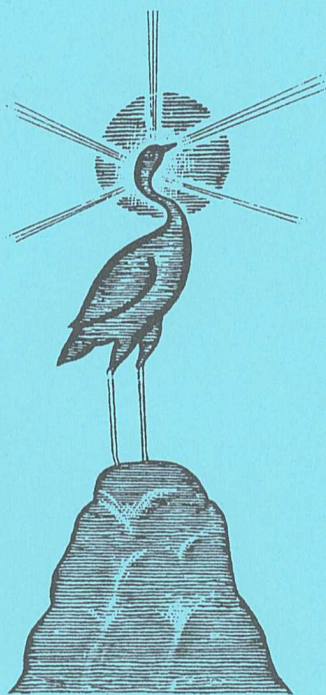


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CHAEREPHON THE SOCRATIC

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INTRODUCTION

CRITO ASIDE, NOBODY IS DEPICTED IN EXTANT GREEK LITERATURE as closer to Socrates than Chaerephon.¹ Chaerephon gets the oracle that changes the course of Socrates' career;² he initiates the critical conversations with Gorgias and with Charmides and Critias; he is second, after Crito, on Xenophon's list of those most benefited by the association with Socrates.³ Aristophanes presents him as practically co-director of the Thinkery in the *Clouds*, and both Aristophanes and other comic dramatists associate him with Socrates in a handful of other plays. This tradition even brought a writer in early antiquity to stage a dialogue between Socrates and Chaerephon alone, the *Halcyon*,⁴ and another to imagine a letter from Socrates to Xenophon about Chaerephon.⁵ Everyone considers Chaerephon a follower of Socrates.⁶ But what kind of follower? Olympiodorus calls him a "philosopher" and second highest among the five ranked types of soul.⁷ He is a competent student, as demonstrated by his respect for his teacher and his Socratic way of talking.⁸ But he is not simply, Olympiodorus claims, Socrates' apprentice: he serves as an intermediary between Socrates and Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles, and he takes the lead when interacting with the youth in the marketplace.⁹ Many contemporary commentators, however, take a dimmer view of the man, pointing to Socrates' reference to him as *μανικός* in the

¹Crito is presented as close to Socrates in the *Euthydemus*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*, and as Socrates' closest friend in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 1.2.48 and a recipient of Socratic advice at 2.9.8. Alcibiades is also frequently depicted, while Xenophon is seen with Socrates only in Xenophon's own work and no extant work explicitly depicts Plato with Socrates. Xanthippe, the only person to spend the night with Socrates before his execution, gets most of her due in post-classical literature: see Woodbury 1973; Puchner 2010: 50–51.

²Pl. *Apol.* 21a; Xen. *Apol.* 14; Diog. Laert. 2.37 (despite 2.23 and Olymp. *On Gorgias* 26.18).

³Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.48; cf. 2.3.1–19.

⁴The Hackett Plato suggests an authorship (doubtfully Lucian's) between 150 and 50 B.C.

⁵The Second Socratic epistle. The text: Χαίρεφῶν ὄν τρόπον ὑφ' ἡμῶν σπουδάζεται οὐκ ἀγνοεῖς. Ἡμερμένος δὲ ὑπὸ τῆς πόλεως πρεσβευτῆς εἰς Πελοπόννησον τάχ' ἄν καὶ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἀφίκοιτο. Τὰ μὲν οὖν τῶν ξενίων εὐπόριστα ἀνδρὶ φιλοσόφῳ· τὰ δὲ τῆς πορείας ἐπισφαλῆ καὶ μάλιστα διὰ τὰς αὐτόθι νῦν ταραχὰς ὑπαρχούσας. Ὡν ἐπιμεληθεὶς ἐκεῖνόν τε σώσεις ἄνδρα φίλον καὶ ἡμῖν τὰ μάλιστα χαριῆ.

⁶Suda s.v.: τῶν ἄγαν γνωρίμων Σωκράτους.

⁷Olymp. *On Gorgias* 0.3 and 25.1; 0.8. Olympiodorus' modern editors wonder on what authority Olympiodorus calls Chaerephon a philosopher, and they speculate *Clouds* 1. Perhaps pertinent evidence would be the *Clouds*' MS V's reading for the speaker of 1505: ἔτ'ε φιλό^ο (surely "other philosopher"; reading in Starkie 1911), since no member of the "philosopher" word-group appears in our text of the *Clouds*.

⁸Olymp. *On Gorgias* 1.10, 2.7; 0.3, 2.9–10.

