

philomatheia and the Knowledge of Leadership in Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus*

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I. φῦναι δὲ ὁ Κῦρος λέγεται καὶ ἄδεται ἔτι καὶ νῦν ὑπὸ τῶν βαρβάρων εἶδος μὲν κάλλιστος, ψυχὴν δὲ φιλανθρωπότατος καὶ φιλομαθέστατος καὶ φιλοτιμότατος, ὥστε πάντα μὲν πόνον ἀνατλήναι, πάντα δὲ κίνδυνον ὑπομεῖναι τοῦ ἐπαινέσθαι ἕνεκα. (*Cyr.* 1.2.1.6-9)

In his nature Cyrus is reputed and still celebrated even now among the barbarians as most beautiful in his form and most loving of humanity in his soul, as well as most loving of learning and most loving of being honored, to the point that he would endure every labor and undergo every danger in order to be praised.

IIa. Καὶ ἦν μὲν ἴσως πολυλογώτερος, ἅμα μὲν διὰ τὴν παιδείαν, ὅτι ἠναγκάζετο ὑπὸ τοῦ διδασκάλου καὶ διδόναι λόγον ὧν ἐποίει καὶ λαμβάνειν παρ' ἄλλων, ὁπότε δικάζοι, ἔτι δὲ καὶ διὰ τὸ φιλομαθῆς εἶναι πολλὰ μὲν αὐτὸς ἀεὶ τοὺς παρόντας ἀνηρώτα πῶς ἔχοντα τυγχάνοι, καὶ ὅσα αὐτὸς ὑπ' ἄλλων ἐρωτῶτο, διὰ τὸ ἀγγίνους εἶναι ταχὺ ἀπεκρίνετο, ὥστ' ἐκ πάντων τούτων ἡ πολυλογία συνελέγετο αὐτῷ. (*Cyr.* 1.4.3.1-9)

He was perhaps a little too chatty, in part because of his education, in that he was compelled by his teacher both to give an account of what he was doing and to receive one from others whenever he judged a case, but also, because he was *philomathês*, he himself was always asking those present for explanations of many things, and as often as he himself was questioned by others, he would quickly answer because he was keen-witted, such that a chatty disposition became customary for him from all these sources.

IIb. Socrates' Pupils

ἔτεκμαιρετο δὲ τὰς ἀγαθὰς φύσεις ἐκ τοῦ ταχὺ τε μανθάνειν οἷς προσέχοιεν καὶ μνημονεύειν ἃ μάθοιεν καὶ ἐπιθυμεῖν τῶν μαθημάτων πάντων δι' ὧν ἔστιν οἶκόν τε καλῶς οἰκεῖν καὶ πόλιν καὶ τὸ ὄλον ἀνθρώποις τε καὶ τοῖς ἀνθρωπίνους πράγμασιν εὖ χρῆσθαι. (*Mem.* 4.1.2.4-8)

He would take as proof of the good natures [of his students] their swiftness of learning whatever they paid attention to and the remembrance of what they learned and the desire for all the lessons by which it is possible to manage a household and a city well, and in general to utilize well both human beings and human activity.

IIc. The Pupil Socrates

Ἐκεῖνό μοι δοκῶ, ἔφην ἐγώ, ὧ Ἴσχομαχε, πρῶτον ἂν ἠδέως μανθάνειν (φιλοσόφου γὰρ μάλιστα ἔστιν ἀνδρός) ὅπως ἂν ἐγώ, εἰ βουλοίμην, γῆν ἐργαζόμενος πλείστας κριθὰς καὶ πλείστους πυροὺς λαμβάνοιμι. (*Oec.* 16.9)

First this, Ischomachus, I said, I think I would gladly learn (for that is especially the character of the lover of wisdom), how I might work the land, should I wish, and harvest the most barley and wheat.

IIIa. Cyrus loving to learn to ride horses and eager to learn about what animals he may hunt

ὁ δὲ Κῦρος ἄτε παῖς ὧν καὶ φιλόκαλος καὶ φιλότιμος ἦδετο τῇ στολῇ, καὶ ἵπευεὶν μανθάνων ὑπερέχειεν. (*Cyr.* 1.3.3.6)

προθύμως ἐπυνθάνετο (*Cyr.* 1.4.7.6), ἐμάνθανε προθύμως (*Cyr.* 1.4.8.1)

