

Cyrus' Beehive: Ruling *Eros* and with *Eros* in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*

Antoine Pageau-St-Hilaire

Ph.D. Candidate, The John U. Nef Committee on Social Thought, University
of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA
apsthilaire@uchicago.edu

Abstract

This paper examines the role of love in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. I argue that an essential aspect of Cyrus' knowledgeable rule is a specific understanding of *eros* and a corresponding strategy to cope with the power of love. Specifically, I contend that by exploiting a common Greek distinction between the beloved and the lover, he articulates the view that lovers are subjects or even slaves to their beloved who deceive themselves into thinking that their attraction and the ensuing behaviors are voluntary. Accordingly, Cyrus attempts to avoid falling in love and to rule as a universally beloved leader. Reflecting on the implications of this solution, I finally suggest that Xenophon wishes to show the limits of Cyrus' solution.

Keywords

Xenophon – love – erotic asymmetry – politics – kingship – subjection

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κινεῖ ὡς ἐρώμενον

ARISTOTLE, *Metaph.* 12.7.1072b3

• • •

πολιτικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ζῶν πάσης μελίττης καὶ παντὸς ἀγελαίου ζώου
μᾶλλον

ARISTOTLE, *Pol.* 1.2.1053a7–9



Xenophon famously begins the *Cyropaedia* by claiming that Cyrus' success was due to the fact that he ruled knowledgeably (1.1.3).¹ It is unclear, however, that Cyrus acquired this knowledge through his formal education in the Persian schools of justice, his time spent in the tyrannical court of his uncle Astyages, or the teachings imparted to him by his father Cambyses in their conversation on military virtue and rulership at the end of Book 1.² For what, then, would be so *unique* about Cyrus' knowledge? One way to understand why Xenophon titles his book the *Cyropaedia* is to assume that Cyrus continues to learn throughout his entire life, or at least beyond the explicit education he gets in Book 1, and that this implicit learning is what Xenophon wishes to display.³ In this respect, it has recently been argued that what Cyrus 'distinctively understands' is that 'honour-loving men can be ensnared into abject dependence if they can be made to accept any one individual's will as the sole source of honour'.⁴ While it is clear that Cyrus' knowledge includes an understanding of love of honour (φιλοτιμία), this article proposes to show that such knowledge would be incomplete if not grounded in an understanding of the power of *eros* on the human soul. Specifically, I argue that *eros* is essential to make human beings accept one individual as their sole source of honor. The kernel of Cyrus' knowledge is fundamentally an understanding of love.

Unlike other emotional relationships such as friendship (φιλία) and grace (χάρις), *eros* has received little thematic attention in the scholarship on the

1 Unless otherwise noted, direct quotes from the *Cyropaedia* follow W. Ambler's translation (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

2 For a discussion of the deficiencies of Cyrus' education, see L.K. Field, in 'Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*: Educating our Political Hopes', *The Journal of Politics* 74, (2012), pp. 723–738, at pp. 733–736. Field unfortunately does not explain what kind of learning contributes to Cyrus' relative success.

3 I do not think that the interpretive possibilities that follow the subjective genitive and objective genitive readings are incompatible. Both are likely at play in Xenophon's book.

4 J.R. Reisert, 'Ambition and Corruption in Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus*', *Polis: The Journal for Ancient Greek and Roman Political Thought* 26 (2009), pp. 296–315, at p. 299.

Cyropaedia.⁵ Although love is not the main focus of the narrative, Xenophon includes several scenes in which it is the central issue. In two of these moments, Cyrus heartily criticizes erotic love, claiming that it is extremely difficult to control, and even unconquerable (τῷ ἀμάχῳ πράγματι, 6.1.36).⁶ Given that Cyrus aims at no less than conquering virtually all nations and habitable regions of Asia and that he succeeds (1.1.4 and 8.6.20–21), we must ask ourselves both why he thinks that *eros* has such an uncontrollable power, and how he can cope with this unconquerable force to satisfy his political ambition. In this paper, I discuss Cyrus' understanding of and relation to *eros* as a crucial aspect of his art of ruling. I argue that, far from 'having no need of anyone's affection,'⁷ Cyrus relies heavily on *eros* to secure his rulership.

I contend that, despite his explicit mockery of Greek pederastic customs (2.2.28–31), Xenophon's Cyrus appropriates the Greek distinction between the

5 Friendship is discussed by most commentators of the *Cyropaedia*, but for an excellent recent analysis, see B. McCloskey, 'On Xenophontic Friendship', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 149 (2019), pp. 261–286. The only piece wholly devoted to the problem of *eros* is L.G. Rubin, 'Love and Politics in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*', *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy* 16 (1989), pp. 391–414. While I agree with her main argument, I disagree with her interpretation on several important points. Most importantly, I do not believe that 'Xenophon endorses Cyrus' theory' about *eros* – see Rubin, 'Love and Politics', p. 397. Rubin also fails to explain how Cyrus comes to his understanding of *eros*. I agree with Azoulay's view that Cyrus perfectly embodies the graces of love in ruling as a *chef éromène* – see V. Azoulay, *Xénophon et les grâces du pouvoir. De la charis au charisme* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2004), pp. 371–432. While the focus of Azoulay's book is on the importance of χάρις in political rule, the chapter on love shows that the splendor of beauty and the charms of benefaction are the two graces that make possible Cyrus' attempt to rule as a beloved: the function of χάρις here seems subservient to the function of *eros* (Azoulay, *Xénophon et les grâces du pouvoir*, pp. 416–418). However, Azoulay downplays the language of subjection and enslavement through which Cyrus understands *eros* and fails to show the limits of Cyrus' erotic rulership. Other scholars have suggested that Cyrus rules through his erotic power without analyzing Cyrus' own understanding of *eros*: W.R. Newell, in *Tyranny: A New Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 201–209; J. Tatum, *Xenophon's Imperial Fiction: On The Education of Cyrus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); E. Baragwanath, 'Xenophon's Foreign Wives', in V.J. Gray (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies*. Xenophon, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 41–71, at p. 47; M. Tamiolaki, 'Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*: Tentative Answers to an Enigma', in M.A. Flower (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Xenophon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 174–194, at p. 191.

6 Baragwanath, 'Xenophon's Foreign Wives', p. 48, thinks that τῷ ἀμάχῳ πράγματι refers to Panthea herself as an 'irresistible creature,' but the paragraph as a whole makes this translation highly implausible: the πρᾶγμα is either *eros* or the beautiful.

7 Reisert, 'Ambition and Corruption', p. 301.

role of the lover (ἐραστής) and the role of the beloved (ἐρώμενος).⁸ In his view, however, the distinction between loved and beloved is not a mere cultural code regulating sexual behaviors.⁹ Rather, it naturally entails different capacities to rule: lovers run the risk of subjection or enslavement to their beloved, and the beloved do not. Cyrus' conception of *eros* thus makes use of the commonly accepted lover-beloved distinction but subverts its traditional interpretation, which emphasizes the relative weakness of the beloved in contrast with the strength and power of the lover.¹⁰

