Dialogue, Speeches, and the Acquisition of Virtue
In Xenophon’s Memorabilia
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The role that dialogue plays in the works of Xenophon is a deeply interesting issue that could be analyzed from a variety of different perspectives. From a literary point of view, it would be possible to raise the question of how dialogue fits into what is above all a narrative framework, in particular in the Cyropaedia and in the Anabasis. It would also be worthwhile to analyze from a literary point of view dialogues that have the form of a mise en abyme. Here I am mainly thinking of the dialogue between Virtue and Vice (Mem. 2.1.21-34), which is related by Socrates in a conversation with Aristippus, as well as of the dialogue between Socrates and Ischomachus (Oec. 7-21), which is also related by Socrates, but this time in a conversation with Critobulus. In addition, it would be interesting to ask whether the dialogues in Xenophon’s Socratic writings are models for the dialogues in his other works. For example, does the dialogue between Simonides and Hiero, in Xenophon’s Hiero, have the same literary form and the same philosophical aims as the Socratic dialogues in the Memorabilia? Is the irony that Simonides manifests in the first part of the Hiero of the same nature as Socrates’ irony? These are a few examples of questions, among many others, that it would be interesting to examine. I have decided, however, to examine Xenophon’s use of dialogue from another interpretative angle, one that is somewhat ambitious, for I propose to analyze the nature, the role, and the effectiveness of dialogue in the process of acquiring virtue as it is depicted in the Memorabilia. I shall try to convince you that the connection between dialogue and the acquisition of virtue is central to Xenophon’s philosophical project in the Memorabilia, but that is also problematic in many respects.

To examine the role of dialogue in the Memorabilia, it is necessary to begin by taking a close look at an important passage in the fourth chapter of the first book. In the introduction to the Budé edition of the Memorabilia,¹ I commented on this passage at some length when I

¹ Dorion 2000, pp. CXXVI-CXLIV.
provided a sample of a comparative exegesis to illustrate how this interpretative approach can provide important insights into Xenophon’s philosophy. My sample comparative exegesis focused on the role of refutation (elenchus) in the Socratic dialogues of Plato and Xenophon. However, my reading of this passage and my understanding of its significance have considerably evolved. Although commentators have often remarked that there are very few refutations in Xenophon’s Socratic writings, they have frequently overlooked the true reason for the almost complete absence of this dialectic strategy in the dialogues in these texts. Xenophon shows little interest in refutation, not because he misunderstands how it functions, but because he has doubts concerning its moral effectiveness. He indicates this quite clearly in *Mem. 1.4.1*:

> Εἰ δὲ τινες Σωκράτην νομίζουσιν, ὃς ἔνιοι γράφουσι τε καὶ λέγουσι περὶ αὐτοῦ τεκμιρωμένοι, προτρέψασθαι μὲν ἀνθρώπως ἐπ᾽ ἀρετὴν κράτιστον γεγονέναι, προσαγαγεῖν δ᾽ ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴν οὐχ ἰκανόν, σκεψάμενοι μὴ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκεῖνος κολαστηρίου ἐνεκα τοὺς πάντ’ ὀιομένους εἰδέναι ἔρωτών ἠλεγχεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἂν λέγων συνημέρευε τοῖς συνδιατάδες, ἰκανός ἦν βελτίους ποιεῖν τοὺς συνόντας.

If some believe, on the basis of what others have written or said about Socrates, that although he was excellent at exhorting men to virtue, he was incapable of leading them to it, they should consider not only the questions and the refutations that he used to correct those who thought they knew everything, but also the things he said in his daily conversations with those with whom he spent most of his time, and then decide whether he was capable of improving his companions.

I have a great number of observations to make about this passage, and this will give me the opportunity to qualify or even to correct the interpretation that I presented in my introduction to the *Memorabilia*.

### 1. How Many Types of Discourse Are Mentioned in *Mem. 1.4.1*?

The first problem raised by this passage is the number of types of discourse mentioned by Xenophon. According to the most widely accepted interpretation, Xenophon refers to two types of discourse in this passage: refutation and daily conversation. For those who argue for this interpretation, refutations are the source of the criticism leveled against Socrates to the effect that he was incapable of leading men to virtue, and this is the reason that Xenophon

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invites Socrates’ detractors to take into consideration not only his refutations, which Xenophon seems to agree are an ineffective means of making men virtuous, but also the daily conversations that he had with his companions. According to this interpretation, it was his use of this second type of discourse that allowed Socrates to improve his companions, that is, make them virtuous. According to a second interpretation, originally put forward by Edelstein and then more recently by Slings, Xenophon distinguishes between three types of discourse in *Mem.* 1.4.1: protreptic discourse, refutative argument, and daily conversation. This makes it possible to attribute a very different meaning to the passage. Indeed, Xenophon is held to be saying that if they take into consideration his refutations and his daily conversations, Socrates’ detractors, who base their criticism of him on his use of protreptic discourse, will realize that he helped his companions make progress on the road to virtue. Thus Socrates’ use of protreptic discourse, not his use of refutation, becomes the focus of his detractor’s criticism. On this account, Xenophon acknowledges that Socrates’ refutations were just as effective as his daily conversation as a means to make men virtuous.

D. Johnson (2005, p. 43) also maintains that three types of Socratic discourse are mentioned in *Mem.* 1.4.1, but the three types that he identifies do not correspond to the three identified in the previous interpretation, which he attributes to Slings in particular:

There are, then, three types of Socratic discourse, but not the three that Slings has in mind. The first is elenchus by itself, which, as Dorion argues, is what the objectors evidently have considered and found wanting. The second is non-elenctic daily conversation, which does make up a large share of the *Memorabilia*, starting with I.5. But the third is a combination of the elenchus with daily conversation, or, more precisely, elenchus viewed not in isolation but as part of an overall educational strategy.

Johnson (2005, pp. 42-43) maintains that the discussion between Socrates and Aristodemus in *Mem.* 1.4 and the discussion between Socrates and Antiphon in *Mem.* 1.6 are examples of this third type of Socratic discourse combining the elenchus with daily conversation. According to Johnson, it is this combination of the two other types of discourse that allows Socrates to lead his interlocutors to virtue. It seems to me, however, that there are two important objections to this position:

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3 This interpretation is put forward by Edelstein (1935, pp. 94-95) and by Slings (1981, p. 90 and p. 93 n. 6 = 1999, p. 79 and p. 78 n. 145).
a) As I shall show in a moment, the syntax itself of the sentence in Mem. 1.41 establishes a clear opposition between two types of discourse, and one finds nothing else in the sentence to indicate that Xenophon acknowledges the existence of a third type of discourse corresponding to the mix described by Johnson.

b) According to Johnson, Mem. 1.4, 1.6 and 2.1 are discussions of the mixed type, discussions in which Socrates engages in both refutation and daily conversation. There is, of course, no question that Socrates disagrees with each of these interlocutors, but does that mean his discussions with them are refutations? Nowhere in his writings does Xenophon provide a definition of what he understands by refutation, but the fact that his Socrates reserved his refutations for those who think they know everything (τοὺς πάντ᾽ οίομένους εἰδέναι ἐρωτῶν ἠλεγχεν, 1.4.1) shows, at the very least, that in the Memorabilia the elenchus is used primarily, even exclusively, to address those making a strong claim to possess knowledge. And contrary to what Johnson suggests in his descriptions of Aristodemus (1.4), Antiphon (1.6), and Aristippus (2.1), none of these interlocutors is a “know-it-all.” Moreover, if we examine the two dialogues in the Memorabilia generally agreed to be the clearest examples of refutations, Mem. 1.2.40-46 and 4.2—I shall return to these texts in a moment—we see that Xenophon’s understanding of the formal structure of the elenchus is akin to that of Plato and Aristotle. For all three authors, the elenchus presupposes not merely an exchange of questions and answers—and in Mem. 1.6 there is not even that (see section 7 below)—but also, and most importantly, one in which the questioner derives conclusions leading to a contradiction from the answers conceded by his interlocutor. However, this formal elenctic structure is not present in any of the three conversations (1.4, 1.6, and 2.1) described by Johnson as examples of discussions in which Socrates refutes his interlocutor.

Therefore, the key question is whether Xenophon is referring to two or to three types of discourse in Mem. 1.4.1. This is a very important issue because resolving it is a matter of determining the status of refutation in the Memorabilia. If Xenophon only has in mind two types of discourse, it follows that he considers refutation, to the extent that it has no dialogic use beyond the stage of mere protreptic, the unique source of the criticism of Socrates.

