

Antisthenica Cynica
Socratica

Edited by
Vladislav Suvák

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II

ANTISTHENES BETWEEN DIOGENES AND SOCRATES

Vladislav Suvák

A dual portrait of Antisthenes has been preserved in ancient sources. The first one can be found in Xenophon's Socratic dialogues, the second one in doxographical literature. The first portrait falls into the context of Classical thought; the second one strongly reflects Hellenistic thought. The portraits differ from each other in several aspects – hence historians often separate Classical accounts from doxographical ones to show their points of disagreement. But we may approach them in a different way as well: doxographical portraits of Antisthenes can be grasped as Hellenistic reinterpretations of classical Antisthenian topics, informed by Antisthenes' works as well as by different ways of reading and interpreting them. From this perspective, the two portraits of Antisthenes do not have to stand against each other, but instead may form interesting connections and relations helpful in the reconstruction of a more complex portrait of Antisthenes.

Xenophon's portrait of Antisthenes is part of a broader literary genre which we designate with the Aristotelian term Σωκρατικοὶ λόγοι.¹ Modern historians thought for a long time that Socrates' followers were writing the "Socratic dialogues" with the only intention of preserving the teaching of their Master.² But the λόγοι Σωκρατικοί themselves speak against their opinions. For example,

¹ Cf. Aristotle, *Poet.* 1447b11; *Rhet.* 1417a21; *Fr.* 72–73.

² Cf. R. Hirzel, *Der Dialog*, I, pp. 68–83; Similar opinion defends A. Hermann, *Dialog*, p. 929.

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at the beginning of his *Memorabilia* Xenophon writes that he shall write down as much as he can recall about what Socrates was actually like and how he benefited others by his personal example and by conversations (*Mem.* I,3,1). Xenophon's note evokes in readers the impression that his *Memorabilia* are an almost literal record of conversations which Socrates had with his companions. But in the very next chapter, Xenophon mentions various oral and written accounts concerning Socrates which, according to him, should be put into their appropriate context – which, in reality, he does by his *Memorabilia* (*Mem.* I,4,1). Several parallels with the passages of the writings of other Socratic authors demonstrate that Xenophon attempts a literary portrayal of Socrates' activity in the context of the Socratic literature of the 4th century B.C.³ Xenophon's emphasis on the authenticity of memoirs is a literary device and integral part of the genre Σωκρατικοὶ λόγοι.⁴

³ Charles Kahn (*Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*, pp. 29–35) deals with a fictional character of Xenophon's Socratic dialogues in detail. The older interpretative tradition advocated the opinion that Socrates' defence (Xenophon's and mainly Plato's version of apology) is a record of speech that Socrates actually delivered at court. However, we do not have any text-based support for this explication. See L. Rossetti, *Alla ricerca dei logoi Sokraticoi perduti*, II, pp. 87–99. Cf. also A. D. Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography*, p. 46: "The Socratics experimented in biography, and the experiments were directed towards capturing the potentialities rather than the realities of individual lives. Socrates, the main subject of their considerations (there were other subjects, such as Cyrus), was not so much the real Socrates as the potential Socrates. He was not a dead man whose life could be recounted. He was the guide to territories as yet unexplored."

⁴ Xenophon, for example, at the beginning of his *Symposium* states that he personally partook in the drinking-party which is dramatically dated to 421 B.C., the time when he was on a military expedition outside of Athens. Similar examples can be found in almost all Socratic dialogues which consciously move themselves along the boundary between reality and fiction. Cf. A. D. Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography*, p. 49: "The interplay between new political and social ideals and old forms is an essential feature of fourth-century writing. At the same time the search for rules of life had to reckon with the new power of words. Plato's fear of being overpowered by rhetoric is as real as Isocrates' fear of having his words controlled by philosophers."

