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SPEUSIPPUS AND XENOCRATES ON THE PURSUIT AND ENDS OF PHILOSOPHY¹

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INTRODUCTION

The educational and institutional structure of the Academy after Plato's death is one of the great unknowns in the history of ancient philosophy. Harold Cherniss, who thought the answer might lie in the educational curriculum outlined in *Republic VII*, dubbed it the great 'riddle of the early Academy'²; contrariwise, in considering the external evidence provided by Plato's students and contemporaries, John Dillon speaks of a 'fairly distinctive, though still quite open-ended, intellectual tradition.'³ One would think, especially given the extent of Plato's discussion of the problem of educational and institutional structures (not to mention the pedagogic journey of the individual teacher and student) that those figures who took over supervision of the Academy after Plato's death – notably his polymath nephew Speusippus of Athens and his popular and brilliant student Xenocrates of Chalcedon⁴ – would have devoted some attention to this issue of educational theory and practice in their writings. After all, several pseudepigraphical texts that are usually considered to have been written in the Academy and were ascribed to Plato – *Theages*, *Alcibiades I* (if inauthentic), *Alcibiades II*, *Epinomis*, *Rival Lovers*, *On Virtue*, the *Seventh Letter* – do, indeed, devote significant space to elaborating pedagogical methods, practices, and institutional structures, to say nothing of the problem

¹ Special thanks are owed to Mauro Bonazzi, Giulia De Cesaris, and David Sedley, each of whom read this piece with care and attention. I cannot promise to have responded sufficiently to their challenges in all circumstances, but I can say with confidence that this paper is much improved owing to their critical acumen. Throughout this essay, I refer to Isnardi Parente's editions and translations of Speusippus (1980) and Xenocrates (second edition revised by Dorandi, 2012), although I consult especially Tarán's edition and commentary of Speusippus as well (1981).

² Cherniss 1945: 66-72.

³ Dillon 2003: 29.

⁴ Unfortunately, space does not permit treatment of Polemo or Crates, the scholarchs who followed after Speusippus and Xenocrates.

of the possibility of knowledge.⁵ One might go so far as to say that the early reception of Plato involved, at a high level of philosophical engagement, the reception of the theories of education and philosophical knowledge proffered by the great master.

If one were to examine the scholarship concerning those leaders of the Academy after Plato's death, she might conclude that they were *almost totally silent* on the theory and practice of philosophical education.⁶ It's as if the scholars themselves simply weren't engaged in what pretty much *everyone* in the educational economy of 4th Century Athens was doing! What could explain this strange lacuna in the history of ancient philosophy? It is possible that this is nothing more than an accident of textual survival – there are several works attested for Speusippus and Xenocrates that deal with dialectic and definition, but few fragments of these works survive; or, alternatively, it is possible that the procedures involved in education within the Academy were simply taken over, without alteration, by Speusippus and Xenocrates, and that they simply followed whatever their teacher Plato, as the 'architect of the sciences', had told them and practiced with them.

The former hypothesis brings the scholars of the Early Academy into fruitful discussion with Aristotle's writings on educational and scientific procedures, especially the *Topics*, as John Dillon has investigated to fruitful ends; and the latter hypothesis, too, has been used as an explanatory framework not only for the educational programme of the Academy, but also of the Lyceum. Either explanation can justifiably be inferred from the earliest and most important piece of external evidence regarding the philosophical activities of Plato and his students in the Early Academy, an extended fragment of the comedian Epicrates of Ambracia (a rough contemporary of Speusippus):

A: What are Plato and Speusippus and Menedemus up to? On what subjects are they discoursing these days (πρὸς τίσι νυνὶ διατρίβουσιν)? What weighty idea, what

⁵ I'm not even mentioning the other Socratic dialogues that demonstrate philosophical dialectic, perhaps for the sake of imitation by students. For a useful recent treatment of the Platonic Pseudepigrapha, see Brisson 2014: 11-17; a more penetrating assessment of how the *Alcibiades II* might represent Platonist work prior to the Sceptical Academy of Arcesilaus, see Tarrant 2015.

⁶ For example, in his analysis of what philosophical activity looked like in the Early Academy, Berti (2010: 24-29) focuses not on Speusippus, but on Eudoxus and Archytas, neither of whom was a scholar of the Academy after Plato's death. Similarly, Xenocrates is not discussed in this context.

line of argument is currently being investigated by them? Tell me these things accurately, in Earth's name, if you've come with any real knowledge of it.

B: Why yes, I can tell you about them clearly. For during the Panathenaea I saw a troop of lads in the exercise-grounds of the Academy, and heard arguments indescribable, ridiculous! For, in propounding definitions about nature (περὶ φύσεως ἀφοριζόμενοι), they were differentiating (διεχώριζον) the way of life of animals, the nature of trees, and the genera of vegetables. And in these arguments, they were investigating to what genus one should assign the pumpkin.

A: And what definition did they arrive at, and of what genus is the plant? Explain it to me, if you really know.

B: Well now, first of all they all took up their places, and with heads bowed they reflected (διεφρόντιζον) a long time. Then suddenly, while they were still bent low in study (ζητούντων), one of the lads said it was a round vegetable, another that it was a grass, another that it was a tree. When a doctor from Sicily heard this, he dismissed them contemptuously, as talking rubbish.

A: No doubt they got very angry at that, and protested against such insults? For it is unseemly to behave thus in discussions of this sort.