However, the text itself of Mem. 1.4.1 seems to challenge the notion that there are three types of discourse in question. If we reread it carefully, we see that Xenophon’s sentence is structured around two oppositions and that the terms played off against each
other in each one correspond to the terms played off against each other in the other one, so that there is complete symmetry. The first opposition, which describes the criticism leveled against Socrates, contrasts his capacity to exhort men to virtue (προτρέψασθαι μὲν) with his incapacity to make them virtuous (προαγαγεῖν δὲ). The second opposition, which is the one that constitutes Xenophon’s response to Socrates’ detractors, contrasts the refutations used by him to correct those who think they know everything (μὴ μόνον ἀ κ ἐκείνος κολαστηρίου ἐνεκα τοῦς πάντ’ οἰομένους εἰδέναι ἑρωτῶν ἠλεγχεν) with the daily conversations that Socrates used to make his companions virtuous. Thus Xenophon’s sentence is structured in a way that plainly indicates that the words μὴ μόνον κτλ. (= refutations) correspond to the words προτρέψασθαι μὲν κτλ. (= exhort to virtue) and that the words ἀλλὰ καὶ κτλ. (= daily conversations) correspond to the words προαγαγεῖν δὲ κτλ (= lead to virtue). This complete symmetry makes clear, not only that there are only two types of discourse in question in Mem 1.4.1, but also that Xenophon, in his response to Socrates’s critics, does not contest the claim that refutation is incapable of making men virtuous.

2. Xenophon’s Distrust of the Elenchus

If Mem. 1.4.1 gives voice to Xenophon’s distrust of the supposed “virtues” of refutation, we should not expect to find very many examples of refutations in the rest of the Memorabilia. Therefore, if it turns out to be true that the Memorabilia contains very few refutations (see section 4 below), the almost complete absence of this type of discourse should not be attributed to his misunderstanding of the latter—a conclusion hastily reached by many commentators—but instead to this distrust. Moreover, the fact that Xenophon’s other Socratic writings contain very few refutations tends to confirm his disavowal of the

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4 My understanding of the structure of this passage corresponds in every point to Gray’s (1998, pp. 75-76): “The distinction between protreptic and proagic seems to be mirrored in Xenophon’s subsequent invitation to consider not only the ironic elenchus of Socrates but also his other kinds of conversations. This statement of the distinction between the two types of instruction opposes several elements . . . . The possibility that the protreptic/proagic division is not mirrored in his subsequent ‘not only/but also’ seems remote. He understands then by ‘protreptic’ those questions and answer conversations intended to refute and punish the arrogant, and by ‘proagic’ those constant conversations with his associates intended to make them better men and actually improve their characters.” See also Gray 1998, p. 77.

5 See Gray 1998, p. 14: “Socrates is very sparing in his use of the classic ironic elenchus. The reason for this and his preference for exposition is found in Memorabilia 1.4.1.” See also Sanders 2011, p. 350: “The use of the elenchus, so closely identified with Plato’s Socrates, is virtually, if not entirely, absent from Xenophon’s characterization of him.”
elenchus. In the *Symposium*, Socrates does not refute any of his interlocutors and one has the impression that Antisthenes is given the ungrateful task of refuting Callias (*Smp. 4.1-5*). There are no refutations in the *Oeconomicus* either. The complete absence of refutation in Xenophon’s *Apology* is very significant if one considers the importance that it has in Plato’s *Apology*. Indeed, in Plato’s version of Socrates’ trial, refutation plays a fundamental role. When Plato’s Socrates sets about questioning his fellow citizens (21b-c), his purpose is clearly to “test” the meaning of the Delphic Oracle’s pronouncements on his superior wisdom (ἐλέγξων τὸ μαντεῖον, 21c1). Thus, in Plato, refutation is the foundation of Socrates’ philosophical mission and it alone sums up the Socratic method of philosophizing. Not only that, it is also the form of argumentation that Plato’s Socrates uses—and this is an absolutely unprecedented use of this type of discourse in Greek judicial oratory—to defend himself against the accusations of Meletus at his trial.6 This is why if we examine Xenophon’s *Apology* from a Platonic perspective, refutation is conspicuously absent. Far from attempting to refute or even to test the Delphic Oracle’s view that he is the most free, the most just, and the most moderate man of all, Xenophon’s Socrates considers it a confirmation of his virtues (*Ap. 14-16*). Nor is this oracular message at the origin of his philosophical “mission,” which Plato essentially identifies with the practice of refutation. Finally, in the discussion in which he confronts Meletus during the trial (*Ap. 19-21*), Xenophon’s Socrates does not attempt to exonerate himself through a formal refutation of the accusations against him. However, as long as it is interpreted as another manifestation of Xenophon’s distrust of the supposed “virtues” of refutation, there is no reason to be surprised by the absence of this type of discourse in his *Apology*.

3. The Programmatic Character of *Mem*. 1.4.1: Overview of the Problems to Resolve

It is clear that the passage in *Mem*. 1.4.1 has a programmatic function. By identifying the type of discourse that is the most appropriate for leading men to virtue, as well as the one that is the least appropriate for this purpose, the passage appears to indicate the type of dialogue that will be privileged in the rest of the *Memorabilia*, where the goal will be to show

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6 See Dorion 1990.
that Socrates was useful to his interlocutors and that he was capable—not merely of exhorting them to be virtuous—but of actually making them virtuous.

Yet although Mem. 1.4.1 is incontestably programmatic, the implications of its being so are not immediately clear. In the rest of this study, I shall attempt to resolve two distinct problems related to the programmatic character of Mem. 1.4.1. The first has to do with the fact that it would be an error to believe the distinction between two types of discourse makes it easy to identify the dialogues in the Memorabilia corresponding to the one or to the other type of discourse. Which dialogues can be qualified as refutations? And what precisely are we to understand by “the things he said in his daily conversations with those with whom he spent most of his time”? Does the rather vague expression “daily conversations” refer to a specific type of dialogue? The second problem concerns the question of how far the program extends. At first sight it seems difficult to determine whether the distinction laid out in Mem. 1.4.1 between two types of discourse should be understood as applying to all the dialogues reported in the Memorabilia. In other words, are refutations and “daily conversations” the only two types of Socratic discourse to be found in the Memorabilia?

4. The Refutative Dialogues in the Memorabilia

There are about forty distinct dialogues in the Memorabilia. A close reading of these dialogues reveals that the great majority of them do not have the form of dialectical refutations. In accordance with the distrust expressed in Mem. 1.4.1, Xenophon’s Socrates avoids refutation because—it seems logical to conclude—he does not see it as a useful type of discourse when it comes to helping his interlocutors acquire virtue. The notion that he shows no interest in refutation corresponds to the negative evaluation of it in Mem. 1.4.1; nevertheless, there is some indication that he actually does refute interlocutors, for in his discussion with him in book 4 of the Memorabilia, Hippias makes it clear that he certainly thinks Socrates does:

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7 Gray 1998, p. 14 and pp. 74-93. See also Johnson 2005, p. 40: “Xenophon therefore chose, more often than not, to steer clear of overt irony and of the elenchus . . . . Xenophon [made the] decision to present a less ironic and less elenctic Socrates.”
By Zeus, he said, you won’t hear my view until you reveal what you yourself think justice is, for I’ve had enough of your ridiculing others by questioning and refuting everyone, while being unwilling to state your own position or to reveal your own opinion to anyone about anything. (4.4.9)

Hippias’ rebuke seems completely appropriate as a criticism of Plato’s Socrates, but a lot less so—or not even at all—as a criticism of Xenophon’s Socrates. Indeed, the Socrates in the Memorabilia never hesitates to give his opinion on any subject that comes up in conversation. Moreover, Hippias’ point is only relevant from the perspective of the declaration of ignorance so often highlighted in Plato’s early dialogues, for the refusal of Plato’s Socrates to state his own position or point of view is a direct consequence of his declaration of ignorance. In contrast to his Platonic (nonidentical) twin, Xenophon’s Socrates never claims to be ignorant, so that there is no reason to be astonished by the fact that he never needs to be prodded to explain what he thinks on any subject, whether it be related to hunting, military strategy, public finance, weaponry, or virtue. But there is another problem with Hippias’ assertion about the use of refutation by Xenophon’s Socrates: it is completely inexact. If one takes into consideration the entire set of conversations and discussions reported in the Memorabilia, the claim that Xenophon’s Socrates spends his time refuting his interlocutors shows itself to be a wild exaggeration. From two different points of view, therefore, the content itself of the Memorabilia makes clear that Hippias’ criticism of Socrates is totally unfounded.9

Most commentators agree that there are very few refutations in the Memorabilia, but there is some disagreement among them over which conversations should be considered refutations. For Irwin (1974, p. 411), the only dialectical refutation in the Memorabilia is the passage where Alcibiades refutes Pericles (1.2.40-46). For others, the only clear example of elenchus is the discussion between Socrates and Euthydemus in Mem. 4.2.10
to choose one of these positions over the other, for both these discussions are incontestably examples of dialectical refutations,\textsuperscript{11} even though they are very different from each other. Other conversations (1.4, 1.6, 3.6, and 4.4) have been seen as refutations by commentators, but I have explained elsewhere\textsuperscript{12} why I consider it incorrect to interpret these conversations as refutations,\textsuperscript{13} the main point being that Socrates’ disagreeing with an interlocutor does not suffice to label his discussion with that interlocutor a refutation.