- 8 The seminal discussions of the erotic asymmetry between lover and beloved in Ancient Greek customs are K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality. Updated and with a new Postscript* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989 [1978]) and M. Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité II. L'usage des plaisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984). Since then, this 'orthodox' view has been challenged several times and in various respects, especially by J. Davidson and T.K. Hubbard. Davidson has argued that the focus on the sexual act of penetration has led Dover and Foucault to oversimplify Greek erotics in terms of an activity-passivity dichotomy, picturing the ἐραστής as a violent dominator and the ἐρώμενος as the victim of a 'zero-sum competition' – see e.g. J. Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes. The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens* (London: Fontana Press, 1997), pp. 174–182 and 'Dover, Foucault and Greek Homosexuality: Penetration and the Truth of Sex', *Past and Present* 170 (2001), pp. 3–51. T.K. Hubbard also rejects the dominator-dominated model predicated upon the lover-beloved distinction – see T.K. Hubbard, 'Popular Perceptions of Elite Homosexuality in Classical Athens', *Arion* 6.1 (1998), pp. 48–78. My interpretation of Cyrus' understanding of this erotic distinction, although it emphasizes asymmetry and power dynamics, does not share in the most challenged aspects of the 'orthodox view': it is absolutely not based on the 'paradigm' of sexual penetration and it does not emphasize passivity and activity as the crux of the distinction (although not sexually, both Cyrus and his lovers are very much active). More importantly, Cyrus does not think that the asymmetry between lover and beloved is just a homoerotic phenomenon. As Konstan argues, the asymmetric structure of erotic relationship characterizes *both* homoerotic (pederastic) relationships and 'traditional heteroerotic relations between citizens' (the protagonists of Greek novels represent an *exception*, he thinks) – see D. Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry. Love in the Ancient Novel and Related Genre* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 35. Azoulay thinks that Cyrus exploits both masculine and feminine seduction in his attempt to rule as a beloved and Hindley shows that Cyrus' discussion of love seems to follow 'the Greek tendency to minimize the difference' between homosexual and heterosexual *eros* (Azoulay, *Xénophon et les grâces du pouvoir*, p. 418; C. Hindley, 'Xenophon on Male Love', in V.J. Gray (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies. Xenophon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 72–110, at pp. 75 and 86.
- 9 Even Davidson, 'Dover, Foucault and Greek Homosexuality', p. 48, admits that there must have been different roles in erotic intercourse, so the lover-beloved distinction is not completely irrelevant.
- 10 On this traditional view, see Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, pp. 16, 52, 84. We find an expression of this dominant interpretation in Plato's *Symposium*, where Phaedrus argues that *eros* inspires virtue (ἀρετήν) and might (μέγος) in lovers (τοῖς ἐρώσι, 179a8–b3). But Plato also entertains the possibility of the opposite view, depicting lovers in positions of

Therefore, *eros* represents a twofold political risk for him. On the one hand, citizens or subjects who are lovers may be more deferential to their beloved than to the common good or to their political leaders. On the other hand, political leadership is made fragile or can even collapse if a ruler becomes erotically attached to another person, for the beloved can easily distract the leader from his or her tasks and responsibilities. Understanding erotic dynamics in these terms, I argue, Cyrus develops a strategy that aims at overcoming this twofold difficulty. As long as the erotic relationship remains asymmetrical, one can avoid undermining one's rule by becoming a universally *beloved* ruler. And if their ruler is truly the highest object of their love, the citizens become erotically subject to their ruler instead of having their deference mixed with or adulterated by other erotic longings. Xenophon also indicates that ruling *qua* beloved has the advantage of giving the lovers the impression that they are *voluntarily* being ruled. This tension between the enslaving character of *eros* and the impression of freedom and voluntariness that it imparts to lovers is used by Cyrus to establish and strengthen his rulership.

The first section of this paper examines how Cyrus understands and criticizes *eros* on the grounds that being a lover involves a risk of subjection or enslavement. Cyrus' explicit critique of *eros* in his conversations with Araspas in Book 5 appears to be reflected in the deeds of some of the lovers we encounter throughout the book. The second section shows how he sets up his strategy to overcome the political dangers that *eros* represents. My concluding remarks discuss three complications with Cyrus' solution: Xenophon suggests that 1) Cyrus cannot be sure that he is genuinely loved because he is also feared; 2) he may not be able to refrain from becoming himself a lover; 3) ruling *qua* beloved undermines the political character of leadership.

1 The Problem of Subjection: Cyrus' Critique of *Eros*

At the beginning of Book 5 and the beginning of Book 6, Cyrus criticizes *eros* in two conversations with his friend Araspas. Summoned by Cyrus to guard the most beautiful Panthea, Araspas tells Cyrus that he should see her (5.1.3–7).

weakness or passivity: Agathon argues that *eros* is stronger than all passions and stronger than lovers (196c–d) and Pausanias explicitly says that lovers are enslaving themselves willingly for their παιδικά: ἐθέλοντες δουλείας δουλεύειν οἷας οὐδ' ἂν δοῦλος οὐδεὶς (183a). Of course, Plato's Socrates also argues in *Republic* 9 that the tyrant is enslaved by his *eros*. Interestingly, Foucault has claimed that in the highest form of Platonic *eros* – philosophical *eros* – the partners overcome this otherwise inevitable asymmetry (Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité II*, pp. 301–310).

Cyrus refuses to look at the woman and explain his position: *eros* is a necessary force that no one can resist, and it enslaves those who fall prey to the charms of their beloved (5.1.12, 16). Araspas, on the other hand, argues that love is voluntary (ἐθελούσιον, 5.1.11) and can be mastered as long as those who are exposed to beauty are not incontinent with respect to their appetites (5.1.14). Between the first and second discussions, Araspas falls in love with Panthea and loses control over himself. In Book 6, Cyrus reminds Araspas of his view that love is something unconquerable (6.1.36), while Araspas expresses the theory he has arrived at through philosophizing with ‘the unjust sophist, *Eros*’: love is not *per se* a bad thing; its goodness or badness depends on which soul – the good or the bad one – is erotically moved (6.1.41).¹¹ Before turning to these discussions and interpreting Cyrus’ critique of *eros*, I propose to examine some of his encounters with lovers whose love made them subject to their beloved. Some of these observations may have played a role in shaping Cyrus’ explicit view.

1.1 *Cyrus’ Observations: Subjection Dynamics in Erotic Behaviors*

The first scene thematizing *eros* in the book is at the end of 1.4 when Cyrus says his farewell to the Medes before going back to Persia. In this *paidikos logos*, as Xenophon calls it (1.4.27), we encounter a young Median boy – only later known as Artabazus (6.1.9) – who ‘had been struck for quite a long time by Cyrus’ beauty.’¹² Cyrus knows that the boy has been gazing (ἐνορᾶν) at him very often (1.4.27). Playfully discussing the Persian custom of kissing relatives on the mouth when they have not seen each other for a long time or when parting ways, Artabazus pretends he is a relative and Cyrus kisses him twice. Artabazus tells Cyrus that he wishes he could continuously stare at him without blinking and Cyrus laughingly promises that this will be possible in a short time (1.4.28). Unsurprisingly, Artabazus loyally follows Cyrus in his military expedition and eagerly executes his commands (cf. 6.1.34 and 35). At the end of the campaign, he confesses to Cyrus that he enthusiastically followed and obeyed him all along because he hoped to get closer to him, to ‘be with him’ (συνεῖναι, 7.5.52) and to ‘share in the greatest part’ of him’ (πλείστον σου μέρος μεθέξομεν, 7.5.54). Later, in Book 8, we see that he is jealous of Cyrus’ other

11 I agree with Gera that the term ‘σοφιστής’ need not be read pejoratively here – see D.L. Gera, in *Xenophon’s Cyropaedia. Style, Genre and Literary Technique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 231n.143.

12 Azoulay rightly interprets Artabazus as the paradigm of Cyrus’ lovers – see Azoulay, *Xénophon et les grâces du pouvoir*, pp. 410–12. The case of Artabazus’ *eros* for Cyrus is acknowledged and briefly discussed by Field, ‘Educating our Political Hopes’, p. 729. Gera, *Xenophon’s Cyropaedia*, p. 167, also notes that Cyrus puts Artabazus’ longing for him to good use.

friends, especially of Chrysantas, who gets from Cyrus the gift of a kiss instead of a golden cup (8.4.26–27). Cyrus thereupon promises Artabazus that he will get a kiss from him too, but that he will have to wait thirty years for it (8.4.27). Artabazus responds: 'Be prepared, then, for I will be waiting and will not die.' This typically Xenophontic mixture of playfulness and seriousness reveals that Artabazus' erotic longing for Cyrus is a reliable guarantee of his faithful dedication to him. It also appears that his subjection to Cyrus' will is strengthened by the fact that his desires remain unsatisfied, and thus intensified.