Socratic conversations are relatively difficult to read for several reasons. First of all, we cannot ascertain what attitudes their participants hold, since there can occur a situation when what they thought at the beginning of conversation shows itself in a very different light at its end (as e.g. in Plato's *Protagoras*). Even more difficult is to find out what attitudes are held by the authors of conversations who are not present at the dialogues (Antisthenes, Plato, Xenophon, Phaedo, Aeschines). We do not know if they agree or not with the opinions of Socrates, or of other persona leading their collective investigation (κοινή ζητεῖν).⁵ Authors of the Socratic dialogues – perhaps with the exception of Xenophon – do not say what they are thinking about the discussed questions.⁶ They also do not expose their attitudes to the

⁵ Cf. Plato, *Lach.* 201a3: Socrates says that we must seek in common most of all as well as possible a teacher for ourselves – since we are in need. Apart from Socrates, other figures also lead Socratic conversations, e.g. Eleatic Stranger in Plato's *Sophist* and *Statesman*, or the Athenian visitor in Plato's *Laws*. A discussion concerning the question behind which figure Plato hides himself already took place in Antiquity (cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae*, III,52). From Antisthenes' preserved fragments it is not clear who the speaker of his dialogues is, but if not Socrates, it may well be Cyrus. In the dialogue *Satho*, the comic caricature of Plato was perhaps figured. Antisthenes has been ascribed authorship of the following dialogues, amongst others: *Truth*, *Satho*, *Protrepticus*, *Alcibiades*, *Archelaus*, *Aspasia*, *Greater Heracles*, *Lesser Cyrus* and *Statesman*; cf. *SSR* VA 41. It seems that as well as Socratic dialogues Antisthenes was also writing "speeches", or more precisely "epideictic speeches", among which belong *The Speech of Ajax*, *Odysseus* and *A Defence of Orestes*; on the grounds of Julian's remarks, cf. *SSR* VA 44, it could appear that Antisthenes was writing diatribes as well, but it is possible that the diatribal form was only ascribed to Antisthenes under the influence of later Cynic literature. See A. Patzer, *Antisthenes der Sokratiker*, pp. 94–98; G. Giannantoni, *Socratis et Socraticorum reliquiae*, IV, pp. 235 ff. References to Antisthenes' fragments and to fragments of other Socratics follow the edition of *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae* by Gabriele Giannantoni.

⁶ Xenophon gives his opinion on discussion about the character of excellence (*Mem.* I,2,19–20) in the first person (ἐγὼ δὲ περὶ τούτων οὐχ οὕτω γινώσκω). Xenophon does not agree with the intellectualistic opinion that someone who is just cannot become unjust, or more precisely, that someone who once acquired ethical knowledge cannot lose it. Physical strength as well as excellence of action vanishes without practice, training one's soul

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opinions of other Socratics, although a great rivalry clearly existed between them.⁷ Together with Werner Jaeger we could say that the aim of Socratic conversations is not an utterance of positive doctrine, but rather a dramatic depiction of philosophical searching and finding accompanied by aporia and conflicts.⁸ For this intention a dramatic

is essential in making the right decisions. Xenophon's references to poetic tradition suggest that he places common sense against ethical intellectualism: Αὐτὰρ ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς τοτὲ μὲν κακός, ἄλλοτε δ' ἐσθλός ("Yet a good man is bad sometimes and noble at other times"; *Mem.* I,2,20). Xenophon's attitude corresponds with some of Antisthenes' propositions; cf. *SSR* VA 163: ... τοὺς μέλλοντας ἀγαθοὺς ἄνδρας γενήσεσθαι τὸ μὲν σῶμα γυμνασίοις ἀσκεῖν, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν παιδεύσει (men who are going to become good must exercise their body by gymnastics, and their soul by education⁴). Trans. by G. Boys-Stones – Ch. Rowe, *The Circle of Socrates*.

