to improve the city of Athens not by imparting expert knowledge to its citizens, but by provoking those citizens to care for themselves. It is thus a type of educational expertise that is compatible with Socrates’ claims concerning his own wisdom.

Such claims to intellectual superiority do not necessarily translate into an antidemocratic stance, nor would they necessarily be interpreted as such within the context of Athenian political discourse. While the ideal of political equality was central to the operation of Athenian *dēmokratia*, the achievement of such political equality was not predicated on the elimination of social and intellectual inequalities; in fact, a central component of Athenian democratic ideology was a recognition of not only the danger, but also the benefit, that elite citizens provided to the political decision-making process.⁹⁷ Maintaining such a balance was the work of a mass democratic ideology that channeled elite competition into public benefits, and in doing so, aimed at preventing inequalities in wealth and social status from being translated into inequalities in the political sphere.⁹⁸ At the same time, the types of benefits that elite citizens could provide to the political decision-making process were circumscribed by the strong

belief in the collective wisdom of the Athenian *dēmos*, a central component of which was the conviction that the *dēmos*, qua *dēmos*, was capable of better political decision-making than that which would be produced under any alternative political regime.⁹⁹ Thus, elite participation was valuable insofar as demophilic elites could check the ambitions of other, oligarchically minded elites who might seek to dominate the *dēmos* as a whole and/or individual, ordinary citizens;¹⁰⁰ elite leadership in the assembly might also facilitate alignment around the recommendations of informed individuals.¹⁰¹ In neither case, however, was elite participation viewed as supplanting collective decision-making or the participation of ordinary citizens in these decision-making procedures.

This understanding of the relationship between mass and elite in democratic Athens can help us explicate the distinct nature of the kind of intellectual superiority implicitly claimed by the Platonic Socrates and its place within such a democratic ideology. Crucial here is the way in which Socrates frames Meletus' response as absurd.¹⁰² As Ober has argued, it is unlikely that Meletus' answer would have been viewed as such by the Athenian jurors at Socrates' trial.¹⁰³ To start with, Meletus' claim that "the laws and public institutions of the *polis*, and . . . those who participate in their use, . . . educate and therefore improve the youth of Athens" is not unique, and it reflects a "core ideological conviction" concerning the educational value of Athenian democratic institutions.¹⁰⁴ Socrates' claim, in denying the ability of either ordinary Athenian citizens or the *dēmos* in any of its institutional manifestations to improve the young, thus constitutes a

rejection of this key premise of Athenian democratic ideology. As such, it also sits in tension with the belief in the collective wisdom of the *dēmos*, insofar as it was not just the institutions themselves that served to educate the young, but the substantive operation and outcomes of those institutions as well.¹⁰⁵ To deny that Athenian civic institutions could educate the young in this way thus constitutes a rejection of the belief in the collective wisdom of the *dēmos*: it implies that the decisions made by the *dēmos* within the context of such institutions are wrong, and, thus, they serve to corrupt, rather than improve, the young. In this sense, it constitutes a rejection of the idea that Athenian citizens were capable of teaching both themselves and each other in ways that could improve and promote effective collective decision-making. It also suggests that his refusal to practice politics, in the conventional sense, is motivated not just by his belief that the *dēmos* cannot be educated, but further by the belief that there is nothing that he could learn from the *dēmos*.¹⁰⁶

This brief analysis can thus help us recover a more charitable interpretation of the critiques of Socratic *eirōneia* presented in Plato's dialogues. Though Plato casts doubt on these accusations through his depictions of those interlocutors who make them, the substance of these critiques might be interpreted as indicative of Socrates' refusal to engage in dialogue on an equal footing with his interlocutors. This charge is highlighted by Thrasymachus, who accuses Socrates of deploying *eirōneia* in order to avoid submitting to cross-examination. From Thrasymachus' perspective, Socratic *eirōneia* is viewed as a technique for maintaining his

superiority over his interlocutors; it is a mocking kind of pretense through which Socrates takes pleasure in “pulling one over” on his interlocutors. Coming from Thrasymachus, as Plato depicts him, this accusation appears disingenuous and self-serving;¹⁰⁷ yet, it does indicate the way in which we might interpret the Socratic practice of *eirōneia* as predicated on a hierarchical positioning of Socrates vis-à-vis his interlocutors, one in which the potential for intellectual and moral benefit in such exchanges lies primarily with Socrates’ interlocutor. Socrates’ ironic mode of engagement thus verges on a kind of uncharitableness, one in which his mocking pretense that his interlocutors are wise constitutes a presumption that they are not. From this perspective, we might interpret Socrates’ ironic mode of engagement as relying implicitly on the same kinds of beliefs that animate his cross-examination of Meletus in Plato’s *Apology*.

It is a sign of the nature of Plato’s depictions of Socratic questioning that readers of the dialogues can reconstruct these distinct interpretations of both this practice and the significance of Socratic irony within it. The question of whether Socrates was an *eirōn*, connected as it is with the question of whether Socrates was a sophist, indicates the ambiguity surrounding the Socratic practice of humor as Plato presents it. It is this ambiguity at the core of Socratic *eirōneia* and irony, moreover, that gives it the potential both to exacerbate the anxieties surrounding equality and inequality within democratic Athens, and to make it a site of productive tension where those anxieties can be interrogated and negotiated. In the next chapter, we will see how Xenophon’s portrait of

Socratic humor navigates these same anxieties through his depiction of the relationship between Socratic leadership and Socratic questioning.

CHAPTER THREE

Xenophon, Socratic Mockery, and Socratic Irony

At *Memorabilia* 1.2.58, Xenophon notes that Socrates was accused of quoting the following passage from the *Iliad* (2.188-91, 198-202), which describes how Odysseus attempted to prevent the Achaians from retreating to their ships and abandoning their campaign at Troy: Whenever he found one that was a captain and a man of eminence, he stood by his side and restrained him with gentle words: “Good sir, it is not seemly to be frightened like a coward, but take a seat yourself and sit the others down,” but whatever man of the people he saw and found him shouting, him he drove with his scepter and berated him with loud words: “Good sir, sit still and hearken the words of others who are your betters: for you are no warrior and a weakling, never reckoned whether in battle or in council.” (1.2.58 = *Iliad* 2.188-91, 198-202, trans. Henderson)

According to Socrates’ accuser,¹ Socrates interpreted this passage as indicating that Homer approved of striking ordinary citizens and the poor (*epainoiē paiesthai tous dēmotas kai penētas*, 1.2.58). Socrates’ fondness for reciting this passage, the accuser seems to have been implying, was a sign that he also approved of such behavior.² Xenophon, of course, denies

that Socrates ever said these things; had Socrates held such a view, Xenophon notes, then he would have thought that he himself deserved such treatment. What he did say was that those who are not useful (*ōphelimous*) either to the army, the *polis*, or the *dēmos* ought to be chastised in such a way, even if they happened to be very wealthy. Socrates, by contrast, showed himself to be friendly to both the *dēmos* and to all of mankind (*dēmotikos kai philanthrōpos*, 1.2.60).

While this particular accusation, as it is presented by Xenophon, does not touch directly on the theme of Socratic humor, the context from which the above passage from the *Iliad* is drawn may be indicative of such a connection. Odysseus' efforts to restore order within the Achaian camp culminate in his chastisement of Thersites, who is attempting to raise the laughter of the Argives against Agamemnon (2.215). Thersites reproaches Agamemnon as a greedy king, always seeking some further prize from the spoils won by the labor of his soldiers, while he himself remains in his tent and does not share in the fighting. He urges the men to leave Agamemnon "here by himself in Troy to mull his prizes of honour that he may find out whether or not we others are helping him" (2.236-38, trans. Lattimore).

Odysseus rebukes Thersites for abusing Agamemnon in this way, and for daring to quarrel with his betters. Though Odysseus acknowledges that Thersites is a skilled orator (*ligus . . . agorētēs*), he is also reckless in his speech (*akritomuthe*), abusing Agamemnon without knowing whether the Achaians will succeed or fail in their appointed task (2.246). Having reproached Thersites, Odysseus then strikes him with his scepter, and "he [Thersites] doubled over, and a round tear

dropped from him, and a bloody welt stood up between his shoulders under the golden sceptre's stroke, and he sat down again, frightened, in pain, and looking helplessly about wiped off the tear-drops" (2.265-69, trans. Lattimore). Despite being grieved (*achnumenoi per*), the crowd laughed (*gelassan*) at Thersites, and thought it was an excellent deed that Odysseus kept this scurrilous slanderer (*lōbētēra epesbolon*) out of the assembly (2.270-75).

While there is disagreement over Thersites' rank within the Achaian camp, Odysseus' treatment of him strongly suggests that he is a common soldier.³ As has often been noted, Thersites' speech is reminiscent of Achilles' critique of Agamemnon in the first book of the *Iliad*. Like Achilles, Thersites accuses Agamemnon of taking an unfair share of the army's spoils (1.225-30; 2.225-34). Both men also chastise their fellow soldiers for allowing Agamemnon to continue engaging in such outrages (1.231-32; 2.235-42). While Thersites thus parodies Achilles' speech, he is also presented as a parody of Achilles.⁴ Thersites' speech does not provoke laughter from the other soldiers. In fact, the other Achaians were angered by Thersites' abuse of Agamemnon (2.222-23), and they are pleased by Odysseus' harsh treatment of Thersites. While the noble Achilles can voice his criticisms of Agamemnon in the assembly, the sight of the ugly and base Thersites doing the same is comical. The ridicule that is directed at Thersites thus serves to police the boundary between mass and elite that he threatens to disturb.⁵

Hence, in accusing Socrates of reciting this passage from the *Iliad*, what is at stake is broader than the question of whether

Socrates approved of the use of physical violence against ordinary citizens; the accusation raises the issue of Socrates' comportment toward ordinary citizens more generally. Was Socrates *dēmotikos*, as Xenophon avers? Or does his treatment of ordinary citizens betray an aristocratic bearing toward the *dēmos*? As the above overview of the Thersites scene suggests, this accusation may have also reflected a concern about Socrates' use of mockery and ridicule toward the *dēmos*. As Xenophon notes elsewhere, and as was mentioned in the introduction, Socrates' accuser also noted that "he [Socrates] taught his companions to despise (*huperoran*) the established laws, saying how it would be foolish (*mōron*) to appoint magistrates by lot when no one would want to choose a pilot or a builder or a flute player by lot or for any other such task, although the harms committed when someone errs in those things are far lesser than those concerning the city" (1.2.9). Such language resembles the charge recorded by Libanius—that Socrates "persuaded his companions to mock the democracy" (*tēs dēmokratias katagelan*, 53)—and may reflect the worry that Socrates' use of humor was inappropriately directed against the *dēmos* and Athens' democratic institutions.

This chapter argues that Xenophon's depiction of Socrates was in part shaped by such concerns over the nature and purpose of Socratic humor. Xenophon's Socrates, unlike his Platonic counterpart, never denies possessing knowledge; in fact, he argues that he clearly merits the claims made by the Delphic oracle that he is "freer, more just, and more moderate" (*eleutheriōteron . . . dikaioteron . . . sōphronesteron*, *Apol.* 14) than all other men, and that he is superior to all others in

matters concerning education (*peri paideias*, 21).⁶ Xenophon's Socrates also engages in direct, often abusive ridicule and mockery of others. He compares Critias to a pig (*Mem.* 1.2.30); he uses abusive language against Xenophon, calling him a wretch (*tlēmon*, 1.3.11) and a fool (*mōre*, 1.3.13); he explicitly mocks Euthydemus for thinking he can practice politics without an education (4.2); and on a more general level, Xenophon indicates that Socrates would use abusive language when reproaching those who thought that their wealth meant they had no need of education (4.1.5). Unlike the Aristophanic Socrates, however, Xenophon's Socrates does not use such mockery as an expression of his superiority over his intellectual inferiors; rather, Xenophon illustrates how Socrates' expertise in *paideia* made him useful to his fellow citizens, the *dēmos*, and the Athenian *polis*.⁷ From this perspective, Socrates' mockery of others was an effective pedagogic tool; it was also connected with a distinctive form of irony he deployed in order to navigate the potential resentment that might be aroused by his self-declared superiority.

The chapter begins with an overview of Xenophon's treatment of humor, one that highlights the connection between these discussions and the theme of effective leadership that is central throughout his corpus. Doing so both situates Xenophon's depiction of Socratic humor within his broader discussion of this theme and illustrates the distinguishing characteristics of the Socratic practice of humor—in particular, his use of irony. The chapter then turns to examining this distinctive mode of irony in more detail, with particular focus on Xenophon's most explicit treatment of this

theme at *Memorabilia* 2.6 and Socrates' conversations with his fellows citizens at 3.1-7.⁸ The exegesis offered in this section establishes the differences between the Socratic practices of irony in Plato and Xenophon, while further illustrating how Xenophon's Socrates adapts the modes of irony and mockery he deploys to his particular interlocutors. The final section explicates how the irony of Xenophon's Socrates functions within the pedagogical framework he deploys.

CYRUS AND THE POLITICS OF HUMOR IN XENOPHON

Xenophon's interest in humor extends well beyond his treatment of Socrates, and is connected to the central theme of his social and political thought: the ability of good leaders to secure the willing obedience of others.⁹ This interest is displayed in Xenophon's attention to how exemplary figures (both good and bad) engaged in laughter and the practices of humor. In the *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus' sense of humor is an important aspect of Xenophon's characterization of the Persian emperor (1.3.8-12, 1.4.4, 1.4.15, 1.6.27; 2.2.1-16, 2.2.28-31; 3.1.42; 5.2.18, 5.5.9; 6.1.1-6, 6.1.34; 7.1.20-22, 7.5.13-14, 7.5.45; 8.1.33, 8.4.12-23), and he is presented as striking a laudable seriocomic balance (*Cyr.* 2.2; 8.4). In the *Hellenika*, Xenophon notes Theramenes' cheerfulness in the face of death, praising his ability to retain his sense of humor up until the moment he was forced to drink the hemlock by the Thirty (*Hell.* 2.3.56).¹⁰ In the *Anabasis*, Meno the Thessalian, by contrast, is described as never mocking his enemies but as always giving

the impression that he was mocking his friends (*Anab.* 2.6.23), a clear inversion of the conventional Greek ethical maxim of helping friends and harming enemies.¹¹ Further evidence for this interest in humor can be found in Xenophon's portraits of Cyrus the Younger (*Anab.* 1.19.13), Agesilaus (*Ages.* 8.1-2), and the Greek generals Socrates the Achaean and Agias the Arcadian (*Anab.* 2.6.30), as well as in his self-depictions (*Anab.* 3.1.26, 4.6.14ff.).¹²

The potential political stakes of such humor are well illustrated in the two symposia scenes in books 2 and 8 of the *Cyropaedia*. The first symposium (2.2) is held in the wake of Cyrus' decision to admit the common soldiers, who had until this point been excluded from having an equal share (*ou meteichete tōn isōn*, 2.1.15), into the ranks of the peers (*homotimoi*). This reorganization of the Persian camp raises anxieties among the original peers concerning their status (2.2.21), and the humorous stories told at the beginning of the symposium provide an outlet for these anxieties. The laughter that arises among the officers, which is primarily directed at the actions of common soldiers, serves an important social function: it solidifies the camaraderie among the original peers who may feel their status is now threatened or undermined by the admission of the commoners to their ranks.¹³ Xenophon notes, moreover, that they laughed "as was fitting" (*hōsper eikos*, 2.2.5; *hōs eikos*, 2.2.10)—a signal that such laughter strikes the right balance between seriousness and playfulness.¹⁴ The men avoid the vice displayed by the agelast Aglaïtadas, who accuses those who relate these stories of being boasters (*alazones*, 2.2.11), and denies that the laughter they

raise is beneficial (2.2.14); and while Cyrus corrects Aglaïtadas, stating that such men are more rightly (*dikaïoteron*) called witty (*asteioi*) and agreeable (*eucharites*, 2.2.12), these qualities entail both moderation and the ability to recognize when such laughter is appropriate. The latter trait is exemplified by Hystaspas' attempt to restrain himself from laughing directly at a common soldier (2.2.5); while such laughter is fitting among the officers, Hystaspas' sense of restraint reflects a concern that it might disturb Cyrus' attempt to fully integrate the peers and common soldiers.

The second symposium scene (8.4) occurs after Cyrus has completed his conquests and reorganized the Persian republic into an empire. As a reflection of this transformation, this second symposium is more formal than that depicted in book 2; while in the former scene there is no mention of seating arrangements, in the latter the guests are assigned their seats around Cyrus according to merit (8.4.4). The laughter that occurs here is also markedly different from the lighthearted humor of the previous symposium, and is indicative of the tensions and anxieties generated by this new hierarchical structure.¹⁵ It begins when Hystaspas complains to Cyrus that Chrysantas has been put in a more honorable place than he (8.4.9-10). Cyrus explains that Chrysantas presents himself for service even before he is called; he not only fulfills his orders, but improves upon the original directive; he provides advice to Cyrus and divines what Cyrus is hesitant to speak to ambassadors and says it for him; finally, he is always content with whatever he is given, but is always searching for some new way to benefit Cyrus; in short, he "takes much more

pleasure and joy in my [Cyrus'] good fortune than I do myself" (8.4.11, trans. Miller). Upon hearing Cyrus' explanation, Hystaspas reports that he is glad that he raised his concern, since he now knows what he must do to gain Cyrus' favor; he is only unclear about one thing, he tells Cyrus rather testily: "I do not know how I could show that I rejoice at your good fortune. Am I to clap my hands or laugh or what must I do" (8.4.12)? While Xenophon reports that laughter arose from this exchange (*epi toutois men dē gelōs egeneto*, 8.4.12), Chrysantas' remarks highlight the fact that the Persians no longer have equal shares in the affairs of the state, which would entail ruling and be ruled in turn (1.6.20). The new order established by Cyrus is hierarchical, and its functioning depends on everyone knowing their place within that hierarchy and obeying their superiors. At the beginning of book 8 Chrysantas emphasizes that this new arrangement is not akin to slavery: while slaves serve their masters unwillingly (*akontes*), they, as free men (*eleutheroi*), must obey willingly (*dei poiein ho pleistou axion phainetai einai*, 8.1.4).¹⁶ And Hystaspas believes that he has shown such willingness to Cyrus: he has done everything eagerly and cheerfully (*prothumōs, hēdomenōs*), and Cyrus agrees with this assessment (8.4.9). Herein lies the sarcastic force of Hystaspas' question: Just how willing must he show himself to be? Must he wildly gesticulate every time he performs some task for Cyrus? And if this demonstration of willingness is compulsory, just how different is his condition from that of a slave? While this scene ends with Cyrus' demonstration that he is still able, despite his new status, to take a joke (8.4.22), it is nonetheless marked by an uneasiness

surrounding the question of how to engage in humor in the context of such political inequality.¹⁷

As was noted above, Socrates' self-declared superiority figures prominently in Xenophon's attempt to demonstrate Socrates' usefulness to the *dēmos* and to Athens' democratic institutions. While such superiority might raise worries over Socrates' political allegiance, Xenophon focuses on how Socrates' educational expertise is a central part of what made him *dēmotikos*. In this sense, Socrates' attempts to use humor to navigate his relationship to the *dēmos* mirrors Cyrus' attempts to navigate the changing power relationships with the Persian republic and empire. In the *Symposium*,¹⁸ Xenophon illustrates how Socrates also exemplified the ideal of the *spoudaiogeloios*.¹⁹ There, Xenophon draws a series of contrasts between Socrates and the other attendees that demonstrate Socrates' ability to balance properly the demands of seriousness and playfulness. Socrates does not refrain entirely from engaging in humor (unlike the boorish Hermogenes); he does not jest excessively nor do so in a merely playful way (unlike the jester Philipos); nor does he deploy aggressive and abusive forms of ridicule against others (unlike Antisthenes).²⁰

While Cyrus is able to use humor to gain and solidify the allegiance of his followers, Socrates does so in order to improve his interlocutors by helping them achieve the noble goals at which they aim. Socrates' use of humor, however, extends beyond the blend of seriousness and playfulness Cyrus displays in the two symposia scenes discussed above. In particular, Socrates consistently deploys a form of irony that is

absent from Xenophon's depiction of Cyrus.²¹ The remainder of this chapter details how Xenophon's Socrates deployed such humor to navigate the inequalities between himself and his interlocutors in ways that enabled him to be useful to them. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to address the question of whether Xenophon's Socrates is ironic or not.

VLASTOS ON SOCRATIC IRONY IN XENOPHON

It has often been remarked that Xenophon's Socrates is not ironic, or at least not ironic to the same extent, or in the same way, as his Platonic counterpart.²² In an early essay on Socrates, Gregory Vlastos maintained that Xenophon's Socrates is devoid of both irony and paradox, characteristics that Vlastos took to be central to the Platonic (and historical) Socrates.²³ Though Vlastos later revised this view, recognizing that we can find in Xenophon that "complex irony" that he argues is distinctively Socratic, he nonetheless concludes that the portrait Xenophon provides of Socratic irony is deficient. First, Socrates does not engage in irony as frequently as his Platonic counterpart, which, for Vlastos, indicates that irony is not a central characteristic of Xenophon's Socrates. Thus he notes: "If we had only Xenophon's picture of Socrates, we would have no reason to think that Socrates' contemporaries had thought of *eirōneia* as a distinctively Socratic trait."²⁴ Second, Vlastos argues that the ironies of Xenophon's Socrates are qualitatively inferior to those found in Plato. More specifically, the ironies Xenophon's Socrates does deploy contain little doctrinal or philosophical significance: while

Plato's Socrates uses irony to address issues of central philosophical importance, such as the possession of knowledge, the ironies of Xenophon's Socrates are comparatively banal.²⁵ Third, they are, from a stylistic standpoint, less excellent representatives of the practice.

In this respect, Vlastos' analysis of Socratic irony in Xenophon is consistent with his solution to the Socratic problem. Particularly telling are the conclusions he draws from his comparison of *Memorabilia* 4.4.9 and *Republic* 337a. In the latter passage, Thrasymachus rebukes Socrates in the following manner: And upon hearing this he gave a very sarcastic laugh and said: "By Heracles!—this is the usual irony (*eiōthua eirōneia*) of Socrates that I had already informed these men here about, that you would be unwilling to answer but would ironize (*eirōneusoio*) and would do anything rather than answer if someone asked you something." (*Rep.* 337a3-7) In the former passage, Hippias offers the following reproach against Socrates: For it's enough that you mock (*katagelais*) others, questioning and examining everyone, while you yourself are unwilling to give an account to anyone nor to reveal your judgment concerning anything. (*Mem.* 4.4.9)²⁶

For Vlastos, Thrasymachus correctly perceives what he terms Socrates' "habitual irony," and Plato, in representing the encounter as he does, does not shy away from highlighting its practice. In Xenophon, however, "that noun [*eirōneia*] and its cognate verb [*eirōneuomai*], so conspicuous in Thrasymachus' attack on Socrates . . . , drop out when the identical reproach is ventilated by Hippias in the *Memorabilia* The reference . . . to Socrates' 'habitual *eirōneia*' has been washed out.

Fortunately, we have Plato's Socratic dialogues where what Xenophon denies us is supplied in such abundance that to go through all of it would be work for a whole book."²⁷ Vlastos' language here is telling: Socrates' irony drops out, has been washed out, is denied to us, by Xenophon.

For Vlastos, this "substitution" of *katagelaō* for *eirōneia* is evidence of the overzealousness of Xenophon's apologetics. Given the pejorative connotations of *eirōneia* during the classical period, both Plato and Xenophon are engaged in defending Socrates from the charge of *eirōneia*; their respective strategies, however, are quite distinct. For Vlastos, Plato indicates that Socrates did not practice *eirōneia* (understood as a kind of deceitful shamming), but rather deployed a kind of complex irony in which he both meant and did not mean what he said. Socrates' denial that he is a teacher is a paradigmatic case of such complex irony for Vlastos: in the traditional sense of a teacher as one who imparts knowledge to his students, Socrates' denial that he is a teacher is sincere; but he does engage in a type of teaching by purging his interlocutors of their false beliefs.²⁸ That Socrates' complex ironies constitute puzzles that his interlocutors must figure out for themselves is, for Vlastos, part of Socrates' pedagogical method. Crucially, however, it also saves Socrates from the charge that he is deceptive in his discursive engagements with others, a charge that, if accurate, would eliminate the distinction Plato attempts to draw between Socrates and the sophists.²⁹ For Vlastos, then, while Plato acknowledges that irony was a central trait of the historical Socrates, he argues that such irony has generally been misunderstood by Socrates'

interlocutors as a form of *eirōneia*. Xenophon, in contrast, denies, through omission, that irony was a central trait of the historical Socrates.

Yet, if we look more closely at *Memorabilia* 4.4.9, it is difficult to maintain that Xenophon denies Socrates' irony to us simply by omitting the word *eirōneia*. Hippias, encountering Socrates while he is conversing about the relative difficulty of finding a teacher of justice, makes fun of Socrates (*episkōptōn auton*) by stating that Socrates is still saying the same old things (4.4.6). Hippias, we are told, had not been to Athens in quite some time (4.4.5), and so the implication is that Socrates has been boring his companions for a long while by droning on with the same old arguments. Socrates takes the jest in stride, exclaiming that not only is he still saying the same things, he is further still stuck on the same old topics as before. Socrates is sure, however, that Hippias himself would never commit such a faux pas, observing that he [Hippias] is so well-educated (*polumathēs*) that he never says the same things about the same subjects; Hippias responds that he at least always tries to say something new (4.4.6).

This prompts Socrates to ask whether Hippias also tries to say new things when the topic of discussion is something that he knows: for example, does he always try to give a new answer to the question "How many letters are there in the name Socrates?" Hippias answers that no, in such matters he always gives the same answers, just as Socrates does; but when it comes to justice, Hippias explains, he thinks that he is able to say something that neither Socrates nor anyone else could contradict (4.4.7). At this point, Socrates remarks that Hippias seems to have discovered a great good (*mega . . .*

agathon heurēkenai)—if it really will stop jurors from voting differently, citizens from engaging in stasis, and cities from making war against each other. He does not know, therefore, how he could be torn away from Hippias' company before he has heard such a great discovery (4.4.8).

From this passage, it is evident that Socrates uses irony to mock Hippias, even if Xenophon does not use the word *eirōneia* to describe this practice. First, Socrates self-deprecatingly goes along with Hippias' mockery, adding that he not only always says the same things, but about the same topics. Second, he plays dumb, asking whether Hippias' claim to novelty extends to such matters as basic grammar and arithmetic. Finally, Socrates offers high praise for Hippias' discovery concerning justice, and emphasizes his great desire to hear it. Each of these elements of Socrates' conversation with Hippias finds easy parallels with the irony of the Platonic Socrates.³⁰ Thus, as others have argued, the absence of the word *eirōneia* and its cognates in Xenophon is not indicative of the absence of Socratic irony.³¹

Even if we concede Vlastos' claim that Xenophon's Socrates is less frequently ironic than his Platonic counterpart, we need not resort to any supposed defect in Xenophon's depiction of Socrates in order to explain this difference. In fact, we might trace the difference to Xenophon's decision not to focus on Socrates' practice of the *elenchus*, one that he explains to his readers early on in the *Memorabilia*. At *Memorabilia* 1.4.1, Xenophon addresses those who might hold the opinion that while Socrates was skilled in exhorting (*protrepsasthai*) others to virtue, he was incompetent in actually leading (*proagagein*)

them to it. Xenophon implies that this opinion is based on a one-sided consideration of the kinds of conversations in which Socrates engaged; he further suggests that a response to this charge would involve considering more than just those occasions where Socrates refuted (*ēlenchen*) those who thought they knew everything in order to correct them, but also his regular conversations with his companions. Those wishing to judge whether Socrates was capable of improving others must consider both kinds of conversations.³²

The distinction Xenophon draws at 1.4.1 thus provides the reader with an understanding of what it is that Xenophon plans to offer in the *Memorabilia*, and what it is that we in fact find. Though Socrates does engage in the *elenchus* in the *Memorabilia*, this practice is not presented as the only, or most important, method through which Socrates engaged his interlocutors.³³ And this relative dearth of the Socratic *elenchus* is directly related to the relative absence of his irony—or, at least, the kind of irony that we find in Plato’s dialogues. In Plato, Socrates is at his most ironic when engaged in the *elenchus*, when he is engaged in refuting those who think they have knowledge that they do not in fact possess.³⁴ His practice of the *elenchus* also goes hand in hand with his denial that he possesses knowledge, a denial that does not have a clear counterpart in Xenophon’s Socratic works.³⁵ Xenophon’s Socrates, in contrast, rarely engages such characters, and hence, rarely engages in such irony.³⁶

Socrates’ interactions with the young Euthydemus, which dominate the fourth book of the *Memorabilia*, indicate the balance Xenophon strikes in depicting these different modes of

Socratic engagement. The fourth book of the *Memorabilia* recounts the development of Socrates' relationship with Euthydemus from an outsider who is confident he has no need of instruction from Socrates to a model pupil and member of the Socratic circle. Socrates begins by mocking Euthydemus' confidence that he can practice politics competently without the benefit of a teacher (4.2.2-5). Having attracted Euthydemus' attention, Socrates then submits him to a series of refutations, relenting only when Euthydemus finally recognizes his complete ignorance and his need to associate with Socrates in order to become a worthy man (*anēr axiologos*) (4.2.6-40). After this, Xenophon states that Socrates stopped disturbing Euthydemus (*hēkista dietaratten*), and started explaining to him in a very straightforward and clear way (*haploustata de kai saphestata*) what he thought the young man needed to know (4.2.40). In what follows, Socrates sets forth his ideas concerning the gods (4.3), justice (4.4), self-control (4.5), and skill in dialectics (4.6). This stark contrast between Socrates' treatment of Euthydemus in 4.2 and his discussions with him in 4.3-6 maps onto the key distinction Xenophon outlines at 1.4.1, and the relative emphasis on Socrates' straightforward treatment of Euthydemus also corresponds with the layout of the work as a whole. Thus, while Xenophon's Socrates does engage in the same kind of irony as his Platonic counterpart, the relative lack of such irony in Xenophon is better explained by the structural organization of the *Memorabilia* itself, rather than by Xenophon's inability to perceive or understand it.

Vlastos also argues, finally, that the quality of Socratic irony in Xenophon is inferior to what we find in Plato. This criticism

is most evident in his treatment of *Memorabilia* 3.11, where Socrates visits the courtesan Theodote. At the conclusion of their conversation, Theodote requests that Socrates visit her often, to which Socrates responds: “Theodote,” said Socrates, making fun of his own lack of activity (*apragmosunēn*), “it is not very easy for me to spare the time to be at leisure. For there are many private and public affairs that allow me no leisure; and there are my girlfriends, who are learning potions and spells from me, and will not allow me to leave them, neither day nor night.” (3.11.16)³⁷

While Vlastos recognizes this as a clear case of Socratic irony in Xenophon, he concludes that it is a rather poor example of irony as such. Thus he writes: Since she [Theodote] is meant to see, and does see, that these “girlfriends” are philosophers, depressingly male and middle-aged, there is no question of her being misled into thinking that her visitor has a stable of pretty girls to whom he teaches love-potions. So here at last we do get something Cicero and Quintilian would recognize as *ironia*, though hardly a gem of the genre: its humor is too arched and strained.³⁸

What makes this “hardly a gem of the genre,” then, is that it lacks the ambiguity contained by the Platonic Socrates’ philosophically weighty complex ironies. Yet here, Vlastos seems to miss what constitutes the irony in Socrates’ response, or at least overlooks Xenophon’s note on where the irony lies. As seen above, Xenophon glosses Socrates’ response with the claim that he was “making fun of his own leisurely habits” (*episkōptōn tēn hautou apragmosunēn*). At least as Xenophon portrays it, then, the irony involved here concerns Socrates’

dissimulation concerning his lack of leisure time. And this is not something that Theodote seems to readily grasp.³⁹

At the same time, Vlastos' larger point is still applicable. For what we see Xenophon doing here is flagging the fact that Socrates is joking; this removes, at least for readers of the work, the mystery concerning what Socrates might mean by the statement that it would not be easy for him to find the time to visit Theodote often in the future. What perhaps falls flat, then, is not the irony itself, but Xenophon's presentation of it.⁴⁰ The irony is not as enigmatic as those ironies we encounter in Plato's Socratic dialogues; yet this difference, at least in part, may not lie in the ironies themselves but in the different presentations of such ironies by Plato and Xenophon. Plato keeps us guessing as readers of the dialogues as to what Socrates might mean when he deploys at least some of his ironies—for example, his denial that he has knowledge. Xenophon, at least at *Memorabilia* 3.11, does not. This distinction, however, plays itself out not on the level of the inner frame of their respective works (in which Socrates interacts with his interlocutors) but at the level of the outer frame (in which we as readers engage with Socrates).

From this analysis, an alternative explanation for the differences between Plato's and Xenophon's depictions of Socratic irony emerges, one that does not interpret those differences within the framework of Vlastos' solution to the Socratic problem. Rather, these differences can be explained in terms of both Xenophon's focus on Socrates' nonelenctic encounters with others and his tendency to signal explicitly Socrates' ironies to his readers. In the following section, I

argue that not only is Xenophon's *depiction* of Socratic irony different from that of Plato, but that Xenophon points us toward a type of Socratic irony that is itself distinct. This type of irony is more direct than the solipsistic mode of *eirōneia* that is sometimes associated with Socrates in Plato, and is deployed by Xenophon's Socrates in his nonelenctic encounters with others. This distinct type of irony is connected with the similarly unique approach Xenophon's Socrates employs in attempting to educate others.

SOCRATIC IRONY AND MOCKERY IN *MEMORABILIA* 3.1-7

At *Memorabilia* 2.6, Socrates discusses with Critoboulos the qualities that make an individual desirable as a friend, as well as the techniques by which one can gain the friendship of such desirable individuals. Likening the pursuit of friends to the practice of hunting, Socrates stresses that the techniques deployed must be suited to the prey in question. In hunting friends, one must not engage in swift pursuit (*kata podas*), as with the hunting of hares; nor must one deploy deception (*apatēi*), as with the hunting of birds; finally, one must not use force (*biai*), as one does with enemies. Capturing a friend against his will, and trying to keep him prisoner like a slave, Socrates explains, will produce enmity rather than friendship (2.6.9). To catch a friend, then, one must use charms (*epōidas*) and drugs (*philtira*), just like the spell the Sirens used in attracting Odysseus (2.6.10).

The spell itself must also be fitted to the listener. The Sirens address Odysseus, for example, as “much-praised” (*poluain’*), and as the “great glory of the Achaeans” (*mega kudos Achaiōn*, 2.6.11), and Socrates explains that the Sirens sang in this way only to those who aspired toward virtue (*tois ep’ aretēi philotimoumenois*, 2.6.12). As Critoboulos rightly surmises, the song must be suitable for its audience so that the one being praised does not think that he is being mocked (*katagelōnta*), for to praise one for his beauty who knows that he is ugly will create further enmity and drive him away (2.6.12).

This passage invites comparison with the irony of the Platonic Socrates, and specifically with his ironic praise of his interlocutors. In the *Euthyphro*, for example, Socrates praises the eponymous interlocutor for his wisdom, and professes his desire to learn what piety is from him. This pretense is maintained throughout the dialogue, even after Euthyphro is repeatedly unable to provide an adequate definition of piety. As has been argued, the supposed pedagogical function of such irony is predicated on Socrates’ interlocutor remaining unaware of his ironic comportment. By praising Euthyphro for his wisdom, Socrates draws Euthyphro into an elenctic encounter, one that can lead to his moral improvement by cleansing him of his self-ignorance.⁴¹ Hence, this element of praise, discussed at *Memorabilia* 2.6 as the kind of charm one must use in order to gain friends, is reminiscent of a particular interpretation of the Socratic practice of irony as it is depicted by Plato.

Nevertheless, there are crucial differences between these two practices. First, the praise of which Socrates speaks in the

Memorabilia is not connected with any disavowal of knowledge on his part. In this sense, if we did label the practice that Socrates is describing at *Memorabilia* 2.6 as irony, we would at the very least need to acknowledge that it seems quite different from the phenomenon of Socratic irony as it is practiced in Plato. As Louis-André Dorion notes, if we understand by Socratic irony “a dialectical strategy that consists in concealing knowledge and feigning ignorance, one must admit that this form of irony is not practiced by Socrates in the *Memorabilia*. . . . If, however, we mean by irony the practice of mocking someone by saying something contrary to what we want to make understood, there are a number of passages in the *Memorabilia* . . . and in the other Socratic writings . . . that attest to this form of irony.”⁴² Yet, that mode of irony, Dorion argues, is much less distinctive and much less original than the Platonic version that involves feigning ignorance.

There is a second crucial difference, however, that points to something distinctive and interesting about the practice of irony by the Xenophontic Socrates. Euthyphro, for example, in the dialogue that bears his name, is depicted as completely unaware of his own ignorance, so much so that he never stops to question Socrates’ praise of him. In the *Memorabilia*, however, Socrates seems to suggest that the objects of these praise incantations are aware of their ignorance—this, at least, is the implication behind his recommendation that to praise someone for qualities that he knows that he does not possess is more likely to repel him than to win his friendship. This signals an important difference between Xenophon’s presentation of Socratic irony and many of the characteristic examples of that

practice that we find in Plato. In Plato, Socrates praises interlocutors like Euthyphro for qualities he appears to suspect they lack, but that they think they possess. By contrast, Xenophon's Socrates praises his interlocutors for qualities they know they do not possess.⁴³

This passage also suggests that there is a fine line between praise and mockery, one that Xenophon's Socrates exploits in pursuing his pedagogical goals. And if we turn to the conversations that Socrates conducts with his fellow citizens at *Memorabilia* 3.1–7, we see that despite the recommendation at 2.6 that praise ought to be fitted to the listener so he does not take such praise as mockery, Socrates does employ a kind of ironic mockery in attempting to motivate his interlocutors to learn what they need to know in order to be useful to their city. By examining some of these conversations in close detail, we can see this distinctive mode of irony in operation.

At *Memorabilia* 3.3, Socrates converses with a man who has just been chosen as a cavalry commander. He begins by asking the man why he desired the office of cavalry commander, but before the man has a chance to answer, Socrates states that it could not have been in order to have the privilege of leading the cavalry charge, since that honor goes to the mounted archers (3.3.1). To this, the man gives his assent. Socrates then proceeds to eliminate other possible answers: his goal could not have been to become recognized, since even madmen (*hoi mainomenoi*) are recognized by everyone (3.3.1); perhaps it is likely that he wants to turn over the cavalry to the city in a better condition than they were in when he assumed the command (3.3.2). The man again assents to both of these

statements. At this point, Socrates asks his first open-ended question: since the cavalry commander has been chosen to command men and horses, Socrates asks how he intends to improve the horses (3.3.3). When the man answers that he does not think that it is his job (*ouk emon oimai to ergon einai*), but that each man must care for his own horse (3.3.3), Socrates asks how he would be able to benefit the city if his men end up with malnourished and badly trained mounts (3.3.4). The man responds that Socrates is of course correct, and he will try to care for the horses as much as he is able (3.3.4).

Socrates then starts on a series of rhetorical questions: Will you also try to improve the men (3.3.5)? Will you first train them to mount better (3.3.5)? Before a campaign, will you train your men to fight on the same kind of ground the enemy occupy (3.3.6)? Will you attend to training your men to bring down as many of the enemy as possible while remaining mounted (3.3.7)? Have you considered sharpening the souls of your troops and arousing their rage against the enemy (3.3.7)? The cavalry commander gives his assent to each of these questions/suggestions. When Socrates then asks if he has considered how to get his men to obey him, the commander responds by asking Socrates what he thinks the best way would be to encourage them to obey (3.3.8). Socrates then states: I suppose (*dēpou*)⁴⁴ you know this, that in all matters men are most willing to obey those who they think are best. During an illness, they think this is whoever is most skilled in medical matters, and they obey this man most, and while on a ship whoever is most skilled in piloting, and in farming the one with most skill in agriculture. (3.3.9) The cavalry commander readily

gives his assent to this statement, and to Socrates' subsequent claim that in horsemanship as well the one who knows what is best concerning the activity in question will most readily receive the obedience of others. Yet, such knowledge itself will not be enough, Socrates claims. The cavalry commander must also show them that it will be better and safer (*kallion te kai sōtēriōteron*) to obey him than not, and for this it will be necessary to concern oneself with the ability to speak well (*epimeleisthai dein kai tou legein dunasthai*). Just as the Athenian chorus so outshines its rivals at Delos because of Athenian love of honor (*philotimia*), so would the Athenian cavalry exceed all others if someone would care for it (*ei tis epimelētheiē*) in the same way, by teaching the knights that they will win honor and glory by performing their tasks well. Thus, the cavalry commander who wishes to benefit the city by improving the men under his command must know how to gain the willing obedience of his men by exhorting (*protrepein*) them in this way (3.3.10-12).

What should we make of this exchange between Socrates and the cavalry commander? To start, much of the advice Socrates provides concerning the training of cavalry recalls that which Xenophon himself offers in his work *On the Cavalry Commander*.⁴⁵ The emphasis on willing obedience, as was noted in the introduction to this chapter, is also central to Xenophon's social and political thought. Thus, the content of Socrates' advice raises the familiar suspicion that Xenophon has projected his own concerns and ideas onto his Socrates.⁴⁶ This may very well be true, at least in terms of the *content* of Socrates' discussion with the cavalry commander; the manner

in which he conducts the conversation, however, might more plausibly be regarded as distinctively Socratic.

First, Socrates asks only one truly open-ended question: how do you propose to improve the horses? Socrates does not start with this open-ended question, but builds to it after having asked a series of questions that clearly signal what the “correct” answer is. The man first responds that this is not something he thinks he needs to concern himself with as a cavalry commander, and when Socrates illustrates that he does indeed need to care for such things, the man avers that he will dedicate himself to these concerns. The remainder of Socrates’ questions are again posed in such a way that the correct answer is obvious. At the same time, however, it appears equally evident to the reader that the correct answer was not entirely obvious to Socrates’ interlocutor before the question was asked. What we see in this exchange, then, is a very subtle mode of questioning, one that reveals the ignorance of Socrates’ interlocutor without doing so directly and explicitly. Socrates’ interlocutor is never forced to acknowledge his ignorance, explicitly and publicly, since Socrates himself provides the correct answers to his questions within those very questions themselves.

This type of questioning does involve a kind of irony, insofar as Socrates pretends that his interlocutor already knows the correct answers to the questions he is asking. Yet it is a mode of irony that is at once both more subtle and more direct than the irony characteristic of the Platonic Socrates. It is more subtle insofar as it is less clear to those who may be present that Socrates does not think that his interlocutor has the answer to the question he is asking. It is more direct insofar as

this is something that is more readily apparent to the interlocutor himself. Socrates' "hint" as to what the correct answer to his question is allows the interlocutor to recognize that he does not know the answer himself. Yet it compels such recognition without forcing the interlocutor to acknowledge his ignorance publicly. In this respect, this mode of questioning can be understood as a form of ironic mockery. The form of Socrates' questions functions as an assurance that he thinks his interlocutors already know the answers to these questions; given that they do not, they may reach the conclusion that such an assurance is only a mocking pretense.

This last point is something we can see in operation if we look to some of the variations of this mode of questioning that occur later in book 3 of the *Memorabilia*. At *Memorabilia* 3.5 Socrates converses with Pericles (son of the fifth-century general), and here his irony is more transparent to his interlocutor. Socrates begins by praising Pericles, stating that his election as general has given him hope that the city will become better in military matters (3.5.1). Pericles, however, is doubtful that the Athenians will be able to return to their former military glory, placing the blame squarely on the Athenians themselves. The Athenians, unlike the Spartans, do not show proper reverence for their elders, they mock those who care for (*epimelomenōn*) their physical fitness, they disdain (*kataphronein*) their rulers, and are far more concerned with their private (and petty) interests and quarrels than with the common good (3.5.4). Socrates, however, notes that the Athenians are capable of being disciplined (*eutaktoi*), pointing to the examples of the Athenian fleet and choruses (3.5.5-6, 18). Socrates suggests that the problem with the infantry and

cavalry is due to the incompetence of the officers, rather than to any inherent lack of discipline on the part of the soldiers themselves (3.5.21). Echoing the conclusion he reaches with the cavalry commander at *Memorabilia* 3.3, Socrates states that no one attempts to rule over choristers or dancers who does not have knowledge of such matters; while all choristers and dancers can clearly demonstrate where they learned about such matters, most generals are improvisors (*autoschediazousin*, 3.5.21). At the same time, he claims that he does not think that Pericles is like most of the other generals in this respect: I do not think that you, at any rate, are such a person, but I think that you are able to speak no less about when you began to learn about being a general as when you began to learn about wrestling. And I think that you remembered many of the things concerning generalship that you heard from your father, and many other things you gathered from wherever one is able to learn something useful when it comes to being a general. And I think you have been careful (*merimnan*) that it not escape your own notice that you are ignorant about one of the things that is useful for generalship, and if you recognize yourself not knowing some such thing, you seek the ones who know these things, sparing neither gifts nor gratitude, so that you might learn from them the things you do not know and so you will have good coaches. (3.5.22-23) Pericles replies that it has not escaped him (*oulanthaneis me*) that Socrates does not in fact think that he cares for these things (*toutōn epimeleisthai*); rather, he thinks that Socrates is attempting to teach him that someone who wants to be a general needs to study all of these things. And Pericles readily consents that Socrates is correct (3.5.24). The

conversation ends with Socrates providing the young Pericles with some tactical advice concerning the defense of the mountain passes leading to Boeotia.

In Socrates' conversation with Pericles, we can see even more clearly the dynamic articulated at *Memorabilia* 2.6, but with one significant twist. Socrates indeed praises Pericles twice during their conversation, once at its commencement, and again in distinguishing between Pericles and most other generals. And it would also appear that Pericles is aware of his ignorance, since he quickly recognizes that Socrates is praising him for possessing qualities that he does not in fact possess. Yet, according to the strategy for "hunting" friends outlined at *Memorabilia* 2.6, we would expect that, if deployed correctly, Pericles would not recognize the falsity of Socrates' praise. Recall that the advice Socrates gives is that the praise must be well suited to the listener, so that the one being praised does not, recognizing that he does not possess the qualities that he is being praised for possessing, take such praise as mockery. What should we make of this discrepancy?

One approach would be to interpret Socrates' conversation with Pericles as a failure, but the outcome of the conversation itself hardly warrants that conclusion. The two part on amicable terms, with Pericles grateful for the tactical advice he receives from Socrates concerning the defense of Attica. Rather, it would seem that this encounter illustrates that the intention behind such praise is that it is taken as misplaced—in other words, that the interlocutor does recognize, in a sense, that he is being mocked. This recognition, moreover, seems necessary to the kind of teaching that Xenophon's Socrates is attempting to provide. As mentioned above, Xenophon's

Socrates only rarely engages in the *elenchus*; thus, his primary method of improving his interlocutors, or to put it in Xenophon's terms, being useful to them, is not that of refuting their beliefs. Rather, as we can see from Socrates' interactions with the cavalry commander and the young Pericles, he benefits them by getting them to realize that they lack the characteristics necessary to perform the tasks that they wish to perform well, and by motivating them to educate themselves so that they can excel at those tasks.⁴⁷

More explicitly, we can compare the connection between irony and the *elenchus* with the dynamic operating here. If we follow the pedagogical interpretation of Socratic irony outlined by Iakovos Vasiliou, then the success of Socrates' practice of irony is dependent on its victim remaining unaware that he is in fact the victim of such irony. Irony, on this reading, is used to lure Socrates' interlocutors into a dialectical encounter. The interlocutor is then benefited by having his beliefs refuted, and that refutation is made possible through the use of irony. In Xenophon, in contrast, the mode of irony practiced by Socrates (the mode of ironic praise described at *Mem.* 2.6) appears just as successful when it is perceived by its interlocutor, and this is because the interlocutors against whom it is deployed are aware of their own ignorance when it comes to the matters being discussed. Socrates' irony, in this case, provides a gentle way for him to suggest to his interlocutors that he is aware of their ignorance without forcing them to acknowledge it publicly; it thus serves to inspire them to acquire the knowledge they need in order to become worthy of such praise.

In his conversation with Glaucon in *Memorabilia* 3.6, however, Socrates' approach is far more direct, and his mockery is much less subtle. Glaucon, we are told, had been attempting to achieve a position of political leadership in the city. His attempts, however, had been rather unsuccessful, and he had made himself into an object of ridicule in the eyes of the *polis* (*katagelaston onta*, 3.6.1). Socrates begins by asking Glaucon if he has decided to become leader of the city, to which Glaucon assents (3.6.2). Socrates then praises this goal, explaining that if Glaucon accomplishes it, he will then be able to obtain whatever he desires, be capable of helping his friends and increasing his household, and his name will be known, like that of Themistocles, throughout Greece and perhaps even in barbarian lands (3.6.2). Glaucon, we are told, became puffed up (*emegaluneto*) when he heard these words, and gladly remained in Socrates' company (3.6.3). From the start, then, Socrates uses praise in order to "catch" Glaucon—to engage him in conversation so that he can attempt to check his political ambition—in a way that is reminiscent of the Platonic Socrates.

Once he has done so, Socrates begins to interrogate Glaucon's readiness for a position as a political leader. After soliciting Glaucon's assent to the claim that acquiring such honor will require benefiting the city, he asks Glaucon how he plans to do so (3.6.3). Glaucon gives no answer—Xenophon describes him as remaining silent as if he were considering the question for the first time (*diesiōpēsen, hōs an tote skopōn hopothen archoito*)—so Socrates offers a suggestion (3.6.4). If you wanted to increase the household of a friend, you would try to make him richer; so, he asks Glaucon, will you also try to

make the city wealthier (*plousiōteran*)? Glaucon agrees that he will do so, and further agrees that the city would be wealthier if its revenues (*prosodoi*) increased. Socrates then asks Glaucon what the sources and total of the city's current revenues are, adding the assurance "for it is clear (*dēlon*) that you have considered (*eskepsai*) this" (3.6.5). Glaucon responds that he has not considered these things (*tauta ge ouk epekemmai*). If you have neglected (*paraelipes*) learning about the city's revenues, Socrates continues, then tell us about the city's expenditures, "for it is clear (*dēlon*) that you intend to eliminate those that are excessive." Glaucon responds that he has not had the time to investigate these matters either.

Socrates' questions to Glaucon are consistently open-ended, forcing Glaucon to admit that he has no knowledge of how he can make the city wealthier. At the same time, they are inflected with Socrates' apparent confidence that Glaucon has in fact considered the matters under discussion, as evidenced by his repeated use of *dēlon*. Yet, Socrates refrains from concluding from Glaucon's admissions that he is completely ignorant of political affairs; rather, he maintains a particular kind of pretense, one that presumes that his interlocutor does possess the knowledge about which he is inquiring.

Socrates concludes that they ought to move on from discussing how to make the city wealthier, since it would seem impossible to care for (*epimelēthēnai*) the city's expenditures and revenues without knowing what they are (3.6.6). To this, Glaucon objects that it is possible to enrich the city with the resources taken from its enemies (3.6.7). Socrates agrees, but insists that wealth can be acquired in this way only if one is stronger than one's enemies. Hence, to rely on military victory

to enrich the city requires knowledge of the city's military strength (*dunamin*) and that of its enemies; otherwise, the city will end up losing resources if it imprudently chooses to fight wars against its military superiors (3.6.8). When Glaucon agrees, Socrates asks him to explain the strength of the city's infantry and navy, and that of its enemies. After Glaucon responds that he is not able to provide that information from memory, Socrates requests that he go fetch any notes that he has taken concerning these matters, since he would be very pleased to hear about them (3.6.9). Glaucon, of course, does not possess any such notes.

