

The Many Lovers of Gain. The Pseudo-Platonic *Hipparchus* and the Fourth-century BCE Debate on the Pursuit of Self-interest¹

BOB RUDOLF WILHELMUS VAN VELTHOVEN

Leiden University

b.r.w.van.velthoven@hum.leidenuniv.nl

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Abstract

This article deals with the interpretation of *Hipparchus* and the question to which extent its advocacy of φιλοκέρδεια or the love of gain should be read ironically. It argues that this pseudo-Platonic dialogue can be best understood in the context of a broader fourth-century philosophical debate on the pursuit of (economic) self-interest. First, I show how the *Hipparchus* comments on and develops thoughts from Plato's *Republic*. Then, I demonstrate how the re-evaluation of the love of gain compares to Xenophon's treatment of φιλοκέρδεια, κέρδος, and πλεονεξία in the *Oeconomicus* and *Cyropaedia*, which also respond to the *Republic*, and show how both authors provocatively re-evaluate these negative notions of gain or self-interest into neutral ones. These comparisons inform a layered reading, in which the apparent irony helps readers to reflect on the proposed re-evaluation of commerce.

Keywords: Plato, Hipparchus, Greed, Philokerdeia, Pleonexia, Economic Rationality, Xenophon, Tyranny

Resumen

Este artículo propone una interpretación del *Hiparco* desde la pregunta de hasta qué punto su defensa de la φιλοκέρδεια o el amor a las ganancias debe leerse irónicamente. Partiendo de la idea de que este diálogo pseudoplatónico puede entenderse mejor en el contexto de un debate filosófico más amplio del siglo IV sobre la búsqueda del interés propio (económico) pongo de relieve, en primer lugar, cómo *Hiparco* comenta y desarrolla pensamientos de la *República* de Platón. Luego argumento que la reevaluación del amor a la ganancia es comparable al tratamiento que Jenofonte da a φιλοκέρδεια, κέρδος y πλεονεξία en el *Económico* y en la *Ciropedia*, que también responden a la *República*. Finalmente, demuestro que ambos autores

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reevalúan estas nociones negativas de ganancia o de interés propio de manera provocadora, para convertirlas en nociones neutrales. Estas comparaciones informan una lectura en capas, en la que la aparente ironía ayuda a los lectores a reflexionar sobre la reevaluación del comercio.

Palabras clave: Platón, Hiparco, Avaricia, *Filokerdeia*, *Pleonexia*, Racionalidad económica, Jenofonte, Tiranía

1. Introduction

«For what is the love of gain, what is it at all, and who are the so-called ‘lovers of gain’ (οἱ φιλοκερδεῖς, [Pl.] *Hipparch.* 225a 1-2)?». With these three questions, Socrates launches his brief interrogation of an anonymous companion on acquisitiveness that constitutes the pseudo-Platonic *Hipparchus*². During the dialogue, the interlocutor proposes three definitions for τὸ φιλοκερδές, which Socrates refutes three times. After multiple accusations of deceit back and forth, they argue that all people, in the end, are lovers of all kinds of gain.

Although very short, the dialogue is difficult to interpret. Socrates’ irony is ostentatiously present, with a re-evaluation of a negative trait, the accusations of deceit, and a re-evaluation of the tyrant Hipparchus as a seemingly ideal moral educator murdered because of jealousy of his educational success. The dialogue, therefore, has been the subject of various widely diverging interpretations. The many mostly Straussian-inspired scholars that have examined the text over the last decades argue that the text must be considered a total rejection of φιλοκέρδεια and a proof of the extent to which greed is incompatible even with ‘pre-Platonic notions of the good’, or regard its discussion of φιλοκέρδεια as a stand-in for an argument that is about the love of the good³.

² The authenticity of the *Hipparchus* has been questioned since Antiquity. The dialogue was not mentioned in the third-century index of Aristophanes of Byzantium. In the first century CE Thrasyllus did include it in his tetradic division of Platonic dialogues. However, in the second century CE, Aelian doubted whether Plato was the author of the work (λέγει δὲ Πλάτων ταῦτα, εἰ δὴ ὁ Ἱππάρχος Πλάτωνός ἐστι τῶ ὄντι) (Ael. *VH* VIII 2, 16). In the nineteenth century, BÖCKH (1806) and SCHLEIERMACHER (1855) proclaimed the work inauthentic and «unworthy of Plato». Against this judgment have argued several scholars, (see SCHUBERT 2018, 35 n. 15), and more recently especially a group of Straussian scholars (BLOOM 1987; TIPTON 1999; PLAX 2005; DAVIS 2006; SAMAD 2010). Their defense of the authenticity of the dialogue consists of a refutation of Schleiermacher’s arguments and thus amounts to a claim that the *Hipparchus* is ‘worthy’ enough to count as a work of Plato - a claim which betrays an implicit assumption that the work is only worth studying if it truly has been written by Plato. Meanwhile, many other scholars have argued against the Platonic authorship of the *Hipparchus*. As JOYAL (2019), 212 n. 3 shows, in arguments about the entirety of the Platonic corpus, the *Hipparchus* has always been rejected on substantial and stylistic grounds; TARRANT-GONZALEZ (2012). Stylistic analysis by LEDGER (1989), TARRANT-ROBERTS (2012), and TARRANT (2018) do not support Platonic authorship. JOYAL (2019) and JAZDŹEWSKA (2022) show how the *Hipparchus* shares many typical features of pseudo-platonic literature. SCROFANI (2021) points out how the *Hipparchus* closely resembles the pseudo-Platonic *Minos* in argument and style and that the dialogues may have had the same pseudo-platonic author. For a complete overview of the discussion, cf. SCHUBERT (2018), 32-42.

³ BLOOM (1987); SAMAD (2010); TIPTON (1999).

Whereas this first group of scholars emphasizes that the author (Plato, in their opinion) conveys a single message through his use of irony, other scholars are in their interpretation of the dialogue but try to make the dialogue's ambiguity more meaningful. Schubert reads the *Hipparchus* as a Socratic play on the ambiguity of material profit: whereas the desire to acquire wealth is often condemned in classical philosophy, one can, on common sense, not deny that acquiring something good is good for the one who is acquiring it, as the possession of wealth was not bad in itself⁴. Similarly, Scrofani has made a convincing comparison between the *Hipparchus* and the *Minos*, in which she points out how the apparent re-evaluation of φιλοκέρδεια is connected to the re-evaluation of the figure of the tyrant, which is often employed to exemplify how a narrow-minded focus on material gain betrays a corrupted soul⁵.

Whereas these scholars have produced many intriguing readings, and Schubert and Scrofani have made an effort to connect the interpretation of the *Hipparchus* to trends in philosophical and historiographical writings in the late classical or early Hellenistic era, I think we may come to a fuller and richer understanding of the *Hipparchus*' argument by examining its relation to the emergence of economic reflection in the fourth century BCE and the more extensive Greek debate on rationality and the pursuit of self-interest, as most recently analyzed by Ober⁶. According to him, many Greek authors reflected on a Greek 'Folk Theory' of instrumental rationality that was propagated by the sophists and stated that all people were, in principle, motivated by the pursuit of their self-interest. Whereas the Socratics accepted this axiom in principle, they had deep concerns about how people misperceived their self-interest. To the sophists, Plato ascribed a theory of narrow self-interest, using them as strawmen whose advocacy of pure instrumentalism, the maximization of material gain, power, and pleasure, paved the way to a theory of ethical and rational egoism, in which social and moral behavior was seen as aligned with the rational pursuit of self-interest⁷.

This general discourse on what constitutes and motivates rational behavior was far from limited to the issue of economic rationality alone, but it was nonetheless

⁴ SCHUBERT (2018), 25-34; The Stoics later solved this problem by arguing that wealth was indifferent, but to be preferred to poverty, see DENTSORAS (2019).

⁵ SCROFANI (2021), cf. JAŹDŹEWSKA (2022), 132-136. Both are indirectly arguing against the position of e.g. BLOOM (1987), 34, who takes the excursus at face value and argues that Hipparchus exemplifies a 'monarchical spirit', whereas the interlocutor possesses a 'democratic' mindset, which still has to be improved.

⁶ OBER (2022).

⁷ OBER (2022). Ober's analysis of the Socratic answer to this threat is limited to only a couple of Plato's most widely read dialogues, such as the *Republic*, *Gorgias* and *Protagoras*, it is logical that this debate about self-interest would also be reflected upon in other philosophical texts of the 4th century BCE, such as the *Hipparchus*.

intertwined with the economic development of Ancient Greece⁸. The debate emerged from a rapidly commercializing era in which large groups of citizens engaged in highly profitable maritime trade practices, thus contributing to remarkably high economic growth⁹. As Hinsch argues, the new wealthy citizen class emerged to compete with the old elite over status and political influence. The old landed elite reacted by copying the commercial practices to keep up with the competition, while on the other hand, they expressed their concerns over how the merchant class' instrumental profit-orientedness eroded their traditional values and moral considerations¹⁰. This double attitude, which Hinsch has christened the *Adelsdilemma*, is the background of the different (initially) Socratic philosophical discourses in the fourth century, such as the philosophical discourse condemning wealth and its pursuit or the *oikonomia* discourse aimed at rationalizing and systematizing knowledge and moral issues concerning economic activity¹¹.