⁷ Plato mentions Antisthenes only once – in *Phaedo*, 59b (*SSR* VA 20). Authors of Σωκρατικοὶ λόγοι appear only rarely in Plato's dialogues (with the exception of *Phaedo* and *Crito*). Plato prefers indirect insinuations (some passages in *Euthydemus*, *Cratylus*, or *Theaetetus* may refer to Antisthenes). Plato says nothing at all about the character of the relationship between Socrates and Antisthenes. Only later anecdotes preserved in doxographical literature describe tense relations between Plato and Antisthenes, or more precisely between Plato and other followers of Socrates – they indicate that among themselves the Socratics had conflictual interpretations of Socrates' teaching; cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae*, VI,7 (*SSR* VA 27); Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae*, VI,3 (*SSR* VA 28); Stobaeus, III,2, 40 (*SSR* VA 29); *Gnom. Vat.* 743 n. 13 (*SSR* VA 30); *SSR* VA 147–159. Diogenes Laertius writes about the rivalry among the Socratics (Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae*, III,34): "And it seems that Xenophon was not on good terms with him [scil. Plato]. At any rate, they have written similar narratives as if out of rivalry with each other, a *Symposium*, a *Defence of Socrates*, and their moral treatises or *Memorabilia*. Next, the one wrote a *Republic*, the other a *Cyropaedia*. And in the *Laws* Plato declares the story of the education of Cyrus to be a fiction, for that Cyrus did not answer to the description of him. And although both make mention of Socrates, neither of them refers to the other, except that Xenophon mentions Plato in the third book of his *Memorabilia*." Trans. by R. D. Hicks, in: Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. See L.-A. Dorion, *The Daimonion and the Megalêgoria of Socrates in Xenophon's Apology*, pp. 127–143.

⁸ Cf. W. Jaeger, *Aristoteles*, p. 24 (about Plato's Socratic dialogues): "In Platon ist der Gestaltungstrieb ursprünglich das Primäre. Er schreibt nicht

form of dialogue is suitable. It was out of this that Socrates' followers created a new philosophical genre within Greek prose.⁹

Antisthenes depicted in Xenophon's Socratic dialogues is a type of man who is used to thinking about Socratic themes in a way inherent to himself. He is a literary figure (*dramatis personā*) from whom we should not expect historical accuracy. On the other hand, we can notice that the manner of his depiction allows us to search for certain characteristic attributes which form interesting connections with preserved theses of Antisthenian thought.

Let us look more closely at several passages from Xenophon's *Symposium*. Participants of a "drinking-party" discuss various topics intended to inform the reader about the importance of Socrates' way of life.¹⁰ Xenophon's Antisthenes is a young, almost mature man, who is rather rude and mildly quarrelsome. But his readiness to fend off any attack on Socrates appears more important than eristic argumentation.¹¹ In this attribute alone we could search for connection with the Hellenistic depiction of Antisthenes in doxographical liter-

um der inhaltlichen Darstellung einer Lehre willen. Ihn reizt es, den philosophischen Menschen in dem dramatisch fruchtbaren Moment des Suchens und Findens, der Aporie und des Konflikts sichtbar zu machen." See also L. Rossetti (*Le Dialogue Socratique*, p. 126) who characterizes Socratic dialogue in general as a certain kind of drama halfway between tragedy and comedy. In spite of comic elements, Socratic dialogue has a serious mission: it justifies the legitimacy of the Socratic way of life.

⁹ Cf. A. Ford, *The Beginnings of Dialogue: Socratic Discourses and Fourth-century Prose*, pp. 29–44. Remember that Aristotle places Σωκρατικοὶ λόγοι on a boundary between poetry and prose; cf. *Poet.* 1447b.