B: No, in fact the lads didn't seem to mind at all. And Plato, who was present, very mildly, and without irritation, enjoined (ἐπέταξ') them to try again [from the beginning] to define the genus to which the pumpkin belongs. And they started once again to attempt a division (διήρουν).

(F 11 Kock = Speusippus F 33 IP, trans. by Dillon 2003: 7-8, with alterations)

As Dillon has noted, regardless of any comedic bias, Epicrates' fragment demonstrates a remarkable understanding of philosophical activity and vocabulary.⁷ Indeed, Epicrates' comic portrayal contributes significantly to our knowledge of (at least the contemporary public perception of) the

⁷ Dillon 2003: 8. In this way, Epicrates follows Aristophanes, whose *Clouds* lampoons Socratic philosophy by appeal to technical concepts in Presocratic philosophy and Sophistic discourse (on which see Konstan 2010: 86-87, with bibliography, and Berti 2010: 22-23).

intellectual activities undertaken in Plato's Academy. First of all, it demonstrates a kind of interdisciplinary and international character: the students' study of nature is taxonomic and focuses chiefly on division, but the participants in the discussion include a Sicilian doctor who, it is implied, is not a philosopher of the Academy. The interest in taxonomy reflects similar intellectual excursions by Italians not only in Plato's *Sophist* (animals at 221e-222d) and *Statesman* (animals at 262c-266a), where the Eleatic Stranger holds court, but also *Timaeus* (animals at 39e; trees and plants at 77a-b), voiced by the eponymous Locrian. Second, there is a specific focus on the patient character of the members of the Academy: neither Plato nor the students do not react harshly when confronted with the Sicilian doctor's contempt – this surprises speaker A and, it appears, serves the amusement of speaker B, who has characterized the sort of definitions they undertook to be 'indescribable, ridiculous' (ἀφάτων ἀτόπων). Finally, speaker B's narrative emphasizes the authority of Plato over the scene: he makes a point of mentioning that Plato was present, and that the master calmly 'enjoined' or 'ordered' (ἐπέταξ') the students to give the proper diaeresis of the pumpkin a second try.

The possibility of knowledge, and pursuit of it in the natural world, are prevalent themes: notably, the fragment parodies the beginning of several Platonic dialogues, in which one figure seeks to know from another what happened at a particular gathering they attended, first hand, in the past.⁸ Interestingly, this query takes the form of concern over certain knowledge: speaker A asks several times whether speaker B *really knows* (note the repetition of κατειδώς; κάτοισθα τι) what Plato, Speusippus, and Menedemus have been discussing lately. Hence, this epistemic framework playfully informs the actors' curiosity about the Academic discussions involving knowledge and definition of objects in the natural world. Indeed, it is in the midst of differentiating the various βίαι of animals and the nature of trees that the subject of defining the pumpkin through differentiae arises.⁹ There is an excellent parallel for this sort of research in Speusippus' *Divisions and Hypotheses Regarding Similar Things*, a text for which we have a relatively robust set of evidence (Frs 38-47 Isnardi Parente; also note Speusippus proclivity for differentiating substances and principles of things, including animals and

⁸ Compare, e.g., Pl. *Symp.* 172a-174a; *Phd.* 57a-59d; *Prm.* 126a-127e.

⁹ In the *Republic*, Plato had, of course, not only encouraged correct differentiation of the 'lives' of the just and unjust men (e.g. 360e-363d), but also the various animal 'lives' that people took up in the postmortem allotment in the myth of Er (617d-620d).

plants, in Frs 48-55 and 123-146 Isnardi Parente).¹⁰ Indeed, as we will see, Speusippus' approach to division and philosophical dialectic confirms the popular view that we find in Epicrates' comedy of Platonic philosophers engaged in enquiry (ζήτησις), while further contextualizing this activity.¹¹

SPEUSIPPUS' *MATHEMATIKOS*: THE HUNT FOR KNOWLEDGE

We can infer from several titles of lost works that Speusippus wrote much on the activity and character of the philosopher (*On Philosophy, The Philosopher*), and on how learning occurs (*The Mathematikos, Discussions on Similarities in Science*).¹² Although very few testimonia of Speusippus survive that describe his approach to learning, Proclus preserves important information in several passages within his *Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements*, one of which describes the 'hunt' for knowledge:

Principles must in every case be superior to what follows after them in simplicity, indemonstrability, and self-evidence. For generally, says Speusippus, of the things which thought (διάνοια) hunts after (τὴν θήραν ποιεῖται), some it [sc. thought] sets up (προβάλλει) and prepares for the coming enquiry (προευτρεπίζει πρὸς τὴν μέλλουσαν ζήτησιν) without having undertaken any sort of elaborate excursion, and it possesses a more vivid contact (ἐναργέστεραν ἐπαφήν) with these than sight has with visual objects; others it [sc. thought], because it is unable to grasp them immediately, attempts to hunt after by advancing on them step-by-step according to what follows after these [sc. principles].

¹⁰ The title is attested at D.L. 4.5 = Fr. 2 IP. It is difficult to know how, or whether, this text differed from other works for which we have titles, e.g. *On Typical Genera and Species* and *Definitions*, as noted by Falcon (2000: 410-411).