At this point, Socrates moves to a further topic, while still maintaining the pretense that Glaucon's oversight in this matter is not indicative of his complete ignorance and incompetence. Thus he states: "For perhaps on account of the great importance of these matters, and because you have only just now begun to exercise political leadership, you have not yet investigated them" (3.6.10). Socrates continues, "I know (*oid'*) that you already have attended to (*soi ēdē memelēke*) the defense of the city's territory, and that you know (*oistha*) which garrisons and troops are well placed and which are not." He is also sure that Glaucon will propose that the city strengthen the garrisons that are strategically well-placed, and eliminate those that are not (3.6.10). Glaucon responds that, on the contrary, he will recommend the elimination of all the garrisons. When Socrates asks how Glaucon knows the garrisons are poorly maintained, he says that he is guessing (*eikazō*), to which Socrates responds by asking whether they ought to wait until they know, and are no longer guessing, before offering such advice.

Finally, turning to the topic of the silver mines at Laurium (3.6.12), he tells Glaucon that he is sure that he has not visited them and thus could not explain why the revenues from them have fallen recently; when Glaucon confirms that he has not visited them, Socrates says that given that the land there is unhealthy, this will serve as a fitting excuse (*prophasis*) should he be asked to give advice on the matter. At this point, Glaucon claims that he is being mocked (*skōptomai*). Finally, when Glaucon admits that his uncle will not even allow him to look after his household, Socrates asks how he can possibly think that he will be able (*dunētheiēs*, 3.6.14)⁴⁸ to persuade all the Athenians that they should entrust the affairs of the city to him if he cannot even persuade his own uncle to entrust his personal affairs to him (3.6.15).

The tenor of Socrates' conversation with Glaucon is thus quite different from that of his conversation with Pericles. While the latter does recognize that Socrates is only pretending that he believes that he is an expert concerning generalship, the mockery conveyed by such pretense is fairly gentle. With Glaucon, however, such mockery is both more direct and more biting. Socrates' repeatedly forces Glaucon to acknowledge his ignorance, while at the same time repeatedly pretending that Glaucon does possess at least some knowledge that would make him a competent political leader. While Socrates' opening gambit of praising Glaucon's ambition to be a political leader needs to remain hidden in order to accomplish its intended goal of luring Glaucon into a discussion, these latter ironies are meant to be recognized by Glaucon as the kind of mockery that they are.

In these chapters from the *Memorabilia*, we can thus see that Socrates' approach is, as is suggested at 2.6, fitted to the particular individual with which he is engaged. At the same time, we can also see that his irony is not confined to the ironic praise discussed in that passage, and, moreover, that it is not always his goal that his interlocutor remain free from the suspicion that he is being ridiculed. With those interlocutors who appear to be aware of their own ignorance, such as the anonymous cavalry commander and the young Pericles, Socrates' approach consists in a form of gentle mockery that prods them to acquire the knowledge that they need to succeed in their chosen occupations. With those interlocutors who persist in their confidence that they already know what they need to be successful, Socrates' mockery appears both harsher and more direct.

We also see this more direct use of mockery on display if we return to *Memorabilia* 4.2, and the early stages of Socrates' encounter with Euthydemus.⁴⁹ Xenophon introduces Socrates' first encounter with Euthydemus by informing the reader that he will explain Socrates' approach to dealing with those who thought they had received the best education and prided themselves on their wisdom (4.2.1). Euthydemus, we learn, thought himself distinguished (*diapherein*) among those of his age group in wisdom on account of the fact that he had amassed a large collection of the writings of poets and wise men. During his first encounter with Euthydemus, one of Socrates' companions asks whether Themistocles became distinguished (*diēnegke*) among the citizens of Athens by associating with some wise man (*sunousian tinos tōn sophōn*)

or was it by nature (*phusei*), and Socrates, wanting to move (*boulomenos kinein*) Euthydemus, says that it is foolish (*euēthes*) to think that one can become accomplished in political matters, which is the greatest of all deeds, by oneself (*apo tautomatou*), while one cannot even do so in the lesser crafts without competent teachers (4.2.2). Thus, while Socrates is ostensibly responding to his companion's question, his remark is actually directed toward Euthydemus in an attempt to urge the young man to question his own competency to engage in political affairs.⁵⁰

While Socrates implies that Euthydemus is foolish in his first encounter with the young man, it is their second encounter that is most illuminating for explicating Socrates' use of mockery. Euthydemus remains reluctant to join Socrates and his circle, Xenophon reports, because of his reluctance to betray any wonder (*thaumazein*) at Socrates' wisdom (4.2.3). Socrates, sensing this reluctance, tears into Euthydemus, mocking the pride he takes in being self-taught. He imagines the exordium Euthydemus has prepared for addressing the Assembly along the following lines, announcing it to those who are currently gathered: I have never, at any time, men of Athens, learned anything from anyone, nor when I have heard that others are capable in speech and action did I seek to meet them, nor did I attend (*epemelēthēn*) to finding a knowledgeable teacher—but I have done the opposite of all these things. I have continuously avoided not only learning anything from anyone, but also the appearance of having done so. Nevertheless, whatever happens to pop into my head, I will recommend to you. (4.2.4) As Josiah Ober demonstrates, the

general suspicion of clever speaking in democratic Athens generated two interrelated rhetorical *topoi*: accusations that one's opponent was a clever speaker and/or professionally trained rhetorician, and claims that one was oneself an incapable and amateur speaker.⁵¹ While Euthydemus prides himself on his skill and wisdom, there is nothing skillful or wise in the speech that Socrates places in his mouth. That is precisely Socrates' point in composing the speech as he does: without a real education, Euthydemus will be capable of doing nothing more than aping the familiar tropes he himself has heard from others. He is, in short, far from being "self-taught."

The humor of the scene gathers force when Socrates next speculates on how Euthydemus might adapt this speech to other occasions—specifically to a decision concerning medicine: From no one, at any time, men of Athens, have I learned the doctor's art nor did I seek a teacher among those who are doctors. For I have continuously avoided not only learning anything from the doctors, but also the appearance of having learned this art. Nevertheless, give the task of medical matters (*to iatrikon ergon*) to me; for I will attempt to learn by experimenting on you. (4.2.5) The joke here recalls Socrates' earlier point that it is foolish to think that one can practice the art of statesmanship without expert teaching, especially since everyone would admit that none of the less noble arts can be practiced well without expert learning. Euthydemus' claim, transferred to the sphere of medical practice, is made to appear patently absurd. And following Socrates' mock speeches, Xenophon notes that everyone present laughed (*egelasan*, 4.2.5).

While these passages do involve pretense, they do not involve the pretense that Euthydemus possesses the knowledge that he needs to advise the Assembly well. Socrates' pretense, rather, consists in imagining how Euthydemus might attempt to establish his authority to advise the *dēmos*; in so doing, Socrates characterizes such claims as ridiculous. Thus, while it is important to note that Socrates is still not addressing Euthydemus directly at this point, it would be difficult to maintain that his mock speeches are in fact examples of irony.⁵² Socrates explicitly names Euthydemus, and Xenophon's description of the passage makes it clear that both Euthydemus and those present know that Euthydemus could hear what Socrates is saying. Rather than irony (or rather than ironic mockery), what we get here is a very direct and explicit form of mockery. Socrates ridicules, viciously, both Euthydemus' confidence in his ability to participate in politics and the beliefs underpinning that confidence.

From these four Socratic conversations, we can see that Socrates' use of humor in the *Memorabilia* ranges from a gentle and somewhat transparent form of irony to outright mockery of his interlocutors. What connects these modes of humor is that Socrates' interlocutors are meant to recognize that they are being mocked, and this is also what distinguishes the practice of both humor and irony by Xenophon's Socrates from that of his Platonic counterpart. While Plato's Socrates only rarely engages in direct mockery, and his *eirōneia* is a solipsistic form of irony, Xenophon depicts a Socrates who is not only more direct in his mockery of others, but also more successful in his conversations with his interlocutors. In the

following section, we turn to analyzing the connections between the pedagogical approach of Xenophon's Socrates and his use of such humor and irony.

SOCRATIC IRONY AND SOCRATIC TEACHING

As Xenophon explains, the core of his defense of Socrates consists in demonstrating his usefulness to his friends, family members, and fellow citizens. Considering his fellow citizens in particular, and hence, the city of Athens, Socrates' usefulness did not take the form of seeking and assuming any positions of leadership; like his Platonic counterpart, Xenophon's Socrates willingly abstains from seeking political power, and lacks the ambition for political leadership that his interlocutors, like Pericles, Glaucon, and Euthydemus, possess.⁵³ Unlike Cyrus, Xenophon's Socrates was not a leader himself, but "a teacher of leaders."⁵⁴ And his teaching, for the most part, consisted in the moral advice he provided to his interlocutors.⁵⁵

Socrates' advice to his interlocutors, as we saw in the previous section, emphasizes the need for knowledge if one is going to become a useful and effective leader capable of contributing to the flourishing of the *polis*. At the same time, the kind of knowledge Xenophon's Socrates discusses with his interlocutors is not the same kind of philosophical knowledge pursued by the Platonic Socrates in his elenctic encounters. In the *Euthyphro*, for example, the kind of knowledge sought is the philosophical knowledge of what piety is; given that Plato's Socrates considers knowledge to be both necessary and sufficient for acting virtuously, knowledge of what piety is will

lead Euthyphro to act piously. Xenophon's Socrates, however, focuses on what are, in comparison, more mundane areas of competence, such as knowledge of the city's revenues and the methods that could be used to increase them (*Mem.* 3.6.4-7), and he argues that it is the possession of such knowledge, and the esteem that comes from being recognized as possessing such knowledge, that can generate the willing obedience of those whom one wishes to lead.

As noted previously, the overlap between this kind of mundane advice given by Socrates and the recommendations made by both Xenophon and some of his characters in his other works has often led to the suspicion that such "Socratic" advice is not very Socratic at all. Yet, the distinctiveness of Xenophon's Socrates ought to be located not in the specific advice that he gives, but in the way he attempts to teach others. Along these lines, the different types of knowledge emphasized by Socrates in Plato and Xenophon point toward their distinct treatments of *enkrateia* (mastery of oneself). As was noted in the introduction, while Plato's Socrates believes that *enkrateia* is a consequence of possessing knowledge, Xenophon's Socrates maintains that *enkrateia* is a precondition for acquiring such knowledge in the first place.⁵⁶ The importance Xenophon's Socrates places upon *enkrateia* as the precondition for acquiring knowledge explains why—despite the fact that the kind of knowledge Xenophon's Socrates urges his interlocutors to acquire requires a lower level of intellectual sophistication than the more philosophically demanding knowledge sought by the Platonic Socrates—others nonetheless fail to acquire it. Without the mastery of oneself that *enkrateia*

entails, one is too distracted by desires for sleep, food, drink, and sexual pleasure to learn those things that will enable one to be useful to one's friends, family, and fellow citizens (4.5.9-10). What is difficult is not acquiring the knowledge that one needs in order to be useful to others, but acquiring the *enkrateia* necessary to gain such knowledge.⁵⁷

The importance of *enkrateia*, however, is often downplayed by Socrates' interlocutors, as it is by Critoboulos in the *Oeconomicus*. While Socrates stresses the need for *enkrateia* if one is to manage one's household well (1.22-23), Critoboulos quickly assures Socrates that he has already examined himself (*autos emauton exetazōn*) and found that he possesses this quality (2.1). What he wants to learn from Socrates are the types of knowledge necessary for household management (4.1). Socrates has already emphasized, however, that such knowledge does not always end up being profitable to those who possess it (1.16), and it is only those who pursue such endeavors with care (*epimeleia*) who succeed (2.17-18). This point is further emphasized by Ischomachus in the conversation that Socrates recounts to Critoboulos by way of providing him with the knowledge that he seeks. Having received Ischomachus' instruction concerning the art of farming, Socrates asks why it is that so many fail to succeed at this endeavor when the knowledge required is so easy to learn (20.1). Ischomachus responds that it is a lack of care (*epimeleia*) that leads individuals to neglect performing the tasks that they know they ought to perform (20.4), and that they shirk such tasks in order to avoid the toil that accompanies them. While Ischomachus does not directly state

that this lack of care is due to a lack of *enkrateia*, such a connection is consistent with Socrates' advice to Euthydemus in the *Memorabilia* that the ability to endure such toil is what enables one to attend to the tasks that are necessary to manage one's household well and benefit one's city (4.5.9-10). Indeed, Socrates' aim in recounting his conversation with Ischomachus to Critoboulos appears to be to emphasize the fact that acquiring knowledge of how to manage one's household is fairly easy; it is acquiring the *enkrateia* necessary to put such knowledge to good use that is much more important, and much more difficult.⁵⁸ Socrates' conversation with Critoboulos thus focuses our attention on the distinct challenge Socrates faces in attempting to make himself useful to his fellow citizens. Xenophon's Socrates, unlike his Platonic counterpart, never denies that he possesses knowledge; in fact, he appears to possess the kingly art (*basilikē technē*) needed to lead the *polis*.⁵⁹ Socrates could teach them such knowledge, but that knowledge will not benefit them unless they are motivated to learn it and to apply it with care.

Here, I would suggest that Xenophon's depiction of Socratic humor and irony operates within a similar dynamic. The type of ironic praise described at *Memorabilia* 2.6 serves as an inspiring reminder of the noble deeds (3.1.1) sought by those with whom Socrates converses at 3.1-7. With those who are aware of their own ignorance, like the cavalry commander and Pericles, Socrates' pretense that they already possess the knowledge that they need to be successful in their respective occupations signals their inability to excel in these occupations and achieve the renown and recognition they desire. From this

perspective, the irony of Xenophon's Socrates serves to illustrate the disconnect between the noble goals toward which such interlocutors aspire and their actual abilities to achieve them—it is by creating this recognition that Socrates can hope to provide his interlocutors with the motivation to attempt to acquire the knowledge that they lack. With interlocutors like Glaucon and Euthydemus, Socrates' deployment of more overt, and harsher, forms of mockery is consistent with their comparative resistance to recognizing their need for knowledge if they are to become successful political leaders. It is by repeatedly demonstrating that their confidence in their abilities to lead is foolishly and ridiculously misguided that Socrates hopes to disturb and ultimately puncture such self-assurance, thus pushing them to the point where they recognize the need to learn from others, and hence, become motivated to do so.

This psychological explanation for Socrates' use of irony and humor finds support in his conversation with Euthydemus. When Socrates recognizes that Euthydemus has changed his attitude toward him, he no longer "thoroughly disturbed him" (*dietaratten*; lit. "to thoroughly shake or stir up"), but "explained very plainly and clearly the things he thought it was necessary to know in order to act and to be excellent" (4.2.20). And, before his very first address to Euthydemus, Xenophon states that Socrates wanted to "move" (*kinein*) him. While such language is used to describe Socrates' general approach to educating Euthydemus, this language of "moving" and "disturbing" is particularly well-suited for describing the role of mockery in Socrates' encounter with the young man; mockery here takes a very physical dimension, literally pushing

Euthydemus from his former position. It is the shock, shame, and painfulness of this mockery that move Euthydemus to abandon his former position on education and seek Socrates' help in transforming himself.

• • •

The humor of Xenophon's Socrates is thus distinct from that of both his Aristophanic and his Platonic counterparts. Unlike his Platonic counterpart, he is much more willing to directly mock his interlocutors, even if such mockery ranges from subtle and gentle to overt and harsh. In this respect, the gelastic practices of Xenophon's Socrates resemble, in at least one respect, those of the Aristophanic Socrates insofar as they both engage in such mockery. Yet, while the mockery of the Aristophanic Socrates is an expression of intellectual superiority, that of Xenophon's Socrates is designed to expose his interlocutors' inability to achieve the noble goals for which they aim, and in doing so, to motivate them to seek the knowledge they need to achieve those goals. Xenophon thus illustrates how this aspect of Socratic humor was consistent with Socrates' aims as a teacher, and how it fit within the moral psychology expounded by Socrates in Xenophon's works.

In the opening section of this chapter, we saw how Xenophon's depiction of Socratic humor was driven by a concern over the accusation that Socrates believed that it was appropriate for elites to treat ordinary citizens with physical and verbal abuse. Lurking within this accusation, as the analysis of the Thersites scene suggests, was perhaps a more specific anxiety surrounding Socrates' supposed mockery of the

dēmos and Athenian democratic institutions. Xenophon responds by acknowledging these elements of Socratic practice, while demonstrating how they are part of what made Socrates *dēmotikos*. Just as Cyrus was able to use humor to manage the tensions introduced by his reorganization of the Persian army and then republic, so Socrates was able to use humor and irony to navigate the potential anxieties raised by his emphasis on his own moral and intellectual superiority within a democratic society that placed great emphasis on the egalitarian relationship between adult male citizens. According to Xenophon's depiction, Socrates was able to encourage aspiring political leaders to acquire the kinds of knowledge that would enable them to benefit both the *dēmos* and the city of Athens. His irony was a means of getting his interlocutors to realize the extent of their ignorance without forcing them to acknowledge such ignorance publicly; thus, it was a means of downplaying, rather than flaunting, his superiority. At the same time, Socrates was willing to express such superiority directly by mocking those who insisted on their knowledge.

In this sense, the use of humor by Xenophon's Socrates is a sign of the hierarchical relationships between him and his interlocutors.⁶⁰ Xenophon's Socrates never denies that he possesses knowledge, and the benefits dispensed during his conversations with others are decidedly one-sided—it is always Socrates who is beneficial and useful to his interlocutors, and not the other way around. In itself, however, this need not entail that the approach that Xenophon's Socrates takes with his interlocutors is antidemocratic. While Xenophon's Socrates emphasizes the importance of good leadership, and frames

such leadership in a way that mirrors the relationship he constructs with his interlocutors,⁶¹ the recognition that elites possess qualities that make them particularly useful to the Athenian *dēmos* and Athens' democratic regime was part of Athenian democratic ideology.⁶²

Along these lines, we might view Xenophon's depiction of Socratic humor as part of an immanent critique of Athenian democracy and its institutions.⁶³ Xenophon's Socrates does offer a balanced critique of Athenian democracy, insofar as he criticizes both ordinary citizens (*Mem.* 3.7.5–6) and political leaders (3.5.21–23). At the same time, the way Xenophon construes the kinds of relationship mentioned above risks reducing the Athenian *dēmos* and Socrates' interlocutors to an overly passive position.⁶⁴ Thus, while Xenophon may not envision such relationships as exploitative, insofar as the superior party in the relationship benefits the inferior, the absence of exploitation does not itself erase the anxiety that Xenophon's conceptions of leadership and friendship may carry with them certain antidemocratic implications.⁶⁵ This is especially so if we consider the emphasis placed on the ability of the *dēmos* to participate as more than just judges in the operation of Athenian democracy.⁶⁶

This tension is worth keeping in mind as we turn to Aristotle's analysis of the ethics and politics of humor. While Aristotle acknowledges that ironic forms of humor might constitute part of what it means to practice *eutrapelia* (the virtue that pertains to laughing and joking well), his analysis of *eutrapelia* appears to model its practice along more egalitarian grounds. From this perspective, we might read Aristotle's

analysis of *eutrapelia* and its ethical and political implications as informed by, yet in tension with, the Socratic forms of humor found in Aristophanes, Plato, and Xenophon.

CHAPTER FOUR

Aristotle, *Eutrapelia*, and Socratic *Eirōneia*

And he [Aristoxenus] says that he [Socrates] was at times quarrelsome, abusive, and hubristic in interactions with others.

Aristoxenus, *Vita Socratis*¹

This chapter offers an account of Aristotle’s virtue of *eutrapelia*—the virtue pertaining to laughing and joking well that he analyzes at *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.8—as an alternative to Socratic *eirōneia*. Before delving into the details of this interpretation, it will be useful to specify the precise nature and scope of this claim. In moving to Aristotle, we are dealing with a different kind of source for Socratic humor and irony than we find in those authors treated in the previous three chapters; Aristotle, of course, did not write Socratic dialogues, nor any work devoted specifically to the figure of Socrates. While there are many references to Socrates’ philosophical beliefs and practices throughout Aristotle’s works,² they are scattered, and framed by the particular philosophical concerns driving Aristotle’s analysis.

There is, however, a series of intriguing passages that provide the starting point for a commentary on Aristotle’s

views concerning Socratic *eirōneia*. First and foremost, Aristotle mentions Socrates as an example of those *eirōnes* who deny possessing reputable qualities (*ta endoxa aparnountai*), a mode of *eirōneia* that Aristotle indicates appears more refined (*chariesteroi . . . phainontai*) than others (*EN* 1127b22–26). Second, Aristotle appears to associate the practice of *eirōneia* with magnanimity (*EN* 1124b29–30) and, in a separate passage, connects Socrates with one particular conception of magnanimity—that which involves indifference to good and bad fortune (*An. Post.* 97b21). Taking these three passages together, we might conclude that Aristotle, in recognizing more refined versions of *eirōneia* and associating its practice with the virtue of magnanimity, offers a positive reevaluation of the concept; on the basis of the association of Socrates with both magnanimity and this more refined practice of *eirōneia*, moreover, we might further speculate that it was Aristotle’s assessment of Socratic *eirōneia* that motivated this positive reassessment.³

In what follows, I maintain that this is a plausible reconstruction of Aristotle’s view concerning Socratic *eirōneia* and its place within Aristotle’s ethical thought. At the same time, it is necessary to highlight the ambiguities and limits of this reconstruction. First, while a much later Peripatetic like Aspasius might claim that Aristotle did not believe that all forms of *eirōneia* were vicious, Aristotle’s discussion of *eirōneia* at *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.7 does not fully warrant this conclusion.⁴ Second, Aristotle’s association of *eirōneia* with magnanimity is itself ambiguous; while Aristotle notes that the magnanimous man will speak truthfully except when he

addresses the many, it is unclear whether this deviation from truthfulness is identified as a type of *eirōneia* or distinguished from the type of insincerity Aristotle associates with *eirōneia* at *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.7.⁵ Third, though Aristotle cites Socrates as an example of one particular type of magnanimity in the *Posterior Analytics*, it has long been a matter of scholarly debate whether Aristotle endorses this philosophically minded conception of magnanimity in *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.3 or one that is more civic-minded.⁶ All three of these considerations raise a more general question concerning Aristotle's engagement with Socrates: to what extent did Aristotle consider Socrates to be a philosophical and/or moral exemplar? As the epigraph to this chapter indicates, the Peripatetic view of Socrates was not, on the whole, uniformly positive. Aristoxenus, a fourth-century Peripatetic, wrote, in his *Life of Socrates*, that Socrates was abusive and hubristic. He also labeled Socrates a bigamist, a charge that was repeated by other Peripatetics (fr. 57), and taken seriously enough that the Stoic Panaetius responded to it (fr. 58).⁷ Louis-André Dorion notes, moreover, that this claim may be one that can be traced back to a lost work by Aristotle.⁸ Finally, as will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5, Aristo of Ceos, another Peripatetic philosopher, maintained that Socratic *eirōneia* was a vicious form of *alazoneia* (boastfulness).⁹

While Aristotle's broader treatment of Socrates will be addressed in more detail in the following section, for now it is sufficient to note that there are reasons to hesitate before claiming that Aristotle offers a positive reevaluation of *eirōneia* in general and of Socratic *eirōneia* in particular. At any rate,

Aristotle's association of *eirōneia* with magnanimity suggests that the scope for the practice of such a virtuous mode of *eirōneia* would be quite limited—limited, that is, to the interactions between magnanimous individuals and their inferiors. It is here that we can discern the starting point for thinking about *eutrapelia* as distinct from *eirōneia* when it comes to Aristotle's thoughts concerning the ethical and political dimensions of humor. While Aristotle does not explicitly discuss *eirōneia* in connection with his analysis of *eutrapelia* at *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.8, he does draw these connections elsewhere. In discussing *eutrapelia*, moreover, Aristotle identifies the sphere of its practice as the daily interactions between friends, strangers, and fellow citizens; while this broader framework is also that under which Aristotle treats *eirōneia*, he identifies truthfulness as the virtuous practice in such interactions. This suggests that *eutrapelia* is intended to govern a much wider range of contexts than *eirōneia*, and that the former ought not to be conflated with the latter.^{[10](#)}

The remainder of this chapter will focus on explicating these differences, with particular attention to the potential political dimensions of *eutrapelia*. The first section examines Aristotle's association of Socrates with *eirōneia* and magnanimity in order to explicate the claims made above concerning those connections. The second section of the chapter turns to Aristotle's analysis of *eutrapelia* and its potential connections with *eirōneia* as a particular gelastic practice. The third section situates both *eutrapelia* and *eirōneia* within the context of Aristotle's analysis of the "social virtues" that ought to govern

our everyday interactions with others by way of explaining what leads Aristotle to classify *eirōneia* as a vice. The fourth section explores the danger that hubristic modes of laughter and joking might pose to political order through a return to Demosthenes' speech *Against Konon*. This analysis indicates why Aristotle labels *eutrapelia* as "educated *hubris*" in the *Rhetoric*, and leads to the analysis in the fifth section of how such "educated *hubris*" might be cultivated. The final section of this chapter examines the political significance of *eutrapelia* (and the more general disposition it signifies) through an analysis of the political significance of Aristotle's choice of the word *eutrapelia* to identify the virtue pertaining to laughter and joking. This final section indicates the centrality of reciprocity to Aristotle's conception of *eutrapelia*, which highlights its key difference from the vertical practice of *eirōneia*.

ARISTOTLE'S SOCRATES, *EIRŌNEIA*, AND MAGNANIMITY

As noted above, the nature of Aristotle's testimony concerning Socrates is distinct from that of the authors considered in the previous three chapters. Given that Aristotle had no firsthand knowledge of Socrates, this makes him an even less likely source for solving the Socratic problem than these other authors.¹¹ Aristotle's discussions of Socrates are, moreover, primarily driven by his own philosophical concerns;¹² they are introduced by way of surveying the *endoxa* (those opinions, that for various reasons, carry some epistemic weight)¹³

relevant to a given topic. For example, in book 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle examines what he considers to be two important *endoxa* concerning *akrasia* (weakness of will) —that of the many, that it is possible for us to err even when we have knowledge of what we ought to do, given the power of appetite to overcome reason; and that of Socrates, that moral error is impossible if we have knowledge. As Socrates states in the *Protagoras*, and Aristotle notes at *Nicomachean Ethics* 1145b23–25, it would be strange if when knowledge was present in a man it could be mastered and dragged around like a slave. Aristotle’s sophisticated solution relies on a distinction between a universal decision (such as I will not smoke any more cigarettes) and the particular decisions that are issued in the applicable circumstances (such as I will not smoke this particular cigarette that my friend has just offered to me); what happens with the akratic is that he or she ceases to issue such a particular decision without, however, revoking or replacing it with a contrary decision. *Akrasia*, then, arises when there is a disconnect between our perceptual knowledge and the knowledge on the basis of which our universal decisions were made.¹⁴ In this sense, the many are correct that *akrasia* does happen, but Socrates is also correct to maintain that knowledge (in the form of such universal decisions) cannot be overcome by appetite.

It is worth recounting Aristotle’s analysis of *akrasia* here, since it is indicative of the manner in which Aristotle establishes his relationship with Socrates. As with his other philosophical predecessors, Aristotle clearly believes that at least some of Socrates’ beliefs hold sufficient epistemic weight

to make them worthy of consideration; at the same time, these examinations are always conducted in a critical light. Though Socrates was correct about the inability of appetite to master reason, he was ultimately wrong that *akrasia* is impossible. And this is closely connected with Aristotle's claim that Socrates failed to properly distinguish between distinct types of intellectual virtues. At *Eudemian Ethics* 1246b34-36, Aristotle notes that Socrates was correct to claim that nothing is stronger than *phronēsis* (practical wisdom), but wrong to hold that nothing is stronger than *epistēmē* (scientific knowledge); thus while Socrates was right to believe that *aretē* (virtue) is a form of *gnōsis* (cognition), he erred in identifying it with *epistēmē*.¹⁵ Elsewhere, Aristotle criticizes Socrates for equating courage with empirical knowledge (*MM* 1190b28-33; *EE* 1229a15, 1230a7; *EN* 1116b3-5) and for failing to recognize the importance of the irrational part of the soul for virtue (*MM* 1182a15-23).¹⁶

A similarly critical approach to Socrates is evident in Aristotle's analysis of *eirōneia* at *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.7. As noted above, it has been argued that Aristotle offers a positive reevaluation of *eirōneia*, one that was influenced by the Socratic practice of *eirōneia*.¹⁷ This argument is based on the distinction Aristotle draws between those *eirōnes* who deny possessing small and manifest things (*ta mikra kai ta phanera*), who are called humbugs and are rather despicable, and those who deny possessing reputable qualities (*ta endoxa*),¹⁸ who appear rather refined (1127b22-27). Aristotle further claims that *eirōneia* is less opposed to the virtue of truthfulness than its corresponding vice, *alazoneia* (1127b31-32). Given that

Socrates is named as an example of the latter group, it may be the case that Aristotle's assessment of the Socratic practice of *eirōneia* led him to draw a distinction between a base and a cultivated form of *eirōneia*.

As we saw in chapter 2, Aspasius' commentary provides an ancient precedent for the view that Aristotle identifies the specific type of *eirōneia* he associates with Socrates as unblameworthy. Yet, as the testimony of Aristo of Ceos indicates, this was not a universally shared view among Peripatetics; moreover, given the evidence we have from Aristoxenus, it is possible that Aspasius' positive view of Socratic *eirōneia* is a later development within the Peripatetic school, one that may have been influenced by the particular philosophical milieu in which Aspasius wrote. There are, in fact, other elements of Aristotle's discussion of *eirōneia* in *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.7 that suggest that Aristotle's use of Socrates as an example is more critical than it might at first appear. First, even though Aristotle does indicate that *alazoneia* is a worse vice than *eirōneia*, there is no reason to suppose that this judgment entails a positive reevaluation of the practice of *eirōneia*. In fact, there are other instances where Aristotle names a particular vice as more or less opposed to the virtuous mean than its counterpart: stinginess is held to be more opposed to liberality than prodigality (*EN* 1122a14-16); and smallness of soul is held to be more opposed to magnanimity than vanity (1125a32-34). By maintaining that prodigality and vanity are closer to the virtuous mean than their corresponding vices, Aristotle is not offering positive reevaluations of those vices. The indication of such an imbalance between two vices does indicate that one is *less*

blameworthy than the other, but it does not indicate that one is *unblameworthy*.

Second, though Aristotle cites Socrates as an example only in discussing those *eirōnes* who deny possessing reputable qualities, he would seem to fit just as well in the category of those who deny *ta mikra kai ta phanera*. As an example of that form of *eirōneia*, Aristotle names those who adopt the dress of the Spartans, which we see associated with Socrates in earlier sources.¹⁹ As Lowell Edmunds has argued, Socratic *eirōneia* possessed practical (i.e., nonverbal) dimensions that centered on issues of bodily comportment and dress. Practices like furrowing one's eyebrows, walking in a swaggering manner, putting on a grave face, and going barefoot (Ar. *Clouds* 362–63) are mannerisms that project an attitude of superiority,²⁰ and this appears to be the type of attitude that Aristotle has in mind in connecting this particular mode of *eirōneia* with *alazoneia*.²¹ Aristo of Ceos, moreover, identified precisely this kind of *eirōneia* with Socrates himself (fr. 14, VI–VIII).²² Thus, while Aristotle names only Socrates as an example of those *eirones* who deny possessing *ta endoxa*, at least one later Peripatetic thought that Socrates provided an example of the type of *eirōneia* Aristotle argues is actually a form of *alazoneia*.

Third, though it appears that Aristotle distinguishes between two types of *eirōneia*, his analysis suggests that there might be a third. In concluding his discussion of *eirōneia*, Aristotle writes: “Those who use *eirōneia* with moderation and do not dissimulate about that which is manifest and clear appear refined” (1127b29–31).²³ At first glance, it might appear that Aristotle is merely reiterating his description of those *eirones*

who deny *ta endoxa*; yet, there are important modifications in this passage that suggest otherwise. First, Aristotle adds the qualification that *eirōneia* needs to be used moderately (*metriōs*) in order to appear refined. Second, the wording of this passage recalls that which Aristotle also uses to describe the second type of *eirōneia*. Those *eirones* who appear to be *alazones* deny *ta mikra kai phanera*; in the passage quoted above, those who appear refined dissimulate concerning that which is not very manifest and clear (*peri ta mē lian empodōn kai phanera*). This suggests that dissimulation concerning *ta phanera* is not sufficient for classifying such *eirōneia* as a type of *alazoneia*; indeed, Aristotle notes that both excess and excessive deficiency (*hē lian elleipsis*) are boastful (1127b28–29). These two qualifications indicate that the distinction between *ta endoxa* and *ta mikra kai ta phanera* does not fully capture the difference between more refined and more vicious types of *eirōneia*. This is particularly evident if we consider some of the reputable qualities that Socrates denies possessing. While Socrates' denial of knowledge falls within this category, so does his denial that he has the ability to make and/or comprehend long speeches (e.g., Plat. *Prot.* 335c–336b). In the latter case, moreover, it is quite clear that Socrates does possess the reputable quality he denies possessing.

Taken together, these aspects of Aristotle's discussion of *eirōneia* are important for considering the extent to which the Socratic practice of *eirōneia* is figured as a positive practice. First, Aristotle classifies all forms of *eirōneia* as vicious, even that which he associates with Socrates; second, Aristotle's description of the boastful form of *eirōneia* also appears to fit the Socratic practice of *eirōneia*, and we have evidence that at

least one later Peripatetic drew this connection; third, it is unclear whether Socrates' practice of *eirōneia* could be described as moderate, or that he refrained from denying the possession of qualities that he clearly possessed. Thus, while Aristotle does name Socrates as an example of those *eirones* who, by denying *ta endoxa*, appear rather refined, Aristotle's analysis of *eirōneia* at *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.7 does not appear to warrant the further claim that Aristotle viewed Socratic *eirōneia* as a positive practice.²⁴

This reinterpretation of Aristotle's use of Socrates as an example of the *eirōn* is worth bearing in mind as we turn to his association of *eirōneia* with magnanimity. Aristotle states that the magnanimous individual "is a frank speaker on account of being disdainful, and he is truthful, except for when he is not truthful to the many on account of *eirōneia*" (*EN* 1124b29–30). Here, Aristotle notes that the magnanimous man—who, as a precondition for being magnanimous, must possess all the other virtues—will speak with *eirōneia* when he is interacting with his inferiors. If this is indeed the sense of this passage,²⁵ it would suggest that *eirōneia*, at least insofar as it is practiced by the truly magnanimous man, is not a vice. In this respect, Aristotle does make a place for *eirōneia* as an acceptable practice.

At the same time, it ought to be stressed that the space for such a nonvicious practice of *eirōneia* appears quite small—it is limited to the interactions that take place between the magnanimous individual and his inferiors. While this does not, in itself, make *eirōneia* a type of boastfulness, it does emphasize the connection between *eirōneia* and an attitude of

superiority.²⁶ Such an attitude is not, of course, a sign of viciousness in the case of the truly magnanimous individual. Yet it does suggest a lack of reciprocity, as do a number of the other characteristics Aristotle identifies with the magnanimous individual. The magnanimous individual, for example, will benefit others, but will be ashamed to be benefited by others, since to be benefited by others would lessen his status as superior (*EN* 1124b9–10). The connections between this type of superiority and the practice of *eirōneia* offer a vantage point from which we might consider *eutrapelia* as, on the whole, indicating a distinct type of social practice. The following three sections will attempt to unpack this distinction by explicating Aristotle’s analysis of *eutrapelia* and the ethical and political dimensions of its practice.

EUTRAPELIA AND EIRŌNEIA

At *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.8, Aristotle names *eutrapelia* (wittiness) as the virtue pertaining to laughter and joking, and as with the other virtues Aristotle discusses, it stands in relation to both an excess and a deficiency. Buffoons (*bōmolochoi*) are excessive with respect to laughter; they are desirous of raising laughter on all occasions, and they care more about producing laughter than about saying something decent (*euschēmona*) or not paining the individual they are mocking.²⁷ Boors (*agroikoi*), in contrast, will not utter anything laughable and are disgusted by the laughable things others say. Those who possess the virtue of wittiness—

eutrapeloi (sg. *eutrapelos*)—will joke and raise laughter in appropriate ways (*EN* 1128a3–10).

What does it mean to laugh and joke in appropriate ways? Aristotle raises this question in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, offering two possible answers: either appropriate laughter is that which avoids pain (*mē lupein*) and gives pleasure to the hearer, or it is that which is fitting for the free man (*mē aprepē eleutheriōi*). In the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle opts for the latter: the *eutrapelos* should seek to give pleasure to the individual of good judgment (*ho eu krinōn*), and need not refrain from paining the one being mocked (1234a18–24). Though the same conclusion is reached in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, more emphasis is placed on the avoidance of pain. While it appears impossible to categorize *eutrapelia* in terms of avoiding pain and giving pleasure (because different people find different things pleasant or hateful), the *eutrapelos* will not engage in all forms of jokes and laughter (*EN* 1128a29); nor will he avoid painful laughter altogether. Just as legislators might need to prohibit certain types of joking as forms of abuse (*loidorēma ti*, 1128a30–31), the *eutrapelos*, as a law unto himself (*nomos ōn heautōi*), will be able to judge in what contexts abusive joking would be appropriate (*EN* 1128a32).

Aristotle's discussion of *eirōneia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, however, is completely divorced from this discussion of laughter and joking. There, Aristotle's discussion of *eirōneia* is confined to his description of the virtue of truthfulness, which entails speaking and acting in a straightforward manner. The boaster (*alazōn*), in contrast, claims qualities for himself that he either does not possess or possesses to a lesser extent than

he claims,²⁸ while the ironist (*eirōn*) disavows or belittles his actual qualities (*EN* 1127a20–26). This separation of irony from laughter and joking may reflect Aristotle’s focus in *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.7 on the element of deceit associated with *eirōneia*. Yet, in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle alludes to the different forms of the laughable (*eidē geloiōn*) that had been discussed in the now-lost *Poetics* II, and appears to include the ironic as one of these modes (1419b7). In fact, he even recommends *eirōneia* as a mode of joking preferable to that of buffoonery, insofar as the ironist jokes for his own sake, while the buffoon jokes for the sake of others (1419b9–11).

As was discussed in chapter 2, this passage from the *Rhetoric* suggests that Aristotle considers *eirōneia* to be a particular type of gelastic practice, one in which the audience for the humor is the ironist himself. While this makes *eirōneia* preferable to buffoonery for Aristotle, it does not equate *eirōneia* with *eutrapelia*. Nor does this recommendation necessarily carry any ethical significance. In this passage, Aristotle is recommending a particular rhetorical technique that will be useful for an orator in contending with his opponent; to be effective, these stylistic choices must be fitting for the individual. Thus, when Aristotle contends that *eirōneia* is an appropriate mode of jesting for the free man (1419b6–8),²⁹ his emphasis is on what the audience will view as fitting given the orator’s character.³⁰

The distinction between *eutrapelia* and *eirōneia*, however, can best be grasped by attending to the particular social contexts Aristotle identifies in discussing these characteristics. It is to this that we now turn.

EUTRAPELIA AND CIVIC FRIENDSHIP

At *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.6–8, Aristotle discusses those “social virtues” that ought to govern our everyday interactions with others, and are geared toward promoting harmonious social interaction: friendliness, truthfulness (of which *eirōneia* is a related vice), and *eutrapelia*. Each of the three social virtues is connected with a particular quality or sphere of social interaction—truthfulness concerns truth; *eutrapelia* concerns the pleasure we take in amusements (*en tais paidiais*); and friendliness concerns pleasure in the other areas of life (*kata ton allon bion*, *EN* 1128b4–9). Yet, as we have already seen from the discussion of *eirōneia* in the *Rhetoric*, the boundaries between these three virtues are more porous than this classification suggests. What interests Aristotle about *eirōneia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is not only whether it is virtuous to tell the truth or not, but also to what extent truth telling shapes our social interactions with others. Likewise, the *eutrapelos* would not joke and laugh in ways that were overly quarrelsome (nor would he do so in ways that caused pleasure with the aim of flattering or being ingratiating). The social virtues, then, allow us to cause pain to and be critical of strangers, friends, and enemies, but require that we do so in a reciprocal way that avoids either dominating or being obsequious to those we encounter in our daily interactions.

It is in Aristotle’s discussion of the virtue of friendliness that this emphasis is most clear. Friendliness differs from actual friendship (the discussion of which occurs in books 8 and 9) in that it does not involve any emotion or love toward those we encounter; in this sense, it is oriented toward our interactions

with strangers,³¹ though it is also the state that underlies our interactions with both friends and enemies. “Friendliness” is best described as an intermediate state disposing us to cause pleasure and pain in the right way and on the right occasion to those we meet. The ingratiating person (*areskos*), unlike the “friendly,” will always please and never pain those he encounters; if he does so for monetary gain, he is called a flatterer (*kolax*); those who are peevish (*duskoloi*) or quarrelsome (*duserides*), on the other hand, oppose others in everything and do not care at all about causing pain to others. The one who occupies the intermediate state will generally aim to avoid causing pain or to share pleasure, but will do so within the parameters of what is fine and beneficial; in particular, he will object to sharing in pleasures if they are not fine or are harmful, and will choose, rather, to cause pain (*EN* 1126b11-20).

On this last point, Danielle Allen’s analysis of “friendliness,” friendship, and their connections to Aristotle’s account of justice is helpful. For Allen, while distributive justice concerns the distribution of goods such as wealth, corrective justice involves the distribution of the good of agency.³² In corrective justice, each party to the dispute is treated as equal. The social status of each individual is irrelevant; all that matters is who committed the injustice and who suffered it. What is “corrected” in corrective justice is the imbalance created by the act of injustice that marks the doer of injustice as the agent who acts and the sufferer of injustice as the subject to be acted upon. The public procedures of corrective justice, then, are what maintain the *polis* as a community of citizens who rule

and are ruled in turn by recognizing the equal agency of each citizen to share in ruling.

“Friendliness” and friendship also deal with the preservation of agency insofar as “friendship achieves what justice does.”³³ In claiming that “if people are friends there is no need of justice, but if they are just they still need friendship” (*EN* 1155a26-27), Aristotle calls attention to how friendship brings about what justice seeks to accomplish without recourse to legal procedures. In this sense, we can think of the virtue of “friendliness” as “a midway point between acquiescence and domination.”³⁴ Those who act toward others in accordance with the virtue of “friendliness” neither subordinate them to the position of subjects nor allow themselves to be so “subjected.” Likewise, those who act toward others in accordance with the virtue of wittiness will neither joke and laugh in ways that dominate others nor acquiesce in the domination of themselves or of others.

By situating Aristotle’s account of *eutrapelia* alongside the concerns with agency raised by the connections between wittiness and friendliness, we can discern the civic dimension of *eutrapelia* as a virtue. *Eutrapelia*, like friendliness, does not just help us get along with others in our daily interactions; rather, these virtues shape our interactions with our fellow citizens in ways that respect both their and our equal agency. Insofar as the *polis* is, for Aristotle and for other Greeks of the classical period, a community of free and equal citizens who share in ruling and being ruled in turn, the social virtues Aristotle adumbrates are crucial for generating and maintaining the reciprocal relationship necessary to political

life; necessary, in other words, to prevent the *political* relationship between citizens from devolving into one of mastery and servitude. Aristotle's conception of wittiness as a virtue indicates an appreciation for both how "everyday talk" between citizens shapes the ways in which they act toward and deliberate with each other, and how their everyday laughter and joking function in this way.³⁵

Attending to the political dimensions of Aristotle's discussion of friendliness also helps elucidate the viciousness of *eirōneia* within the context of our daily interactions with others. As was noted in the previous section, the *eirōneia* of the magnanimous man is figured as a device used by a superior toward his inferiors. While such *eirōneia* would be justified, in Aristotle's view, in the case of the truly magnanimous individual, it might also appear arrogant and boastful to those against whom it is practiced. As itself a form of contempt, the practice of *eirōneia* also carries with it the potential to anger those against whom it is deployed (*Rhet.* 1379b31). Finally, as was argued in chapter 2, *eirōneia* itself is a private form of joking, one where the ironist mocks his target for his own amusement; and when such *eirōneia* is perceived by its targets, as Plato well illustrates, it is often met with strong objection. Finally, while the *eirōn* might appear refined when he employs his *eirōneia* moderately, he might also appear to be boasting of his superiority. Based on these considerations, we can see how irony might disrupt the reciprocity that is central to Aristotle's conception of friendliness, insofar as it is perceived as an assertion of superiority and/or a refusal to engage with others on equal terms.³⁶

At the same time, the kind of laughter and joking that constitutes *eutrapelia* also carries with it the potential to disrupt such harmonious social interactions. These dangers are evident in Aristotle's alternative definition of *eutrapelia* in the *Rhetoric* as "educated *hubris*."

EUTRAPELIA AS EDUCATED HUBRIS

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defines *eutrapelia* as "educated *hubris*" (*pepaideumenē hubris*, 1389b12). *Eutrapelia* is educated *hubris* insofar as the forms of laughter and mockery with which it is associated may still pain its targets and portray them as inferior with respect to the fault that has been exposed. It is *educated hubris*, however, insofar as it requires that much of the aggressive current in such laughter be "educated and moulded . . . into a medium of reciprocated friendship."³⁷ Those who possess the virtue of *eutrapelia*, then, will be able to laugh and joke both at and with others in ways that are critical, while allowing them to continue to interact harmoniously in the future.

To explicate this definition of *eutrapelia*, it is helpful to turn to both Aristotle's understanding of the laughable (*to geloion*) and the concept of *hubris* more generally. Let us begin with the first. In the *Poetics*, the laughable is defined as some fault or something shameful that is both painless and not destructive (*Poet.* 1449a33–35); this definition, however, is specific to the production of the laughable through imitation for the comic stage.³⁸ Elsewhere, the account of laughter as an effective rhetorical weapon in court (e.g., *Rhet.* 1419b3 ff.), and

Aristotle's own use of the category of the laughable to describe and criticize competing arguments (*Met.* 357a24 ff.), provide examples of forms of the laughable that may be both painful to one's opponents and destructive of their arguments.³⁹ Indeed, as noted above, in the second section of this chapter, Aristotle observes that a joke is a type of abuse (*loidorēma ti*), and just as legislators prohibit some forms of abuse, it may also be necessary for them to prohibit certain types of joking (*EN* 1128a30-31). In laughing at others then, or making them appear laughable (through joking, mockery, or ridicule), we are exposing their faults in ways that might mark them as inferior.⁴⁰

The element of superiority involved in laughter helps explain what is hubristic about educated *hubris*. As noted above, the public charge of *hubris* (*graphē hubreōs*) was applicable in cases of verbal and/or physical assault where the deliberate intent was the dishonoring or disrespecting of another.⁴¹ And Aristotle himself recognizes the dangers hubristic actions might pose to political order in his discussion of *stasis* (civic conflict) in book 5 of the *Politics*. There, Aristotle identifies *hubris* as one of the seven causes of *stasis* (*Pol.* 1302b1). Underpinning this discussion is his analysis of *hubris* and its connection to anger in the *Rhetoric*, where he identifies suffering hubristic treatment as one of the three forms of slighting that give rise to anger. Anger, in turn, is defined as "a desire, accompanied by pain, for apparent retribution for an apparent slight" (1378a30-32).⁴² For Aristotle, then, suffering hubristic treatment can generate anger and the desire for revenge; acting on these desires can in turn lead to political

disturbance, *stasis*, and even the overthrow of a political regime.

On the whole, Aristotle's analysis of the political dangers of *hubris* is focused on nondemocratic regimes: he argues that monarchies, tyrannies, and aristocracies are the regimes most vulnerable to *stasis* arising from the revenge of hubristic acts, and lists a number of monarchs who were brought down through hubristic action: Hipparchus (the brother of Hippias) of Athens; Periander of Ambracia; Evagoras of Cyprus; and Philip II and Archelaus of Macedon, to name a few (*Pol.* 1311a32-b6). Tyrants, he claims, must be especially wary of hubristic action (1315a14, 27), and even the women of their households must avoid the appearance of treating other women hubristically, since "many tyrannies have been destroyed on account of the hubristic actions of women" (1314b25-27). Finally, so-called aristocracies are more vulnerable to *stasis* arising from hubristic action than polities. In general, the majority of citizens, who constitute the most powerful element in the regime, are content with having an equal share; however, when the rich are granted more power, as they are in so-called aristocracies, they act hubristically and try to acquire even more power for themselves (1307a20). This last example illustrates why Aristotle's analysis of *hubris* as a cause of *stasis* focuses on nondemocratic regimes; echoing Herodotus,⁴³ Aristotle claims that *hubris* is cultivated in those who are placed in positions of superior political power. While monarchies, tyrannies, and aristocracies are all predicated on inequality between rulers and ruled, acts of *hubris* can

exacerbate the felt experience of inequality, leading to the overthrow of inequalitarian regimes.

While hubristic laughter does not figure prominently in Aristotle's analysis of *stasis*, there is one example that does appear to involve hubristic mockery: "And they plotted against Periander, the tyrant in Ambracia, because when he was drinking with his young male beloved he [Periander] asked him [the young male beloved] if he [the young male beloved] was pregnant by him [Periander] yet" (*Pol.* 1311a39-b1). Who "they" are is unclear, though earlier in the *Politics* Aristotle notes that the *dēmos* of Ambracia joined with Periander's enemies in overthrowing him (1304a31-33). While the precise force of the joke is also unclear, it does, at the very least, call attention to the hierarchical relationship between Periander and his beloved. Rather than avoiding the appearance of acting hubristically, Periander's joke is a means of reveling in such hubristic behavior.

Finally, while Aristotle does not provide any examples of the political dangers of hubristic mockery within democratic regimes, Demosthenes' *Against Konon* provides a historical example that links Aristotle's definition of *eutrapelia* as educated *hubris* to democratic concerns about hubristic laughter. As was discussed in the introduction,^{[44](#)} Demosthenes' speech indicates a concern that hubristic laughter could undermine the recognition of political equality that supported the equal agency of democratic citizens. As such, the treatment of hubristic laughter in the speech resonates with Aristotle's concern with the potential for certain forms of laughter and joking to disrupt our social interactions.

The speech also offers an illustrative portrait of what virtuous forms of laughter and mockery would *not* look like. Given that, for Aristotle, the laughable is connected to a perceived fault or shortcoming, the laughter and joking engaged in by the *eutrapelos* would seem to remain derisive, at least in some sense. At the same time, *eutrapelia*, as educated *hubris*, would be *hubris* “only in a severely attenuated sense.”⁴⁵ The potential *hubris* involved in laughing and joking would be “educated” in such a way that it would not constitute a pure expression of superiority, or at least not be perceived in that way. How can the hubristic element of laughter be educated in this way? How would such laughter and joking not fall prey to the same problems of perceived superiority associated with irony? The following section provides an answer to these questions by returning to the practice of laughter within the context of friendship.

