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The Philosophy of Antisthenes as Therapy in Xenophon's *Symposium*

Abstract: This paper shows the philosophy of Antisthenes of Athens described in Xenophon's *Symposium* as a philosophical therapy closely connected with the Socrates' model also presented in Xenophon's writings. Antisthenes developed the basic concepts of Socrates' ethics, like *arete*, *enkrateia*, *eleutheria* and *autarkia*, giving them a specific radical dimension. This decisive radicalization was Antisthenes's reaction to the then deep moral crisis which, like his master, he tried to remedy by offering the only proper medicine – philosophy. It was, above all, a practical philosophy that showed a man how to live in order to be able to call his existence, following Socrates, “a life worth living”. The philosophical thought of Antisthenes presented in Xenophon's *Symposium* is a peculiar therapy of human souls, and the philosopher himself can therefore be described as a “physician of the soul” (*iatros psyches*). Since Antisthenes perfectly recognized the state of a special kind of intoxication deeply embedded in society and its addiction to inborn impulses and instincts, as well as attachment to irrational traditions and customs, and his treatment, with the help of philosophy, boiled down to a thorough return to rationality, rejection of excessive bodily desires, and continuous shaping of one's own personality through work on oneself and practicing virtue.

Keywords: philosophical therapy, the art of living, Socrates, Antisthenes, *arete*, *enkrateia*, *eleutheria*, *autarkia*

Introduction

A clear therapeutic approach characterized Greek philosophical thought of the late fifth and early fourth centuries B.C. An analogy linking philosophy and medicine, and thus the philosopher and the physician, often shapes the ethical and political considerations of this period. This analogy highlights the unique power of the philosopher to heal the human soul and draws on the healing properties of the *logos* as a basis for philosophical discourse. Over time, this analogy has been applied more frequently to emphasize the practical dimension of philosophical thought in the Hellenistic period, transforming philosophy into the “therapy of the soul”.

Some philosophical considerations already emerged in classical texts as a form of therapy. Their frequent reference to the term *therapeia* describes the special care and concern that should be given to loved ones – children, parents, or friends. This care covers both physical aspects, such as the health of the body, and spiritual aspects, that is, the health of the soul.¹ In the view of ancient philosophers, the therapeutic dimension of philosophical thinking was limited to the field of ethics. Rather, it took the form of theoretical analyses and guidelines that philosophers themselves, such as Socrates, applied to their lives, making it a true testimony of their teaching.

As Martha Nussbaum notes, several elements in the ethical considerations of some classical philosophers, like Socrates and his disciples, form the key elements of the therapeutic function of philosophy. The three most important include “a focus on false beliefs (and the associated passions) as an origin of the soul’s misery; the insistence that philosophy knows systematic procedures of therapy that can produce psychic health; the idea that critical and self-critical arguments, in particular, are tools by which experts can probe deeply into the personality and rid it of diseased elements.”²

The philosophers of the classical period already recognized the prominent role played by philosophical discourse in securing the health of the soul.

¹ Plato, *Leges* 886c, *Gorgias* 464b, *Laches* 185e; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* III, 11.4.

² Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire. Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (New Jersey–Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 53.

With their reflections, philosophy becomes “the art of living”, through which man has been able to attain the greatest good (*megiston agathon*). But he can achieve this only by rational research, because he is only able to acquire or attract what he truly needs and desires by living life according to the principles of reason. As the art of living, philosophy ensures its followers that, by ascribing to its knowledge and implementing its principles, they can heal their own souls of all diseases from their previous way of life and achieve a state of inner calm, thus coming closer to a state of desired happiness.

Philosophy as therapy takes care of the human soul by making a lifelong commitment to the pursuit of truth about a human being and about the values that constitute this being in order to enable it to live real life worth living. Such philosophical considerations, which may be called therapeutic, emphasize an orientation of a life devoted to reason. By wise analysis and argumentation, a philosopher as *iatros psyches* (a physician of soul) deals with the beliefs, desires, and fears that disturb the peace of the human soul. The main source of soul's fear is society and its artificial hierarchy, which encompass an individual's fame, social status, wealth, and the greatest assets toward which one should earnestly strive. From a philosophical point of view, such a life, although generally glorified, is utterly worthless. For its realization does not perfect the human being because it does not fully develop the unique capacity of humanity to reason.