Cyrus also observes a similar dynamic at play in the behaviors of Tigranes during the trial of the Armenian king at the beginning of Book 3. Xenophon tells us that Tigranes, the son of the Armenian, was newly married and was in love beyond measure (ὑπερφιλῶν, 3.1.36). Xenophon's use of this very uncommon verb to characterize the type of love that unites Tigranes to his wife indicates that their love is different and more intense than the ordinary φιλία that one would expect between husband and wife at the time.¹³ It is interesting and perhaps not incidental that the only other occurrence of ὑπερφιλῶ in the *Cyropaedia* describes the love that people have for the young Cyrus in the Median court. More specifically, Sakas and *all the others* love him beyond measure (ὁ Σάκας ὑπερφίλει ἧδὴ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι πάντες, 1.4.6). The kind of love that Tigranes has for his wife is similar to that which Cyrus has experienced from a very large number of people.¹⁴

Cyrus implicitly compares Tigranes' marriage to the Armenian's when he asks both of them what they would be ready to give up, to get their wives back. Cyrus' question shows that he is interested in knowing the intensity of their attachment, and especially in seeing how much of themselves they subordinate to their beloved. The Armenian says that he would be willing to give all his money to free his wife and that he would do the same for his children. Xenophon indicates an important difference between the two couples, for Tigranes says that he would be ready to die to keep his wife free: 'I would pay even with my life (τῆς ψυχῆς) so that she never becomes a servant (λατρεῦσαι)' (3.1.36; cf. 3.1.41: δουλεύειν). The Armenian does not seem to love his wife as strongly as Tigranes loves his. When the former sees that he is under attack by Cyrus's troops, he sends his wife and children into the mountains along with precious jewelry and property, and presumably not very well protected (3.1.2).

13 See for instance Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, p. 202.

14 Interestingly, the sole other occurrence of ὑπερφιλῶ in Xenophon characterizes the Arcadians' excessive love for Lycomedes in the *Hellenika*, which leads them to think that he alone is a man and to accept as leaders whomever he would choose (*Hell.* 7.1.24). Aristotle's use of the verb in the discussion of friendship in book 9 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* also suggests asymmetry (*Eth. Nic.* 9.1.1164a3–4).

Not only are they the first to be caught, but once the king sees this, he flees (3.1.4). In the Armenian's eyes, so it seems, his beloved ones are unworthy of his own life. In Tigranes' eyes, sacrificing his life for the freedom of his wife is a self-evident principle.

This contrast is a good example of the power of love on the human soul. To many readers' eyes, and perhaps even to Cyrus' at this moment, Tigranes' reply is more honorable than the Armenian's. But despite the nobility and greatness of his love, Tigranes' position may appear problematic to an ambitious ruler like Cyrus. In fact, *eros* – or, at any rate, a love that exceeds *φιλία* – makes Tigranes subordinate his whole being to his wife's freedom. This subordination significantly limits the sense in which he owns and rules himself because he is a subject to his beloved before being his own master. For, at the moment when he fears for his wife, he becomes subject to Cyrus: paradoxically, it is Tigranes who teaches Cyrus that nothing 'enslaves' (*καταδουλοῦσθαι*) human beings more than intense fear' (3.1.23). Even though this teaching of Tigranes may very well apply to all human beings, what his own story shows is that human beings who are in love are more exposed to fear-induced slavery. After this threat, Tigranes chooses to follow Cyrus and to bring his wife with him. From that moment, Tigranes will silently obey Cyrus' rule (5.1.27). Therefore, Tigranes' love relationship makes him a subject to his wife, which in turn enslaves him to Cyrus' power.

It is difficult to tell how erotic the love relationship between Panthea and Abradatas the Susan is. We know, however, that Panthea loved her husband strongly (*ἐφίλει* *ἰσχυρῶς*, 6.1.32), so much so that she honors him more than her own life or soul (*μειζον τῆς αὐτῆς ψυχῆς ἐτίμησεν*, 6.4.5).¹⁵ When Panthea is captured, Cyrus refuses to take her himself. Instead, he ensures that her honor is preserved. This attention fills Panthea with such strong gratitude that she convinces her husband to surrender to Cyrus and join him in battle with the Susan cavalry.¹⁶ Asked by Panthea, Abradatas is willing to give up his freedom. After he is killed in battle, Panthea kills herself. Xenophon tells us that Cyrus wonders (*ἀγασθεῖς*) at Abradatas' eagerness to fight (6.3.36) and is amazed (*ἐκπλαγείς*) by Panthea's deed (7.3.15, cf. 7.3.16: *ἀγασθεῖς*).¹⁷ Their position as lovers makes them value their beloved so much that they deem their life not worth living

15 Gera (*Xenophon's Cyropaedia*, p. 236) rightly notes the linguistic similarity with Tigranes' description of his devotion for his wife.

16 Xenophon also tells us that Cyrus makes sure that Abradatas is sent to his wife before meeting with him, and that they embrace each other when they are reunited (6.1.46).

17 It is not clear whether Abradatas fights so eagerly *for* Cyrus or because Panthea often encourages him to do so (7.3.9). At any rate, Abradatas' gratitude to Cyrus is inseparable from his love for his wife.

without each other. Panthea is one of the most – if not *the* most – virtuous and admirable character of the *Cyropaedia* (e.g., 5.1.4–5; 7.4.12). Cyrus' respect for her is evident even when she criticizes him for taking insidious advantage of the χάρις he inspires in his friends. In fact, he does not reject the reproach, and instead, 'wept for some time in silence' (7.3.10–11). Thus, Xenophon presents Panthea's critique not only as a courageous *point d'honneur*, but also as revealing an important insight: Cyrus exploits love feelings and the potential weaknesses latent in the interdependence they entail. But despite his admiration and solemnity in the face of Panthea's perceptiveness and steadfast virtue, nothing shows that he wishes to change his conduct.

From his different encounters with lovers, Cyrus observes that love is so powerful that it induces behaviors of extreme devotion among human beings. In both the experiences of φιλία and *eros*, someone else's good appears to the lover as a condition of his or her own good, to such an extent that it can lead to self-destruction. All these lovers whose lives depend so much on the good of their beloved thus appear to Cyrus as profoundly subjugated. From the perspective of a ruler, he sees both how dangerous this precarious sense of self can be, and how easily one can take advantage of this politically weak position.¹⁸

1.2 *The Case of Araspas: Cyrus' Explicit Critique of Eros*

This implicit understanding of *eros* and of lovers appears explicitly in Cyrus' conversations with Araspas on the subject. In the first of these two discussions, Araspas tries to convince Cyrus to look at the divine beauty of Panthea. Cyrus says that he will not look at her, especially if her beauty is so great; that could persuade him very quickly to come to see her again and, gazing

18 *Contra* Sandridge, who thinks that reuniting this couple is a gesture of φιλανθρωπία and does not take into account the fact that Cyrus sees Panthea as an opportunity when she is captured – see especially N.B. Sandridge, *Loving Humanity, Learning, and Being Honored. The Foundations of Leadership in Xenophon's Education of Cyrus* (Washington: Center for Hellenic Studies, Trustees for Harvard University, 2014), p. 33. I also disagree with Nadon, who thinks that Cyrus enjoys the sight of Panthea's corpse – C. Nadon, *Xenophon's Prince. Republic and Empire in the Cyropaedia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), p. 160. For more nuanced positions, see Gera, *Xenophon's Cyropaedia*, p. 228 and Tatum, *Xenophon's Imperial Fiction*, p. 179. Baragwanath, 'Xenophon's Foreign Wives', pp. 50–51, instead thinks that Panthea's reunion with her husband is due to her own diplomatic genius, not to Cyrus' strategy or benevolence. It is true that Panthea shows outstanding virtues and a great deal of diplomatic prudence while captive. However, one should keep in mind that her decisions ultimately lead her and her husband to a tragic ending. After all, Baragwanath admits that she regrets having been torn 'between the debt of *philia* owed to the ideal leader, and that owed to her husband' (p. 57n.34). The forces of love have corrosive effects even on the most virtuous actions and characters.

(θεώμενος) at her, he would neglect his military duties (5.1.8). Araspas argues that *eros* is not a natural necessity – like fire, hunger, thirst, or temperature, but rather something that can be controlled by will – like picking clothes or shoes; therefore, fear and law are sufficient to give *eros* its proper boundaries. On the one hand, Araspas' naïveté is obvious – for one does not choose a lover like a pair of shoes – and to a Greek audience, his speech is somewhat undermined by the many Greek stories featuring incestuous relationships and setting up conflicts opposing *eros* and laws.¹⁹ But one should also be suspicious of Cyrus' alleged fear. In fact, as many have noted, one cannot help but be reminded of the parallel situation in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (3.11), where Socrates comes to Theodote to see her beauty and to expose himself to her persuasive power.²⁰ But the Socratic version of the story shows a possibility of self-control that contradicts Cyrus' claim and that is very much in line with Araspas' confidence in the capacity of strong human beings to control their desires. Not only this, but Cyrus himself finally sees Panthea and talks to her at least once without falling in love with her and becoming enslaved to his passions (7.3.8–13).²¹ Because Araspas presented himself as such an example of continence and mastery, he will ironically undermine his point, but both Socrates' visit to Theodote and Cyrus' encounter with Panthea seem to provide counterevidence to Cyrus' theory.²²

19 A notable example is Herodotus 3.31, where Cambyses marries two of his sisters, a deed which is only lawful in the sense that the king's will is not bound by any law. On the correlation between this unaccountability of the king and the ever-expanding dynamic of *eros*, see M. Landauer, *Dangerous Counsel. Accountability and Advice in Ancient Greece* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2019), p. 65. Gera alerts us to the fact that in the midst of this dialogue, we tend to forget that the interlocutors are not two Greeks, but a Mede and a Persian (Gera, *Xenophon's Cyropaedia*, p. 226).