CULTIVATING *EUTRAPELIA*

Despite the danger that hubristic actions and hubristic laughter pose to political order, Aristotle does not conceptualize *eutrapelia* as devoid of this agonistic element, but as tempering it. What, then, is the positive contribution of wittiness to one’s ethical development and to life within a political community? Why, in other words, not champion the *agelast* as virtuous with respect to laughter and joking?⁴⁶ In this section, I argue that the positive value of laughter lies in its ability to serve as a medium for critical engagement with friends, enemies, and strangers with whom we disagree.⁴⁷ In

attending to how laughter functions in this way, I hope to illustrate how *eutrapelia* can be cultivated through such engagements, and how such cultivation creates the social space for laughing with, rather than at, others.

The necessity of friendship to the flourishing human life provides us with a useful starting point. John Cooper argues that the self-knowledge we gain from virtue friends (those friends whom we care for because of their characters and for their own sakes) is a necessary constituent of the good life, since human flourishing requires both leading the best life (that of activity in accordance with the virtues) and choosing it for its own sake.⁴⁸ Given the “double tendency to deny the presence in oneself of what one recognizes in others as faults, and to claim for oneself virtues that one does not really have at all,”⁴⁹ gaining knowledge of the character of our “second self” through sharing in a community of conversation and thought (*EN* 1170b10–12) with our friends is a potential means to nonbiased information about our own self. Though Cooper acknowledges that our assessment of our friends is also liable to bias, he insists that we must balance this fact against the very difficulty of attaining such self-knowledge. Unlike the gods, whose self-knowledge is perfect, human self-knowledge is inherently imperfect, and is dependent on our relationships with others for its illumination.⁵⁰

Virtue friends are necessary to the flourishing life, then, insofar as self-knowledge is necessary, and self-knowledge is best acquired by using our friends as mirrors of our selves (*MM* 1213a10–26). Yet, this is not the only way in which friends help us to acquire such self-knowledge. In his discussions of both

“friendliness” and *eutrapelia*, Aristotle notes that the virtuous individual will cause pain to those with whom he associates, when it is appropriate. How does one cause pain in this way? The friendly person, it seems, will share in the pleasure of others only insofar as it is fine and beneficial to do so; if it is not, he will not only cease sharing in such pleasure, but cause pain instead. Though Aristotle does not specify what such paining will look like, it is likely to take the form of rebuking others for their faults; as he notes in the *Rhetoric*, “Everyone is pained when they see their own faults exposed” (1379b22-23). The friendly person, then, will cause pain by exposing and critiquing the faults of friends, enemies, and strangers; the *eutrapelos*, likewise, will do the same via laughter and joking. When practiced within the context of virtue friendship, then, laughing at the faults of our friends may be a further method by which friendship can help cultivate self-knowledge. In conversing and thinking with our friends, we come to recognize their faults and can expose them to our friends via laughter.

This critical laughter and its link to self-knowledge offer one possible conception of the positive contribution of virtuous laughter to ethical life; yet, it does not itself fully explain how such laughter would be practiced and cultivated within the context of virtue friendships. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle argues that we seek out witty individuals as friends for their ability to both make *and* take jokes: “And those are liked who are adept at both mocking others and enduring mockery (*hoi epidexioi kai tōthasai kai hupomeinai*), for each strives for the same goal as the other, the ability to be mocked and to mock others appropriately” (1381a33-35). Likewise, individuals seek out “those who do not dissemble (*plattomenous*) with them; such

individuals are those who speak about their own faults (*ta phaula ta heautōn*)” (1381b29–30). These passages suggest that for such critical laughter to be sustained within a relationship of friendship it must be reciprocal; in this regard, one must both be able to joke and laugh in virtuous ways and be disposed to laugh at oneself.

Here, Aristotle’s accounts of *eutrapelia* in the *Eudemian Ethics* and *Magna Moralia* offer a crucial supplement to the account offered in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In both the *Eudemian Ethics* and *Magna Moralia*, Aristotle distinguishes between two types of *eutrapelia*. The first type, which corresponds to the definition offered in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, consists in the ability to produce jokes and laughter; the second type, however, consists in the disposition to endure being laughed at and even to take pleasure in jokes told against oneself (*MM* 1193a17–18; *EE* 1234a15–17).⁵¹ If the first type of *eutrapelia* distinguishes the witty individual from the buffoon (who produces too much laughter and/or too much pain with his mockery), the second type of *eutrapelia* distinguishes the witty person from the boor (who cannot endure the laughter of others). Both types of *eutrapelia* are necessary, however, for such laughter to be reciprocal; and such laughter must be reciprocal in order to prevent the friendship from devolving into a relationship of domination and obsequiousness where one party to the relationship is consistently mocking the other, and the other is consistently being mocked.⁵²

If the disposition to laugh at oneself captured by this second form of *eutrapelia* is necessary to explain how laughter functions within the context of friendship to enrich the ethical

development of individuals, it is also true that the relationship of friendship itself is integral to cultivating such a disposition. The Aristotelian *Problems* offers a clue to how this latter dynamic operates: “Why are individuals less able to restrain their laughter when in the presence of those with whom they are intimately familiar? Is it because when something is stirred up, it is easily moved? And goodwill causes one to speak more that is laughable, on account of which it moves [us]” (*Prob.* 950a17–19).⁵³ This passage suggests that given the presence of goodwill among friends, we are less concerned, in laughing at them, that our laughter will cause offense;⁵⁴ conversely, it suggests that we are more likely to laugh at jokes directed at us by our friends because we recognize that such jokes are animated by a spirit of goodwill. The presence of goodwill signals that the joke or laughter is not motivated by a desire to cause pain, or at least not to cause pain with the goal of demonstrating superiority. Given that Aristotle defines friendship as mutually recognized, reciprocated goodwill (*eunoia*; *EN* 1155b27–1156a5), friendship would seem to offer an ideal social space for developing the disposition to laugh at ourselves.

Drawing together these various threads on laughter in Aristotle’s works allows us to reconstruct what I take to be a plausible account of how laughter functions in his ethical thought. So far, however, this argument has focused solely on the operation of laughter within the context of virtue friendship. Is this the only context in which laughter can function in the abovementioned way? Is this account transferable to the other forms of friendship that Aristotle

names? Is it applicable to what he calls civic friendship? To our daily interactions with enemies and strangers?

If the mutual recognition of goodwill in friendship facilitates laughter, then the practice of laughter becomes more complicated as we move from virtue friendship to other, more conflict-prone relationships.⁵⁵ Insofar as Aristotle thinks that these less complete forms of friendship are more vulnerable to dissolution through slander, it would seem to follow that they would also be more prone to conflicts arising from one or both of the parties taking offense at the laughter and jokes of another (*EN* 1157a20–25). This problem is compounded by the fact that “what is hateful to one is pleasant to another, and vice versa” (*EN* 1128a27–28); insofar as laughing well requires knowing the character of the one we are laughing at (i.e., what he or she finds pleasant and hateful), the practice of *eutrapelia* is more difficult in utility and pleasure friendships where we know the characters of our friends less well. With strangers, where there is no preexisting feeling of affection, all of these difficulties are compounded even further.

In spite of these difficulties, it is specifically within the context of our daily interactions with friends, enemies, and strangers that Aristotle situates the virtue of *eutrapelia*. What such virtuous laughter and joking will consist in will change according to the relationship in question; jokes and laughter directed at others might need to be more tempered in these contexts; and more emphasis might be placed on laughing at oneself as a mode of facilitating social interaction. Yet, laughter will still be an important part of both the personal and the civic friendships of citizens. It will be both a medium through which

they relax and bond with each other, and one through which they criticize each other's faults and those of their city.⁵⁶

THE POLITICS OF *EUTRAPELIA*

While the discussion of *eutrapelia* has, up to this point, focused on the activities of joking and laughter that Aristotle associates with its practice, *eutrapelia* is also connected with a more generalized disposition that enables individuals to engage in such gelastic practices in excellent ways. This disposition can best be uncovered by attending to the ways in which *eutrapelia* and its opposite, *dustrapelia*, are used by authors other than Aristotle; the use of *eutrapelia*, moreover, indicates its connection with a type of democratic versatility.

Eutrapelia is commonly translated as “wittiness,” and the adjective describing the individual possessing this virtue—*eutrapelos*—as “witty.”⁵⁷ “Wittiness,” however, does not capture the broader range of meaning with which the word is connected. An individual who is *eutrapelos* is literally “one who turns easily”; the word conveys a sense of versatility and flexibility that is apparent in its larger, though limited, use in the classical period.⁵⁸ Attending to its use in Thucydides and Plato—and the use of its antonym, *dustrapelos*, in Sophocles—will help to elucidate the place of such versatility within classical Greek political thought, and to situate Aristotle's conception of *eutrapelia* within this intellectual context.

In Thucydides, Pericles uses *eutrapelos* to epitomize the character of the Athenians: “In sum, I hold that the whole city is an education for Greece, and it seems to me that every man

among us, exhibits his body to be self-sufficient, with the most versatile grace, for most kinds of conducts” (2.41.1).⁵⁹ This versatility/adaptability is a thick current running through Pericles’ encomium of the city of Athens and its citizens: it is evident, for example, in the unique Athenian ability to combine opposing character traits. Indeed, the Athenians defy simple categorization: they are lovers of beauty and lovers of wisdom, but without succumbing to the softness or idleness such extravagance and indulgence might breed; their penchant for deliberation, far from inhibiting swift, decisive, and courageous action, serves as its prerequisite. This versatility has forged a city and citizen body that is innovative and unique, one that does not imitate the practices of others (*mimoumenoi heterous*) but serves as a model (*paradeigma*) for them (2.37.1).

The importance of versatility to the Athenian character is perhaps most prominent, however, in Pericles’ analysis of Athenian courage. In his comparison of Athenian and Spartan courage, Pericles contrasts the arduous training of the Spartans with the relaxed lifestyle of the Athenians, contending not only that the Athenians are just as courageous as the Spartans, but that theirs is the true courage: Spartan courage is based in ignorance, whereas “the ones who are rightly judged to be strongest with respect to spirit are those who both recognize most clearly that which is fearful and that which is pleasurable and yet do not turn away from danger on account of these things” (2.40.3). As Ryan Balot has argued, Pericles’ conception of democratic courage demands that individual citizens possess rational understanding of ultimate values, practical knowledge of what to do in particular situations, and

a character that disposes them to act bravely.⁶⁰ The Athenians know, Pericles declares, that they were raised in a world of changing fortunes, and their ability to act virtuously depends upon their ability to judge what it means to act virtuously amid such variable conditions (2.41.1). Here, versatility (in the form of intellectual dexterity) is of no small importance. The Athenian decision to abandon their city during the second Persian invasion is an apt illustration of the intellectual dexterity demanded by Pericles' vision of practical judgment. The decision itself is not only bold and creative, but may have also been interpreted at the time to be the direct opposite of courage—they were abandoning their homeland and their city in order to save their lives. Yet this apparent act of cowardice becomes a consummate act of bravery—it is the sacrifice of the Athenians that not only allows their city to endure, but saves the rest of Greece from Persian conquest in the process.

Plato also uses *eutrapelia* in connection with his analysis of democracy in book 8 of the *Republic*, but for him it is symptomatic of democratic *disorder*. As in Pericles' oration, democracy is cast as a form of constitution that defies conventional categorization: both the democratic city and democratic soul contain within them many types of constitutions. In the *Republic*, however, this disorder is what makes democracy the second-worst form of regime, and the adaptability of the democratic soul is held up for ridicule. The democratic individual is the one who bounces from desire to desire without attempting to order his soul in any particular manner; he leads an "isonomic" life where each desire is of equal worth with every other desire (*Rep.* 562e1-2); the

democratic regime, likewise, is one where *isonomia* pervades, inverts, and/or demolishes the traditional hierarchies between ruler and ruled, man and woman, parent and child, and teacher and student. As Socrates notes, the teacher in a democracy fears his students and flatters them, and students hold their teachers in little regard and treat their tutors in the same way. And generally the young imitate their elders and heatedly compete with them in their words and deeds, while the old lower themselves to the level of the young, filling themselves with wittiness and playfulness (*eutrapelias te kai charientismou*), mimicking the young lest they seem to be unpleasant and despotical. (563a4–b3)

Democracy breeds, it would seem, its own culture of laughter.⁶¹

This passing reference to *eutrapelia* in the *Republic's* analysis of democracy is emblematic of democratic disorder, and not only because of its connection with the inversion of the traditional hierarchy between old and young. In outlining the education the ruling elite of the utopian Kallipolis will receive, Socrates remarks that they must not be lovers of laughter (*philogelōtas*), “since when someone yields to strong laughter (*ischurōi gelōti*), he seeks a strong change (*ischuran . . . metabolēn*)” inside himself (388e4–6). To allow oneself to be conquered by laughter (*kratoumenous hupo gelōtos*) is dangerous; it constitutes a loss of rational control over the soul, and could lead to unsettling the careful psychic balance that constitutes justice on the individual level. At the level of the *polis*, we can think of democracy as the regime that results when citizens are lovers of laughter; they mock all distinctions

and hierarchies as authoritarian and unjust, preferring to live a life of pure equality between both individuals in the city and desires in the soul. Thus, the versatility signaled by *eutrapelia* and praised by Pericles threatens to undo the psychic and political orders outlined in the *Republic*. The ideal citizens of Kallipolis are not versatile at all, but must order their souls through a regimented educational system and guard against any change to that order, just as they must seek to guard against any such changes to the social and political order of Kallipolis. For Plato, it is this unchanging model of order, in contrast to democratic Athens, that is the true *paradeigma* (592b1).

If the type of versatility praised by Pericles is undesirable, if not dangerous, in a city like Kallipolis, it is because Kallipolis is a *polis* devoid of politics; it is a city cleansed of the spontaneity, disagreement, and turbulence that characterize the very concept of the political.⁶² Conversely, the citizen who is incapable of adapting is dangerous to the political community that is truly political in this sense. This inadaptability and its unsuitability to political life are highlighted by Ajax in Sophocles' tragedy of that name. Ajax feels dishonored when he loses the judgment for Achilles' arms to Odysseus, and he resolves to avenge this slight by murdering the Greeks who have humiliated him. Athena intervenes, and deceives Ajax into thinking that his Greek enemies are a herd of sheep, and he slaughters the animals with glee. Upon returning to his senses, he experiences further humiliation in his failure to exact his revenge, and sees no other option but to take his own life, which he eventually does.

Upon learning of his suicide, the chorus (composed of sailors from Ajax's native Salamis) laments the fate of the *dustrapelos* Ajax (913). As Bernard Knox has argued, noting the resonance with Pericles' use of *eutrapelos* in the Funeral Oration, Ajax's *dustrapelia* mirrors his inability to live within a community of equals where one must adapt to the actions, beliefs, and decisions of others.⁶³ If a political community is one in which citizens share in ruling and being ruled, then citizens must be able and willing, some of the time, to come to terms with loss—with the fact that their vision of the direction the community should take will not always win out. They must also come to terms with a world in which alliances and coalitions shift, where one's friends today might be one's enemies tomorrow, and vice versa. Ajax cannot adapt to this flux of the political community; he remains stuck in an aristocratic, heroic world that lies in tension with these social and political circumstances. He cannot adjust to the community's judgment to award Achilles' arms to Odysseus.⁶⁴ He believes he has no choice but to kill himself.⁶⁵

Amid this debate (if we can call it that) on the political value of *eutrapelia* and *dustrapelia*, we might interpret Aristotle's choice to make *eutrapelia* a virtue as reflecting his broader conception of the *polis* as a multitude of diverse citizens who share in deliberation and in ruling and being ruled. It embodies the ethical disposition citizens need for the *polis* to flourish and that they need to flourish within the *polis*. In the *Eudemian Ethics*, the boor, who cannot take a joke, is equated with the *dustrapelos*; in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he is called hard (*sklēros*; *EE* 1234a4-5; *EN* 1128a9). Both terms describe a

character that is unmoving in the face of the demands, desires, and criticisms of others. Such characters might be suitable for Kallipolis, but they are not well suited to Aristotle's vision of political life.

• • •

This chapter has illustrated how we can interpret Aristotle's conception of *eutrapelia* as part of a larger conversation about Socratic humor during the classical period. Aristotle's association of Socrates with the practice of *eirōneia*, along with his distinction between *eirōneia* and *eutrapelia*, allows us to situate *eutrapelia* as an alternative to the forms of Socratic irony depicted by Plato and Xenophon. At the same time, it also demonstrates how Aristotle's engagement with Socratic *eirōneia* may have informed his broader account of the ethics and politics of humor, and, more specifically, his concern with identifying a virtuous practice of humor citizens could use to navigate their everyday interactions with friends, strangers, and fellow citizens. While Aristotle's classification of *eirōneia* as a vice is not without its qualifications, the potential for *eirōneia* to function as an expression of superiority is indicative of the ethical and political concerns its practice may raise: by placing himself above his interlocutor, the *eirōn* refuses to deal with him in a straightforward manner. This element of superiority can manifest itself in those forms of *eirōneia* that Aristotle identifies as modes of *alazoneia* (boastfulness), though Aristotle's apparent association of *eirōneia* with magnanimity might indicate a more generalized connection between the practice of *eirōneia* and the expression of superiority. The

practice of *eutrapelia*, in contrast, appears to be modeled along more egalitarian and reciprocal lines in ways that point to the ability of citizens to make and take jokes in excellent ways in their everyday interactions with each other.

This emphasis on reciprocity does not, in itself, make Aristotle's conception of *eutrapelia* democratic. Aristotle would have conceived its possession as a virtue as beyond the reach of most democratic citizens; moreover, the reciprocal framework within which *eutrapelia* appears to operate is one in which citizens rule and are ruled in turn, a type of political relationship that can also characterize an aristocratic regime. The uses of *eutrapelia* outside of Aristotle, however, do suggest that Aristotle's conception of *eutrapelia* may harbor certain democratic potentialities. At the very least, this emphasis on reciprocity highlights how the gelastic practices associated with *eirōneia* and *eutrapelia* constitute two distinct modes of social and political engagement.

These issues will be taken up in more detail in the conclusion to this book; for now, however, we turn to the legacy of Socratic humor during the Hellenistic period.

CHAPTER FIVE

Socratic Humor in the Hellenistic Period

One should not take up the task of teaching lightly. So Epictetus advises his auditors, reproaching those who immediately “vomit up” the lessons they have learned without first properly “digesting” them through successful practice. Such misguided action is akin to the belief that the words spoken during the Eleusinian Mysteries would be equally efficacious regardless of the context in which they are spoken; the words themselves, Epictetus explains, do not possess any sacred force, but must be spoken at the right time and in the right place, and by the right person. And so he speculates that perhaps wisdom alone might not be sufficient for caring for the young (*to epimelēthēnai neōn*) through teaching: There is a need, in addition to this, for some readiness and fitness for the task, by Zeus, and a certain kind of body, and, above all, for god to advise one to occupy this position, just as he advised Socrates to take up the task of cross-examination, Diogenes that of kingship and chastisement, and Zeno that of teaching and doctrine. (*Diss.* 3.21.18–19) What one needs, Epictetus suggests, is a mode of philosophical engagement that possesses transformative power.

Epictetus' inventory of his philosophical predecessors makes for an interesting history of philosophy, one that divides its chapters not by the invention of novel doctrines but according to distinctions in the teaching and practice of philosophy.¹ The Stoic lineage Epictetus traces from Socrates to Zeno does share a core set of doctrines—namely, that virtue is the only good and that its possession is sufficient for happiness. While this glosses over important philosophical differences, those differences in doctrine are not the ones named by Epictetus here; rather, as Malcolm Schofield has noted, “the crucial differences between the three of them are to be found not in *what* they believed, but in how they sought to convert others to acceptance—practical as well as intellectual—of what they were united in seeing as the key to the good life.”² Socrates used the *elenchus*; Diogenes of Sinope deployed kingly speech; and Zeno systematized the ethical teachings of his predecessors. And in doing so, each practiced a method that he believed could bring others to see the truth about virtue and its connection with happiness.

While Epictetus singles out the *elenchus* as the distinctive aspect of Socratic philosophical practice, the discussions of Socrates among the Hellenistic philosophical schools also reveal a continued interest in Socratic humor. In line with the above passage, this interest is less explicitly political than we find in our classical-era sources; it is focused, especially in our Stoic and Epicurean sources, on the appropriate use of humor and irony in the relationship between teacher and student. These sources nonetheless offer an important chapter in the legacy of Socratic humor, one that illustrates how the nature

and purpose of Socratic humor continued to be debated beyond the classical period.

The present chapter begins with brief overviews of the legacy of Socratic humor in the Stoic and Epicurean traditions before turning to a more extensive analysis of Cynic humor. It is in the Cynics that we can find the clearest continuation of a particular brand of Socratic humor, which they deployed in their attempts to live in accordance with nature.³

THE STOICS

Among the Hellenistic schools, the Stoics aligned themselves most closely with the figure of Socrates.⁴ For the early Stoics, there is evidence that they understood themselves as defending key Socratic doctrines against rival philosophical schools, such as the sufficiency of virtue for happiness, the conception of virtue as knowledge of good and evil, and the idea of natural law.⁵ Diogenes Laertius, moreover, reports that it was reading Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, and the depiction of Socrates it contains, that sparked Zeno's conversion to philosophy (6.2–3). Socrates, finally, was considered to be one of the few individuals to approach the Stoic ideal of the sage.⁶

The discussions of Socrates found among later Stoics focus mainly on ethical considerations. Seneca frequently uses Socrates as an exhortative *exemplum* in the *Epistulae morales*,⁷ pairing him both with other Greek philosophers, such as Zeno, Cleanthes, and Plato, and with key Roman *exempla*, such as Cato, Laelius, Regulus, Mucius, and Rutilius. For Epictetus, Socrates is not just an important example, but

the model that he exhorts others to follow and that he himself emulates. Of the four quotations Epictetus urges others to keep always at hand (*procheira*), in the final chapter of the *Encheiridion*,⁸ two are attributed to Socrates.⁹ Finally, in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, Socrates is listed as one of the great figures of the past who already met with the inevitable fact of death (6.47, 7.19); he is contrasted with Alexander, Caesar, and Pompey as someone whose ruling center (*hēgēmōnikon*) was autonomous (8.3); he is associated with the admirable qualities Marcus also found in his adoptive father—strength, endurance, and sobriety (1.16); and he is praised for his arguments with the sophists, his endurance of inclement weather, and his noble refusal to follow the orders of the Thirty to arrest Leon of Salamis (7.66). In short, Socrates appears in Marcus Aurelius as a good Stoic.¹⁰

The Socrates depicted by the Stoics, however, does not appear to have been an *eirōn*. In fact, there are two key passages suggesting that the Stoics viewed *eirōneia* as a negative trait, one from the early Stoa and one from the Roman Stoics. The first is from the Stobaeian epitome of Stoic ethics: The noble man, being affable, clever, encouraging, and like a hunter in his pursuit of goodwill and friendship through his interactions with others, is as accommodating as possible with the multitude (*plēthos anthrōpōn*), in the company of whom he is also charming, pleasant, and trustworthy, and further he is wily, shrewd, opportune, quick-witted, straightforward, simple, frank, and without artifice. But the base person is subject to the opposite of all of these qualities. And they [the Stoics] say that to dissemble is a characteristic of those who are base,

since no one who is free and noble dissembles (*to d' eirōneusthai phaulōn einai phasin, oudena gar eleutheron kai spoudaion eirōneusthai*); and they say the same thing about sarcasm (*to sarkazein*), which is dissembling with a type of mockery (*eirōneusthai met' episurmou tinos*). (SVF 3.630) Besides providing evidence for the claim that *eirōneia* was viewed as a negative trait in the early Stoa, there are some further aspects of this passage worth highlighting. First, the passage appears to detail specifically how the noble man (*spoudaion*) will act in relation to the multitude (*pros plēthos anthrōpōn*). In this sense, we can discern a contrast (whether consciously made or not) with Aristotle's remark that the magnanimous man will be truthful, except insofar as he speaks with *eirōneia* toward the many (EN 1124b30). Second, while both *eirōneia* and sarcasm (*to sarkazein*)—which is defined as a type of *eirōneia* that is combined with mockery (*episurmos*)—are viewed negatively, the noble man will be clever (*epidexion*), a characteristic that may indicate a type of humorousness or wittiness.^{[11](#)}

In the second passage, which is part of a long chapter (11.18) of the *Meditations* detailing the considerations that we ought to bring to bear when dealing with others, Marcus Aurelius likewise eschews *eirōneia*. This chapter recapitulates a number of key themes found throughout the *Meditations*, and is designed as a guide for avoiding both anger and flattery in our interactions with others, and in particular, with those with whom we disagree. The chapter lists nine central points (*kephalaiōn*): (1) human beings were born to help one another, and he [Marcus Aurelius, presumably in his role as emperor]

was born to preside over them; (2) the compulsions (*anankas*) experienced by others are the results of their opinions (*dogmatōn*); (3) if they are acting rightly, there is no need to be annoyed, and if they are acting wrongly they do so involuntarily and through ignorance (*akontes kai agnoountes*); (4) you yourself commit many wrongs and have the inclination to commit others; (5) you cannot be certain that what others are doing is wrong; (6) when annoyed by others, you must recall how ephemeral human life is; (7) the actions of others do not trouble us—only our beliefs about their actions trouble us; (8) our anger at such actions creates more harm than the original actions that gave rise to such anger; and (9) kindness (*eumenes*) is unconquerable (*akinēton*). Marcus identifies this last quality as the *ethos* that ought to guide *how* it is that we interact with those who disagree with us. As elsewhere, Marcus stresses that we ought to attempt to correct those who err, but we must do so gently (*praōs, euaphōs*), reminding them that such behavior does not befit a creature with a gregarious nature. Further, one must not do so ironically (*eironikōs*) or reproachfully; nor in the manner a schoolmaster would correct a student; nor as if one were trying to impress others in a crowd. Thus, in what is a key summary of the social ethics Marcus describes throughout the *Meditations*, we see that *eirōneia* is not a suitable technique to deploy in conversation with others.^{[12](#)}

It is important to note that both passages discuss the use of *eirōneia* specifically in the context of a superior interacting with an inferior. The passage from Stobaeus details how a noble man will conduct himself in relation to the many; the

passage continues with “They [the Stoics] allow for friendship only among the wise,” which introduces a contrast between how the noble man will act toward other noble men and how he will act toward the many. In the above passage from the *Meditations*, Marcus is likewise reflecting on how he ought to attempt to correct those who err, reminding himself in this context that it is his role as emperor to preside over others. Both of these passages, but especially the latter, connect this Stoic interest in the ethics of *eirōneia* with pedagogical concerns—in other words, how will the Stoic engage with those who have made little or no progress on the path toward happiness?

This is an important concern, especially for Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. In the *Discourses*, Epictetus repeatedly returns to the example of Socrates to illustrate his ability to endure both the errors and criticisms of others (2.2.14; 4.5.3–4, 33–35). For Epictetus, Socrates’ endurance in these situations was the product of his recognition that no one is the master of another’s ruling principle (*oudeis allotriou hēgemonikou kurieuei*, 4.5.4). To seek such mastery is misguided in a number of ways, but most important for our purposes here is the fact that it reflects the mistaken judgment that the beliefs of others are “up to us.” To seek to master another’s ruling principle is thus an impossible goal, and also one that constitutes a failure to respect the autonomy others have in forming their own beliefs. As Marcus Aurelius notes, this recognition is compatible with the attempt to correct the errors of others, but it constrains the manner in which such correction ought to be conducted (4.6, 5.28, 6.27, 11.13). The passages from Stobaeus’ epitome and the *Meditations* indicate that

eirōneia was not appropriate in this context; unfortunately, our sources do not shed much light on *why* it was held to be inappropriate.

Given the sage-like status of Socrates, and the fact that the Stoics rejected the practice of *eirōneia*, it is unlikely that they considered Socrates to be an *eirōn*. That does not mean, however, that the Stoic depiction of Socrates was completely devoid of irony and humor. As was argued in chapter 2, *eirōneia* signified not irony generally, but a more specific form of solipsistic irony: the variety in the ironic practices depicted by Plato and Xenophon is indicative of the fact that a rejection of *eirōneia* need not entail a wholesale rejection of Socratic irony. Aristotle's analysis of *eirōneia*, moreover, further distinguishes between forms of irony based on both the intent of the ironist and the content of what he denies. And as the above passage from Stobaeus indicates, the Stoic rejection of *eirōneia* did not entail a rejection of all forms of humor—while sarcasm (*to sarkazein*) is categorized as a humorous variety of *eirōneia* that should also be avoided, this description of the noble man appears to leave room for more general forms of wittiness or cleverness (*epidexion*).

If we look more closely at the Stoic depiction of Socrates, we can see that he does indeed practice forms of humor and irony. As Eric Brown has argued, the Stoic paradoxes can be viewed as “gently mocking expressions . . . that pose riddles without intending to deceive.”¹³ As such, Stoic paradoxes like “Only the sage is rich” are akin to the “complex ironies” Gregory Vlastos identifies with the Platonic Socrates, insofar as they trade in distinctions between the conventional and technical

meanings of the terms being used—the sage may be poor in the conventional sense, since he does not possess material wealth, but is rich if we agree with the Stoics that only virtue has real (positive) value. With this in mind, we can see how the Stoics could reject *eirōneia* “without disparaging Socratic irony.”¹⁴ At the same time, it is important to note that such complex ironies do not exhaust the practice of Socratic irony as it is depicted by Plato and Xenophon. In particular, while both Socrates’ complex ironies and the Stoic paradoxes might gently mock without intending to deceive, they do not target particular interlocutors in the way that other forms of Socratic irony do. Thus, while there may have been some continuity between a particular form of Socratic irony and the Stoic paradoxes, there may have been some discontinuities as well.¹⁵

Epictetus also deploys forms of irony, but in ways that are distinct from the complex ironies discussed above. In particular, Epictetus deploys both self-deprecating (3.20.19) and other-directed (3.23.19–21) forms of ironic humor in his engagements with others in ways that are reminiscent of the Socrates found in Plato and Xenophon.¹⁶ In the latter passage, which is a characteristic example of Epictetus’ irony, he exclaims: “Wow, listen to the words of a philosopher, the character of humanity’s benefactor! Here’s a person who has listened to reason, who has read [aloud] the Socratic literature in the genuinely Socratic way, and not as something by Lysias and Isocrates. . . . *You* have been reading the Socratic literature as if it were an operatic libretto!”¹⁷ Coming as it does in the middle of a long denunciation of those who are more concerned with epideictic displays of philosophical ideas

than the real work of philosophy, the irony in this passage is quite transparent, and verges on the sarcastic. In this respect, while Plato appears to have been the principal source for Epictetus' references to Socrates,¹⁸ his use of humor and irony has more in common with Xenophon's Socrates. Not only is Epictetus' irony more transparent, as the above example indicates, Epictetus also readily engages in forms of abuse and mockery that are absent in Plato but present in Xenophon's Socratic writings.¹⁹ Epictetus, for example, addresses an interlocutor as "slave" (*doule*, 4.1.146) and another as a "wretch" (*talas*, 4.1.21), to cite just a couple of examples.²⁰

These are not the only examples of irony and humor associated with Socrates by our Stoic sources;²¹ yet, they are indicative of how the Stoic assessment of Socratic humor is far more nuanced than the rejection of *eirōneia* might initially suggest. And while most of the Stoic figures discussed above are far removed from the democratic anxieties that shaped the accounts of Socratic humor in Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon, and (to a lesser extent) Aristotle, these pedagogical considerations do reflect a similar concern with the power relationships between teacher and student. While our sources do not provide a clear explanation for why the Stoics held *eirōneia* to be inappropriate in this context, they do indicate that other forms of humor were considered appropriate pedagogical practices.

THE EPICUREANS

The Epicureans did not consider themselves to be Socratics, and among them Socrates is depicted as an *eirōn* and strongly criticized on that basis.²² This critique of Socratic *eirōneia* appears to have originated with Epicurus himself: Cicero informs us that Epicurus reproves (*reprehendit*) Socrates for his *ironia* (*Brut.* 292), though, unfortunately, we possess no evidence indicating Epicurus' reason for this judgment. We do know, however, that Epicurus' student Colotes attacked Socrates for being a sophist and a boaster (*alazōn*), accusing him of hypocrisy in acting in opposition to what he said in the dialogues (*Plut. Adv. Col.* 1108b, 1117d).²³ Zeno of Sidon, in his *Against Plato's Gorgias*, gave to Socrates the nickname *scurra Atticus* (Attic buffoon).²⁴ The most sustained of the Epicurean criticisms of Socrates, however, can be found in the tenth book of Philodemus' *On Vices*, in which Philodemus focuses on the vice of arrogance (*huperēphania*), offering a six-fold classification of the vice that he draws from a summary of a work on the same theme by the Peripatetic Aristo of Ceos.²⁵ Philodemus, following his Peripatetic sources, identifies the fifth kind of arrogant person as the *eirōn*, associating *eirōneia* both with *alazōneia* and with Socrates. What makes *eirōneia* an expression of arrogance for Philodemus is not simply the fact that it entails dissimulation; rather, it is a kind of superiority expressed through wit.²⁶

Why, though, do the Epicureans engage in such criticisms of the figure of Socrates, and, in doing so, focus such attention on his *eirōneia*? Knut Kleve has suggested that Socrates and the Epicureans are simply "two different human types,"²⁷ a suggestion that Anthony Long rightly judges "cannot be a

sufficiently penetrating explanation.”²⁸ Long’s own suggestion, that the Epicurean hostility toward Socrates is possibly connected with the positive role he serves for the rival Stoics and Academic Skeptics, is likely to be at least part of the explanation; and in this regard, we might interpret the Epicurean emphasis on Socratic *eirōneia* as a response to Stoic attempts to deny (either directly or through omission) that Socrates was an *eirōn*. Yet, as Mark Riley has argued, there is perhaps an even more fundamental explanation, one with roots in Epicurean pedagogy. As is emphasized in Philodemus’ *On Frank Speech* (*Peri parrhēσίας*), the Epicurean teacher must show his students their errors in a frank manner (*anupostolōs*); to act in secret (*lathraiopragein*), or to fail to report such errors, is considered to be a quintessentially unfriendly (*aphilōtaton*) action (40–41).²⁹ It is such frank speech on the part of the good teacher, complemented by the ability to listen to and learn from frank speech on the part of the good student, that creates friendship and trust between them; moreover, it is the horizontal practices of frank speech, between teacher and teachers and between students and students, that both exemplify the egalitarian nature of friendship and create solidarity and cohesion among members of the school.³⁰ For the Epicureans, then, Socrates’ *eirōneia* illustrates his failure to act as a true friend to his interlocutors, arrogantly mocking them rather than healing their mental diseases.³¹

As with the Stoics, the Epicurean criticism of *eirōneia* appears to have been driven by pedagogical concerns. The above evidence suggests, then, that the source of their disagreement lies not in their evaluations of *eirōneia*, but in

their answers to the question of whether Socrates was an *eirōn*.

THE CYNICS

With the Stoics and Epicureans, we can see how Socrates was used as a positive and negative example of how to practice philosophy. With the Cynics, however, we do not have any direct discussions of Socrates and Socratic humor—a fact that is perhaps partly the result of the relative paucity of our evidence for the Cynics, and partly a reflection of the distinctive way in which the Cynics practiced philosophy.³² The Cynics did, however, deploy a type of Socratic humor, albeit one that was not ironic. This section begins with an analysis of Xenophon's *Symposium*—and, in particular, his depiction of Antisthenes in that work—in order to suggest the possible connection between Socratic and Cynic humor. The section then turns to an analysis of how the Cynic practice of humor figures in their attempts to live in accordance with nature.

Xenophon, Antisthenes, and Cynic Humor

In the opening sentence of his *Symposium*, Xenophon indicates that his work will focus on the playful deeds of good men, informing us that such deeds, alongside their serious counterparts, are also worthy of remembrance. The *Symposium* thus treats a theme that is important to Xenophon throughout his corpus—namely, the gelastic tendencies that are connected

with good and bad leadership. In the *Symposium* it is the playful deeds of Socrates that are highlighted, and as the work unfolds, Xenophon develops a series of contrasts between Socrates and the other guests at the symposium, contrasts that illustrate the former's excellence in blending seriousness with playfulness. There is Philippos the jester, who is always attempting to raise a laugh regardless of the appropriateness of the joke and/or context, and is thus always playful and never serious (1.11-16). At the opposite end of the spectrum stands Hermogenes, who is too reserved and will not engage in playful banter with the other guests—for this reason, Socrates reproaches him for his *paroinia* (6.1-4). In contrast to these figures, Socrates does engage in playful humor, but he always does so for a serious purpose. In an example of the kinds of complex ironies mentioned above, he jokes that he is more beautiful than the quite striking Critoboulos (4.19), explaining how each of his features (like his bulging eyes), though ugly in appearance by conventional standards, are in fact more beautiful because they are better suited to the task that nature intends them to perform (5.1-11). Socrates thus uses humor to make a serious point concerning the nature of the beautiful.³³

Equally important is the fact that Socrates' jests are not abusive, and he is able to endure the joking of others. These two characteristics of Socratic humor are illustrated through the contrasts that Xenophon draws between Socrates and his student Antisthenes.³⁴ At *Symposium* 6.6-10, the Syracusan, who is providing the entertainment for the gathering, becomes annoyed that the guests are so rapt in conversation with each other that they are paying no attention to the performance of

his dancers. Jealous, he begins to mock Socrates with jokes borrowed from Aristophanes' *Clouds*—he asks if Socrates is the one called the “Thinker” (*phrontistēs*), and requests that Socrates tell him the distance between the two of them in flea's feet. Observing this interaction, Antisthenes turns to Philippos, and suggests that the latter retaliate on Socrates' behalf. Socrates, however, intercedes, stating that to do so would be to stoop to the level of abuse.³⁵

While Xenophon depicts Antisthenes' gelastic practices as tending toward the abusive end of the spectrum, he also indicates that he is unable to take a joke. Having earlier stated what they each take most pride in, Xenophon recounts the explanations they provide for these choices. Many of the answers offered display the kind of complex irony Vlastos associated with Socrates—wherein one both means and does not mean what one says.³⁶ Antisthenes, for example, though being poor, states that he prides himself on his great wealth, explaining afterward that he believes that true wealth resides not in one's possessions but in one's soul (3.8, 4.34–44). Charmides, though quite wealthy, states that he takes most pride in his poverty (3.9, 4.29–33). When it is his turn, Socrates states that he takes pride in his trade as a procurer (*mastropeia*, 3.10, 4.56–60). He explains, of course, that he does not mean this in the conventional understanding of such a trade (as one who obtains a prostitute for another); rather, like a good procurer, he is able to make his clients attractive to others, which is what he does in bringing people together.³⁷ He then observes that Antisthenes has brought to perfection the complementary trade of the panderer (*proagōgeian*, 4.61).

Antisthenes becomes quite annoyed (*mala achthestheis*) at Socrates' remark and asks him how he could accuse him of such a thing (4.62). Either Antisthenes does not get the joke, or he is unable to take the joke. Though he is willing to engage, with the other guests, in the mildly self-deprecating complex ironies mentioned above, he is unable to find such remarks humorous when they are directed at him by others.

This general depiction of Antisthenes' demeanor is further developed elsewhere in the *Symposium*. When Callias seeks to defend his wealth, he states that while Socrates puzzles over what justice is, he (Callias) actually makes men more just. Socrates asks how he does this, to which Callias jokingly replies, "By giving them money" (4.1). At this point, Antisthenes stands up and begins to question Callias "very elenchtically" (*mala elenchtikōs*), attempting to refute the idea that wealth has the power to make individuals more just (4.2). Callias defends his claim by stating that those to whom he provides money are no longer tempted to engage in crime; he freely admits, however, that those to whom he gives his money do not usually repay him, nor do they even thank him. In fact, they often end up disliking him even more than they did before he gave them the money. At this point, Xenophon observes that Antisthenes looked at Callias as if he (Antisthenes) had refuted him (Callias) (*eisblepōn hōs elenchōn auton*), and said, "It is amazing (*thaumasta*) . . . that you are able to make them just toward others but not toward yourself!" Callias promptly dismisses this as unremarkable, using the example of carpenters who can build houses for others but cannot do so for themselves. And when Callias tells Antisthenes to admit that he has been refuted, Socrates seconds the motion (4.2-5).

One might be tempted to interpret this as a critique of the *elenchus* itself, and perhaps even an attempt to dissociate Socrates from its practice. After all, while the *elenchus* is the predominant method Socrates deploys in engaging his interlocutors in Plato's dialogues, it is nearly absent from Xenophon's depiction of Socrates. Yet, as was discussed in chapter 3,³⁸ Xenophon does acknowledge Socrates' use of the *elenchus* (*Mem.* 1.4), occasionally depicts its practice (*Mem.* 4.2), and, finally, provides an explanation for why it is not depicted more frequently in his Socratic works. A more accurate explanation of the critical presentation of Antisthenes in this passage is that his use of the *elenchus* is overly aggressive (hence Xenophon's use of the qualifier *mala*) as well as inappropriate, given the symposiastic context. If anything, Antisthenes remains too serious—the humor he deploys is not at all playful, but harsh and caustic. And his eagerness to refute Callias appears as a breach of the mix of seriousness and playfulness appropriate for the occasion. In short, Xenophon casts Antisthenes as rather nasty, with a biting and caustic wit that is contrasted with the seriocomic urbanity of Socrates.

Antisthenes, however, is not just another guest at the house of Callias. He was, as Xenophon notes (*Mem.* 3.11.7), and we have no good reason to doubt,³⁹ one of Socrates' students and close companions. He was also purported in antiquity to have been the teacher of the best-known (if not the first) Cynic philosopher, Diogenes of Sinope.⁴⁰ In depicting Antisthenes as he does, Xenophon appears to be engaging in the same kind of rivalry that occupies Plato in the *Euthydemus*: that of contesting the legacy of Socratic humor among Socrates'

immediate successors. And while Xenophon's assessment of Antisthenes' humor is critical, we can perhaps discern in that assessment another offshoot of the legacy of Socratic humor in antiquity, one that runs from Antisthenes' brand of Socratic humor through the Cynics.⁴¹

Lucian's Demonax

From the extant testimony and fragments, it is clear that the use of humor within the Cynic school was widespread, both as a literary practice⁴² and as a mode of interpersonal engagement. Most importantly, humor was also central to the Cynic practice of philosophy itself.⁴³ While such humor, moreover, may reflect a Socratic pedigree, it is generally not ironic. As with the Stoics and the Epicureans, there is evidence that the Cynics eschewed the type of *eirōneia* that is associated (either rightly or wrongly) with the Socrates of the Platonic dialogues. This distinction between Cynic humor and Socratic *eirōneia* is one that is explicitly addressed, albeit in a much later text: Lucian's *Demonax*.⁴⁴ In that work, Lucian offers a brief biography of the life of his older contemporary, the philosopher Demonax.⁴⁵ Most important for our purposes is the way in which Lucian frames the relationship between Demonax and Socrates. Lucian writes: And he [Demonax] did not appropriate one form of philosophy for himself, but he mixed many forms into one, and did not clearly reveal to anyone which of them pleased him [most]. He seemed to endear himself (*ōikeiōsthai*) more to Socrates, although in dress and in the leisureliness of his life he seemed to emulate

the man from Sinope, not by defacing the currency so that he would be wondered and marveled at by those he encountered, but he led the same kind of life as all others and was simple and was not overcome with vanity and he participated in politics (*sunepoliteueto*); he did not practice the irony of Socrates (*tou Sōkratous eirōneian ou prosiemenos*), but his conversations with others showed him to be full of Attic grace (*charitos Attikēs mestas*), so that those who associated with him went away neither disdainful of him because he was ignoble nor fleeing the anger (*to skuthrōpon*) of his criticisms, but they were in all ways happier, much more orderly, cheerful, and filled with good hope for the future. (5-6) Here, we see that while Demonax had most in common with Socrates, he did not share Socrates' *eirōneia*; that does not indicate, however, that Demonax was not humorous. In fact, much of Lucian's account is dedicated to recording his witty remarks. This direct, and often more caustic, form of humor is even on display in the other important parallel that Lucian draws between Socrates and Demonax: the latter's prosecution by the Athenians under the same charges previously brought against Socrates. Demonax even begins his defense by daring the Athenians to sacrifice him as they did Socrates (11); but, on this occasion, not only is the philosopher acquitted, but upon his death he is accorded a public funeral by the city (63).⁴⁶

Lucian's treatment of Demonax does not, in itself, demonstrate Cynic antipathy toward Socratic *eirōneia*, neither during the Second Sophistic nor earlier.⁴⁷ Yet, his other works do offer us some speculative clues that may help account for the way he positions Demonax between Socrates and Diogenes.

Here, it is useful to briefly consider the ways in which Lucian treats *eirōneia* elsewhere in his corpus. First, there are a number of passages that, as in the *Demonax*, associate Socrates with *eirōneia*. In *De domo*, Lucian, in a reference to Plato's *Phaedrus*, refers to Socrates sitting under a plane tree deploying his irony against Phaedrus (4). Elsewhere, the association of Socrates with *eirōneia* is more clearly negative. In the *True History*, Rhadamanthus is said to threaten Socrates with banishment from the Isle of the Blest unless he quits his irony (*apheis tēn eirōneian*, 2.17). And in the *Dialogues of the Dead*, we see an intriguing denial on the part of Socrates that he deployed *eirōneia*—when Menippus informs him that the Athenians all think he was an amazing man and that he knew everything, even though, as Menippus thinks, Socrates knew nothing, Socrates responds, “And I used to say the same thing to them, but they thought I was being ironic” (6.5).

Other usages of the term, though not directly connected with Socrates, are reminiscent of the kind of irony generally associated with Socrates in the Platonic dialogues. In the *Lexiphanes*, Lexiphanes responds to Lycinus' praise of the former's response to Plato's *Symposium* with the charge that he dispense with his irony (*ton men eirōna pedoi katabale*, 1). Lucian responds to the claim that he is like a “Prometheus in words” with the suspicion that those who call him such are excessively praising (*huperepainōn*) him, and that their words seem to contain some irony and an Attic sneer (*tis eirōneian . . . kai muktēra hoion ton Attikon, Prometheus es in verbis*, 1).⁴⁸ This characterization of *eirōneia* as an Attic trait appears elsewhere as well. When Solon states that the city of Athens

will not be ashamed to learn from a foreign guest, Anacharsis suspects that this is an example of Attic *eirōneia* (*Anacharsis*, 18).⁴⁹ Finally, Plato is also associated with *eirōneia* in *The Dead Come to Life* (22).

It is thus tempting to suggest that what we see in Lucian's portrait of Demonax is a philosopher whose deployment of humor reflects a Socratic lineage,⁵⁰ but one that has been refracted through the very different approach to humor deployed by Antisthenes and Diogenes. For the latter, humor is still a central part of philosophical practice; yet, the direct, caustic, and often abusive nature of such humor is a form that fits better with the Cynic emphasis on *parrhēsia*.

Cynic Humor and Cynic Philosophy

To understand how Cynic humor is connected with the Cynic practice of philosophy, it is necessary to consider briefly the Cynic goal of living a life in accordance with nature. Given that the Academics, Peripatetics, Epicureans, and (especially) the Stoics placed central value on nature as an important standard in the conduct of life, the attempt to live a life in accordance with nature does not in itself distinguish Cynicism from its contemporary philosophical rivals.⁵¹ Unlike these other philosophical traditions, however, the Cynics appear to have lacked any systematic, theoretical articulation of what nature was and what it would mean to live in accordance with it. It is thus mainly through our knowledge of Cynic practices that we can discern that simplicity was a central concern.⁵² Diogenes reportedly owned nothing besides a knapsack, double-folded

cloak, and, later in life, a stick to help him walk (but only when traveling). Yet he still found opportunities to shed even more of his possessions—coming across a child who used his hands to drink water, he reportedly smashed his wooden cup on the ground, stating that he had not realized that nature had already provided him with a cup (*SSR* V.B.158, 160, 175). He was noted for eschewing luxurious foods, and was reported to have eaten an octopus raw in order to avoid having to cook it.⁵³ Diogenes was also noted for his *parrhēsia*—his frank and direct speech.

To live in accordance with nature in this way requires combating the hold that conventional norms and practices exert over the conduct of our lives. According to Diogenes Laertius, “He [Diogenes] would often loudly proclaim that the gods have granted human beings the means to an easy life, but this has been hidden from sight because they seek out honey-cakes and perfume and the like” (*SSR* V.B.322 = D.L. 6.44). The path of nature, in other words, is hidden by desires for luxurious goods, desires that for the Cynics are not themselves natural. While human beings possess a natural desire for food in order to satiate their hunger, they do not possess any natural desire for luxurious food in order to satiate their hunger. The desire for luxurious food, and the subsequent belief that one ought to satiate one’s hunger with luxurious food, arise from the practices and beliefs we learn from family, friends, and the surrounding culture. And these beliefs can become so engrained in our psyches that we come to take these conventional practices, and the desires to practice them, as natural.

While such a life in accordance with nature required a withdrawal from politics (as conventionally understood and practiced), it did not require a withdrawal from social life.⁵⁴ In fact, if we look to the metaphors the Cynics deployed in describing their way of life, we can see the social dimension of Cynic philosophical practice. The Cynics describe themselves as spies (*kataskopoi*) or watchers (*episkopoi*), watching over the vices of humanity and attempting to correct them; they are benefactors and saviors, who, motivated by *philanthropia*, attempt to benefit mankind through moral correction; and they are the true kings who attempt to improve their inferiors with their kingly speech.⁵⁵ In this sense, the aim of Cynic philosophical practice was both to free oneself from the fetters of convention and to attempt to free others.

Given the way in which conventional beliefs and practices become so easily engrained in our psyches as natural, we can view the Cynic use of humor as a way of shocking one's audience into recognizing the conventionality of those practices. Consider the well-known example of Diogenes masturbating in public (*SSR* V.B.147). If one believes that living in accordance with nature entails attending to one's sexual desire when it arises, in the simplest manner possible, and that under at least certain conditions the simplest manner possible is masturbation, then Diogenes' action makes sense. At one level, it seeks to violate the convention that such sexual matters ought to be relegated to the private sphere, and in this respect Diogenes' response to those who chastised him for eating in the agora is also applicable to his public act of masturbation—"Why, it was in the marketplace that hunger

took me” (SSR V.B.186 = D.L. 6.58). In other words, at least part of what is entailed in fulfilling sexual desire naturally, as with other desires, is fulfilling it when and where it arises, without concern for the norms and conventions that designate only certain places as appropriate for the fulfillment of such desires.

This also fits with Diogenes’ response to those who reproached him for masturbating in public: “If only one could do away with hunger by rubbing one’s stomach!” (V.B.147 = D.L. 6.46). On its surface, one might interpret this statement as a lament that hunger cannot be satiated as easily as one’s sexual desire. In a basic sense, this is of course true: all Diogenes needs to satisfy his sexual desire is his hand, whereas satisfying his hunger will require food, which he will need to acquire through purchase, begging, stealing, or some other means. Yet, interpreted in light of Diogenes’ more general approach to eating, the statement also contains a reminder that the satisfaction of our desire for food is in fact much easier than we often take it to be—easier precisely to the degree that we free ourselves from the conventional norms that govern when, where, and what we ought to eat. Diogenes’ onanism is thus a quite literal demonstration of just how simple it is to satisfy those desires, desires that most individuals agonize over because they are constrained by norms that permit them to satisfy those desires only in certain ways. And in this respect, it also demonstrates how such humor can be a technique through which the Cynic attempts to free himself,⁵⁶ and not just others, from the hold of such conventions: it is through cultivating the

ability to laugh at such conventions that we come to view those conventions as unnatural and ridiculous.⁵⁷

This is true both of the Cynic use of mockery and joking, and of the way that certain Cynic practices figure the Cynic himself as an object of ridicule and laughter. It is by being laughed at, by becoming the object of ridicule, that the Cynic can learn to resist the desire to conform to convention. This point is well illustrated by the following anecdote: “To someone who said, ‘Many people laugh at you (*katagelōsin*),’ he [Diogenes] replied, ‘Yes, but I’m not laughed down (*katagelōmai*)’” (SSR V.B.430). This distinction is conveyed by using the same verb, but in the active and passive voices. Many people laugh at Diogenes (in the active voice), but he does not become the passive object of their laughter. He resists their laughter, which is, after all, nothing but an expression of societal conventions; to resist such laughter is to resist being pulled back within the ambit of these conventions, to resist the power they can exercise. Sometimes this sentiment takes a more aggressive stance: “When someone said to him, ‘Most people laugh at you,’ he replied, ‘And perhaps donkeys laugh at them; but just as they are not corrected (*epistrephontai*) by the donkeys, I am not by them” (SSR V.B.431).⁵⁸ Explicit here is the intended corrective force of such laughter,⁵⁹ as well as the contempt with which Diogenes regards it.