Given that I did a lengthy analysis of these two refutations (1.2.40-46 and 4.2) in my introduction to the Budé edition of the \emph{Memorabilia}\textsuperscript{14} and that my interpretation has not significantly changed, I shall simply provide a brief overview of the distinguishing characteristics of these two refutations. In my view, Alcibiades’ refutation of Pericles (1.2.40-46) is an example of a bad refutation that Xenophon necessarily condemns, not because it is incoherent from a logical standpoint, but because it has no moral purpose, being nothing but an example of Alcibiades’ hubris.\textsuperscript{15} Socrates’ refutation of Euthydemus in \emph{Mem.} 4.2 is, on the contrary, a legitimate elenchus, for it exemplifies, in accordance with \emph{Mem.} 1.4.1, the way that Socrates refutes interlocutors who think they know everything. Indeed, Euthydemus is the only one of Socrates’ interlocutors in the \emph{Memorabilia} expressly described by Xenophon as an example of someone who prides himself on his knowledge (4.2.1). Thus it is no surprise that he should also be the only one subjected to an elenchus. In addition, it is important to point out that in complete conformity with \emph{Mem.} 1.4.1, it is not the refutations described in \emph{Mem.} 4.2 that make Euthydemus virtuous, but the teaching he receives from Socrates in the subsequent conversations (4.3, 4.5, and 4.6), teaching that does not involve any refutations (see section 9 below).

\textsuperscript{11} See Gera 1993, p. 34: “Socrates’ examination of the young and over-confident Euthydemus (\emph{Mem.} 4.2) is the most outstanding instance of a Platonic-style, negative 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5. Two Precisions Concerning the Programmatic Signification of Mem. 1.4.1

In Mem. 1.4.1, Xenophon invites his readers to take into consideration, not only the refutations that Socrates used to correct (κολαστηρίου ἐνεκα) those who thought they knew everything (τοὺς πάντ’ οἰομένους εἰδέναι), but also what he said in his daily conversations with his companions, because it was the latter that made these companions better men. As I emphasized earlier, it is necessary to ask what exactly Xenophon means by “the things he said in his daily conversations with those with whom he spent most of his time (ἂ λέγων συνημέρευε τοῖς συνδιατρίβουσι).” Is he referring to a specific type of conversation conforming to a certain model that is repeated in all the dialogues in the Memorabilia that are not refutations? My position on this question has considerably evolved since the end of the 1990s, when I was working on my introduction to the Budé edition of the Memorabilia. Indeed, a more attentive reading of the chapters following Mem. 1.4.1 reveals that Xenophon’s reference to ἄ λέγων συνημέρευε τοῖς συνδιατρίβουσι is not a reference to a unique type of discourse. Moreover, it reveals that Xenophon has in mind, not only what Socrates said in dialogues with his interlocutors, but sometimes also what he said to listeners outside of a dialogic framework (see section 6 below). The passage in Mem. 1.4.1 clearly has a programmatic character, but it is essential not to read it as if it announced that all the conversations that follow could be necessarily categorized as belonging to one of two definite types of discourse: either refutation or didactic discussion (as some have called it). When Xenophon speaks of ἄ λέγων συνημέρευε τοῖς συνδιατρίβουσι, it seems to me that he is not referring to what Socrates said in conversations that were always modeled on one and only one type of discourse, and this is why I am now hesitant about using the term “didactic.” Indeed, it is not if this term referred to a single well-defined type of discourse in the Memorabilia.

Before clarifying the nature of the daily conversations in which Socrates helped his companions make moral progress, it is important to stress that the programmatic signification of Mem. 1.4.1 is much more limited than I suggest in my introduction to the Memorabilia.

16 Edelstein (1935, p. 94) and Erbse (1961, p. 271) use the term “didactic” to describe the daily conversations in which Socrate taught something to his interlocutors.
Memorabilia.\textsuperscript{17} It would be an error to believe that all the conversations that follow Mem. 1.4.1 help Socrates' interlocutors make moral progress. This is not because Xenophon often neglects to specify whether a conversation did in fact improve the companions with whom Socrates was discussing, but because the theme itself of the conversation has no connection to the moral progress of these interlocutors. I think that this is the case for, among others, the three conversations reported in Mem. 3.10, where Socrates discusses first with a painter, then with a sculptor, and finally with an armorer who makes breastplates. No doubt Socrates helps them improve their understanding of their respective crafts, but does he make them better men? In my view, he does not. Of course, one could object to me that Socrates allows them to improve their understanding of their respective crafts and thus to become better craftsmen, but the progress referred to in Mem. 1.4.1 is moral, not technical. The same conclusion could be drawn with respect to the conversation that immediately follows Mem. 3.10, the one that Socrates has with the courtesan Theodote (3.11), whose beauty is reputed to be superior to logos (λόγου κρείττον). Socrates succeeds in seducing Theodote while at the same time teaching her the finer points of her own trade, but I do not see what that has to do with making her better from a moral standpoint.

\textbf{6. Daily Conversations That Lead to Virtue}

If it is true that it was in particular Socrates' daily conversations that helped make his companions morally better, we should expect the conversations that follow Mem. 1.4.1 to confirm, in one way or another, that this actually was the case. Yet, in the approximately 40 conversations reported in the Memorabilia, there are only eleven passages,\textsuperscript{18} each one situated either at the beginning or at the end of a chapter, where Xenophon explicitly states that what Socrates said in conversations helped his companions improve themselves morally. This does not mean, of course, that the dialogues not explicitly described as morally uplifting for Socrates' interlocutors fail to achieve this goal. However, before attempting to determine whether these dialogues actually do achieve this goal, it would be worthwhile to examine attentively the passages in which Xenophon explicitly states that interlocutors have

\textsuperscript{17} See Dorion 2000, pp. CXLIII-CXLIV.

\textsuperscript{18} See Mem. 1.4.19, 1.5.1, 1.6.14, 1.7.1, 2.1.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.18, 4.4.25, 4.5.1, 4.6.1, and 4.7.1. Thus, between Mem. 2.1.1 and 4.3.2, there is no explicit reference to moral progress being made thanks to Socrates.
made moral progress thanks to things said by Socrates. Interestingly, some of these passages are at the end of chapters that do not report a dialogue. This is the case, for example, in *Mem.* 1.5.1:

Εἰ δὲ δὴ καὶ ἕγκρατεία καλὸν τε κάγαθὸν ἀνδρὶ κτήμα ἔστιν, ἐπισκεψόμεθα εἰ τι προσβήσαξ εἰς ταύτην τοιάδε λέγων·

If self-control is another truly dignified quality for a man to possess, then let us consider whether Socrates made it possible to progress toward it when he spoke as follows.

The passage that immediately follows this introductory statement does not report a dialogue, but instead an uninterrupted speech that Socrates is supposed to have delivered to his companions, the text of the passage giving no indication of any other verbal communication with them. The participial phrase that Xenophon uses at the end of this introductory statement (τοιάδε λέγων) recalls the one that he uses in *Mem.* 1.4.1 (ὃ λέγων), which suggests that this reference in 1.4.1 to the things Socrates said is not necessarily a reference to what he said in one-on-one exchanges or dialogues with his companions, but instead to any form of verbal communication that he addressed to them while he was with them. Moreover, when at the beginning of *Mem.* 1.5.1 Xenophon invites his readers to join with him as he considers whether what Socrates said helped others make progress in the acquisition of self-control, this invitation is obviously rhetorical, for it is clear from the outset that in Xenophon’s view, Socrates’ words actually did help others make such moral progress.

The sentence at the beginning *Mem.* 1.5 is not an isolated case. Indeed, there is a very similar sentence at the beginning of 1.7:

᾿Επισκεψόμεθα δὲ εἰ καὶ ἀλαζονείας ἀποτρέπων τοὺς συνόντας ἀρετῆς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι προέτρεπεν.

Let us also consider whether in turning his companions away from imposture he prompted them to care about virtue.

After making this introductory statement, Xenophon reports—just as in *Mem.* 1.5—an uninterrupted speech by Socrates with no other verbal interaction with his listeners. It seems, therefore, that Socrates’ verbal communications do not have to have a dialogic form in order to help those who hear him make moral progress. At the beginning of *Mem.* 1.7,
Xenophon uses the same rhetorical invitation (῾Επισκεψώμεθα δὲ εἰ) as at the beginning of Mem. 1.5 (ἐπισκεψώμεθα εἰ).