Socrates was the primary ancient philosopher who drew attention to the importance of a life devoted to reason. He was also the first philosopher who described the essence of man – the soul that is identified with reason. Such a perspective led his philosophical thinking to emphasize the therapeutic dimension of ethical propositions, which aim to cure the human soul of all oppressive diseases. Socrates, as he appeared in Plato's dialogues and in Xenophon's Socratic works, is portrayed as a physician capable of healing the human soul with philosophical discourse. Dialectics was figured as his preferred method of therapeutic philosophizing. In Socrates's view, it is the art of wise conversation, offering its interlocutors a personalized approach to intellectual thought and exchange that is crucial for therapy. At the same time, dialectics makes it possible to prove the false assumptions that shape the interlocutor's value system and, by choosing the right audience or place for dis-

course, opens the greatest possible opportunities for an interlocutor to grasp Socrates' argument.³ From a therapeutic point of view, this method, which relies upon a calm approach to questioning, is too sensitive a tool to confront the deep or hidden wishes, desires, and fears of humans.⁴ To reach these intentions or emotions, more assertive questioning is needed to make a listener think about oneself and encourage them to do the right thing to achieve internal change.

After the death of Socrates, as foretold in Plato's *Apology* (39 c–d), his disciples continued their master's philosophical activity, each in their own individual way. Above all other disciples, Plato and Antisthenes emphasized the therapeutic aspect of philosophy. However, the former interpreted it in too theoretical a manner, restricting the influence of the lived environment in his philosophical thought. However, Antisthenes emphasized the confluence of theory and lived reality in his philosophical approach. As a Socratic and later a Cynic, he was particularly interested in philosophy as the art of living. Like his master, Antisthenes often describes himself as a physician, more precisely as a physician of the soul (*iatros psyches*). As reported by Diogenes Laertios:

When he was asked why he reproached his pupils with bitter language, he said "Physicians too use severe remedies on their patients" (6.4). He was once reproached for being intimate with wicked men and said "Physicians also live with those who are sick, and yet they do not catch fevers" (6.6).⁵

The therapeutic aspect of Antisthenes' philosophy related, as in the case of Socrates, to the proper care of the individual for their soul. Nevertheless, its implementation took on a much more practical, but also radical dimension, trying to influence the widest possible social circle. One could say that Antisthenes' philosophical activity was a type of shock therapy, one that pro-

³ Dorota Tymura, *Sokrates Ksenofonta* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2017), 210.

⁴ Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, 35.

⁵ All translations of Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* are from: Charles D. Yonge, Keith Seddon, *An Outline of Cynic Philosophy: Antisthenes of Athens and Diogenes of Sinope in Diogenes Laertius Book Six* (Constantia: Lulu, 2008).

posed radical methods to overcome the exceptionally difficult condition, in this philosopher's opinion, of the profound crisis of morality at that time.

Antisthenes of Athens

Antisthenes of Athens is one of the most enigmatic and mysterious philosophers of antiquity. Both his life and his philosophical output are surrounded by an aura of ambiguity that emerges from the few surviving fragments of his works. His philosophical considerations, which he willingly wrote down, in contrast to his master Socrates, did not attain the status of works deemed worthy of preservation for posterity. Only a few fragments have survived among the large number of diverse writings that gave him the nickname "prolific babbling" in antiquity (DL 6.18).