IIIb. Xenophon's Younger Cyrus Excelling in the Persian *Agogé*

ἔδοκει εἶναι...φιλιππότατος καὶ τοῖς ἵπποις ἄριστα χρῆσθαι· ἔκρινον δ' αὐτὸν καὶ τῶν εἰς τὸν πόλεμον ἔργων, τοξικῆς τε καὶ ἀκοντίσεως, φιλομαθέστατον εἶναι καὶ μελετηρότατον. ἐπεὶ δὲ τῇ ἡλικίᾳ ἔπρεπε, καὶ φιλοθηρότατος ἦν καὶ πρὸς τὰ θηρία μέντοι φιλοκινδυνότατος. (*Ana.* 1.9.5.2-1.9.6.3)

He seemed to be...most loving of horses and best at managing them. They adjudged him also to be most eager to learn about the arts of war (*philomathestatos*), namely in using the bow and spear, and most diligent at practicing them. And when it befitted his age, he was most loving of the hunt and in fact most loving of danger in regard to wild beasts.

IVa. Eagerness to hear Tigranes, the pupil of a sophist

πάνυ ἐπεθύμει αὐτοῦ ἀκοῦσαι (*Cyr.* 3.1.14.6)

IVb. Isocrates' Letter to Demonicus of Cyprus

Ἐὰν ἦς φιλομαθῆς, ἔσει πολυμαθῆς. Ἄ μὲν ἐπίστασαι, ταῦτα διαφύλαττε ταῖς μελέταις, ἃ δὲ μὴ μεμάθηκας, προσλάμβανε ταῖς ἐπιστήμασι· ὁμοίως γὰρ αἰσχροὺν ἀκούσαντα χρήσιμον λόγον μὴ μαθεῖν καὶ διδόμενον τι ἀγαθὸν παρὰ τῶν φίλων μὴ λαβεῖν. Κατανάλισκε τὴν ἐν τῷ βίῳ σχολὴν εἰς τὴν τῶν λόγων φιληχοίαν: οὕτω γὰρ τὰ τοῖς ἄλλοις χαλεπῶς εὗρημένα συμβήσεται σοι ῥαδίως μανθάνειν. (18)

If you are a *philomathês*, then you will be a learner of many things. Maintain what you know with practice; but what you have not learned, seize with understanding. For it is as shameful to hear a useful account and not to learn it as it is to neglect something good given by friends. Spend your leisure time in life in the love of hearing accounts of things. For in this way discoveries difficult for others to make will turn out easy to learn for you.

V. Cyrus' interest in learning about military tactics

δεῖ δὲ, ἔφη, φιλομαθῆ σε τούτων ἀπάντων ὄντα οὐχ οἷς ἂν μάθης τούτοις μόνοις χρῆσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸν ποιητὴν εἶναι τῶν πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους μηχανημάτων, ὥσπερ καὶ οἱ μουσικοὶ οὐχ οἷς ἂν μάθωσι τούτοις μόνον χρῶνται, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄλλα νέα πειρῶνται ποιεῖν. (*Cyr.* 1.6.38.1-5)

It is necessary, since you are eager to learn about all these things, that you learn to employ not only these strategies but that you yourself also be a fashioner of the engines of war against your enemies, just as musicians, too, not only use what they have learned but also try to fashion other new tunes.

VI. On the Simplicity of Knowledge and the Importance of Paying Attention

οἱ στρατηγοὶ ἔστιν ἐν οἷς τῶν στρατηγικῶν ἔργων οὐ γνῶμη διαφέροντες ἀλλήλων οἱ μὲν βελτίονες οἱ δὲ χειρόνες εἰσιν, ἀλλὰ σαφῶς ἐπιμελεία. ἃ γὰρ καὶ οἱ στρατηγοὶ γινώσκουσι πάντες καὶ τῶν ἰδιωτῶν οἱ πλεῖστοι, ταῦτα οἱ μὲν ποιοῦσι τῶν ἀρχόντων οἱ δ' οὐ. (*Oec.* 20.6)

It is the case that generals differ from one another, in matters of strategy in which some are better and some are worse, not because of judgment but obviously because of attentiveness. For what all generals and most private citizens understand is performed by some leaders and not by others.

VII. Why this rarity? The *only* other extant coupling of superlative *philanthrôpia* and *philomatheia*

Athenagoras (c. 176-177 C.E.) praises Marcus Aurelius and Commodus (cf. φιλανθρωποτάτων καὶ φιλομαθεστάτων βασιλέων, *Leg.* 2.1.6-7). He calls them “most loving of learning” and “most knowledgeable” for their familiarity with the writings of Moses and other prophets (cf.

φιλομαθεστάτους καὶ ἐπιστημονεστάτους, 9.1.4).