In this respect, we can view the Cynic practice of making oneself the object of laughter as a technique connected with Cynic *askēsis*—it is a technique through which the Cynics train themselves to become the kinds of subjects capable of living in accordance with nature.⁶⁰ As Michel Foucault has argued, the

philosophical-pagan practice of *askēsis* is crucially distinct from a Christian practice of asceticism.⁶¹ While the latter is driven by self-renunciation, the former is linked to a process of subjectivation—a working upon the self as a mode of constructing the self. From within this framework, the Cynic practice of subjecting oneself to the laughter of others is deeply connected with the formation of a Cynic self that is indifferent to societal conventions and practices that the Cynics view as unnatural. The Cynics do not remain unaffected by such laughter, since the effect of the experience of being laughed at is part of what constitutes them as subjects that have the ability to speak the truth about the societies in which they live. The laughter works upon them, but as the example above illustrates, they are not simply its passive subjects.

• • •

As the analysis above indicates, the negative assessment of *eirōneia* persisted during the Hellenistic period, and appears to have been a shared judgment among the Stoics, Epicureans, and Cynics. At the same time, it also reveals the complexity of the continuing debate concerning Socratic *eirōneia*, and about the nature and purpose of Socratic humor more generally. As Aspasius notes in his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*,⁶² the question of whether Socrates was an *eirōn* continued to be debated well beyond the classical period, and the evidence surveyed above suggests that the Stoics and Epicureans held opposing views. For the Stoics, Socrates was a positive *exemplum*, yet the Stoic Socrates was not an *eirōn*; for the Epicureans, Socrates was an *eirōn*, and his *eirōneia* is an

important element in the Epicurean critique of Socrates. With the Cynics, the picture is both less clear and more complicated; if Lucian's *Demonax* is representative, then it is possible that the Cynics did believe Socrates was an *eirōn* and did think that *eirōneia* was a negative trait, but did not wholly reject Socrates as a negative model on that basis.

The assessments of *eirōneia* by the Stoics, Epicureans, and Cynics are also each bound up with their respective understandings of the proper relationship between the philosopher and those he or she seeks to educate. The emphasis Marcus Aurelius places on kindness and gentleness in correcting the errors of others is at odds with an eironic comportment toward others. For both the Epicureans and Cynics, the practice of *eirōneia* conflicts with their respective emphases on *parrhēsia*. For the former, it is necessary for the Epicurean teacher to explain, in a clear and straightforward manner, those doctrines that will protect the pupil from physical and mental disturbance; for the latter, the task of the *episkopos* is to declare frankly the foolishness and vanity that lie within social conventions. At the same time, the evidence surveyed in this chapter further demonstrates that the legacy of Socratic humor was broader than the question of whether he was an *eirōn* or not. While the Stoics may have rejected the practice of *eirōneia*, the Stoic use of Socrates as a positive example includes a number of anecdotes that highlight Socrates' use of humor. And the Cynic practice of humor may well have a Socratic pedigree, even if it eschews both *eirōneia* and irony more generally.

Finally, this Cynic practice of humor highlights the ways in which a variety of gelastic practices can be harnessed both to

contest and to resist the social and political exercise of power. Living in accordance with nature requires freeing oneself from the power that social norms and conventions have in shaping and constraining one's behavior. The use of humor to make those norms and conventions look ridiculous was thus an important practice through which the Cynics attempted to weaken the power norms and conventions held over both them and others. Just as important, however, was the cultivation of the ability to endure the laughter and joking of others, especially that which expressed the ridiculousness of the Cynic way of life from the perspective of such norms and conventions. If such laughter and joking can be viewed as an attempt to reassert the power of societal norms and conventions, then the ability to endure such laughter and ridicule is a crucial means toward cultivating the ability to continue to resist them. Just as Diogenes would not be corrected by the laughter of donkeys, so would he not be corrected by the laughter of those who would seek to prevent him from living in accordance with nature.

Conclusion

In *Laughter in Ancient Rome*, Mary Beard notes that “it is a truism that the practice of laughter is closely bound up with power and its differentials.”¹ As she also observes, however, how such laughter (and humor more generally) is bound up with power and its differentials is shaped by the particular social, cultural, and political contexts in which it is practiced. To attempt to recover the political significance of practices of humor from the distant past demands attention to such specificities—to how laughter and humor can reflect, challenge, and reveal tensions within a given society’s ideological constructs.²

In this book, I have argued that ancient depictions of Socratic humor reflect a specific anxiety surrounding Socratic intellectualism and the danger it might pose to the democratic operation of authority in classical Athens. Thus, the practice of Socratic humor and its representations within our extant sources can be understood against the backdrop of a set of Athenian democratic practices that distributed political power among adult male citizens in a remarkably egalitarian way, and in light of a democratic ideology that placed great faith in political judgments reached through collective decision-making procedures. Such equality, however, was far from complete.

Even among the adult male citizen population there were noticeable discrepancies in how the poorest class of citizens—the *thetes*—were treated, and it is likely that members of Athens' different socioeconomic classes would have both understood and experienced such democratic equality differently.³ And while the Assembly and jury system required participation by large numbers of ordinary citizens, the educational and economic advantages possessed by elites allowed them to exercise disproportionate political influence. The persistence of such inequalities thus created tensions within an Athenian democratic ideology that emphasized a robust and extensive notion of political equality.

These tensions between a democratic ideology that stressed political equality and the persistence of various forms of inequality created fertile ground for exploration, examination, and contestation within Athenian political discourse.⁴ The preceding chapters have indicated how the Socratic practice of humor was situated within this ideological context by our classical sources. In Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Socrates' use of mockery is presented as a reflection of his own sense of intellectual superiority; it is a derisive form of humor that Socrates uses to denigrate his intellectual inferiors, and it expresses disdain for ordinary citizens who lack his scientific and technical knowledge. It is this disdainful, mocking attitude that Strepsiades ultimately learns from Socrates. While he fails to master such knowledge, his rudimentary understanding of the subjects Socrates attempts to teach him suffice, in his eyes, to render him unaccountable to his fellow citizens. Socratic mockery, in this context, reflects the belief that intellectual

superiority ought to translate to greater political power and authority; it is thus a transgressive form of humor, one that sought to transform the ways in which political power and authority were distributed in democratic Athens.

The depictions of Socratic humor we find in Plato and Xenophon are quite distinct from that found in Aristophanes' *Clouds*; nonetheless, both authors also address the anxieties surrounding Socratic wisdom and the suspicion that Socrates sought to mock his fellow citizens and the institutions of Athenian democracy. Plato's engagement with the question of whether Socrates was an *eirōn* is indicative of the ambiguity surrounding the nature and purpose of Socratic philosophy and its political significance. Those who accuse Socrates of being an *eirōn* do so convinced that they understand what Socrates is up to when he questions his interlocutors. While Plato's ironic depiction of these accusations casts doubt on the accuracy of their judgments, this doubt must be situated within the broader context of how Plato addresses the distinction between Socratic philosophy and sophistry. Attending to the epistemological and ontological positions that undergird this distinction can help to explain why it is that Socrates' interlocutors exhibit such varied reactions to his use of humor and irony.

These reactions are closely linked, moreover, to the nature of Socratic wisdom as it is presented in Plato's *Apology*. Socrates' interpretation of the Delphic oracle simultaneously asserts and downplays his intellectual superiority: while it may be true that there is no Athenian who is wiser than he, his wisdom consists in his knowledge of his own ignorance, and is far inferior to the wisdom possessed by the gods. As such, it represents an

attempt to navigate the tensions and anxieties raised by this form of inequality; Socrates may be wiser than others, but not much wiser, and he uses this wisdom to benefit both his fellow citizens and the city of Athens. Socrates' irony likewise represents an attempt to navigate the anxieties that might flow from such inequalities, and involves downplaying his own intellectual abilities and praising those of his interlocutors. How we interpret the ultimate nature and purpose of such irony depends on our understanding of Socrates' goal in questioning his interlocutors. For Socrates' defenders, such irony was a playful form of jesting that attempted to grapple seriously with the difficulties involved in making others aware of their self-ignorance. It was also a genuine reflection of Socrates' recognition of the limits of his own knowledge. For his accusers, it was a pretense designed to help him defeat his interlocutors in dialectical combat, and mocked what he took to be their intellectual inferiority.

In Xenophon, Socrates' claim to superiority is far more straightforward; he never denies having wisdom, nor the virtues of character that set him apart from his fellow Athenians. At the same time Xenophon presents Socrates' use of both mockery and irony as techniques deployed in order to benefit his interlocutors. His use of irony in particular demonstrates that while he is aware of his own intellectual superiority, he is also aware of the difficulties in getting others to recognize the extent of their own ignorance. His subtle use of irony attempts to guide his interlocutors to the recognition that they lack the knowledge that they need in order to achieve the noble goals they desire, and does so while refraining from explicitly acknowledging their ignorance. Xenophon's Socrates

is also aware, however, that a more direct approach is necessary with those who insist that they already possess knowledge; his ridicule is a means of forcing them to recognize their ignorance in a humiliating and public way. The range of humorous practices deployed by Xenophon's Socrates, from a subtle form of irony to a direct form of mockery, thus constitutes a technique for adapting his pedagogical approach to the particular interlocutor with whom he is engaged.

For Aristotle, *eirōneia* can also be a technique for negotiating power imbalances; he thus notes that the magnanimous man may use *eirōneia* specifically when dealing with his inferiors. Thus, Aristotle's association of Socrates with the practice of *eirōneia* reflects a tacit recognition of the kinds of concerns Socrates had to contend with in engaging with his interlocutors. At the same time, Aristotle also recognizes in the practice of *eirōneia* a mostly vicious way of interacting with others, one that sits in tension with the "social virtues" he identifies: friendliness, truthfulness, and wittiness. By contrast, his conception of virtuous laughing and joking—*eutrapelia*—offers an alternative to *eirōneia* in its emphasis on reciprocity: the *eutrapelos* must know how to laugh and joke well, and must also be able to endure the laughter and joking of others that is directed at him.

While the material on Socratic humor in the Stoics, Epicureans, and Cynics is not drawn from this same ideological context, it still reflects a concern with the relationship between humor and power. This is especially true in the case of the Cynics, for whom the practice of a nonironic, Socratic form of humor was a technique used to resist the power of social norms and conventions. Cynic mockery was a means of "defacing the

currency,” of ridiculing such norms and conventions in order to weaken the power that they might exert over both others and themselves. Thus, it was a means by which the Cynic attempted to become the kind of individual who was capable of living a life in accordance with nature. This Cynic mockery of such conventions went hand in hand with Cynic attempts to turn themselves into objects of laughter and ridicule. Such laughter and ridicule sought to “correct” the actions of Cynics like Diogenes, and by doing so, draw them back to beliefs and practices of normal life. Making oneself into an object for such laughter and ridicule was a means by which the Cynics could cultivate the ability to resist its power to lead them away from living according to nature.

The preceding chapters thus illustrate how Socratic humor was a contested practice during the classical period and beyond, and that a large part of that debate revolved around how to place the Socratic practice of humor within the context of democratic Athens. Reconstructing this debate can help us understand how and why the Socratic practice of philosophy raised the kinds of suspicions described above, and how the Socratic practice of humor could either exacerbate or mitigate the anxieties surrounding certain forms of inequality within democratic Athens. As was previously noted, that the Socratic practice of humor might provoke such anxieties does not, of course, make it antidemocratic; in fact, navigating such anxieties concerning equality and inequality was already a central facet of Athenian democratic politics. As Josiah Ober has ably demonstrated, the political activities of elite orators were effectively constrained by a mass democratic ideology that emphasized the wisdom of collective decision-making by

the *dēmos*. In advising the *dēmos*, political elites had to contend with the suspicion that they might attempt to use their rhetorical abilities to manipulate the people, and to persuade them to pursue public policies that furthered the private interests of those elites over those of ordinary citizens. In contending with these anxieties, elite orators needed to stress how they used their elite status and abilities in order to benefit the *dēmos* and its democracy.⁵

Socrates' claim to wisdom, as it is depicted by Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle, is quite distinct from the rhetorical abilities possessed by elite orators. Yet, it raised similar concerns about the place of such inequality within Athenian democratic politics. In Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Socratic mockery is depicted as an antidemocratic expression of Socrates' superiority. In both Plato and Xenophon, however, Socrates emphasizes the benefits that he provides to his fellow citizens and to Athens' democracy on account of his superior wisdom. While such wisdom might set him apart from his fellow citizens, he uses it to their benefit. His irony, in this light, is a technique for mitigating the anxieties that his superiority might raise.

Yet, just as the *dēmos* worried that elite orators might manipulate this ideological terrain in order to pursue their own private advantage, so Socrates' critics worried that his claim to benefit others masked his desire to defeat them in dialectical combat and humiliate them. For them, his irony and other forms of humor expressed a disdain for what he perceived as their inferiority. The accusations of Thrasymachus in the *Republic* and Hippias in the *Memorabilia* situate Socrates'

mockery of his interlocutors as part of his monopolization of the role of questioner in their dialectical exchanges, and they further express resentment over the one-sided nature of these conversations. And his accusers, moreover, worried that his irony and humor also expressed disdain for the *dēmos* and for Athens' democratic institutions.

It is in this respect that Aristotle's analysis of *eirōneia* proves valuable, precisely because it highlights the hierarchical element of Socratic humor while pointing toward a potential alternative. As was emphasized in chapter 4, Aristotle views laughter and joking as expressions of superiority; at the same time, he identifies virtuous laughter and joking as requiring the ability to both laugh and joke well and to join in the laughter and joking of others, even when they are directed at oneself. This understanding of *eutrapelia* appears to be reflected in Aristotle's definition of the concept as "educated *hubris*," which both highlights the element of superiority expressed by such laughter and joking and emphasizes that the virtuous practice of such humor requires that it be socialized in such a way that the agency of both parties is maintained. This points toward a reciprocal practice of laughing and joking, one that requires the possession of both types of *eutrapelia* delineated in the *Eudemian Ethics*.

This interpretation of Aristotle's account of *eutrapelia* relies heavily on a distinction he draws in the *Eudemian Ethics*, which does not appear in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. And even though the account of *eutrapelia* that results from this emphasis appears to entail a more egalitarian and reciprocal disposition than *eirōneia*, these qualities alone do not make it a democratic virtue. The mode of reciprocity it embodies, that

which is akin to ruling and being ruled in turn, reflects a conception not just of democratic citizenship, but of citizenship in oligarchic and aristocratic regimes as well, not to mention the *politeia* that Aristotle identifies as the correct form of popular government. Aristotle would also not consider the citizens of a democracy, as he understands the terms, to be virtuous. Yet these qualities do lend themselves to thinking about an ethics of laughter and joking that might be suited to a democratic regime. The democratic anxieties concerning hubristic laughter in Demosthenes 54 provide us with one such opportunity for thinking about how that might work; unpacking the seemingly democratic connotations of the word *eutrapelia* in fifth-/fourth-century Athenian political discourse provides another. In this respect, Aristotelian *eutrapelia* may provide a better starting point for thinking about a democratic practice of humor than Socratic irony.⁶

One might object that this distinction between irony and *eutrapelia* ignores the self-deprecating elements of irony; in other words, it overlooks the ways in which the ironist figures both others *and* himself as an object of ridicule.⁷ Yet, there is still an important distinction here between the practice of the *eirōn* and that of the *eutrapelos*. While the former may figure herself as an object of ridicule, the latter is able to endure (*MM* 1193a17-18) or even take pleasure in (*EE* 1234a15-17) the laughter and joking that others direct at her. Overlooking for the moment the potential difference between enduring and taking pleasure in such laughter and joking, what Aristotle requires from the *eutrapelos* is far more demanding than the kind of self-deprecating humor in which the *eirōn* might be

seen as engaging. This distinction is exemplified by Xenophon's depiction of Antisthenes in the *Symposium*, as was discussed in chapter 5. While Antisthenes participates in the kind of ironic jesting that each of the guests deploy in describing which of their characteristics or possessions they most take pride in, he is quite resistant to, and offended by, the joke Socrates directs against him concerning his trade as a procurer.

To be sure, this ability to endure the laughter of others does appear to be an element of the Socratic practice of humor, at least as it is depicted in Plato and Xenophon. For the Platonic Socrates, being laughed at does not matter (Plat. *Euth.* 3c), especially if that laughter is the laughter of the many. And in the *Memorabilia*, Socrates advises the young Charmides not to worry about the laughter he might encounter at the hands of the base, stupid citizens who attend the Assembly (3.7). What it means to endure such laughter in these contexts is to cultivate an indifference toward it. This mode of endurance is one that is captured well by that arguably Socratic (but not ironic) form of humor practiced by the Cynics, especially in the following anecdote: "When someone said to him, 'Most people laugh at you,' he replied, 'And perhaps donkeys laugh at them; but just as they are not corrected (*epistrephontai*) by the donkeys, I am not by them" (SSR V.B.431). As discussed in chapter 5, the ability to endure such laughter was, for the Cynics, a way of training themselves to resist being pulled back within the ambit of conventional norms and practices. Diogenes might be laughed at, but such laughter does not affect him.

Aristotelian *eutrapelia*, in contrast, demands a very different kind of endurance, one that is reflected in the etymology of the word. *Eutrapelia* literally indicates a kind of "turning well," and

more generally, a type of versatility. Such versatility fits well with the kind of endurance exemplified by the second type of *eutrapelia* Aristotle identifies in the *Magna moralia* and *Eudemian Ethics*—the ability to take pleasure in the laughter and jokes of others that identify and ridicule our own faults. While Diogenes is not turned (*epistrephontai*) by the laughter of others, the *eutrapelos* will be turned by such laughter and joking, when appropriate. *Eutrapelia* thus demands both an ability to use laughter and joking to educate others, and an ability to be educated by the laughter and joking of others. It is in this sense that it might be interpreted both as constituting a critique of Socratic *eirōneia* and as representing an alternative political *ethos* of laughter and joking.

Thus, by reconstructing the classical debate surrounding Socratic humor, we can recover a democratic critique of Socrates' gelastic practices, one that risks being overlooked if we focus solely, or primarily, on the Socrates of the Platonic dialogues. To be clear, to recover such a democratic critique is not equivalent to demonstrating its historical veracity; as was explained in the introduction, the latter kind of claim is inconsistent with the methodological approach to the study of Socrates deployed in this book. Rather, placing Plato's depiction of Socratic *eirōneia* into conversation with the portraits of Socratic humor we find in Aristophanes, Xenophon, and Aristotle allows us to identify the potential democratic anxieties surrounding Socrates' gelastic practices and to observe how those anxieties shaped the accounts of Socratic irony found in Plato and Xenophon. The result is a richer understanding of the relationship between Socratic philosophical practice and Athenian democracy.

This emphasis on the democratic critique of Socratic humor does sit in tension with other accounts of Socratic irony and politics, especially those by contemporary political theorists who use the figure of Socrates and his critical philosophical practice as a model for contemporary democratic citizenship. Such accounts, which focus exclusively on the Platonic dialogues, emphasize the immanent nature of Socrates' critique of Athenian democracy, and highlight the continuities between Socrates' philosophical mode of engagement and Athenian democratic values and practices.⁸ In particular, these interpretations argue that the critical, aporetic nature of Socratic questioning mirrors the "openness" of democracy as a type of political regime. Thus, while the Platonic Socrates is critical of Athenian democratic practice, his critical efforts are directed at cultivating and fostering practices and principles that are essentially democratic.

Though they are primarily directed at contemporary political concerns, these interpretations of Socratic politics and the role of Socratic irony in shaping such practices risk presenting a one-sided account of democracy, in both its contemporary and ancient Athenian manifestations. While we might count "openness" as a democratic principle, its importance ought to be balanced against that of the agency of the *dēmos*, qua *dēmos*, to govern its own affairs. This is especially true in the case of Athenian *dēmokratia*, in which not only was the importance of the collective wisdom of the *dēmos* emphasized, but that of "openness" was secondary to the emphasis placed on consensus.⁹ Valuing the supposed "openness" of Socratic questioning over the collective wisdom of the *dēmos* as

displaying a superior mode of democratic citizenship overlooks, moreover, the ways in which this vision of Socrates as practicing an alternative mode of democratic citizenship is part of Plato's defense of Socrates against the charges made by his democratic critics and accusers. In doing so, it also neglects the ways in which this portrait of Socrates as an immanent critic is entangled with Plato's rejectionist critique of Athenian *dēmokratia*; Socrates' abstention from politics is ultimately underwritten by the belief that the *dēmos*, as a collective agent, is incapable of governing its own affairs well.

Ultimately, however, the interpretation of Socratic humor offered in this book questions the extent to which we ought to interpret Socratic irony as aporetic in this way. Such interpretations of Socratic irony, and of irony more generally, are driven by Romantic conceptions that link the practice of irony to concerns with authenticity.¹⁰ For Alexander Nehamas, Socratic irony creates a puzzle that Socrates' interlocutors must solve for themselves;¹¹ for Jonathan Lear, Socrates' ironic approach provides a model for living a truly authentic life;¹² for contemporary theorists, irony provides a mode of engagement suitable for a postmetaphysical, postfoundational world—it entails an awareness of the contingency of our political beliefs and the limits to their theoretical justification.¹³ The view articulated in this book, by contrast, frames Socratic irony as a variation on the practices of Socratic humor and mockery found in our other ancient sources. It further contends that while the particular dynamics involved in Socratic irony may differ from those involved in the mockery depicted by Aristophanes, the social force of such humor may

be quite similar, insofar as both can be viewed as establishing and reinforcing the superiority of the one deploying such humor over his target.

This last observation in particular points toward the democratic critique of Socratic irony articulated in this conclusion, as well as to a democratic critique of irony more generally. While Richard Rorty, for example, contends that “what the ironist is being blamed for is not an inclination to humiliate but an ability to empower,”¹⁴ the above analysis suggests that what the ironist is being blamed for is his refusal to place himself on an equal footing with his interlocutors. It is not, as Rorty contends, that the ironist, unlike the metaphysician, cannot offer ordinary citizens social hope,¹⁵ but that the ironist assumes, from the start, that his interlocutors’ beliefs are faulty. In this sense, what the ironist lacks is not an ability to empower, but a kind of presumptive generosity that entails an openness to the possibility that one’s interlocutor’s beliefs may be correct.¹⁶ Such an *ethos* reflects the belief that we may not only educate our fellow citizens in our encounters with them, but that we might learn from them as well. And while Socrates, in speech, insists that he is open to this latter possibility, in deed his practice of irony leads his interlocutors to doubt his sincerity.

Again, to reconstruct the classical debate concerning Socratic humor is not the same as closing the debate. Hopefully, however, this book provides a new starting point for thinking about Socratic humor, one that can inform attempts to understand both the relationship between the Socratic practice

of humor and Athenian *dēmokratia* and the legacy of Socratic irony for contemporary democratic politics.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

[1.](#) For recent overviews, see S. Critchley, *On Humor* (New York: Routledge, 2002); A. Stott, *Comedy* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 121-38; and J. Morreall, *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Theory of Humor* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

[2.](#) S. Halliwell, *Greek Laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); M. Beard, *Laughter in Ancient Rome* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014).

[3.](#) On Ariston's reasons for choosing to prosecute Konon under the rubric of the *dikē aikeias* rather than the *graphē hubreōs*, see D. Cohen, *Law, Violence, and Community in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 122. Cf. M. Morford, "Ethopoiia and Character-Assassination in the *Conon* of Demosthenes," *Mnemosyne*, 4th ser., 19.3 (1966): 243. While the former was classified as a private crime, in which any financial penalty assessed would be awarded to the defendant, the latter was a public crime, in which any financial penalty would be paid to the *polis*; it could also carry the penalty of death. On the distinction between public and private suits, see D.M. MacDowell, *The Law in Classical Athens* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 57-58.

[4.](#) N.R.E. Fisher, *Hybris: A Study in the Values of Honor and Shame in Ancient Greece* (Warminster, UK: Aris & Phillips, 1992), 148. As Fisher argues, this civic

understanding of *hubris* is consistent with the definition Aristotle offers at *Rhet.* 1378b23–25. For other views, see D.M. MacDowell, “Hybris in Athens,” *Greece & Rome* 23.1 (1976): 14–31; D. Cohen, “Sexuality, Violence, and the Athenian Law of Hubris,” *Greece & Rome* 38.2 (1991): 171–88; and D.L. Cairns, “Hybris, Dishonor, and Thinking Big,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 116 (1996): 1–32.

[5.](#) D. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 96.

[6.](#) J. Ober, *Athenian Legacies: Essays on the Politics of Going on Together* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 114–15.

[7.](#) For the former, see Dem. *Against Meidias*, 21.180; for the latter, see Isocrates, *Against Lochites* 4.

[8.](#) For this “civic” understanding of dignity, see J. Ober, “Democracy’s Dignity,” *American Political Science Review* 106.4 (2012): 827–46.

[9.](#) *Boulomai dē proeipein humin ha egō pepusmai legein auton pareskeuasthai, apo tēs hubreōs kai tōn pepragmenōn to pragm’ agonta eis gelōta kai skōmmata embalein peirasesthai.*

[10.](#) On the different sets of norms that animate Ariston’s position and that which he attributes to Konon, see Cohen, *Law, Violence, and Community*, 126–28. For a contrasting view, see G. Herman, *Morality and Behavior in Democratic Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 123–24, 156–59, and 283–86.

[11.](#) Halliwell, *Greek Laughter*, 37.

[12.](#) V. Wohl, *Law’s Cosmos: Juridical Discourse in Athenian Forensic Oratory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 76–77.

[13.](#) This term is borrowed from J. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

[14.](#) As John Clarke notes in his work on Roman visual humor, it is important to attend to the “multivalent interpretations” and the “zone of possible meanings” that humor can elicit. See J.R. Clarke, *Looking at Laughter: Humor, Power, and Transgression in Roman Visual Culture, 100 B.C.–200 A.D.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 9, 120.

[15.](#) Ober, “Democracy’s Dignity,” 827.

[16.](#) Since the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher, there has been a tendency to associate the Platonic Socrates with the historical Socrates, a trend exemplified recently in the work of Gregory Vlastos (who identifies the Socrates of the so-called early Platonic dialogues with the historical Socrates). See G. Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991). While most recent work on Socrates in the field of political theory also focuses on the Platonic Socrates, the reasons for this focus are generally not founded on a commitment to this particular solution to the Socratic problem. For an exception, see D. Villa, *Socratic Citizenship* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001),

311 n. 4, who does adopt Vlastos' solution to the Socratic problem.

[17.](#) For an extensive history of the Socratic problem (with a focus on Xenophon), see L.-A. Dorion, "Introduction générale," in M. Bandini and L.-A. Dorion, *Xénophon: Mémoires* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2000), vii–cclii.

[18.](#) Vlastos, *Socrates*, 101.

[19.](#) *Ibid.*, 100–101.

[20.](#) L.-A. Dorion, "Akrasia et enkrateia dans les *Mémoires* de Xénophon," *Dialogue* 42 (2003): 662–64. For a contrasting view, see G. Seel, "If you Know What Is Best, You Do It: Socratic Intellectualism in Xenophon and Plato," in L. Judson and V. Karasmanis, eds., *Remembering Socrates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 20–49.

[21.](#) For a summary of the importance of *enkrateia* for other aspects of the Xenophontic Socrates' thought, see L.-A. Dorion, "Xenophon's Socrates," in S. Ahbel-Rappe and R. Kamtekar, eds., *A Companion to Socrates* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 96–103. See also D. Johnson, "Aristippus at the Crossroads: The Politics of Pleasure in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*," *Polis* 26.2 (2009): 200–218.

[22.](#) On the centrality of this theme within Xenophon's works, see most recently V. Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror for Princes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[23.](#) For an outline of this approach, see L.-A. Dorion, "The Rise and Fall of the Socratic Problem," in D. Morrison, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1–23. For a recent objection to this approach, see D. Johnson, "Xenophon's *Apology* and *Memorabilia*," in M. Flower, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Xenophon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 119–31.

[24.](#) L.-A. Dorion, *Socrate* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004), 11–16. For an analysis of how Polycrates' *Accusation* shaped the *Apologies* of both Plato and Xenophon, see G. Danzig, "Apologizing for Socrates: Plato and Xenophon on Socrates' Behavior in Court," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 133.2 (2003): 281–321. On Polycrates' *Accusation* more generally, see A.H. Chroust, *Socrates, Man and Myth* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1957), 69–100.

[25.](#) Halliwell, *Greek Laughter*, 295. While Halliwell offers a brief sketch of these distinct depictions of Socratic humor, his focus lies in his broader project of analyzing Greek gelastic practices from Homer to the early Christians. This book, in contrast, provides a focused and more detailed account of those practices as they pertain to Socrates during the classical period. It offers further evidence to justify Halliwell's claim concerning the existence of such a debate in antiquity. In its treatments of Plato and Xenophon, the present study focuses on the Socratic practice of irony (a topic that is largely overlooked by Halliwell). Finally, it emphasizes the political dimensions of Socratic humor as it is depicted in our

classical sources. Thus, while Halliwell's insights into the existence of a debate concerning Socrates' gelastic practices provide a key starting point for the analysis that follows, this book offers an actual reconstruction of that debate during the classical period, with emphasis on Socratic irony and the political implications of its practice.

[26.](#) Halliwell, *Greek Laughter*, 295–97.

[27.](#) The *Apologies* of Plato and Xenophon, of course, depict only Socrates' response to Meletus' speech, but it is likely that Anytus and Lycon also delivered speeches at the trial. On this point, see M.H. Hansen, "The Trial of Sokrates—From the Athenian Point of View," in M. Sakellariou, ed., *Colloque international Démocratie athénienne et culture* (Athens: University of Athens, 1996), 137–70. Cf. P. Cartledge, *Ancient Greek Political Thought in Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 76–90.

[28.](#) Vivienne Gray has argued that criticizing the lot is not necessarily an antidemocratic position. Gray offers two pieces of evidence for this claim: (1) Isocrates' *Areopagiticus* 22–23, where Isocrates claims that a democracy that relied on election rather than sortition for choosing magistrates would be more democratic, since it would be a more effective system for preventing oligarchs from holding office—hence, sortition itself is actually rather undemocratic, since it allows oligarchs to hold office; and (2) Lysias 26.9, where Lysias claims that the *dokimasia* ensures that any oligarchs selected by lot are not sworn into office. Gray notes that Josiah Ober (*Political Dissent in Democratic Athens* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998], 280) has argued that Isocrates' claim is specious, but she contests Ober's interpretation by contending that Lysias 26.9 illustrates Lysias making the same claim to a democratic audience, thus illustrating that critiques of sortition were not necessarily viewed as undemocratic. It is unclear, however, how Lysias 26.9 does the work Gray wants it to do. There, Lysias does claim that the *dokimasia* can and ought to be used to prevent oligarchs who are selected by lot from being sworn into office; but he never claims that the practice of sortition itself is undemocratic or that election would be a more democratic way of choosing magistrates. See V. Gray, "Xenophon's Socrates and Democracy," *Polis* 28.1 (2011): 15.

[29.](#) G.B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 62.

[30.](#) This does not mean, of course, that the Socrates of the *Euthydemus* does not engage in humor, but merely that he does not engage in, and explicitly condemns, the specific type of humor practiced by Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. For explorations of the comic dimensions of Plato's presentation of Socrates in the dialogue, see D. Roochnik, "The Serious Play of Plato's *Euthydemus*," *Interpretation* 18.2 (1991): 211–32; and A. Michelini, "Socrates Plays the Buffoon: Cautionary

Protreptic in ‘Euthydemus,’” *American Journal of Philology* 121.4 (2000): 509–35.

[31.](#) See, in particular, D. Hyland, *Finitude and Transcendence in the Platonic Dialogues* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 132–34; and M. Miller, “The Pleasures of the Comic and of Socratic Inquiry: Aporetic Reflections on *Philebus* 48A-50B,” *Arethusa* 41.2 (2008): 263–89.

[32.](#) On this *aporia*, along with others raised by this connection, see Miller, “Aporetic Reflections,” 281.

[33.](#) C. Emlyn-Jones, “Dramatic Structure and Cultural Context in Plato’s *Laches*,” *Classical Quarterly* 49.1 (1999): 129. On the comic elements in the *Laches* more generally, see A. Tessitore, “Courage and Comedy in Plato’s *Laches*,” *Journal of Politics* 56.1 (1994): 115–33.

[34.](#) In fact, Socrates laughs only twice in the entire Platonic corpus, and in those cases Socrates’ laughter is described as gentle (*ērema*, *Phaedo* 84d8) and quiet (*hēsuchēi*, *Phaedo* 115c5).

[35.](#) On this point, *Rep.* 518a ff. is informative. There, Socrates compares the individual leaving the cave for the first time, and the individual returning to the cave. The former will be blinded by the light of the sun, and, at least initially, will be unable to competently navigate the world outside the cave; the latter, on account of the darkness of his new surroundings, will be unable to make out the shadows on the walls of the cave that its denizens take to be real. Both may appear laughable, insofar as they are both disturbed and unable to see. Yet, Socrates insists, one should not laugh unreasonably (*ouk an alogistōs gelōi*) whenever one sees someone disturbed in this way, but should consider whether the potential object of such laughter came from a brighter life and has been blinded by his lack of habituation (*aētheias*), or came from greater ignorance into relative brightness and has been filled by the brightness of the glare. The former should be deemed happy (*eudaimoniseien*) on account of his experience and his life; the latter, in contrast, should be pitied, but if someone wanted to laugh at him, he would be less ridiculous in doing so than if he were to laugh at someone who had come from the light above. While Socrates here distinguishes between reasonable and unreasonable laughter, in a way that is reminiscent of his earlier discussion at 452d-e, it is important to note that he does not recommend that we ought to laugh at the latter, but that in doing so one would be “less ridiculous” (*hētton katagelastos*) than in laughing at the former. For an overview of laughter in Plato’s dialogues, see G.J. De Vries, “Laughter in Plato’s Writings,” *Mnemosyne* 38.3/4 (1985): 387–90.

[36.](#) Dorion provides seven types of evidence for this argument, which can be briefly summarized as follows: (1) at least a dozen different sources associated the Megarian school with the practice of eristic, and most name it as the principal characteristic of the school; (2) eristic appears as a deviant form of dialectic that is linked to the *elenchus*; (3) the arguments deployed by Euthydemus and

Dionysodorus resemble the sophistic arguments associated with the Megarians: in particular, those that function in turning their interlocutors into an object of ridicule, and those that stipulate that the respondent must respond with a simple yes or no answer without adding any further distinctions to the question that has been asked; (4) Sextus Empiricus includes Euthydemus and Dionysodorus in a list of philosophers who are otherwise attested as members of the Megarian school, and he indicates that he is referring to the men who appear in Plato's *Euthydemus*; (5) Diogenes Laertius associates Euclid, the founder of the Megarian school, with eristics; (6) some of the sophistic arguments deployed by Euthydemus and Dionysodorus display Eleatic influence, and the Eleatics were one of the primary philosophical movements that influenced the Megarians; and (7) Aristotle's principal target in his *Sophistical Refutations* seems to have been the Megarians, and his descriptions and criticisms of eristics in that work fit well both with what we know of the Megarian school and with the kind of arguments deployed by Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. See L.-A. Dorion, "Euthydème et Dionysodore sont-ils des Mégariques?," in T.M. Robinson and L. Brisson, eds., *Plato: Euthydemus, Lysis, Charmides: Proceedings of the V Symposium Platonicum* (Sankt Augustin: Akademie, 2000), 43-49.

[37](#). There is other evidence that may lend further support to this conclusion as well. As Rosamond Kent Sprague has argued, while the *Euthydemus* is usually classified as a late middle dialogue, its thematic parallels with the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* may suggest an even later date. In particular, the verbal antics of the two brothers fit the practice of eristic as it is described in the two latter dialogues. There is also the connection between the Eleatic Visitor of the *Sophist* and the Eleatic pedigree of the Megarians. As Sprague notes, Socrates' concern at the beginning of the *Sophist* over how to discern the difference between a sophist and a philosopher might, in part, be directed at the Eleatic Visitor himself; given the varying experiences Socrates has in the Platonic dialogues with those associated with the Eleatic school (Parmenides and Zeno in the *Parmenides* versus Euthydemus and Dionysodorus in the *Euthydemus*), he might well be wondering what kind of Eleatic the Eleatic Visitor will turn out to be. See Rosamond Kent Sprague, "The *Euthydemus* Revisited," in Robinson and Brisson, *Plato*, 3-19.

[38](#). Dorion, "Euthydème et Dionysodore," 45-46. Plato also frames the *Theaetetus* as a dialogue written by Euclid, the founder of the Megarian school. On Euclid, who was known in antiquity to have written Socratic dialogues of his own, including a *Crito* and *Alcibiades*, see W.K.C. Guthrie, *Socrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 179-86; and K. Döring, *Die Megariker: Kommentierte Sammlung der Testimonien* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1972), frs. 15-16. For some earlier suggestions regarding Plato's concern with the Megarian school, see W.C. Greene, "The Spirit of Comedy in Plato," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 31 (1920): 79

n. 6 and 113.

[39.](#) See Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror*, 330-71.

[40.](#) See, for example, M. Nussbaum, "Aristophanes and Socrates on Learning Practical Wisdom," *Yale Classical Studies* 26 (1980): 43-97.

[41.](#) Dorion, *Socrate*, 11-16; G. Danzig, *Apologizing for Socrates: How Plato and Xenophon Created Our Socrates* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 1-13.

[42.](#) While the word *eirōn* is used at *Clouds* 449 to describe one of the many qualities Strepsiades will acquire should he study at the *phrontistērion*, Aristophanes' Socrates does not engage in *eirōneia* in the play. For a contrary view, see L. Edmunds, "Aristophanes' Socrates," *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 2 (1986): 209-30. On the absence of *eirōneia* and its cognates in Xenophon, see Vlastos, *Socrates*, 32. Vlastos' interpretation of Xenophon will be the subject of further analysis, in chapter 3.

[43.](#) M. Narcy, *Le philosophe et son double: Un commentaire de "l'Euthydème" de Platon* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1984), 35-58; and M. Lane, "The Evolution of *Eirōneia* in Classical Greek Texts: Why Socratic *Eirōneia* Is Not Socratic Irony," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 31 (2006): 49-83.

1. ARISTOPHANES AND SOCRATIC MOCKERY

[1.](#) All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

[2.](#) Since Dover's argument that the Socrates of *Clouds* is less a depiction of Socrates than of a generalized sophist, there has been no dearth of articles addressing this issue, many of which challenge Dover's conclusion. For Dover's argument, see K. Dover, "Introduction," in *Aristophanes, Clouds* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), xvii-cxxv. For arguments contesting his conclusions, see especially A.W.H. Adkins, "Clouds, Mysteries, Socrates, and Plato," *Antichthon* 4 (1970), 13-24; E. Havelock, "The Socratic Self as It Is Parodied in Aristophanes' *Clouds*," *Yale Classical Studies* 22 (1972): 1-18; M. Nussbaum, "Aristophanes and Socrates on Learning Practical Wisdom," *Yale Classical Studies* 26 (1980): 43-97; K. Kleve, "Anti-Dover or Socrates in the *Clouds*," *Symbolae Osloenses* 58 (1983): 23-37; L. Edmunds, "Aristophanes' Socrates," *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 2 (1986): 209-30; M. Nichols, *Socrates and the Political Community* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987); J. Tomin, "Socratic Gymnasium in the *Clouds*," *Symbolae Osloenses* 62 (1987): 25-32; and Tomin, "Socratic Midwifery," *Classical Quarterly* 37.1 (1987): 97-102 (with the criticisms of this argument in M. Burnyeat, "Socratic Midwifery, Platonic Inspiration," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 24 [1977]: 7-16; and H. Tarrant, "Midwifery and the *Clouds*," *Classical Quarterly* 38.1 [1988]: 116-22); P.A. Vander Waerdt, "Socrates in the *Clouds*," in P.A. Vander Waerdt, *The Socratic Movement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 48-86; J.P. Euben, *Corrupting Youth* (Princeton,

NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 109-38; S. Berg, "Rhetoric, Nature, and Philosophy in Aristophanes' *Clouds*," *Ancient Philosophy* 18 (1998): 1-19; D. Konstan, "Socrates in Aristophanes' *Clouds*," in D.R. Morrison, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 75-90; J. Broackes, "ΑΥΤΟΣ ΚΑΘ' ΑΥΤΟΝ in the *Clouds*: Was Socrates Himself a Defender of Separable Soul and Separable Forms?," *Classical Quarterly* 59.1 (2009): 46-59; G. Cerri, "Le *Nuvole* di Aristofane e la realtà storica di Socrate," in F. Perusino and M. Colantonio, eds., *La commedia greca e la storia* (Florence: Edizioni ETS, 2012), 157; and C. Moore, "Socrates and Self-Knowledge in Aristophanes' *Clouds*," *Classical Quarterly* 65.2 (2015): 534-51.

3. On the Athenian anxiety surrounding expertise more generally, see recently P. Ismard, *Democracy's Slaves: A Political History of Ancient Greece*, trans. J.M. Todd (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 80-102. See also S.C. Todd, "Lysias against Nikomachos: The Fate of the Expert in Athenian Law," in L. Foxhall and A.D.E. Lewis, eds., *Greek Law in Its Political Setting: Justifications Not Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 101-31, esp. 131.

4. M.H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 142.

5. *Ibid.*, 306-7.

6. W.R. Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971).

7. P. Cartledge, "Comparatively Equal: A Spartan Approach," in *Spartan Reflections* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 69-73.

8. J. Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 189.

9. *Ibid.*, 333.

10. *Ibid.*, 191, 318-24; J. Ober, "Power and Oratory in Democratic Athens: Demosthenes 21, *Against Meidias*," in *The Athenian Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 105.

11. Private cases, in contrast, could be prosecuted only by the victim, or in the case of murder or a crime against a woman, by a male relative. See D.M. MacDowell, *The Law in Classical Athens* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 57-58.

12. D. Allen, *The World of Prometheus: The Politics of Punishing in Democratic Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 50-59.

13. *Ibid.*, 166.

14. M. Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1:226-27.

15. As Jeffrey Stout argues, all discursive practices, even democratic ones, entail various degrees of authority and consent—what distinguishes democratic discursive

practices, in this regard, from other types of discursive practices is that the former are relatively nondeferential (though not entirely nondeferential). See J. Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 209-13, 278-83.

[16.](#) Stout offers the following example: “As in street soccer or sandlot baseball, all of the participants have the authority to ‘keep score,’ and each of them necessarily does so in light of his or her already-adopted commitments. That I have the authority to track commitments and entitlements, and thus to draw the fundamental normative distinction from my own point of view, does not make my commitments correct; nor does it make me entitled to them, in the sense that entails being epistemically justified in holding them. It simply puts me in the democratic game of giving and asking for reasons.” Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 279.

[17.](#) The arguments of both Ober and Allen are constructed primarily from the corpus of fourth-century forensic oratory, which raises the question of whether the analysis of democratic authority in ancient Athens I have articulated using their works is applicable to the fifth-century context in which Aristophanes wrote and produced *Clouds*. The extent to which the same techniques were employed in the fifth century is one for which a complete answer is not readily available, given the paucity of evidence comparable to that which we have for the fourth century.

[18.](#) Tarrant speculates that in the version of *Clouds* performed in 423 Strepsiades successfully graduated from the *phrontistērion*. See H. Tarrant, “*Clouds* I: Steps Towards Reconstruction,” *Arctos* 25 (1991): 157-81.

[19.](#) This connection is emphasized by the language of Strepsiades’ description: it is not simply that the men in the *phrontistērion* say or argue that the sky is a barbecue lid, but that they are persuasive in doing so (*hoi ton ouranon legontes anapeithousin hōs estin pnigeus*). It is as if Strepsiades were saying: “If these people can argue that the sky is a giant barbecue lid, surely they can help me come up with an argument to help me escape repaying my debts!”

[20.](#) As Dover explains, the joke plays off of the similarity between the abstract word for “whirling” or “rotation” (*dinē*) and that denoting a type of cup (*dinos*). See Dover, *Clouds*, 150.

[21.](#) On Strepsiades’ misunderstandings, see P. Green, “Strepsiades, Socrates, and the Abuses of Intellectualism,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 20 (1979): 17-22; and L. Woodbury, “Strepsiades’ Understanding: Five Notes on the ‘Clouds,’” *Phoenix* 34.2 (1980): 108-27.

[22.](#) *Epeit’ apaitais argurion toioutos ōn; / ouk an apodoiēn oud’ an obolon oudeni, / hostis kaleseie kardopon tēn kardopēn.*

[23.](#) *Pōs oun apolabein targurion dikaios ei / ei mēden oistha tōn meteōrōn pragmatōn;* [24.](#) If Tarrant’s argument is correct (see above, n. 18), then this is perhaps a remnant of the earlier version of *Clouds*. In any case, it is part of the play

as we have it, and an aspect of the play that is often overlooked in the focus on the corruption of Pheidippides.

[25.](#) See pp. 5–7 in the introduction.

[26.](#) *Clouds* 1068 is worth consulting on this point, where the Weaker Argument seems to construe being a *hubristēs* as an ideal for which one should strive. On this point, see Dover, *Clouds*, 226.

[27.](#) As Ober has argued, “Athenian political culture was specifically based on collective opinion, rather than on objectively verifiable, scientific truths. By this I do not mean that Athenians supposed that their collective opinion could cause the sun to rise in the west, or alter other ‘brute’ physical facts. But social facts were regarded by them as conventional and political, rather than homologous to the brute facts of nature.” See J. Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 35.

[28.](#) For a summary of this democratic ideology, which Ober draws from fourth-century oratory, see Ober, *Political Dissent*, 33–36.

[29.](#) Besides the use of the word *eirōn* as part of a long list of abilities that Strepsiades will acquire if he studies with Socrates, the presence of which certainly implies that it is also a characteristic that describes Socrates (how else would Strepsiades learn it from him?), *eirōneia* is not one of the characteristics of Socrates as Aristophanes depicts him in *Clouds*. Lowell Edmunds, however, has argued against this standard view on the presence of Socratic irony in *Clouds*, claiming that (1) the clouds themselves represent a hypostatized Socratic irony, and (2) Socrates’ manner of dress, commented upon by the cloud-chorus at lines 362–63, constitutes a mode of practical (i.e., nonverbal) irony. First, according to Edmunds, the shape-shifting of the cloud chorus corresponds with a kind of verbal dissembling or irony: he writes: “Their resembling is dissembling.” The clouds do change shape, and that shape-shifting may be interpreted as a kind of pretense; it may also be used to trick others into believing that they are something other than clouds, and such pretense as trickery also constitutes a form of mockery. In this, what the clouds do appears to resemble *eirōneia*, understood as the kind of practical joking described in the previous chapter. Yet, on this reading, the clouds would also be mocking Socrates by appearing to him as clouds, and, in this sense, such *eirōneia* is better described as a characteristic of the clouds themselves and not of Socrates. Socrates himself, however, does not deploy mockery of this sort in the play. Second, while Edmunds’ argument concerning Socrates’ practical irony makes good sense, Aristophanes’ does not depict Socrates’ sartorial style as a mode of ridiculing others. Edmunds does illustrate, however, how each of the characteristics the chorus identifies at 362–63 exhibits Socrates’ attitude of superiority, which, as I have argued, is central to the portrait Aristophanes offers and to our understanding of his depiction of Socratic mockery. For the clouds as ironic, see Edmunds, “Aristophanes’ Socrates,”

222; for Socrates' practical irony, see Edmunds, "The Practical Irony of the Historical Socrates," *Phoenix* 58.3/4 (2004): 196–201.

[30.](#) This is an association made in antiquity as well. See Arist. *EN* 1128a23.

[31.](#) S. Halliwell, *Greek Laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 217.

[32.](#) *Ibid.*, 216.

[33.](#) N. Worman, *Abusive Mouths in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 4, 13. It should be noted, however, that *aischrologia* is not solely associated with the agora. As Worman argues, such abusive speech is connected with archaic iambic discourse in which elite speakers assume various "low" perspectives; the imagined setting for such discourses, however, is the aristocratic symposium.

[34.](#) Halliwell, *Greek Laughter*, 230.

[35.](#) This ambiguity is well illustrated, as Halliwell notes, by Theophrastus in his sketch of the slanderer (*kakologos*). There, he notes that the slanderer calls his slander frank speech, democracy, and openness (*parrhēsia kai dēmokratian kai eleutherian*, 28.6). For Halliwell's analysis, see *Greek Laughter*, 237–43.

[36.](#) This dynamic is not confined to Aristophanes' contests with other comic poets—it is also expressed in the rivalries he constructs between democratic politicians and tragic poets. In *Knights*, it is closely intertwined with Aristophanes' portrayal of Cleon, and the way in which the poet frames his rivalry with the popular politician. On this theme, see J. Hesk, *Deception and Democracy in Classical Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chap. 5; J.F. McGlew, *Citizens on Stage: Comedy and Political Culture in the Athenian Democracy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), chap. 3; V. Wohl, *Love among the Ruins: The Erotics of Democracy in Classical Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), chap. 2; N. Slater, *Spectator Politics: Metatheatre and Performance in Aristophanes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), chap. 4; J. Zumbrennen, "Elite Domination and the Clever Citizen: Aristophanes' *Acharnians* and *Knights*," *Political Theory* 32.5 (2004): 656–77; and J. Lombardini, "Comic Authority in Aristophanes' *Knights*," *Polis* 29.1 (2012): 130–49. On his rivalry with the tragic poets, see in particular O. Taplin, "Tragedy and Tragedy," *Classical Quarterly* 33 (1983): 331–33, S. Goldhill, *The Poet's Voice: Essays on Poetics and Greek Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 201–22; and J. Given, "The Agathon Scene in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*," *Symbolae Osloenses* 82 (2007): 35–51.

[37.](#) The question of poetic rivalry between Aristophanes and his contemporaries has also attracted a great deal of recent attention. See M. Heath, "Aristophanes and His Rivals," *Greece & Rome* 37.2 (1990): 143–58; K. Sidwell, "Poetic Rivalry and the Caricature of Comic Poets: Cratinus' *Pytine* and Aristophanes' *Wasps*," in A. Griffiths, ed., *Stage Directions: Essays in Ancient Drama in Honour of E.W. Handley*

(London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1995), 56-80; Sidwell, *Aristophanes the Democrat: The Politics of Satirical Comedy during the Peloponnesian War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Z.P. Biles, "Intertextual Biography in the Rivalry of Cratinus and Aristophanes," *American Journal of Philology* 123.2 (2002): 169-204; Biles, *Aristophanes and the Poetics of Competition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[38.](#) Heath, "Rivals," 149-50, T. Hubbard, *The Mask of Comedy: Aristophanes and the Intertextual Parabasis* (Ithaca, 1991), 75; Z.P. Biles "Aristophanes' Victory Dance: Old Poets in the Parabasis of 'Knights,'" *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 136 (2001): 195-200; and I. Ruffell, "A Total Write-Off: Aristophanes, Cratinus, and the Rhetoric of Comic Competition," *Classical Quarterly* 52.1 (2002): 142-48.

