

The Positioned Parasite: Philip in Xenophon's *Symposium*

My study examines the parasite-character Philip in Xenophon's philosophical *Symposium*. I place Philip both within the greater parasite trope popularized by Roman Comedy, and within the context of the historical Classical symposium by examining the parasite's most distinguishing features. I determine Philip's place within the philosophical *Symposium* by investigating the act of becoming a spectacle at Classical symposia. Understanding the parasite's place historically and philosophically provides insight into the elite attitudes toward the parasite-character. I ascertain the parasite's consideration of his own profession, or at least Xenophon's view of it. What is observed is a distinction between the elite male class and the parasite within the sympotic space. Philip, although permitted into the elite institution, does not uphold elite values of moderation and self-control that are inherently espoused by the symposium, and thus his presence is based more upon his ability to generate laughter rather than to build homosocial bonds.

Concerned primarily with his desire for food and wine, and secondly with a want for luxurious excess, Philip possesses no substantial philosophical education, and exists as a plot device employed by Xenophon to direct his reader's attention to the next topic of discussion. His interactions with the elite symposiasts and foreigner reveal Philip's liminality: he is not entirely integrated into the symposium because he is not elite, but he is not unfamiliar with the institution's code of ethics, and operates within them to fulfill his role as a jester-type parasite. Philip is characterized as slavish, but his occupation requires skill and effort, and thus retains class-affirming value, and while Xenophon renders him servile and feminine, there is no evidence to suggest that he considers himself anything but a skilled labourer.