Whereas Hinsch describes these genres either as explicit rejections or as embracements of instrumentally rational economic reasoning, in which economic knowledge was made acceptable within the existing normative framework, I argue that some philosophical works, including the *Hipparchus*, navigate between these two positions precisely by making an ironical case for the pursuit of profit (and, therefore, narrow self-interest) and provocatively reforming it into a form of gain that is compatible with an ethical theory of self-interest. In this article, I show how the apparent re-evaluation of the pursuit of self-interest relates to similar, typical Socratic argumentative moves in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* and *Cyropaedia*, three texts commonly regarded as reactions to Plato's *Republic*¹². In the *Republic*, we see

⁸ LEESE (2021), 196-203 sees the discourse about greed and injustice as an indication for economic rationality in Ancient Greece (contrary to e.g. FINLEY 1973, 38 who regarded the condemnation of wealth acquisition as evidence for an anti-economic mentality).

⁹ OBER (2015).

¹⁰ HINSCH (2021), 92; HELMER (forthcoming). For ancient aristocratic reflections on the relationship between urban life, maritime trade, and democratic government (as opposed to the ideal of life in rural villages, agriculture and aristocracy) see LÉVYSTONE (2022), 13-18.

¹¹ HINSCH (2021), 84-94. On the genre of *oikonomia* literature, cf. HELMER (2021).

¹² On Intra-Socratic Polemics in general, see DANZIG (2006); DANZIG (2018). On the specific connections with the *Republic*. Polemics: *Hipparchus - Republic*: SCHUBERT (2018); *Oeconomicus - Republic*, JOHNSON (2021); *Cyropaedia - Republic*, see e.g. D.L. III 34, REICHEL (2010); VANDIVER (2014); TAMIOLAKI (2018). Dating: The *Republic* is commonly thought to be written between 380 and 370 (cf. ARRUZZA 2018, 54 for an overview of the discussion). Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* and *Cyropaedia* are supposedly written between 362 and his death around 355 (cf. POMEROY 1994, 1-8; HIGGINS 1977, 131 and KAHN 1998, 29-30; GERA 1993, 25). Considering the *Hipparchus*, many have argued for the beginning of the fourth century, because of the characteristics shared with the early Platonic dialogues (ARONADIO 2008) and stylometric analysis by LEDGER (1989) that places this dialogue in the 380s. That seems too early. TARRANT (2018), 402 claims «that the *Hipparchus* probably comes from a time when the philosophic discussion has become more conscious of rhetorical issues, and in particular of types of speech, but less conscious of (or less committed to) language appropriate for Socrates». SCHUBERT (2018) speculates about a much later date, based on the resemblance between Hipparchus as described in the digression and the iconography of Demetrius of Phaleron (SCHUBERT

Socrates arguing against the sophistic positions defended by Thrasymachus (*R.* I 336b-354c), Glaucon (II 358b-362c), and Adeimantus (II 362d-367e), who theorize that laws and morals are conventional and the self-interested pursuit of desires is the only reasonable motivation for men to have.

Whereas Socrates will later argue that *πλεονεξία* (see e.g. *R.* IX 586b 1 ff.), desire for taking more than one's share, or *φιλοκέρδεια* (see e.g. *R.* IX 581a7), lust for profit, leads humankind to commit injustice, propagators of a theory of narrow self-interest, such as Callicles in the *Gorgias* and Glaucon and Adeimantus in the *Republic*, make a 'conceptual leap,' arguing that injustice is justice by nature¹³.

Reacting to argumentative moves such as these, the author of the *Hipparchus* and Xenophon make a similar conceptual leap, as the *Hipparchus* (section 2) and *Oeconomicus* (3) both contain similar reconceptualization of *φιλοκέρδεια*, whereas the *Cyropaedia* re-evaluates the vice of *πλεονεξία* (4)¹⁴. In the case of the *Hipparchus* and the *Cyropaedia*, this re-evaluation of self-interest is exemplified by the presentation of a reformed tyrant (5), the figure who, in the *Republic*, had not only exemplified supreme injustice but also a theory of self-interest¹⁵. After showing how the *Hipparchus*, *Oeconomicus*, and *Cyropaedia* present the subordination of the desiderative part of the soul to the spirited part, I demonstrate through a comparison with Plato's *Republic* and *Euthydemus* (6) how the *Hipparchus* also promotes the love of wisdom. In the conclusion (7), I show how the *Hipparchus* inspires various divergent interpretations and how these can best be understood in relation to another. Referring to Tamiolaki's interpretation of the *Cyropaedia*, I argue that the *Hipparchus* creates room for «dialogical reflection» on commercial activity by letting the reader entertain the thought that profit does not need to go at the expense of somebody else and that the love of profit does not necessarily have to be a bad trait¹⁶.

2. Towards a neutral conception of *κέρδος* in the *Hipparchus*

From the start of the *Hipparchus*, the author clearly targets the use of *φιλοκέρδεια* in the *Republic*, as the *γάρ* in the opening question *τί γάρ τὸ φιλοκερδές*, suggests an elaboration on a previous discussion, the concept of *φιλοκέρδεια* is almost

2018, 42-65; 93-94). I agree with those who place the dialogue after the 350's (such as BRISSON 2014). Such a dating also allows the *Minos*, as the *Hipparchus*' twin dialogue, to be regarded as a reaction to the *Laws* (see also MULROY 2007), which is traditionally seen as Plato's last work before his death in 347.

¹³ WEISS (2007), 94; Pl., *Grg.* 482c-484c. For an analysis of Callicles' argumentation and Socrates rebuttal, see e.g. CATANA (2021).

¹⁴ About the thematic connection of *Oec.* 14, 6-10 and *Cyr.* I 6, 31-35 with the *Hipparchus*, cf. SCHUBERT (2018), 42. Schubert suspects an intertextual link between the *Hipparchus* and the passage in the *Cyropaedia*, but cannot corroborate her intuition.

¹⁵ For the centrality of *πλεονεξία* in Thrasymachus' world view and its connection to his conception of tyranny (cf. Pl. *R.* I 344a 1) see ALGRA (1994). For the tyrant as an example promoting narrow self-interest, see OBER (2022), 46-49.

¹⁶ According to TAMIOLAKI (2017), 191 ff. Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* deliberately creates an ambiguous portrait of Cyrus, to make the reader reflect on Xenophon's philosophical ideas.

exclusively used in Platonic texts, and using the phrasing τὸ φιλοκερδές (instead of, e.g., φιλοκέρδεια) echoes the choice for τὸ φιλοκερδές in the *Republic*¹⁷. However, in the *Republic*, τὸ φιλοκερδές is a synonym for the desiderative part (ἐπιθυμητικόν) of the soul (Pl. *R.* IX 580d-581a). The author of the *Hipparchus* does not refer to the tripartite division of the soul and makes it a general factor of human motivation, with a corresponding type of people: οἱ φιλοκερδεῖς. This move seemingly clears the way for presenting τὸ φιλοκερδές as a form of love for the good¹⁸.

However, that is certainly not the way the interlocutor conceives τὸ φιλοκερδές. During the entire dialogue, the interlocutor tries to convince Socrates that οἱ φιλοκερδεῖς are people who defraud and cheat others, as he first attempts to define οἱ φιλοκερδεῖς as «people who think it is acceptable to make a profit (κέρδος) by selling things they think are worthless» (οἱ ἄν κερδαίνειν ἀξιώσιν ἀπὸ τῶν μηδενὸς ἀξίων, [Pl.] *Hipparch.* 225a 3-4). When Socrates asks the interlocutor whether he thinks these people are stupid, the interlocutor says that he rather thinks that they are «wicked and evil and yielding to profit, because they are fully aware that the things they dare to profit from are worth nothing, but dare to profit from these things anyway because of their shamelessness» (πανούργους καὶ πονηροὺς καὶ ἥττους τοῦ κέρδους γινώσκοντας ὅτι οὐδενὸς ἀξιά ἐστιν ἀφ' ὧν τολμῶσι κερδαίνειν, ὅμως τολμᾶν φιλοκερδεῖν δι' ἀναισχυντίαν, 225a 8-b 3).

In this passage, we see that the companion conceptualizes κέρδος in its traditional meaning of short-term gain at the expense of others¹⁹. Socrates, however, seems to move away from this immoral connotation of κέρδος to a more neutral conceptualization. In the first refutation, Socrates uses a τέχνη analogy to show that the interlocutor's assumption that the lovers of profit are malicious frauds would lead to an absurd conclusion: practitioners of τέχνη, such as farmers, generals, or musicians, would never knowingly employ flawed instruments, so nobody would be ignorant enough to try to make money with things that he knows are worthless, and therefore, nobody could be considered φιλοκερδής (225a 3-226e 6)²⁰.

¹⁷ SCHUBERT (2018), 68-69.

¹⁸ DAVIS (2006), 548-549. *R.* IX 582a 8-e 10: the rehabilitation of τὸ φιλοκερδές competes with Socrates' claim that only the philosopher can know the good by experience, judgment, and reason.

¹⁹ For κέρδος and cognate terms in general, see VAN BERKEL (2020), 280 n. 76: «κέρδος ('gain') should not be mistaken for the morally neutral modern notion of gain or profit; the term κέρδος implies that the exchange at hand is not committed to a long-term relationship, but is a satisfaction of immediate needs». For κέρδος in general, see COZZO (1988). Van Berkel argues that κέρδος often invokes the scenario of zero-sum game (for Homer see DE JONG 1987 and ROISMAN 1990). According to LEESE (2021), 195, Thucydides sees κέρδος as a cause of φθόνος (Th. III 43, 1). In fourth-century literature, we find more neutral conceptions of κέρδος in e.g. Arist. *Pol.* I 9, 1257b 2-5 and Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* (see LEESE 2021, 27-28; 191).