[39.](#) R. Rosen, "Cratinus' *Pytine* and the Construction of the Comic Self," in D. Harvey and J. Wilkins, eds., *The Rivals of Aristophanes* (London: Duckworth, 2000), 32; E. Bakola, *Cratinus and the Art of Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 21.

[40.](#) Biles, "Intertextual Biography," 179.

[41.](#) Fragment numbers for Cratinus refer to Kassel and Austin's standard *Poetae Comici Graeci* (PCG).

[42.](#) Biles, "Intertextual Biography," 171.

[43.](#) Bakola, *Cratinus*, 24-25; Biles, "Intertextual Biography," 181. For the neologism *euripidaristophanizein*, see Cratinus fr. 342. Attribution of this fragment to *Pytine*, however, is unclear.

[44.](#) Bakola, *Cratinus*, 61-62.

[45.](#) For an analysis of the function of *alazoneia* in the *parabasis* of *Clouds*, see W. Major, "Aristophanes and 'Alazoneia': Laughing at the Parabasis of the 'Clouds,'" *Classical World* 99.2 (2006): 139-141.

[46.](#) Hubbard, *Mask of Comedy*, 2-8.

[47.](#) As Goldhill argues, "Aristophanes' writing constantly poses the question of how seriously, how comically, how literally to take (the) play." See Goldhill, *Poet's Voice*, 201.

[48.](#) Major, "Aristophanes and 'Alazoneia,'" 139.

[49.](#) To lump together the strategies of Cratinus and Aristophanes in this way admittedly overlooks any broader disagreements around which their rivalry might have revolved. At the very least, we might take the charge of *euripidaristophanizein* as a criticism of Aristophanes' elitism; while Aristophanes boasts of the cleverness of his comic poetry in *Clouds* (522), Cratinus, it seems, is accusing him of being a bit *too* clever. Or, as Keith Sidwell has argued, most recently in *Aristophanes the Democrat*, we might even interpret such rivalry as evidence of the comic poets' political positions. The exact nature of this rivalry is beyond the scope of this

chapter; here, I merely want to illustrate how Aristophanes applies this technique to the political rivalry he constructs between himself and Cleon in *Knights*.

[50.](#) Ober, "Power and Oratory," 104–5. For an alternative view of the speech, see P. Wilson, "Demosthenes 21 (*Against Meidias*): Democratic Abuse," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 37 (1991): 164–95.

[51.](#) On this point, I think a contemporary example can be illustrative. When Jon Stewart, former host of the popular American satirical news show *The Daily Show*, appeared on CNN's *Crossfire* in 2004, he accused the show's hosts, and the American news media more generally, of failing in their responsibility to the American people. Stewart argued that what *Crossfire* offered was mere theater, rather than substantive debate; the show simply provided a forum for Democrats and Republicans to recycle their talking points without ever forcing any real discussion. What most interests me here, however, is how Stewart responded when Tucker Carlson turned this criticism against Stewart himself. When Carlson faulted Stewart for his "softball" interview of John Kerry, Stewart countered, "You're on CNN. The show that leads into me is puppets making crank phone calls." The comic, in other words, is not where we should be looking for someone to perform this role, and Stewart was not claiming such authority for himself. In fact, he was preemptively mocking any such claim. Yet, there is a sense in which we can read Stewart's response as itself a strategy for constructing his own authority. Stewart knew that while he might deny his own authority, many of his viewers held his satirical presentation of current events to be more authoritative than that of traditional news outlets. From this perspective, to deny such authority is partly disingenuous. At the same time, however, it reconstructs the distinction between Stewart and his rivals by exposing their own claims to authority as boastful and self-deluded. For a full transcript of the interview, see <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0410/15/cf.01.html> (accessed March 29, 2012).

[52.](#) Halliwell argues that the comic poets enjoyed an exemption from the everyday norms regulating shameful speech. Attic Old Comedy, in his words, exemplified a principle of "institutionalized shamelessness," a principle according to which "the audience of Old Comedy is exempted from both the practical and the psychological considerations that could be expected to impinge on reactions to the shameful in many other public settings" (*Greek Laughter*, 247). We might construe the interpretation developed here as an alternative to this approach, one that views abusive speech as permissible insofar as it is deployed on behalf of the *dēmos*.

[53.](#) See C. Carey, "Comic Ridicule and Democracy," in R. Osborne and S. Hornblower, eds., *Ritual, Finance, and Politics: Athenian Democratic Accounts Presented to David Lewis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 69–83.

[54.](#) While it is true that Aristophanes is highly critical of democracy, he most

often lays the ultimate blame for political failures on elites. See J. Henderson, "The *Dēmos* and the Comic Competition," in J.J. Winkler and F. Zeitlin, eds., *Nothing to Do with Dionysos?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 271–313. And, while he does poke fun at ordinary citizens, he also celebrates their ingenuity and resourcefulness. On this last point, see in particular J. Zumbrennen, *Aristophanic Comedy and the Challenge of Democratic Citizenship* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2012).

[55](#). See the introduction, p. 3. On the historical plausibility that Anytus accused Socrates of criticizing Athens' democratic institutions during his speech at the trial, see Hansen, "The Trial of Sokrates—from the Athenian Point of View," in M. Sakellariou, ed., *Colloque international Démocratie athénienne et culture* (Athens: University of Athens, 1996), 147–49.

[56](#). This argument thus challenges the idea (expressed most notably by Peter Euben) that the affinities between Aristophanic comedy and Socratic philosophy as they are depicted in the play express their shared commonalities as democratic, reflective practices. While Euben is right to point out these affinities, the above analysis demonstrates that these affinities run only so deep, and that the play also contains serious criticisms of Socratic intellectualism that illustrate how the mode of critical reflection represented by Aristophanic comedy is importantly distinct from that of Socrates as they are both depicted in the play. Thus, while Euben attempts to distinguish the politics of Aristophanic comedy from that represented by the Old Education in *Clouds* by highlighting the continuities between Aristophanes, the New Education, and Socrates, the argument developed in this chapter offers a democratic reading of Aristophanic comedy that distinguishes it both from the intellectualism associated with the New Education and from the traditionalism associated with the Old Education. See Euben, *Corrupting Youth*, 109–38.

2. PLATO AND SOCRATIC *EIRŌNEIA*

[1](#). For general treatments of Plato's relationship to Greek tragedy, see H. Kuhn, "The True Tragedy: On the Relationship between Greek tragedy and Plato, I," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 52 (1941), 1–40; Kuhn, "The True Tragedy: On the Relationship between Greek tragedy and Plato, II," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 53 (1942): 37–88; M. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), chaps. 4–7; J.P. Euben, *The Tragedy of Political Theory: The Road Not Taken* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); A. Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), chap. 2; and S. Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements: Athenian Politics and the Practice of Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), chap. 8. On the dramatic elements of the dialogues more generally, see R.

Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–112.

2. On Plato and comedy and the comic, see W.C. Greene, “The Spirit of Comedy in Plato,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 31 (1920): 63–123; A. Saxonhouse, “Comedy in Callipolis: Animal Imagery in the *Republic*,” *American Political Science Review* 72 (1978): 888–901; R. Brock, “Plato and Comedy,” in E.M. Craik, ed., *Owls to Athens’: Essays on Classical Subjects Presented to Sir Kenneth Dover* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 39–49; Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue*, chap. 5; and D. Boyarin, *Socrates and the Fat Rabbits* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

3. Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue*, 187–89; G. Mara, *The Civic Conversations of Thucydides and Plato* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 136–37.

4. On this scene, see I.C. Storey, *Eupolis: Poet of Old Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). As Storey notes, the flatterers of Eupolis’ eponymous play are not sophists; rather, “Plato is giving his twist to the story by turning the *kolakes* of Eupolis into would-be sophists” (192). Given this disconnect, Storey also raises the possibility that Plato was here borrowing from Ameipsias’ *Konnos*, which featured a chorus of *phrontistai*. In either case, it is generally believed that the scene is based on a comic original.

5. It should be noted, however, that Plato’s engagement with comic themes and tropes is not drawn solely from the genre of Attic Old Comedy. On the potential influence of the Aesopic tradition on Plato’s depiction of Socrates, see L. Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations: Popular Tradition, Cultural Dialogue, and the Invention of Greek Prose* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), chap. 9.

6. For an analysis of this passage, see C. Rowe, “The Good, the Reasonable, and the Laughable in Plato’s *Republic*,” in S. Jäkel, A. Timonen, and V.M. Rissanen, eds., *Laughter down the Centuries* (Turku, Finland: Turun Yliopisto, 1997), 3:45–54. Rowe also responds, convincingly, in my opinion, to the Straussian argument that Socrates’ proposals, along with the Callipolis itself, are meant to be recognized as laughable by readers of the dialogue. For this interpretation of the *Republic* and its relationship to comedy, see A. Bloom, “Response to Hall,” *Political Theory* 5.3 (1977): 315–30; A. Saxonhouse, “Comedy in Callipolis: Animal Imagery in the *Republic*,” *American Political Science Review* 72 (1978): 888–901; and Nichols, *Socrates and the Political Community* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987); and D. Hyland, *Finitude and Transcendence in the Platonic Dialogues* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), chap. 3. For a further critique of the Straussian view of the *Republic*’s relationship to comedy, see G. Klosko, “The ‘Straussian’ Interpretation of Plato’s *Republic*,” *History of Political Thought* 7.2 (1986): 275–93.

7. As Ober remarks, Polus’ laughter “echoes the inappropriate laughter of the Athenian demos, who (we are led to suppose) were able to giggle over Socrates’

apparent fumbling [in his role as *prutanis* during the trial of the Arginousae generals in 406], all the while preparing to override established legal procedures by sentencing fellow citizens to death without trial." See Josiah Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 197.

[8.](#) S. Halliwell, *Greek Laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 298-99.

[9.](#) On Socrates' "crude talk" in the *Gorgias*, see N. Worman, *Abusive Mouths in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 186-99. On Socrates' use of shame in the dialogue, see C. Tarnopolsky, *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants: Plato's "Gorgias" and the Politics of Shame* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 56-88.

[10.](#) As Michelini notes, Socrates' behavior in the *Gorgias* appears "uncharacteristically aggressive and direct." See A. Michelini, "ΠΙΟΑΗ ΑΓΡΟΙΚΙΑ: Rudeness and Irony in Plato's *Gorgias*," *Classical Philology* 93.1 (1998): 50.

[11.](#) Cf. M. Lane, "The Evolution of *Eirōneia* in Classical Greek Texts: Why Socratic *Eirōneia* Is Not Socratic Irony," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 31 (2006): 49, who also identifies irony with conveying something other than what is said.

[12.](#) See H.H. Clark and R.J. Gerrig, "On the Pretense Theory of Irony," *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 113.1 (1984): 121-26.

[13.](#) Irony and humor share a core similarity insofar as both entail forms of incongruity; yet there are clearly nonironic forms of humor (such as the direct forms of mockery and abuse practiced by the Aristophanic Socrates) and nonhumorous forms of irony (such as tragic irony and some forms of dramatic irony). For an overview of the different types of irony, see C. Colebrook, *Irony* (New York: Routledge, 2004); and H. Heckel, "Was ist Ironie?" in R. Gleis, ed., *Ironie: Griechische und lateinische Fallstudien* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2009), 15-31.

[14.](#) Halliwell, *Greek Laughter*, 299.

[15.](#) G. Vlastos, "Socratic Irony," *Classical Quarterly* 37.1 (1987): 87. Paradigmatic for Vlastos is Socrates' denial that he is a teacher. For Vlastos, Socrates denies that he is a teacher according to the conventional meaning of the term, as one who imparts knowledge to others; but he *is* a teacher in a nontraditional sense, as one who attempts to make his interlocutors aware of their own self-ignorance.

[16.](#) A. Nehamas, "Voices of Silence: On Gregory Vlastos' Socrates," *Arion*, 3rd ser., 2.1 (1992), 157-86.

[17.](#) J.P. Euben, *Corrupting Youth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 42.

[18.](#) G. Mara, *Socrates' Discursive Democracy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 240-59. For Mara, Socratic irony is akin to that of the liberal ironist described by Richard Rorty, whose irony signals her awareness that her

“final” vocabulary is contingent and subject to continuing doubts. See R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 73–95.

[19.](#) E. Markovits, *The Politics of Sincerity: Plato, Frank Speech, and Democratic Judgment* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 81–122.

[20.](#) Tarnopolsky, *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants*, 138, 116.

[21.](#) Ibid., 118. Cf. J. Schlosser, *What Would Socrates Do? Self-Examination, Civic Engagement, and the Politics of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 18–19.

[22.](#) My focus in this chapter is thus on Plato’s depiction of Socrates’ use of irony in his engagement with his interlocutors. As I result, I largely do not discuss Platonic irony—those forms of dramatic irony that Plato, as author of the dialogues, could deploy, but could not have been used at the level of interpersonal engagement by the character Socrates. For discussions of Platonic irony, see A. Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 19–45. For a more general taxonomy of the different modes of Platonic irony, see C. Griswold, “Irony in the Platonic Dialogues,” *Philosophy and Literature* 26 (2002): 93–99.

[23.](#) For the dating of Aspasius, see J. Barnes, “An Introduction to Aspasius,” in A. Alberti and R.W. Sharples, eds., *Aspasius: The Earliest Extant Commentary on Aristotle’s “Ethics”* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 1–4. Barnes suggests, based on a reference in the text to the temple of Olympian Zeus, that Aspasius wrote his commentary in or shortly after 131 C.E.

[24.](#) G. Heylbut, ed., *Aspasia in Ethica Nicomachea quae supersunt Commentaria*, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* XIX 1 (Berlin, 1889): 54:13–28.

[25.](#) Aspasius is commenting here on *EN* 2.7, 1108a19–23.

[26.](#) It is thus unclear what Aspasius is referring to in claiming that Meno accuses Socrates of being an *eirōn*—Meno does not do so in the Platonic dialogue that bears his name.

[27.](#) On this issue, see R. Burger, “Socratic εἰρωνεία,” *Interpretation* 13.2 (1985): 143–49; Lane, “Evolution of *Eirōneia*”; and J. Lear, *A Case for Irony* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), chaps. 1–2.

[28.](#) Barnes, “Introduction to Aspasius,” 27–28. As noted above (n. 23), the passage that Aspasius is commenting on is *EN* 2.7, 1108a19–23, which is not the discussion of *eirōneia* in which Aristotle uses the example of Socrates. That discussion occurs at *EN* 4.7, 1127b25–26. Perhaps Aspasius is simply anticipating that later passage, which he does discuss, and in which Aristotle does mention Socrates—though the discussion of Socrates there consists in only one line.

[29.](#) J.-B. Gourinat, “Le Socrate d’Épictète,” *Philosophie antique* 1 (2001): 137; and A.A. Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (New York: Oxford

University Press, 2002), 67.

[30.](#) K. Döring, *Exemplum Socratis* (Wiesbaden, 1979), chap. 4; and A. Brancacci, "Dio, Socrates, and Cynicism," in S. Swain, ed., *Dio Chrysostom: Politics, Letters, and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 240.

[31.](#) Cf. J. Opsomer, *In Search of the Truth: Academic Tendencies in Middle Platonism* (Brussels: Academie voor Wetenschappen, 1998), 120-21.

[32.](#) G.R.F. Ferrari, "Socratic Irony as Pretence," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 34 (2008): 1-33.

[33.](#) J. Burnet, *The Ethics of Aristotle* (London: Methuen, 1900), 196. For Burnet, this includes its use in Aristotle.

[34.](#) Ap. 38a1 might be taken as an exception, insofar as Socrates applies the term to himself in that passage. Yet he does so to suggest that the jurors will think that he is speaking with *eirōneia* in a way that indicates that he himself does not think that he is doing so, and that this judgment would be mistaken. This passage is analyzed in more detail below.

[35.](#) This chapter does not present such a comprehensive survey of the use of *eirōneia*; rather, my focus on the relatively recent arguments by Michel Narcy and Melissa Lane is driven by my two main concerns, which are highlighted by their studies: (1) the relationship between *eirōneia* and deception; and (2) the relationship between *eirōneia* and humor. Important comprehensive studies of the use of *eirōneia* and its cognates during the classical period include O. Ribbeck, "Über den Begriff des εἴρων," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 31 (1876): 381-400; W. Büchner, "Über den Begriff den Eironeia," *Hermes* 76.4 (1941): 339-58; L. Bergson, "Eiron und Eironeia," *Hermes* 99.4 (1971): 409-22; and F. Amory, "Eirōn and Eironeia," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 33 (1981): 49-80.

[36.](#) As noted above (n. 32), in developing this interpretation, my own views have been influenced by G.R.F. Ferrari's excellent treatment of Socratic irony. While Ferrari does suggest, based on his argument concerning Socratic irony, that the phrase "putting on an act" might serve as a suitable rendering of *eirōneia* more generally ("Socratic Irony as Pretence," 18 n. 20), it is not a claim that he attempts to justify. The following analysis will hopefully provide such a justification. Vasiliou also argues that *eirōneia* means something like "putting one on," but he further contends that *eirōneia* is not a form of irony. See I. Vasiliou, "Socratic Irony," in J. Bussanich and N.D. Smith, *The Bloomsbury Companion to Socrates* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 20-30.

[37.](#) M. Narcy, "Le comique, l'ironie, Socrate," in M.-L. Declos, ed., *Le rire des Grecs: Anthropologie du rire en Grèce ancienne* (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 2000), 290. Cf. Lane, "Evolution of *Eirōneia*," 73-74.

[38.](#) M. Narcy, *Le philosophe et son double: Un commentaire de "l'Euthydème" de Platon* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1984), 50.

[39.](#) Ibid.

[40.](#) M. Narcy, “Qu’est-ce que l’ironie socratique?,” *Internet Journal of the International Plato Society* 1 (2001).

[41.](#) *Esti d’ hē eirōneia tēs bōmoloχias eleutheriōteron’ ho men gar hautou heneka poiei to geloion, ho de bōmoloχos heterou.*

[42.](#) As Trevett notes, “Demosthenes’ point is that behind all their bustle, the Athenians have no real intention of getting ready for war.” See J. Trevett, *Demosthenes, Speeches 1–17* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 83 n. 54.

[43.](#) E.g., Ar. *Wasps* 178 and *Birds* 1211; Plat. *Euthyd.* 302b2–3. Though a much later source, Plutarch often uses *eirōneia* to signify a nonhumorous kind of pretense. Consider Plutarch’s use of *eirōneia* in commenting on the first occasion where the multitude called Antigonus and Demetrius king: “And this did not entail the addition of a name and a change of dress alone, but stirred the lofty thoughts of these men, excited their fancies, and brought about in their lives and interactions with others pretension and arrogance, just as tragic actors change their gait, voice, comportment at the dinner table, and manner of address along with their costume. And because of these things they became harsher in their judicial decisions, throwing away the dissembling of power (*eirōneian tēs exousias*) that had often made them milder and gentler with their subjects” (*Demetrius* 18.3–4; cf. *Phocion* 43.3). Here, *eirōneia* indicates that Antigonus and Demetrius had, up to that point, downplayed the extent to which they possessed power in order to deceive their subjects concerning the nature of their subjection. Plutarch, however, also uses *eirōneia* in ways that indicate that it can also contain humorous dimensions. See, for example, *Pompey* 24.8.1 and *Timoleon* 15.7.1. On Plutarch’s use of *eirōneia* and its cognates, see Opsomer, *In Search of the Truth*, 122–26. As I hope to demonstrate, the presence of the intention to deceive does not disqualify a given utterance or act of *eirōneia* from being counted as either a form of irony or a form of humor.

[44.](#) On the practical (i.e., nonverbal) dimensions of *eirōneia*, see L. Edmunds, “The Practical Irony of the Historical Socrates,” *Phoenix* 58.3/4 (2004): 193–207.

[45.](#) As Socrates later explains to Cleinias, though not with such terminology, their argument employs the fallacy of equivocation concerning what it means to learn (*to manthanein*). See R.K. Sprague, *Plato’s Use of Fallacy* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1962), 5–7.

[46.](#) Cf. P. Wolfsdorf, “EIPONEIA in Aristophanes and Plato,” *Classical Quarterly* 58.2 (2008): 666–72.

[47.](#) Lane, “Evolution of *Eirōneia*,” 51.

[48.](#) Ibid., 61.

[49.](#) Ferrari, “Socratic Irony as Pretence,” 17 n. 20.

[50.](#) See Z. Pavlovskis, “Aristotle, Horace, and the Ironic Man,” *Classical Philology* 63.1 (1968): 23.

51. This conception of *eirōneia* may also help to explicate Theophrastus' puzzling account of the *eirōn*, which includes a list of seemingly disparate activities, such as praising in person those whom he abuses in secret (1.2), and pretending that he has not heard what has been said (1.5). While all the actions that Theophrastus describes as typical of the *eirōn* can be classed as examples of dissembling, the question as to whether the *eirōn* has any further motive for his dissembling has troubled interpreters. A further puzzle is that though Theophrastus was a student of Aristotle, his description of the *eirōn* appears to depart quite radically from Aristotle's definition of *eirōneia* as a pretense toward the lesser in actions and words. Theophrastus' description of the *eirōn* appears as less of a departure from Aristotle, however, if we attend to both Aristotle's use of *eirōneia* outside of the *EN* and to what makes *eirōneia* a vice according to his understanding—the *eirōn* does not just dissemble, but takes pleasure in such dissembling. It is this consideration that grounds Aspasius' distinction between vicious and nonvicious forms of *eirōneia*—pretense in the absence of love of falsehood does not count as a vicious form of *eirōneia* for Aspasius. This argument, moreover, is well grounded in Aristotle's understanding of what a vice involves—it involves taking pleasure in the wrong things, at the wrong time, in the wrong way, *etc.* In searching for a motive lying behind the actions of Theophrastus' *eirōn*, then, perhaps we need not look any further than that of taking pleasure in the act of dissembling itself. The comic affinities that many of Theophrastus' character sketches possess also suggest that part of what makes such dissembling pleasurable is the *eirōn*'s ability to fool others into believing he is being sincere. Take the following example: “And to those who want in haste to meet with him, he orders them to come back later, and he does not admit to any of the things that he is doing but says that he is deliberating, and he pretends that he has just now arrived and that it is late and he is ill” (1.4). As in the example imagined above of the hypothetical comedy by Aristophanes, here we can imagine the comic dimensions of this character portrait as operating on two dimensions: first, the *eirōn* himself as a comic figure; and, second, the *eirōn*'s interlocutor as the butt of his practical joking. On this reading, the *eirōn* takes pleasure in deceiving others, and part of that pleasure consists in his ability to fool them into believing that he is sincere. This, perhaps, is the motive that ties his seemingly disparate actions together. For an overview of the approaches to the question of the *eirōn*'s motive, see J. Diggle, *Theophrastus, Characters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 167. On the comic dimensions of Theophrastus' character sketches, see J. Rusten, “Introduction,” in *Theophrastus, Characters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 16–18.

52. Following Lane, I will occasionally use “*eirōnic*” as the adjectival form of *eirōneia*. While I argue above that *eirōneia* does signify a form of irony, it is important to note that it indicates, according to my argument, a very specific form of

irony. To use “ironic” would thus risk conflating the particular example (*eirōneia*) with the broader category (irony).

[53.](#) On Plato’s treatment of atheism in the *Laws*, see D. Sedley, “The Atheist Underground,” in V. Harte and M. Lane, eds., *Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 329–48.

[54.](#) As Christina Tarnopolsky observes in her study of shame in the *Gorgias*, “Out of respect for his interlocutors, Socrates utters the truth as he sees it. Yet, for this very reason, he ends up appearing strange, annoying, non-sensical, mocking, and thus ironical to the very Athenian audience he refuses to flatter.” See Tarnopolsky, *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants*, 118.

[55.](#) G. Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 157–78; M. McPherran, *The Religion of Socrates* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1996), 47–82.

[56.](#) Though, as McPherran points out, the distinction between Socratic and traditional piety does not map onto the distinction drawn between the former and Euthyphro’s notion of piety: “For although Euthyphro clearly endorses traditional Greek religion in many of its respects, unlike any sort of traditionalist he is willing to prosecute his own father (cf. *Nu.* 1303–1453), takes Socrates’ side in the accusations against him (including that of ‘making new gods’), sympathizes with him as a fellow ‘heretic,’ finds nothing impious in Socrates’ *daimonion* (despite his recognition of its potential threat as involving religious innovation) (3b-c), and is willing to accept—with a quite nontraditional presumption—Socrates’ imputation of wisdom to him (4b).” See McPherran, *Religion of Socrates*, 35.

[57.](#) Vlastos, *Socrates*, 176. Cf. M. McPherran, “Socratic Religion,” in D.R. Morrison, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 131–32.

[58.](#) See T.C. Brickhouse and N.D. Smith, “The Origin of Socrates’ Mission,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44.4 (1983): 658.

[59.](#) Here, a contrast might be helpful. Iakovos Vasiliou has interpreted this passage as an example of what he terms “reverse irony,” by which he means those instances where Socrates says precisely what he believes, but that the statement is so ludicrous (from the standpoint of conventional opinion) that his audience/interlocutors are bound to assert that he is speaking ironically. For Vasiliou, reverse irony is a pedagogical tool, one geared toward producing an “immediate *aporia*,” through which Socrates “is attempting to generate perplexity *en masse*, and therefore attempting to do something positive and educative.” Yet, the use of *eirōneia* by Socrates in the *Apology* would seem to suggest the opposite interpretation: it is not his irony that is producing immediate *aporia*, but the revelation of his sincerely held beliefs that compels his audience to understand him as speaking with *eirōneia*. Far from inducing perplexity, the attribution of *eirōneia* is

a way of pigeonholing Socrates' beliefs—he is just another one of those atheistic sophists—rather than grappling with his revisionary theology. See I. Vasiliou, "Socrates' Reverse Irony," *Classical Quarterly* 52.1 (2002): 226–27.

[60.](#) Burger, "Socratic εἰρωνεία," 143–44. While I agree with Burger's conclusion that these accusations of irony are themselves presented ironically by Plato, I do not agree that what ultimately explains this reaction to Socrates is the love for, and desire to master, the *dēmos* she argues is shared by Socrates' accusers.

[61.](#) Cf. Vlastos, *Socrates*, 36.

[62.](#) Lane argues that the decisive statement that leads to Alcibiades' use of *eirōneia* actually occurs later, at 219a8–b2, when Socrates says, "In the future, let's consider things together. We'll always do what seems the best to the two of us," implying that he has accepted the bargain Alcibiades has proposed. Yet, Alcibiades' claim that Socrates answered him *mala eirōnikōs* comes at 218d6, and it prefaces the response that Socrates gives, quoted above, at 218d7–219a4. At 219a5, Alcibiades' narrative voice reappears (*kagō akousas*), and is again expressed at 219a8, prefacing the quotation at the beginning of this note. If it was this last utterance of Socrates that elicited Alcibiades' judgment that Socrates' response was ironic, it would seem to make more sense for that judgment to have been expressed at 219a8, and not back at 218d6. See Lane, "Evolution of *Eirōneia*," 75–76.

[63.](#) Vlastos, *Socrates*, 36–37.

[64.](#) On Alcibiades' misunderstanding of Socrates, cf. P. Destrée, "The Speech of Alcibiades," in C. Horn, ed., *Platon, Symposium* (Berlin: Akademie, 2012), 197.

[65.](#) Cf. 215b7 and 222a8, where Alcibiades also accuses Socrates of *hubris*. On this aspect of Alcibiades' speech, see M. Gagarin, "Socrates' 'Hybris' and Alcibiades' Failure," *Phoenix* 31.1 (1977): 22–37. As Gagarin argues (32–33), Alcibiades identifies Socrates' *hubris* as connected to his false pretenses to being a lover and to ignorance. This suggests a connection between Alcibiades' attribution of *eirōneia* to Socrates and his perception of Socrates' *hubris*.

[66.](#) See Lear, *Case for Irony*, 84.

[67.](#) Reeve contends that Alcibiades' accusation that Socrates is an *eirōn* is connected to his belief "that something like knowledge-conferring *agalмата* must exist in him [Socrates] to account for his elenctic competence." While I agree with this assessment, it is more than just Socrates' elenctic competence that Alcibiades is insisting on in attributing *eirōneia* to Socrates. See C.D.C. Reeve, "A Study in Violets: Alcibiades in the *Symposium*," in J. Leshner, D. Nails, and F. Sheffield, eds., *Plato's "Symposium": Issues in Interpretation and Reception* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 132.

[68.](#) *Kai hos akousas anakakchase te mala sardanion kai eipen: Ō Hērakleis, ephē, hautē 'keinē hē eiōthua eirōneia Sōkratous, kai taut' egō eidē te kai toutois proulegon, hoti su apokrinasthai men ouk ethelēsois, eirōneusoio de kai panta*

mallon poiēsois ē apokrinoio, ei tis ti s' erōtai.

[69.](#) On this point, see Lane, “Evolution of *Eirōneia*,” 69. Cf. Vlastos, *Socrates*, 24.

[70.](#) Both Vlastos and Lane insist that *eirōneia* cannot be translated as “irony” in this passage. For Vlastos, Thrasymachus is accusing Socrates of lying by denying that he does not have an answer to the question “What is justice?”; for Lane, he is accusing Socrates of feigning his commitment to the *elenchus* in describing his efforts with Polemarchus to reach a definition of justice. As I have argued in this chapter, if we view *eirōneia* as a solipsistic form of irony, then we need not count the presence of an intention to deceive as evidence for the absence of irony.

[71.](#) Lane nicely illustrates this point. See Lane, “Evolution of *Eirōneia*,” 68–69.

[72.](#) On Plato’s use of Euripides’ *Antiope* in the *Gorgias*, see J. Arieti, “Plato’s Philosophical *Antiope*: The *Gorgias*,” in G.A. Press, ed., *Plato’s Dialogues: New Studies and Interpretations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), 197–214; and Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue*, 73–92.

[73.](#) *Contra* Vasiliou, who argues that Callicles experiences such *aporia*. See Vasiliou, “Reverse Irony,” 227–29.

[74.](#) In this respect, I think that Nancy is correct that we ought not to conflate *eirōneia* with Callicles’ concern with whether Socrates is joking or being serious, though my own reasons for maintaining this distinction differ from his. By questioning whether Socrates is serious or joking in maintaining that it is worse to commit injustice than to suffer it, Callicles expresses his belief that Socrates’ argument is so strange that it cannot represent his sincere belief. In accusing him of *eirōneia*, he questions Socrates’ claim to be more interested in learning from Callicles than in winning the argument. Both raise doubts concerning Socrates’ sincerity, and both can be viewed as connected with Callicles’ perception of Socrates’ *philonikia*; yet, it is only the accusation of *eirōneia* that entails the charge that Callicles is being mocked. For Nancy’s argument, see Nancy, “Le comique, l’ironie, socrate,” 287.

[75.](#) For Nehamas, Socrates’ irony operates like a mask, creating a Socrates who was a mystery even to Plato himself. See Nehamas, *Art of Living*, 86–87. If the above analysis is correct, however, it might imply that Plato suggests the opposite in depicting those who accuse Socrates of *eirōneia*—the perception of irony is the *result* of the strange things he does and says. On Socrates’ strangeness (*atopia*), see F. Makowski, “Où est Socrate? L’apriorie de l’atopie chez Platon,” *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 12.2 (1994): 131–52; and T. Eide, “On Socrates’ ἀτοπία,” *Symbolae Osloenses* 71 (1996): 59–67.

[76.](#) Though it was argued in the introduction that Euthydemus and Dionysodorus are probably not fifth-century contemporaries of Socrates, it should be noted that this does not mean that they could not be counted as sophists in the sense that they deploy sophistic arguments. The use of *eirōneia* in the *Cratylus* (384aa) and

Euthydemus (302b3)—which will not be discussed here—also furthers this connection.

[77.](#) On this passage, see M. Burnyeat, “Socratic Midwifery,, Platonic Inspiration,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 24 (1977): 9.

[78.](#) See Z. Giannopoulou, “Socratic Midwifery: A Second *Apology*?,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 33 (2007): 55–88.

[79.](#) See A.A. Long, “Plato’s Apologies and Socrates in the *Theaetetus*,” in J. Gentzler, ed., *Method in Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 113–36.

[80.](#) On this point, see M.M. McCabe, *Plato and His Predecessors: The Dramatisation of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 35–54; D. Sedley, *The Midwife of Platonism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 118–19; P. Stern, *Knowledge and Politics in Plato’s “Theaetetus”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 112; and Z. Giannopoulou, *Plato’s “Theaetetus” as a Second “Apology”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 10–11, 122–23.

[81.](#) Vlastos, *Socrates*, 23; C.C.W. Taylor, “Socrates the Sophist,” in L. Judson and V. Karasmanis, *Remembering Socrates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 157–68.

[82.](#) For Parmenides’ claim concerning the impossibility of speaking *to mē on*, see Parmenides D-K 2.

[83.](#) B. Bossi, “Back to the Point: Plato and Parmenides—Genuine Parricide?,” in B. Bossi and T.M. Robinson, eds., *Plato’s “Sophist” Revisited* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 157–73.

[84.](#) It is important to keep in mind that Socrates’ initial question concerning the relationship between the sophist, statesman, and philosopher is an inquiry concerning what the Eleatics thought the distinctions were between these three categories, if they were in fact distinct. The progression of the dialogue suggests that the Eleatics would classify Socrates as a sophist; to distinguish between Socrates and the sophists thus requires a modification of Parmenides’ views concerning the possibility of false speech. See M. Narcy, “Remarks on the First Five Definitions of the Sophist,” in Bossi and Robinson, *Plato’s “Sophist” Revisited*, 58. See also N. Notomi, *The Unity of Plato’s “Sophist”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 22 n. 22.

[85.](#) On the affinities between Socrates and some of the earlier definitions of the sophist, see Taylor, “Socrates the Sophist,” 159–63.

[86.](#) As Notomi notes, in the *Sophist* it appears that Plato is engaging in a renewed attempt to distinguish Socratic philosophy from sophistry. See Notomi, *Unity of Plato’s “Sophist,”* 67–68.

[87.](#) As Diskin Clay has argued, there is an ambiguity inherent in Socratic irony, one that revolves around the fact that “it takes a philosopher to recognize a

philosopher” (99), and that “Socratic irony is ambiguous, depending on the point of view from which it is interpreted” (94). For most it is insincere, and an expression of superiority (94). From a higher point of view, however, it can be seen as sincere. Clay argues, however, that this ambiguity is resolved if we view Socrates from the correct, higher viewpoint; it is my contention, by contrast, that such ambiguity ought to be maintained, and that the “lower” interpretation of Socratic irony is not necessarily wrong. In this respect, I agree with Marina McCoy that the Platonic dialogues retain this ambiguity between philosophy and sophistry as a means of critically evaluating the practice of philosophy. See D. Clay, *Platonic Questions: Dialogues with the Silent Philosopher* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); and M. McCoy, *Plato on the Rhetoric of Philosophers and Sophists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 6–7.

[88.](#) With the latter, Socrates’ refutation of Meletus at *Ap.* 24b-25b offers a helpful comparandum. There, Socrates gets Meletus to make what he attempts to demonstrate is an absurd claim: that everyone in Athens improves the young and Socrates alone corrupts them. Socrates makes this claim seem absurd by comparing it to the case of training horses: in that case, everyone acknowledges that the few who know about horses improve them, while the many who do not corrupt them. A similar epistemological claim undergirds Socrates’ analysis in the *Meno*; there, the few who know are identified with those technicians who charge a fee for their instruction.

[89.](#) We might surmise, along the lines of the argument made by Nehamas, that in concluding that Socrates is being ironic we are falling into a trap that Plato sets for us; but there are important distinctions between Nehamas’ argument concerning Platonic irony and the dynamic analyzed above. For Nehamas, the issue is whether we as readers believe that we know better than Socrates’ interlocutor what piety, for example, is, or at least do not make claims to know what it is when we do not; here, we as readers would be claiming to know that Socrates does not sincerely think that the popularity of the sophists is a good indicator of the true worth of their pedagogy, which is a reasonable belief given the claims that Socrates makes elsewhere concerning the sophists.

[90.](#) Cf. Lane, “Evolution of *Eirōneia*,” 65. For Lane, Socratic *eirōneia* lies in the “eye of the beholder,” which for her is indicative of the fact that “it is a question of temperament and perception as to what the interlocutor who charges Socrates with *eirōneia* believes him to be trying to conceal” (65–66). What Lane means by the idea that *eirōneia* lies in the “eye of the beholder” is thus closely connected with her definition of the *eirōn* as one who attempts to conceal, rather than convey, what is not said; nonetheless, it is also applicable to the analysis of Socratic *eirōneia* as a type of irony outlined above. What attention to the use of the term and its cognates in dialogues like the *Sophist* indicates, however, is that the question of whether

Socrates was an *eirōn* extends beyond the individual temperament and perception of his interlocutors to the fundamental epistemological and ontological questions of these dialogues.

[91.](#) For a recent overview of this possibility, with relevant bibliography, see A. Hatzistavrou, "Socrates' Deliberative Authoritarianism," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 29 (2005): 75-113.

[92.](#) G. Vlastos, "The Historical Socrates and Athenian Democracy," *Political Theory* 11.4 (1983): 508; G. Klosko, *The Development of Plato's Political Theory*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 46-61; and Euben, *Corrupting Youth*, 41-42.

[93.](#) See chapter 1, pp. 40-46.

[94.](#) We might draw a comparison here with Eleanor Dickey's analysis of what she identifies as "friendship terms of address" (FTs): "When Plato's Socrates professes ignorance and humility and appeals to his interlocutors' superior knowledge, it is sometimes difficult to tell whether he is being serious or not. But it seems from the usage of FTs in Plato that if Socrates uses FTs in his 'humble' utterances (e.g. *Euth.* 5a, 5c), they express only mock humility, for FTs are used only by someone who is conscious of dominating a dialogue." See E. Dickey, *Greek Forms of Address: From Herodotus to Lucian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 127. Lane also draws on the work of Eleanor Dickey, but to argue that what is generally interpreted as Socrates' ironic praise of his interlocutors (such as the "O divine one" of *Gorg.* 489d1) ought not to be interpreted ironically. For Lane, Dickey demonstrates that such FTs indicate the dominance of the speaker, and are polite terms rather than ironic insults. I find this interpretation difficult to square, however, with what Dickey states in the passage quoted above. For Lane's interpretation of Dickey's argument, see M. Lane, "Reconsidering Socratic Irony," in Morrison, *Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, 256.

[95.](#) On the continuities between Socratic philosophy and Athenian democratic principles, see especially Euben, *Corrupting Youth*, 101-38; and R. Balot, "Democracy and Political Philosophy: Influences, Tensions, Rapprochement," in J. Arnason, K. Raaflaub, and P. Wagner, eds., *The Greek Polis and the Invention of Democracy: A Politico-Cultural Transformation and Its Interpretations* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 181-204. As Balot summarizes his own view, "Socrates' life and thought, as we know them from the Platonic dialogues, were not a stinging departure from the democratic experience, but rather a perfection of that experience" (193). For a recent, and in my opinion, convincing, critique of these views, see M. Landauer, "Democratic Theory and the Athenian Public Sphere," *Polis* 33 (2016): 31-51, esp. 39-46.

[96.](#) As Michael Frede has argued, "however much Plato may have admired Socrates, he also had a critical distance towards him," and "we should not exclude

the possibility that the very arguments of the dialogues in which Socrates is made to be the main speaker also reflect some of that criticism.” See M. Frede, “Plato’s Arguments and the Dialogue Form,” in J.C. Klagge and N.D. Smith, eds., *Methods of Interpreting Plato and His Dialogues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 204–5. This is in keeping with Frede’s more general interpretation of the dialogue form as it is deployed by Plato, which compels the reader to sort through the different lines of argumentation presented in the dialogues. On the critical distance between Plato and the arguments he puts in the mouth of Socrates, see J. Cooper, “Socrates and Plato in the *Gorgias*,” in *Reason and Emotion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 75.

[97.](#) Ober, *Political Dissent*, 33.

[98.](#) Ober, “Power and Oratory.”

[99.](#) Ober, *Mass and Elite*, 163–65; Ober, *Political Dissent*, 33.

[100.](#) This is how Demosthenes, at least in part, frames the public benefit of his prosecution of Meidias. See Dem. 21 (*Against Meidias*), with Ober, “Power and Oratory.”

[101.](#) J. Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge: Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 179–83.

[102.](#) In particular, Plato has Socrates claim that Meletus remains silent when first asked who improves the young, a silence that Socrates interprets as indicating that Meletus has never thought seriously about the question (24d); Socrates’ claim that it is the case with horses and with all other animals that the few who are experts improve their subjects, while the many who are not corrupt them frames Meletus’ claim that the opposite is the case when it comes to educating the young in Athens as *prima facie* ridiculous (25b-c).

[103.](#) J. Ober, “The Debate over Civic Education in Classical Athens,” in Y.L. Too, ed., *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 180–81.

[104.](#) Ibid.

[105.](#) Y.L. Too, “Legal Instruction in Classical Athens,” in Too, *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, 127–30.

[106.](#) Cf. R. Kraut, *Socrates and the State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 207–15. As Kraut notes, however, while Socrates might believe democracy to be “inevitably a bad form of government,” this does not necessarily mean that he thought a better alternative was feasible, or at least easily achievable. On intellectual superiority as the basis for rule for Socrates, see R. Kamtekar, “The Politics of Plato’s Socrates,” in S. Ahbel-Rappe and R. Kamtekar, eds., *A Companion to Socrates* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 214–27. For a recent, general overview of the issues involved in thinking about Socratic politics, and the different scholarly positions that have been advanced, see C.D. Johnson, “Socrates’ Political Philosophy,” in Bussanich and Smith, *Bloomsbury Companion to Socrates*, 233–56.

[107](#). That Thrasymachus' anger and impatience with Socrates may be grounded in a sincere critique of Athenian imperialism, however, may make his accusation appear more sympathetic. For the relevant background on the historical Thrasymachus, see S. White, "Thrasymachus the Diplomat," *Classical Philology* 90.4 (1995): 307-27.

3. XENOPHON, SOCRATIC MOCKERY, AND SOCRATIC IRONY

[1](#). On the identity of this accuser, see L.-A. Dorion (in M. Bandini and L.-A. Dorion, eds., *Xénophon, Mémorables*, 1:79-81). Dorion argues that the singular accuser Xenophon begins mentioning at 1.2.9 is Polycrates. For a recent argument contesting this attribution, see N. Livingstone, *A Commentary on Isocrates' "Busiris"* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 28-40.

[2](#). It is also linked to what Xenophon refers to as Socrates' *megalēgoria*. On this theme more generally, see L.-A. Dorion, "Le *daimonion* et la *megalēgoria* de Socrate dans l'*Apologie* de Xénophon," in *L'autre Socrate: Études sur le écrits socratiques de Xénophon* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2013), 301-16; and P. Pontier, "Remarques sur la *megalēgoria* de Socrate et le tumulte des juges," *Kentron* 31 (2015): 59-74.

[3](#). Although Thersites is the only character in the *Iliad* who lacks both a patronymic and a place of origin, there is an alternative epic tradition in which Thersites is a close relative of Diomedes and is later killed by Achilles after mocking him for falling in love with the Amazon Penthesilea. For the view that Thersites is a common soldier, see P. Rose, "Thersites and the Plural Voices of Homer," *Arethusa* 21 (1988): 5-25; and W.G. Thalmann, "Thersites: Comedy, Scapegoats, and Heroic Ideology in the *Iliad*," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 118 (1988): 1-28; for the view that he is a lower-ranked aristocrat, see G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 279-80; and G.S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1:138-39. Halliwell argues that Thersites' status is inherently ambiguous. See S. Halliwell, *Greek Laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 73-76.

[4](#). See Rose, "Thersites and the Plural Voices of Homer," 19.

[5](#). On Thersites' speech as a flawed heroic performance, see R.P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the "Iliad"* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 110. Kirk notes that Thersites "would not be permitted to open his mouth in assembly if he were a common soldier" by way of discrediting the idea that he is a common soldier (Kirk, *Iliad*, 139); but it may well be that Thersites' transgression of this boundary is part of what gives the scene its comic charge. Arlene Saxonhouse notes that we can view the Thersites scene as a protodemocratic moment. See A. Saxonhouse, *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1–2; cf. S. Stuurman, “The Voice of Thersites: Reflections on the Origins of the Idea of Equality,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65.2 (2004): 171–89. Even if Thersites is a low-level aristocrat, his actions would still represent a violation of the established hierarchy—he is attacking his aristocratic betters.

[6.](#) On the differences between Plato’s and Xenophon’s depictions of the Delphic oracle, see P.A. Vander Waerdt, “Socratic Justice and Self-Sufficiency: The Story of the Delphic Oracle in Xenophon’s *Apology of Socrates*,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 11 (1993): 1–48.

[7.](#) On Socrates’ usefulness as a central component of Xenophon’s defense of Socrates, see L.-A. Dorion, “Xenophon’s Socrates,” in S. Ahbel-Rappe and R. Kamtekar, eds., *A Companion to Socrates* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 99–100.

[8.](#) V. Gray, *The Framing of Socrates* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1998), 138–42; and C. McNamara, “Socratic Politics in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*,” *Polis* 26.2 (2009): 223–45.

[9.](#) V. Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), chap. 1. For citations of the use of this terminology in Xenophon, see Dorion, “Commentary,” 2:282–83.

[10.](#) Cf. V. Gray, *The Character of Xenophon’s “Hellenika”* (London: Duckworth, 1989), 26–27. Theramenes’ grim humor mirrors that of Xenophon’s Socrates in the face of death. See *Ap.* 29–31, 33.

[11.](#) Though, as Gera notes, Xenophon does express some uneasiness regarding this principle. See D. Gera, *Xenophon’s “Cyropaedia”: Style, Genre, and Literary Technique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 112 n. 276. Cf. Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror*, 75.

[12.](#) For an overview of these passages, see Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror*, 330–71. Gray, however, classifies much of this material under the heading of irony, claiming that Xenophon uses the term “playing in earnest” to describe what we identify as irony (331). Much of this humor, however, is nonironic, insofar as it does not entail the kind of pretense and/or ambiguity generally associated with the term. By “playing in earnest,” Xenophon denotes not irony, but that the forms of humor being deployed were directed toward serious purposes. On the language of humor more generally, see the brief remarks in V. Gray, “Xenophon’s Language and Expression,” in M. Flower, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Xenophon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 232–35.

[13.](#) Gera, *Xenophon’s “Cyropaedia,”* 161. Cf. J. Tatum, *Xenophon’s Imperial Fiction: On the Education of Cyrus* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 200; and C. Nadon, *Xenophon’s Prince: Republic and Empire in the “Cyropaedia”* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 67.

[14.](#) On this harmonious mixture between what is *spoudaia* and what is *geloia*, see

Gera, *Xenophon's "Cyropaedia,"* 135-47; and Halliwell, *Greek Laughter*, 139-40, 372-74.

[15.](#) As Gera observes, there is an increased emphasis in this scene on the issue of speaking freely and truthfully, one that is attributable to the new reality introduced by the empire. See Gera, *Xenophon's "Cyropaedia,"* 184.

[16.](#) On willing obedience in Xenophon, see Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror*, 15ff.; and R.F. Buxton, "Xenophon on Leadership: Commanders as Friends," in Flower, *Cambridge Companion to Xenophon*, 323-37. Cf. P. Carlier, "The Idea of Imperial Monarchy in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*," in V. Gray, ed., *Xenophon: Oxford Readings in Classical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 327-66: "In the *Cyropaedia*, what distinguishes free men (*eleutheroi*) from slaves (*douloi*) is not the fact that some have a master, and others do not, it is that they get different orders from the same master" (351).

[17.](#) There is considerable disagreement over whether Cyrus is an example to be emulated or avoided. The main interpretations can be grouped into three camps: (1) Cyrus is an example to be avoided, and the *Cyropaedia* should be read as a warning about the limits and danger of political life; see T. Pangle, "Socrates in the Context of Xenophon's Political Writings," in P. Vander Waerdt, ed., *The Socratic Movement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 127-50; and Nadon, *Xenophon's Prince*; (2) Cyrus is Xenophon's ideal ruler, without reservations, and the subsequent decline of the Persian Empire upon his death should be attributed to his absence as a leader; see B. Due, *The "Cyropaedia": Xenophon's Aims and Methods* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1989); C. Mueller-Goldingen, *Untersuchungen zu Xenophons "Kyrupädie"* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1995); and V. Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror*; (3) Cyrus is an example to be emulated, but Xenophon's praise for Cyrus is not without its ironic undercurrents; see Tatum, *Xenophon's Imperial Fiction*; Gera, *Xenophon's "Cyropaedia"*; and V. Azoulay, *Xénophon et les grâces du pouvoir: De la charis au charisme* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2004). My own view is most closely aligned with those of the third group. Cf. M. Tamiolaki, "Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*: Tentative Answers to an Enigma," in Flower, *Cambridge Companion to Xenophon*, 174-94.

[18.](#) On the connections between symposia scenes in the *Cyropaedia* and the *Symposium*, see Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror*, 345-51.

[19.](#) Cf. *Mem.* 4.1.1. On the concept of the *spoudaiogeloios*, and its connection to symposiastic literature more generally, see Gera, *Xenophon's "Cyropaedia,"* 135-47, as well as Halliwell, *Greek Laughter*, 139-40, 372-74.

[20.](#) These aspects of Xenophon's *Symposium* are analyzed in further detail in chapter 5, pp. 166-70. On the serious purpose of Socrates' playful dancing, see V. Wohl, "Dirty Dancing: Xenophon's *Symposium*," in P. Murray and P. Wilson, eds., *Music and the Muses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 346. On Xenophon's

Symposium more generally, see V. Gray, "Xenophon's *Symposion*: The Display of Wisdom," *Hermes* 120.1 (1992): 58-75.

[21.](#) This touches on two familiar concerns often raised about Xenophon's depiction of Socrates: (1) whether Xenophon projects his own views onto his version of Socrates; (2) whether he transposes the characteristics of other exemplary figures, such as Cyrus, onto his depiction of Socrates. Given that the goal here is not to attempt to use Xenophon's writings to locate the historical Socrates, these questions are not central to the analysis of this chapter. It suffices to say here that Xenophon's Socrates does practice forms of humor that are distinct from those used by Cyrus. On the history of the scholarly treatment of these questions, see Dorion, "Introduction générale," in Bandini and Dorion, *Xénophon, Mémoires*, lxx-lxxxix.

[22.](#) C. de Vogel, "Who Was Socrates?," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 1.2 (1963): 151; Gray, *Framing of Socrates*, 181; R. Waterfield, "Xenophon's Socratic Mission," in C. Tuplin, ed., *Xenophon and His World* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2004), 100.

[23.](#) G. Vlastos, "Introduction: The Paradox of Socrates," in G. Vlastos, ed., *The Philosophy of Socrates* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), 1-21.

[24.](#) G. Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 32.

[25.](#) *Ibid.*, 31-32.