The opposition in Mem. 1.7.1 between the verbs ἀποτρέπων and προέτρεπεν gives me an opportunity to address a problem that I consider absolutely fundamental, but at the same time, very difficult to solve. It is important to recall that in Mem. 1.4.1 Xenophon reports that some of Socrates’ critics claim he was excellent at exhorting men to virtue (προτρέψασθαι μὲν ἀνθρώπους ἐπ’ ἀρετήν), but incapable of leading them to it (προαγαγεῖν δ’ ἐπ’ αὐτὴν οὐχ ἰκανόν). In light of Mem. 1.4.1, the use of the verb προτρέπειν in 1.7.1 is rather surprising because it seems to lend support to Socrates’ detractors by indicating that his speech merely had the effect of encouraging his listeners to care about virtue, as opposed to actually making them virtuous. If Xenophon’s goal is to demonstrate that Socrates’ words had the latter effect, then his use of the verb προτρέπειν is quite peculiar. In Mem. 1.4.1, Xenophon uses the verb προαγάγειν, in direct opposition to his use of the verb προτρέπειν, in order to insist on the moral progress actually realized as a result of what Socrates said when he communicated with his companions. In addition to the verb προαγάγειν, whose only occurrence in the Memorabilia is in 1.4.1, Xenophon uses four other verbs—ἄγειν (1.6.14, quoted below), προβιβάζειν (1.5.1), παρασκευάζειν (4.3.18), ποιεῖν (βελτίους ποιεῖν, 1.4.1; 1.2.61, 4.4.25, the latter quoted below, and 4.5.1 and 4.6.1)—to highlight the fact that what Socrates said to his companions in his daily conversations with them actually did have the effect of making them virtuous. As for the verb προτρέπειν, there are fifteen occurrences of it in the Memorabilia,20 nine of which are in contexts where it is a question of the effect of Socrates’ words on his listeners. In my view, it is mistaken to argue that the verb προτρέπειν sometimes has the weaker sense of “exhort to become”—which is clearly the case in Mem. 1.4.1—and sometimes the stronger sense of “lead (or cause) to become.” Xenophon does in fact waver back and forth between using terms suggesting it is a question of exhorting (προτρέπειν) others to become virtuous and using terms suggesting it is a question of actually causing (προαγάγειν, ἄγειν, προβιβάζειν, ποιεῖν, παρασκευάζειν) others to become virtuous. However, my hypothesis is that the ambivalence of his terminology is attributable, not to his clumsy choice of wording, but instead to an important hesitation between two competing, but sometimes

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19 See Mem. 1.1.4, 1.2.32, 1.2.64, 1.4.1, 1.7.1, 2.1.1, 2.3.12, 2.5.1, 3.3.8, 3.3.15, 3.5.3, 3.5.7, 4.5.1, 4.7.9, and 4.8.11.
20 See Mem. 1.2.64, 1.7.1, 2.1.1, 2.5.1, 3.3.15, 3.5.3, 4.5.1, 4.7.9, and 4.8.11.
complementary, models for the transmission and the acquisition of virtue (see section 10 below). As for the purely protreptic dimension of Socrates’ discourse in the *Memorabilia*, a dimension that comes to the fore much too often to be treated as irrelevant, I believe it has to do with two important points that will be discussed later: his use of *nouthetikoi logoi* and the role of *askēsis* in the acquisition of virtue (see sections 7 and 10 below).

However, the use of the verb *προτρέπειν* in *Mem.* 1.7.1 is interesting for another reason. Once again, we have to return to *Mem.* 1.4.1 to address the issue involved. When Xenophon reports the criticism of Socrates in 1.4.1, he establishes a close connection between refutation and protreptic, suggesting that refutation is merely useful for exhorting men to be virtuous, because it cannot lead them to actually become virtuous. Yet this criticism of the usefulness of refutation says very little about the usefulness of protreptic. *Mem.* 1.7, which does not have the form of a refutation, shows that there was sometimes a protreptic dimension to what Socrates said to his listeners without there being an elenctic dimension. It shows that Socrates could exhort those who heard him speak to be virtuous without having to refute them. Moreover, *Mem.* 1.7 is not an isolated case. There are other passages and sometimes even entire dialogues, in the *Memorabilia*, that have a protreptic dimension without having the form of an elenchus. Among other examples, the discussion between Socrates and Glaucon in *Mem.* 3.6. fits this description. In my view, the commentators who interpret 3.6 as an elenctic discussion are mistaken.²¹ It is true that the initial situation seems to call for a refutation. Just like Alcibiades (see *Alc.* 1) and Euthydemus (4.2), Glaucon is a young man about 20 years old burning with the desire to make a name for himself in politics. Socrates wants to dissuade him because he considers that the young man does yet have all the required competencies. Again, this suggests that Socrates has an auspicious occasion to subject Glaucon to a refutation, and yet he does not. The key to understanding why Socrates does not use the elenchus is that Glaucon makes no claim to knowledge—which clearly distinguishes him from Alcibiades and Euthydemus—and he puts forward no positions or arguments for Socrates to refute. To the various questions that Socrates asks him about the knowledge that is indispensable to a political leader, he either remains silent (3.6.4) or he immediately acknowledges his ignorance (3.6.5, 6, 9, 11, 12, and 13) with respect to the

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²¹ Delatte (1933, p. 83) and Gera (1993, p. 32).
matters that Socrates submits to him for consideration (public finances, the military, the city's food supply, etc.). Since Glaucon does not present any positions on these matters and since he does not even pretend to know anything about them, it is incorrect to say that Socrates subjects him to an elenchus. Indeed, no refutation occurs in Mem. 3.6; however, it definitely contains protreptic discourse. This is proved beyond any doubt in the conclusion to the dialogue, where Socrates exhorts Glaucon to acquire the knowledge that he is lacking:

Εἰ οὖν ἐπιθυμεῖς εὐδοκιμεῖν τε καὶ θαυμάζεσθαι ἐν τῇ πόλει, πειρῶ κατεργάσασθαι ὡς μάλιστα τὸ εἰδέναι ἃ βούλει πράττειν

Therefore, if you wish to be highly esteemed and admired in the city, try to acquire as much knowledge as you possibly can about the things that you want to accomplish. (Mem. 3.6.18)

The use of the imperative form of the verb πειράω (πειρῶ) clearly expresses the protreptic intention behind Socrates' words: he is urging Glaucon to make an effort to acquire the knowledge that is indispensable to a competent political leader. In the Memorabilia, there are many other occurrences of the same verb22 or of verbs with equivalent meanings,23 and each occurrence has the same protreptic signification as in Mem. 3.1.18. The inescapable conclusion is that, contrary to what Mem. 1.4.1 suggests, Xenophon shows no hesitation in admitting that Socrates often spoke in a purely protreptic manner.24 If we go back to Mem. 3.6 and consider the effect of Socrates' words on Glaucon, we realize that the text gives no indication of whether or not the young man eventually heeded Socrates' advice, so that we have no idea whether or not Socrates succeeded in helping him improve himself. And even if he did, does that mean that Glaucon actually became a better person? The knowledge that Socrates exhorts Glaucon to acquire has to do with technical competency, not with moral

22 See Mem. 2.1.34 (πειρᾶσθαι), 2.6.28 (‘Αλλὰ θαρρῶν, ἔφη, ὁ Κριτόβουλε, πειρῶ ἀγαθὸς γίγνεσθαι), 2.6.37 (ἡ πείθων πειρᾶσθαι σε ἄγαθον ἄνδρα γενέσθαι), 2.6.39 (γενέσθαι ἀγαθὸν πειρᾶσθαι), 2.8.6 (Χρὴ οὖν πειρᾶσθαι), 3.3.15 (Μὴ τοίνυν ὅκνει, ἔφη, ἀλλὰ πειρῶ).
23 See Mem. 2.2.14 (τοὺς μὲν θεοὺς παρατήση . . . φιλάξῃ μή), 2.3.16 (μὴ ὅκνει . . . ἀλλὰ ἐγχείρει), 3.5.24 (ἀλλὰ ἐγχειρῶν με διδάσκειν ὅτι τὸν μέλλοντα στρατηγεῖν τούτων ἀπάντων ἑπιμελεσθαιδεῖν), 3.5.28 (ἐπιχείρει), 3.7.9 (Μὴ οὖν ἀπορρᾳθύμει τούτου, ἀλλὰ διατείνου μᾶλλον πρὸς τὸ σαυτῷ προσέχειν. Καὶ μὴ ἄμελει κτλ.).
24 See Johnson 2005, p. 43 n. 10: “Xenophon has no objection to explicit exhortation towards virtue, but rather towards elenctic protreptic, which may turn some interlocutors towards virtue, but, taken in isolation, risks leading others astray.”
knowledge, which means that it could not have helped make him a better person from an ethical standpoint.

