

Xenophon's *Hieron* and the Psychology of the Tyrant

Despite the growing number of publications on Xenophon in recent years, *Hieron* remains a much neglected text. This paper will examine the philosophical implications of the *Hieron*, a 'Socratic dialogue' without Socrates, in which the poet Simonides and the tyrant Hieron discuss the nature of tyranny and the (un)happiness of the tyrant. Recent scholarship on the *Hieron* has considered the dialogue's relationship with other genres of literature, most notably 'the meeting of the wise man and ruler' and epinikion poetry (Gray 1986 and Sevieri 2004, respectively). I intend to examine what exactly the *Hieron* is arguing.

Starting with the claim made in the *Memorabilia* that akratic behavior is impossible because nobody errs willingly (*Mem.* 3.9.4 and 4.6.6), I ask why Hieron continues to rule as a tyrant when he knows that tyranny is the cause of his unhappiness. In other words, is Hieron's behavior akratic or is there something else at play? This question seems to lie at the intersection of epistemology and ethics, two areas which are essential to understanding the phenomenon of the tyrant in the thought of one of Xenophon's contemporaries, Plato. In respect to epistemology my paper will consider what similarities Xenophon's view of tyranny shares with Plato's model of the tyrant. Can the tyrant, if his soul is inverted, actually know anything, and what does this say about the possibilities of educating the tyrant? Can Simonides succeed in his goal of educating and reforming Hieron?

On the ethical side, I intend to argue that part of what distinguishes tyranny from other forms of individual rule is the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. This is played out in the *Hieron* most clearly through Xenophon's language: at the moment when Simonides 'teaches' Hieron to become a good ruler, there is a drastic change in the language from *turannos* and *idiotês* (tyrant and subject) to *archôn* and *politês* (ruler and citizen). Finally, I shall explore how

the view of the tyrant that emerges in the *Hieron* relates to and informs the characterization of tyrants in Xenophon's other works, especially the *Hellenica*, and how this contributes to the growing body of scholarship on Xenophon and leadership.

Bibliography

Gray, V. J. 1986. "Xenophon's *Hiero* and the Meeting of the Wise Man and Tyrant in Greek Literature." *CQ* 36: 115-23.

Sevieri, R. 2004. "The Imperfect Hero: Xenophon's *Hiero* as the (Self-)Taming of a Tyrant." In Tuplin, C. ed. *Xenophon and his World, 277-287*. *Historia Einzelschriften* 172. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.