20 L. Strauss, *Xenophon*, ed. C. Nadon (Chicago: Leo Strauss Center, 2016 [1963]), p. 314; Gera, *Xenophon's Cyropaedia*, p. 224–225; Nadon, *Xenophon's Prince*, p. 158; Baragwanath, 'Xenophon's Foreign Wives', p. 47. Baragwanath rightly notes that Panthea does not exploit her sexuality like Theodote, but Gera points out that both seduce through benevolence and kindness – see Baragwanath, 'Xenophon's Foreign Wives', p. 67 and Gera, *Xenophon's Cyropaedia*, pp. 228–229.

21 Gera thinks that Cyrus 'does not permit himself to see the fair lady of Susa until she no longer belongs to another man,' but Cyrus does not show any sign of falling in love when meeting with her – Gera, *Xenophon's Cyropaedia*, pp. 240–242. According to Gera, Cyrus would have likely married Panthea if she had not killed herself – but this is purely conjectural and I see no indication of it in the text. In fact, as I argue below, Cyrus does not seem eager to find himself a wife.

22 It must be conceded, however, that the circumstances under which Cyrus finally meets Panthea – she is mourning her husband's death – would have made any erotic desire on Cyrus' part extremely odd. Yet, before she commits suicide, Cyrus offers her the man of her choice – with the apparent exception of himself (8.4.12).

Regardless of its truth or falsity, Cyrus' understanding of *eros* remains unchanged by Araspas' response:

I have seen people in tears from the pain of love; and people *enslaved* (δουλεύοντάς) to those they love, even though before they fell in love they believed that it was bad to be *enslaved* (τὸ δουλεύειν); and people giving away many things of which it was better that they not be deprived; and people praying that they *get free* (ἀπαλλαγῆναι) from it, just as they would from a disease, and yet *not being able to get free* (οὐ δυναμένους μέντοι ἀπαλλάττεσθαι), but being *bound by some necessity* (δεδεμένους [...] τινὶ ἀνάγκῃ) stronger than if they had been bound in iron. At any rate, they *surrender themselves to serve* (παρέχουσι γοῦν ἑαυτοὺς [...] καὶ εἰκὴ ὑπηρετοῦντας) the many whims of those they love. They nevertheless do not even try to run away, even though they suffer these evils, but they even stand guard so that those they love do not run off (5.1.12; trans. modified, my emphasis).

Cyrus' speech on *eros* is a univocal critique: love enslaves people and forces them to act imprudently in following their beloved. It is difficult not to think of Tigranes when Cyrus says that love enslaves people who previously deemed slavery to be a bad thing, especially since Tigranes used to spend his time with a wise man and that he still has a very high opinion of freedom (3.1.14; 3.1.36 and 41). Perhaps the story of Tigranes is not only an illustration of Cyrus' thought but an experience through which he comes to it. In any case, the fact that Araspas, despite his defense of self-control in speech, ends up being 'captured by love (ἡλίσκετο ἔρωτι),' and that Xenophon tells his readers that this is 'nothing to wonder at,' seems to support Cyrus' view (5.1.18). Indeed, having failed to persuade the virtuous Panthea to have sexual intercourse with him, Araspas resorts to violence (βία) and threatens to rape her (6.1.31–33). Thereupon, Panthea sends one of her eunuchs to Cyrus, who prevents Araspas' violent deed by asking Artabazus to chastise him (6.1.34–35).²³ Yet it is noteworthy that Araspas refrains from assaulting Panthea 'out of fear that he would suffer at Cyrus' hands' (6.1.35). Perhaps Araspas' understanding of *eros* is not altogether flawed – for if his self-control does not seem able to contain his erotic madness, fear certainly is.

23 Actually, Cyrus wants Artabazus to prevent Araspas to *rape* Panthea, but makes clear to Artabazus that he would not prevent the sexual encounter to happen out of persuasion – it is perhaps not surprising, given his erotic attachment to Cyrus, that Artabazus reviles Araspas much more strongly than what was explicitly asked (cf. 6.1.34 and 6.1.35). It is not implausible that Cyrus suspected such a reinterpretation of his command on Artabazus' part.

Through these complicated contrasts of the speeches and deeds of both Cyrus and Araspas, Xenophon, I think, indicates that neither of them can be entirely right about *eros*, that is, that *eros* is neither a completely unconquerable force, nor simply a matter of voluntary choice. But while Araspas' experience has led him to philosophize about love and reconsider his view, Cyrus will pay no attention to his claims (6.1.41–42). Instead, he reasserts his understanding of *eros*, once again using the political language of subjection and conquest:

I hear that gods are *overcome* by love (ἔρωτος ἡττησθαι), and I know that human beings, even those seeming to be very prudent, have suffered similarly from love. It was I myself who knew that I would not be able to be so steadfast as to neglect the beautiful when in their company. And I am the cause of this problem for you, for I shut you up with this *unconquerable* problem (τῷ ἀμάχῳ πράγματι) (6.1.36; my emphasis).²⁴

By saying this, Cyrus clarifies his view of the necessary enslaving character of *eros*. We see here that he was not speaking loosely or metaphorically when he described love as a matter of necessity (ἀνάγκη) in his previous critique. Cyrus' comparison between fire and *eros* suggests that it works just like a more powerful kind of fire, that is, one that 'ignite[s] *even those who gaze from afar*' (τοὺς ἄπωθεν θεωμένους ὑφάπτουσιν), so that they are inflamed by love' (5.1.16; my emphasis). He refuses Araspas' idea that it does not do so *necessarily* but depending on the lover's capacity for self-control. Araspas' second view about *eros*, however, is not an acknowledgment or acceptance of Cyrus', for his philosophizing has led him to think about the structure of the human soul. Araspas' view is that *eros* affects human beings through psychic mediation – which was already implied in his initial idea of self-control – and not through mere (material) necessity.²⁵ Some parallels with the *Memorabilia* may help us understand what Xenophon has in mind by presenting these two contrasting views. With the example of the deeds of both Socrates and Cyrus, Xenophon suggests that some human beings can look at beauty without being enslaved by love. However, in the only passage where Xenophon is explicitly mentioned, Socrates chastises him harshly for entertaining the thought of kissing the son of

24 Here, Cyrus accepts responsibility once again, but contrary to his conversation with Panthea, this is not because of any explicit blame on Araspas' part.

25 On this materialistic account of erotic powers as emanating through air, see Gera, *Xenophon's Cyropaedia*, pp. 227–228. An indication that Cyrus does not think much in terms of human psychology may be the fact that he draws 'evident' conclusions about eunuchs from observations of all kinds of lower animals (8.5.62).