The fact that continuous speeches—like the ones that Xenophon reports in Mem. 1.5 and 1.7—could contribute to the moral progress of those who heard them is extremely important because it makes clear that the main beneficiary of a dialogue with Socrates is not necessarily his immediate interlocutor. Indeed, there are dialogues in which it is the listeners, not the interlocutor, who profit from Socrates words. Take, for example, the first conversation with Aristippus that Xenophon reports (2.1). To introduce the conversation in question, Xenophon says this:

᾿Εδόκει δέ μοι καὶ τοιάδε διαλεγόμενος προτρέπειν τούς συνόντας ἁσκεῖν ἐγκράτειαν πρὸς ἐπιθυμίαν βρωτοῦ καὶ ποτοῦ καὶ λαγνείας καὶ ύπνου [καὶ ρίγους καὶ θάλπους καὶ πόνου].

I also had the impression that when he said the following things, he was exhorting his companions to exercise self-control with respect to their desire for food and drink, their sexual relations, and their sleep. (2.1.1)

This introductory sentence suggests that it was Socrates’ companions who benefited from the dialogue about to be reported, and not exclusively, not even especially, his interlocutor, who will turn out to be Aristippus. Indeed, it seems that the only companions who were helped by this dialogue were the ones who listened to it without directly participating in it. This can be deduced from Xenophon’s introduction to the second discussion that Socrates has with Aristippus (3.8), for in that introduction, Xenophon states that Socrates had not succeeded, in his previous conversation with Aristippus (2.1), in convincing him of the necessity of training himself to exercise self-control.25 There are three other passages, in the Memorabilia, where Xenophon indicates that a discussion between Socrates and an interlocutor helped those who listened to it make progress in their acquisition of the virtue that was the object of the discussion, but gives no indication as to whether it helped the interlocutor himself make such progress. The first one is at the end of Socrates’ discussion with Aristodemus in Mem. 1.4, where Xenophon says the following:

25 See Mem. 3.8.1 and Dorion 2011a, p. 86 n. 6.
In my view, in speaking this way he made his companions capable of abstaining from impiety, injustice, and baseness, not only when they could be seen by other men, but also when they were alone, since they came to believe that nothing that they could do would ever go unnoticed by the gods. (1.4.19)

The second passage is at the end of Socrates’ discussion with Antiphon in Mem. 1.6:

When I heard him say these things, it seemed to me that he himself was very happy and that he showed those who listened to him the way to become truly good men. (1.6.14)

The third passage is at the end of Socrates’ discussion with Hippias in Mem. 4.4:

In saying such things as well as putting them into practice, he made those who associated with him more just. (4.4.25)

Thus it is clear that those who listened to a dialogue without directly participating in it were able to benefit from it just as much as Socrates’ interlocutor, and sometimes even more than that interlocutor. This dialogic model could be described as “triangular” (Socrates, interlocutor, listeners), but not in the sense in which rhetoric is called triangular, since Xenophon’s Socratic dialogues do not portray two irreconcilable adversaries trying to convince a third party of the validity of their respective positions, but instead one main interlocutor (Socrates) whose words can have an impact either on his immediate interlocutor or on the other listeners, and sometimes on both at the same time. Moreover, Xenophon’s triangular model has another variant in the Memorabilia. On some occasions Xenophon portrays Socrates as using a dialogic device that consists in speaking to an interlocutor, but in fact addressing his words to a third person listening to the conversation to whom he wants to teach a lesson. Even if there is a group of listeners, this can still mean that Socrates’s true addressee is neither his interlocutor or the group of listeners as a whole, but instead one
particular person in the group of listeners.\textsuperscript{26} At the beginning of \textit{Mem.} 2.5, Xenophon indicates that this was the case for a conversation between Socrates and Antisthenes:

\begin{quote}
'Ἡκουσα δὲ ποτε καὶ ἄλλον αὐτοῦ λόγον, δός ἐδόκει μοι προτρέπειν τὸν ἀκούοντα ἐξετάζειν ἑαυτὸν ὑπόσυ τοῖς φίλοις ἄξιος εἰς. Ἡδὼν γὰρ τινὰ τῶν ξυνόντων ἀμελοῦντα φίλου πενία πιεζομένου, ἤρετο Ἀντισθένη ἐναντίον τοῦ ἀμελοῦντος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἄλλων πολλῶν.'
\end{quote}

Once I also heard him say something that seemed to me intended to encourage the person listening to examine for himself what he was worth in the eyes of his friends. Having noticed that one of his companions had been neglecting a friend who was in dire straits, he questioned Antisthenes in front of this neglectful companion and several other persons. (2.5.1)

This clearly indicates that the main person Socrates was addressing in his discussion with Antisthenes in \textit{Mem.} 2.5 was this neglectful companion to whom he intended to teach a lesson. Nevertheless, this neglectful companion was not the only person he was addressing, for in mentioning the other listeners Xenophon suggests that they too may have been led to reflect on their true value for their friends. The commentator who deserves credit for having first highlighted the importance of Xenophon’s use of this dialogic device is Olof Gigon (1953, p. 56), who also points out, quite rightly, that there are no examples of its use in Plato’s dialogues.

\section*{7. Νουθετικοί Λόγοι}

What Xenophon’s Socrates says in conversations and discussions can help either his interlocutor or his listeners—or both—make moral progress. This interesting feature of many of the dialogues in the \textit{Memorabilia} deserves to be examined more closely. If sometimes Socrates’ listeners benefit, but his interlocutor derives no benefit at all, this seems to show that as a form of discourse, dialogue in itself has no particular ethical effectiveness. Indeed, Xenophon attaches no special status to dialogue as a means of helping others make moral progress. This is confirmed, as we have already seen, by the fact that he portrays Socrates as having had just as much success using uninterrupted speeches to help others make moral progress as when he used dialogue (see 1.5 and 1.7). Moreover, from a formal perspective, a

\textsuperscript{26} See \textit{Mem.} 1.2.30, 1.3.8-9, 2.5.1-2, 3.14.2-4, and 4.2.1-7.
dialogue between Xenophon’s Socrates and an interlocutor is sometimes very difficult to
distinguish from one of his uninterrupted speeches. This is the case, for example, in the first
conversation in the Memorabilia between Socrates and Antiphon (1.6.1-10). Antiphon
criticizes Socrates (1.6.2-3), and the latter answers this criticism with a long completely
uninterrupted reply (1.6.4-10), so that there is in fact no dialogic exchange between them. In
this “dialogue,” Socrates is plainly addressing the other listeners just as much as he is
addressing Antiphon, and it is quite clear that what he says may have even more of an impact
on these listeners than it does on Antiphon.

This raises the following question: What is the conception of discourse underlying
Xenophon’s claim that when Socrates spoke—whether or not it was in a dialogue—his words
had a morally effective impact on those who heard them? There are the beginnings of an
answer to this question in a passage of the Memorabilia whose interest was underestimated
by me when I wrote the notes for my translation. In book 1, when Xenophon discusses the
conditions for acquiring virtue, he states that he agrees with the poets who acknowledge that
it is possible to lose virtue, and he makes an important remark about the best type of
discourse for inspiring men to become virtuous:

καὶ ὁ λέγων· Ἀὐτὰρ ἄνὴρ ἄγαθός τοτὲ μὲν κακός, ἀλλοτε δ’ ἐσθλός. Κάγω δὲ μαρτυρῶ
τούτοις· ὥσπερ τῶν ἐν μέτρῳ πεποιημένων ἐπῶν τοὺς μὴ μελετῶντας ἐπιλανθανομένους, οὕτω καὶ τῶν διδασκαλικῶν λόγων τοῖς ἄμελουσι λήβην ἐγγιγνομένην. Ὄταν δὲ τῶν νουθετικῶν λόγων ἐπιλάθηται τις, ἐπιλέλησται καὶ ὣν ἡ
ψυχὴ πάσχουσα τῆς σωφροσύνης ἐπεθύμει· τούτων δ’ ἐπιλαθόμενοι οὐδὲν ἑαυτῷ λαμαστόν
καὶ τῆς σωφροσύνης ἐπιλαθέσθαι.

And there is the [poet] who says, “But a good man is at times bad, at times noble.” I too
can testify to what [these poets] say, for I note that, just as those who do not practice
reciting verses of poetry soon forget them, those who are not attentive to their teacher’s
words no longer remember them. When one forgets words of admonishment, one also
forgets the influences on the soul that urge it to seek moderation. Once one has forgotten
these influences, it is not surprising that one should forget moderation too. (1.2.21)

This passage is a clear description of how the aspiration to acquire virtue can be inspired by
a particular type of discourse: nouthetikoi logoi. According to Xenophon, nouthetikoi logoi
affect the soul of those who hear them in such a way as to create a desire to be virtuous. This
does not mean, however, that this type of discourse makes souls virtuous. It only means that
its makes them desire to be virtuous. If, provisionally, we assume that Xenophon’s Socrates
uses nouthetikoi logoi—and we shall see in a moment that he in fact does—then this indicates the first of two reasons that the speeches of Xenophon’s Socrates can do no more than exhort (προτρέπειν) his listeners to acquire virtue, without actually leading them to become virtuous.