¹⁰ The *Symposion* may have been written sometime after 390 B.C., but its dramatic date is 422 B.C. For us it is important that at the time when Xenophon was writing *Symposium*, Antisthenes might still have been alive. On the grounds of Plutarchus' account (Plutarchus, *Lyc.* 30,7, 58f–59a [SSR VA 10]) we can assume that Antisthenes was still alive in 371 B.C. when the battle between the Boeotians (with Thebans and Spartans at the head) took place. Diodorus (*Bibl. hist.* XV,76 [SSR IH 3]) places Antisthenes among the exceptional men who were still alive in 366 B.C. At the time when Xenophon was writing his *Symposium*, Antisthenes might have been one of the most important Athenian philosophers (cf. Ch. Kahn, *Plato and The Socratic Dialogue*, pp. 29 ff.).

¹¹ Cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *Socrates*, p. 21.

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ature: Antisthenes is angry at Plato's criticism and decides to write the mocking dialogue *Satho* to defend his understanding of Socrates' teaching.¹²

From our point of view, there is an interesting scene in Chapter 4 of *Symposium* (*Symp.* 4,61–64 [SSR VA 13]). In this passage, Socrates entrusts Antisthenes with his most valuable art, which he ironically calls “pandering” (μαστροπεία, προαγωγή). Antisthenes is surprised, and he asks why it is exactly him who should inherit this craft. It looks as though he is not sure if Socrates is sneering at him or talking seriously. Socrates immediately assures Antisthenes that he is fully qualified to become a pander in the Socratic sense, which we can understand as a playful reference to their close relationship. As the following account of Athenians for whom Antisthenes has arranged favourable partners from a number of intellectuals suggests, Socrates helps Antisthenes to establish convenient relations in the city.¹³

Antisthenes is the most competent (from those of Socrates' circle) to undertake the art of his teacher, i.e. the art which Socrates in Plato's *Apology* claims he would not abandon even if Athenian polis ordered him to one hundred times.¹⁴ Socrates explains to Antisthenes why he has chosen him to be his successor with these words (*Symp.* 4,64):

“It is seeing your ability to do that which makes me consider you a good pander. The man with the skill to recognise people who can use each other and with the power to make them want each other

¹² The title of Antisthenes' dialogue *Satho* or *of Contradiction* is based on a wordplay with Plato's name (Σάθων = “one with a large *membrum virile*“); cf. SSR VA 147 from Athenaeus, *Deipnosoph.* V,220d–e. Some historians doubt that Antisthenes would express himself in such a vulgar manner inherent to Old Comedy (cf. F. Sayre, *Diogenes of Sinope*, pp. 55–56). But the majority of them think that Antisthenes' *Satho* was an attack on Plato's theory of ideas (SSR VA 149) and that this attack had been provoked by Plato's criticism of Antisthenes' thesis concerning the impossibility of contradiction (Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae*, III,35 [SSR VA 148]). Cf. K. von Fritz, *Antisthenes und Sokrates*, p. 25; A. Patzer, *Antisthenes der Sokratiker*, p. 60; G. Giannantoni, *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae*, IV, p. 205 ff.

¹³ Cf. S. Prince, *Socrates, Antisthenes, and the Cynics*, pp. 76–77.

¹⁴ Plato, *Apol.* 30b.

could in my view make friendships between cities, and he could broker acceptable marriages, and he'd be very much worth getting hold of for communities and friends and allies. Yet you were cross, as if I'd slandered you in saying you were a good pander."¹⁵

Antisthenes as a zealous follower of Socrates – the best pander (προαγωγός), and the most capable of mediating acceptable marriages (γάμους ἐπιτηδεΐους συνάγειν) – conspicuously resembles Socrates from Plato's *Theaetetus* (149d–150b), who designates himself a midwife for men. Even the comicality of the whole situation and Socrates' ironical tone¹⁶ do not decrease Xenophon's emphasis on the fact that it is Antisthenes who should undertake Socrates' philosophical mission.¹⁷ An amplification of this emphasis could be a passage from *Symposium*, 8,4–6 [SSR VA 14], where Antisthenes confesses his passionate love for Socrates.¹⁸