²⁰ SCROFANI (2021) argues that Socrates here considers φιλοκέρδεια a skill, but what Socrates strictly speaking does is showing how φιλοκέρδεια, if it is defined the right way, could never be compatible within the practice of a τέχνη.

This argument structurally resembles Socrates' rebuttal of Thrasymachus in the first book of the *Republic*. Thrasymachus argues that rulers, regarded in their capacity as practitioners of their τέχνη of rulership, solely rule to serve their interest²¹. Socrates responds that practitioners of other τέχναι, such as the boat pilot and the physician, practice their arts for the sake of those people or things that benefit from the art and not for their own benefit. He leads Thrasymachus to the conclusion that the physician practices two distinctive arts: the art of medicine, which produces health in patients, who are the beneficiaries of the art (ιατρική), and the art of wage-earning (μισθωτική or μισθαρνητική) which produces wages for its beneficiary, the wage-earner (Pl. *R.* I 346a 6-c 12):

Then the benefit, the receiving of wages, does not accrue to each from his own art. However, if we are to consider it precisely, medicine produces health but the fee-earning art the pay (ἡ δὲ μισθαρνητικὴ μισθόν), and architecture a house, but the fee-earning art accompanying it the fee (ἡ δὲ μισθαρνητικὴ αὐτῇ ἐπομένῃ μισθόν), and so with all the other arts, each performs its own task and benefits that over which it is set, but unless pay is added to it is there any benefit which the craftsman receives from the craft? (Pl. *R.* I 346d 1-d 9, tr. SHOREY 1969, adapted).

Afterward, Thrasymachus' potential retort that these artisans do not practice their crafts selflessly because they earn money with it is forcefully distinguished as the τέχνη of doing 'work for pay' or 'entrepreneurship' (μισθαρνητική), thus separating pure craftsmanship from a proto-form of entrepreneurship²².

In the τέχνη-analogy in the *Hipparchus*, Socrates does something similar by focusing on the assessment that artisans have to make in their capacity of artisans. Employing the example of the farmer, Socrates asks the interlocutor whether he knows a farmer who, knowing that the crop he grows is worthless, thinks that he should derive profit from that crop (ἄρ' ἔστιν ὄντινα οἶε γεωργικὸν ἄνδρα γιγνόμενον, καὶ γινώσκοντα ὅτι οὐδενὸς ἄξιον φυτεύει τὸ φυτόν, οἶεσθαι ἀπὸ τούτου κερδαίνειν, [Pl.] *Hipparch.* 226a 2-4). In this way, however, Socrates ignores that the fraudulent behavior the companion is hinting at does not take place in the artisans' capacity of craftsmen but in their capacity of businessmen: of course, a farmer would not on purpose grow bad crops, but if he happens to have bad crops for whatever reason, he is likely to sell them anyway, pretending that they are worth more than they actually are. Socrates' reasoning, however, rules out that such an

²¹ Pl. *R.* I 340d-341a for the definition of the ruler as an unerring craftsman of self-interest, cf. OBER (2022), 47 ff.

²² This argument is wobbly: it only works because Thrasymachus had first compared leadership to a τέχνη, and by distinguishing craftsmanship from 'entrepreneurship', Socrates seems to deliberately disregard the fact that specialization requires a form of monetary exchange. Thirdly, the argument prepares Socrates' argument that leaders only lead in the interest of others and thus require financial compensation (*R.* I 347a-b), a position he for instance ridicules in *Grg.* 515e, where he claims that Pericles' introduction of the system (εἰς μισθοφορίαν πρῶτον καταστήσαντα) had made them, among other bad things, money-loving (φιλαργύρους). Cf. MARKLE (1985).

information asymmetry between the φιλοκερδεῖς and their buyers exists: if the crop happens to be worthless, so he suggests, the farmer must be mistaken *qua* technical expertise, and not deceptive because of his φιλοκέρδεια.

During the subsequent two attempts of the interlocutor, we see that Socrates chooses different arguments to make the same conceptual leap as we have seen during the first attempt. The companion tries to shift Socrates' attention to the immorality of οἱ φιλοκερδεῖς by defining them as people who «because of their insatiable greed, exceedingly lust after things that are very small and worth little and, therefore, love profit» (οἱ ἐκάστοτε ὑπὸ ἀπληστίας καὶ πάνυ μικρὰ καὶ ὀλίγου ἄξια καὶ οὐδενὸς γλίσχονται ὑπερφυῶς καὶ φιλοκερδοῦσιν, 227c 10-d). Socrates, however, neglects the interlocutor's moral outrage and approaches the argument analytically, arguing that οἱ φιλοκερδεῖς are lovers of profit (κέρδος), that the opposite of profit is loss (ζημία), that loss is bad, and that therefore the opposite of loss, profit, is good. By employing this rigorous analysis, Socrates again ignores all moral qualifications attributed to οἱ φιλοκερδεῖς, which are resolved when he concludes that because all people naturally love all good things, all people must be φιλοκερδεῖς.

During the third attempt, the interlocutor defines the lover of gain as «somebody who is occupied with these things and thinks it is acceptable to make a profit of these things, of which honest people would not dare to make a profit» (ὅς ἂν σπουδάζη ἐπὶ τούτοις καὶ ἀξιῷ κερδαίνειν ἀπ' αὐτῶν, ἀφ' ὧν οἱ χρηστοὶ οὐ τολμῶσι κερδαίνειν, 227d 4-228a 5). Socrates notices that the interlocutor implicitly makes a difference between good and bad profit (κέρδος) and argues that logically speaking, profit, as the opposite of loss, must always be good. After the digression about Hipparchus (228b-229e) they develop this point. Socrates creates the possibility to conceive κέρδος neutrally: seeking the analogy with good and bad food still being food, Socrates argues that good and bad gain is still gain, and he defines gain technically as «every acquisition that somebody has acquired by spending nothing or by earning more after spending less» (πᾶν κτήμα ὃ ἂν τις κτήσεται ἢ μηδὲν ἀναλώσας, ἢ ἔλαττον ἀναλώσας πλέον λάβη, 231a 6-8). Moreover, Socrates asserts that only something good can count as profit, and when one acquires something bad, that should be considered a loss; therefore, bad profit cannot exist (231b 1-6). They think of different things, as the interlocutor thinks that bad means fraudulent or shameful, whereas Socrates, thinks that bad means bad for the one who acquires it. When the interlocutor still does not get Socrates, he explains that profit is concerned with the value (τὸ ἄξιον) of a thing, thus following up on the interlocutors' earlier focus on the φιλοκερδεῖς practice of valuation (231d 9-10). Something of value is profitable (κερδαλέον), something profitable is beneficial (ὠφέλιμον), and something beneficial is good (ἀγαθόν) (231e 2-232a 5). Whatever the interlocutor tries, he is unable to define οἱ φιλοκερδεῖς and loses the battle with Socrates over the definition of κέρδος. Ultimately, the interlocutor is compelled to admit that all sorts of profit are good and that good and bad people love all sorts of profit.

3. *Oeconomicus* - *What motivates Ischomachus' household?*

So far, we have analyzed how the *Hipparchus'* Socrates forcefully replaces the interlocutor's conception of gain with a neutral conception. Socrates' re-valuation reeks of irony, but before we analyze that irony further, we first move on to Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, in which a similar re-evaluation of φιλοκέρδεια takes place. In the second part of the *Oec.* (7-21), Socrates recounts to Critobulus the conversation he had with the alleged καλὸς κάγαθός Ischomachus. During that conversation, Ischomachus tells Socrates how to select good superintendents for his enslaved workers:

“Then what about those who are passionately in love with making a profit?” (οἵτινες αὐ̄ ἔρωτικῶς ἔχουσι τοῦ κερδαίνειν), I asked. “Are these, too, incapable of being trained so that they can concern themselves with the work on a farm?”

“No, not at all,” responded Ischomachus, “in fact, they can easily be led to concern themselves about such things. You need do nothing but show them that taking proper concern is profitable” (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο δεῖ ἢ δεῖξαι μόνον αὐτοῖς ὅτι κερδαλέον ἔστιν ἡ ἐπιμέλεια).

“What about the others?” I asked. “If they show self-control in the areas in which you demand it and are moderately interested in making a profit (εἰ ἐγκρατεῖς τέ εἰσιν ὧν σὺ κελεύεις καὶ πρὸς τὸ φιλοκερδεῖς εἶναι μετρίως ἔχουσι), how do you teach them to be concerned in the way you require?”

“Very simply, Socrates,” he answered. “When I see them showing proper concern, I praise them and try to reward them, as well; but when they are not, I try to say and do things that will hurt their feelings” (X. *Oec.* 12, 15-16, tr. POMEROY 1994).

Ischomachus makes clear that he selects his bailiffs based on their ability to practice self-restraint. According to Ischomachus, these people are easy to teach; it is necessary to point out that diligence is profitable. In contrast, Ischomachus educates the intendents who are capable of self-restraint and are moderate in their love of gain, by using praise and blame, thus appealing to their sense of honor. Ischomachus thinks that his enslaved workers can be incentivized and motivated in a similar way, as we can examine below.