But what exactly are nouthetikoi logoi? Unfortunately, the use of the adjective νουθετικός in the above passage is the only occurrence of this adjective in Xenophon. The two occurrences of the verb νουθετεῖν in his works are of no help when it comes to interpreting his use of the expression nouthetikoi logoi in the above passage either. Here it may be useful to appeal to Plato to help elucidate what Xenophon means by nouthetikoi logoi.

The following passage from the Sophist is particularly relevant:

STRANGER: One part of the kind of teaching that’s done in words (Τῆς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις διδασκαλικῆς) is a rough road, and the other part is smoother.

THEAETETUS: What do you mean by these two parts?

STRANGER: One of them is our forefathers’ time-honored method (Τὸ μὲν ἀρχαιοπρεπές τι πάτριον) of scolding or gently encouraging. They used to employ it especially on their sons, and many still use it on them nowadays (καὶ ἄτι πολλοὶ χρῶνται τὰ νῦν) when they do something wrong. Admonition (νουθετητική) would be the right thing to call all of this.

THEAETETUS: Yes.

STRANGER: As for the other part, some people seem to have an argument to give to themselves that lack of learning is always involuntary, and that if someone thinks he’s wise, he’ll never be willing to learn anything about what he thinks he’s clever at. These people think that though admonition is a lot of work, this form of education doesn’t do much good (μετὰ δὲ πολλοῦ πόνου τὸ νουθετητικὸν εἶδος τῆς παιδείας σμικρὸν ἀνύτειν).

THEAETETUS: They’re right about that.

STRANGER: So they set out to get rid of the belief in one’s own wisdom in another way. (Sophist, 229d-230a, trans. White, slightly modified)

In this passage from his discussion with Theaetetus, the Stranger contrasts two types of educational logoi. The first type, an older form of discourse still used by many today, is a kind of admonition or exhortation (νουθετητική). The second type, which is a newer form of discourse considered more appropriate for curing involuntary ignorance, is obviously the

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27 See HG 2.3.43; Cyr. 8.2.15.

28 Besides the two occurrences in the Sophist (νουθετητική, 230a3; τὸ νουθετητικὸν, 230a8), there is only one other occurrence of this term in Plato. In the passage in question in the Laws, it has exactly the same meaning as in the Sophist: “the young can be admonished (νουθετήσει) by words of warning (διὰ λόγων νουθετητικῶν) from their elders” (Laws, 740e1, trans. Saunders). It is clear that νουθετικός (Xenophon) and νουθετητικὸς (Plato) derive from the same verb (νουθέτω). The slight difference in spelling is probably due to the fact that the term was new and relatively rare.
elenchus, although the Stranger does not clarify it in this passage, explaining it instead in the well-known passage (230b-e) that immediately follows. My hypothesis is that the *nouthetikoi logoi* referred to by Xenophon in *Mem.* 1.2.21 correspond fairly closely to the type of discourse used in the ancient method of education described by the Stranger in the *Sophist*. This hypothesis is supported by what we saw earlier concerning Xenophon’s distrust of the elenchus. In other words, given that Xenophon shares the view of those who see the elenchus as an ineffective means of leading men to virtue, he prefers the older time-honored type of discourse, *nouthetikoi logoi*. This does not mean that *nouthetikoi logoi* lead directly to the acquisition of virtue. Xenophon admits that their effect is limited to making listeners desire to be virtuous, but he still sees this as ethically useful. Moreover, in two passages in the *Memorabilia*, he states that this was precisely the effect produced by Socrates when he spoke:

>`'Αλλ’ ἔπαυσε μὲν τούτων πολλούς, ἀρετῆς ποιήσας ἐπιθυμεῖν καὶ ἐλπίδας παρασχὼν, ἄν ἐαυτῶν ἐπιμελώνται, καλοὺς κἀγαθοὺς ἔσεσθαι'`

On the contrary, he freed many men of these vices by making them desire virtue and by giving them the hope that, if they looked after themselves, they could become truly good persons. (1.2.1)

>`φανερὸς ἦν τῶν συνόντων τοὺς πονηρὰς ἐπιθυμίας ἔχοντας τούτων μὲν παύων, τῆς δὲ καλλίστης καὶ μεγαλοπρεπεστάτης ἄρετῆς, ἣ πόλεις τε καὶ οἴκοι εὖ οἰκοῦσι, προτρέπων ἐπιθυμεῖν'`

[H]e was known for ridding his companions of their bad desires and for urging them to desire the finest and the most fitting virtue for the good management of cities and private homes. (1.2.64)

These two passages are rigorously parallel. In each case, Xenophon uses the same verbs to indicate that Socrates put an end (ἔπαυσε, 1.2.2; παύων, 1.2.64) to his companions’ vices and that he made them desire (ἐπιθυμεῖν, 1.2.2; ἐπιθυμεῖν, 1.2.64) virtue. It is plain that in 1.2.64 the verb προτρέπων has no more than a protreptic sense, for the passage clearly focuses on how Socrates prompted other persons to desire virtue, without giving any indication that this led to something more. According to the Stranger in the *Sophist*, *nouthetikoi logoi* have the function of reprimanding or admonishing someone who has done something wrong. To the extent that this is true, it would appear that Xenophon’s Socrates freed his companions of their baser habits and inclinations and instilled a desire for virtue in their souls.
There is another point that seems to confirm my interpretative hypothesis: *nouthetikoi logoi*, as they are described by Xenophon and by Plato, can have the form of uninterrupted speeches, as they sometimes do in the *Memorabilia*, and they can also function in dialogue, as when Socrates teaches a lesson to his interlocutor. In my view, it is not true that everything Socrates says in the *Memorabilia* has the form of a *nouthetikos logos* and it can be difficult to say with precision which passages are examples of his using this form of discourse, but there is no doubt whatsoever that it is very present in the *Memorabilia*.

8. Socrates’ Dialectical Effectiveness

In *Mem.* 1.4.1, Xenophon challenges his readers to stop paying attention to what other people have said and written about Socrates and to take the time to judge for themselves. If you look closely at Socrates’ daily conversations with his companions, he says, you will see that he succeeded in improving them. Indeed, it is as if Xenophon wanted his readers to see for themselves that Socrates never failed to achieve his dialogic goals. And in fact, Xenophon clearly states, in another passage, that Socrates was infallible in this respect:

"Ἡδεσαν δὲ Σωκράτην ἀπ’ ἐλαχίστων μὲν χρημάτων αὐταρκέστατα ζώντα, τῶν ἢδονῶν δὲ πασῶν ἐγκρατέστατον ὄντα, τοῖς δὲ διαλεγομένοις αὐτῷ πᾶσι χρώμενον ἐν τοῖς λόγοις ὅπως βούλετο.

They [Critias and Alcibiades] knew that although Socrates possessed almost nothing, he lived his life with the greatest self-sufficiency, that he had the highest degree of self-control with respect to all pleasures, and that in discussions he could do as he liked with anyone through his arguments. (1.2.14)

Is it true that through his arguments Socrates could dispose of anyone who discussed with him? We can leave out of consideration the discussions in the *Memorabilia* that end without there being any indication whether Socrates’ interlocutor finally agreed with him. In the great majority of discussions reported by Xenophon, Socrates has the last word, which probably means that at the very least Xenophon approves of Socrates’ position and that he thinks it would have been in the interlocutor’s best interest to adopt it. However, there are at least three cases where Socrates does not succeed in convincing his interlocutor to adopt his position. He fails to persuade Critias to stop pursuing his purely physical passion for Euthydemus (1.2.29-31); he also fails to persuade Aristippus of the necessity of exercising
self-control (see 2.1.1 and 3.8.1); and he does not succeed in convincing Critobulus that it
would be in his best interest to renounce his passion for paidika (see Mém 1.3.8-13 and Oec.
2.7). It is quite significant that these three dialogic failures all occur in discussions dealing
directly with a moral issue related to enkrateia, which is the foundation of the ethical system
of Xenophon’s Socrates (1.5.4). If Socrates is unable to convince certain of his interlocutors
that it is essential to exercise enkrateia, then it is difficult to accept Xenophon’s claim that his
effectiveness as a speaker was such that he was dialectically infallible.

The dialogues that provide the best indication of Socrates’ effectiveness as a speaker
are the ones in book 2 of the Memorabilia in which Xenophon actually describes the positive
effect of his discourse. When Xenophon reports these dialogues, he is not content to mention
the later effect of Socrates’ words. Instead of merely saying that Socrates’ interlocutor and/or
listeners later felt happy or desired to become virtuous, he devotes a part of the dialogue to
describing in some detail how they were changed as a result of Socrates’ words. The dialogues
in question are at the end of book 2. Each of them has the goal of showing how Socrates came
to the aid of friends who were in difficulty by giving them advice (see 2.7.1). When he reports
the conversations with Aristarchus (2.7), Crito (2.9), and Diodorus (2.10), Xenophon explains
the positive effect of the advice that Socrates gave to these interlocutors.29 In this respect,
these dialogues stand out from all the other dialogues reported in the Memorabilia. Finally, it
is important to emphasize that in reporting these dialogues, Xenophon’s goal is not to show
how Socrates’ was able to transmit a virtue to his interlocutor or his listeners, but instead to
provide a concrete description of how he came to the aid of his friends by giving them advice
and how he helped them develop new ties of philia.