¹¹ Falcon's (2000: 410) dismissal of the evidence from Epicrates contradicts itself: 'Although this testimony is very curious, it can hardly be considered historical evidence about the activity of the members of the Academy. What we can infer from the fragment of Epicrates, I think, is only that the practice of division was important in the Academy.' If Epicrates' evidence is taken to show that the practice of division was important in the Academy, how could it *not* be considered historical evidence about the activity of the members of the Academy? Perhaps Falcon means that it should not be taken as historical evidence for Speusippus *in particular*; but in that circumstance, he would need to explain why such historical evidence for Speusippus practicing division as is collected by Isnardi Parente exists at all – especially given the fact that so much of Speusippus' work has been lost.

¹² See D.L. IV.4-5 = F 2 IP. *Nine* books are attested for the latter work.

(Proclus, *Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements* p. 179.14-22 Friedlein = Speusippus F 35 Isnardi Parente)

Proclus goes on by giving examples from mathematics (pp. 179.22-80.22 Friedlein): the former kind of cognition, in which thinking simply *apprehends* its object, is exemplified by reference to the line that one draws from one point to another. The line is obtained through the 'uniform flux' (τῆ ὁμαλῆ ῥύσει) that attends motion through a point, and hence, so claims Proclus, our thought grasps the line with ease.¹³ The implication is that there cannot be a mathematical *proof* of the line.¹⁴ By contrast, the construction of a one-turn spiral, which requires construction of multiple geometric shapes and complex motions, cannot be successfully obtained through these simple epistemic operations. The latter activity requires 'geometric' thinking. It appears that Speusippus was attempting to describe two functions or activities of 'thought' (διάνοια), based on their objects: simple and indemonstrable mathematical objects such as lines are grasped through apprehension, and they are ontologically and logically prior to their consequents; they are principles of the latter.¹⁵ Alternatively, complex geometrical objects, which require demonstration and depend upon simple mathematical objects for their construction, are posterior and must be discovered through the process of enquiry (ζήτησις), which requires multiple steps in the 'hunt' for knowledge.

As has been noted, the appeal to the 'hunt' for knowledge reflects Speusippus' reception and expansion of ideas found in Plato's dialogues.¹⁶ In particular, we note that Speusippus bifurcates 'thought' (διάνοια), as it is described in the Divided Line passage in *Republic* VI (509d-511e), according to simple or complex mathematical objects.¹⁷ For Plato in the *Republic*, 'thought' is the realm of the sciences and arts, which, according to Glaucon and Socrates, is comprehensible only through use of hypotheses as first principles, and not through exercise of their 'intellect' (νοῦς): we may

¹³ On the role of 'uniform flux' in the 'progression' of mathematical objects, see, inter alia, Cherniss 1944: 396-397 n. 322.

¹⁴ Nothing in the fragment as it is preserved justifies Dillon's claim (2003: 84 n. 122) that 'presumably what Speusippus is here asserting is the immediate apprehensibility of the basic principle that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points'. There is no propositional content in the testimonium as such.

¹⁵ Cf. Bonazzi 2015: 28-30.

¹⁶ The 'hunt' metaphor refers to dialectical procedures in Plato's dialogues (*Phd.* 66a; *Theaet.* 198a; *Polit.* 285d; *Soph.* 220b and 261a; *Phlb.* 65a) (Cf. Dillon 2003: 84 n. 121). Thanks to Giulia De Cesaris for reminding me of these intertexts.

¹⁷ Contra Tarán (1981: 430), who misinterprets by not acknowledging two diverse operations of διάνοια here based on diverse objects of its attention.

recall that Glaucon says of the people who study the sciences that they ‘are forced to observe them through thought, not perception; but on account of the fact that they undertake their examination not by returning to a principle but from hypotheses, they do not seem to you [sc. Socrates] to possess intellect (νοῦν οὐκ ἴσχευ)’.¹⁸ Instead, so Glaucon says, ‘the state of specialists in geometry and such [sciences] you seem to me to refer to as “thought” and not intellect, since ‘thought’ is something in between opinion and intellect.’¹⁹ In *Republic* VI, it is by no means obvious that when Socrates or Glaucon refer to ‘first principles’, they are speaking about lines, or basic propositions about points relative to one another; they are referring to Forms.²⁰ If Speusippus continued to retain the Platonic Forms for at least their explanatory function in his bid to, in the words of Dillon, ‘restructure’ and ‘rationalize’ them²¹, we would need to account for the fact that the Forms were unambiguously the unique first principles that could be grasped by ‘intellect’ (νοῦς) in the *Republic*, whereas Speusippus only speaks of grasping first principles in one of the operations of ‘thought’ (διάνοια).²²

What Speusippus would have thought of the Platonic notion of the ‘intellect’ (νοῦς), and its proper objects, is difficult to infer from his surviving fragments.²³ What is clear from what survives, however, is that Speusippus placed a lot of emphasis on the demonstrative aspect of learning that one employs in enquiry (ζήτησις). This is evident from a fragment of Eudemus, either built upon

¹⁸ Pl. *R.* 511c7-d2. Whether or not Plato would claim that forms qua first principles are intuited, in the sense that scholars often take Aristotle to be eliciting when he speaks of νοῦς (*An. Post.* II.19), is beyond the scope of this paper. Be that as it may, Dillon’s ingenious comparison of the testimony on Speusippus with that passage of Aristotle (2003: 85) is slightly misleading, for the simple reason that intuitive principles for Aristotle are obtained *via* νοῦς, whereas for Speusippus they are obtained through the simpler type of διάνοια. For Aristotle’s view, also see *EN*VI.6-7, 1140b31-1141a20.