“By applying some of these laws,” he said, “by adding other enactments from the laws of the kings of Persia, I attempt to make my slaves honest in their handling of property. For the former laws only contain penalties for wrongdoers, but the laws of the kings not only penalize the dishonest but also reward the honest. So, because they see that the honest become wealthier than the dishonest (ὥστε ὀρῶντες πλουσιωτέρους γιγνομένους τοὺς δικαίους τῶν ἀδίκων), many who love of profit continue firmly to refrain from dishonesty (πολλοὶ καὶ φιλοκερδεῖς ὄντες εὐ μάλα ἐπιμένουσι τῷ μὴ ἀδικεῖν). However, when I perceive that people attempt to act dishonestly, despite good treatment, I refuse to have anything more to do with them because they are incorrigibly greedy (ὡς ἀνηκέστους πλεονέκτας ὄντας). On the other hand, if I learn of some who are induced to be honest not only because of the advantages they gain through being honest but because of a desire to be praised by me, I treat them as if they were free men, not only do I make them wealthy, but I even honor them like gentlemen. For Socrates,” he said, “I think an ambitious man differs from a greedy one in that, for

the sake of praise and honor, he is willing to work hard and to run risks when necessary and to abstain from dishonest gains” (αἰσχροῶν κερδῶν ἀπέχεσθαι, X. *Oec.* 14, 6-10, tr. POMEROY 1994, adapted).

Ischomachus tells Socrates that many profit-loving enslaved workers choose to behave and not act unjustly, because they see that the well-behaving become wealthier than the ones who misbehave. However, whenever he perceives that well-treated enslaved workers still behave unjustly, he gets rid of them because they are incorrigibly greedy. However, the enslaved worker who acts justly not only because they benefit from it but also because they desire to do so, Ischomachus praises and chooses to treat as a free man. For Ischomachus, the difference between the honor-loving and profit-loving man lies in their willingness to toil and face danger and refrain from shameful profit to gain praise (14, 9-10).

Xenophon, like the author of the *Hipparchus*, thus partly re-evaluates φιλοκέρδεια as a motivation to inspire the enslaved to do their labor and shun laziness²³. However, like the interlocutor in *Hipparchus*, Ischomachus is also concerned with φιλοκέρδεια’s potentially devastating effect. Without the proper manipulation in the form of punishing and rewarding, their φιλοκέρδεια would probably lead them to ‘bad profit,’ as is the case with the honor-loving enslaved workers, whose love for honor is the only thing that keeps them from dishonorable profit. Therefore, the lovers of profit must be monetarily or materially incentivized in order for them to start acting justly and diligently. If such an incentive is in place, however, their φιλοκέρδεια is no longer negative but becomes productive, and seeking κέρδος no longer goes at the expense of another person but instead contributes to a common cause.

At the end of the *Oeconomicus*, Ischomachus’ own motivation is questioned when he asserts that his father was so fond of farming (φιλογέωργος) that he taught him to ‘flip’ farms by buying them when they were cheap and by selling them for profit once they have acquired a good value:

“For, you know, Socrates,” he said, “I think, of all Athenians, my father was, by nature, the most devoted to farming” (φιλογεωργότατος).

When I heard this, I asked him, “Ischomachus, did your father keep all the plots of land he cultivated, or did he sell them if he could get a good price?”

“He would sell them, by Zeus,” replied Ischomachus, “and he would buy another uncultivated plot immediately to replace it because he loved working” (διὰ τὴν φιλεργίαν).

“You are telling me, Ischomachus,” I said, “that your father naturally loved farming as much as merchants love grain (τῶ ὄντι φύσει τὸν πατέρα φιλογέωργον εἶναι οὐδὲν ἥττον ἢ οἱ ἔμποροι φιλόσιτοι εἶσι)? For because of their great love of grain, merchants sail wherever they hear there is an abundance of it so as to get it across the Aegean, the Euxine, and the Sicilian Sea. Moreover, when they have taken as much as

²³ Xenophon presents laziness (ἀργία and ἀμέλεια, *Oec.* 1, 19) in both citizens and slaves as a huge problem, as is argued by HELMER (forthcoming), n. 15.

they can on board, they carry it across the sea, even storing it in the same ship in which they themselves sail. Moreover, when they need money, they do not unload the grain anywhere they happen to be, but rather, they take it and sell it wherever they hear that grain sells for the highest price and where men place the highest value on it. And your father appears to have loved farming in much the same way” (καὶ ὁ σὸς δὲ πατὴρ οὕτω πως ἔοικε φιλογέωργος εἶναι).

Ischomachus replied to this, “You may be joking, Socrates, but I genuinely believe that men who sell houses as soon as they have built them, and then build others, are lovers of building (φιλοικοδόμους) to just the same degree.”

“By Zeus, Ischomachus,” I said, “I declare to you on oath that I accept your view that all men naturally love those things which they think will bring them profit” (φιλεῖν ταῦτα πάντας ἀφ’ ὧν ἂν ὠφελείσθαι νομίζωσιν, X. *Oec.* 20, 26-29, tr. POMEROY 1994, adapted).

After Socrates’ initial skeptical reaction, comparing Ischomachus’ father’s love for ‘farming’ to wheat merchants’ ‘love for wheat,’ Xenophon has Ischomachus reverse the argument from the first book of the *Republic*²⁴. Unlike Plato’s Socrates in that discussion, Ischomachus thinks the monetary aspect of the craft cannot be conceptually separated from the craft itself: lovers of house building build houses for others all the time because they obviously can only build one house for themselves and need to do the other buildings for profit to practice their craft²⁵.

Xenophon’s Socrates does not seem to be satisfied with this argument and answers that ‘all men naturally love those things which they think will bring them profit,’ and so suggests that Ischomachus’ and his father’s ‘love for farming’ (φιλογεωργία) is a poorly disguised love for profit. The question is whether a poorly disguised φιλοκέρδεια would be an improper motivation. While the term φιλοκέρδεια seems only appropriate for slaves who cannot manage their own passions, Ischomachus’ equation of slaves with a sufficient sense of honor to refrain from shameful gain with free men, implies that it is not shameful for a free man to strive for fair gain. If he applies this measure to himself, it is no problem that he strives for profit, as long as he does so under his stronger love for honor.

In the *Hipparchus*, the reconceptualization is not explicitly connected to the relative strength of an alternative motivation, such as φιλοτιμία, that can guide the φιλοκέρδεια and prevent men from making unfair gain. The interlocutor of the *Hipparchus* shares in Ischomachus’ concerns about people making bad gain. Socrates seems deaf to the interlocutor’s concerns when he says bad gain does not exist. He may, however, very well think that the problem with the fraudulent figures the interlocutor is thinking of is not their love for gain per se but their lack of better motivations to guide this φιλοκέρδεια and focus on honorable gain.

²⁴ On the publicly despised wheat merchants in Antiquity and evidence of economic rationality in their work, see LEESE (2017).

²⁵ Pl. *R.* I 346a 6-d 9, *vide supra* 77. Xenophon’s Socrates reversal of Plato’s Socrates’ argument is as ironic as Plato’s Socrates employment of the argument in the first place.

The reconceptualization of φιλοκέρδεια in the *Oeconomicus* thus seems less far-reaching than in the *Hipparchus*, in which it is generally applied to all citizens, and not to slaves. However, whereas Xenophon never applies the term φιλοκέρδεια to Ischomachus, we see that he plays with the idea that Ischomachus' motivation is not that different from his slaves' motivation, which suggests that the love for profit, as long as it is not called φιλοκέρδεια, can be an acceptable motivation for a free man. Such a seeming, partial re-evaluation of φιλοκέρδεια may have helped readers to reflect on the legitimacy of making profits. This interpretation, thus, is compatible with Helmer's recent argument that Xenophon employs the story about Ischomachus' farmer to dialogically examine the possibility of reconciling the occupation of trade with traditional aristocratic values²⁶.

4. *Cyropaedia - Cyrus' pursuit of self-interest*

As we have seen in the last section, in *Oec.* 14, 7-8, Xenophon presents πλεονεξία as an incorrigible desire for more, and therefore, a worse trait than φιλοκέρδεια, which a love of honor can overrule. Interestingly enough, Xenophon provocatively flirts with a reconceptualization of πλεονεξία in the *Cyropaedia*, as we can observe during Cambyses' conversation with Cyrus in the first book²⁷.

“Yes, my son,” said he; “it is said that in the time of our forefathers, there was once a teacher of the boys who, it seems, used to teach them justice in the very way that you propose; to lie and not to lie (μὴ ψεύδεσθαι καὶ ψεύδεσθαι), to cheat and not to cheat (μὴ ἔξαπατᾶν καὶ ἔξαπατᾶν), to slander and not to slander, to take and not to take advantage (μὴ πλεονεκτεῖν καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν). Moreover, he drew the line between what one should do to one's friends and what to one's enemies. And what is more, he used to teach this: that it was right to deceive friends even, provided it was for a good end (ἔξαπατᾶν ἐπὶ γε ἀγαθῷ), and to steal the possessions of a friend for a good purpose (κλέπτειν τὰ τῶν φίλων ἐπὶ ἀγαθῷ). Moreover, in teaching these lessons, he had also to train the boys to practice them upon one another, just as also in wrestling, the Greeks, they say, teach deception and train the boys to be able to practice it upon one another. When, therefore, some had in this way become skilled in both deceiving for the good and in taking advantage for the good, and perhaps also not untalented in their love of profit, they did not refrain from trying to take advantage even of their friends” (γενόμενοι οὖν τινες οὕτως εὐφρῆεις καὶ πρὸς τὸ εὖ ἔξαπατᾶν καὶ πρὸς τὸ εὖ πλεονεκτεῖν, ἴσως δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὸ φιλοκερδεῖν οὐκ ἀφρῆεις ὄντες, οὐκ ἀπείχοντο

²⁶ HELMER (forthcoming) supports this claim by arguing 1. that Ischomachus' father's farm-flipping (20, 22-26) should be conceived as a practice to make land worth more valuable and thus as a practice aiming at long-term profit (reading it in connection with *Symp.* 8, 25); 2. That Ischomachus' father shows ἐπιμέλεια in contrast with the former farm owners' ἀμέλεια (20, 22) and therefore is rewarded by nature's reciprocity; 3. That Ischomachus' father's inclinations were all natural (διὰ τὴν φιλογεωργίαν καὶ φιλοπονίαν ... διὰ τὴν φιλεργίαν [φύσει] ... φιλογεωργότατος, 20, 25-26; 20, 27).