Indirect sources pose an additional difficulty to the reception of Antisthenes, defining him as both a Socratic and the first Cynic. In this respect, the Socratic dialogues of Xenophon, the *Symposium* and *Memorabilia*, and doxographical literature are the main sources of knowledge for us on Antisthenes. However, they advance such different representations of the philosopher that a dual portrait of Antisthenes emerges. According to modern interpretations, Xenophon's dialogues show Antisthenes as the leading Socratic, the successor of the master Socrates and a continuator of his practical philosophy of life with its special therapeutic approach. On the other hand, doxographical literature makes Antisthenes the creator of cynicism, the mentor of Diogenes of Sinope, the most famous Cynic of all time, and the creator of the most important principles and concepts of this movement, such as *autarkia*, *ponos*, *askesis* or the art of "not-needing-anything" (τὸ μηδενὸς προσδεῖσθαι).

At first glance, it seems that Greek literature has given us too disparate portrayals of Antisthenes to allow us to piece together a reasonably coherent description of his philosophical thought. However, primary and secondary source research reveals a specific evolution of his philosophical activity from a Sophist to a Socratic and finally to a Cynic. Each of these changes was marked by an important event in his life related to the figure of Socrates.

Diogenes Laertios relates that Antisthenes was initially educated by Gorgias of Leontinoi and later ran his own school of rhetoric (6.12). In turn, when he met Socrates, he closed the school and joined the Socratic circle with his students, probably guided by his rather intense emotionality, which he would shape for a long time under the guidance of his master.

Despite being a follower of Socrates, Antisthenes showed significant independence in his philosophical thought, while remaining faithful to the fundamental assumptions of Socratic ethics, such as the question of *arete*, the commandment of *enkrateia*, or the denial of material goods. This philosophical attitude probably prompted Socrates to make him his successor, as confirmed by Xenophon in his *Symposium*. According to his master, Antisthenes was the most competent of all his disciples to continue the philosophical mission he had begun. The distinctive feature that qualified Antisthenes to such an eminent function was his *proagogeia* (the profession of go-between). Using many examples of his unique ability, Socrates explains why he has chosen Antisthenes to become his successor in his own philosophical activity with such words:

It is the witnessing of your talent at achieving such a result that makes me judge you an excellent go-between. For the man who can recognize those who are fitted to be mutually helpful and can make them desire one another's acquaintance, that man, in my opinion, could also create friendship between cities and arrange suitable marriages, and would be a very valuable acquisition as friend or ally for both states and individuals (4.64).⁶

This crucial decision of Socrates was probably based on two main reasons. Firstly, Antisthenes was one of his oldest and closest companions, who showed the greatest independence in the formation of his philosophical thought, which in many ways was extraordinarily aligned with the thought and activity of the master. This affinity probably made him Socrates' most faithful disciple and his closest friend, as attested by Xenophon and Diogenes

⁶ All translations of Xenophon, *Symposium* are from: Edward C. Marchant, Otis J. Todd, *Xenophon. Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Symposium, Apology* (Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 1923).

Laertios.⁷ In addition, because of his explosive and angry disposition, Antisthenes, constantly experienced a kind of therapy from Socrates. Despite his mature age, he often behaved quite rudely and was quarrelsome even with the master, as demonstrated in Xenophon's *Symposium* (4. 60–62). His violent attitude required constant self-work under Socrates' watchful eye, which prompted Antisthenes to become thoroughly acquainted with his mentor's therapeutic methods.

Socrates' trial and his death probably contributed to Antisthenes' abandonment of the Socratic mission and the evolution of his practical philosophy toward a more cynical orientation. As Luis Navia states, "Socrates' death, in particular, may have been for him the catalytic experience responsible for his transformation into a Cynic".⁸ At that time, he probably began to teach in the Cynosarges without making this place a proper school of philosophy in the ancient sense. It is also noteworthy that, out of all Cynics, only the name Antisthenes is associated with the Cynosarges (DL 6.13), which makes it clear that the Cynics did not form a typical school of philosophy there "with accepted principles or a religion with dogmas and precepts".⁹

This last stage in the development of Antisthenes' philosophical activity is recorded in the doxographical literature, which describes a portrait of a mature philosopher immersed in a constant struggle against the world. The Athenians' Socratic mission of moral renewal became an intensive philosophical therapy. Socrates' own activity, although strongly therapeutic, demonstrated the importance of a morally sound soul and offered methods to cure it of common diseases. In Antisthenes' conception of philosophical therapy, this aspect took on a different, more fundamental orientation, thus becoming much more adaptable for the public.