⁹Olymp. *On Gorgias* 0.8, 1.10, 25.1; 1.6.

Charmides and σφοδρός in the *Apology*.¹⁰ They call him impulsive, unrestrained, and tactless,¹¹ an indifferent student,¹² or an inept arguer.¹³ He wrote nothing, as far as we know, and is notable for not a single idea. The references to his companionship are many, but there is little curiosity about that companionship.

If Chaerephon is indeed silly, slow, or useless, and yet Socrates still associated with him for years, what are the consequences for our understanding of Socrates? Is it evidence of Socrates' limited transformative effects? His susceptibility to hangers-on? His bad judgment in friend-making? His patience and forbearance? Or are Chaerephon's personal characteristics irrelevant except for his political affiliation? Might Chaerephon's presence in *Sokratikoi logoi* signify only that Socrates had at least one assuredly democratic friend and thus could not have been a crypto-oligarch?¹⁴ In the following remarks I set out what we can say about Chaerephon and Socrates' relationship. The evidence suggests a Chaerephon who is neither merely a parasite nor a mediocre pupil. He was a man with a developed and somewhat independent commitment to philosophizing, the communal life of examining and discussing becoming popular in Periclean Athens.¹⁵

Understanding the Chaerephon that Plato, Xenophon, and the comic dramatists describe helps us understand how Socrates engaged in the Athenian intellectual community, what he shared with its members, and how original he may have been. It has always been difficult to understand Socrates' relationships with others, even for his contemporaries. Are his associates acolytes, friends he passes the time with, sidekicks, or themselves pedagogues?¹⁶ Socrates probably spent significant time listening to others talk—giving recitations and public lectures, prattling on in the marketplace—and then talking with his companions about what he alone and they together heard. His companions may have often let Socrates take the lead in directly confronting speakers, diagnosing their argumentative ills, and examining the consequences of their positions. Their doing so is what we see in Plato's, Xenophon's, and Aristophanes' work. But the

¹⁰Guthrie 1969: 368, 405–406; 1975: 285.

¹¹Croiset 2003: 48; Cappuccilli 2003: 1385, n. 3; Schmid 1998: 3–7, 172, n. 5; Levine 1975: 16; Brown 1979: 28; Bruell 1977: 142; Pichanick 2005: 5, n. 11; Benardete 1986: 10; West 1979: 106.

¹²Schmid 1998: 9; Nichols 1998: 132; Ranasinghe 2009: 17, 22, 92; Plochmann and Robinson 1988: 9–10, 15, 20, 42–3, 53, 364, n. 15; Hyland 1981: 22–23 (“uncritical discipleship”).

¹³Ranasinghe 2009: 25, 80; Plochmann and Robinson 1988: 11, 15–16, 29, 360, n. 26.

¹⁴Vlastos 1983: 511; Stone 1988: 152–153; Brickhouse and Smith 1989: 23, 77–78; Hughes 2011: 324. The value of friendship with Chaerephon as evidence of Socrates' democratic feeling is challenged by Wood and Wood (1986: 70–71, with n. 31).

¹⁵I want to move away from the view for which Guthrie (1969: 406) is the standard, that Socrates had a “small but devoted band of disciples, of whom the lean and earnest Chaerephon, ‘the Bat,’ was fanatical.”

¹⁶Clitophon refers to them as “your contemporaries and fellow-enthusiasts or comrades, or whatever one should call the kind of relation you and they have” (τῶν ἡλικιωτῶν τε καὶ συνεπιθυμητῶν ἢ ἐταίρων σῶν, ἢ ὅπως δεῖ πρὸς σέ περὶ αὐτῶν τὸ τοιοῦτον ὀνομάζειν, *Clit.* 408c6–7). See Moore 2012b and Taylor 1911 on Socratic associates.

known details of Chaerephon's identity show that the companions of Socrates must often have held their own in conversation, observation, and inquiry. This is likely not an unfamiliar conclusion, but perhaps it is often forgotten, and our three authors take some pains to remind us of it.