Alcibiades as Critobulus did. In this passage, Xenophon compares the power of *eros* to the poison of a spider's sting, and Socrates' reply is extremely similar to Cyrus' comparison of *eros* with fire:

'You fool!' says Socrates. 'Do you think that when those who are beautiful kiss they don't inject (ἐνιέναι) anything, just because you don't see (ὁρᾶς) it? Don't you know that this beast that they call beautiful and in bloom is so much more terrible (δεινότερόν) than spiders, that while spiders inject something when they touch (ἄψάμενα), it (*even when it does not touch* [οὐδ' ἀπτόμενον], *but if one just looks* [θεᾶται] *at it*) injects even from quite far away (πρόσωθεν) something of the sort to drive one mad? And perhaps 'loves' (ἔρωτες) are called archers because those who are beautiful inflict wounds *even from afar* (πρόσωθεν οἱ καλοὶ τιτρώσκουσιν). But I counsel you, Xenophon, whenever you see someone beautiful, to flee without looking back. And I counsel you Critobulus, to go into exile for a year. For perhaps in that length of time your sting might just barely heal'.²⁶

Mem. 1.3.13; my emphasis

Socrates advises Xenophon to avoid even looking at the beautiful, but *he* has no trouble gazing (θεωρεῖν) at Theodote's divine beauty (*Mem.* 3.11.1). This difference between Socrates' teaching to Xenophon and his own deeds sheds light on the fact that, as Araspas argues, different human souls respond differently to the power of *eros*, but perhaps it is possible to see this truth only if one can first overcome the view that erotic power necessarily enslaves, that is, if one sees the possibility to resist *eros* through self-control.²⁷ However, it might be wiser to presume, especially in a political rather than a philosophical context, that most people (and even most gods) are not as moderate as Socrates (or Cyrus). Cyrus' relatively simplistic insight about *eros* may not be entirely true, but the idea that love often enslaves human beings is true enough to navigate the world of human passions prudently. Thus, his critique of *eros* as a necessary

26 A. Bonnette's translation (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

27 The idea that self-control and moderation are possible and good is not only shown by Socrates' deeds in the *Memorabilia*, but also argued in many of his thoughts and speeches (1.2.17–28; 1.4.7–8; 1.5; 1.6.13; 1.1.; 1.2.14; 2.6.5, 19, 22; 3.9.4; 4.3.1; 4.3.17–18; 4.5.). This must have been on Xenophon's mind when composing the dialogues between Cyrus and Araspas. Note that by the *Memorabilia*'s standard, there are two ways in *these* conversations in which Araspas appears more Socratic than Cyrus: he recognizes the possibility and defends the goodness of self-control, and he is happy to learn something that he did not know before (cf. *Mem.* 1.6.14).

and enslaving force has enough practical bearing to be integrated into his science of ruling.

2 Cyrus' Erotic Way: The Twofold Mastery of *Eros*

To what extent, then, is *eros* truly unconquerable? And if it is, how can Cyrus deal with such an unconquerable force? An amusing scene from the last 'symposium' (8.4.13) of the story shows a joking Cyrus presenting himself as a professional in the art of matchmaking (8.4.19). Is not the art of arranging marriages a way to stand above *eros* and to manage its force knowledgeably? Cyrus is not only joking about matchmaking: he arranges the marriage between Gobryas' daughter and Hystaspas (8.4.26). Jokes and seriousness are often intertwined in Xenophon's 'sympotic' scenes (cf. 2.3.1), and the jocular conversation about Cyrus' governing the course of erotic affairs indicates something true about his actual treatment of *eros*. I think we can identify two distinct but complementary strategies on his part to master the power of love.

The first of these strategies is hinted at by Chrysantas' joke at the symposium: 'By the gods, would you be able to say what sort of wife would be advantageous for a cold king?' (8.4.22). Cyrus laughs but does not deny that he is cold, and this characteristic is repeated in Hystaspas' joke, again, without any denial. But in what exactly does Cyrus' coldness consist? His confession to Araspas that he might have not been able to be steadfast in the presence of Panthea makes implausible the hypothesis that he is simply insensitive to the powers of love (cf. 7.1.36).²⁸ Rather, it looks like Cyrus stays at a distance great enough to avoid the charms of seduction.²⁹ And his depiction as a 'cold king' reminds the reader that Cyrus is not married yet. By staying at a distance, Cyrus avoids becoming a lover and hence avoids the risks of subjection implied in erotic relationships.³⁰ When he finally marries, the ceremony is not described by Xenophon (unlike, for instance, the military processions in Babylon, cf. 8.3.1–8) and the text suggests that his wife is not as beautiful as

28 Strauss nevertheless affirms that Cyrus is 'amusic' and 'wholly unerotic' – see Strauss, *Xenophon*, pp. 314, 322, 406.

29 In addition to not taking Panthea for himself, Cyrus decides to refuse Gobryas' gift of his daughter and has her married to his friend Hystaspas instead (5.2.7–13 cf. 8.4.25).

30 I agree with Field on this point ('Educating our Political Hopes', p. 729): 'Cyrus understands the power of beauty and love to enslave men and has made a conscious decision not to take such risks with his own soul.'

Panthea was (cf. 8.5.28 and 4.6.11).³¹ We are not surprised to learn that she is not present at Cyrus' death (8.8.28). Even though they have two children, it looks like he manages to avoid falling in love with her. By seeing his marriage as a political device for matters of succession and diplomatic strategies – his wife is Cyaxares' daughter –, he seems able to escape any erotic complications that could arise from it.³² This distance-keeping may very well be the key to Cyrus' coldness. To avoid falling in love looks more like an intentional way to master *eros* than a psychological deficiency.³³

But there is also a more proactive way to master erotic forces. In both Cyrus' implicit and explicit critiques of *eros*, we have seen that lovers tend to become subjects to their beloved. To be loved in return, the lover is indeed willing to do many things that would otherwise seem foolish, completely unreasonable, or dangerous. In these situations, the beloved becomes the master of the lover. The cases of Tigranes and his wife and Panthea and Abradatas could appear slightly different because these are couples for whom love seems reciprocal.³⁴ Reciprocal love, according to this logic, may bring about a situation of mutual dependence that mitigates the impression of subjection but that does not yet suppress it. Observing this dynamic, if a ruler like Cyrus wants to be free and to rule,³⁵ he needs to be in the position of the beloved and in that position only. He needs to avoid reciprocal relationships and take full advantage of erotic asymmetry. This strategy seems to be Cyrus' ultimate way of mastering the otherwise 'unconquerable' *eros*.

After his first dialogue on the nature of *eros* with Arapsas, and right after Xenophon tells us that Araspas will indeed be 'captured by love,' Cyrus addresses the Medes and the allies, wishing to make them stay with him

31 Chrysantas' comic question concerning the fitting wife for Cyrus remains unanswered, but depending on which one of Cyrus' two different criteria for matchmaking one uses (8.4.20–21), a cold wife would be a good match for a cold king, or a very hot wife could compensate for his coldness and ensure the production of an heir: although she is not as beautiful as Panthea, Cyrus' wife, it seems, has been in love with Cyrus since she was a girl (8.5.19). That Chrysantas' question calls for an opposite seems supported by Xenophon's following joke: Cyrus gives Tigranes' wife 'feminine ornaments (γυναικεῖον κόσμον)' because she has behaved courageously or in a manly way (ἀνδρεῖως, 8.4.24).

32 Cf. Azoulay, *Xénophon et les grâces du pouvoir*, p. 409.

33 On erotic self-control as condition for ruling *qua* beloved, see Azoulay, *Xénophon et les grâces du pouvoir*, pp. 394; 399–400; 408–9.

34 Xenophon is unusual in that he seems to think that erotic reciprocity is possible between husband and wife – see the case of Niceratos in the *Symposium* (8.3) and Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, p. 52 – and is eager to praise it (*Symp.* 9.2–7).

35 For Cyrus does think that ruling and being free are mutually dependent, if not the same (cf. 7.1.13).

willingly (ἐθελοντάς, 5.1.19). His speech first expresses his gratitude to the people who have followed him thus far and run risks with him (κινδυνεύειν, 5.1.21). Cyrus then says not only that he could not pay them back properly for their devotion and self-sacrifices, but that he would be *ashamed* (αἰσχυνοίμην) to pay for their loyal services. Instead, Cyrus professes that, regardless of their decision to stay or leave, he will act in such a way that even those who leave will praise him (ἐπαινεῖν). Cyrus does not say that the Medes and allies will not get any rewards if they follow him: he makes it quite clear that the ‘gods are giving good things openly’, and so that they should probably expect to receive some material rewards after all. However, Cyrus insists that his troops should not expect rewards proportionate to their devotion, that is, they should not expect anything like a *reciprocal* exchange between him and them. They should not follow him because he has been and will be good *to them*, but only because he *deserves praise*, that is, because *he is κάλος*. Cyrus sets up his relationship with his subjects as an asymmetrical one.