⁷ Xen. *Mem.* III 11.17; II 5; *Symp.* 4.61–64; DL 6.2.

⁸ Luis E. Navia, *Antisthenes of Athens. Setting the World Alright* (Westport–London: Greenwood Press, 2001), 25.

⁹ *Ibidem*, 30.

Socrates' *therapeia*

Socrates' philosophy demonstrates a strong therapeutic orientation through his extraordinary philosophical output, which took on the character of a mission, as he admitted in Plato's *Apology* (30a). Its aim was the moral renewal of the Athenians, which Socrates wanted to bring about by persuading them to care for their souls and urging them to persevere in the pursuit of virtue. As Vladislav Suvak claims, his purpose was "to give the life of an individual a sense of direction, turning it into something beautiful and good".¹⁰

The most significant expression of the therapeutic dimension of his philosophical considerations was their strong emphasis on action. Indeed, his philosophy is no more than a philosophy of action. By establishing a dialogue with other people and making it a foundational tool to advance his social influence, Socrates recognized its true power. As Xenophon states in *Memorabilia*:

Socrates lived ever in the open; for early in the morning he went to the public promenades and training-grounds; in the forenoon he was seen in the market; and the rest of the day he passed just where most people were to be met; he was generally talking, and anyone might listen (I 1.10).¹¹

Through his daily public discourses with various representatives of Athenian society, Socrates was able to diagnose their most serious diseases. His diagnosis was not very optimistic, as the Athenians, in his estimation, were clearly amid a growing moral crisis. According to Socrates, incorrect beliefs spurred this moral crisis, beliefs that, for generations, determined social rank in terms of one's possessions or principles of honor. The philosophical therapy applied by Socrates stressed the importance of reason in the life of every individual, in order to rid of these beliefs and rediscover oneself – to recognize one's own soul and to perfect it. The process of inner transformation rec-

¹⁰ Vladislav Suvak, "Socratic Therapy: Antisthenes", *Philosophia* 48 (2018): 96.

¹¹ All translations of Xenophon, *Memorabilia* are from: Edward C. Marchant, Otis J. Todd, *Xenophon. Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Symposium, Apology* (Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 1923).

commended by Socrates formed the basis of his ethical reflections and educational activity, aimed at the moral renewal of Athenian society.

The first stage of Socrates' philosophical *therapeia* was self-knowledge, i.e., knowing one's own soul, which he saw as initiating an inner process of human perfection. According to Socrates, every human being must undergo an inner "examination" of the self in accordance with the Delphic recommendation *Gnothi seauton* ("Know thyself"). However, true self-knowledge does not only involve getting to know one's physical body, but also demands an in-depth, insightful examination of one's abilities and skills, as well as the value that each individual believes oneself to possess (Xen. *Mem.* IV 2.25). Such a comprehensive analysis of one's inner "ego" brings the greatest benefit to man. As Socrates states in *Memorabilia*:

Is it not clear too that through self-knowledge men come to much good, and through self-deception to much harm? For those who know themselves, know what things are expedient for themselves and discern their own powers and limitations. And by doing what they understand, they get what they want and prosper: by refraining from attempting what they do not understand, they make no mistakes and avoid failure. And consequently, through their power of testing other men too, and through their intercourse with others, they get what is good and shun what is bad (IV 2.26).

Socrates believes that those who have not conducted an objective self-assessment are incapable of properly developing their personality or establishing good relationships with others. They are stuck in a state of ignorance, which means that they are not only unable to achieve good in their lives, but also more likely to fall into the arms of evil:

Those who do not know and are deceived in their estimate of their own powers, are in the like condition with regard to other men and other human affairs. They know neither what they want, nor what they do, nor those with whom they have intercourse; but mistaken in all these respects, they miss the good and stumble into the bad (Xen. *Mem.* IV 2.27).