In the next passage from Xenophon's *Symposium* (4,34–44 [SSR VA 82]), Antisthenes gives reasons why he prides himself on his wealth. His speech holds a very special position among his speeches, which may indicate that Xenophon makes Antisthenes the most

¹⁵ ταῦτα οὖν ὁρῶν δυνάμενόν σε ποιεῖν ἀγαθὸν νομίζω προαγωγὸν εἶναι. ὁ γὰρ οἶός τε ὧν γινώσκειν τε τοὺς ὠφελίμους αὐτοῖς καὶ τούτους δυνάμενος ποιεῖν ἐπιθυμεῖν ἀλλήλων, οὗτος ἂν μοι δοκεῖ καὶ πόλεις δύνασθαι φίλας ποιεῖν καὶ γάμους ἐπιτηδεΐους συνάγειν, καὶ πολλοῦ ἂν ἄξιός εἶναι καὶ ἢ πόλεσι καὶ φίλοις καὶ συμμάχοις ἢ κεκτηῖσθαι. σὺ δὲ ὡς κακῶς ἀκούσας ὅτι ἀγαθὸν σε ἔφην προαγωγὸν εἶναι, ὠργίσθης. Trans. by A. J. Bowen, in: Xenophon, *Symposium*.

¹⁶ Cf. Plutarchus' commentary on this passage (*Quaest. conv.* II,1,6, 632d–e [SSR VA 13]).

¹⁷ Cf. H. D. Rankin, *Antisthenes Sokraticos*, p. 20.

¹⁸ Cf. Xenophon, *Mem.* III,11,17 (SSR VA 14). H. D. Rankin (*Antisthenes Sokraticos*, pp. 18–19) sees a certain analogy between how Xenophon through playful erotic vocabulary depicts Antisthenes' penchant to Socrates, and Plato's depiction of Alcibiades' relationship with Socrates at the end of *Symposium*. Cf. also Kurt von Fritz's note (*Antisthenes und Sokrates*, p. 31) that the words πρὸς τῶν θεῶν, ὃ Ἀντίσθενης, μόνον μὴ συγκόψης με refer to line 213d3 from Plato's *Symposium* (where Socrates admits to his apprehension that Alcibiades' madness and affection could end in violent behaviour) and refers to the complicated character of Antisthenes (and analogically to the unbalanced character of Alcibiades).

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important figure of his dialogue.¹⁹ Wealth (πλοῦτος) is from the conventional point of view the opposite to poverty (πενία) feared by every free citizen. However, to be wealthy does not have to necessarily mean to own enormous property, but it may well mean to have a sufficiency of resources for a good life.²⁰ In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates in this spirit explains that he does not have time to ensure a valuable livelihood for his family, and thus he lives in complete poverty (ἐν πενίᾳ μυρία).²¹ Socrates is poor in the conventional sense of the word.²² Hence, when Antisthenes shows that wealth and poverty may also be understood in a different way from that which education, custom, or the opinion of the majority usually teach us, he does something which is typical for Socratic rhetoric.²³

¹⁹ Cf. H. D. Rankin, *Antisthenes Sokraticos*, pp. 22–23. D. L. Gera (*Xenophon's Socrates*, pp. 45–46) shows that the portrait of Socrates in Xenophon's *Symposium* has at least another two variations in the figures of Hermogenes and Antisthenes. Hermogenes is a less interesting figure in Xenophon's *Symposium* – serious, pious, and satisfied with himself. Antisthenes is depicted much more dramatically that he is – as a follower of Socrates who is sometimes more Socratic than Socrates himself (*plus royaliste que le roi*, cf. G. J. Woldinga). Antisthenes is indigent but he is proud of his poverty. He loves leisure time spent in conversations with Socrates. Antisthenes and Socrates are inseparable friends who like to jest with each other (cf. *Symp.* 8,4–6). Compared to Socrates, Antisthenes is much more impulsive in conversations – Socrates has sometimes to tame his passions (*Symp.* 3,5–6).