[26.](#) *Arkei gar, hoti tōn allōn katagelais erōtōn men kai elengchōn pantas, autos d' oudenī thelōn hupechein logon oude gnōmēn apophainesthai peri oudenos.*

[27.](#) Vlastos, *Socrates*, 32-33.

[28.](#) *Ibid.*, 32.

[29.](#) *Ibid.*, 42-43.

[30.](#) E.g., *Euth.* 5b, where Socrates expresses his confidence that Euthyphro's instruction in piety will ensure his acquittal.

[31.](#) L. Robin, "Sur une hypothèse récente relative a Socrate," in *La pensée hellénique des origines a Épicure* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1942), 146 n. 1; T. Deman, *Le témoignage d'Aristote sur Socrate* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1942), 67-69; J. Luccioni, *Xénophon et le socratisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953), 52 n. 4; D.R. Morrison, "On Professor Vlastos' Xenophon," *Ancient Philosophy* 7 (1987): 10-11; and Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror*, chap. 7.

[32.](#) On the importance of dialectic for this latter type of encounter, see C. Natali, "Socrates' Dialectic in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*," in L. Judson and V. Karasmanis, *Remembering Socrates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3-19; and J.-B. Gourinat, "La dialectique de Socrate selon les *Mémoires* de Xénophon," in M. Narcy and A. Tordesillas, eds., *Xénophon et Socrate* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2008), 129-58.

[33.](#) Xenophon's comments at 1.4.1 perhaps imply a critique of Plato as presenting a one-sided portrait of Socrates by focusing too heavily on his elenctic encounters with others. As Dorion argues, this also seems to represent a profound disagreement between Plato and Xenophon on the role of the *elenchus*: while in Plato it is presented as a method of moral instruction, capable of improving Socrates' interlocutors, in Xenophon it is a procedure for testing to see if the interlocutor possesses qualities necessary for benefiting from instruction. On this point, and on Xenophon's treatment of the *elenchus* more generally, see Dorion, "Introduction générale," cxviii-clxxxiii.

[34.](#) On the link between the *elenchus* and irony in Plato, see I. Vasiliou, "Conditional Irony in the Socratic Dialogues," *Classical Quarterly* 49.2 (1999): 456-72. On this reading, Socrates deploys irony in order to draw others into conversation so that they may be subjected to the benefit of the *elenchus*. The effectiveness of this technique thus relies on the irony remaining unnoticed by Socrates' interlocutors.

[35.](#) Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror*, 331-34.

[36.](#) On this point, see Morrison, "Vlastos' Xenophon," 10: "Xenophon shows less of Socrates' irony than Plato does, partly because Xenophon shows Socrates mostly in the company of his close associates; and in both Plato and Xenophon, Socrates is much more savage and ironical when dealing with professional sophists and other strangers."

[37.](#) *Kai ho Sōkratēs episkōptōn tēn hautou apragmosunēn, All', ō Theodotē, ephē, ou panu moi raidion esti scholasai kai gar idia pragmata polla kai dēmosia parechei moi ascholian eisi de kai philai moi, hai oute hēmeras oute nuktos aph' hautōn easousi me apienai philtra te manthanousai par' emou kai epōiodas.*

[38.](#) Vlastos, *Socrates*, 30.

[39.](#) Cf. M. Narcy, "La meilleure amie de Socrate: Xénophon, *Mémoires*, III 11," *Les Études Philosophiques* 69 (2004): 213-34; and G. Danzig, *Apologizing for Socrates: How Plato and Xenophon Created Our Socrates* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 171-78.

[40.](#) Cf. Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror*, 335-36.

[41.](#) For this variant of the pedagogical interpretation of Socratic irony, see Vasiliou, "Conditional Irony."

[42.](#) "Une stratégie dialectique qui consiste à dissimuler des connaissances et à feindre l'ignorance, force est d'admettre que cette forme d'ironie n'est pas pratiquée par Socrate dans les *Mémoires*. . . . Enfin, si l'on entend par 'ironie' une simple manière de se moquer en disant le contraire de ce qu'on veut faire entendre, il y a de nombreux passages de *Mémoires* (II 1, 14; II 3, 1; III 5, 23-24; III 6, 2 sq.; IV 2, 9; IV 4, 6-8) et des autres écrits socratiques (*Bq.* IV 53, V 6; *Econ.* II 9, XI 3-7, XX, 26-29), qui attestent cette forme d'ironie." Dorion, "Commentary," 1:102-3.

[43.](#) Dorion, "Commentary," 2:202.

[44.](#) On the use of *dēpou* as signaling irony, see S. Goldhill, "The Seductions of the Gaze: Socrates and His Girlfriends," in Gray, *Xenophon*, 183–84.

[45.](#) For a survey of early views of these similarities, see A. Delatte, *Le troisième livre des souvenirs socratiques de Xénophon* (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de L'Université de Liège, 1933), 34–46. For a more recent review, see Dorion, "Commentary," 2:279–85.

[46.](#) On the history of the scholarly treatment of this question, see Dorion, "Introduction," LXX–LXXXIX.

[47.](#) D.M. Johnson, "From Generals to Gluttony: *Memorabilia* 3," in A. Stavru and F. de Luise, eds., *Socratic Dialogue* (Milan: Limina Mentis, forthcoming).

[48.](#) On the importance of this concept for Xenophon's Socrates, see L.-A. Dorion, "Qu'est-ce que vivre en accord avec sa *dunamis*? Les deux réponses de Socrate dans les *Mémorables*," in *L'autre Socrate*, 247–74.

[49.](#) On this scene more generally, see D. Johnson, "Xenophon at His Most Socratic (*Mem.* 4.2)," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 29 (2005): 39–73.

[50.](#) On this scene in particular, see L. Rossetti, "L'*Eutidemo* di Senofonte: *Memorabili* IV 2," in G. Mazzara, ed., *Il Socrate dei dialoghi* (Bari: Levante, 2007), 67–74. Rossetti argues that the whole first encounter is staged, in the sense that, anticipating Euthydemus' arrival, Socrates directed his companion to ask the foregoing question so that he could then deliver his indirect message (in the form of his answer) to Euthydemus. This is an intriguing suggestion, and one that would make Socrates' companions complicit (as Rossetti himself notes) in the mockery of Euthydemus that is to follow. On this point, cf. Danzig, *Apologizing for Socrates*, 181–82, who counts this scene as an example of the active "hunting" of friends that Socrates distinguishes from the passive tactics of the spider at *Mem.* 3.11.

[51.](#) J. Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 170–77.

[52.](#) *Contra* Rossetti, "L'*Eutidemo* di Senofonte," 70.

[53.](#) For an analysis of Socrates' reasons for abstaining from politics in Plato and Xenophon, see L.-A. Dorion, "Socrate et la politique: Les raisons de son abstention selon Platon et Xénophon," in *L'autre Socrate*, 171–93.

[54.](#) Johnson, "From Generals to Gluttony."

[55.](#) D.R. Morrison, "Xenophon's Socrates as Teacher," in Vander Waerdt, *Socratic Movement*, 191–98.

[56.](#) L.-A. Dorion, "Akrasia et *enkrateia* dans les *Mémorables* de Xénophon," *Dialogue* 42 (2003): 645–72. As Johnson notes, while the version of intellectualism attributed to Socrates by Xenophon is quite distinct from that of Plato's Socrates, it is in fact closer to the view that Aristotle attributes to Socrates. See Johnson, "From Generals to Gluttony."

[57.](#) This difference is connected with the conception of *sophia* held by Xenophon's Socrates. While Plato's Socrates views *sophia* as knowledge of the good, Xenophon's Socrates likens *sophia* to a kind of technical competence, one that, like other forms of technical knowledge, can be used for either good or bad purposes. On this point, see L.-A. Dorion, "La nature et le statut de la *sophia* dans les *Mémoires*," in *L'autre Socrate*, 124-33.

[58.](#) This points toward a distinct understanding of the *Oeconomicus*, one that moves beyond the question of the compatibility between the Socratic life of the philosopher and that of the *kalos k'agathos*, represented by Ischomachus. For Dorion, these two ways of life are compatible, which raises the question as to why one would turn to Socrates for instruction in the first place. Though it is not an interpretation that can be fully justified in the space of this chapter, I would argue that the conversation with Ischomachus that Socrates recounts to Critoboulos is entirely fictitious—it offers Critoboulos the kind of comedy Socrates remarks the young man enjoys (*Oec.* 3.9) as a means of demonstrating that what matters most for success in managing one's household is *enkrateia*. Thus, while it is true that Ischomachus does deploy a similar kind of "teaching-by-questioning" that is generally characteristic of Socrates (e.g., *Oec.* 10.1), I would argue that this similarity is part of Socrates' parody of his own pedagogical technique. For Dorion's assessment of the *Oeconomicus*, see L.-A. Dorion, "Socrate *oikonomikos*," in Nancy and Tordesillas, *Xénophon et Socrate*, 253-81. For a contrasting view, see Danzig, *Apologizing for Socrates*, 239-63.

[59.](#) See Dorion, "Socrate et la politique," 181. On Xenophon's treatment of the *basilikē technē* more generally, and its difference from Plato's treatment of the topic, see L.-A. Dorion, "Socrate et la *basilikē technē*," in *L'autre Socrate*, 147-69.

[60.](#) This is true even if, as Gray notes, Xenophon's emphasis on the principle that each give benefit according to his ability provides a means by which such relationships can be balanced. Such friendships might exemplify a kind of proportionate equality, one that would prevent the friendship from being exploitative, but that would not erase the hierarchical relationship that lay at its core. See Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror*, 304-7. Cf. Azoulay, *Xénophon et les grâces du pouvoir*, 291. As Azoulay notes, Xenophon's conception of *philia* is distinct from both its democratic and Aristotelian (which he construes as aristocratic) alternatives, both of which conceptualize friendship as a horizontal type of relationship between equals. The inequality inherent in Xenophon's discussions of friendship, moreover, is well exemplified by the two striking images Socrates uses to describe the process of winning friends: the hunt and the use of incantations and charms. Rossetti also argues that Socrates' encounter with Euthydemus illustrates the hierarchical distance between Socrates and his students, and, in that respect, it appears to lie in tension with attempts to cast Socrates as a champion of equal dialogue. See

Rossetti, "L'*Eutidemo* di Senofonte," 94–95.

[61.](#) Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror*, 294.

[62.](#) Ober, "Power and Oratory," 97–98.

[63.](#) On Xenophon as an immanent critic of Athenian democracy, see R. Kroeker, "Xenophon as a Critic of the Athenian Democracy," *History of Political Thought* 30.2 (2009): 197–228; and V. Gray, "Xenophon's Socrates and Democracy," *Polis* 28.1 (2011): 1–32.

[64.](#) Azoulay, *Xénophon et les grâces du pouvoir*, 291. On the anxieties surrounding the danger that the *dēmos* might become overly passive, see Aristophanes, *Knights*, along with S. Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements: Athenian Politics and the Practice of Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 86–87; V. Wohl, *Love among the Ruins: The Erotics of Democracy in Classical Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 87; and A. Scholtz, "Friends, Lovers, Flatterers: Demophilic Courtship in Aristophanes' *Knights*," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 134.2 (2004): 273.

[65.](#) *Contra* Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror*, 298–301.

[66.](#) See J. Ober, "The Original Meaning of 'Democracy': Capacity to Do Things, Not Majority Rule," *Constellations* 15.1 (2008): 3–9, along with Ober, *Knowledge and Democracy: Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008). Both Gray and Kroeker support their interpretations by citing other democratic sources that repeat Xenophon's views. Gray cites Lysias' claim (16.21) that the wealthy practiced politics, while the *dēmos* acted as judge, for example, as evidence that casting the *dēmos* as a follower of its elite leaders is not problematic from a democratic perspective (Gray, "Xenophon's Socrates and Democracy," 20). Yet, Xenophon's approach appears to cast this division as a matter of principle (only elites with knowledge ought to practice politics), rather than the basic reflection of fact it constitutes in Lysias' speech. Kroeker challenges the view that Socrates' disapproval of the lot illustrates his antidemocratic sympathies by comparing his view with Isocrates' arguments (*Areopagiticus* 22–23) that elections are more democratic than selection by lot (Kroeker, "Xenophon as a Critic of the Athenian Democracy," 212). Kroeker's interpretation of Isocrates does not contend, however, with the ways in which Isocrates' call for a return to Athens' ancestral democracy would constitute a fundamental erosion of the *dēmos*' power. On this point, see J. Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 285–86.

4. ARISTOTLE, *EUTRAPELIA*, AND SOCRATIC *EIRŌNEIA*

[1.](#) F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles: Texte und Kommentar*, vol. 2, *Aristoxenos* (Basel: Schwabe, 1945), fr. 54b: *einai de phēsin auton en tais homiliais eniote*

philapechthēmona kai loidoron kai hubristikon.

[2.](#) For a comprehensive treatment of these references, see T. Deman, *Le témoignage d'Aristote sur Socrate* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1942).

[3.](#) For the origin of this view, see O. Ribbeck, "Über den Begriff des εἴρων," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 31 (1876): 381–400. This view can also be found in F. Amory, "Eirōn and Eirōneia," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 33 (1981): 61–63; P.W. Gooch, "Socratic Irony and Aristotle's Eirōn," *Phoenix* 41.2 (1987): 103–4; A. Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 50; and M. Lane, "The Evolution of Eirōneia in Classical Greek Texts," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 31 (2006): 77–79.

[4.](#) Cf. J. Burnet, *The Ethics of Aristotle* (London: Methuen, 1900), 196 n. 14: "But neither here [referencing Aristotle's use of the example of Socrates] nor anywhere elsewhere is the word [eirōneia] used in a good sense."

[5.](#) This ambiguity will be discussed below.

[6.](#) For the former view, see R.A. Gauthier, *Magnanimité* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1951), 55–118; R.A. Gauthier and J.Y. Jolif, *L'éthique à Nicomaque* (Louvain: Publications universitaires, 1958–59), 2.1:272–73; and J. Howland, "Aristotle's Great-Souled Man," *Review of Politics* 64.1 (2002): 27–56. Cf. A. Tessitore, *Reading Aristotle's "Ethics": Virtue, Rhetoric, and Political Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 28–35. Though Tessitore maintains that the account of magnanimity offered at *EN* 4.3 is deliberately ambiguous, he argues that the pedagogical purpose of this intentional ambiguity is to shift the reader's conceptions of greatness of soul from those centered on political activity to those centered on philosophical activity. For the latter view, see W.F.R. Hardie, "Magnanimity in Aristotle's *Ethics*," *Phronesis* 23.1 (1978): 63–79; and R. Hanley, "Aristotle on the Greatness of Greatness of Soul," *History of Political Thought* 23.1 (2002): 1–20.

[7.](#) For a brief summary of this evidence, see A.A. Long, "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," *Classical Quarterly* 38.1 (1988): 155. As Long speculates, "We may probably conclude that a good many Peripatetics sought to combat the tendency of the other Socratic schools to set up Socrates as the paradigm of how a philosophical life should be lived. The more Socrates' exclusive concentration on ethics was stressed, the less at home he could be in the research environment of the Lyceum" (155).

[8.](#) L.-A. Dorion, *Socrate* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004), 8, 119–21. He writes: "L'hostilité dont Aristoxène fit preuve à l'endroit de Socrate serait difficile à comprendre si le fondateur du Lycée n'avait pas lui-même donné l'exemple et montré la voie" (120–21). Dorion also interprets *Rhet.* 1390b27–31, where Aristotle notes Socrates' failure to transmit virtue to his son, as a criticism of Socrates for being unable to accomplish that which he readily criticized in others.

[9.](#) F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles: Texte und Kommentar*, vol. 6, *Lykon und*

Ariston von Keo (Basel: Schwabe, 1952), fr. 14.

[10.](#) *Contra* S. Collins, *Aristotle and the Rediscovery of Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 147–65.

[11.](#) It has been argued that Aristotle carefully (for the most part) distinguishes between the historical Socrates and the Socrates of the Platonic dialogues by designating the latter “the Socrates” (using the definite article in Greek) and calling the former “Socrates” (without the definite article). This argument, which originated with the work of William Fitzgerald, is generally referred to as “Fitzgerald’s canon.” For its original (brief) articulation, with selected evidence, see W. Fitzgerald, *A Selection from the “Nicomachean Ethics” of Aristotle* (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1850), 163–64. For defenders of this view, see W.D. Ross, *Aristotle, Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), 1:xxxix–xli; and, more recently, G. Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 97 n. 67; and T. Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 8 and 355 n. 12; for critics, see A.E. Taylor, *Varia Socratica* (Oxford: James Parker, 1911), 40–90; Deman, *Le témoignage d’Aristote*, 35; and A. Nehamas, “Voices of Silence: On Gregory Vlastos’ Socrates,” *Arion*, 3rd ser., 2.1 (1992): 169–70. Even if Fitzgerald’s canon were correct, however, this does not demonstrate that Aristotle provides us with independent evidence for Socrates’ beliefs. On this last point, see Nehamas, “Voices of Silence,” 170–71. Finally, even if it were the case that Aristotle does provide us with independent evidence for the historical Socrates, it is far from clear that such evidence is directly relevant to the question of Socratic irony.

[12.](#) In the words of Deman, who notes in the conclusion to his comprehensive study of Aristotle’s testimony on Socrates: “Il [Aristotle] explique Socrate, certes, mais selon le sens d’Aristote, non selon le sens de Socrate. . . . Les doctrines de Socrate sont engagées en des exposés d’intention non historique, mais doctrinale, et entraînées, si l’on peut dire, dans le mouvement proper de la pensée aristotélicienne.” See Deman, *Le témoignage d’Aristote*, 122. Cf. C. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 79–87.

[13.](#) For this understanding of *endoxa*, see C.D.C. Reeve, *Practices of Reason: Aristotle’s “Nicomachean Ethics”* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 37.

[14.](#) While it is unclear exactly how this happens, Aristotle’s reference to drunkenness at *EN* 1147b perhaps offers a clue. A mathematician, for example, when drunk, does not cease knowing how to solve differential equations; but she might cease to be able to solve this particular differential equation that is placed before her when she is in such a state of intoxication.

[15.](#) Cf. *MM* 1183b8–18.

[16.](#) For a more complete list of Aristotle’s criticisms of Socrates (with citations), see Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics*, 8–9. As Irwin notes in sum: “The contrasts that Aristotle

draws between Socrates and Plato are not casual or unimportant. On metaphysical questions, he largely agrees with Socrates against Plato; for he thinks Socrates was right not to separate universals, and that Plato's belief in separation was the root of the paradoxes arising for Platonic forms. Still, Aristotle is no thoughtless partisan of Socrates against Plato. In ethics, he agrees with Plato against Socrates on most of the points that he picks out as distinctively Socratic; in fact, it would not be a gross exaggeration to describe Aristotle's ethical theory as a systematic defense of the theory that Plato develops in opposition to Socrates" (9). Cf. R. Burger, *Aristotle's Dialogue with Socrates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 1-9. Burger contends, by contrast, that we should read the *Nicomachean Ethics* as an extended response to Socratic philosophy, which culminates in his praise of the Socratic life as exemplary.

17. For the latter claim, see Gooch, "Socratic Irony and Aristotle's *Eiron*," 103.

18. Most translators render *ta endoxa* in this passage as something like "reputable qualities," rather than in accordance with Aristotle's technical usage of the term as "those opinions that carry some epistemic weight." For an argument that interprets *ta endoxa* according to its technical meaning in this passage, see Nancy, "Qu'est-ce que l'ironie socratique?," *Internet Journal of the International Plato Society* 1 (2001), https://digitalis-dsp.uc.pt/bitstream/10316.2/42279/3/Qu'est-ce_que_l'ironie_socratique.pdf?ln=pt-pt.

19. On this point, and for citations, see L. Edmunds, "The Practical Irony of the Historical Socrates," *Phoenix* 58.3/4 (2004): 199-201.

20. Edmunds, "Practical Irony," 194-98.

21. Here, Alcibiades' report of Socrates' actions during the Potidaea campaign is relevant. Even though it was quite cold, Socrates would go outside barefoot and wearing only a light cloak, which the other soldiers interpreted as disdainful toward them: *hoi de stratiōtai hupeblepon auton hōs kataphronounta sphōn* (Plat. *Symp.* 220b7-c1).

22. Aristo does appear to depart from Aristotle, however, in claiming that Socrates' denial of knowledge also constituted a boastful form of *eirōneia*.

23. *Hoi de metriōs chrōmenoi tēi eirōneiai kai peri ta mē lian empodōn kai phanera eirōneuomenoi charientes phainontai*.

24. It is also worth noting the language of appearance that Aristotle deploys throughout this passage. Each time Aristotle refers to the practice of *eirōneia* as being refined, he does so using the verb *phainontai* (they appear). Thus, ironists can appear refined, since they do not seem to practice their irony for the sake of profit; yet this is not the same as saying that ironists actually are refined. Elsewhere, Aristotle contrasts the language of appearing (*phainesthai*) with that of being (*einai*) (*EN* 1152b32, 1113a16). Aristotle's use of *phainomai* in his discussion of *eirōneia* also seems to mirror his use of *dokei* (it seems) in other passages. For example,

Aristotle notes that the magnanimous man seems to be haughty (*dio hyperoptai dokousin einai*); but given that the truly magnanimous man will deserve the high honors he judges himself worthy of, while he may seem haughty, he is in fact not (1124a20). Likewise, Aristotle notes that since most people enjoy laughing and joking more than they ought, those who are buffoons are called (*proagoreuontai*) witty and refined (*charientes*) (1128a13-15). Aristotle goes on to explicitly state that they do differ; hence, the judgment that they are the same is a mistaken judgment made by those whose characters have been habituated to take too much pleasure in laughter and joking.

[25.](#) Bywater prints the following text: *parrēsiastēs gar dia to kataphronētikos einai, kai alētheutikos, plēn hosa mē di' eirōneian [eirōneia de] pros tous pollous*. Most translators render the passage along the same lines as the translation offered above; e.g., Ostwald: "Since he looks down upon others his speech is free and truthful, except when he deliberately depreciates himself"; Rowe: "For he is the sort to speak his mind, since he tends to look down on people, and tell the truth, except when being self-deprecating with ordinary people"; Bartlett and Collins: "He speaks freely because he is disposed to feeling contempt for others, and he is given to truthfulness, except inasmuch as he is ironic toward the many." Irwin, however, translates the passage as "He is open in his speech and actions, since his disdain makes him speak freely. And he speaks the truth, except [when he speaks less than the truth] to the many, [because he is moderate], not because he is self-deprecating." The difference in translation depends (keeping constant the seclusion of the *eirōneia de*) on what the *mē* is negating. If we take it with the *di' eirōneian*, then we get something akin to Irwin's translation; if we take it with the *hosa*, then we get the sense indicated by Ostwald and Rowe.

[26.](#) On the connection between irony and superiority, see Nehamas, *Art of Living*, 62-63.

[27.](#) On the figure of the *bōmolokhos*, see S. Kidd, "The Meaning of *bōmolokhos* in Classical Attic," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 142.2 (2012): 239-55.

[28.](#) On this term, see D.M. MacDowell, "The Meaning of ἀλαζών," in E.M. Craik, ed., *Owls to Athens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 287-92.

[29.](#) *Eirētai posa eidē geloiōn estin en tois peri poiētikēs, hōn to men harmottei eleutherōi to d' ou. hopōs oun to harmotton hautōi lēpsetai.*

[30.](#) On the ethical dimensions of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, see J. Cooper, "Ethical-Political Theory in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*," in A. Nehamas and D. Furley, eds., *Aristotle's "Rhetoric": Philosophical Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 193-210; S. Halliwell, "Popular Morality, Philosophical Ethics, and the *Rhetoric*," in Nehamas and Furley, *Aristotle's "Rhetoric*," 211-30; T. Engberg-Pedersen, "Is There an Ethical Dimension to Aristotelian Rhetoric?," in A.O. Rorty,

ed., *Essays on Aristotle's "Rhetoric"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 116-41; and T.H. Irwin, "Ethics in the *Rhetoric* and in the *Ethics*," in Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's "Rhetoric*," 142-74.

[31.](#) D. Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 121.

[32.](#) D. Allen, *The World of Prometheus* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 287-88.

[33.](#) Allen, *Talking to Strangers*, 121.

[34.](#) Ibid., 121. On this conception of friendship in classical Greece more generally, see D. Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 53-92; and Konstan, "Reciprocity and Friendship," in C. Gill, N. Postlethwaite, and R. Seaford, eds., *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 300.

[35.](#) I borrow the phrase "everyday talk" from Jane Mansbridge. See J. Mansbridge, "Everyday Talk in the Deliberative System," in S. Macedo, ed., *Deliberative Politics: Essays on Democracy and Disagreement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 211-39.

[36.](#) For these reasons, I disagree with Collins' arguments that Socratic *eirōneia* constitutes the paradigmatic case of *eutrapelia* for Aristotle, and that the primary function of *eutrapelia* lies in liberating the virtuous individual from the limits of political life and his attachments to the particular city in which he lives. While I agree with Collins that the laws of the city might be *one* of the objects of the witty person's jokes and laughter, Aristotle's primary focus is on the contribution *eutrapelia* makes to facilitating harmonious social interactions between citizens. In this sense, the political dimension of *eutrapelia* is focused on maintaining the political community as a community of equals. See Collins, *Aristotle and the Rediscovery of Citizenship*, 162.

[37.](#) S. Halliwell, *Greek Laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 324.

[38.](#) On *to geloion* in Aristotle, see D. Micallella, *I giovani amano il riso: Aspetti della riflessione aristotelica sul comico* (Lecce: Argo, 2004), 17-28. On attempts to reconstruct *Poetics* II on the basis of the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, see R. Janko, *Aristotle on Comedy: Towards a Reconstruction of Poetics II* (London: Duckworth, 1984); and W. Watson, *The Lost Second Book of Aristotle's "Poetics"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). For analyses of Aristotle's discussions of comedy in the extant portions of the *Poetics*, see L. Cooper, *An Aristotelian Theory of Comedy* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1922); and L. Golden, "Aristotle on Comedy," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 42.3 (1984): 283-90.

[39.](#) On Aristotle's use of *geloion* to describe the arguments of his opponents, see A. Jaulin, "Le rire logique: Usages de *geloion* chez Aristote," in M.-L. Desclos, ed., *Le*

rire des Grecs: Anthropologie du rire en Grèce ancienne (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 2000), 320–21.

[40.](#) This is the source for the theory of laughter as derision that Quentin Skinner has identified in his work on the Hobbesian conception of laughter. See Q. Skinner, “Hobbes and the Classical Theory of Laughter,” in *Visions of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3:142–76. For an argument that Aristotle’s account of laughter is broader than this conception of derision, see M. Beard, *Laughter in Ancient Rome* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 32–34.

[41.](#) See the introduction, pp. 5–7.

[42.](#) *Estō dē orgē orexis meta lupēs timōrias phainomenēs dia phainomenēn oligōrian.*

[43.](#) Herodotus, *Histories* 3.80.2–4. On *hubris* in Herodotus more generally, see D. Cairns, “Hybris, Dishonor, and Thinking Big,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 116 (1996): 14–15; and W. Desmond, “Punishments and the Conclusion of Herodotus’ *Histories*,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 44 (2004): 19–40.

[44.](#) See the introduction, pp. 5–7.

[45.](#) N.R.E. Fisher, *Hybris: A Study in the Values of Honor and Shame in Ancient Greece* (Warminster, UK: Aris & Phillips, 1992), 12.

[46.](#) This is, of course, the position advocated for the guardians of Kallipolis in Plato’s *Republic* (388e4–6), and one that enjoyed long favor from the Renaissance through the nineteenth century. For the latter tradition, see Skinner, “Hobbes and the Classical Theory of Laughter,” 142–76; J. Morreall, *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Theory of Humor* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), chap. 1; and A. Parvulescu, *Laughter: Notes on a Passion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), chap. 1.

[47.](#) This is not to say that this is the *only* positive value of laughter and mockery for Aristotle. In the *Rhetoric*, as mentioned above, he positively recommends Gorgias’ maxim that we “destroy the seriousness of our opponents with laughter and their laughter with seriousness” (1419b13–15). He also recommends the use of laughter as a technique for disengaging the audience’s attention when it is useful to do so (1415a36–38). Lysias’ speech *For the Disabled Man* is perhaps a fourth-century example of this technique; see C. Carey, “Structure and Strategy in Lysias XXIV,” *Greece & Rome* 37 (1990): 44–51. In general, Aristotle does not ban the use of particular techniques in the *Rhetoric*, though this assessment should be qualified by the fact that he does disparage some forms of abuse and mockery as vulgar and to be avoided by those of refinement. On the former point, see B. Yack, “Rhetoric and Public Reasoning: An Aristotelian Understanding of Political Deliberation,” *Political Theory* 34.4 (2006): 417–38; on the latter point, see N. Worman, *Abusive Mouths in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 284–96.

[48.](#) J. Cooper, “Friendship and the Good in Aristotle,” in *Reason and Emotion*

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 341; and J. Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 251–52.

[49.](#) Cooper, “Friendship and the Good,” 342.

[50.](#) *Ibid.*, 351–52.

[51.](#) *EE: ousēs de dittēs tēs eutrapelias (hē men gar en tōi chairein esti tōi geloīōi kai tōi eis hauton, ean ēi toiondi, hōn hen kai to skōmma estin); MM: estai de ho eutrapelos dittōs pōs legomenos kai gar ho dunamenos skōpsai emmelōs, kai hos an hupomeinēi skōptomēnos, eutrapelos.* Thus, while the *EE* identifies this second type of *eutrapelia* with the ability to take pleasure (*chairein*) in jokes, even when they are directed against us, the *MM* identifies it with the ability to endure (*hupomenein*) such jokes. The former would appear to be the far more demanding standard, but the two are not necessarily in tension—to take pleasure in jokes may be one way of understanding what it means to endure them. This relationship will be discussed in more detail in the conclusion. On the authenticity of the *MM*, see J. Cooper, “The *Magna Moralia* and Aristotle’s Moral Philosophy,” in *Reason and Emotion*, 195–211; and C. Rowe, “A Reply to John Cooper on the *Magna Moralia*,” *American Journal of Philology* 96 (1975): 160–72.

[52.](#) For a possible explanation for why this second type of *eutrapelia* drops out of the account in *EN*, see W.W. Fortenbaugh, “Aristotle and the Questionable Mean-Dispositions,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 99 (1968): 203–31.

[53.](#) *Dia ti hētton katechousi ton gelōta parontōn tōn gnōrimōn; ē hotan sphodra exērmenon ēi ti, eukinēton estin; hē d’ eunoia eipein mallon geloion, hōste kinei.*

[54.](#) W.W. Fortenbaugh, “Une analyse du rire chez Aristote et Théophraste,” in Desclos, *Le rire des Grecs*, 351.

[55.](#) It should be noted, however, that even virtue friendships are not free from conflict for Aristotle. On this point, see J. Frank, *A Democracy of Distinction: Aristotle and the Work of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 156–59.

[56.](#) Exactly how *eutrapelia* would manifest itself in contexts outside of virtue friendship (as well as within it) would be a matter of practical judgment. Parties to pleasure and utility friendships, for example, would need to gauge the level of trust that exists in the relationship in assessing just how critical their joking and laughter can be without provoking unwanted conflict. With strangers and enemies, one might emphasize forms of self-deprecating humor, those critical of shared characteristics, or eschew critical forms of joking altogether. Among strangers and enemies, the shared pleasure of lighthearted forms of joking might help dispel any initial distrust. One commonality would seem to be the crucial importance of the second form of *eutrapelia* (that of the ability to endure being the object of joking and laughter discussed in the *Eudemian Ethics*) in moving from virtue friendships to other

relationships where trust may be absent. Cultivating this type of *eutrapelia* may help avoid unwarranted offense at the joking and laughter of others.

[57.](#) As do Ostwald, Irwin, Rowe, and Bartlett and Collins in their respective translations of the *EN*.

[58.](#) *Eutrapelia* derives from *eu trapesthai*, lit. “to turn well.” See P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1984), in which the *eutrapelos* is defined as “qui se tourne facilement, mobile, vif, spirituel.”

[59.](#) *Xunelōn te legō tēn te pasan polin tēs Hellados paideusin einai, kai kath’ hekaston dokein an moi ton auton andra par’ hēmōn epi pleist’ an eidē kai meta charitōn malist’ an eutrapelōs to sōma autarkes parechesthai*. Rusten comments that *eutrapelōs* may be a reference to Athenian adaptability in general, but notes that *charis* and *eutrapelia* “generally describe a congenial personality.” See J. Rusten, *Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War: Book II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 159.

[60.](#) R. Balot, “Pericles’ Anatomy of Democratic Courage,” *American Journal of Philology* 122.4 (2001): 505–25, along with Balot, *Courage in the Democratic Polis: Ideology and Critique in Classical Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 25–46.

[61.](#) Halliwell, *Greek Laughter*, 23.

[62.](#) S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 38–39.

[63.](#) B.M.W. Knox, “The *Ajax* of Sophocles,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 65 (1961): 20–22.

[64.](#) As Knox illustrates, the language Sophocles uses to describe the tribunal that awards Achilles’ arms to Odysseus is reminiscent of that used to describe an Athenian court. See Knox, *Ajax*, 22–23. On the use of *dustrapelia*, cf. *Xen. Oec.* 8.15.6, 8.16.2. Here, *dustrapelia* refers to objects that are stored in a ship’s hold in such a way that they are difficult to access.

[65.](#) The view that *Ajax* is representative of a Homeric heroic code that has passed away, voiced by Knox (*Ajax*, 2, 20), has more recently been persuasively challenged by those who point out that Sophocles’ *Ajax* is not necessarily representative of the Homeric hero. See R.P. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles: An Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 18–19; and Simon Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 156, 160–61. Nonetheless, I think this analysis of the social and political dangers of *dustrapelia* holds whether it is marked as a particularly heroic characteristic or not.

5. SOCRATIC HUMOR IN THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD

[1.](#) M. Schofield, “Stoic Ethics,” in B. Inwood, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 233–35.

[2.](#) Ibid., 234 (emphasis in original).

[3.](#) It should be noted that discussions of Socratic humor were not confined to the Stoics, Epicureans, and Cynics during this period. In particular, a fragment (D.L. 2.19) from the Pyrrhonian Skeptic Timon of Phlius associates Socrates with *eirōneia*, but it is unclear whether the association is meant to be negative or positive. For commentary on this passage, see G. Cortassa, “Note ai *Silli* di Timone di Fliunte,” *Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica* 106 (1978): 140–46; and A.A. Long, “Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy,” *Classical Quarterly* 38.1 (1988): 151–52.

[4.](#) Long, “Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy,” 160–71.

[5.](#) G. Striker, “Plato’s Socrates and the Stoics,” in P. Vander Waerdt, ed., *The Socratic Movement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 243–51; F. Alesse, *La stoa e la tradizione socratica* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 2000), chaps. 5–7; and E. Brown, “Socrates and the Stoa,” in S. Ahbel-Rappe and R. Kamtekar, eds., *A Companion to Socrates* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 275–84. For the idea that Socrates’ conversation with Aristodemus in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* may have shaped the Stoic conception of natural law, see J.G. DeFilippo and P.T. Mitsis, “Socrates and Stoic Natural Law,” in Vander Waerdt, *Socratic Movement*, 252–72.

[6.](#) For a thorough discussion of the early Stoic view of Socrates, and its role in shaping the Stoic conception of the sage, see R. Brouwer, *The Stoic Sage: The Early Stoics on Wisdom, Sagehood, and Socrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 136–76.

[7.](#) K. Döring, *Exemplum Socratis: Studien zur Sokratesnachwirkung in der kynisch-stoischen Popularphilosophie der frühen Kaiserzeit und im frühen Christentum* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1979), 18.

[8.](#) On the importance of keeping key doctrines “at hand,” see P. Hadot, *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, trans. M. Chase (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 50.

[9.](#) The first, Socrates’ response to Crito upon learning of his death sentence—“If it pleases the gods, so be it”—can also be found in the *Discourses* (1.4.24, 4.4.21), and for Epictetus it captures Socrates’ ability to focus above all on his moral purpose and on caring for himself. The second—“Anytus and Meletus are able to kill me, but they cannot harm me” is also present in the *Discourses* (1.29.16, 2.2.15, 3.23.22), and illustrates Socrates’ exemplary understanding of two key Stoic principles: first, that virtue alone is good, both necessary and sufficient for happiness; and second, the distinction between what is up to us, and what is not up to us.

[10.](#) There has been a good deal of scholarly debate over the depth and consistency of Marcus Aurelius’ Stoicism. For those who are skeptical of the coherence of Marcus’ Stoic beliefs, see, for example, J.M. Rist, “Are You a Stoic?” The Case of Marcus Aurelius,” in B.F. Meyers and E.P. Sanders, eds., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 3:23–45; and J.

Cooper, "Moral Theory and Moral Improvement: Marcus Aurelius," in *Knowledge, Nature, and the Good* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 335-68. For more positive assessments, see E. Asmis, "The Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.36.3 (1989): 2228-52; J. Annas, "Marcus Aurelius: Ethics and Its Background," *Rhizai* 2 (2004): 103-19; and C. Gill, "Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*: How Stoic and How Platonic?," in M. Bonazzi and C. Helmig, eds., *Platonic Stoicism, Stoic Platonism: The Dialogue between Platonism and Stoicism in Antiquity* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), 189-207.

[11.](#) Cf. Arist. *EN* 4.8, 1128a16-19, where Aristotle links *epidexiotēs* with *eutrapelia*.

[12.](#) On the social dimension of Marcus' ethical thought, see G. Reydams-Schils, "Marcus Aurelius' Social Ethics," in M. van Ackeren and J. Opsomer, eds., *Selbstbetrachtungen und Selbstdarstellungen: Der Philosoph und Kaiser Marc Aurel im interdisziplinären Licht* (Wiesbaden: Reichart, 2012), 111-32.

[13.](#) Brown, "Socrates in the Stoa," 283.

[14.](#) *Ibid.*, 282.

[15.](#) Brown bases his argument on the idea that "the standard Greek meaning of 'being ironical' (*eirōneuesthai*) is deception," but, as we saw in chapter 2, deception is not all that the term *eirōneia* entails. Moreover, whether the ironist intends to deceive or not is not the only metric for assessing the effect of such irony; as was argued in chapter 2, this also depends greatly on the perception of the audience for such irony. See Brown, "Socrates and the Stoa," 282-83.

[16.](#) A.A. Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 67-96, 134, 136, and 140. Cf. T. Brennan, "Socrates and Epictetus," in Ahbel-Rappe and Kamtekar, *Companion to Socrates*, 291-95.

[17.](#) Trans. Long, in *Epictetus*, 53.

[18.](#) J.-B. Gourinat, "Le Socrate d'Épictète," *Philosophie Antique* 1 (2001): 138-39.

[19.](#) Thus, while I agree with Brennan that Epictetus' irony tends to be "overt," it is not more gentle than that practiced by the Platonic Socrates. See Brennan, "Socrates and Epictetus," 295.

[20.](#) On the use of such abusive mockery by Xenophon's Socrates, see chapter 3, p. 96.

[21.](#) See, for example, Seneca, *Ep. Mor.* 104.7; *De Ben.* 5.6.6; and Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 11.39. On humor more generally within Stoicism, see S. Halliwell, *Greek Laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 302-7. On laughter and humor in Seneca, see M. Nussbaum, "Stoic Laughter: A Reading of Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*," in S. Bartsch and D. Wray, eds., *Seneca and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 84-112.

[22.](#) For a comprehensive overview of the evidence for the Epicurean view of

Socrates, see K. Kleve, "Scurra Atticus: The Epicurean View of Socrates," in G. Macchiaroli, ed., *ΣΥΖΗΤΗΣΙΣ: Studi sull' Epicureismo greco e romano offerti a Marcello Gigante* (Naples: Biblioteca della Parola del Passato, 1983), 227-51. For a briefer overview, see Long, "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," 9-10.

[23.](#) See Kleve, "Scurra Atticus," 231-33; and M. Riley, "The Epicurean Criticism of Socrates," *Phoenix* 34 (1980): 57-58.

[24.](#) See Kleve, "Scurra Atticus," 229.

[25.](#) On the issues surrounding the identity of Aristo, see V. Tsouna, *The Ethics of Philodemus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 143-44 n. 3.

[26.](#) On the connections between *eirōneia* and humor in Philodemus, see Kleve, "Scurra Atticus," 244-49; and Tsouna, *Ethics of Philodemus*, 161.

[27.](#) Kleve, "Scurra Atticus," 249-51.

[28.](#) Long, "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," 9.

[29.](#) For a detailed treatment of this theme, see Tsouna, *Ethics of Philodemus*, 92-118.

[30.](#) Tsouna, *Ethics of Philodemus*, 110-13.

[31.](#) Riley, "Epicurean Criticism of Socrates," 65-68. Cf. M. Erler, "Parrhesie und Ironie: Platons Sokrates und die epikureische Tradition," in R. Gleis, ed., *Ironie: Griechische und lateinische Fallstudie* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2009), 59-75. Erler reaches what is fundamentally the same conclusion as Riley, though he emphasizes the complicated relationship of the Platonic Socrates to *parrhēsia*. Cf. J. Opsomer, *In Search of the Truth: Academic Tendencies in Middle Platonism* (Brussels: Academie voor Wetenschappen, 1998), 113-18.

[32.](#) On whether the Cynics engaged in *philosophia*, as it was understood in antiquity, see J. Cooper, *Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Life in Ancient Philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 61-62.

[33.](#) On the serio-comic dimensions of Xenophon's depiction of Socrates in the *Symposium*, see B. Hüss, "The Dancing Sokrates and the Laughing Xenophon," *American Journal of Philology* 120.3 (1999): 381-409; Halliwell, *Greek Laughter*, 139-54; and Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror*, 337-45.

[34.](#) Xenophon's depiction of, and relationship to, Antisthenes have been the subject of a good deal of scholarly commentary. Early assessments of Xenophon's depiction of Antisthenes have been shaped by arguments that Xenophon's depiction of Socrates is largely, or even wholly, dependent on Antisthenes' now-lost Socratic works. For such arguments, see K. Joël, *Der echte und der Xenophontische Sokrates*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1893-1901); H. Maier, *Sokrates: Sein Werk und seine geschichtliche Stellung* (Tübingen: Paul Siebeck, 1913), 51-76, 175-77; and F. Caizzi, "Antistene," *Studi Urbinati* 38 (1964): 83-99. For critical assessments of the arguments of Joël and Maier in particular, see J. Cooper, "Notes on Xenophon's Socrates," in *Reason and Emotion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 3-28. For a more

general reassessment, see G. Giannantoni, "Antistene e Senofonte," in *SSR* 4:222. In particular, Giannantoni rightly argues that while there are important thematic similarities between Xenophon's Socrates and what we know of Antisthenes' philosophy, these similarities were widely shared throughout the Socratic circle. The search for a source of Xenophon's depiction of Socrates is a symptom of the generally dim view of Xenophon's intellectual abilities and his depiction of Socrates over the past two centuries.

[35.](#) 6.9: *all' homōs, ephē ho Sōkratēs, su auton mē eikaze, hina mē kai su loidoroumenōi eoikēis.*

[36.](#) For this notion of complex irony, see G. Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 30-31. While Vlastos does identify Socrates' own response as an example of such complex irony, he does not note that this designation is equally applicable to the responses of many of the other guests as well.

[37.](#) On this Socratic analogy, see L.-A. Dorion, "Socrate entremetteur," in *Études platoniciennes* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2009), 6:107-23.

[38.](#) See chapter 3, pp. 104-5.

[39.](#) G. Giannantoni, "Antistene: I rapporti con Gorgia e con Socrate," in *SSR* 4:205.

[40.](#) The idea that Diogenes of Sinope was a student of Antisthenes, found in Diogenes Laertius, has long been called into question. See D.R. Dudley, *A History of Cynicism: From Diogenes to the 6th Century A.D* (London: Methuen, 1937), chap. 1; and, more recently, G. Giannantoni, "Antistene: La presunta fondazione della scuola cinica," in *SSR* 4:226-33. Despite the historical implausibility of their direct association, it is likely that Antisthenes' writings and his particular depiction of Socrates exerted a strong influence on Diogenes. See V. Tsouna McKirahan, "The Socratic Origins of the Cynics and Cyrenaics," in P.A. Vander Waerdt, ed., *The Socratic Movement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 367-91; and A.A. Long, "The Socratic Tradition: Diogenes, Crates, and Hellenistic Ethics," in R. Bracht Branham and M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, eds., *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and its Legacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 367-91; 28-46, 32.

[41.](#) On this point, see J.-C. Carrière, "Socratisme, platonisme et comédie dans le *Banquet* de Xénophon: Le *Banquet* de Xénophon et le *Phèdre* de Platon," in M. Trédé-Boulmer, P. Hoffman, and C. Auvray-Assayas, eds., *Le rire des anciens* (Paris: Presses de l'École normale supérieure, 1998), 254-55. Carrière, though, attributes to the Cynics an ironic form of humor.

[42.](#) On this dimension of Cynic humor, which will not be pursued here, see J.F. Kindstrand, *Bion of Borysthenes: A Collection of the Fragments with Introduction and Commentary* (Stockholm: Uppsala, 1976), 44-55.

[43.](#) In the words of one recent commentator, “Whereas Socrates offers step-by-step arguments to lay bare the contradictions in his opponents’ views, Diogenes scorns, jokes, and gestures.” See E. Brown, “The Cynics,” in J. Warren and F. Sheffield, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Ancient Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 406. Cf. Demetrius, *De elocutione* 170: “Even sensible people will indulge in laughter on such suitable occasions as feasts and drinking parties, and in reprimanding those who are too inclined to a life of luxury. Examples are Telauges’ bag, and Crates’ poetry—and you might well read a eulogy of lentil soup to the profligate. The Cynic manner is very much like this, for such humor is a substitute for maxims and gnomic wisdom (*ta gar toiauta geloia chreias lambanei taxin kai gnōmēs*)” (trans. Innes).

[44.](#) For a general overview of the work, see C.P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 90–100.

[45.](#) Almost all we know about Demonax derives from Lucian’s biographical portrait. For what little evidence that exists outside of Lucian, see D.M. Searby, “Non-Lucian Sources for Demonax With a New Collection of ‘Fragments,’” *Symbolae Osloenses* 83 (2008): 120–47. On Lucian’s philosophical biographies more generally, see D. Clay, “Lucian of Samosata: Four Philosophical Lives,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.36.5 (1992): 3406–50.

[46.](#) For a brief overview of the Cynic and Socratic features of Demonax, with relevant bibliography, see M. Billerbeck, “The Ideal Cynic from Epictetus to Julian,” in Bracht Branham and Goulet-Cazé, *Cynics*, 215–16.

[47.](#) For a recent treatment of Lucian’s relationship with Cynicism, see P.R. Bosman, “Lucian among the Cynics: The *Zeus Refuted* and the Cynic Tradition,” *Classical Quarterly* 62.2 (2012): 785–95, esp. 794–795. On attitudes toward Cynicism during the period directly preceding Lucian, see M. Griffin, “Cynicism and the Romans: Attraction and Repulsion,” in Bracht Branham and Goulet-Cazé, *Cynics*, 190–204.

[48.](#) Cf. *Jupiter Tragoedus* 52.

[49.](#) The contrast between a supposedly ironic Solon and Anacharsis is perhaps another example of a kind of Cynic antipathy to irony in Lucian. On the relationship between Anacharsis and Cynicism, see R.P. Martin, “The Scythian Accent: Anacharsis and the Cynics,” in Bracht Branham and Goulet-Cazé, *Cynics*, 136–55.

[50.](#) On Demonax as a Socratic, see D. Sedley, “Philosophical Allegiance in the Greco-Roman World,” in M. Griffin and J. Barnes, eds., *Philosophia Togata* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 119 n. 48.

[51.](#) The search for a conception of justice in the *Republic* that can withstand the objections of Glaucon and Adeimantus, for example, is precisely a quest for a conception of justice that is grounded in nature.

[52.](#) W. Desmond, *The Cynics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 143–

50.

[53.](#) On abstaining from luxury foods: *SSR* V.B.494; on eating a raw octopus: *SSR* V.B.93. Plutarch reports that Diogenes died from this attempt.

[54.](#) For a helpful discussion of the distinct meanings of such a “quiet life” in the ancient philosophical tradition, see E. Brown, “False Idles: The Politics of the ‘Quiet Life,’” in R. Balot, ed., *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 485–500; on the Cynics in particular, see 496–97.

[55.](#) For a more complete list of these metaphors, see Desmond, *Cynics*, 124–25.

[56.](#) Cf. R. Bracht Branham, “Defacing the Currency: Diogenes’ Rhetoric and the Invention of Cynicism,” in Bracht Branham and Goulet-Cazé, *Cynics*, 98.

[57.](#) As Moles notes, “The cosmopolitan sentiment [at D.L. 6.72] is also humorous, which suits both the note struck in the context by ‘ridicule’ and that most characteristic Cynic style of expression. For it is a splendid joke that while earnest philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle spend their lives attempting to define, and then disastrously to implement, their conceptions of the ‘correct *politeia*’, the Cynic, who eats, drinks, urinates, farts, defecates, masturbates and fornicates in public, even in the sacred space of the *agora*—this incredible figure not only solves the theoretical problem instantly but immediately practices it in his way of life.” See J.L. Moles, “The Cynics and Politics,” in A. Laks and M. Schofield, eds., *Justice and Generosity: Studies in Hellenistic Social and Political Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 136–37.

[58.](#) Both of these examples call to mind an important division between conventional laughter and Cynic laughter that could be mapped onto the *nomos/physis* divide central to the Cynic movement. On this point, see Halliwell, *Greek Laughter*, 372–87.

[59.](#) On laughter as a social corrective, see H. Bergson, “Laughter,” in W. Sypher, ed., *Comedy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), 72–74.

[60.](#) On Cynic *askēsis*, see M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, *L’ascèse cynique: Un commentaire de Diogène Laërce VI 70–71* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2001), esp. 195–220.

[61.](#) M. Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983–1984*, trans. G. Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 262.

[62.](#) See chapter 2, pp. 53–55.

CONCLUSION

[1.](#) M. Beard, *Laughter in Ancient Rome* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 129.

[2.](#) On the difficulties of attempting to understand the laughter and humor of the past, see Beard’s excellent discussion in *Laughter in Ancient Rome*, 49–69. On how a changing political climate can alter norms surrounding what forms of laughter and

joking count as appropriate, see A. Corbeill, *Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 174–217.

3. K. Raaflaub, “Equalities and Inequalities in Athenian Democracy,” in J. Ober and C. Hedrick, eds., *Dēmokratia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 159. Cf. J. Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 293–95.

4. As David Konstan has argued with respect to Greek comedy, it “reproduces in an altered register tensions that enter into the ideology of the ancient city-state, in which ideals of social harmony that are grounded in images of a golden age and other emblems of collectivity come into conflict with a system of competitive values and exclusionary practices based on class, status, and gender.” See D. Konstan, *Greek Comedy and Ideology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 165.

5. Ober, *Mass and Elite*, 314–26.

6. For an attempt to do so in a contemporary context, see J. Lombardini, “Civic Laughter: Aristotle and the Political Virtue of Humor,” *Political Theory* 41.2 (2013): 203–30.

7. Though the view of *eirōneia* advanced in chapter 2 is quite different from this view of irony as self-deprecating humor, it is a point worth addressing, since it helps to further establish the distinction between *eirōneia* and *eutrapelia*.