¹⁹ Pl. *R.* 511d3-5.

²⁰ Whether or not Plato would claim that Forms are intuited, in the sense that scholars often take Aristotle to be eliciting when he speaks of νοῦς, is beyond the scope of this paper.

²¹ Dillon 203: 49. I do not have space here to discuss Speusippus’ rejection of the Forms, as asserted by Aristotle (*Arist. Metaph.* XIII.1, 1076a19-29 = F 74 IP; *Arist. Metaph.* VII.2, 1028b18-24 = F 48 IP) and effectively discussed by Berti (2010: 105-110). For further doubts about Dillon’s hypothesis, see Bonazzi 2015: 13-14 with n.37.

²² It is worth noting, however, that Socrates in the Palinode (*Phaedr.* 247c-d) does refer to the gods’ observation of true being as involving ‘thought’ (διάνοια) which is steered by ‘intellect’ (νοῦς ὁ κυβερνήτης).

²³ An enigmatic doxographical statement by Aëtius (*Plac.* 1.7.20 = F 89 IP) constitutes almost all we know about Speusippus’ conceptualization of νοῦς, although it is unclear what exactly is being said there. A challenging testimonium by Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. Math.* 7, 145-146 = F 34 IP), possibly taken over from Antiochus of Ascalon, differentiates among objects of knowledge the ‘intelligible’ (τὰ νοητά) and ‘sensible’ (τὰ αἰσθητά), the former of which is judged by ‘scientific reason’ (ὁ ἐπιστημονικὸς λόγος), and the latter by ‘scientific perception’ (ἡ ἐπιστημονικὴ αἴσθησις). The example that follows, however, chiefly explains how the latter participates in the former. We might infer from what Sextus says, however, that intelligibles would consist of mathematical properties such as ‘harmonious’ and ‘non-harmonious’. See Bonazzi 2015: 29 with n. 83.

Aristotle's account in the *Posterior Analytics* (II. 13, 97a6-22 = F 39 Isnardi Parente) or deriving from Speusippus' own work²⁴, that ascribes to Speusippus the claim that definition of a single definiendum is impossible without knowledge of everything:

This doctrine is said by Eudemus to be that of Speusippus, that it is impossible to define any of the things that are without knowing all the things that are. And since it seems to bear some plausibility, [Aristotle] posits it. For the argument which he thinks can demonstrate this runs on the following lines: it is necessary for one who defines something to know its difference in relation to all things that are different from it. For, indeed, what *doesn't* differ in any way from something is the same as it; but what *does* differ is other. So, it is necessary for one who defines something as differing from other things to know its differentiae, those by which it differs from other things. For if someone doesn't know this, he will believe both that what is the same is other and what is other is the same. In this way, he will not state the essence that is proper to something; for if this should so happen, nothing prevents the definition produced from being common to some other things as well. But it's impossible to know something's difference in relation to certain [other] things without also knowing the things from which the proposed object differs. Therefore, it is necessary for one who defines something to know all things, for the one who defines is defining both this (for how [else] could he define it?) and all the things other than which it is itself defined as being other.

(Anonymous Commentator on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* p. 584.17-585.2 Wallies = F 39 Isnardi Parente)²⁵

It's difficult to extract from this passage what Speusippus' real project was in describing how one can and cannot obtain definitions of essences, although Eudemus implies that Speusippus preferred to

²⁴ This is clear from the near-repetition of οὐ γὰρ μὴ διαφέρει, ταύτων εἶναι τούτῳ, οὐ δὲ διαφέρει, ἕτερον τούτου (in Aristotle's) οὐ μὲν γὰρ μὴ διαφέρει τι, τούτῳ ταύτων ἐστίν, οὐ δὲ διαφέρει, ἕτερον (in the Anonymous Commentator's text, from Eudemus).

²⁵ Thanks especially to David Sedley for suggestions on translating this challenging passage.

define objects through arguments from identity and similarity over aliorelativity.²⁶ Importantly, however, Speusippus is not to be credited here with any sort of proto-sceptical argument that a regress implies that no essence can be known whatsoever²⁷; rather, the claim could be used in to show that prenatal knowledge of all the essences is required for knowledge of any single essence, which can only, in fact, be obtained via discursive dialectic.²⁸ In this way, Speusippus could be seen to extend Plato's commitment to a theory of psychic recollection, as a response to Meno's worries about the possibility of knowledge and its transmission through education (*Meno* 80a-82a). Here we may recall Socrates' demonstration in the *Phaedo* that human beings must not only recollect the essence of the object under scrutiny, but also *all* the essences that may be considered relevant to it in a relation of similarity or difference (*Phd.* 72d-76e, especially 75b-76b).²⁹ Or we might recall the image in the *Phaedrus* (247c-e), in which the unmixed soul-chariot sometimes pauses at the edge of the universe and gazes upon the forms of justice, temperance, and knowledge – 'the things that really are' (τὰ ὄντα ὄντως), which inhere in 'real being' (οὐσία ὄντως οὐσα). Hence, for Plato, the soul's familiarity with the *all* the Forms of things is required for successful identification of *each* of them, and of each of the natural objects that imitate them, when incarnate, i.e. in a state in which essences have been forgotten.³⁰ Similarly, Speusippus looks to be adapting Plato's argument by stipulating that the mind must have had knowledge of all essences at some point in the past in order for it to successfully determine any one essence through dichotomous definition. This positive interpretation of the testimonia accounts for the differentiation of objects that require 'enquiry' (ζήτησις), which are obtained through discursive thinking (and quite possibly interpersonal dialogue), and those objects that are grasped intuitively or, at

²⁶ For 'aliorelatives', I am referring to definitions posited πρὸς ἕτερον or πρὸς ἄλλα, as contrasted from definitions formed ταύτων. Generally, on aliorelatives in Plato's philosophy, see Duncombe 2012.