According to Socrates, without self-knowledge, the human soul cannot make morally correct decisions. That is why an individual often takes on tasks and obligations that they are unable to fulfill. These wrong decisions risk making one an object of contempt and ridicule in society (Xen. *Mem.* IV 2.29).

Knowing oneself is of great benefit to the human soul, as it is linked to an honest assessment of one's character, the state of ethical knowledge and the way in which this knowledge is used. For, as Socrates believes, proper self-assessment, preceded by objective self-knowledge, is revealed both in knowing when to pursue or resign from a specific action.

The acquisition of self-knowledge forms a primary step in the process of an individual's self-improvement. Socrates introduced this idea to his listeners in terms of applied philosophical therapy. An honest and objective self-assessment formed the basis for the formation of one's personality, as well as abilities developed under the watchful eye of one's master or other mentors, turning to whom Socrates often recommended his listeners when their interests exceeded the scope of his philosophical research.

In Socrates' ethics, the acquisition of self-knowledge should be accompanied by *enkrateia* ("self-control"), which is the second essential principle of his philosophical therapy. The philosopher described *enkrateia* as the dominion over the sensory and emotional realms. As the "greatest good" (*megiston agathon*), *enkrateia* enables individuals to derive pleasure from satisfying basic existential needs. Following one's self-discipline of man, it allows an individual to restrain their desires until the moment when satisfying them will bring one real pleasure:

Incontinence will not let them endure hunger or thirst or desire or lack of sleep, which are the sole causes of pleasure in eating and drinking and sexual indulgence, and in resting and sleeping, after a time of waiting and resistance until the moment comes when these will give the greatest possible satisfaction; and thus she prevents them from experiencing any pleasure worthy to be mentioned in the most elementary and recurrent forms of enjoyment. But self-control alone causes them to endure the sufferings I have named, and therefore she alone causes them to experience any pleasure worth mentioning in such enjoyments (Xen. *Mem.* IV 5.9).

The development of an appropriate degree of *enkrateia* is an important stage in human pursuit of virtue, after which we perfect our own souls. According to Socrates, an individual whose existence is limited to satisfying sensory needs and pleasures cannot approach a state of virtue. Until the rational soul drives the needs and actions of the body, an individual will not be able to attain the knowledge of the beautiful and the good, i.e., virtue, and act in accordance with its principles. The development of *enkrateia* makes it possible to maintain an appropriate hierarchy in the soul-body system, since it extends beyond the sphere of sensory-emotional experiences to endow the mind with mastery of the soul. It should be noted that this art of self-control, essentially an art of abstinence, requires constant daily training to keep the soul healthy, just as a strong, fit body requires regular care and physical activity.

The third important principle to be considered when discussing Socrates' philosophical therapy is the concept of virtue (*arete*). This concept forms the core of his philosophical system. Socrates tried to convince the Athenians that, since reason is the attribute that distinguishes human beings, their natural goal must be the moral perfection of the soul, and thus the inner, true self. According to him, an individual can only achieve this by acquiring knowledge of that which is beautiful and good. In the Socratic circle, this knowledge, equated with virtue, was ethical knowledge. Thus, individuals had to acquire an appropriate level of ethical knowledge to lead a "life worth living".

Nevertheless, as Xenophon reports, Socrates considered virtue in an exceptionally practical manner, which reveals the therapeutic dimension of his activity. In his view, this ethical knowledge must be reflected in real human action – it must be manifested in concrete actions, for no one can prove that they possess true virtue unless they prove it through deeds.

This approach is best illustrated by the concept of justice as it is defined in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (IV 6.6). Xenophon states that a person who knows the applicable laws and acts in accordance with them is just. Legal prescriptions regulate their relationships with others, through which they realize justice.

As we can see, in his approach to *arete*, Socrates emphasizes the unity of knowledge and action that should characterize all human activities. This uni-

ty is a unique imperative of Socratic philosophy. Socrates' philosophical activity was aimed at convincing the Athenian society of its moral correctness and constantly persuading them to implement it. To achieve this, they were encouraged to pursue an objective and honest process of self-knowledge and the continuous shaping of the state of *enkrateia*.

