The *Hieron,* the *Memorabilia,* and Philosopher-Kings

In this paper I argue that the advice that Simonides offers Hieron at the conclusion to the *Hieron*—that Hieron's best method of defending his tyranny was to truly benefit the citizens of Syracuse—implicitly establishes a parallel between Hieron and Socrates in the *Memorabilia,* a parallel which not only criticizes Hieron's method of coercive leadership but also reveals the impossibility of a philosopher-king in Xenophon's corpus.

Although the *Hieron* is one of the more neglected corners of Xenophon's corpus, interpretations of the conversation between Hieron and Simonides has been broadly split. Most scholars have seen Simonides as offering Xenophon's more-or-less unironic improvements to tyranny (e.g. Gray 1986; Gelenczey-Mihálcz 2000; Fertik 2017). Others have emphasized its critique of tyranny, seeing Simonides' suggestions less as genuine examples of how a tyrant can improve and more as evidence of behaviors that a tyrant could never aspire to (see Chason Takakjy 2017: 71-73, for example).

My paper builds on the latter approach by juxtaposing the advice Simonides offers to Hieron to improve his tyranny with the behavior of Socrates in the *Memorabilia*. Simonides emphasizes the common harm Hieron has caused with his tyrannical methods: he suggests that Hieron should spend his money on his citizens (9.11); employ his public (10.4) and private (11.1) resources to financially benefit his entire community; obey and enforce the law (10.8); care for the well-being of his citizens (11.2-3); and to help the economic growth of his own citizens (11.4). Without any narratorial interpretation, the *Hieron* abruptly ends without explaining what Simonides means by his advice.

I argue that Simonides' advice largely parallels the basic schema of Socrates as depicted in the *Memorabilia*: Socrates gives all his money away to his friends (*Mem*. 1.2.61); spends his time advising and helping his friends so that he can help make the Athenians—and thus their leadership—better (1.6.15); he risks his life and reputation to uphold Athenian law (*Hell*. 1.7.15);

he cares about the physical (*Mem.* 3.12) and financial (2.10) and philosophical (*passim*) well-being of his fellow citizens; he even does what he can to help the economic growth of his fellows (e.g. 2.8). In form if not in name, Simonides urges Hieron to become a Socratic philosopher.

I argue, however, that this parallel between Socrates in the *Memorabilia* and Simonides' suggestions ultimately exposes the impossibility of a philosopher-king in Xenophon's corpus. The crucial difference between Socrates and Hieron is that Socrates' leadership, such as it is, of the Socratic circle is based on Athenian freedom of speech and Socrates' personal lack of power over anyone. Socrates' benefit and philosophy his approach is fully persuasive and his popularity amongst his followers is based on this. Socrates has so little that even jealous and violent Athenians have little to gain from attacking him (although in the end, of course, they do). Yet for Hieron, the stakes are so high that even if he were to implement Simonides' advice and devote himself selflessly to the benefit of his fellow citizens, he would effect the destruction of his own tyranny long before he became a beloved ruler protected by the good will of his citizens.

In contrast to Plato, then, the *Hieron* establishes for Xenophon that a king (or tyrant) cannot become a philosopher and that, perhaps, a philosopher cannot become a king. The tension between the freedom of speech and action required for a philosopher destroys or is destroyed by the hierarchy required for a king.

Bibliography

Chason Takakjy, L. 2017. "Xenophon the Literary Critic: The Poetics and Politics of Praise in *Hiero*." *GRBS* 57: 49-73.

Fertik, H. 2017. "The Absent Landscape in Xenophon's *Hiero*." *Mnemosyne* 71: 1-10.

Gelenczey-Mihálcz, A. 2000. "Thoughts on Tyranny; Xenophon's *Hiero*." *Acta. Ant. Hung.* 40: 113-121.

Gray, V. 1986. "Xenophon's *Hiero* and the Meeting of the Wise Man and Tyrant in Greek Literature." *CQ* 36: 115-123.