²⁷ Cf. Tarán 1981: 390.

²⁸ Cf. *Pl. Plt.* 286a, describing the benefits of obtaining definitions through discussion: 'That is why one must practice at being able to give and receive an account of each thing; for the things that are without body, which are finest and greatest, are shown clearly only by verbal means and by nothing else... (tr. Rowe).'

²⁹ This is my understanding of the important passage at *Phd.* 76a1-4, which Sedley and Long translate: 'Right, because this was shown to be possible: upon perceiving something – whether by seeing or hearing, or by some other perception of it – thanks to it, to come to think of something else which one had forgotten, something with which the first thing, though dissimilar, *had a connection*, or something to which it was similar' (italics mine). See the next note.

³⁰ It is important to qualify this statement: I am not saying that at the moment of perceiving an object, the soul recollects *all* the essences *at once*; rather, at that very moment, the soul recollects those essences that are said to 'consort' or 'associate' with (ἐπλησίαζεν at *Phd.* 76a3) the object being perceived.

the very least, more ‘easily’³¹; it also helps to explain the fact that Speusippus did, indeed, attempt to make taxonomic definitions of various sorts of animals and plants in his fragments (see Frs 123-146 Isnardi Parente).³²

The evidence discussed above shows that Speusippus was committed to developing theories of definitional dialectic that were focused on proper procedure, which could not proceed solely from aliorelatives if they were to obtain the proper essences of things. While he did reject the separate Forms that had grounded Plato’s metaphysics, he nevertheless does not appear to have embraced the scepticism that has sometimes been associated with his epistemology. The evidence suggests that Speusippus’ theory of education was focused primarily on the steps involved in scientific ‘enquiry’ (ζήτησις), an activity that required multiple interlocutors working together in the hunt for knowledge. Hence, Speusippus adapted and extended what Plato had already described in several works, especially those dialogues composed later in life, to suit a project of scientific taxonomy. Despite the postulation of a robust axiomatic metaphysical-mathematical scheme (well-discussed by other scholars), there is no compelling evidence that Speusippus associated this scheme with learning itself; rather, it was preparation for the journey to come.

XENOCRATES ON THE HAPPY MAN

If Speusippus focused on the correct procedures involved in the (re)discovery of knowledge, his successor to the Academy, Xenocrates, sought to explain *why* one should seek knowledge at all. Hence, Xenocrates was credited by philosophers and doxographers in the Hellenistic period with explaining the ends of philosophy. It is well known that Xenocrates’ philosophy was, from Antiochus forward, strongly associated with Speusippus’, but there remained some room for differentiation of their approaches to the unified system of Platonic philosophy. Consider, for example, Varro’s account of Platonic philosophy in Cicero’s *Academica Posteriora*:

³¹ Aristotle, too, refers to pursuit of definitions through division and collection as occurring in δίανοια (*Metaph.* VI.4, 1027b25-1028a4).

³² For a brief treatment of Speusippus’ method of division, see Berti 2010: 24.

But by the authority of Plato, who was [a thinker] complex, manifold, and productive, a single univocal system of philosophy was founded – with two names, Academics and Peripatetics, which, while agreeing in doctrines, differed in name. For although Plato had left Speusippus, his sister’s son, as ‘heir’, as it were, nevertheless two men of outstanding zeal and learning (*praestantissimos studio atque doctrina*), Xenocrates of Chalcedon and Aristotle of Stagira –³³ those who were with Aristotle were called ‘Peripatetics’, because they conducted debates (*disputabant*) while walking around inside the Lyceum, but those who, according to the practice of Plato, assembled and customarily held discussions (*sermones*) in the Academy, which is another exercise-ground, obtained their appellation from the name of the place.

(Cicero, *Academica Posteriora* 4.17 = Xenocrates T 82 IP² = Speusippus F 25 IP)

Interestingly, Varro’s account presents Speusippus as a mere ‘heir’ to Plato’s doctrines, whereas he emphasizes the strong connections between Xenocrates and Aristotle, referring to them as ‘*praeantissimi studio atque doctrina*’. Their superiority with regard to ‘*studium*’ and ‘*doctrina*’ is emphasized by Varro, and they are juxtaposed with one another, leaving poor Speusippus out on his own.³⁴ There are also some implicit differences signalled by the language: philosophical engagement at Aristotle’s Lyceum is taken to be more dialectical, with the emphasis on disputation (*disputabat*), whereas at Xenocrates’ Academy it is more relaxed and conversational (*sermones*).³⁵

Furthermore, Varro’s emphasis on ‘*studium*’ and ‘*doctrina*’ is worth remarking on³⁶: the latter, which would in Greek be διδασκαλία, indicates their pedagogical commitment to philosophy in its manifold univocality³⁷; the former, however, is in some ways more interesting, since it indicates a deep

³³ The grammar is unclear here, as there is no stated main verb.

³⁴ Contrast, for example, Piso’s description of Antiochus’ view at *Fin.* V.7, in which Aristotle is rendered the *princeps* over Speusippus, Xenocrates, Polemo, and Crantor as a group (i.e. the Peripatetici).