Antisthenes' *therapeia*

As already mentioned, according to Socrates, Antisthenes was the rightful successor to his philosophical activity. Antisthenes also said that Socrates owed his standing to his soul, a life lesson that he, like his master, willingly shared with other people. As he says in Xenophon's *Symposium*:

For Socrates, from whom I acquired this wealth of mine, did not come to my relief with limitation of number and weight, but made over to me all that I could carry. And as for me, I am now niggardly to no one, but both make an open display of my abundance to all my friends and share my spiritual wealth with any one of them that desires it (4.43).

Thanks to Socrates and his therapy, Antisthenes became internally free and independent from material goods. He always had access to leisure, which he considered to be the greatest privilege that Socratic wealth had bestowed upon him. Such a lifestyle allowed him to devote himself freely to various activities so that he could "see whatever is worth seeing and hear whatever is worth hearing" (*Symp.* 4.44). And most importantly, Antisthenes could spend every free moment talking to Socrates, which is the activity that he appreciated the most.

As we can see, during Socrates' lifetime, Antisthenes transformed his philosophical activity to include a practical, social dimension by helping people to take care of themselves. This probably helped to determine his selection as Socrates' obvious successor. His approach already featured important philosophical principles, referred to, in some scholarship, as the art of "not-needing-anything", since it called for the rejection of all material goods, perceived as the source of humankind's enslavement and thus also of their suffering.

The art of “not-needing-anything” instead forwarded the entire secret of happiness, liberating and making humankind fully self-sufficient and free, exposing the primacy of the soul over the body.

We may highlight some fundamental elements of Antisthenes' philosophical *therapeia* in Xenophon's *Symposium*. They take the form of commandments, which function as a kind of *tetrapharmakon* intended to heal human souls of the most severe diseases.

The first of these commandments can be formulated as “Do not covet wealth”. Antisthenes pays close attention to this subject since he regards material wealth as the greatest threat to humanity. As he points out, many people fear poverty and try to prevent it through all possible means. In their pursuit of money, however, they forget their true wealth – their reason. And instead of perfecting their innate inner nature and giving their lives a more spiritual dimension, they degrade themselves and long for material things that only cause them additional distress. As Antisthenes notes in the *Symposium*:

For I see many persons, not in office, who though possessors of large resources, yet look upon themselves as so poor that they bend their backs to any toil, any risk, if only they may increase their holdings; and again I know of brothers, with equal shares in their inheritance, where one of them has plenty, and more than enough to meet expenses, while the other is in utter want. Again, I am told of certain despots, also, who have such a greedy appetite for riches that they commit much more dreadful crimes than they who are afflicted with the direst poverty. For it is of course their want that makes some people steal, others commit burglary, others follow the slave trade; but there are some despots who destroy whole families, kill men wholesale, oftentimes enslave even entire cities, for the sake of money. As for such men, I pity them deeply for their malignant disease; for in my eyes their malady resembles that of a person who possessed abundance but though continually eating could never be satisfied (*Symp.* 4. 35–37).

His own detachment from material wealth informs his extremely negative evaluation of human behavior. According to his self-assessment, he sees himself as wealthy because he has enough food and drink to satisfy his basic needs of hunger and thirst. Nor does he feel cold or tired any more than others, for he finds warmth and comfort in the walls of his house. And when he

feels the need to satisfy the physical pleasure of intercourse with a woman, he is satisfied with every opportunity that comes to him. Antisthenes considers the most valuable manifestation of his wealth to be the fact that if the circumstances of his life had forced him to undertake some work, he would not hesitate to accept any employment, even a shameful one, in order to ensure his basic existence (*Symp.* 4. 37–40).