The distinction that Mem. 1.4.1 establishes between two types of discourse is
illustrated by the group of four discussions that Socrates has with Euthydemus (4.2, 4.3, 4.5,
and 4.6). Euthydemus, who is a self-important young man proud of his (false) knowledge
before he begins associating with Socrates, embodies one category of interlocutor and then
later another, so that in his discussions with him Socrates uses in succession each of the two

29 Socrates also gives advice to Eutherus (Mem. 2.8), but the conversation ends with an exhortation (Χρὴ ὁὖν
πειράσθαι κτλ., 2.8.6), not by a description of how Eutherus is changed by this conversation with Socrates.
types of discourse identified in Mem. 1.4.1. At the beginning of Mem. 4.2, Euthydemus is portrayed as an ambitious young man who has an exalted opinion of his own knowledge (μέγα φρονοῦσιν ἐπὶ σοφίᾳ, 4.2.1). Therefore, from the standpoint of Mem. 1.4.1, he is an ideal candidate for a refutation. In the rest of the chapter, which corresponds to the actual refutation (there are in fact four of them), Socrates’ goal is to make Euthydemus acknowledge that he does not actually know anything. Seen from this angle, the refutations are clearly useful, but that does not mean that they make Euthydemus virtuous. Indeed, in Mem. 4.2, Xenophon never says that Euthydemus became a better person thanks to the four refutations to which Socrates subjected him. On the contrary, the conclusion of the discussion clearly indicates that Euthydemus is not yet virtuous, for Xenophon says that Euthydemus was now convinced that if he wanted to become a man worthy of consideration, he would have to spend as much time as he possibly could in Socrates’ company (4.2.40, quoted in section 10 below). The chapters that follow (4.3, 4.5, and 4.6) correspond to what Xenophon describes in Mem. 1.4.1 as the non-refutative discussions in which Socrates helped interlocutors and listeners make moral progress. In other words, they correspond to type of discussions that he had in his daily conversations with his companions.

The discussions between Socrates and Euthydemus have a special status in the Memorabilia. They are not only the longest sequence of conversations with the same interlocutor, they are also the only dialogues in which Socrates converses with a disciple whom he has chosen in advance. I now want to raise a question concerning these four dialogues that I have never given attention to before: How do Socrates’ discussions with Euthydemus stand out from the daily conversations that he had with other interlocutors when it comes to the issue of acquiring virtue? If, as we have seen, daily conversations with Socrates could educate his interlocutors and listeners in the acquisition of virtue, what is—if you do not mind my using this expression—the “value added” when a conversation is between Socrates and one of his disciples? Are the discussions with Euthydemus more effective as a means of transmitting virtue? I believe that they are more effective in this

30 See Gray 1998, p. 66: “The fourth book offers an extended version of the Socratic education of a particularly spirited individual, who was one of those who thought he knew everything and was therefore by definition a candidate for the elenchus (see 1.4.1), which he receives in full measure (4.2).”
respect than the discussions that Socrates has with other interlocutors, and I shall now attempt to explain why.

I shall begin by some important preliminary considerations. First, no listener is present during the discussions between Socrates and Euthydemus. For the refutations in Mem. 4.2, the private character of the discussion can probably be explained by Socrates’ desire to spare Euthydemus the public humiliation of being refuted in front of others, but consideration for the young man’s feelings cannot explain Socrates’ decision to speak to him alone in the discussions in Mem. 4.3, 4.5, and 4.6. For these chapters, Socrates probably chooses to speak to him in private because he is teaching one of his handpicked disciples. Second, with the exception of the discussion with Hippias in Mem. 4.4, which mysteriously interrupts this teaching, the discussions with Euthydemus are the only ones in the Memorabilia in which Socrates presents the definitions of a virtue to an interlocutor. Definitions are also presented in Mem. 3.9, but not directly by Socrates and not within the context of a dialogue. Third, given that even before associating with Socrates Euthydemus already longs to acquire the highest virtue (see 4.2.11), Socrates cannot make do with a speech or a dialogue that is purely protreptic, as he does with other interlocutors and listeners. Since Euthydemus seeks virtue and since he now (after 4.2) acknowledges his ignorance, the time is ripe for discussions that actually educate him in virtue.

After these preliminary considerations, I can now explain why I think that Xenophon portrays Socrates as being more effective at transmitting virtue in these four discussions than he is in other discussions and conversations in the Memorabilia. In my view, this is particularly true of Mem. 4.6, where Socrates explains to Euthydemus his conception of the main virtues (piety, justice, courage, etc.). These virtues consist in knowledge that is prescriptive, which means that someone who knows what they consist in also knows what they prescribe as virtuous action. And given that a man who possesses this knowledge cannot act in a way that does not conform to them (see 4.6.3 and 4.6.6), he is and will be necessarily virtuous. These discussions with Euthydemus are more effective when it comes to transmitting virtue because of what could be called their “performativity.” In these discussions, it is as if Socrates merely had to explain a virtue to Euthydemus, and as if the latter merely had to agree to this explanation and confirm that he understood it, for him to become immediately virtuous. And because these discussions are characterized by dialogic
interaction between Socrates and Euthydemus that is much more tightly packed and much more rapid than the dialogic interaction in the majority of other discussions in the *Memorabilia*, it is also clear that they exclude the possibility of transmitting virtue to listeners. Indeed, the transmission of moral knowledge takes place in a dialogue in which the interlocutor must indicate his agreement to the positions put forward and in which Socrates must verify his understanding of them. This form of discourse is different from the *nouthetikoi logoi* that Socrates addresses to his interlocutors as well as to his listeners, making it possible for both to be similarly affected by what he says. This form of discourse is instead a true dialogue that presupposes the preliminary selection of a disciple with the required qualities, a person to whom it is possible to transmit moral knowledge that has an almost immediate effect on the one who acquires it.

10. Dialogue, *Askēsis*, and the Acquisition of Virtue

The texts that we have examined so far might give the impression that for Xenophon dialogue and Socrates’ words on their own suffice to transmit virtue. If this were true, Socrates’ discourse would be the unique determinant for the transmission and the acquisition of virtue. However, if we look at the ethical doctrine that underlies the *Memorabilia* as a whole, we see that exercise and training are just as important as discourse for acquiring virtue. Indeed, Xenophon repeatedly stresses that virtue is the fruit of exercise and training (*askēsis*). For him, it is by practicing a virtue—and this holds true for any virtue whatsoever—that one finally becomes virtuous (see *Mem*. 1.2.23, *Smp*. 8.27, *Cyr*. 7.5.74-77). This means that his conception of virtue is rather pessimistic because it highlights the risk of losing virtue if one stops exercising it (see 1.2.19), which entails that virtue is never acquired once and for all.

This ascetic or practical side to the acquisition of virtue is confirmed by Socrates’ way of teaching. If we become virtuous by practicing to be so, then we necessarily need a model to imitate. Indeed, Xenophon sees imitating a virtuous model as the surest way to acquire virtue,31 and he portrays Socrates as a superb model to imitate for those who seek to acquire the virtues embodied and exemplified by a virtuous model:

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31 The clearest text on the role of imitation in the acquisition of virtue is in the *Agesilaus*: ”If line and rule are a noble discovery of man as aids to the production of good work, I think that the virtue of Agesilaus may well
On the contrary, he freed many men of these vices by making them desire virtue and by giving them the hope that, if they looked after themselves, they could become truly good persons. And yet he never claimed to be teaching this, but by being an outstanding example of such a person, he made those who spent time with him hope that through imitation they could become like him. (1.2.2-3)

Socrates was an extraordinary example of a virtuous person, so that the model he embodied sufficed to make his companions hope to succeed in becoming virtuous themselves by imitating him.

Of course, it is impossible to avoid the question of the coherence of Xenophon’s position. Is he justified in saying, on the one hand, that it was through discourse that Socrates transmitted virtue to his companions and, on the other hand, that virtue is acquired through askêsis and that Socrates embodied a virtuous model to imitate? There is no escaping the fact that in the Memorabilia Xenophon does not offer a clear account of the connection between discourse and askêsis in the acquisition of virtue. In several passages, he does stress, however, the joint roles that dialogue and practice have in the acquisition of virtue. He says, for example:

Οἷς δὲ δὴ καὶ ὑφελεῖν ἐδόκει μοι τοὺς ξυνόντας τὰ μὲν ἔργῳ δεικνύων ἑαυτὸν οἷος ἦν, τὰ δὲ καὶ διαλεγόμενος, τούτων δὴ γράψω ὁπόσα ἂν διαμνημονεύσω.