²⁷ BALOT (2001), 22-34 describes πλεονεξία in Aristotle's thought as inherently connected to injustice. On πλεονεξία in *R.* I, see ALGRA (1994). For the tyrant's πλεονεξία in the *Republic*, see ARRUIZZA (2018), NIELSEN (2019).

οὐδ' ἀπὸ τῶν φίλων τὸ μὴ οὐ πλεονεκτεῖν αὐτῶν πειρᾶσθαι, X. *Cyr.* I 6, 31-32, tr. MILLER 1914, adapted).

Cambyses presents his son with a story of a teacher of times past who taught the Persian children to do things to their friends that are traditionally only permissible to perform against enemies, such as deceiving and stealing, as long as that happened for a good purpose (ἐπί γε ἀγαθῶ), resulting in the conceptual leap towards a concept of taking advantage of friends for good reasons (εὖ πλεονεκτεῖν)²⁸. Some of the children are easily impressed by bad things, as some of them, who were 'disposed to practising their love of gain' (καὶ πρὸς τὸ φιλοκερδεῖν οὐκ ἀφνεῖς ὄντες) could not refrain from trying to take «unfair» advantage from their friends, as Miller translated originally. φιλοκέρδεια here thus seems to be a negative motivation that makes it impossible for children to take advantage for good, whereas πλεονεξία is presented as something that generally is bad and goes at the expense of another, but now has a surprising good side.

This apparent re-evaluation foreshadows Xenophon's provocative treatment of πλεονεξία in the rest of the dialogue. The conversation departs from a traditional view, as Cyrus shares his observation that his Median friends think that the ruler should differ from the ruled in eating more delicate food, and possessing more gold (πλέον ἔχειν ἔνδον χρυσοῦν), sleeping more hours (πλείονα χρόνον καθεύδειν) and living without less toil than the ruled in general. Cyrus then already remarks that, in his opinion, the ruler should differ from the ruled only in his foresight and love of toil (τῶ προνοεῖν καὶ φιλοπονεῖν, I 6, 8). This theme is picked up by Cambyses, who says that the ruler should have a greater share (πλεονεκτοῦντα) of the heat during summer, a greater share of the cold during the winter, and a greater share of toil during hardships (I 6, 25).

Later in the conversation, Cambyses says that during a fair battle, earlier acquired advantages can be very powerful (αἱ ἐκ πολλοῦ παρεσκευασμένα πλεονεξίαί μέγα δύνανται), by which he means the advantages that would typically not be considered unfair, such as making sure your troops have been well trained, that their minds are well disciplined, and that oneself is well versed in the art of war (I 6, 41)²⁹. Cambyses here thus broadens the scope of πλεονεξία by using it outside the fair-unfair dichotomy.

Cyrus' response to what he has just been taught is naïve and enthusiastic, as he exclaims how late he is learning about taking advantage, and he begs his father not to deny him teaching him to take advantage of his enemies (ὥς τοῖσιν ὀψιμαθῆ ὄντα ἐμὲ τούτων τῶν πλεονεξιῶν, ὦ πάτερ, μὴ φείδου εἴ τι ἔχεις διδάσκειν ὅπως πλεονεκτήσω ἐγὼ τῶν πολεμίων, I 6, 35). It is telling for the rest of the

²⁸ TAMIOLAKI (2017), 191 places the reconceptualization in a broader perspective of Xenophon's purposeful attempt to make the audience reflect critically on Cyrus.

²⁹ Later in the work, when he has invented a siege tower that can be pulled towards walls, he argues «that taking unfair advantage in war is a form of safety, justice and happiness» (νομίζων τὴν ἐν πολέμῳ πλεονεξίαν ἄμα σωτηρίαν τε καὶ δικαιοσύνην εἶναι καὶ εὐδαιμονίαν, X. *Cyr.* VI 1, 55).

Cyropaedia, as Cyrus can be observed to take advantage of many other characters in his ascension to power. Cyrus never seems to use *πλεονεξία* in a positive, reformed way but always attributes this negative motivation to others while at the same time hiding or defending his own advantage. The most famous occasion is his confrontation with his uncle Cyaxares, who accuses him of *de facto* usurping his position and stealing his army. In this discussion, Cyrus asks his uncle whether he is, given all the hardships they have gone through together, really accusing him of *πλεονεξία* (ἐν τούτοις ἔχεις τινά μου πλεονεξίαν κατηγορῆσαι; V 5, 19). However, in the same conversation, Cyrus explains to his uncle that by advancing his own interest, he has advanced his uncle's interests as well; thus, as Danzig has extensively shown, he reconceptualizes the pursuit of self-interest as something compatible with other's interests and that does not need to go at the expense of other people's interest³⁰.

A second example of Cyrus' manipulation of the language of self-interest forms the episode in which Mandane warns her son not to stay longer in Media and warns him that he will be punished if he returns with the tyrannical conviction that it is suitable for one to have more than all (ἐστὶ τὸ πλεόν οἶσθαι χρῆναι πάντων ἔχειν). Cyrus asks her whether it is more devious to be taught to have more or to have less (δεινότερός ἐστιν, ὧ μῆτερ, διδάσκειν μείον ἢ πλεόν ἔχειν). He asserts that Astyages will teach everybody to have less than himself (Μήδους ἅπαντας δεδίδαχεν αὐτοῦ μείον ἔχειν) so that Mandane does not need to worry that her father will send home Cyrus or somebody else who has learned to take advantage (ὥστε θάρρει, ὡς ὁ γε σὸς πατὴρ οὔτ' ἄλλον οὐδένα οὔτ' ἐμέ πλεονεκτεῖν μαθόντα ἀποπέμψει, I 3, 17-18). Cyrus' reasoning is devious because he conflates being forced to live with less than one's share (because of a greedy tyrant taking yours) with being content with less³¹. He, therefore, presents *μειονεκτεῖν* as if it were a virtue, and as if his grandfather would do the victims of his tyrannical regime a favor by teaching them how to be poor while he is rich himself³².

A final example of how Cyrus manipulates the concept of *πλεονεξία* can be found when Cyrus has been appointed as the judge who can divide the loot in the army. There, Cyrus supports unequal division over the army, saying, «even to the worst, it

³⁰ DANZIG (2009); (2012).

³¹ A similar thing happens in the *Hiero*: whereas Simonides, representing how a commoner would view tyranny, assumes that the tyrant will have a better life than normal people, because he has taken more than his share, and therefore has more access to sources of pleasure, such as, for instance, sightseeing, Hiero will answer that, when also counting the sights of the eye, he finds that tyrants are worse off (εὐρίσκω μειονεκτοῦντας τοὺς τυράννους, X. *Hier.* 1, 11, 2). When investigating other seeming advantages of being a tyrant, Simonides is given the same answer eight more times (Cf. X. *Hier.* 1, 14, 2; 1, 19, 1; 1, 19, 4; 1, 27, 2; 1, 29, 3; 2, 1, 4; 3, 6, 2; 4, 1, 2).

³² This is very ironic. In the *Republic* the view is propagated that a cultural environment in which tyranny and crime are celebrated will only breed more tyrants and criminals (FRANK 2018). Taking less than one's share (*μειονεκτέω*) can also be conceptualized as virtuous behavior, see X. *Ages.* 4, 5, 2; *Lac.* 11, 9, 3.

will seem proper that the good should have the larger share» (tr. MILLER 1914; καὶ τοῖς κακίστοις συμφέρον φανεῖσθαι τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς πλεονεκτεῖν), and that the one who always seeks to have the most (ὅς ἐν παντὶ μαστεύει πλέον ἔχειν) is a worthy fellow soldier (II 2, 21-22). However, when he has been appointed judge, he warns soldiers that «those who are poor companions in toil, and also extravagant and shameless (σφοδροὶ καὶ ἀναίσχυντοι) in their desire for any advantage (πρὸς δὲ τὸ πλεονεκτεῖν), are likely also to lead others to what is vicious; for they are often able to demonstrate that vice does gain some advantage» (tr. MILLER 1914; πολλακίς γὰρ δύνανται τὴν πονηρίαν πλεονεκτοῦσαν ἀποδεικνύναι, II 2, 25). Cyrus thus warns his soldiers for people who seek unfair advantage because of their effect on others when he has just obtained the advantage of distributing the spoils over the army³³.