8. On Socratic questioning as reflecting the Athenian principle of democratic accountability, see J.P. Euben, *Corrupting Youth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 91–108; on the Socratic mode of philosophical discourse as anticipating the “discursive turn” in contemporary democratic theory, see G. Mara, *Socrates’ Discursive Democracy: Logos and Ergon in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 1–30; for an Arendtian interpretation of Socrates as attempting to instill in his fellow citizens a type of thoughtfulness vital to democratic flourishing, see D. Villa, *Socratic Citizenship* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 1–58; and on Socratic irony as a democratic response to the corruption of Athenian democratic discourse, see E. Markovits, *The Politics of Sincerity: Plato, Frank Speech, and Democratic Judgment* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 81–122.

9. Ober, *Mass and Elite*, 70–71.

10. On this point, see A. Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 12–13.

11. Nehamas, *Art of Living*, 67–68.

12. J. Lear, *A Case for Irony* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 30–37.

13. R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 73–95; J. Seery, *Political Returns: Irony in Politics and*

Theory from Plato to the Antinuclear Movement (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 340-46; and W. Connolly, *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*, exp. ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 120-21.

[14.](#) Rorty, *Contingency*, 91.

[15.](#) Ibid.

[16.](#) On presumptive generosity, see White, *The Ethos of a Late-Modern Citizen* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 105-6.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ademollo, F. *The Cratylus of Plato: A Commentary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Adkins, A.W.H. "Clouds, Mysteries, Socrates, and Plato." *Antichthon* 4 (1970): 13-24.
- Ahbel-Rappe, S., and R. Kamtekar, eds. *A Companion to Socrates*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.
- Alberti, A., and R.W. Sharples, eds. *Aspasius: The Earliest Extant Commentary on Aristotle's "Ethics."* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999.
- Alesse, F. *La stoa e la tradizione socratica*. Naples: Bibliopolis, 2000.
- Allen, D. *The World of Prometheus: The Politics of Punishing in Democratic Athens*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- . *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- . *Why Plato Wrote*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Amory, F. "Eirōn and Eirōneia." *Classica et Mediaevalia* 33 (1981): 49-80.
- Annas, J. *The Morality of Happiness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- . "Plato the Skeptic." In Vander Waerdt, *Socratic Movement*, 309-40.
- . "Marcus Aurelius: Ethics and Its Background." *Rhizai* 2 (2004): 103-19.
- Arieti, J. "Plato's Philosophical *Antiope*: The *Gorgias*." In G.A. Press, ed., *Plato's Dialogues: New Studies and Interpretations*, 197-214. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993.

- Asmis, E. "The Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius." *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.36.3 (1989): 2228-52.
- Azoulay, V. *Xénophon et les grâces du pouvoir: De la charis au charisme*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2004.
- Bakola, E. *Cratinus and the Art of Comedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Balot, R. "Pericles' Anatomy of Democratic Courage." *American Journal of Philology* 122.4 (2001): 505-25.
- . "Democracy and Political Philosophy: Influences, Tensions, Rapprochement." In J. Arnason, K. Raaflaub, and P. Wagner, eds., *The Greek Polis and the Invention of Democracy: A Politico-Cultural Transformation and Its Interpretations*, 181-204. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.
- . *Courage in the Democratic Polis: Ideology and Critique in Classical Athens*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Bandini, M., and L.-A. Dorion, eds. *Xénophon, Mémoires*. 2 vols. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2000-2010.
- Barnes, J., ed. *Aristotle, Complete Works*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- . "Socrates the Hedonist." In K. Boudouris, ed., *The Philosophy of Socrates*, 22-32. Athens: Kardamitsa, 1991.
- . "An Introduction to Aspasius." In Alberti and Sharples, *Aspasius*, 1-50.
- Bartlett, R.C., and S. Collins, eds. and trans. *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Beard, M. *Laughter in Ancient Rome*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2014.
- Berg, S. "Rhetoric, Nature, and Philosophy in Aristophanes' *Clouds*." *Ancient Philosophy* 18 (1998): 1-19.
- Bergson, H. "Laughter." In W. Sypher, ed., *On Comedy*, 61-190. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956.
- Bergson, L. "Eiron und Eironeia." *Hermes* 99.4 (1971): 409-22.
- Berry, E.G. "The Oxyrhynchus Fragments of Aeschines of Sphettus." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 81 (1950): 1-8.
- Beverly, J. "Vlastos' Quest for the Historical Socrates." *Ancient Philosophy* 13 (1993): 293-312.
- . *Cross-Examining Socrates: A Defense of the Interlocutors in Plato's Early Dialogues*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Bickford, S. "'This Way of Life, This Contest': Reconsidering Socratic Citizenship." In S. Salkever, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Political Thought*, 126-55. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Biles, Z.P. "Aristophanes' Victory Dance: Old Poets in the Parabasis of 'Knights.'" *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 136 (2001): 195-200.
- . "Intertextual Biography in the Rivalry of Cratinus and Aristophanes."

- American Journal of Philology* 123.2 (2002): 169-204.
- . *Aristophanes and the Poetics of Competition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Billrbeck, M. "The Ideal Cynic from Epictetus to Julian." In Bracht Branham and Goulet-Cazé, *Cynics*, 205-21.
- Blondell, R. *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Borthwick, E.K. "Socrates, Socratics, and the Word ΒΑΙΠΙΕΔΑΙΜΩΝ." *Classical Quarterly*, n.s., 51.1 (2001): 297-301.
- Bosman, P.R. "Lucian among the Cynics: The *Zeus Refuted* and the Cynic Tradition." *Classical Quarterly* 62.2 (2012): 785-95.
- Bossi, B. "Back to the Point: Plato and Parmenides—Genuine Parricide?" In Bossi and Robinson, *Plato's "Sophist" Revisited*, 157-73.
- Bossi, B., and T.M. Robinson, eds. *Plato's "Sophist" Revisited*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013.
- Boyarin, D. *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Bracht Branham, R. "Defacing the Currency: Diogenes' Rhetoric and the Invention of Cynicism." In Bracht Branham and Goulet-Cazé, *Cynics*, 81-104.
- Bracht Branham, R., and M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, eds. *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Brancacci, A. "Dio, Socrates, and Cynicism." In S. Swain, ed., *Dio Chrysostom: Politics, Letters, and Philosophy*, 240-60. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- . "Le Socrate de Dion Chrysostome." *Philosophie Antique* 1 (2001): 167-82.
- Bremmer, J. "Jokes, Jokers, and Jokebooks in Ancient Greek Culture." In J. Bremmer and H. Roodenburg, eds., *A Cultural History of Humor: From Antiquity to the Present*, 11-28. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1997.
- Brennan, T. "Socrates and Epictetus." In Ahbel-Rappe and Kamtekar, *Companion to Socrates*, 285-97.
- Brickhouse, T.C., and N. Smith. "The Origin of Socrates' Mission." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44.4 (1983): 657-66.
- Broackes, J. "ΑΥΤΟΣ ΚΑΘ' ΑΥΤΟΝ in the *Clouds*: Was Socrates Himself a Defender of Separable Soul and Separate Forms?" *Classical Quarterly* 59.1 (2009): 46-59.
- Broadie, S., and C. Rowe, eds. and trans. *Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Brock, R. "Plato and Comedy." In Craik, *Owls to Athens*, 39-49.
- Brouwer, R. *The Stoic Sage: The Early Stoics on Wisdom, Sagehood, and Socrates*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Brown, E. "Socrates and the Stoa." In Ahbel-Rappe and Kamtekar, *Companion to Socrates*, 275-84.
- . "False Idles: The Politics of the 'Quiet Life.'" In R. Balot, ed., *A Companion to*

- Greek and Roman Political Thought*, 485–500. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- . “The Cynics.” In J. Warren and F. Sheffield, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, 399–408. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Brown, P. “The Comic Socrates.” In M. Trapp, ed., *Socrates from Antiquity to the Enlightenment*, 1–16. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007.
- Büchner, W. “Über den Begriff der Eironeia.” *Hermes* 76.4 (1941): 339–58.
- Burger, R. “Socratic εἰρωνεία.” *Interpretation* 13.2 (1985): 143–49.
- . *Aristotle’s Dialogue with Socrates*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Burnet, J. *The Ethics of Aristotle*. London: Methuen, 1900.
- . *Platonis Opera*. Vols. 2–3. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901–3.
- Burnyeat, M. “Socratic Midwifery, Platonic Inspiration.” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 24 (1977): 7–16.
- Bussanich, J., and N.D. Smith. *The Bloomsbury Companion to Socrates*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Buxton, R.F. “Xenophon on Leadership: Commanders as Friends.” In Flower, *Cambridge Companion to Xenophon*, 323–37.
- Bywater, L. *Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachea*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894.
- Cairns, D. “Hybris, Dishonor, and Thinking Big.” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 116 (1996): 1–32.
- Caizzi, F. “Antistene.” *Studi Urbinati* 38 (1964): 48–99.
- Carey, C. “Structure and Strategy in Lysias XXIV.” *Greece & Rome* 37.1 (1990): 44–51.
- . “Comic Ridicule and Democracy.” In R. Osborne and S. Hornblower, eds., *Ritual, Finance, and Politics: Athenian Accounts Presented to David Lewis*, 69–83. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Carlier, P. “The Idea of Imperial Monarchy in Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*.” In Gray, *Xenophon*, 327–66.
- Carrière, J.-C. “Socratisme, platonisme, et comédie dans le *Banquet* de Xénophon: Le *Banquet* de Xénophon et le *Phèdre* de Platon.” In M. Trédè-Boulmer, P. Hoffman, and C. Auvray-Assayas, eds., *Le rire des anciens*, 243–71. Paris: Presses de l’École normale supérieure, 1998.
- Cartledge, P. *Spartan Reflections*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- . *Ancient Greek Political Thought in Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Cartledge, P., P. Millet, and S. Todd, eds. *Nomos*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Cerri, G. “Le *Nuvole* di Aristofane e la realtà storica di Socrate.” In F. Perusino and M. Colantonio, eds., *La commedia greca e la storia*, 151–94. Florence: Edizioni ETS, 2012.

- Chantraine, P. *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1984.
- Chroust, A.H. *Socrates, Man and Myth*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1957.
- Clark, H.H., and R.J. Gerrig. "On the Pretense Theory of Irony." *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 113.1 (1984): 121-26.
- Clarke, J.R. *Looking at Laughter: Humor, Power, and Transgression in Roman Visual Culture, 100 B.C.-200 A.D.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Clay, D. "Lucian of Samosata: Four Philosophical Lives." *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.36.5 (1992): 3406-50.
- . "The Origins of the Socratic Dialogue." In Vander Waerdt, *Socratic Movement*, 23-47.
- . *Platonic Questions: Dialogues with the Silent Philosopher*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.
- Cohen, D. "Sexuality, Violence, and the Athenian Law of Hubris." *Greece & Rome*, 2nd ser., 38.2 (1991): 171-88.
- . *Law, Violence, and Community in Classical Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Colebrook, C. *Irony*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Collins, S. *Aristotle and the Rediscovery of Citizenship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Connolly, W. *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*. Exp. ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
- Connor, W.R. *The New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971.
- Cooper, J. "Ethical-Political Theory in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*." In Furley and Nehamas, *Aristotle's "Rhetoric,"* 193-210.
- . *Reason and Emotion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- . "Friendship and the Good in Aristotle." In Cooper, *Reason and Emotion*, 336-55.
- . "The *Magna Moralia* and Aristotle's Moral Philosophy." In Cooper, *Reason and Emotion*, 195-211.
- . "Notes on Xenophon's Socrates." In Cooper, *Reason and Emotion*, 3-28.
- . "Socrates and Plato in Plato's *Gorgias*." In Cooper, *Reason and Emotion*, 29-75.
- . *Knowledge, Nature, and the Good: Essays on Ancient Philosophy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- . "Arcesilaus: Socratic and Skeptic." In Cooper, *Knowledge, Nature, and the Good*, 81-103.
- . "Moral Theory and Moral Improvement: Marcus Aurelius." In Cooper,

- Knowledge, Nature, and the Good*, 335-68.
- . *Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Life in Ancient Philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Cooper, L. *An Aristotelian Theory of Comedy*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1922.
- Cope, E.M. *Commentary on Aristotle's "Rhetoric."* Vol. 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1877.
- Corbeill, A. *Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Cortassa, G. "Note ai Silli di Timone di Fliunte." *Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica* 106 (1978): 140-56.
- Craik, E.M., ed. *'Owls to Athens': Essays on Classical Subjects Presented to Sir Kenneth Dover*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
- Critchley, S. *On Humor*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Dalfen, J. *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus: Ad se ipsum libri XII*. Leipzig: Teubner, 1987.
- Danzig, G. "Apologizing for Socrates: Plato and Xenophon on Socrates' Behavior in Court." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 133.2 (2003): 281-321.
- . *Apologizing for Socrates: How Plato and Xenophon Created Our Socrates*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.
- . "The Best of the Achaemenids: Benevolence, Self-Interest, and the 'Ironic' Reading of the *Cyropaedia*." In Hobden and Tuplin, *Xenophon*, 499-540.
- DeFilippo, J.G., and P.T. Mitsis. "Socrates and Stoic Natural Law." In Vander Waerdt, *Socratic Movement*, 252-72.
- Delatte, A. *Le troisième livre des souvenirs socratiques de Xénophon*. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de L'Université de Liège, 1933.
- Deman, T. *Le témoignage de Aristote sur Socrate*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1942.
- Deneen, P. "Chasing Plato." *Political Theory* 28 (2000): 421-39.
- Desclos, M.-L., ed. *Le rire des Grecs: Anthropologie du rire en Grèce ancienne*. Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 2000.
- Desmond, W. "Punishment and the Conclusion of Herodotus' *Histories*." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 44 (2004): 19-40.
- . *The Cynics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.
- Destrée, P. "The Speech of Alcibiades." In C. Horn, ed., *Platon, Symposium*, 191-205. Berlin: Akademie, 2012.
- De Vogel, C.J. "Who Was Socrates?" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 1.2 (1963): 143-61.
- De Vries, G.J. "Laughter in Plato's Writings." *Mnemosyne* 38.3/4 (1985): 387-90.
- Dickey, E. *Greek Forms of Address: From Herodotus to Lucian*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

- Diggle, J. *Theophrastus, Characters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Dilts, M.R., ed. *Demosthenis Orationes*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002.
- , ed. *Demosthenis Orationes*. Vol. 4. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009.
- Dittmar, H. *Aischines von Sphettos: Studien zur Literaturgeschichte der Sokratiker*. Berlin: Weidmann, 1912.
- Döring, K. *Die Megariker: Kommentierte Sammlung der Testimonien*. Amsterdam: Grüner, 1972.
- . *Exemplum Socratis: Studien zur Sokratesnachwirkung in der kynisch-stoischen Popularphilosophie der frühen Kaiserzeit und im frühen Christentum*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1979.
- . "Antisthenes: Sophist oder Sokratiker?" *Siculorum Gymnasium* 38 (1985): 229-42.
- . "The Students of Socrates." In Morrison, *Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, 24-47.
- Dorion, L.-A. "Euthydème et Dionysodore sont-ils des Mégariques?" In Robinson and Brisson, *Plato*, 35-50.
- . "Introduction générale." In Bandini and Dorion, *Xénophon*, vii-cclii.
- . "À l'origine de la question socratique et de la critique du témoignage de Xénophon: L'étude de Schleiermacher sur Socrate (1815)." *Dionysius* 19 (2001): 51-74.
- . "Akrasia et enkrateia dans les *Mémoires* de Xénophon." *Dialogue* 42 (2003): 645-72.
- . "Qu'est-ce que vivre en accord avec sa *dunamis*? Les deux réponses de Socrate dans les *Mémoires*." *Les Études Philosophiques* 69.2 (2004): 235-52.
- . *Socrate*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004.
- . "Xenophon's Socrates." In Ahbel-Rappe and Kamtekar, *Companion to Socrates*, 93-109.
- . "Socrate *oikonomikos*." In Nancy and Tordesillas, *Xénophon et Socrate*, 253-81.
- . "Socrate entremetteur." In *Études platoniciennes*, 6:107-23. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2009.
- . "The Straussian Exegesis of Xenophon: The Paradigmatic Case of *Memorabilia* IV 4." In Gray, *Xenophon*, 283-323.
- . "The Rise and Fall of the Socratic Problem." In Morrison, *Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, 1-23.
- . *L'autre Socrate: Études sur les écrits socratiques de Xénophon*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2013.
- . "Le *daimonion* et la *megalēgoria* de Socrate dans l'*Apologie* de Xénophon." In Dorion, *L'autre Socrate*, 301-16.
- . "La nature et le statut de *sophia* dans les *Mémoires*." In Dorion, *L'autre*

- Socrate, 123-46.
- . “Socrate et la *basilikē technē*.” In Dorion, *L'autre Socrate*, 147-69.
- . “Socrate et la politique: Les raisons de son abstention selon Platon et Xénophon.” In Dorion, *L'autre Socrate*, 171-93.
- Dover, K. *Aristophanes, Clouds*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.
- Dudley, D.R. *A History of Cynicism: From Diogenes to the 6th Century AD*. London: Methuen, 1937.
- Due, B. *The “Cyropaedia”: Xenophon’s Aims and Methods*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1989.
- Dunbar, N. *Aristophanes, Birds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Dworkin, R. “The Right to Ridicule.” *New York Review of Books*, March 23, 2006.
- Edmunds, L. “Aristophanes’ Socrates.” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 2 (1986): 209-30.
- . “The Practical Irony of the Historical Socrates.” *Phoenix* 58.3/4 (2004): 193-207.
- Eide, T. “On Socrates’ ἀτοπία.” *Symbolae Osloenses* 71 (1996): 59-67.
- Eire, A.L. “À propos des mots pour exprimer l’idée de ‘rire’ en grec ancien.” In Desclos, *Le rire des Grecs*, 13-43.
- Emlyn-Jones, C. “Dramatic Structure and Cultural Context in Plato’s *Laches*.” *Classical Quarterly* 49.1 (1999): 123-38.
- Engberg-Pedersen, T. “Is There an Ethical Dimension in Aristotelian Rhetoric?” In Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle’s “Rhetoric,”* 116-41.
- Erler, M. “Parrhesie und Ironie: Platons Sokrates und die epikureische Tradition.” In Gleis, *Ironie*, 59-75.
- Euben, J.P. *Corrupting Youth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Farquharson, A.S.L. *The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Antoninus*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944.
- Ferrari, G.R.F. “Socratic Irony as Pretence.” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 34 (2008): 1-33.
- Fisher, N.R.E. “Hybris and Dishonor: I.” *Greece & Rome*, 2nd ser., 23.2 (1976): 177-93.
- . “Hybris and Dishonor: II.” *Greece and Rome*, 2nd ser., 26.1 (1979): 32-47.
- . “The Law of *hubris* in Athens.” In Cartledge, Millet, and Todd, *Nomos*, 123-38.
- . *Hybris: A Study in the Values of Honor and Shame in Ancient Greece*. Warminster, UK: Aris & Phillips, 1992.
- Fitzgerald, W. *A Selection from the “Nicomachean Ethics” of Aristotle*. Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1850.
- Flower, M., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Xenophon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Fortenbaugh, W.W. “Aristotle and the Questionable Mean-Dispositions.”

- Transactions of the American Philological Association* 99 (1968): 203–31.
- . “Une analyse du rire chez Aristote et Théophraste.” In Desclos, *Le rire des Grecs*, 333–54.
- Foucault, M. *The Courage of Truth: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983–1984*. Trans. G. Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Frank, J. *A Democracy of Distinction: Aristotle and the Work of Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Frede, M. “Plato’s Arguments and the Dialogue Form.” In J.C. Klagge and N.D. Smith, eds., *Methods of Interpreting Plato and His Dialogues*, 201–19. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- . “The Early Christian Reception of Socrates.” In Judson and Karasmanis, *Remembering Socrates*, 188–202.
- Freese, J.H., ed. and trans. *Aristotle, Art of Rhetoric*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926.
- Furley, D., and A. Nehamas, eds. *Aristotle’s “Rhetoric”: Philosophical Essays*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- Gagarin, M. “Socrates’ ‘Hybris’ and Alcibiades’ Failure.” *Phoenix* 31.1 (1977): 22–37.
- . “The Athenian Law against *Hybris*.” In G.W. Bowersock, W. Burkert, and M.C.J. Putnam, eds., *Arktouros: Hellenic Studies Presented to Bernard M.W. Knox*, 229–36. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979.
- Gauthier, R.A. *Magnanimité*. Paris: J. Vrin, 1951.
- Gauthier, R.A., and J.Y. Jolif, eds. *L’éthique à Nicomaque*. 2 vols. Louvain: Publications universitaires, 1958–59.
- Gera, D. *Xenophon’s “Cyropaedia”: Style, Genre, and Literary Technique*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Giannantoni, G. *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae* (= SSR). 4 vols. Naples: Bibliopolis, 1990.
- . “Antistene: I rapporti con Gorgia e con Socrate.” In SSR 4:203–7.
- . “Antistene: La presunta fondazione della scuola cinica.” In SSR 4:223–33.
- . “Antistene e Senofonte.” In SSR 4:209–22.
- Giannopoulou, Z. “Socratic Midwifery: A Second *Apology*?” *Oxford Studies in Classical Philosophy* 33 (2007): 55–88.
- . *Plato’s “Theaetetus” as a Second “Apology.”* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Gigon, O. *Sokrates: Sein Bild in Dichtung und Geschichte*. Bern: A. Francke, 1947.
- Gill, C. “Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditations*: How Stoic and How Platonic?” In M. Bonazzi and C. Helmig, eds., *Platonic Stoicism, Stoic Platonism: The Dialogue between Platonism and Stoicism in Antiquity*, 189–207. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007.

- Given, J. "The Agathon Scene in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*." *Symbolae Osloenses* 82 (2007): 35-51.
- Glei, R., ed. *Ironie: Griechische und lateinische Fallstudien*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2009.
- Golden, L. "Aristotle on Comedy." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 42.3 (1984): 293-90.
- Goldhill, S. *Reading Greek Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- . *The Poet's Voice: Essays on Poetics and Greek Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- . "The Seductions of the Gaze: Socrates and His Girlfriends." In Gray, *Xenophon*, 167-91.
- Gooch, P.W. "Socratic Irony and Aristotle's *Eirōn*." *Phoenix* 41.2 (1987): 95-104.
- Gordon, J. "Against Vlastos on Complex Irony." *Classical Quarterly*, n.s., 46.1 (1996): 131-37.
- Goulet-Cazé, M.-O. *L'ascèse cynique: Un commentaire de Diogène Laërce VI 70-71*. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2001.
- Gourinat, J.-B. "Le Socrate d'Épictète." *Philosophie Antique* 1 (2001): 137-65.
- . "La dialectique de Socrate selon les *Mémoires* de Xénophon." In Narcy and Tordesillas, *Xénophon et Socrate*, 129-58.
- Gourinat, M. "Socrate était-il une ironiste?" *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 91.3 (1986): 339-53.
- Gray, V. *The Character of Xenophon's "Hellenika"*. London: Duckworth, 1989.
- . "Xenophon's *Symposion*: The Display of Wisdom." *Hermes* 120.1 (1992): 58-75.
- . *The Framing of Socrates: The Literary Interpretation of Xenophon's "Memorabilia"*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1998.
- , ed. *Xenophon: Oxford Readings in Classical Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- . *Xenophon's Mirror of Princes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- . "Xenophon's Socrates and Democracy." *Polis* 28.1 (2011): 1-32.
- . "Le style simple de Xénophon: Du rabaissement de la grandeur." In P. Pontier, ed., *Xénophon et la rhétorique*, 319-37. Paris: Presses de l'université Paris-Sorbonne, 2014.
- . "Xenophon's Language and Expression." In Flower, *Cambridge Companion to Xenophon*, 223-40.
- Green, P. "Strepsiades, Socrates, and the Abuses of Intellectualism." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 20 (1979): 15-25.
- Greene, W.C. "The Spirit of Comedy in Plato." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 31 (1920): 63-123.
- Griffin, M. "Cynicism and the Romans: Attraction and Repulsion." In Bracht

- Branham and Goulet-Cazé, *Cynics*, 190–204.
- Griffin, M., and B. Inwood. *Seneca, On Benefits*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Griswold, C. "Irony in the Platonic Dialogues." *Philosophy and Literature* 26 (2002): 84–106.
- Gummere, R.M. *Seneca, Epistles*. 3 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917–25.
- Guthrie, W.K.C. *Socrates*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.
- Hadot, P. *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*. Trans. M. Chase. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Halliwell, S. "Popular Morality, Philosophical Ethics, and the *Rhetoric*." In Furley and Nehamas, *Aristotle's "Rhetoric,"* 211–30.
- . "The Uses of Laughter in Greek Culture." *Classical Quarterly* 41.2 (1991): 279–96.
- . *Greek Laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Halperin, D. *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Hanley, R. "Aristotle on the Greatness of Greatness of Soul." *History of Political Thought* 23.1 (2002): 1–20.
- Hansen, M.H. "Solonian Democracy in Fourth-Century Athens." *Classica et Mediaevalia* 40 (1989): 71–99.
- . *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.
- . "The Trial of Sokrates—from the Athenian Point of View." In M. Sakellariou, ed., *Colloque international Démocratie athénienne et culture*, 137–70. Athens: University of Athens, 1996.
- Hardie, W.F.R. "'Magnanimity' in Aristotle's *Ethics*." *Phronesis* 23.1 (1978): 63–79.
- Hatzistavrou, A. "Socrates' Deliberative Authoritarianism." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 29 (2005): 75–113.
- . "Crito's Failure to Deliberate Socratically." *Classical Quarterly* 63.2 (2013): 580–94.
- Havelock, E. "The Socratic Self as It Is Parodied in Aristophanes' *Clouds*." *Yale Classical Studies* 22 (1972): 1–18.
- Heath, M. "Aristophanes and His Rivals." *Greece & Rome* 37.2 (1990): 143–58.
- Heckel, H. "Was ist Ironie?" In Gleis, *Ironie*, 15–31.
- Henderson, J. "The *Dēmos* and the Comic Competition." In J.J. Winkler and F. Zeitlin, eds., *Nothing to Do with Dionysos?*, 271–313. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- . *Aristophanes, Plays and Fragments*. 5 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998–2007.

- Herman, G. *Morality and Behavior in Democratic Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Hesk, J. *Deception and Democracy in Classical Athens*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Heylbut, G., ed. *Aspasii in Ethica Nicomachea quae supersunt Commentaria*. Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca XIX 1. Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1889.
- Hobden, F., and C. Tuplin, eds. *Xenophon: Ethical Principles and Historical Enquiry*. Boston: Brill, 2012.
- Howland, J. "Aristotle's Great-Souled Man." *Review of Politics* 64.1 (2002): 27-56.
- Hubbard, T. *The Mask of Comedy: Aristophanes and the Intertextual Parabasis*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- Hüss, B. "The Dancing Sokrates and the Laughing Xenophon." *American Journal of Philology* 120.3 (1999): 381-409.
- Hyland, D. *Finitude and Transcendence in the Platonic Dialogues*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.
- Innes, D.C., ed. and trans. *Demetrius, On Style*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Irwin, T. *Plato's Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- . "Ethics in the *Rhetoric* and in the *Ethics*." In Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's "Rhetoric,"* 142-74.
- , trans. *Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999.
- Ismard, P. *Democracy's Slaves: A Political History of Ancient Greece*. Trans. J.M. Todd. Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 2017.
- Janko, R. *Aristotle on Comedy: Towards a Reconstruction of Poetics II*. London: Duckworth, 2002.
- Jaulin, A. "Le rire logique: Usages de *geloion* chez Aristote." In Desclos, *Le rire des Grecs*, 319-31.
- Joël, K. *Der echte und der Xenophontische Sokrates*. 2 vols. Berlin: Gaertner, 1893-1901.
- Johnson, C.D. "Socrates' Political Philosophy." In Bussanich and Smith, *Bloomsbury Companion to Socrates*, 233-56.
- Johnson, D.M. "Xenophon at His Most Socratic (*Mem.* 4.2)." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 29 (2005): 39-73.
- . "Aristippus at the Crossroads: The Politics of Pleasure in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*." *Polis* 26.2 (2009): 200-218.
- . "Strauss on Xenophon." In Hobden and Tuplin, *Xenophon*, 123-60.
- . "Xenophon's *Apology* and *Memorabilia*." In Flower, *Cambridge Companion to Xenophon*, 119-31.
- . "From Generals to Gluttony: *Memorabilia* Book 3." In A. Stavru and F. de Luise, eds., *Socratic Dialogue*. Milan: Limina Mentis, forthcoming.

- Jones, C.P. *Culture and Society in Lucian*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.
- Judson, L., and V. Karasmanis, eds. *Remembering Socrates*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Kahn, C. "Aeschines on Socratic Eros." In Vander Waerdt, *Socratic Movement*, 87-106.
- . *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Kamtekar, R. "The Politics of Plato's Socrates." In Ahbel Rappe and Kamtekar, *Companion to Socrates*, 214-27.
- Kidd, S. "The Meaning of *bōmolokhos* in Classical Attic." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 142.2 (2012): 239-55.
- Kindstrand, J.F. *Bion of Borysthenes: A Collection of the Fragments with Introduction and Commentary*. Stockholm: Uppsala, 1976.
- Kirk, G.S. *The Iliad: A Commentary*. Vol 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Klausen, J. *The Cartoons That Shook the World*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Kleve, K. "Anti-Dover or Socrates in the *Clouds*." *Symbolae Osloenses* 58 (1983): 23-37.
- . "Scurra Atticus: The Epicurean View of Socrates." In G. Macchiaroli, ed., *ΣΥΖΗΤΗΣΙΣ: Studi sull' Epicureismo greco e romano offerti a Marcello Gigante*, 227-51. Naples: Biblioteca della Parola del Passato, 1983.
- Klosko, G. "The 'Straussian' Interpretation of Plato's *Republic*." *History of Political Thought* 7.2 (1986): 275-93.
- . *The Development of Plato's Political Theory*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Knox, B.M.W. "The *Ajax* of Sophocles." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 65 (1961): 1-37.
- Konstan, D. *Greek Comedy and Ideology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- . *Friendship in the Classical World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- . "Reciprocity and Friendship." In C. Gill, N. Postlethwaite, and R. Seaford, eds., *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece*, 279-302. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- . "Socrates in Aristophanes' *Clouds*." In Morrison, *Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, 75-90.
- Konstan, D., et. al. *Philodemus on Frank Criticism: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998.
- Kraut, R. *Socrates and the State*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.

- Kroeker, R. "Xenophon as a Critic of the Athenian Democracy." *History of Political Thought* 30.2 (2009): 197-228.
- Kuhn, H. "The True Tragedy: On the Relationship between Greek Tragedy and Plato, I." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 52 (1941): 1-40.
- . "The True Tragedy: On the Relationship between Greek Tragedy and Plato, II." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 53 (1942): 37-88.
- Kurke, L. *Aesopic Conversations: Popular Tradition, Cultural Dialogue, and the Invention of Greek Prose*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011.
- Landauer, M. "Democratic Theory and the Athenian Public Sphere." *Polis* 33 (2016): 31-51.
- Lane, M. "The Evolution of *Eirōneia* in Classical Greek Texts: Why Socratic *Eirōneia* Is Not Socratic Irony." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 31 (2006): 49-83.
- . "Reconsidering Socratic Irony." In Morrison, *Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, 237-59.
- Lear, J. *A Case for Irony*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.
- Livingstone, N. *A Commentary on Isocrates' "Busiris"*. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- Lombardini, J. "Comic Authority in Aristophanes' *Knights*." *Polis* 29.1 (2012): 130-49.
- . "Civic Laughter: Aristotle and the Political Virtue of Humor." *Political Theory* 41.2 (2013): 203-30.
- . "Seeing Democracy in the *Clouds*." In B.-P. Frost and J. Mhire, eds., *The Political Theory of Aristophanes*, 13-27. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014.
- Long, A.A. "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy." *Classical Quarterly* 38.1 (1988): 150-71.
- . "The Socratic Tradition: Diogenes, Crates, and Hellenistic Ethics." In Bracht Branham and Goulet-Cazé, *Cynics*, 28-46.
- . "Plato's Apologies and Socrates in the *Theaetetus*." In J. Gentzler, ed., *Method in Ancient Philosophy*, 113-36. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- . *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Luccioni, J. *Les idées politiques et sociales de Xénophon*. Paris: Ophrys, 1949.
- . *Xénophon et le socratisme*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953.
- MacDowell, D.M. "Hybris in Athens." *Greece & Rome*, 2nd ser., 23.1 (1976): 14-31.
- . *The Law in Classical Athens*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978.
- . "The Meaning of ἀλαζών." In Craik, *Owls to Athens*, 287-92.
- Maier, H. *Sokrates: Sein Werk und seine geschichtliche Stellung*. Tübingen: Paul Siebeck, 1913.
- Major, W. "Aristophanes and 'Alazoneia': Laughing at the Parabasis of the 'Clouds.'" *Classical World* 99.2 (2006): 131-44.

- Makowski, F. "Où est Socrate? L'aporie de l'atopie chez Platon." *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 12.2 (1994): 131-52.
- Mansbridge, J. "Everyday Talk in the Deliberative System." In S. Macedo, ed., *Deliberative Politics: Essays on Democracy and Disagreement*, 211-39. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Mara, G. *Socrates' Discursive Democracy: Logos and Ergon in Platonic Political Philosophy*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.
- . *The Civic Conversations of Thucydides and Plato*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.
- Markovits, E. *The Politics of Sincerity: Plato, Frank Speech, and Democratic Judgment*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008.
- Martin, R.P. *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the "Iliad."* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- . "The Scythian Accent: Anacharsis and the Cynics." In Bracht Branham and Goulet-Cazé, *Cynics*, 136-55.
- May, J.M., and J. Wisse, trans. *Cicero, On the Ideal Orator*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Mayhew, R., ed. and trans. *Aristotle, Problems*. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.
- McCabe, M.M. *Plato and His Predecessors: The Dramatisation of Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- . "Banana Skins and Custard Pies: Plato on Comedy and Self-Knowledge." In J. Dillon and L. Brisson, eds., *Plato's "Philebus": Selected Papers from the Eighth Symposium Platonicum*, 194-203. Sankt Augustin: Akademia, 2010.
- McCoy, M. *Plato on the Rhetoric of Philosophers and Sophists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- McGlew, J. *Citizens on Stage: Comedy and Political Culture in the Athenian Democracy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.
- McNamara, C. "Socratic Politics in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*." *Polis* 26.2 (2009): 223-45.
- McPherran, M. *The Religion of Socrates*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996.
- . "Socratic Religion." In Morrison, *Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, 111-37.
- Micalella, D. *I giovani amano il riso: Aspetti della riflessione aristotelica sul comico*. Lecce: Argo, 2004.
- Michelini, A. "ΠΟΛΗ ΑΓΡΟΙΚΙΑ: Rudeness and Irony in Plato's *Gorgias*." *Classical Philology* 93.1 (1998): 50-59.
- . "Socrates Plays the Buffoon: Cautionary Protreptic in 'Euthydemus.'" *American Journal of Philology* 121.4 (2000): 509-35.
- Miller, M. "The Pleasures of the Comic and of Socratic Inquiry: Aporetic Reflections

- on *Philebus* 48A-50B." *Arethusa* 41.2 (2008): 263-89.
- Mitchell, A.G. *Greek Vase-Painting and the Origins of Visual Humor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Moles, J.L. "The Cynics and Politics." In A. Laks and M. Schofield, eds., *Justice and Generosity: Studies in Hellenistic Social and Political Philosophy*, 129-58. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Momigliano, A. *The Development of Greek Biography*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971.
- Monoson, S. *Plato's Democratic Entanglements: Athenian Politics and the Practice of Philosophy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Moore, C. "Socrates and Self-Knowledge in Aristophanes' *Clouds*." *Classical Quarterly* 65.2 (2015): 534-51.
- Morford, M. "Ethopoia and Character-Assassination in the *Conon* of Demosthenes." *Mnemosyne*, 4th ser., 19.3 (1966): 241-48.
- Morreall, J. *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Theory of Humor*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Morrison, D.R. "On Professor Vlastos' Xenophon." *Ancient Philosophy* 7 (1987): 9-22.
- . "Xenophon's Socrates as Teacher." In Vander Waerdt, *Socratic Movement*, 181-208.
- , ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Mossé, C. "How a Political Myth Takes Shape: Solon, 'Founding Father' of Athenian Democracy." In P.J. Rhodes, ed., *Athenian Democracy*, 242-59. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Mueller-Goldingen, C. *Untersuchungen zu Xenophons "Kyropädie"*. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1995.
- Nadon, C. *Xenophon's Prince: Republic and Empire in the "Cyropaedia"*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- Nagy, G. *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.
- Nails, D. *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002.
- Narcy, M. *Le philosophe et son double: Un commentaire de "l'Euthydème" de Platon*. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1984.
- . "Le comique, l'ironie, Socrate." In Desclos, *Le rire des Grecs*, 283-92.
- . "Qu'est-ce que l'ironie socratique?" *Internet Journal of the International Plato Society* 1 (2001). https://digitalis-dsp.uc.pt/bitstream/10316.2/42279/3/Qu'est-ce_que_l'ironie_socratique.pdf?ln=pt-pt.
- . "La meilleure amie de Socrate: Xénophon, *Mémorables*, III 11." *Les Études*

- Philosophiques* 69.2 (2004): 213-34.
- . "Remarks on the First Five Definitions of the Sophist." In Bossi and Robinson, *Plato's "Sophist" Revisited*, 57-70. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013.
- Narcy, M., and A. Tordesillas, eds. *Xénophon et Socrate: Actes du Colloque d'Aix-en-Provence (6-9 novembre 2003)*. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2008.
- Natali, C. "Socrates' Dialectic in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*." In Judson and Karasmanis, *Remembering Socrates*, 3-19.
- Nehamas, A. "Voices of Silence: On Gregory Vlastos' Socrates." *Arion*, 3rd ser., 2.1 (1992): 157-86.
- . *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
- . "Eristic, Antilogic, Sophistic, Dialectic: Plato's Demarcation of Philosophy from Sophistry." In *Virtues of Authenticity*, 108-22. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Nichols, M. *Socrates and the Political Community*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987.
- Nightingale, A. *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Notomi, N. *The Unity of Plato's "Sophist."* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Nussbaum, M. "Aristophanes and Socrates on Learning Practical Wisdom." *Yale Classical Studies* 26 (1980): 43-97.
- . "Commentary on Edmunds." *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 2 (1986): 231-40.
- . *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- . "Stoic Laughter: A Reading of Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*." In S. Bartsch and D. Wray, eds., *Seneca and the Self*, 84-112. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Ober, J. *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- . *The Athenian Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- . *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- . "The Debate over Civic Education in Classical Athens." In Y.L. Too, ed., *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, 175-207. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- . *Athenian Legacies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- . *Democracy and Knowledge: Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.
- . "The Original Meaning of 'Democracy': Capacity to Do Things, Not Majority

- Rule." *Constellations* 15.1 (2008): 3-9.
- . "Democracy's Dignity." *American Political Science Review* 106.4 (2012): 827-46.
- Opsomer, J. *In Search of the Truth: Academic Tendencies in Middle Platonism*. Brussels: Academie voor Wetenschappen, 1998.
- Ostwald, M., trans. *Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics*. New York: Macmillan, 1962.
- Pangle, T. "Socrates in the Context of Xenophon's Political Writings." In Vander Waerdt, *Socratic Movement*, 127-50.
- Parvulescu, A. *Laughter: Notes on a Passion*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010.
- Patzner, A., ed. *Der historische Sokrates*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1987.
- . "Sokrates in den Fragmenten der Attischen Komödie." In A. Bierl and P. v. Möllendorf, eds., *Orchestra, Drama, Mythos, Bühne*, 50-81. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1994.
- Pavlovskis, Z. "Aristotle, Horace, and the Ironic Man." *Classical Philology* 63 (1968): 22-41.
- Post, R. "Religion and Freedom of Speech: Portraits of Muhammad." *Constellations* 14.1 (2007): 72-90.
- Prince, S. "Socrates, Antisthenes, and the Cynics." In Ahbel-Rappe and Kamtekar, *Companion to Socrates*, 75-92.
- . *Antisthenes of Athens: Texts, Translations, and Commentary*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015.
- Raaflaub, K. "Equalities and Inequalities in Athenian Democracy." In J. Ober and C. Hedrick, eds., *Dēmokratia*, 139-74. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Raaflaub, K., J. Ober, and R.W. Wallace, eds. *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.
- Rackham, H. *Cicero, On the Orator*. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942.
- Reeve, C.D.C. *Socrates in the "Apology"*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989.
- . *Practices of Reason: Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics"*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- . "A Study in Violets: Alcibiades in the *Symposium*." In J. Leshner, D. Nails, and F. Sheffield, eds., *Plato's "Symposium": Issues in Interpretation and Reception*, 124-46. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Reydams-Schils, G. "Marcus Aurelius' Social Ethics." In M. van Ackeren and J. Opsomer, eds., *Selbstbetrachtungen und Selbstdarstellungen: Der Philosoph und Kaiser Marc Aurel im interdisziplinären Licht*, 111-32. Wiesbaden: Reichart, 2012.
- Ribbeck, O. "Über den Begriff des εἶρων." *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 31

- (1876): 381-400.
- Riley, M. "The Epicurean Criticism of Socrates." *Phoenix* 34 (1980): 55-68.
- Rist, J.M. "Are You a Stoic? The Case of Marcus Aurelius." In B.F. Meyer and E.P. Sanders, eds., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, 3:23-45. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.
- Robin, L. "Sur une hypothèse récente relative a Socrates." In *La pensée hellénique des origines a Épicure*, 138-76. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1942.
- Robinson, T.M., and L. Brisson, eds. *Plato: Euthydemus, Lysis, Charmides; Proceedings of the V Symposium Platonicum*. Sankt Augustin: Akademie, 2000.
- Roochnik, D. "The Serious Play of Plato's *Euthydemus*." *Interpretation* 18.2 (1991): 211-32.
- Rorty, A.O., ed. *Essays on Aristotle's "Rhetoric"*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Rorty, R. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Rose, P. "Thersites and the Plural Voices of Homer." *Arethusa* 21 (1988): 5-25.
- Rosen, R. "Cratinus' *Pytine* and the Construction of the Comic Self." In D. Harvey and J. Wilkins, eds., *The Rivals of Aristophanes: Studies in Athenian Old Comedy*, 23-39. London: Duckworth, 2000.
- Ross, W.D. *Aristotle, Metaphysics*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924.
- . *Aristotelis Politica*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.
- Rossetti, L. "Ricerche sui 'Dialoghi Socratici' di Fedone e di Euclide." *Hermes* 108.2 (1980): 183-200.
- . "Le ridicule comme arme entre les mains de Socrate et de ses élèves." In Desclos, *Le rire des Grecs*, 253-68.
- . "L'*Eutidemo* di Senofonte: *Memorabili* IV 4 2." In G. Mazzara, ed., *Il Socrate dei dialoghi*, 63-103. Bari: Levante, 2007.
- Rostbøll, C. "Autonomy, Respect, and Arrogance in the Danish Cartoon Controversy." *Political Theory* 37.5 (2009): 623-48.
- . "From the Standpoint of Practical Reason: A Reply to Tønder." *Political Theory* 39.3 (2011): 386-93.
- Rowe, C. "A Reply to John Cooper on the *Magna Moralia*." *American Journal of Philology* 96 (1975): 160-72.
- . "The Good, the Reasonable, and the Laughable in Plato's *Republic*." In S. Jäkel, A. Timonen, and V.M. Rissanen, eds., *Laughter down the Centuries*, 3:45-54. Turku, Finland: Turun Yliopisto, 1997.
- Ruffell, I. "A Total Write-Off: Aristophanes, Cratinus, and the Rhetoric of Comic Competition." *Classical Quarterly* 52.1 (2002): 142-48.
- Rusten, J. *Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War: Book II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

- . *Theophrastus, Characters*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Saxonhouse, A. "Comedy in Callipolis: Animal Imagery in the *Republic*." *American Political Science Review* 72 (1978): 888-901.
- . *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Schleiermacher, F. "Über den Werth des Sokrates als Philosophen." In Patzer, *Der historische Sokrates*, 41-58.
- Schlosser, J. *What Would Socrates Do? Self-Examination, Civic Engagement, and the Politics of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Schofield, M. "Stoic Ethics." In B. Inwood, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, 233-56. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Scholtz, A. "Friends, Lovers, Flatterers: Demophilic Courtship in Aristophanes' *Knights*." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 134.2 (2004): 263-93.
- Scott, J. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Searby, D.M. "Non-Lucian Sources for Demonax." *Symbolae Osloenses* 83 (2008): 120-47.
- Sedley, D. "Philosophical Allegiance in the Greco-Roman World." In M. Griffin and J. Barnes, eds., *Philosophia Togata*, 97-119. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- . "Socratic Irony in the Platonist Commentators." In J. Annas and C. Rowe, eds., *New Perspectives on Plato, Modern and Ancient*, 37-57. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- . *Plato's Cratylus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- . *The Midwife of Platonism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004.
- . "The Atheist Underground." In V. Harte and M. Lane, eds., *Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy*, 329-48. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Seel, G. "If You Know What Is Best, You Do it: Socratic Intellectualism in Xenophon and Plato." In Judson and Karasmanis, *Remembering Socrates*, 20-49.
- Seery, J. *Political Returns: Irony in Politics and Theory from Plato to the Antinuclear Movement*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990.
- Shields, C.J. "Socrates among the Sceptics." In Vander Waerdt, *Socratic Movement*, 341-66.
- Sidgwick, H. "The Sophists." *Journal of Philology* 4 (1872): 288-307.
- Sidwell, K. "Poetic Rivalry and the Caricature of Comic Poets: Cratinus' *Pytine* and Aristophanes' *Wasps*." In A. Griffiths, ed., *Stage Directions: Essays in Ancient Drama in Honor of E.W. Handley*, 56-80. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1995.
- . *Aristophanes the Democrat: The Politics of Satirical Comedy during the*

- Peloponnesian War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Skinner, Q. "Hobbes and the Classical Theory of Laughter." In *Visions of Politics*, 3:142-76. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Slater, N. *Spectator Politics: Metatheatre and Performance in Aristophanes*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.
- Sprague, R.K. *Plato's Use of Fallacy*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1962.
- . "The *Euthydemus* Revisited." In Robinson and Brisson, *Plato*, 3-19.
- Stern, P. *Knowledge and Politics in Plato's "Theaetetus"*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Storey, I.C. *Eupolis: Poet of Old Comedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- . *The Fragments of Old Comedy*. 3 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.
- Stott, A. *Comedy*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Stout, J. *Democracy and Tradition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Strauss, L. "The Spirit of Sparta, or the Taste of Xenophon." *Social Research* 6 (1936): 502-36.
- . *Socrates and Aristophanes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.
- . *Xenophon's Socrates*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972.
- . "The Problem of Socrates: Five Lectures." In T.L. Pangle, ed., *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*, 103-83. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- . *Xenophon's Socratic Discourse*. South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 1989.
- Striker, G. "Plato's Socrates and the Stoics." In Vander Waerdt, *Socratic Movement*, 241-51.
- Stuurman, S. "The Voice of Thersites: Reflections on the Origins of the Idea of Equality." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65.2 (2004): 171-89.
- Tamiolaki, M. "Virtue and Leadership in Xenophon: Ideal Leaders or Ideal Losers?" In Hobden and Tuplin, *Xenophon*, 563-89.
- . "A Citizen as a Slave of the State? Oligarchic Perceptions of Democracy in Xenophon." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 53 (2013): 31-50.
- . "Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*: Tentative Answers to an Enigma." In Flower, *Cambridge Companion to Xenophon*, 174-94.
- Taplin, O. "Tragedy and Tragedy." *Classical Quarterly* 33 (1983): 331-33.
- Tarnopolsky, C. *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants: Plato's "Gorgias" and the Politics of Shame*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Tarrant, H. "Midwifery and the *Clouds*." *Classical Quarterly* 38.1 (1988): 116-22.
- . "*Clouds* I: Steps toward Reconstruction." *Arctos* 25 (1991): 157-81.
- Tatum, J. *Xenophon's Imperial Fiction: On the Education of Cyrus*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Taylor, A.E. *Varia Socratica*. Oxford: James Parker, 1911.

- Taylor, C.C.W. "Socrates the Sophist." In Judson and Karasmanis, *Remembering Socrates*, 157-68.
- Tessitore, A. "Courage and Comedy in Plato's *Laches*." *Journal of Politics* 56.1 (1994): 115-33.
- . *Reading Aristotle's "Ethics": Virtue, Rhetoric, and Political Philosophy*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.
- Thalman, W.G. "Thersites: Comedy, Scapegoats, and Heroic Ideology in the *Iliad*." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 118 (1988): 1-28.
- Thein, K. "Entre ἄνοια et ἄγνοια: La nature humaine et la comédie dans les dialogues de Platon." In Desclos, *Le rire des grecs*, 169-80.
- Todd, S.C. "Lysias against Nikomachos: The Fate of the Expert in Athenian Law." In L. Foxhall and A.D.E. Lewis, eds., *Greek Law in Its Political Setting: Justifications Not Justice*, 101-31. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
- Tomin, J. "Socratic Gymnasium in the *Clouds*." *Symbolae Osloenses* 62 (1987): 25-32.
- . "Socratic Midwifery." *Classical Quarterly* 37.1 (1987): 97-102.
- Tønder, L. "Humility, Arrogance, and the Limitations of Kantian Autonomy: A Response to Rostbøll." *Political Theory* 39.3 (2011): 378-85.
- . *Tolerance: A Sensorial Orientation to Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Too, Y.L. "Legal Instruction in Classical Athens." In Y.L. Too, ed., *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, 111-32. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- Trevett, J., ed. and trans. *Demosthenes, Speeches 1-17*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011.
- Tsouana, V. *The Ethics of Philodemus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Tsouana McKirihan, V. "The Socratic Origins of the Cynics and Cyrenaics." In Vander Waerdt, *Socratic Movement*, 367-91.
- Tuplin, C., ed. *Xenophon and His World*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2004.
- Vander Waerdt, P.A. "Socratic Justice and Self-Sufficiency: The Story of the Delphic Oracle in Xenophon's *Apology of Socrates*." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 11 (1993): 1-48.
- . "Socrates in the *Clouds*." In Vander Waerdt, *Socratic Movement*, 48-86.
- , ed. *The Socratic Movement*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Vasiliou, I. "Conditional Irony in the Socratic Dialogues." *Classical Quarterly* 49.2 (1999): 456-72.
- . "Socrates' Reverse Irony." *Classical Quarterly* 52.1 (2002): 220-30.
- . "Socratic Irony." In Bussanich and Smith, *Bloomsbury Companion to Socrates*, 20-33.
- Villa, D. *Socratic Citizenship*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Vlastos, G. "Introduction: The Paradox of Socrates." In G. Vlastos, ed., *The*

- Philosophy of Socrates*, 1-21. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971.
- . "The Historical Socrates and Athenian Democracy." *Political Theory* 11.4 (1983): 495-516.
- . "Socratic Irony." *Classical Quarterly* 37.1 (1987): 79-96.
- . *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- Wallach, J. "Socratic Citizenship." *History of Political Thought* 9.3 (1988): 393-413.
- Walzer, R.R., and J.M. Mingay. *Aristotelis Ethica Eudemia*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Waterfield, R. "Xenophon's Socratic Mission." In C. Tuplin, ed., *Xenophon and His World*, 79-113. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2004.
- . "The Quest for the Historical Socrates." In Bussanich and Smith, *Bloomsbury Companion to Socrates*, 1-19.
- Watson, W. *The Lost Second Book of Aristotle's "Poetics"*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.
- Weber, M. *Economy and Society*. Ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich. 2 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.
- Wehrli, F. *Die Schule des Aristoteles: Texte und Kommentar*. Vol. 2, *Aristoxenos*. Basel: Schwabe, 1945.
- . *Die Schule des Aristoteles: Texte und Kommentar*. Vol. 6, *Lykon und Ariston von Keos*. Basel: Schwabe, 1952.
- White, S. *The Ethos of a Late-Modern Citizen*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- White, S.A. "Thrasymachus the Diplomat." *Classical Philology* 90.4 (1995): 307-27.
- Wildberg, C. "Socrates and Euripides." In Ahbel-Rappe and Kamtekar, *Companion to Socrates*, 21-35.
- Wilson, P. "Demosthenes 21 (*Against Meidias*): Democratic Abuse." *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 37 (1991): 164-95.
- Winnington-Ingram, R.P. *Sophocles: An Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Wittwer, R. "Aspasian Lemmatology." In Alberti and Sharples, *Aspasius*, 51-84.
- Wohl, V. *Love among the Ruins: The Erotics of Democracy in Classical Athens*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- . "Dirty Dancing: Xenophon's *Symposium*." In P. Murray and P. Wilson, eds., *Music and the Muses*, 337-63. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- . *Law's Cosmos: Juridical Discourse in Athenian Forensic Oratory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Wolfsdorf, P. "The Irony of Socrates." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65.2 (2007): 176-87.