²⁰ Cf. e.g. Plato, *Prot.* 354b.

²¹ Plato, *Apol.* 23b7–c1: καὶ ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς ἀσχολίας οὔτε τι τῶν τῆς πόλεως πρᾶξαι μοι σχολὴ γέγονεν ἄξιον λόγου οὔτε τῶν οἰκείων, ἀλλ' ἐν πενίᾳ μυρία εἰμι διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ λατρείαν.

²² Cf. Xenophon, *Oecon.* II,3 (Socrates would get only five mines for all his property, but it is sufficient for his life); cf. also *Mem.* I,3,5 (Socrates' expenses were so low that Xenophon could not imagine such a man who would work so little to have such a low income); *Mem.* I,6,1–10. See S. B. Pomeroy, *Xenophon, Oeconomicus: A Social and Historical Commentary*, pp. 268–269.

²³ Socratic dialogues centred upon the question τί ἐστι (“What is X?”), have a similar structure: in the process of being demonstrated, all answers to a central question show themselves as insufficient, either because they are too wide (i.e. they include other things than that which is the subject matter in question), or they are too narrow (i.e. do not include all the cases of the thing which is the subject matter in question). The first responses in a series

As an initial thesis of Antisthenes' speech in Xenophon's *Symposium*, 4,34–44, the conviction is expressed that a man does not keep his wealth or poverty in his house, but in his soul. This motive can also be found in other Socratic dialogues,²⁴ particularly in Plato's *Apology* (29d–30b), where Socrates reproaches Athenians for their efforts to accumulate wealth and their desire for good reputation and honour, as well as for their lack of care for reason and truth or for their soul to be as noble as possible. Plato's Socrates espouses a maxim that he has followed all his life:

of attempts to answer the question – definition of τί ἐστὶ of a thing *X* – are generally closest to a conventional understanding of the examined thing. E.g. in Plato's *Laches* the central question concerns courage (190d8: ἀνδρεία τί ποτ' ἐστίν·); *Laches*' first answer associates courage with endurance in military action and in facing the enemy (190e); *Laches*' second, more expansive answer identifies ἀνδρεία with καρτερία (192b). Experience that there is no question about the definition of τί ἐστὶ of a thing *X* that can be fully answered, may lead Antisthenes to the conviction that “one cannot define what a thing is (since a definition is a long *logos*), however one can explain what it is like” (Aristotle, *Met.* VIII,3,1043b4–32 [SSR VA 150]). Trans. by D. Bostock, *Aristotle's Metaphysics Books Z and H* (slightly modified).

²⁴ Xenophon's Socrates thinks about relativism of wealth and poverty in *Oecon.* II,5; cf. also *Mem.* IV,2,37 ff. Evidence for the influence of Socratic understanding of poverty can also be seen in the way poverty is defined in the Byzantine lexicon *Suidas*. Cf. *Suda*, s.v. Πενία: καὶ πένης οὐχ ὁ μηδὲν κεκτημένος, ἀλλ' ὁ πολλῶν ἐφιέμενος; καὶ πλούσιος, οὐχ ὁ πολλὰ περιβεβλημένος, ἀλλ' ὁ μὴ πολλῶν δεόμενος (“And a poor man [is] not the one who has no possessions, but the one who has many desires; and a rich man [is] not the one surrounded by many things, but the one who does not need many things”; trans. by C. Roth, *Suda On Line*, online at www.stoa.org). An intellectual predecessor of the Socratic understanding of poverty could be Democritus, to whom is ascribed the following statement (*DK* 68 B 284): “If your desires are not great, a little will seem much to you; for small appetite makes poverty equivalent to wealth.” Cf. also Democritus, *DK* 68 B 283: “Poverty and wealth are terms for lack and superfluity; so that he who lacks is not wealthy, and he who does not lack is not poor.” Trans. by K. Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*.