As for the ways in which he appeared to me useful to his companions, some were related to what he revealed of his character in his actions, whereas others were related to what he said in conversation, and I shall now endeavor to report all that I recall of these things. (1.3.1)

stand as a noble example to follow for those who wish to train themselves in moral goodness (καλὸν ἴν μοι δοκεῖ [ἐνναὶ] ἡ Ἀγησιλάου ἀρετὴ παράδειγμα γενέσθαι τοῖς ἀνδραγαθίαν ἀσκεῖν βουλομένους). For how could someone who imitates a pious man become impious (τίς γὰρ ἂν ἢ θεοσεβῆ μιμούμενος ἀνόσιος γένοιτο)? How could someone who imitates a just, a sober, and a self-controlled man become unjust, violent, and intemperate? In point of fact, Agesilaus prided himself less on reigning over others than on ruling himself (ἐπὶ τῷ ἔαυτοῦ ἄρχειν ἐμεγαλύνετο), less on leading his citizens against their enemies than on guiding them to every virtue (ἅλ’ ἐπὶ τῷ πρὸς πάσαν ἀρετὴν ἡγεῖσθαι τοῖς πολίταις") (10.2, trans. Marchant, modified)

32 The only exception is Mem. 3.9.1-3, where Socrates explains that study and exercise are essential to the acquisition of courage. However, it is difficult to reconcile this passage with Mem. 4.6.10-11, where Socrates explains a conception of courage in which exercise plays no role.
This is an important passage because it is the one in which Xenophon explains the intention that guided him while he was writing the *Memorabilia* and the main objective that he hopes to achieve by relating these “memories” of Socrates. Xenophon tells his readers that Socrates was useful to his companions, meaning that he helped them become better persons. He says that Socrates did so both by the example that he set for his companions in his actions and by what he said to them in conversations. Thus he holds that what Socrates did in his actions and what he said in his conversations were both equally necessary when it came to transmitting virtue to his companions.

In the *Memorabilia*, there are other passages that highlight in a similar way the joint roles of practice and discourse in Socrates’ transmission of virtue:

To this it may be objected that Socrates should not have taught politics to his companions before moderation. For my part, I do not deny this, but I note that all teachers set an example for their disciples (πάντας δὲ τοὺς διδάσκοντας ὁρῶ αὐτοὺς δεικνύντας τε τοῖς μανθάνουσιν) by showing them how they themselves do what they teach and by persuading them in speech (καὶ τῷ λόγῳ προσβιβάζοντας). And I know that it was the same with Socrates: he showed his companions that he himself was a truly good man (Οἶδα δὲ καὶ Σωκράτην δεικνύντα τοῖς ξυνοῦσιν ἑαυτὸν καλὸν κἀγαθὸν ὄντα), and he spoke very beautifully about virtue and the other important issues for men (καὶ διαλεγόμενον κάλλιστα περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρωπίνων). (1.2.17-18)

These two parts of Socrates’ teaching and of the training in virtue that he encouraged his companions to undertake are mentioned once again in the conclusion to the long discussion in *Mem.* 4.2 where Euthydemus acknowledges, after having been refuted by Socrates several times, that he is completely ignorant:

But Euthydemus understood that he would never become a man worthy of consideration (ἀνὴρ ἀξιόλογος) unless he spent as much time as he possibly could with Socrates (εἰ μὴ ὅτι μᾶλαστα Σωκράτει συνείη); and from then on, he never left him except when it was absolutely necessary. He even imitated some of his practices (ἔνια δὲ καὶ ἐμιμεῖτο ὧν ἐκεῖνος ἐπετήδευεν). When Socrates saw that Euthydemus had become this way, he stopped tormenting him and he began to explain to him as simply and as clearly as possible what he thought it was indispensable to know and what he thought were essential practices (ὅ τε ἐνόμιζεν εἰδέναι δεῖν καὶ <ὅ> ἐπιτηδεύειν κράτιστα εἶναι). (4.2.40)

Xenophon says that Euthydemus imitated Socrates or, to be more precise, that he imitated Socrates’ practices, his *epitêdeumata*. In many different passages in his works, Xenophon
stresses the importance that epitêdeumata have for the transmission of virtue.\textsuperscript{33} The last sentence of the passage quoted above clearly refers to the two parts of Socrates’ teaching. According to Xenophon, Socrates explained to Euthydemus what he must know (εἰδέναι) and what he must practice (ἐπιτηδεύειν) in order to become a man worthy of consideration, in other words, a man who is kalos kagathos. In the three chapters devoted to Euthydemus’ education (4.3, 4.5, and 4.6), we do not learn a lot more about the nature of the epitêdeumata that Socrates encouraged Euthydemus to imitate and practice. On the other hand, we do learn a lot more about what Socrates thought he should know, for these three chapters show Socrates transmitting through dialogue his teaching on the nature of the main virtues. However, there are passages in these chapters that stress the necessity of the two parts of this Socratic education—the necessity of both discourse and practice—for the acquisition of virtue (see 4.3.18 and 4.5.1).\textsuperscript{34}

Have I shown that Xenophon’s position is coherent? Yes and no. If the role of discourse—dialogues or uninterrupted speeches—is to exhort listeners and interlocutors to become virtuous and to make their souls desire virtue, without necessarily leading them to it, then Xenophon’s claim that training focused on imitating a model is necessary to complete the process of acquiring virtue is a coherent claim. Discourse—whether it be in the form of dialogues or in the form of uninterrupted speeches—is not sufficient to transmit virtue, and this is why it needs the support of the concrete example offered by a model of virtue whom the person training to be virtuous must strive to imitate. In my view, this is the other reason that in the Memorabilia discourse usually only serves to exhort interlocutors and listeners to acquire virtue.\textsuperscript{35} For Xenophon, the use of discourse is only the first step in the process of acquiring of virtue. Moreover, if discourse were enough to make someone virtuous, what would be the role of training and the role of a model of virtue in the process of acquiring

\textsuperscript{33} See, among other passages, Mem. 3.5.14; Lac. 1.1, 10.8; Cyr. 7.5.86.

\textsuperscript{34} See also Mem. 4.4.25, which serves as a conclusion to Socrates’ discussion with Hippias.

\textsuperscript{35} For Xenophon, exercise is in fact indissociable from study. Indeed, there are numerous pages in his works that stress the close connection between exercise and study (see Mem. 1.5.5: ἢ μάθοι τι ἄγαθον ἢ μελετήσειν; 2.1.28: μαθητέον καὶ ἄσκητεον; 2.6.39: μαθήσει τε καὶ μελέτητ; 3.9.2: μαθήσει καὶ μελέτητ; 3.9.3: μανθάνειν καὶ μελετάν; 3.9.14: μαθόντα τι καὶ μεμελετήνατα; 4.2.40: εἰδέναι δεν καὶ <ἡ> ἐπιτηδεύειν; 4.5.10: τοῦ μαθέων τι καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τοῦ ἐπιμεληθῆναι τῶν τοιούτων τινός; Cyr. 3.3.57: διά τοῦ ἐπίστευσατι τε καὶ μεμελετηκέειν ἐν τάξει πορεύεσθαι; Τύν. 12.15: μαθησάτε καὶ μελέτητα; 12.21: τοὺς πόνους καὶ τὰς παθήσεις; An. 1.9.5: φιλομαθέστατον εἶναι καὶ μελετηρότατον; Eq. 12.14: μαθήματα καὶ μελετήματα; see also Cyr. 3.3.53; Eq. 3.8, 7.3).
virtue? Yet discourse does appear to suffice for acquiring virtue in *Mem.* 4.6, where Euthydemus’ discussion with Socrates has the effect of making him virtuous at the very moment he acquires specific knowledge about the specific nature of each of the main virtues. If we accept Xenophon’s account of this discussion, then why—after what he has learned by dialoguing with Socrates—would Euthydemus also need training in virtue? Moreover, the thesis that it is possible to lose virtue (*Mem.* 1.2.19-24) is much easier to understand if training in virtue is essential than if dialogue suffices to acquire it. Indeed, if virtue is a form of knowledge transmitted by dialogue, then why would lack of training cause someone to lose this knowledge? But if virtue is acquired through training and if it is never acquired definitively, then we can easily understand that continuous training in virtue is necessary in order to avoid losing it, just as we can easily see that athletes must train continuously in order to maintain their ability to perform well in sporting events. In short, and this will be my conclusion, contrary to what Xenophon suggests in *Mem.* 1.4.1, it does not seem to be the case that Socrates’ use of discourse was sufficient to make his companions virtuous.36

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36 This conclusion seems to be confirmed by an important passage in the *Cyropaedia* (3.3.49-55) where Cyrus questions the effectiveness that speeches have by themselves when it comes to giving soldiers courage.