These examples of Cyrus' opportunism and rhetorical prowess have fueled many ironical readings of the *Cyropaedia*, in which this meritocratic rhetoric is a mere façade for the advancement of an elite that is quickly enriching itself³⁴. Danzig's response to these ironical readings has been that Cyrus' advancement of his self-interest is compatible with advancing a common interest, thus emphasizing that Xenophon's ideal leader does not have to be altruistic and that seeking advantage is inherent to ruling and politics³⁵. Moreover, Danzig shows, as the anecdote of Cyrus' judgment over the big and the small boys' coats shows, that some people are entitled to more because they can make better use of it³⁶.

We now have seen how Xenophon's re-evaluation of φιλοκέρδεια in the *Oeconomicus* is paralleled by a provocative and tentative reconceptualization of πλεονεξία in the *Cyropaedia*. In contrast, πλεονεξία is presented as unequivocally negative in the *Oeconomicus* and φιλοκέρδεια in the *Cyropaedia*. This negative presentation of φιλοκέρδεια is however, as I will show now, followed by a reconceptualization of κέρδος in the *Cyropaedia* with its' parallels in others of Xenophon's works.

In the discussion between Aglaitadas and Cyrus (II 1, 11-17), we see that both have a traditional short-term and zero-sum conception of κέρδος. When Aglaitadas complains about Cyrus' companions who boast and tell entertaining stories in which they mock foreign soldiers' moral flaws, Cyrus argues that the term boaster (ἀλαζών) is only applicable to men who pretend to be better than they are and promise what

³³ Later, however, when Cyrus rules over Babylon, he starts hosting games in which the strongest appears to be the one who has gained the most advantage (ὄπου δὲ μάλιστα πλεονεκτῶν ὁ κράτιστος φαίνεται) in order to install competition among the people (Xen. *Cyr.* VIII 4, 4).

³⁴ As explained by TAMIOLAKI (2017), 189-190, the *Cyropaedia* is generally read in three ways: 1. An ironic reading, which is most vocally advocated by NADON (2001). 2. A virtuous reading, which argues against the ironic reading. This interpretation is best represented by GRAY (2011), 246-90. 3. An ambiguous reading, in which Cyrus is seen as a good leader because of his dark sides. This line of interpretation is for instance followed by DANZIG (2012).

³⁵ DANZIG (2012).

³⁶ DANZIG (2009). For this old aristocratic notion of πλεονεξία, see ADKINS (1960), 236-238.

they cannot do to obtain something or make gain (καὶ ταῦτα φανεροῖς γιγνομένοις ὅτι τοῦ λαβεῖν τι ἔνεκα καὶ κερδᾶναι ποιοῦσιν). People who tell amusing stories to entertain an audience and not for gain at the expense of the audience nor at the expense of their hearers or to their harm (μήτε ἐπὶ τῷ αὐτῶν κέρδει μήτ' ἐπὶ ζημίᾳ τῶν ἀκουόντων μήτε ἐπὶ βλάβῃ μηδεμιᾶ), should not be considered to be boasting, but just funny (II 2, 12). Cyrus, however, also acknowledges that κέρδος can be good, like Ischomachus does in the *Oeconomicus*, as Xenophon reports about Cyrus' concern that nobody would wrong friends and allies. By always acting justly himself, he believed that others would also refrain from shameful gain (αἰσχροῦ κερδῶν ἀπέχεσθαι) by making them want to be just in their conduct (διὰ τοῦ δικαίου δ' ἐθέλειν πορεύεσθαι, VIII 1, 26). At the end of the *Cyropaedia*, Pheraulas complains about the freedom he has lost because «he has profited to such extent (τοσοῦτον κερδαίνω), that he has more to watch over, and more to share with others, and more business to oversee» (VIII 3, 40). This use of κέρδος is also reminiscent of a vignette in the *Memorabilia*, in which Xenophon, in his authorial voice, describes how people are always in need of good guidance. Those who think that just men never can become unjust are wrong: according to Xenophon, people who indulge in drinking and sex (καὶ τοὺς εἰς φιλοποσίαν προαχθέντας καὶ τοὺς εἰς ἔρωτας ἐγκυλισθέντας) start spending on unnecessary luxuries, and, in order to fulfil these needs, end up not shunning the profit which they shunned to profit from before (καὶ τὰ χρήματα καταναλώσαντες, ὧν πρόσθεν ἀπείχοντο κερδῶν, αἰσχρὰ νομίζοντες εἶναι, τούτων οὐκ ἀπέχονται, *Mem.* I 2, 22).

In a later vignette, Cyrus inverts this standard conception of κέρδος. During Cyrus' campaign against the Assyrians without the supervision of Cyaxares, he proposed to let the Medes, Hyrcanians and Tigranes take care of the division of the money, realizing that they will give the others less, as he argues that if they were to attribute less to them, they should consider it their gain, as the gain for those who are left over will be more agreeable (καὶ ἦν τι μείον ἡμῖν δάσωνται, κέρδος ἡγεῖσθαι: διὰ γὰρ τὰ κέρδη ἦδιον ἡμῖν παραμενοῦσι). To this aphorism, he adds that seeking gain now could only deliver them short-lived fortune (τὸ μὲν γὰρ νῦν πλεονεκτῆσαι ὀλιγοχρόνιον ἂν τὸν πλοῦτον ἡμῖν παράσχοι, *Cyr.* II 2, 43-45). Cyrus thus redefines profit: real or proper κέρδος is not made on the short-term but on the long-term, and the gain of the Medes and Hyrcanians does not need to be the Persians' loss, but is rather an investment leading to proper gain.

The result of this semantical inversion is very comparable to a couple of Xenophon's rhetorical oxymorons: In the *Memorabilia*, Xenophon defends Socrates from the accusation that he taught his pupils' immoral behavior by selecting immoral passages in poetry. When asked whether he explained Hesiod's ἔργον δ' οὐδὲν ὄνειδος, ἀεργίη δέ τ' ὄνειδος («work is no disgrace, but idleness is a disgrace», *Hes. Op.* 309) as an admonition to do dishonest and disgraceful work, and do anything for gain (ὡς ὁ ποιητῆς κελεύει μηδενὸς ἔργου μήτ' ἀδίκου μήτ' αἰσχροῦ ἀπέχεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῦτα ποιεῖν ἐπὶ τῷ κέρδει), Socrates defends this image by arguing that

working is indeed a noble occupation, as working implies doing good work, and doing work that is immoral and onerous (πονηρὸν καὶ ἐπιζήμιον) should be considered idleness (*Mem.* I 2, 56-57). Later, Xenophon says that Socrates wondered «that anyone should make money by practising virtue, and should not consider that the highest reward would be the acquiring a good friend» (τὸ μέγιστον κέρδος ἔξιν φίλον ἀγαθὸν κτησάμενος, *Mem.* I 2, 7)³⁷. This application of the language and narrow self-interest to domains in which this would be inappropriate can be observed in other works as well. In his conversation with Nicomachides, Socrates says that nothing is so profitable as achieving victory over enemies, and that nothing is so unprofitable as losing» (ὅτι οὐδὲν οὕτω λυσιτελές τε καὶ κερδαλέον ἐστίν, ὡς τὸ μαχόμενον τοὺς πολεμίους νικᾶν, οὐδὲ οὕτως ἀλυσιτελές τε καὶ ζημιώδες, ὡς τὸ ἡττᾶσθαι, *Mem.* III 4, 11). In the *Hellenica*, Callistratus warns the Spartans about the fall of Cadmea, saying: «Now they have been taught that seeking unfair advantage is unprofitable (ὥστε πεπαιδευμένους ἡμᾶς ὡς τὸ πλεονεκτεῖν ἀκερδές ἐστι) I hope that we will be moderate and friendly towards each other» (X. *HG* III 11, 7). Xenophon thus paradoxically contrasts πλεονεξία and κέρδος and implies that not deceiving each other will provide to be κερδαλέον.

These examples from the *Cyropaedia* and other works of Xenophon show Xenophon's playfulness and flexibility in using κέρδος and his provocative flirt with presenting κέρδος as something different by presenting long term gains (such as enduring loyalty of subjects) and non-zero-sum gains (such as friendship) as if they were κέρδος. It is part of the same game that Xenophon has been playing with πλεονεξία.

5. *The reformed tyrant in the Hipparchus and Cyropaedia*

The *Cyropaedia* and the *Hipparchus* do not only present a similar ethical re-evaluation of self-interest, but both works do so by employing a reformed figure of the tyrant, Hipparchus and Cyrus. While the tyrant, in general, can be an example to project either good or bad leadership ideals on, the tyrant, as has been observed before, is also strongly connected to the motivation of unfair gain throughout Greek literature: in Archaic poetry, tragedy, and historiography, tyrants are rich, overtly concerned with money, or so impoverished by the maintenance of their guards and lifestyle that they start plundering temples³⁸.

Following Ober, we can see that the figure of the tyrant embodies the sophistic theory of narrow self-interest, in which citizens directly compete with each other about the means for survival in a state of nature³⁹. Apart from a cultural and literary model, tyranny is the antithesis of any cooperative organization of society, in which citizens may very well find that they would be happier as a tyrant. However,

³⁷ Cf. *Mem.* I 6, 14.

³⁸ On the reform of the tyrant in Xenophon: ZUOLO (2018). On the connection between κέρδος and the tyrant in the *Hipparchus*, cf. MASSARO-MASSARO (1997), 11-37; SCROFANI (2021).

³⁹ Cf. OBER (2022), 59-60.

cooperation with other citizens is better than being ruled by another tyrant. Given this Socratic interest in developing the language belonging to the theory of narrow self-interest, which includes κέρδος and πλεονεξία, into a language suited to a theory of broader self-interest, it is only logical to reform the figure of the tyrant as well. Moreover, as leaders, Hipparchus and Cyrus are both responsible for moral education and have the power to design a moral regime that imprints their own morality on their people⁴⁰.