³⁵ Compare Epicrates’ description above of the activity in the Academy as ‘discoursing’ (διατριβουσιν).

³⁶ The coupling of *studium* with *doctrina* in Cicero is not rare, occurring at, e.g. *De or.* 1.11 and 3.230 (where it appears alongside *ingenium* and *memoria*); *Brutus* 240 (coupled with *industria* and *labor*); and *De senectute* 49.

³⁷ Blank (2012: 259-260) notes that one important difference between Piso and Varro’s positions is that the latter believes that virtue is implanted by instruction (*doctrina*), whereas the latter assumed that virtue could not be fully achieved without it.

commitment to the project of philosophy – we may here wish to recall that one of Cicero’s calques for φιλόσοφος is ‘*studiosus sapientiae*’ (*Tusc.* 5.9; also see *Tusc.* 1.1, on φιλοσοφία), a term that is difficult to translate back into Greek from Latin. It is not a direct transliteration of Greek φιλοσοφία, which Cicero certainly could have advanced (e.g. at *Laws* 1.59, φιλοσοφία is literally rendered as *amor sapientiae*).³⁸ The term ‘*studiosus*’, and its abstract form ‘*studium*’, are more nuanced, implying a kind of commitment to enquiry and scientific dedication that are not indicated by the literal translation of φιλία into *amor*. It is difficult to infer a direct Greek cognate in Cicero’s own works. One possibility might be to associate *studium* with ὄρεξις, which would conform with other Platonist definitions of φιλοσοφία as an ὄρεξις σοφίας, *vel sim.*³⁹ The problem here is that there is no easy cognate that follows for ‘*studiosus*’⁴⁰, and ὄρεξις does not do the work of explaining the sustained commitment to wisdom implied by the term ‘*studium*’. Another possibility, this time arising out of the Stoic world, is ἄσκησις: after all, we have it on the authority of Aëtius that they understood φιλοσοφία to be the ἄσκησις ἐπιτηδείου τέχνης, or, as Long and Sedley translate, ‘the practice of expertise in utility.’⁴¹ This possibility has the value of retaining the close connections between the Xenocratean and the Stoic division of philosophy into physics, ethics, and logic.⁴² But, again, the Stoic philosopher is not anywhere (to my knowledge) called an ἄσκητὸς τῆς σοφίας, or anything like it.

Another possibility that, I think, holds more traction for our understanding of Varro’s philosopher as a ‘*studiosus*’ who is committed to his ‘*studium*’, is attested in the medieval translation tradition of Aristotle’s *Topics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, extending from Boethius to Thomas Aquinas, where we consistently see the terms ‘*studiosus*’ and ‘*studium*’ used to translate σπουδαίος and σπουδή, respectively.⁴³ For Aristotle, the term σπουδαίος plays an important role in his definition of

³⁸ My discussion here has benefited from Baraz 2012: 96-112.

³⁹ E.g. Alcin. *Didask.* 1, 152.2; also see the Platonist *Definitions* 414b: φιλοσοφία τῆς τῶν ὄντων ἀεὶ ἐπιστήμης ὄρεξις; and Iambl. *Protr.* 5, p. 26.4-5 Pistelli: ἡ δὲ φιλοσοφία ὄρεξις ἐστὶ καὶ κτῆσις ἐπιστήμης.

⁴⁰ I am not aware of any examples of the philosopher being described as ὄρεκτικὸς σοφίας.

⁴¹ Aët. 1, Preface 2 = L&S 26A = *SVF*2.35.

⁴² Cf. Dillon 2003: 138-142.

⁴³ Boethius *ap. Aristoteles Latinus (AL)* V.1, pp. 39.23-40.1 Mino-Paluella, translating Arist. *Top.* II.6 below; the author of the ‘ethica nova’, often thought to be Burgundio of Pisa, *ap. AL* XXVI.1, translating Arist. *ENI*.7, p. 78.3-12 Gauthier; William of Moerbeke, following the author of the ‘ethica nova’ in, *ap. AL* XXVI.3, translating Arist. *ENI*.7, p. 384.4-11 Gauthier; for Thomas Aquinas, see *S.T.* 1 a1, 6, where the *virtuosus* is differentiated from the *studiosus* because the latter requires *studium ad doctrinam* in order to make judgments, whereas the former grasps principles *ex revelatione*.

human happiness, the supreme good that is indicated by appeal to the function of a human being, in the famous ‘function argument’:

If the function of the human being is activity of soul in accordance with reason, or not apart from reason, and the function, we say, of a given sort of practitioner and a *serious* (σπουδαίος)⁴⁴ practitioner of that sort is generically the same, as for example in the case of a cithara-player and a *serious* (σπουδαίος) cithara-player, and this is so without qualification in all cases, when a difference in respect of excellence is added to the function (or what belongs to the citharist is to play the cithara, to the *serious* (σπουδαίος) citharist to play it *well* (τὸ [κιθαρίζειν] εὖ)) – if all this is so, and a human being’s function we posit as being a kind of life, and this life as being activity of soul and actions accompanied by reason, and it belongs to a *serious* man (σπουδαίος) to perform these well and finely (εὖ καὶ καλῶς), and each thing is completed well when it possesses its proper excellence (ἕκαστον δ’ εὖ κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν ἀρετὴν ἀποτελεῖται): if all this is so, the human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with excellence (and if there are more excellences than one, in accordance with the best and most complete).

(Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7, 1098a7-18, trans. Rowe, with minor alterations)

Aristotle has already argued (at 1097b22-1098a7) that the function of the human being is the activity of its soul in accordance with reason; but here he adds that there is an important difference between the function of *any* human being and the human function that is most complete and best, which is exemplified by the *serious* (σπουδαίος) practitioner of any art, i.e. the one who practices his art in accordance with the excellence/virtue that is proper to him ‘well’ (εὖ).⁴⁵ Near the end of *Nicomachean Ethics* (X.6, 1177a1-2), when laying the ground for his final description of happiness being the fully

⁴⁴ I translate σπουδαίος with ‘serious’ rather than ‘good’, although Aristotle does routinely contrast σπουδαίος with φαῦλος (e.g. at *EN*II.4, 1105b30 and *III*.6, 1113a25). But he also contrasts it with γελοῖος at *EN*X.7-8, 1177a2-5, again in the context of discussing the happy life and happiness. Consider Finnis’ (1998: 48) description of a *studiosus*, by reference to its use in Thomas Aquinas: “‘*Studiosus*’ is simply a translation handed to Aquinas for Aristotle’s keyword *spoudaios*, the serious, morally weighty, mature person whose views and conduct deserve to be taken seriously – the right-minded person.’

⁴⁵ Generally, on the ‘function argument’, see Barney 2008.

contemplative life, Aristotle is more to the point: the happy life is what is in accordance with virtue (κατ' ἀρετήν), i.e. that which is conducted 'with seriousness' (μετὰ σπουδῆς).

Interestingly, Aristotle's focus on the virtuous life lived seriously reflects broader eudaimonistic traditions found in the Early Academy: indeed, we are led to believe that Xenocrates advanced similar arguments, as Aristotle himself suggests:

Another method of attack is to refer a term back to its original meaning on established... Similarly, 'happy' (εὐδαίμων) can be used of one whose spirit is serious (ὁ δαίμων σπουδαῖος), as Xenocrates says that 'he who possesses a soul that is serious is happy (εὐδαίμονα εἶναι τὸν τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχοντα σπουδαῖον); for this [sc. the soul] of each man is a spirit.'

(Aristotle, *Topics* II.6, 112a32-38 = Xenocrates F 154 Isnardi Parente²; trans. after Forster)

Later on, Aristotle explains that by referring to the 'happy' life as that which is psychologically 'serious', Xenocrates was committed to the idea that the 'serious' life is that which is 'most choiceworthy of all lives', and that what is choiceworthy is the same thing as what is greatest.⁴⁶ Hence, so goes the implication⁴⁷, the happiest life, which is the most choiceworthy and hence greatest, is the life that is 'serious'. 'Serious' in what sense? Obviously Xenocrates was equivocating the meanings of 'well' (εὖ) and 'serious' (σπουδαῖος) with reference to the activities of the soul, which is, or is at least similar to, a *daemon*.⁴⁸ Perhaps he does this in service of an argument relating the proper end of human life with the practise of virtue.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, beyond this, no other substantive evidence survives, but it would not be unreasonable to assume that Aristotle's elaborate theory of the 'serious'

⁴⁶ Arist. *Top.* VII.1, 152a5-30 = Xenocrates F 158 IP².

⁴⁷ Note that Aristotle refers to Xenocrates' activity here as an ἀποδείξις (καθάπερ Ξενοκράτης τὸν εὐδαίμονα βίον καὶ τὸν σπουδαῖον ἀποδείκνυσι τὸν αὐτόν κτλ.). Just as we saw above with Speusippus, the argument, though obscured by Aristotle's summarizing, is conducted from similars, rather than from aliorelatives.

⁴⁸ It is interesting to consider Boethius' translation here, which fails to retain the etymologization of 'happy' (εὐδαίμων) into 'good-δαίμων' in replacing the term δαίμων with 'fortuna': 'similiter autem et bene fortunatam, cuius fuerit fortuna studiosa, quemadmodum Xenocrates dicit bene fortunatum esse qui animam habet studiosam.' On soul as δαίμων in Xenocrates, see Dillon 2003: 146-149.

⁴⁹ This would help to explain Cicero's claim that the happiest life is the one practised 'in virtute' (*Tusc.* V.51 = Xenocrates F 161 IP²), or Clement of Alexandria's claim that 'Xenocrates of Chalcedon argued that happiness is the "possession of proper virtue and the capacity subservient to it" (κτῆσις τῆς οικείας ἀρετῆς καὶ ὑπερετικῆς αὐτῆ δύναμεως) and that the "parts" of the virtues are "fine deeds and serious dispositions, as well as states, motions, and arrangements"' (*Strom.* II.22 = Xenocrates F 150 IP²).

man, which was fundamental to his celebrated function argument, was actually indebted to, if not based on, arguments advanced by his competitor Xenocrates concerning intellectual seriousness and commitment to philosophical enquiry.