- . “EIPΩNEIA in Aristophanes and Plato.” *Classical Quarterly* 58.2 (2008): 666–72.
- Wolin, S. *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*. Rev. and exp. ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Woodbury, L. “Strepsiades’ Understanding: Five Notes on the ‘Clouds.’” *Phoenix* 34.2 (1980): 108–27.
- Worman, N. *Abusive Mouths in Classical Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Yack, B. “Rhetoric and Public Reasoning: An Aristotelian Understanding of Political Deliberation.” *Political Theory* 34.4 (2006): 417–38.
- Zumbrunnen, J. “Elite Domination and the Clever Citizen: Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* and *Knights*.” *Political Theory* 32.5 (2004): 656–77.
- . *Aristophanic Comedy and the Challenge of Democratic Citizenship*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2012.

INDEX

- abuse (*loidoria*), [41](#); accusations against Xenophontic Socrates, [93-94](#), [96](#); in *Against Konon*, [5-6](#); in *eirōneia*, [56](#); joking as, [143](#); in *Knights*, [42-43](#); in Socratic humor, [40-41](#); in Socratic mockery, [50](#), [93-94](#); in *Wasps*, [41](#); by Xenophontic Socrates, [96](#), [126](#). See also *hubris*; mockery
- Academic Skeptics, on Socrates, [165](#)
- aischrologia* (shameful speech): class overtones of, [41](#); *parrhēsia* and, [41-42](#); in Socratic humor, [41](#)
- Ajax (Sophocles), inadaptability of, [153-54](#)
- akrasia* (weakness of will): decision-making and, [133](#); in *Nicomachean Ethics*, [132](#); Xenophon on, [9](#)
- alazoneia* (boastfulness), *eirōneia* as, [131](#), [134](#), [135](#), [136](#), [137](#), [155](#)
- Alcibiades: depiction in *Symposium*, [68-71](#); Socrates' influence on, [12](#)
- Allen, Danielle, [19](#), [32](#); on friendliness, [140](#)
- ambition, Socrates' mockery of, [116-19](#)
- Anytus, [12](#); in *Meno*, [82-83](#), [84](#); prosecution speech of, [13-14](#), [46](#)
- aretē* (virtue), Aristotle on, [133](#). See also social virtue
- Aristo of Ceos (Peripatetic): on *eirōneia*, [131](#), [134](#), [135](#); on vice, [165](#)
- Aristophanes: claims to superiority, [43-44](#); claims to authority, [44](#). See also comedy, Aristophanic; Socrates, Aristophanic
- Clouds*: abstract thought in, [34](#); *aischrologia* in, [41-42](#); democratic anxiety in, [28-29](#); democratic authority in, [20](#); education in, [20](#), [29-30](#), [49](#); the laughable in, [39-](#)

[40](#); laughter in, [28-30](#); mockery in, [10](#), [30](#), [85-86](#), [180](#), [184](#); parabasis of, [42](#), [43-44](#); *phrontistērion* of, [2](#), [29](#), [33-37](#), [56](#); scientific analogy in, [36-37](#), [39-40](#); Socratic humor in, [11](#), [19-22](#), [187](#); traditional authority in, [32](#); Weaker Argument in, [29](#), [34-35](#); Xenophon's use of, [167](#)

—*Knights*: abusive speech in, [42-43](#); ancestry in, [31](#); boastfulness in, [44](#); Cratinus in, [42-43](#); mockery in, [41](#); parabasis of, [42](#), [43](#); scholiast on, [43](#)

—*Wasps*, abuse in, [41](#)

Aristotle: conception of *polis*, [154-55](#); engagement with Socrates, [24](#), [129](#), [132-37](#); ethics of, [130](#); on social virtues, [132](#); on vice-virtue counterparts, [134-35](#). See also *eirōneia*, Aristotelian; *eutrapelia*, Aristotelian; Socrates, Aristotelian

—*Eudemian Ethics*: *dustrapelia* in, [154](#); *eutrapelia* in, [138](#), [148](#), [185](#), [187](#); *phronēsis* in, [133](#)

—*Magna Moralia*, *eutrapelia* in, [148](#), [187](#)

—*Nicomachean Ethics*: on *akrasia*, [132](#); avoidance of pain in, [138](#); boors in, [154](#); decision-making in, [133](#); *eirōneia* in, [24](#), [53-58](#), [130](#), [134](#), [136](#), [138](#); on *endoxa*, [132](#), [136](#); *eutrapelia* in, [148](#); joking in, [129](#), [138](#); laughter in, [129](#), [138](#); magnanimity and, [136](#)

—*Poetics*, the laughable in, [139](#), [143](#)

—*Politics*, on *stasis*, [143](#)

—*Posterior Analytics*, magnanimity in, [130](#)

—*Rhetoric*: educated *hubris* in, [132](#); *eirōneia* in, [63](#), [139-40](#); *eutrapelia* in, [142-43](#); *hubris* in, [144](#); the laughable in, [138-39](#)

Aristoxenus (Peripatetic): life of Socrates, [131](#); on Socrates' *hubris*, [13](#)

asceticism, Christian, [176](#)

Aspasia (Peripatetic), on *eirōneia*, [53-56](#), [130](#), [134](#), [176](#)

Assembly, Athenian: participation in, [30-31](#), [88-89](#)

Athenians: character traits of, [151](#); class distinctions among, [179-80](#); as *eirōnes*, [60](#); isonomic life of, [152](#); jurors, [89](#), [90](#); use of mockery, [113](#); versatility of, [151-52](#). See also citizens, Athenian; *dēmos*; elites, Athenian; *thetes*

authority, democratic: accountability in, [33](#); citizens' exercise of, [33](#); in Classical Athens, [30-34](#); cultural norms of, [32-33](#); norms of, [28](#); Protagoras on, [28](#); Socratic mockery and, [37-40](#), [85](#); threats to, [29](#), [86](#); traditional authority and, [29](#)

autonomy, in formation of beliefs, [162](#)

Balot, Ryan, [151](#)

Beard, Mary: on ancient laughter, [4](#), [179](#)

belief: autonomy in, [162](#); false, [79](#), [80](#)

belief-mimicry (*doxomimētikēn*), [77](#)

blasphēmia (blasphemy), [41](#)

boorishness (*agroikia*): *eutrapelia* and, [58](#); in *Nicomachean Ethics*, [154](#)

boors (*agroikoi*), disgust at laughter, [138](#)

Brown, Eric, [163](#)
buffoonery (*bōmolochia*): *eirōneia* and, [63](#); *eutrapelia* and, [58](#); versus wit, [148](#)
buffoons (*bōmolochoi*), excessive laughter of, [137-38](#)

Cicero, on Socratic *ironia*, [164](#)
citizens, agency of, [141](#), [145](#)
citizens, Athenian: exercise of democratic authority, [33](#); jurors, [89](#), [90](#); prosecutors, [32](#); self-care among, [89](#); Socrates' education of, [29](#), [34-37](#)
civic institutions, Athenian: education of young, [91](#)
Cleisthenes, [31](#)
Cleon, [31](#), [33](#)
Colotes (Epicurean), attack on Socrates, [164](#)
comedy, Aristophanic: comic leveling in, [45](#); mockery in, [30](#), [41](#), [46](#); Socratic mockery and, [40-46](#). *See also* Aristophanes; Socrates, Aristophanic
Connor, W.R., [31](#)
constitution, Athenian, [152](#); Assembly in, [30](#)
Cooper, John, [146](#)
Crates, in *Knights*, [42](#)
Cratinus: boastfulness in, [44](#); in *Knights*, [42](#); *Pytine*, [43](#), [44](#)
Critias, Socrates' influence on, [12](#)
Cynics: *askēsis* of, [176](#); humor of, [24](#), [25](#), [158](#), [166-70](#); indifference to social conventions, [176](#); laughter at, [175-76](#), [177-78](#), [183](#), [186](#); living according to nature, [172-75](#), [176](#), [178](#), [183](#); observation of humanity, [174](#); *parrhēsia* of, [172](#), [177](#); rejection of Socratic *eirōneia*, [170-71](#), [176-77](#); rejection of Socratic humor, [170](#); use of mockery, [175](#). *See also* humor, Cynic; philosophy, Cynic

decision-making: by Athenian elites, [90](#); in democracy, [89-90](#), [91](#), [179](#); by *dēmos*, [28](#), [32](#), [183](#); in *Protagoras*, [88](#); *technē* for, [40](#); universal and particular, [133](#)
Delphic oracle: Platonic Socrates on, [22](#), [65-66](#), [87](#), [181](#); Xenophontic Socrates on, [96](#)
democracy: adaptability in, [154](#); dignity in, [7-8](#); political agency in, [8](#)
democracy, Athenian: accountability in, [85](#); anxiety over, [4](#), [7](#), [28-29](#), [127](#), [164](#), [179](#), [183-84](#); clever speaking in, [120-21](#); consensus in, [188](#); constitution of, [30](#), [152](#); disorder in, [153](#); educational value of, [90](#); elite participation in, [31](#), [90](#); equality in, [22](#), [180](#), [183](#); *hubris* in, [5-6](#); humor in, [7](#), [49](#), [185](#); laughter in, [153](#), [185](#); mockery in, [6-7](#); openness in, [188](#); participatory, [3](#), [30-31](#), [40](#), [128](#); Platonic Socrates on, [28](#), [152](#), [188](#); Plato's rejectionist critique of, [188](#); political equality in, [89](#); political power in, [86](#); political *technē* in, [28](#), [40](#); Socrates' attitude towards, [3](#), [14](#); Socrates' threat to, [19-20](#), [95](#); Socratic humor and, [4](#), [25](#), [164](#), [183-84](#), [187](#), [190](#); Socratic intellectualism and, [19](#), [28-29](#), [40](#), [179](#); teaching of, [152-53](#); Xenophontic Socrates' usefulness to, [124](#)

democratic ideology, Athenian: decision-making process of, [89-90](#), [91](#), [179](#); equality in, [180](#); mockery of, [46](#)

Demonax (philosopher): Lucian's depiction of, [170-72](#); prosecution by Athenians, [171](#); use of Socratic philosophy, [170](#)

dēmos: authority to advise, [121](#); collective wisdom of, [3](#), [90](#), [183](#), [187](#); participation in democracy, [128](#); Xenophontic Socrates' friendship for, [94](#), [99-100](#)

Demosthenes: elite attributes of, [45](#); use of *eirōneia*, [21](#)

—*Against Konon*: *eutrapelia* in, [24](#), [132](#); *hubris* in, [5-7](#); hubristic laughter in, [6-7](#), [145](#), [185](#); mockery in, [5-7](#); verbal abuse in, [5-6](#)

—*Against Meidias*, [44-45](#)

—*First Philippic*, *eirōneia* in, [56](#), [57](#), [58-59](#), [60](#), [63](#)

dialectic, Socratic: sophistic eristic and, [15](#)

Diogenes (Cynic): *parrhēsia* of, [173](#); resistance to laughter, [175](#), [178](#), [186](#), [187](#); simplification of desire, [174-75](#)

Diogenes Laertius: *Life of Socrates*, [3](#); on Xenophontic Socrates, [159](#)

Diogenes of Sinope, [169](#); humor in, [24](#); kingly speech of, [158](#)

dissimulation: concerning *ta phanera*, [136](#); Stoics on, [160](#)

Dorion, Louis-André, [9-10](#), [12](#); on *Euthydemus*, [18](#); on Peripatetics, [131](#); on Socratic irony, [109](#)

dustrapelia, [150](#); political aspects of, [154](#); of Sophocles' Ajax, [153-54](#)

Edmunds, Lowell, [135](#)

education: in Aristophanes, [20](#), [29-30](#), [49](#); of Athenian citizens, [29](#), [34-37](#); in Athenian civic institutions, [91](#); of Athenian elites, [153](#); by joking, [187](#); Platonic Socrates' expertise in, [89](#); self-, [119-21](#); Xenophontic Socrates on, [119-21](#)

eirōneia: abusive, [56](#); arrogance in, [165](#); Aspasius on, [53-56](#), [130](#), [134](#); association with sophistry, [21](#); as Attic trait, [172](#); buffoonery and, [63](#), [139](#); as deceptive pretense, [59](#); in Demosthenes, [21](#), [56](#), [57](#), [58-59](#), [60](#), [63](#); in evasion of responsibility, [59-60](#); gelastic practices of, [156](#); humor and, [56-58](#); humorous and nonhumorous forms, [58](#), [59-60](#); imitation in, [77-81](#); insincerity in, [60](#), [74](#); as ironic mockery, [55-56](#); irony and, [56-63](#); as jesting, [58](#), [60-61](#); versus *katagelaō*, [102](#); in Lucian, [171-72](#); Marcus Aurelius on, [160](#), [161](#), [162](#); negative assessment of, [176](#); as negative trait, [159-60](#); pejorative connotation of, [56](#), [102](#); in Platonic corpus, [20-21](#), [82](#); sarcasm in, [162](#); as solipsistic irony, [52-53](#), [55](#), [56](#), [62-63](#), [82](#), [162](#); Stoic view of, [159-64](#), [176](#), [177](#); in superior/inferior relations, [161](#); as vice, [24](#), [53-54](#), [58](#); vicious and nonvicious, [54](#), [182](#); in Xenophon, [101](#), [102](#). *See also* dissimulation

eirōneia, Aristotelian, [11](#), [63](#); acceptable practice of, [137](#); *alazoneia* and, [134](#), [135](#), [136](#), [137](#), [155](#); base and cultivated, [134](#); boastful, [131](#), [134](#), [135](#), [136](#), [137](#); as contempt, [142](#); *eutrapelia* and, [131-32](#), [137-38](#), [139](#); forms of irony in, [162](#); insincerity in, [130](#); magnanimity and, [132-37](#), [142](#), [155](#), [182](#); as mode of joking,

[139](#), [142](#); moderate use of, [135-36](#), [142](#); in *Nicomachean Ethics*, [24](#), [53-58](#), [130](#), [134](#), [136](#); nonvicious, [137](#); power in, [182](#); social interactions in, [140](#); and Socratic *eirōneia*, [129-30](#), [131](#), [134](#), [155](#); superiority in, [137](#), [155](#); truthfulness in, [138](#), [182](#); types of, [134-35](#); unblameworthy, [134](#), [135](#); as vice, [132](#), [136](#), [155](#)

eirōneia, Socratic, [11](#), [21-22](#), [46](#); as *alazoneia*, [131](#); ambiguity in, [77](#); and Aristotelian *eirōneia*, [129-30](#), [131](#), [134](#), [155](#); association with sophistry, [76-77](#); as atheistic, [63-67](#); concealment in, [62](#); concerning justice, [72](#), [86](#); Cynic rejection of, [170-71](#), [176-77](#); Epicurean pedagogy and, [165-66](#); Epicurus on, [164-66](#), [176](#); Hellenistic debates over, [176](#); in Hellenistic era, [55](#); in humor, [21](#), [22](#); irony in, [67](#); lack of wisdom in, [72-73](#); magnanimity in, [130](#), [131-32](#); maintenance of superiority through, [91](#); in *Meno*, [83](#); moderate, [136](#); nature and purpose of, [76](#), [77](#); in Plato, [20-21](#), [47-92](#), [187](#); in Plato's *Symposium*, [68-71](#); politics of, [85-92](#); positive practice of, [136](#), [176](#); practical dimensions of, [135](#); as practical joke, [62](#); praiseworthy, [54](#); as pretense, [86](#); during Second Sophistic, [171](#); Socrates' interlocutors and, [67-77](#); Socratic irony and, [82-85](#); as solipsistic irony, [122](#); in the *Sophist*, [77-81](#); Thrasymachus' accusations of, [57](#); as trickery, [73](#); unreliable witnesses to, [76](#)

eirōnes (ironists): *alazones*, [136](#); Aristotle on, [134](#), [135](#), [162](#); denial of *ta endoxa*, [136](#); *eutrapeloi* and, [185](#); possession of *endoxa*, [135](#); reputable qualities of, [135](#); self-deprecating humor of, [186](#); Socrates as, [52](#), [53-56](#), [63-65](#), [67-77](#), [81](#), [122](#)

elenchus, Socratic, [104-5](#), [158](#); in Plato, [16](#), [23](#), [105](#), [122](#), [169](#); spectators of, [16-17](#); in Xenophon, [107](#), [169](#). *See also* refutation

Eleusinian Mysteries, [157](#)

elites, Athenian: advice to *dēmos*, [31](#), [183](#); authority of, [31](#); check on, [32](#); *dēmos*' need for, [45](#); education of, [153](#); political decisions by, [90](#)

enkrateia (self-mastery): in Socratic literature, [9-10](#); Xenophonic Socrates on, [9-10](#), [123-24](#)

Epictetus: on *elenchus*, [158](#); on Socrates, [55](#); Socratic quotes of, [159](#); on teaching, [157](#); use of irony, [163-64](#); use of mockery, [164](#). Works: *Discourses*, [162](#); *Encheiridion*, [159](#)

Epicureans: humor of, [158](#); view of *parrhēsia*, [177](#)

Epicurus, on Socratic *eirōneia*, [164-66](#), [176](#)

epistēmē (scientific knowledge), Aristotle on, [133](#)

Euben, Peter, [51](#)

Eupolis, *Flatterers*, [47](#)

Euripides, *Antiope*, [74](#)

eutrapelia (wittiness): in classical period, [24](#); in Demosthenes, [24](#), [132](#); etymology of, [186-87](#); jokes against self in, [148](#); in *Republic*, [152-53](#), [154](#); social virtue of, [182](#); Thucydides on, [150](#), [151](#). *See also* wittiness

eutrapelia, Aristotelian, [11](#), [24](#), [58](#), [128](#), [185](#); agency in, [141](#); boorishness and, [58](#);

buffoonery and, [58](#); civic friendship and, [139-42](#); cultivation of, [146-50](#);
democratic potential of, [156](#); *dustrapelia* and, [150](#); as educated *hubris*, [142-46](#),
[184-85](#); egalitarianism in, [155](#); *eirōneia* and, [131-32](#), [137-38](#), [139](#); endurance in,
[186](#); gelastic aspects of, [132](#), [156](#); in laughter, [142-43](#); pain caused by, [147](#);
political dimensions of, [131](#), [132](#), [150-55](#); in political discourse, [185](#); reciprocity
in, [24](#), [182](#); social practice of, [137](#); Socratic humor and, [128](#), [155](#); types of, [148](#)
eutrapeloi: *eirōnes* and, [185](#); laughter of, [138](#); pain caused by, [147](#); turning by
laughter, [187](#); versatility of, [150](#), [151-52](#), [153](#), [187](#)
Evagoras of Cyprus, *hubris* of, [144](#)

Ferrari, G.R.F., [55](#)

Foucault, Michel: on *askēsis*, [176](#)

friendliness: Aristotelian, [142](#), [182](#); friendship and, [140-41](#); pleasure and pain in,
[140](#), [147](#); political dimensions of, [142](#); social virtue of, [139](#), [140](#), [182](#)

friendship: conflict-prone, [149](#); for *dēmos*, [94](#), [99-100](#); *eutrapelia* and, [139-42](#);
friendliness and, [140-41](#); goodwill in, [148-49](#); in human flourishing, [146-47](#);
justice and, [140-41](#); laughter in, [146](#), [149-50](#); in *Memorabilia*, [107-9](#), [114](#);
mockery in, [147](#); mutually recognized, [149](#); rebukes in, [147](#); self-knowledge
through, [146-47](#); taking of jokes in, [147](#), [148](#); utility, [149](#); virtue, [147](#), [149](#)

gods: Platonic Socrates on, [66](#); presence among men, [78](#); self-knowledge of, [146-47](#)
the good, Form of, [49](#)

goodwill: in friendship, [148-49](#); mutual recognition of, [149](#)

Gorgias, sophistry of, [78](#)

Halliwell, Stephen: on ancient laughter, [4](#), [12](#)

Halperin, David: on *hubris*, [5](#)

Hansen, M.H., [30](#)

happiness, Stoic, [161](#)

Heliastic oath, Athenian jurors', [89](#)

Herodotus, on *hubris*, [144](#)

Hipparchus (brother of Hippias), *hubris* of, [144](#)

Hippias, sophistry of, [78](#)

Homer, *Iliad*: chastisement in, [93-95](#); mockery in, [94-95](#)

hubris: in *Against Konon*, [5-7](#); anger and, [144](#); in crimes of assault, [39](#), [143](#);

disrespect through, [6](#); educated, [132](#), [142-46](#), [184-85](#); laughter in, [132](#), [144-45](#),
[185](#); monarch's, [144](#); political dangers of, [144](#); *stasis* and, [143-44](#); women's, [144](#)
humor: in Athenian democracy, [7](#), [49](#), [185](#); Athenian norms for, [7](#); *eirōneia* and, [56-](#)
[58](#); Epicurean, [158](#); ethics of, [24](#), [128](#); legitimate expression of, [7](#); politics of, [4-8](#),
[24](#), [128](#), [179](#); power and, [8](#), [24](#), [85](#), [179](#), [182](#); relief theory of, [4](#); self-deprecating,
[186](#); social contexts of, [7](#), [8](#), [179](#); sophists', [87](#); Stoic, [158](#); in student-teacher

relationships, [158](#); superiority in, [4](#); Xenophon's interest in, [97-99](#). *See also* joking; laughter

humor, Cynic, [25](#); contesting of social power, [177-78](#), [183](#); conventionality in, [174-75](#); and Cynic philosophy, [170](#), [172-76](#); self-cultivation and, [25](#); and Socratic humor, [158](#), [166-70](#); toleration in, [186](#)

humor, Socratic: abusive, [40-41](#); *aischrologia* in, [41](#); ambiguity concerning, [12-13](#); among Socrates' successors, [170](#); antidemocratic implications of, [3](#), [52](#), [184](#); Aristotelian *eutrapelia* and, [128](#), [155](#); in Athenian democracy, [4](#), [25](#), [164](#), [183-84](#), [187](#), [190](#); centrality of, [10](#); classical sources for, [4](#), [8](#), [9](#), [11-12](#); in *Clouds*, [11](#), [19-22](#), [187](#); concerning inferiority, [184](#); as contested practice, [3-4](#), [183](#); and Cynic humor, [158](#), [166-70](#); democratic anxiety concerning, [4](#), [164](#), [183-84](#), [187](#); *eirōneia* in, [21](#), [22](#); in engagement with interlocutors, [10](#); ethics of, [11-12](#); in *Euthydemus*, [18](#), [62](#), [169-70](#); Hellenistic, [24](#), [156](#); hierarchical relationships in, [127](#), [184](#); historical debate over, [8-9](#), [12-19](#), [183](#), [187](#), [190](#); leadership and, [11](#); legacy of, [11](#), [12](#), [170](#), [177](#); mockery in, [1-3](#); nature and purpose of, [3](#), [14](#), [24](#); pedagogical purposes of, [10](#); in Plato, [10](#), [18](#), [47-51](#), [62](#), [169-70](#), [180](#), [186-87](#); political purposes of, [8-19](#), [22-23](#), [30](#), [46](#), [52](#), [97-100](#); in relationship to *dēmos*, [100](#); relationship to power, [25](#); in Roman era, [24](#); Stoic depiction of, [158](#), [163](#), [164](#), [177](#); superiority in, [4](#); Xenophon's depiction of, [19](#), [22-23](#), [95-100](#), [126](#), [167](#), [180](#), [187](#). *See also* mockery, Socratic

ignorance, laughable, [17-18](#)

imitation: *eirōnic*, [77-81](#); sophists' use of, [80](#); types of, [77](#)

impiety: eironical, [64](#); parrhesiastical, [64](#)

intellectualism, Socratic: challenges to democracy, [19](#), [28-29](#), [40](#), [179](#)

interlocutors, Socrates': *eirōneia* in, [67-77](#); humor in engagement with, [10](#); irony in engagements with, [81](#), [112-22](#); mockery in engagement with, [112-22](#); mockery suited to, [125](#); Platonic Socrates' engagement with, [49-50](#), [53](#), [54](#), [67-77](#), [81](#), [82-88](#), [91-93](#), [102-3](#), [108](#), [181](#), [184](#); Xenophontic Socrates' engagement, [100](#), [104-5](#), [107-8](#), [110-24](#), [127-28](#), [182](#), [184](#). *See also* questioning, Socratic

irony: *eirōneia* and, [56-63](#); empowerment through, [189](#); Epictetus' use of, [163-64](#); Platonic myth as, [51](#); in postmetaphysical world, [189](#); Quintilian on, [51](#); self-deprecating, [185](#); separation from laughter, [138](#); in student-teacher relationships, [158](#); superiority associated with, [145](#)

irony, Socratic: ambiguity in, [106-7](#); anxieties surrounding, [187](#); as aporetic, [75](#), [188-89](#); authentic life through, [189](#); complexity of, [101](#), [102](#), [163](#); concerning inferiority, [184](#); contemporary democracy and, [190](#); democratic critique of, [189](#); and denial of authority, [86](#); easing of anxieties, [181](#); in *elenchus*, [23](#); in engagements with interlocutors, [81](#), [112-22](#); as indirect speech, [51](#); interlocutors' perception of, [81](#); legacy of, [190](#); in Lucian, [170](#), [171](#); in *Memorabilia*, [103](#), [106](#), [107-22](#), [125](#); nature and purpose of, [51](#), [181](#); as opposite of *eutrapelia*, [155](#);

pedagogical interpretation of, [115](#); in *Phaedrus*, [83](#); in Plato, [2](#), [10](#), [12-13](#), [22](#), [51-53](#), [82](#), [100-101](#), [108](#), [163](#), [172](#); Plato's versus Xenophon's, [101-2](#), [105-7](#), [109](#); politics of, [85-92](#), [188](#); praise in, [109-10](#), [115-16](#), [125](#); reactions to, [84-85](#); reciprocal, [87](#); in *Republic*, [101-2](#); Socrates' accusers and, [88](#); Socrates' denial of, [103](#); and Socratic *eirōneia*, [82-85](#); and Socratic teaching, [122-26](#); Stoicism and, [162](#), [163](#); superiority in, [4](#); victims' awareness of, [115](#); in Xenophon, [23](#), [96-97](#), [100-122](#), [168](#), [182](#)

isēgoria (right to speak), *dēmokratia* and, [30](#)

joking: as abuse, [143](#); in Athenian democracy, [185](#); Cynic use of, [175](#); education by, [187](#); *eirōneia* as, [62](#), [139](#), [142](#); in friendship, [147](#), [148](#); in *Nicomachean Ethics*, [129](#), [138](#); at others, [150](#); at self, [148](#); virtuous, [184](#). *See also* humor; laughter

judicial system, Athenian: cultural norms of, [32](#); participation in, [180](#)

jurors, Athenian: Heliastic oath of, [89](#); at Socrates' trial, [90](#)

justice: corrective, [140-41](#); friendship and, [140-41](#); in *Memorabilia*, [103-4](#), [105](#); natural, [73](#); Socratic *eirōneia* concerning, [72](#), [86](#); Socratic Xenophon on, [168](#)

kakēgoria (slander), [41](#)

kakologia (foul speech), [41](#)

Kleve, Knut, [165](#)

knowledge: appetite and, [133](#); as perception, [79](#); philosophical, [122](#); Platonic Socrates' disavowal of, [68-69](#), [71](#), [105](#), [107](#), [124](#), [136](#), [181](#); Platonic versus Xenophonic, [123](#); practical, [123](#); Stoic concept of, [159](#)

Knox, Bernard, [154](#)

Lane, Melissa: on *eirōneia*, [21](#), [55](#), [57](#), [61-62](#)

laughter: acceptable, [138](#); in *Against Konon*, [6-7](#); in Aristotelian *Problems*, [148](#); in Aristotle's ethical thought, [149](#); in Athenian democracy, [153](#), [185](#); Athenian norms for, [7](#); citizens', [28](#); in *Clouds*, [28-30](#); corrective, [175](#); critical, [147](#); at Cynics, [175-76](#), [177-78](#), [183](#); Diogenes' resistance to, [175](#), [178](#), [186](#), [187](#); education by, [187](#); in education of elites, [153](#); in *Euthydemus*, [15-16](#), [17](#); of *eutrapelia*, [142-43](#); excessive, [137-38](#); expression of envy, [16](#); in friendship, [146](#), [149-50](#); hubristic, [132](#), [144-45](#), [185](#); humiliating, [13](#); as judicial weapon, [143](#); in *Memorabilia*, [121](#); in *Nicomachean Ethics*, [129](#); offense at, [149](#); at oneself, [147](#), [148](#), [184](#); at others, [150](#); at Platonic Socrates, [186](#); Platonic Socrates' engagement with, [2](#), [15-16](#), [28](#), [48-50](#), [153](#); in Plato's *Laws*, [19](#); positive value of, [146](#); power and, [179](#); reasonable and unreasonable, [48](#); at self-ignorance, [16](#), [17-18](#); self-knowledge in, [147](#); separation from irony, [138](#); social challenges of, [145](#), [179](#); between social classes, [98](#); social space for, [146](#); superiority in, [143](#); threat to political order, [132](#); toleration of, [185-86](#); at violation of norms, [28](#); virtue in, [132](#), [150](#), [184](#); at wittiness, [138](#). *See also* humor; joking

leadership: Socrates' conception of, [92](#), [122](#), [127-28](#); Socratic humor and, [11](#);
Socratic questioning and, [92](#)

Lear, Jonathan, [189](#)

Libanius: *Apology of Socrates*, [3](#), [13-14](#); on Socrates' mockery, [95](#)

literature, Socratic: accusers in, [12](#); contested humor in, [18-19](#); democratic context of, [4](#); Hellenistic, [55](#); historical Socrates in, [9](#); interpretative shifts in, [9](#); on purpose of humor, [14](#); second-hand knowledge in, [132](#)

Long, Anthony, [165](#)

Lucian: on *eirōneia*, [171-72](#); on Socratic irony, [170](#). Works: *The Dead Come to Life*, [172](#); *Demonax*, [170-72](#), [176](#); *Lexiphanes*, [172](#); *True History*, [171](#)

luxury, desire for, [173](#)

Lycon, [12](#); representation of orators, [13](#)

Lysias (orator), in *Phaedrus*, [83-84](#)

Magnes, in *Knights*, [42](#)

Mara, Gerald, [51](#)

Marcus Aurelius: duties as emperor, [160](#); guiding principles of, [160-61](#)
—*Meditations*: on correction of error, [161](#); on *eirōneia*, [160](#), [161](#); on kindness, [161](#), [177](#); social ethics of, [161](#); Socrates in, [159](#)

Markovits, Elizabeth, [51](#)

McPherran, Mark, [66](#)

Meletus, [12](#); charges of impiety by, [13](#)

mockery: in *Against Konon*, [5-7](#); in Aristophanic comedy, [30](#), [41](#), [46](#); in Athenian democracy, [6-7](#); Cynic use of, [175](#); and democratic authority, [37-40](#); *eirōneia* as, [55-56](#); Epictetus' use of, [164](#); in friendship, [97](#), [147](#); goal of, [18](#); in Homer, [94-95](#); hubristic, [145](#); pleasure in, [16-18](#)

mockery, Socratic, [1-3](#), [10](#); abusive, [50](#), [93-94](#); of Anytus, [13](#); in Aristophanes, [2](#), [10](#), [13](#), [20](#), [37-40](#), [46](#), [49](#), [51](#), [85-86](#), [180](#), [184](#), [189](#); Aristophanic comedy and, [40-46](#); of clever speech, [120-21](#); democratic authority and, [37-40](#), [85](#), [95](#); of democratic ideology, [46](#); direct use of, [119](#); disturbing, [125-26](#); in engagement with interlocutors, [112-22](#); of Euthydemus, [119-20](#), [125](#); of false wisdom, [119-20](#); of ignorance, [116-20](#), [125](#); Libanius on, [95](#); as pedagogic tool, [96](#); in Plato, [49-50](#); of political ambition, [116-19](#); praise in, [110](#); suited to interlocutor, [125](#); victims' rationalization of, [122](#); in Xenophon, [2](#), [10](#), [13](#), [14](#), [95-97](#), [101-4](#), [107-22](#), [164](#), [182](#). *See also* humor, Socratic

Narcy, Michel, [21](#); on *eirōneia*, [55](#), [57-58](#)

nature: living according to, [172-75](#), [176](#), [178](#), [183](#); Platonic Socrates on, [86](#); value for Stoics, [172](#)

Nehamas, Alexander, [51](#); on Socratic irony, [189](#)

nomos, phusis and, [40](#)

Ober, Josiah, [19](#); on dignity, [7-8](#); on elites, [31](#), [183](#)

Old Comedy, Attic: Plato's use of, [47](#)

Parmenides, injunction against falsehood, [80](#)

parrhēsia (frank speech): *aischrologia* and, [41-42](#); of atheists, [64](#); Cynic, [172](#), [177](#); of Diogenes, [173](#); Epicurean view of, [177](#); impiety in, [64](#); between student and teacher, [165-66](#)

Periander of Ambracia, *hubris* of, [144](#), [145](#)

Pericles, [31](#); on *eutrapeloi*, [151-52](#), [153](#)

Peripatetics, view of Socrates, [130-31](#), [134](#)

Philip II of Macedon, *hubris* of, [144](#)

Philodemus: *On Frank Speech*, [165](#); on student-teacher relationships, [165-66](#); *On Vices*, [165](#)

philosopher-kings, Platonic, [32-33](#)

philosophers: counterfeit and real, [78](#); impracticality among, [1](#); Megarian, [18](#); mockery of, [1](#); objects of derision for, [1-2](#)

philosophy: epideictic displays of, [163](#); teaching of, [158](#); transformative power of, [157-58](#)

philosophy, Cynic: and Cynic humor, [170](#), [172-76](#); freedom from convention, [174](#); social dimension of, [173-74](#)

philosophy, Socratic: as alternative form of politics, [87](#); Aristotle's references to, [129](#); and Athenian democratic norms, [20](#); classical representations of, [9](#); democratic citizenship and, [187](#); as *eirōnic*, [66](#); *elenchus* in, [158](#); nature and purpose of, [22](#), [181](#); perception of danger in, [52](#); sophistry and, [181](#); Stoic alignment with, [158-64](#); in *Theaetetus*, [78](#)

phronēsis, Aristotle on, [133](#)

piety, Platonic Socrates' conception of, [66-67](#)

Plato: depiction of sophists, [22](#), [47](#); on *eutrapeloi*, [150](#)

—*Apology*: conception of gods in, [66](#); Delphic oracle in, [22](#), [65-66](#), [87](#); *eirōneia* in, [64-65](#), [71](#); *elenchus* in, [16](#); improvement of young in, [88-89](#), [90](#)

—*Euthydemus*: concealment in, [61-62](#); *eirōneia* in, [61](#); eristic practice in, [15](#), [61](#), [62](#); humor in, [18](#), [62](#), [169-70](#); laughter in, [15-16](#), [17](#); refutation in, [14](#), [16-17](#)

—*Euthyphro*: conception of gods in, [66](#); elenctic encounters in, [122-23](#); irony in, [108](#)

—*Gorgias*: Callicles' accusation in, [73-76](#), [84](#); demagoguery accusations in, [75](#); *eirōneia* in, [74-76](#); on laughter, [48](#); mockery in, [50](#); Socrates' superiority in, [73-74](#); topoi of *Knights* in, [47](#); on tragedy, [49](#)

—*Laches*: envy in, [17](#); ignorance in, [17](#)

—*Laws*: Athenian Stranger of, [63-64](#); *eirōneia* in, [77](#); impiety in, [63-64](#), [65](#); laughter in, [19](#)

—*Meno*: depiction of Anytus, [82-83](#), [84](#); *eirōneia* in, [83](#); sophists in, [82-83](#)

—*Phaedo*, Socrates' laughter in, [50](#)

—*Phaedrus*: *erōs* in, [83](#); irony in, [83](#); Lysias in, [83-84](#); pretense in, [83-84](#)
—*Philebus*: comic pleasure in, [16](#), [17-18](#); the laughable in, [4](#), [47-48](#)
—*Protagoras*: decision-making in, [88](#); on knowledge, [133](#); sophists in, [47](#)
—*Republic*: *eirōneia* in, [57](#); *eutrapelia* in, [152-53](#), [154](#); irony in, [101-2](#); *isonomia* in, [152](#); on mockery of Socrates, [2](#); Thrasymachus' accusations in, [71-73](#), [84](#), [86](#), [91](#), [101-2](#), [184](#); on tragedy, [49](#)
—*Sophist*: *eirōneia* in, [77-81](#); Eleatic Visitor in, [77-78](#), [80-81](#); image of Socrates in, [79](#); imitation in, [77-81](#); Socratic philosophy in, [81](#)
—*Statesman*, image of Socrates in, [79](#)
—*Symposium*: depiction of Alcibiades, [68-71](#); *eirōneia* in, [68-71](#)
—*Theaetetus*: epistemological argument in, [77](#), [81](#); joke on Thales of Miletus, [1-2](#), [3](#); midwife trope of, [78-79](#), [81](#); Socratic philosophy in, [78](#), [81](#). *See also* Socrates, Platonic

poetry, pedagogical effects of, [11](#)

Polycrates, *Accusation of Socrates*, [12](#)

practicality, abstract questions and, [1-2](#)

Problems, Aristotelian: laughter in, [148](#)

Prodicus (sophist), [78](#)

prosecutors, citizen, [32](#)

Protagoras: laughter in, [28](#); sophistry of, [78](#), [82](#)

questioning, Socratic: Socratic leadership and, [92](#); trickery in, [79](#). *See also* interlocutors, Socrates'

reason, the laughable and, [48](#)

refutation: eristic, [14-16](#); rhetorical mode of, [48](#); through irony, [115](#). *See also* *elenchus*, Socratic

rhētores: authority of, [31](#), [33](#); democratic anxiety concerning, [31](#)

ridicule. *See* mockery

Riley, Mark, [165](#)

Schofield, Malcolm, [158](#)

Second Sophistic, Socratic *eirōneia* during, [171](#)

self-cultivation, Cynic humor and, [25](#)

self-knowledge: imperfection in, [147](#); through friendship, [146-47](#)

Seneca the Younger: *Epistulae morales*, [159](#); use of Socrates, [159](#)

social virtue: Aristotle on, [132](#); of friendliness, [139](#), [140](#); reciprocity in, [140](#); role in political life, [141-42](#). *See also* *aretē*

Socrates, Aristophanic: abusive humor of, [40-41](#); antidemocratic authority of, [28](#); atheism of, [35](#), [36](#); audience laughter at, [40](#); intellectual superiority of, [43-46](#), [126](#); political humor of, [46](#); on study of natural world, [86](#); teaching of arrogance,

[37](#), [49](#); as threat to authority, [29](#), [86](#); threat to democracy, [19-20](#); use of *aischrologia*, [41-42](#); use of *eirōneia*, [21](#); use of mockery, [2](#), [10](#), [13](#), [20](#), [37-40](#), [46](#), [49](#), [51](#), [85-86](#), [180](#), [184](#), [189](#); on worship, [35](#), [36](#)

Socrates, Aristotelian, [129](#); Aristotle's critique of, [133-35](#); *eirōneia* of, [129-30](#), [131](#), [134](#), [155](#); intellectual virtues and, [133](#); on moral order, [133](#); second-hand knowledge of, [132](#)

Socrates, Cynic, [166-76](#)

Socrates, of Diogenes Laertius: accusers of, [3](#); use of ridicule, [13](#)

Socrates, Epicurean, [164-66](#); as *eirōn*, [164-65](#), [176](#)

Socrates, historical, [11](#); impiety charges against, [29](#); literary accounts of, [9](#); memory of, [13](#)

Socrates, Libanius', [13-14](#); as *misodēmos*, [3](#)

Socrates, Peripatetic, [130-31](#); boastfulness of, [131](#)

Socrates, Platonic: abstention from politics, [188](#); accusations of arrogance against, [87-88](#); accusations of demagoguery against, [75](#); accusations of impiety against, [65](#); on *akrasia*, [9-10](#); Alcibiades on, [68-71](#); Anytus' response to, [82-83](#), [84](#); authority of, [86](#), [88](#); bravery at Potidaea, [70](#); Callicles' accusation of, [73-76](#), [84](#); on citizens' laughter, [28](#); conception of gods, [66](#); conception of piety, [66-67](#); defense of philosophy, [66](#); on Delphic oracle, [22](#), [65-66](#), [87](#), [181](#); on democratic authority, [28](#); democratic citizenship of, [20](#); desire for honor, [72](#), [73](#); disavowal of knowledge, [54](#), [68-69](#), [71](#), [105](#), [107](#), [124](#), [136](#), [181](#); educational expertise of, [89](#); egalitarian laughter of, [87](#); as *eirōn*, [52](#), [53-56](#), [63-65](#), [67-77](#), [81](#), [122](#), [180](#); elenctic encounters of, [23](#), [105](#), [122](#), [169](#); engagement with interlocutors, [49-50](#), [53](#), [54](#), [67-77](#), [81](#), [82-88](#), [91-93](#), [102-3](#), [108](#), [181](#), [184](#); engagement with laughter, [2](#), [15-16](#), [28](#), [48-50](#), [153](#); on *enkrateia*, [10](#); on envy, [16](#); Epictetus' references to, [164](#); on eristic practice, [14-16](#); experience of mockery, [2](#); humor of, [10](#), [18](#), [47-51](#), [62](#), [169-70](#), [180](#), [186-87](#); as immanent critic, [188](#); intellectual superiority of, [65](#), [73-74](#), [88-89](#), [90](#); knowledge emphasized by, [123](#); and knowledge of justice, [72](#); as laughable, [50](#), [186](#); legacy of, [18](#); midwife trope of, [78-79](#), [81](#); on moral expertise, [86](#); noble sophistry of, [80](#); pedagogical method of, [89](#), [102](#); perception as insolent, [70](#); and physical beauty, [68-69](#), [70-71](#); profession of worthlessness, [70](#); relationship to sophists, [77](#), [79-80](#), [83](#), [92](#), [102](#); self-deprecation by, [75](#); as Silenus, [68](#); sincerity/insincerity of, [71-72](#), [74-75](#); on sophist teaching, [83](#); on study of natural world, [86](#); on suffering injustice, [48](#), [50](#), [75-76](#); on teachers of democracy, [152](#); Thrasymachus' accusation of, [71-73](#), [84](#), [91](#), [101-2](#), [184](#); on tragedy, [49](#); trial and execution of, [2](#), [65](#); trickery in questioning, [79](#); on unexamined life, [64-65](#); use of irony, [10](#), [12-13](#), [22](#), [51-53](#), [82](#), [100-101](#), [108](#), [163](#), [172](#); use of mockery, [49-50](#); use of praise, [109](#); use of pretense, [83-84](#), [86](#); virtue of, [70-71](#); wisdom of, [87-88](#). See also *eirōneia*, Socratic; humor, Socratic; irony, Socratic; philosophy, Socratic

Socrates, Stoic, [158-64](#), [165](#); Marcus Aurelius' use of, [159](#); Seneca's use of, [159](#)

Socrates, Xenophonic: abusive language of, [96](#), [126](#); accusations against, [22-23](#), [93-94](#); advice to cavalry officer, [110-12](#); on *akrasia*, [9-10](#); avoidance of politics, [122](#); on awareness of ignorance, [114](#), [125](#); on the beautiful, [167](#); citing of *Iliad*, [93](#), [95](#); conception of leadership, [122](#), [127-28](#); critique of democracy, [14](#), [95](#), [127-28](#); on Delphic oracle, [96](#); democratic citizenship of, [20](#); as *dēmotikos*, [95](#), [100](#), [126](#); Diogenes Laertius on, [159](#); disrespect for laws, [3](#); *elenchus* and, [107](#), [169](#); engagement with interlocutors, [100](#), [104-5](#), [107-8](#), [110-24](#), [127-28](#), [182](#), [184](#); on *enkrateia*, [9-10](#), [123-24](#); exhortation to virtue, [103](#); expertise of, [96](#); exposing of incompetence, [126](#); expression of Xenophon's concerns, [19](#), [112](#), [123](#); on friendship, [107-8](#); friendship for *dēmos*, [94](#), [99-100](#); hierarchical relationships of, [127-28](#); Hippias' accusation of, [101-3](#), [184](#); humor of, [19](#), [22-23](#), [95-100](#), [126](#), [167](#), [180](#), [187](#); intellectual superiority of, [96](#), [99-100](#), [126-27](#), [181](#); on justice, [105](#), [168](#); knowledge emphasized by, [123](#); leadership ability of, [124](#); as mocker of *dēmos*, [126](#), [127](#); mockery of Euthydemus, [96](#), [105](#), [119-21](#); mockery of Glaucon, [116-19](#); mockery of ignorance, [116-20](#), [125](#); on *paroinia*, [167](#); pedagogical approach of, [122-26](#); on physical violence, [93](#), [95](#); political allegiance of, [100](#); on practical knowledge, [123](#); questioning of Pericles (son of the general), [113-15](#), [118-19](#); refutation by, [115](#); self-deprecation of, [168](#); on self-education, [119-21](#); on Siren song, [108](#); tactical advice from, [114](#), [115](#); usefulness to Athens, [122](#), [124](#); use of irony, [23](#), [96-97](#), [100-107](#), [168](#), [182](#); use of mockery, [2](#), [10](#), [13](#), [14](#), [95-97](#), [101-4](#), [107-22](#), [164](#), [182](#); use of praise, [109-10](#), [115-16](#), [125](#); wisdom of, [120](#); Xenophon's defense of, [122](#)

sophistry: association with *eirōneia*, [76-77](#); noble, [80](#); sixth definition of, [81](#)

sophists: ironic humor of, [87](#); as *eirōnic* imitators, [80-81](#); expertise in argumentation, [80](#); in *Meno*, [82-83](#); Plato's depiction of, [22](#), [47](#), [82](#), [83](#); relationship to Socrates, [77](#), [79-80](#), [83](#), [92](#), [102](#)

Sophocles: *Ajax*, [153-54](#); *dustrapelia* in, [150](#)

Spartans, versus Athenians, [151](#)

stasis (civic conflict), [143-44](#)

statesmanship, teaching of, [121](#)

Stobaeus: on *eirōneia*, [162](#); epitome of Stoic ethics, [159-60](#); on interactions with multitude, [161](#)

Stoics: alignment with Socrates, [158-64](#); concept of knowledge, [159](#); core doctrines of, [158](#); depiction of Socratic humor, [158](#), [163](#), [164](#), [177](#); on dissimulation, [160](#); enduring of criticism, [162](#); ethics of, [159-60](#); on Socratic irony, [162](#), [163](#); on teacher/student relationships, [164](#); value of nature for, [172](#); view of *eirōneia*, [159-64](#), [176](#), [177](#); on wittiness, [162](#)

superiority: Aristophanes' claims to, [43-44](#); Aristophanic Socrates', [43-46](#), [126](#); in Aristotelian *eirōneia*, [137](#), [155](#); associated with irony, [145](#); in *Gorgias*, [73-74](#); in

humor, [4](#); in irony, [4](#); in laughter, [143](#); maintenance through Socratic *eirōneia*, [91](#); Platonic Socrates', [65](#), [73-74](#), [88-89](#), [90](#); Xenophonic Socrates', [96](#), [99-100](#), [126-27](#), [181](#)

Tarnopolsky, Christina, [51-52](#)

Thales of Miletus, impracticality of, [1-2](#)

thetes, Athenian: treatment in democracy, [180](#)

threats to democracy, [29](#), [86](#); Socrates', [19-20](#), [95](#); in Socratic intellectualism, [19](#), [28-29](#), [40](#), [179](#); through laughter, [132](#)

tragedy: as oratory, [49](#); Plato's engagement with, [47](#)

truthfulness: in *eirōneia*, [138](#), [182](#); social virtue of, [139](#)

Vasiliou, Iakovos, [115](#)

Vlastos, Gregory, [9](#); on irony, [51](#), [88](#), [100](#), [163](#); on Socrates' theology, [66](#)

wittiness: versus buffoonery, [148](#); in political community, [146](#); in Stoicism, [162](#); virtue of, [141-42](#). See also *eutrapelia*

Xenophon: lack of *eirōneia* in, [101](#), [102](#); interest in humor, [97-99](#); treatment of *akrasia*, [9-10](#). See also Socrates, Xenophonic

—*Anabasis*, mockery in, [97](#)

—*Cyropaedia*: Aglaïtadas in, [98](#); humor in, [97-100](#); laughter in, [98-99](#); social hierarchy in, [99](#)

—*Hellenika*, humor in, [97](#)

—*Memorabilia*, [3](#); abuse of Critias in, [96](#); accusations against Socrates in, [14](#), [23](#); Critoboulos in, [107-8](#); lack of *eirōneia* in, [102](#); *enkrateia* in, [124](#); friendship in, [107-9](#), [114](#); Hippias' accusation of Socrates, [101-3](#), [184](#); irony in, [103](#), [106](#), [107-22](#), [125](#); justice in, [103-4](#), [105](#); laughter in, [121](#); mockery in, [101-4](#), [105](#), [107-22](#); mocking of Euthydemus in, [96](#), [105](#), [119-21](#); mocking of Glaucon in, [116-19](#); Pericles (son of the general) in, [113-15](#), [118-19](#); political ambition in, [116-18](#); questioning of cavalry officer, [110-12](#); Socrates' accusers in, [93](#), [103](#), [184](#); Socratic conversations in, [23](#), [105](#); structural organization of, [105](#); wisdom in, [119](#)

—*Oeconomicus*: Critoboulos in, [123-24](#); *enkrateia* in, [123-24](#)

—*On the Cavalry Commander*, [112](#)

—*Symposium*: abusive humor in, [167-68](#); Antisthenes in, [25](#); attendees, [167](#); depiction of Antisthenes, [166-70](#); humor in, [167](#); idea of *spoudaiogeloios* in, [100](#); on leadership, [166-67](#); use of *Clouds*, [167](#); wealth and poverty in, [168-69](#)

Zeno of Citium, reading of *Memorabilia*, [159](#)

Zeno of Sidon, *Against Plato's Gorgias*, [164-65](#)