In Plato's *Republic*, the tyrant's moral corruption is caused by his precarious psychological state (*R. IX 571a-577c*). He is characterized by a dominant appetitive and profit-loving part of the soul (580e; 587b). As Arruzza has shown, the fact that the ἐπιθυμητικόν is dominant says something about the relative strengths of the three parts but nothing about the absolute strengths since the tyrant also possesses a particularly strong θυμοειδές and λογιστικόν. As Arruzza describes, they are men with the potential to become philosophers but were ill-guided in their education⁴¹.

Granted that both the authors of the *Hipparchus* and Xenophon utilize the Platonic tripartite model of the soul, they need to make another part of the soul dominant for the tyrant to change. Cyrus has a powerful love of honor, to which the introduction to the *Cyropaedia* testifies⁴². This description does not mean that he has no concern for monetary gain, as the timocratic man in the *Republic* also has active appetites for wealth, but these are subordinated and controlled by his love for honor⁴³. This same psychological composition helps Cyrus to seek advantage and riches, but only as a means to pursue glory rather than as an end in itself. This limitation on his greed, which also has been mentioned by Ischomachus in the *Oeconomicus*, makes it possible for Cyrus to avoid shameful gain and benefit others while also benefitting himself.

Whereas stronger, more noble motivations can keep in check weaker, more base motivations, the dominance of a less noble part of the soul is regarded as problematic, as both Balot and Arruzza analyze, in cases in which φιλοτιμία is overruled by πλεονεξία⁴⁴. Although in the *Hipparchus*, motivations of the soul other than φιλοκέρδεια are not mentioned, its eponymous tyrant can be observed to be lacking guidance by a stronger part of the soul as he apparently had a strong love for wisdom but is motivated by a stronger love for honor, which causes his envy of the oracle of Delphi's authority, and inspires his decision to replace the oracle's maxims with his own⁴⁵. This action foreshadows his failure as a moral educator, for his displayed love

⁴⁰ MULROY (2007), 129.

⁴¹ ARRUZZA (2018), 227-250.

⁴² X. *CyT*: I 2, 1. On Cyrus' φιλοτιμία, cf. VANDIVER (2014), 86-94.

⁴³ ARRUZZA (2018), 141-142.

⁴⁴ ARRUZZA (2018), 147; BALLOT (2001), 142-172.

⁴⁵ Cyrus and Hipparchus are therefore both timocratic rulers. However, whereas for Xenophon, that might very well be enough for a successful ruler, Hipparchus may be held to higher standards because he poses as a sage.

of honor and his installment of new competition (μηδὲν ἄγαν is replaced with μὴ φίλον ἐξαπάτα) has sparked the envy and competition of Harmodius of Aristogiton, who kill him out of jealousy for his educational success. The story, therefore, may be read as a warning of what happens if an inferior motivation becomes dominant in the soul⁴⁶.

6. *Proper Use and Proper Acquisitiveness*

So far, we have examined how the love of honor or praise (φιλοτιμία) has been conceived as a limitation for the love for profit (φιλοκέρδεια) in the *Oeconomicus*, *Cyropaedia* and *Hipparchus*. Φιλοτιμία does not at all impede striving for financial gain but rather helps people to refrain from dishonorable gain. The focus that characters have on these two motivations, is however contrasted by the presence of a Socrates-like figure, who implicitly or explicitly presents the love for wisdom or the good as higher attainable motivations. In the *Oeconomicus*, for instance, Ischomachus is no philosopher like Socrates, although he may form a decent example of the man Critobulus would like to be. As Danzig and Johnson argue, one has to account for the differences between Socrates and Ischomachus: If Ischomachus, a Greek farmer and businessman, is the highest attainable ideal for Critobulus, why does Socrates then distance himself from Critobulus' acquisitiveness (X. *Oec.* 2, 2) and is he not more like Ischomachus?⁴⁷

The answer to that question comes early in the *Oeconomicus*, where Socrates presents a version of the 'Proper use' (ὀρθή χρῆσις) argument. In this argument, Socrates distinguishes between exchange value and subjective value to show that whoever truly knows how to 'use' wealth also knows when he has no use *for* it. Consequently, as Socrates argues, these possessions do not constitute wealth for people who do not know how to use particular possessions⁴⁸. In that particular respect, Socrates, as he claims himself (*Oec.* 2, 1), is more prosperous than Critobulus and probably richer than Ischomachus.

In the *Hipparchus*, a version of the same 'Proper use' argument may be utilized and thus presents the reader with an alternative to a lifelong pursuit of φιλοκέρδεια. The *Hipparchus*, however, is not strictly about use (χρῆσις) but about valuation

⁴⁶ [Pl.] *Hipparch.* 228c-229d. On the interpretation of the maxims, see also MULROY (2007), 127-128. On the historical excursus, cf. SCHORN (2005), SCHUBERT (2018).

⁴⁷ Whether Ischomachus is meant to form a good example to Critobulus, and to what extent Ischomachus exemplifies all aspects of Xenophon's Socrates' moral philosophy is a subject of debate. Many Straussian scholars (STRAUSS 1970; STEVENS 1994) regard Ischomachus as a foil to the philosopher Socrates. DANZIG (2003) argues that the lifestyle of the gentleman farmer is acceptable, but that the life of the philosopher still stands out. JOHNSON (2021) refines this thesis, namely that Ischomachus is a flawed example of a way of life that is in principle commendable but always second to that of the philosopher. I follow this latter interpretation. Arguing against these two interpretations is DORION (2008); (2018), who shows that there is no disagreement between Ischomachus' teachings and Socrates' ethical ideas elsewhere in Xenophon's oeuvre.

⁴⁸ X. *Oec.* 1, 10-12; cf. VAN BERKEL (2018), 399-401; (2020), 297-303.

(ἀξιόω), as I will show now through a comparison with the *Republic* and the *Euthydemus*.

According to multiple definitions during the first and third attempts taken by the interlocutor, οἱ φιλοκερδεῖς are people who «think it valuable» (ἀξιοῖ or ἀξιῶσι) to derive profit (κερδαίνειν) from certain (dishonorable) sources of profit⁴⁹. This peculiar use of the verb ἀξιόω is introduced by the interlocutor at the offset of the first definition. Somewhat later, Socrates draws attention to this use of the verb by asking the interlocutor whether he means something else with «to deem worthy to make profit with» than to «think that one should profit from» (τὸ οὖν ἀξιῶν κερδαίνειν ἄλλο τι λέγεις ἢ οἶσθαι δεῖν κερδαίνειν), which the interlocutor asserts (225d2-3). Socrates then imitates this use of the verb a couple of times, and its use remains uncontested during the remainder of the dialogue (225b 4-6; 225c 2-3).

How should we understand this use of ἀξιόω and derived terms? In the *Hipparchus*, it seems to be used as a synonym for either τολμάω or οἶμαι, but does it signify a calculation of profitability (of the ἐπιθυμητικόν), a pragmatic consideration (of the θυμοειδές) or a moral one (of the λογιστικόν)? A passage in the first book of the *Republic* may help us. In this passage, Socrates follows up on Thrasymachus' argument that injustice is more profitable than justice (348b ff.), and he shows in what respects the just differs from the unjust:

“No difference,” said I, “but here is something I want you to tell me in addition to what you have said. Do you think the just man would want to overreach or exceed another just man?” (ὁ δίκαιος τοῦ δικαίου δοκεῖ τί σοι ἂν ἐθέλειν πλέον ἔχειν;).

“By no means,” he said; “otherwise, he would not be the delightful simpleton that he is.”

“And would he exceed or overreach or go beyond the just action?”

“Not that either,” he replied. “But how would he treat the unjust man - would he deem it proper and consider it just to outdo, overreach, or go beyond him, or would he not?” (τοῦ δὲ ἀδίκου πότερον ἀξιοῖ ἂν πλεονεκτεῖν καὶ ἡγοῖτο δίκαιον εἶναι ἢ οὐκ ἂν ἡγοῖτο;).

“He would consider it just and deem it proper,” he said, “but he wouldn't be able to” (ἡγοῖτ' ἂν, ἢ δ' ὅς, καὶ ἀξιοῖ, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἂν δύναίτο).

“That is not my question,” I said, “but whether it is not the fact that the just man does not claim and wish to outdo the just man but only the unjust?” (ἀλλ' εἰ τοῦ μὲν δικαίου μὴ ἀξιοῖ πλέον ἔχειν μηδὲ βούλεται ὁ δίκαιος, τοῦ δὲ ἀδίκου;).

⁴⁹ [Pl.] *Hipparch.* 225a 3-4 (Ἐμοὶ μὲν δοκοῦσιν οἱ ἂν κερδαίνειν ἀξιῶσι ἀπὸ τῶν μηδενὸς ἀξιῶν.); 225b 4-6 (Ἄρ' οὖν τοιόνδε λέγεις τὸν φιλοκερδῆ, οἷον ἓαν φυτεύων γεωργὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ γινώσκων ὅτι οὐδενὸς ἄξιον τὸ φυτόν, ἀξιοῖ ἀπὸ τούτου ἐκτραφέντος κερδαίνειν); 225c 2-3 (οὐχὶ ὁμολογεῖς τὸν φιλοκερδῆ ἐπιστήμονα εἶναι περὶ τῆς ἀξίας τούτου ὅθεν κερδαίνειν ἀξιοῖ;); 226c 4-5 (οἶεται ἀπὸ τούτων κερδαίνειν καὶ ἀξιοῖ κερδαίνειν); 228d 1-3 (ὅς ἂν σπουδάζη ἐπὶ τούτοις καὶ ἀξιοῖ κερδαίνειν ἀπ' αὐτῶν, ἀφ' ὧν οἱ χρηστοὶ οὐ τολμῶσι κερδαίνειν); cf. DAVIS (2006), 551; SCROFANI (2021), who compares the play on ἀξιῶν and ἀξιόω to the *Minos*' play on νόμος and νομίζω.