Artabazus is the first to respond to Cyrus’ speech. His answer completes Cyrus’ demand to be followed on asymmetrical and non-reciprocal grounds, explaining that erotic rulership works precisely that way. Artabazus tells Cyrus that his subjects are disposed to him like bees to the leader of their hive:

You seem to me to have been born a king by nature, no less than is the naturally born leader of the bees in the hive, for the bees obey him voluntarily (ἐκούσαι). If he stays in a place, not one leaves it; and if he goes out somewhere, not one abandons him, so remarkably ardent is their innate love of being ruled by him (οὕτω δεινός τις ἔρως αὐταῖς τοῦ ἄρχεσθαι ὑπ’ ἐκείνου ἐγγίγνεται). And human beings seem to me to be somewhat similarly disposed toward you, for even when you were going away from us to Persia, who among the Medes, whether young or old, failed to follow you, until Astyages turned us back? And when you set out from Persia to help us, we again saw nearly all your friends willingly following along (ἐθελουσίους συνεπομένους). Further, when you desired (ἐπεθύμησας) this expedition, all Medes followed you here voluntarily (ἐκόντες ἠκολούθησαν) (5.1.24–25).

The argument implies that erotic subordination to a ruler is both voluntary and extremely – one may say terribly (δεινός) – strong. People follow Cyrus because he is the object of their *eros*. The metaphor of the beehive and king bee in Greek political thought has generally been interpreted as conveying a picture of ideal rulers and perfect political orders, but Xenophon complicates this view by introducing the erotic dimension of Cyrus’ rule in Artabazus’ use

of the metaphor.³⁶ As seen from his conversation with Araspas, it is, to say the least, not clear that our protagonist agrees that love is voluntary. But what Araspas' defense of *eros* and Artabazus' analogy reveals to Cyrus is that lovers are usually under the *impression* that their erotic attachment is voluntary.³⁷ Therefore, erotic rulership is stronger and safer than any kind of coerced rule. If Cyrus can rule *qua* beloved like the ruler of a beehive, he can guarantee himself extremely faithful and obedient subjects. At the very beginning of his adventure, before even beginning his campaign, Cyrus encourages the soldiers of his army to be 'lovers of praise (ἐπαίνου ἐραστάς)' (1.1.12) and tries to have them look erotically (ἐρωτικῶς) at the prospect of beginning the campaign (3.3.12). Because he can be the ultimate source of praise among his troops and the indisputable leader of this military journey, Cyrus quickly becomes the object of the erotic longings that he has instilled in his subjects.

In addition to the case of Artabazus discussed in the first section of this essay, Araspas' observable change of attitude after he falls in love with Panthea can be interpreted in line with this idea of erotic rulership. Araspas' philosophical doctrine of the two souls must not be read hastily as a dichotomy between a passionate and loving bad soul and an apathetic rational soul. Attempting to explain this psychic partition, Araspas says that the soul cannot be good and bad at the same time, and by this, he means that it 'does not love both noble and shameful deeds at the same time' (οὐδ' ἄμα καλῶν τε καὶ αἰσχρῶν ἔργων ἐρᾷ, 6.1.41). Accordingly, we must understand that the good soul is good because it loves good actions, and the bad soul is bad because it loves bad things. Araspas concludes that his good soul conquers because it has taken Cyrus as an ally (σύμμαχον). But as we see in the sequel, the good deeds that Araspas' good

36 The erotic dimension of Artabazus' metaphor is silenced by L.L'Allier, *Le bonheur des moutons. Étude sur l'homme et l'animal dans la hiérarchie de Xénophon* (Sainte-Foy: Édition du Sphinx, 2004), pp. 175–179 and S. v. Overmeire, 'The Perfect King Bee. Visions of Kingship in Classical Antiquity', *Akroterion* 56 (2011), pp. 31–46, at p. 36. *Contra* Vasilaros, who insists that bees are *not* erotic animals and that Xenophon chooses this animal because it is a 'σύμβολο της εγκράτειας' – see G.N. Vasilaros, in 'Ὡςπερ ἡγεμῶν ἐν μελίτταις. Η μέλισσα ως σύμβολο της βασιλικής εξουσίας στην Κύρου Παιδεία,' in I. Vassiss, G.S. Henrich and D.R. Reinsch (eds.), *Lesearten. Festschrift für Athanasios Kambylis zum 70. Geburtstag dargebracht von Schülern, Kollegen und Freunden* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1998), pp. 12–32, at pp. 22–23. Farber also construes Cyrus as an idealized king and only mentions Artabazus' metaphor of the king bee as an indication that Cyrus is a helper (βοηθός) – see J.J. Farber, 'The *Cyropaedia* and Hellenistic Kingship', *The American Journal of Philology* 100 (1979), pp. 497–514, at p. 513.

37 Mitchell argues that the voluntary character of the obedience of Cyrus' subjects is more apparent than real, but she does not discuss the connection with *eros* in Artabazus' speech – see L. Mitchell, *Cyrus the Great and the Obedience of the Willing. Center for Leadership Studies. Extended Essays Series* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 2012), pp. 15–18.

soul now loves are the deeds ordered by Cyrus. Araspas has not turned away from *eros*, but the object of his love has changed: he is no longer subject to the charms of Panthea but to those of Cyrus, who is also καλός in his way. Indeed, the spy mission on which Cyrus sends Araspas is an extremely dangerous one, and Xenophon indicates that the choice to send Araspas is a product of the position in which his love affair has put him (6.1.31).³⁸

We observe a similar strategy when Cyrus has finished conquering and establishes his empire. Right after having moved into the palace of the Babylonian king, Cyrus reflects on the problem stated at the outset of Xenophon's inquiry, namely that of ruling over many human beings (7.5.58). When reflecting upon the kind of bodyguards he should seek out, he indicates once more that the crux of his political knowledge is an understanding of human love relationships:

He believed that there could never be a trustworthy human being who was more friendly to someone else than to the one in need of the guard. So he recognized that those who had children, or wives well suited to them, or boyfriends, were compelled by nature to love especially these (φύσει ἡναγκάσθαι ταῦτα μάλιστα φιλεῖν). Seeing that eunuchs were deprived of all these ties, [...] he made all those who served near his own person, beginning with the doormen, eunuchs (7.5.59–60, 65).

Pondering the general problem of political rule over human beings, Cyrus concludes that the safest subjection is one that is not disturbed by any ties of love.³⁹ But since he does not rule a people of eunuchs and cannot simply get rid of his subjects' loving desires, he must seek to set up his kingdom like a beehive in which *he* is the sole beloved ruler.⁴⁰

In Book 8, we see again that this is what Cyrus tries to achieve. Acknowledging the risk of arousing rebellious envies among the strongest of his men, he thinks it is best to avoid political and military repression, for this would probably provoke even more envy and fortify solidarity among his opponents. Instead, 'he

38 Again, *contra* Sandridge, *Loving Humanity*, p. 69, who interprets this as a sign of Cyrus' softness or gentleness (πραότης), not as a manifestation of his calculation and use of fear (cf. 6.1.31, 35).

39 *Contra* Foucault, who claims without support that the advantage of eunuchs is that they are 'incapable of hurting women and children' – see Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité II*, p. 244.

40 On eunuchs as 'ideal subjects,' see V. Azoulay, 'Xénophon, le roi et les eunuques: Généalogie d'un monstre?', *Revue Française d'Histoire des Idées Politiques* 11 (2000), pp. 3–26, at p. 20: 'les eunuques sont les seuls dont le loyalisme exclusif soit garanti.'

judged one to be both best for his own safety and most noble, if he should be able to make the strongest become *more friendly* (μᾶλλον φίλους) *to himself than to each other*' and thus 'to become loved (φιλεῖσθαι)' by them (8.1.48; my emphasis, cf. 8.2.28).⁴¹ Genuine friendship among his subjects would adulterate their love for him.⁴² Even though φιλία may not be a passion as powerful as *eros*, the fact that Cyrus uses it in a like manner suggests that the logic of subjection, albeit perhaps weaker, is similar in both cases.⁴³ Indeed, he understands his relation to his friendly subjects as one of seduction and attempts to *bewitch* (καταγοητεύειν) them (8.1.40). The key to the political unity of Cyrus' empire is not harmony or concord within the body of the citizens, but a ruler-oriented loving subjection.

41 Cf. 7.1.38; 8.1.48; 8.2.1 and 26. This much, however, was already advised by his father to him at the beginning of the book (1.6.24–25).