As we can see, Antisthenes formulates his concept of wealth based on a conviction that it lies in minimizing an individual's existential needs. He models his own life as an example of how this concept of wealth "enriches" people spiritually and becomes the source of their true happiness. By rejecting conventional wealth and external honors, an individual attains a state in which no fate "would make him miserable, since he has a happy life in his own hands and resulting from his own decisions".¹²

Antisthenes also finds that the concepts of wealth and poverty are interpreted differently according to social status and level of education. They are often formulated by custom or the opinion of a majority, but in too narrow and inappropriate sense. As advanced by Socrates, being rich does not mean having a huge fortune, but can be equated with possessing the basic needs sufficient for existence.

Antisthenes' above-stated opinions are strictly connected to his major ethical view that every individual does not keep their real wealth or poverty in their house, but rather in their soul (*Symp.* 4. 34). Thus, their effort should not be focused on accumulating wealth, but on caring for the soul to be as noble as possible. This is a well-known Socratic motif, which is also found in other Socratic dialogues by Xenophon¹³ or Plato. In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates accuses the Athenians of being too anxious to accumulate as much wealth as possible and to acquire a good reputation and honor. He also reproaches them for their lack of a properly maintained soul, as expressed in his famous maxim:

¹² Vladislav Suvak, "Antisthenes between Diogenes and Socrates", in: *Antisthenica Cynica Socratica*, ed. Vladislav Suvak (Praha: Oikoumene, 2014), 82.

¹³ Xen. *Oecon.* II. 5; *Mem.* IV 2.37

Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence makes wealth and everything else good for men, both individually and collectively (30b).¹⁴

The second commandment of Antisthenes' philosophical therapy, which is closely related to the first, can be formulated as "Limit your own needs". It is an interpretation of the Socratic *enkrateia* and, due to Antisthenes' philosophical progression, was subject to a more radical development. In Xenophon's *Symposium*, Antisthenes postulates that people should limit themselves to satisfying basic existential needs, without wanting anything more refined or exquisite, like he does every day. As he says:

For whenever I feel an inclination to indulge my appetite, I do not buy fancy articles at the market (for they come high), but I draw on the storehouse of my soul. And it goes a long way farther toward producing enjoyment when I take food only after awaiting the craving for it than when I partake of one of these fancy dishes, like this fine Thasian wine that fortune has put in my way, and I am drinking without the promptings of thirst (*Symp.* 4.41).

As we can see, in the above passage, Antisthenes calls for the typical Socratic restraint over the sensory realm, since people do not need elaborate or excessive food or beverages to secure their basic existence. It even seems necessary to minimize their physical and sensual needs so that they can understand and appreciate the value of a good life in accordance with their inner nature, or the soul. Such a life makes an individual completely free and their existence exceptionally pleasant:

In a word, all these items appeal to me as being so conducive to enjoyment that I could not pray for greater pleasure in performing any one of them but could pray rather for less – so much more pleasurable do I regard some of them than is good for one (*Symp.* 4.39).

It is worth noting here a specific change in Antisthenes' attitude towards physical love. In Xenophon's *Symposium*, he does not deny its importance in

¹⁴ Plato, *Apology*, 30b, transl. George M. A. Grube.

human life and, as he emphasizes, he experiences this pleasure himself, if the need arises. However, he reduces its fulfillment to the level of purely physiological needs, like eating food or sleeping:

If I ever feel a natural desire for converse with women, I am so well satisfied with whatever chance puts in my way that those to whom I make my addresses are more than glad to welcome me because they have no one else who wants to consort with them (*Symp.* 4.38).

As a Cynic, Antisthenes' view of physical love is equated with something wicked and rejected, which is most vividly expressed by his following statement: "I would rather go mad than feel pleasure" (DL 6.3). According to his conviction, this erotic pleasure is closely linked to submission and the blind desire to satisfy its urges, so that an individual is deprived of all autonomy and transformed into a subordinate to the one who can give them this pleasure. In short, physical love enslaves a person unless they can control it properly. This message is probably related to one of Antisthenes' most well-known sayings: "If I could catch Aphrodite, I would kill her with a bow".¹⁵

The third commandment of Antisthenes' therapy, which may be framed as "Do not seek honor or fame", was only hinted at the feast of Callias. Antisthenes' inactivity in the public sphere, in the political or social life of his *polis*, and thus lack of any obligation towards it, makes him a truly free man, free to govern and order his own life. As he states, this is the greatest advantage of his lifestyle:

But – most exquisite possession of all! – you observe that I always have leisure, with the result that I can go and see whatever is worth seeing and hear whatever is worth hearing and – what I prize highest – pass the whole day, untroubled by business, in Socrates' company. Like me, he does not bestow his admiration on those who count the most gold but spends his time with those who are congenial to him (*Symp.* 4. 44).