About the ends of philosophical enquiry according to Xenocrates we are better informed: Pseudo-Galen tells us that Xenocrates believed that the ‘cause of the discovery of philosophy is putting an end to the confusions of things in [one’s] life’ (αἰτία δὲ φιλοσοφίας εὐρεσεώς ἐστὶ...τὸ παραχῶδες ἐν τῷ βίῳ καταπαῦσαι τῶν πραγμάτων).⁵⁰ It is worth comparing this with Speusippus’ definition of happiness (εὐδαιμονία) as ‘a habit perfected in reference to what accords with nature’ (ἔξιν...τελείαν ἐν τοῖς κατὰ φύσιν ἔχουσιν) and something at which ‘good people aim for freedom from disturbance’ (στοχάζεσθαι...τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς τῆς ἀοχλησίας).⁵¹ Xenocrates’ final cause for the human discovery of philosophy was the arresting of ‘confusions of things’ in life, a phrase whose difficulty to interpret is evident: does Xenocrates reject, as Isnardi Parente takes him to⁵², Aristotle’s famous claim that the origin of philosophy is intellectual wonder (διὰ τὸ θαυμάζειν), followed by perplexity (ἀπορῶν) and then the desire to escape ignorance (διὰ τὸ φεύγειν τὴν ἄγνοιαν), in favour of a pre-Hellenistic theory of the pacification and removal of disturbed emotions?⁵³ I suspect Xenocrates is more ambivalent here, with a phrase that accounts for both the contemplative and the practical lives, both of which are part of embodied existence.⁵⁴ When describing σοφία *simpliciter*, for example, Xenocrates referred to the ‘science of first causes and of the intelligible substance’ (ἐπιστήμη τῶν πρώτων αἰτίων καὶ τῆς νοητῆς οὐσίας), whereas φρόνησις was ‘double, both practical and theoretical, the latter of which is ‘*human* σοφία’.⁵⁵ Theoretical knowledge, then, could be applied to human life, just as practical knowledge, and it would involve inquiry into the causes of *human* (rather than divine) knowledge. The remarkable use of the term παραχῶδες, however, also

⁵⁰ Ps-Galen, *Phil. Hist.* 6, p. 605 Diels = Xenocrates F 171 IP².

⁵¹ Clem. *Strom.* II.22 = Speusippus F 101 IP.

⁵² Isnardi Parente and Dorandi 2012: 330.

⁵³ Arist. *Metaph.* I.2, 982b11-21.

⁵⁴ It is worth noting that if Xenocrates is rejecting the claim that philosophy started with intellectual wonder, he would be disagreeing with Socrates in Plato’s *Theaetetus* (155d).

⁵⁵ This point is emphasized by Dillon (2003: 150-151).

indicates a movement in the direction of developing a technical language for what will become a fundamental problem for Epicurean, Stoic, and Platonist philosophers of the Hellenistic Era.

CONCLUSIONS

If indeed it is the case that, as scholars since Cherniss have maintained, the activities of the Early Academy can be inferred from the educational programme laid out in Plato's own dialogues, there is a need to consider how its scholarchs Speusippus and Xenocrates, who no doubt continued (in some way) the intellectual practices that were established by their master Plato, reacted to Plato's own commitments to learning, educational practice, and the pursuit of knowledge, as preserved in the dialogues. This essay has only been able to scratch the surface in terms of its approach to educational theory and practice in the Early Academy – to focus primarily on the theoretical and epistemological paradigms advanced by the scholarchs which might have informed their conduct of the 'school'. Several aspects are prominent: first, it emerges that interpersonal philosophical engagement is thought to be more 'conversational' and less adversarial than might have occurred, for instance, in Aristotle's Lyceum. This might be a function of the strong Peripatetic commitments to, and formulation of, endoxastic enquiry and dialectical practice.⁵⁶ Second, the extant evidence shows a focus on the sort of enquiry (ζήτησις) that is directed towards studying the natural world through dichotomous division – a sort of application of the definitional procedures practised by the Eleatic Stranger in Plato's *Sophist* and *Statesman* to the topics discussed by Timaeus of Locri in the *Timaeus*. But grounding this zetetic approach was a positive epistemology ultimately assumed from Socratic debates in the *Republic*, *Meno*, and *Phaedo*: it is as if Socrates was the 'mouthpiece' for metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics, whereas the scholarchs turned to the natural illustrations and explanations of the Eleatic Stranger (definitional) and Timaeus of Locri (cosmological) for the procedures and subject areas relevant to education. Interestingly, despite apparent differences in their approaches to the Forms and/or ultimate

⁵⁶ One wonders how polyvalent a notion of 'dialectic' could have been in Xenocrates' day, when he and Aristotle pursued what appear to be kindred, but not identical, approaches to this issue. For one analysis of this issue, see Horky: *forthcoming*.

explanantia, Speusippus and Xenocrates appear to have had compatible approaches to philosophical enquiry and its ends – so far as the evidence suggests, the pursuit and ends of philosophy were apparently the same for both Plato’s innovative nephew and his most ardent defender. It is possible, but by no means absolutely certain, that the ideal of ‘freedom from disturbance’ had pre-Platonic roots⁵⁷; regardless, it was never so effectively integrated into philosophical education until it became philosophy’s *purpose* under the first scholarchs of the Early Academy, Speusippus and Xenocrates. Hence, in their approach to ethics, the first scholarchs both departed from their great master and expressed a view that competed against that of his most famous student.

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⁵⁷ Isnardi Parente and Dorandi (2012: 330) associate this ideal with Democritus and Nausiphanes (cf. DK 68 B 4 = DK 75 B 3), but the original source, Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* II.130), is not obviously drawing the exact same association. For a valuable attempt to trace out the relationship between Democritus, Nausiphanes, and Epicurus, see Warren 2002: 169-181 (although he does not mention Xenocrates there).

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