42 On this point, I agree with Reisert, 'Ambition and Corruption', p. 306.

43 The overlap between φιλία and *eros* seems to be common in Greek culture – see Hindley, 'Xenophon on Male Love', p. 74n.7 and Azoulay, *Xénophon et les grâces du pouvoir*, pp. 371–2. It is also attested in Xenophon's Socratic writings, in the *Memorabilia* (e.g. 2.6.28–29 and 3.11) as well as in the *Symposium*, where φιλία stems from an *eros* for the soul or mind of the other: ὁ τῆς ψυχῆς ἔρως at 8.12 is called ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς φιλία at 8.15. *Contra* Hindley ('Xenophon on Male Love', p. 100), I do not think we need to suspect that Socrates (who calls himself ἔρωτικός at *Mem.* 2.6.28) is uncomfortable with the term ἔρως; rather, he seems eager to treat love and friendship almost interchangeably. This is why Cyrus must be careful and keep his relationships at a distance – on this see Sandridge, *Loving Humanity*, pp. 81–83; and Tatum, *Xenophon's Imperial Fiction*, p. 163. I would add that φιλοανθρωπία, unlike *eros*, does not have a *particular* but a general and more diffuse object, which makes this detachment easier. The main exception I see to this distance loving on Cyrus' part is the case of Chrysantas. But Chrysantas seems precisely to 'rule' Cyrus, at least to some extent, by telling him what to do (see 8.4.11). For a persuasive understanding of Cyrus' friendships as exploitative, asymmetrical and directed toward political subjection – which confirms my view that *eros* and φιλία operate similarly in his rule, see McCloskey, 'On Xenophonic Friendship', esp. pp. 265, 269–72, 282. The point is also mentioned by D. Plácido, 'La monarchie orientale comme modèle de la polis: la *Cyropédie* de Xénophon', in A. Gonzales and M.T. Schettino (eds.), *L'idéalisation de l'autre. Faire un modèle d'un anti-modèle. Actes du 2e colloque SoPHIA – Société Politique, Histoire de l'Antiquité* (Besançon: Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2014), pp. 41–52 and 47–48. I agree with McCloskey that Socratic friendship is incompatible with Cyrus' friendship, *contra* Danzig and Tamiolaki, who downplay the asymmetry of Cyrus' friendly relationships and thus think of Cyrus as Socratic and vice versa – see G. Danzig, 'Nature, Culture and the Rule of Good in Xenophon's Socratic Theory of Friendship: *Memorabilia* Book 2', in A. Starvu and C. Moore (eds.), *Socrates and the Socratic Dialogue* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), pp. 459–480, at pp. 462, 469) and M. Tamiolaki, 'Xenophon's Conception of Friendship in *Memorabilia* 2.6 (with Reference to Plato's *Lysis*)', in G. Danzig, D. Johnson and D. Morrison (eds.), *Plato and Xenophon. Comparative Studies* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), pp. 433–460, at pp. 437, 445.

Therefore, Cyrus' understanding of love is crucial for his science of ruling. It provides him with the insight necessary to control this fundamental force of the human soul, at least as far as it is possible to control it. Cyrus' mastery of erotic powers culminates in his effort to avoid being a lover and being instead in the sole position of a universally beloved leader.

3 The Limits of Cyrus' Solution

But it seems that Xenophon shows problems with Cyrus' solution. I propose to conclude by reflecting on three of them. The first one concerns the possibility of being universally and truly loved, the second, the possibility of avoiding becoming a lover, and the third, the political implications of ruling *qua* beloved.

First, one must wonder whether it is possible for Cyrus to be loved by all his subjects, that is, to be *truly* loved. Is it not likely, instead, that ruling over such a gigantic empire will lead Cyrus to be feared? And is it not likely that even those who love him are also somewhat afraid of him? Xenophon hints at this problem several times. At the beginning of the book, he writes that fear was an important component of his rule (1.1.5). Towards the end, Chrysantas tells Cyrus that a good ruler is like a good father (8.1.1), yet we have learned earlier that fathers punish their children by making them weep (2.2.14). Xenophon then describes Cyrus' strategy of implementing an impressive system of surveillance, having, by means of his subjects, 'Eyes and Ears' everywhere (8.2.10). Cyrus' closest friends and relatives are not exempted from such surveillance. It is also clear that some of his dearest companions, like Araspas, fear him (e.g., 6.1.35). Early on, Cyrus makes his uncle Cyaxares fear him. When Xenophon narrates Cyrus' visit to his father Cambyses after the completion of his empire, the tension is palpable. Cambyses makes explicit the differences between his rule as king of the Persians and Cyrus' empire and insists that Cyrus will only become King of Persia after his death (8.5.26). The speech is very formal, and the reader does not sense anymore the paternal and filial love that is felt in their conversation at the beginning of the book (1.6). Why would Cambyses be so clear about the limits of Cyrus' empire if he did not have the slightest fear for his own politics? Indeed, everything looks like Cambyses' love for his son is mixed with (if not supplanted by) fear. Cyrus can probably not avoid being feared because the risk of being feared is dialectically embedded in his desire to be loved. Since one can hardly be *sure* that one is truly loved, one cannot solely rely on love to assure authority, and the suspicion that this love is not genuine will likely produce behaviors that are conducive to fear. The

contamination of love by fear is latent in the fact that one cannot *control* love. But as soon as one is loved *and* feared, one cannot be sure that one is truly loved.⁴⁴ It thus follows from the dialectic of love and fear that Cyrus' attempt to rule qua beloved can only partly succeed.

Second, it is not clear at all that Cyrus can avoid becoming a lover himself. This difficult status of a beloved that is not himself a lover is similar to a certain conception of the divine.⁴⁵ Not only is Cyrus said to be 'descended from gods' (4.1.24), but he explicitly compares himself to a God, claiming on his deathbed that he deserves to become a partner to the 'benefactor of human beings' (8.7.25). In this sense, he imitates God or the gods.⁴⁶ Cyrus' theology is complex and confused, but it is safe to say that he does not meet all the criteria to be himself divine.⁴⁷ And if it is true that a self-sufficient God could be devoid of *eros*, Cyrus probably cannot. On the contrary, one wonders: could Cyrus achieve his conquest of Asia without any erotic impetus? Should his striving to rule the world not be understood in terms of *eros*? Certainly, one would be at first more inclined to understand the φιλοτιμία that energizes him as a 'thumotic' rather than erotic force. Yet, the particle 'φιλ-' in 'φιλοτιμία' suggests a kinship between *thumos* and a kind of love that need not be radically separated from *eros*,⁴⁸ for Diotima in Plato's *Symposium* presents 'thumotic' aspirations as derived from a broader erotic striving for immortality (208c–e),

44 According to Xenophon's *Hiero*, the tyrant cannot be sure that he is loved and not feared (cf. 1.37 and 7.6). This undermines his pursuit of pleasures, for 'sex with love' (τὰ μετ' ἔρωτος ἀφροδίσια) is more delightful than mere sexual pleasures (1.29) – see Hindley, 'Xenophon on Male Love' and Newell, *Tyranny*, pp. 192–193. At the very end of the dialogue, Simonides tells Hiero that if he makes his city happy, he will 'not only be liked,' but 'loved by human beings' (11.11: οὐ μόνον φιλοῖο ἄν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐρῶσιν ὑπ' ἀνθρώπων). But whereas the poet's teaching presents being loved and not feared as a happy consequence of good rulership, Cyrus tries to be loved in order to secure his rule. Thus, while the *Cyropaedia* shows how one can rule over many people and nations by doing so knowledgeably, the aim of the *Hiero* is to 'show the tyrant how he should enjoy his goods, lead a better life and not fear the suspicion of the private citizens' – see F. Zuolo, 'Xenophon's *Hiero*: Hiding Socrates to Reform Tyranny' in A. Starvu and C. Moore (ed.), *Socrates and the Socratic Dialogue* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), pp. 564–576, at p. 572.

45 The most prominent example is Aristotle's argument in *Metaphysics* 12.7. For a helpful discussion of the role of *eros* in Aristotle's theology, see G. Richardson Lear, *Happy Lives and the Highest Good. An Essay on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 73–80.

46 See L.S. Pangle, 'Xenophon on the Psychology of Supreme Political Ambition', *American Political Science Review*, 111, pp. 308–321, at 315–316.

47 On the incoherence of Cyrus' theology, cf. 1.6.6 and 6.1.36, which implies a rejection of divine omnipotence, with 8.7.22, which asserts that the gods are all-powerful.