¹⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, II 20. 107.

Due to independence from public opinion, Antisthenes would not hesitate to undertake any occupation that would provide him with sufficient support in the case of a sudden change in his fate. No adversity could make him unhappy since he is the master of his own life, which unfolds solely and entirely based on his own decisions.

In the later period of Antisthenes' philosophical activity, this commandment is transformed into a cynical *adoxia*, meaning "lack of honor and glory" and equated with the good (DL 6.11). For the later Antisthenes, good opinion, honors, or fame had negative value and even harmed the human soul by making its actions dependent on general social opinion. The good opinion of society was never, and never could be, a source of any good for man. This is most clearly evidenced by a fragment from the work of Diogenes Laertios:

A man said to him one day "many people praise you". "Why. What evil have I done?" he asked (6.8).

The last commandment of Antisthenes' philosophical therapy, which is consistently followed by the philosopher, can be formulated as "Be self-sufficient", that is, independent and autonomous. In Xenophon's *Symposium*, he views self-sufficiency in terms of pleasure:

Yes, and it is natural that those whose eyes are set on frugality should be more honest than those whose eyes are fixed on money-making. For those who are most contented with what they have are least likely to covet what belongs to others (4.42).

However, this commandment can be applied to the totality of Antisthenes' philosophical thought. If one lives according to the above-stated commandments, they will become more independent from supposed material goods such as wealth, fame, and public opinion and of their own inner, particularly sensual, desires. Unless one craves pleasure or seeks power and wealth, they will not become a slave to their own desires. As part of his therapy, Antisthenes recommended complete liberation from everything that, in the general opinion of society, was good and led to happiness, for this only leads people into the arms of evil and endangers their happiness. The secret of hap-

piness lies in oneself, in one's soul. Happiness results from one's self-sufficiency and independence from all things and other people to the state of not-needing-anything.

Nevertheless, such a way of life required a constant effort (*ponos*), a concept emphasized by the cynic Antisthenes as the supreme good, on par with *adoxia* (DL 6.11). But the lifestyle that Antisthenes outlined in Xenophon's *Symposium* required also extraordinary, constant training against a seemingly hostile environment and against himself, since Antisthenes had to face his own desires, pain, tiredness, and unfavorable social opinion on a daily basis. Such minimizing one's own needs and avoiding any perceived possessions became a daily struggle for all cynics – a struggle against the world. Over the course of time, they would become more persistent in their experiences and find the way to true freedom and happiness through hard effort, like Antisthenes.

Conclusion

In accordance with the will of Socrates, Antisthenes continued the therapeutic philosophical mission that his master had initiated. This philosophical orientation aimed to free humankind from the depths of ignorance, into which it had become more profoundly immersed due to irrational customs and traditions, guided only by impulses and emotions and not by reason. Following in the footsteps of Socrates, Antisthenes recognized this unfavorable state of the human condition and the symptoms and main cause that had led to its degeneration. He proposed a cure of philosophical *therapeia*, which emphasized a need to return to rationality, to make reason the ruler and guide of human life and, above all, to subject all human activities and actions to rational norms. This therapy was a mode of continuous self-improvement following four main commandments:

- Do not covet wealth;
- Limit your own needs;
- Do not seek honor or fame;
- Be self-sufficient.

It required tremendous perseverance and self-control, but it led a person to true happiness – a life worth living. In his therapy, Antisthenes emphasized the commandment to make a habit of giving up pleasure, and our desires for power and wealth, because they are the pursuits that most enslave us.

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