“That is the case,” he replied. “How about the unjust, then? Does he claim to overreach and outdo the just man and the just action?” (ἄρα ἀξιοῖ τοῦ δικαίου πλεονεκτεῖν καὶ τῆς δικαίας πράξεως).

“Of course,” he said, “since he claims to overreach and get the better of everything” (ὅς γε πάντων πλέον ἔχειν ἀξιοῖ).

“Then the unjust man will overreach and outdo both the unjust man and the unjust action, and all he will endeavor to get the most in everything for himself” (Pl. *R.* I 349b 1-c 9, tr. SHOREY 1969, adapted).

As we read, the just differs from the unjust by his choice of whom he will take advantage of: the just will only act at the expense of the unjust, whereas the unjust will act at the cost of either the just or the unjust. In a following analogy with musicians, Socrates clarifies the point again by asking Thrasymachus whether he thinks that a musician tuning his lyre would want to exceed or outdo another musician (καὶ ἀνέσει τῶν χορδῶν πλεονεκτεῖν ἢ ἀξιοῦν πλέον ἔχειν, I 349e 10-12), thus emphasizing that the just, like the expert, would only take advantage of the unjust (I 350a-b). In these six instances of ἀξιώω, the verb indicates a moral consideration in the sense that he does not deem it right or worth it to mistreat another just person. Although Thrasymachus suggests that the just man may only do this because he is afraid of losing his reputation - and Socrates does not object to Thrasymachus' suggestion that the just person would, in principle, be as acquisitive as the unjust person - Socrates contradicts these suggestions earlier in his discussion with Polemarchus, as he convinces him that the just man will not feel the urge to wrong the unjust man (I 335a ff.). This intertextual link between the *Hipparchus* and the *Republic* suggests, therefore, that the decision to or not to ἀξιοῦν κερδαίνειν is a moral consideration and that this very action thus implies a moral ideal higher than the pursuit of mere gain.

A second dialogue in which the verb ἀξιώω plays an important role and which may also be considered an intertextual link is the *Euthydemus*. In this dialogue, the ‘Proper use’ argument originates and is used to show that the philosophical life is superior to any other activity, particularly money-making, which has been targeted throughout the dialogue since only philosophy produces the knowledge of how to use objects⁵⁰.

The verb ἀξιώω and its cognates appear in a couple of key passages in the text. In his summary of his argument, Socrates argues that ἀγαθά can be considered good as long as understanding and wisdom guide them, but in themselves, neither sort is of any worth (αὐτὰ δὲ καθ’ αὐτὰ οὐδέτερα αὐτῶν οὐδενὸς ἄξια εἶναι, Pl. *Euthd.*

⁵⁰ For the ‘Proper use’ argument, see Pl. *Euthd.* 280b-e, 281b, 281d, 288e-289a. In the *Euthydemus*, Socrates explains how, all people strive to prosper, and people need good things to prosper (278e; 280b). For good fortune (εὐτυχία), wisdom is sufficient (279c-e). All other good things needed to prosper must be beneficial (279e-280a). In order to be beneficial, one has to use them rightly (280d-e) and one needs knowledge (ἐπιστήμη, 281a-282a). Assets therefore cannot be inherently good, only knowledge is good in itself. Philosophy is equated with possessing knowledge (288d-e), the only way to be happy is to become a philosopher. SERMAMOGLU-SOULMAIDI (2014), 10 ff.

281d 8-e 1). Later, to clarify to Clinias that not just any branch of knowledge (other than philosophy) is per se worth knowing, Socrates asks him whether the knowledge of turning rocks into gold would be of no value (οὐδενὸς ἂν ἀξία ἢ ἐπιστήμη εἴη) if one did not know how to use gold properly (289a 1). Thirdly, on a dramatic level, Socrates has been alluding to this greater point by telling Clinias to pay attention so that they will not skip over a good worth mentioning (ἄξιον λόγου, 279c 3) or telling Crito on two occasions that an argument is «worth hearing» (ἄξιον ἀκοῦσαι, 283b 2; 304d 9).

Finally, at the end of the framed conversation, Socrates encourages Crito to invest in lessons of the two eristics, arguing that following lessons would not hinder his chrematistic practices (304b-c). Crito asks Socrates to defend philosophy from the accusations overheard by Crito that philosophers are talking nonsense and taking things seriously that are of no value (ληρούντων καὶ περὶ οὐδενὸς ἀξίων ἀναξίαν σπουδὴν ποιουμένων, 304e 4-5), and that therefore, philosophy is of no value (οὐδενὸς μὲν οὖν ἄξιον, 305a 1). Crito eagerly waits for Socrates' rebuttal, but Socrates ostentatiously refuses to make the case for philosophy again. Crito expresses his regret that he has been overconcerned with financially providing for his family, but that he has neglected his sons' moral education and that, therefore, he does not know how he should introduce them to philosophy. Socrates then remarks that «in each business, there are many lazy ones who are worth nothing, and only a few eager ones worth a lot» (ἐν παντὶ ἐπιτηδεύματι οἱ μὲν φαῦλοι πολλοὶ καὶ οὐδενὸς ἄξιοι, οἱ δὲ σπουδαῖοι ὀλίγοι καὶ παντὸς ἄξιοι, 307a 3-5) and reassures Crito that he should not introduce anybody into philosophy if he himself is not even convinced of its worth (307b-c).

The *Euthydemus* thus deals with the question of what is valuable and worthwhile, and Socrates' 'Proper use' argument renders wealth something that seems inherently valuable, worthless if it is not used by a philosophically trained mind. Determining true value is something that only the philosopher can do. Therefore, the seemingly neutral move of equating κέρδος with an increase in value and calling the valuable profitable (τὸ μὲν ἄξιον ἄρα κερδαλέον ἐστίν) in the end seems to point to the philosopher ([Pl.] *Hipparch.* 231d 9-e 8). The *Hipparchus*, potentially does not render a precise version of the 'Proper use' argument, but rather seems to present the other side of the coin: the 'Proper use' argument is always employed in a context in which one desires to acquire more than one currently possesses. In order to use the user needs to possess first, possession requires acquisition, and acquisition requires an assessment of what is worth possessing.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, I have compared the *Hipparchus* with several texts that reflect on human motivation and self-interest in multiple societal domains, including economic traffic. All these texts can be read as, but not reduced to, reactions to the *Republic's* subordination of the lower human motivations, and in particular, the love of profit.

Reading the *Hipparchus* in that context and examining how Xenophon's works repeat many of the controversial steps made in the *Hipparchus*, such as the provocative attempts to re-evaluate φιλοκέρδεια, κέρδος, and πλεονεξία and adapt the language of narrow self-interest to explore a theory of broader self-interest, helps us to understand more of this debate and to appreciate the *Hipparchus'* place in it.

Compared to the *Republic's* negative treatment of φιλοκέρδεια, the *Hipparchus* seems to ostentatiously set the naïve reader free and removes all easily imaginable arguments against an unlimited pursuit of profit. While it does not directly speak of justice and injustice or shameful gain, comparison with the other texts has shown that these topics were concerns in the broader debate and that these were also implied in the *Hipparchus* but either ironically dismissed by Socrates or implied and visible for the well-versed reader of Plato. The naïve reader can let himself be convinced that the love of gain is always good for oneself and that everybody strives for profit, and he can ignore the fact that some profits go at the expense of others, thus falling for Socrates' deceptive reasoning. The experienced reader can perceive that Socrates has withheld the fact that profit can still go at the expense of another person but appreciate Socrates' innovation that profit does not always have to be at the expense of another, and therefore regard the text as a motivation to pursue honorable gain (and not all gain). Φιλοκέρδεια, understood in that sense, may be considered an acceptable alternative to philosophy, just as Ischomachus forms an acceptable, but not an ideal model to imitate compared to Socrates. To the ears of the philosophical mind, it shows that the love of gain does not disallow the love of the good as long as one can truly value what is good. In other words, if the profit does not go at the expense of others, it still may go at the expense of the profiteer if it does not constitute true wealth for him.

Rather than disallowing the obvious reading and promoting a more obscure one, the *Hipparchus'* obvious irony enables the reader to reflect on these various interpretations. Upon reading the *Hipparchus*, one may decide that one should follow Socrates, but if one truly believes that one can adequately value wealth and knows how to use it, and one can acquire wealth without losing one's head in the process, there is no impediment to become rich and be a philosopher nonetheless. Such use of irony that is used to promote 'dialogical reflection' - and not to hide a suppressed and undiscussable opinion - may come in useful since the debate about whether one should live as a philosopher or participate in society is, unless one wants to live like Diogenes the Cynic, practically unsolvable. The philosophically interested reader, who was also engaged in making money and managing his estate, may have been interested in reading something that would question the status quo but, in the end, would still allow him to keep doing business as usual.

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