48 On the connection between *thumos* and *eros*, see Pangle, 'Psychology of Supreme Political Ambition', pp. 311, 319n.21 and Newell, *Tyranny*, pp. 203, 208.

and Socrates in Xenophon's *Symposium* corroborates this idea, claiming that the Heavenly *Eros* inspires both *φιλία* and the noble deeds of the gentlemen (8.10–11). It thus seems possible to understand Cyrus' political ambition as deeply erotic. It would not seem exaggerated to say that Cyrus is so erotically attached to his political accomplishments that he becomes enslaved to his beloved empire.⁴⁹ *Φιλοτιμία* makes him run risks and make many sacrifices, just as *eros* does in general when it makes a lover subject to his or her beloved.

Third, one is prompted by Xenophon to wonder about the political implications of Cyrus' erotic rule. As we have seen, according to Araspas and Artabazus, following someone out of love is a voluntary subjection. Yet if we are to believe Cyrus' account of the *necessary* ties implied in *eros*, it looks like love merely *appears* voluntary to the lover. Wittingly or not, Artabazus' own words betray this tension when he tells Cyrus at the end of his speech: 'Now too we are so disposed that we are confident when with you, even though in enemy territory, but *without you we are even afraid to go home*' (5.1.26; my emphasis).⁵⁰ How would Cyrus' people be free to stop following him, to stop loving him in such circumstances? Tigranes' brief intervention following Artabazus' speech also mitigates this appearance of freedom under the charms of his ruler, for Tigranes tells Cyrus: 'my soul has been prepared *not to deliberate* (οὐχ ὥς βουλευέσουςα παρσκευάσται) but to do *whatever you command* (ὅ τι ἂν παραγγέλλῃς)' (5.1.27; my emphasis). How can voluntary or free actions be *without* deliberation? Xenophon's multiple metaphors for Cyrus' rulership seem rather to point in the opposite direction: Cyrus rules like a father over his children, like a husband over his wife, and Gobryas even submits to him as a *slave to his master* (7.2.28; 7.1.1, 43; 8.2.9; 8.8.1). According to Greek customs, all these relationships share one fundamental characteristic: radical asymmetry and inequality. This inequality and lack of reciprocity are essential for a leader who wishes to rule *qua* beloved. However, while children and women remain free human beings, the other metaphors that Xenophon uses to describe Cyrus' leadership emphasize an ontological gap between ruler and ruled: a man feeding animals, a farmer gelding horses, bulls or dogs, a shepherd's care for his flock (2.1.28–29; 7.5.62–65; 8.2.14).⁵¹ To rule as a beloved leader, Cyrus must either *effeminate*,

49 This is perhaps even clearer in Herodotus' presentation, which construes Cyrus' death as the result of a hubristic desire for more military victories and a greater empire (1.205–214).

50 The problem of fear is also left out of the idealizing accounts of Artabazus' speech: see Overmeire, 'The Perfect King Bee', p. 36; Vasilaros, 'Ὡςπερ ἡγεμῶν ἐν μελίτταις'; G.N. Vasilaros, 'Zu Xenophons Kyrupädie 5.1.26', *Philologus* 143 (1999), pp. 348–352.

51 For a list of these metaphors, see Newell, *Tyranny*, p. 209.

infantilize, enslave or treat as animals the men who follow him. As Rubin puts it, 'love on a mass scale makes a herd animal out of man'.⁵²

Many scholars have observed that Cyrus conflates politics and dominion.⁵³ Many have also discussed the different ways in which the failure of Cyrus' regime after his death indicates defects in his education and project.⁵⁴ What I would like to suggest is that Xenophon shows this feature of Cyrus' rule not only to highlight problems with his politics but to undermine Cyrus' whole project much more fundamentally. Xenophon in fact opens the *Cyropaedia* by telling us that, by comparing human governments and animal keeping, one concludes that 'it is easier, given his nature, for a human being to rule all the other kinds of animals than to rule human beings' (1.1.3). Cyrus is then said to represent an *exception* to this general rule for his success in ruling over 'very many cities, and very many nations,' given that he was doing so knowledgeably. I have argued that Cyrus' utmost knowledge concerns the power of *eros* and how to cope with it to avoid being enslaved by love and, instead, to rule as beloved. Xenophon shows us that the implication of Cyrus' twofold mastery of *eros* is an asymmetry between ruler and ruled that makes it impossible to treat the ruled as free human beings. Xenophon himself indicates by one of his last metaphors that this gap between the ruler and his subjects is so important that it is akin to the gap between humans and herd animals. In other words, Cyrus' success in ruling human beings is tantamount to annihilating the humanity of his subjects, that is, *Cyrus is not a genuine exception* to Xenophon's first observation.⁵⁵

52 Rubin, 'Love and Politics', p. 412. According to Aristotle, of course, bees are gregarious animals comparable to herd animals and less political than human beings (*Pol.* 1.2.1253a7–9). The significance of Artabazus' comparison could be similar: Cyrus' beehive is not politics properly speaking because it does not treat its subjects as truly political beings.

53 Notably Rubin, 'Love and Politics' and Field, 'Educating our Political Hopes'.

54 Especially Field 'Educating our Political Hopes', but also Reisert, 'Ambition and Corruption' and Newell, *Tyranny*.

55 I do not take this to mean that Xenophon is contradicting himself or that we must distinguish between Xenophon and the narrator of the *Cyropaedia*, as if this distinction were the necessary consequence of the ironic distance between what Xenophon says as a narrator and what he urges us to think by reflecting on his narrative. While we cannot *prove* that Xenophon is genuinely the narrator of the book, I see no reason to think he is not. Xenophon may simply wish to have us measure his initial statements about Cyrus against his picture of the man's whole life. Xenophon is not so much distancing himself from the narrator of his book as he is simply writing in a philosophical way. Stadter also thinks that Xenophon is the genuine narrator of the *Cyropaedia* – see P. Stadter, 'Fictional Narrative in the *Cyropaedia*', in V.J. Gray (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies. Xenophon*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 367–400. Of course, this view cannot apply to all of Xenophon's works – the *Anabasis* is one clear counter-example – see P.J. Bradley, 'Irony and the Narrator in Xenophon's *Anabasis*', in V.J. Gray (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies. Xenophon*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 520–552.

Cyrus' success properly understood is but an imitation of animal keeping in the human realm, which is at best an unattractive perspective.⁵⁶

If I am right in suggesting that this circular structure is meant to indicate Cyrus' fundamental failure at ruling human beings properly speaking, it does not follow that *Xenophon's* enterprise fails as well. Rather, his whole narrative is prompted by something like a Socratic *aporia* and attempts to solve it by investigating the implications of what appears at first like a promising yet still hypothetic answer.⁵⁷ Xenophon has not written a treatise presenting explicitly his analysis and conclusions because such a piece of writing could never have the effects that the *Cyropaedia* has on its readers. Reading Xenophon's most exciting book, we are so eager to consider the hypothesis that we are seduced by Cyrus and by the idea that he *was* a genuinely successful political ruler.⁵⁸ If, going through this erotic experience ourselves – as perhaps Xenophon has as well –, we can manage to find our way out of the charms and distinguish the apparent from the real, then this process of disillusion is intellectually and politically formative. Cyrus' education and its unfolding can thus become, in the objective genitive sense of the phrase, a genuine *Κύρου παιδεία*.⁵⁹

56 In contrast to Socrates' metaphor of the leader as a shepherd, according to which the ruler should take care of the happiness of the ruled above all and not about their love for him, Cyrus' herd keeping is directed toward him and his empire (cf. *Mem.* 3.2 and *Cyr.* 7.2.14) – see L.L'Allier, *Le bonheur des moutons*, pp. 170–71. Let us also note that in Socrates' metaphor, the sheep have *elected* their shepherd. While I think that seeing Cyrus' limits is essential to Xenophon's project, Tamiolaki, 'Tentative Answers,' pp. 190–91, is right that Xenophon's Cyrus is not pictured wholly negatively.

57 I agree with Tamiolaki, 'Tentative Answers,' p. 192, that 'overall, the *Cyropaedia* offers a dialogic reflection (and not an authoritative suggestion) about leadership'. Field considers the end– not the beginning – of the *Cyropaedia* as a 'Platonic *aporia*' ('Educating our Political Hopes,' p. 724).

58 This idea of a seduction is suggested by Reisert, 'Ambition and Corruption,' p. 314.

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