I. THE DURATION OF CHAEREPHON'S RELATIONSHIP WITH SOCRATES

Evidence from contemporary literature suggests that Chaerephon and Socrates were close friends for more than a decade, possibly several decades, of Socrates' philosophical maturity. In the *Apology* Socrates says Chaerephon and he had known each other since they were young (ἐκ νέου, 21a1), but, as this could mean either since childhood or early adulthood, it proves little.¹⁷ The dramatic dates of Plato's dialogues suggest they knew each other by the late 430s. In the *Charmides*, Chaerephon gives Socrates an eager homecoming upon his return in 429; this would have them knowing each other well before Socrates left, in the late 430s.¹⁸ It is most likely that the friendship continued through the mid-420s. Plato presents it as plausible that they would have spent a normal day in the agora before meeting up with Gorgias, who visited Athens in 427.¹⁹ Aristophanes places Chaerephon and Socrates explicitly together in at least the latter version of the *Clouds*—so in 420–17, if not also in 423—and implicitly so in 414, in the *Birds*. We cannot be sure that the *Birds*, which associates Chaerephon with Socratizing and calls him an accomplice to Socrates' *psychagogia* (1280–93, 1552–64), provides timely information.²⁰ Even so, the time period from the late 430s to the early 410s encompasses fifteen years. Xenophon in his turn gives three pieces of evidence for an early friendship. In *Mem.* 1.2, he discusses Socrates' association with both Critias and Alcibiades, which began as early as the 430s, turning sour only years later. Xenophon wants to show that Socrates fostered many relationships (ὄμιλητής, 1.2.48.1) that turned out well. He compares the negative cases of Critias and Alcibiades to the positive ones of Crito, Chaerephon, and others: “of these not one—neither when younger nor when older—did anything bad or got in trouble” (1.2.48.8–9). Xenophon must be implying that Socrates was friends with Chaerephon and the others from as early a date as he was with Alcibiades and Critias. Otherwise he would be liable to the response that the better men had had too glancing a relationship with Socrates to become corrupted. Xenophon's story about Socrates' intercession in the dispute between Chaerecrates and Chaerephon gives further evidence (2.3.1–19). By the time of that dispute, Socrates knew both of them well (γνωρίμω, 1), enough that he could assert Chaerephon to be φιλότιμος . . .

¹⁷ νέος is applicable to people under thirty (Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.35) or those from twenty to forty (Diog. Laert. 8.10, citing Pythagoras). Mulligan (2007: 58–60) wonders whether Socrates and Chaerephon could have been classmates studying under Archelaus.

¹⁸ Taylor (1911: 139–140) implies a friendship as early as 440, due to his early dramatic dating of the *Protagoras*.

¹⁹ *Contra* Plochmann and Robinson 1988: 360, n. 26, 363–364, n. 7, 371, n. 5.

²⁰ On Socrates in the *Birds*, see Moore 2014.

καὶ ἐλευθέριος (“honor-loving and free,” 16).²¹ Socrates’ advice to Chaerecrates sounds like what one would say to a sensitive young man still unsure about himself, annoyed by the bossiness of his older brother, and ignorant about the level of directness with which he can safely or rightfully address his elders (15–16). This might put Chaerecrates in his twenties: an age of burgeoning but as-yet-undeveloped independence, free of parental rein but also of their advice. Were the senior sibling at the most in his thirties, and a near contemporary of Socrates’, then Xenophon’s story would take place in the 430s.²² One more piece of evidence from Xenophon, if independent, reinforces Plato’s story that is taken up by Diogenes Laertius (2.37): Chaerephon asked the Delphic Oracle about Socrates (Xen. *Apol.* 14).²³ If the story is true, Chaerephon must have been aligned closely with Socrates by the time he went to Delphi. But when would that have happened? Some evidence suggests an early date: Socrates presents it to the jury as a sort of ancient history (Pl. *Apol.* 20d6–21a9). Still, any proof that Chaerephon queried the Oracle by the mid-430s would have to depend on a pair of conditions: (i) Socrates not interrogating reputedly wise people before starting to interpret the Oracle, and (ii) the *Protagoras* depicting Socrates in 433 interrogating such people.²⁴ Neither condition inspires much confidence. Socrates might already have been interrogating people, just not so systematically or intently; thus the *Protagoras* could show a pre-Oracle Socrates in action. Alternatively, the *Protagoras* might not depict Socrates as he really spoke in 433, instead retrojecting a post-Oracle Socrates some years earlier. In favor of this view is the fact that the *Clouds* of 423–417 shows a seemingly pre-Oracle Socrates, and as a comedian of contemporary life Aristophanes may have had less opportunity for anachronism.

On the strictest criteria, then, we do not know whether Chaerephon and Socrates were friends except at the time of one of the drafts of the *Clouds*, 424 or 420–417. We have good reason to believe, however, that the men were friends from the late 430s and perhaps even earlier, and at least up through the penultimate decade of Chaerephon’s life.

II. THE COMEDIC EVIDENCE FOR CHAEREPHON’S PUBLIC CHARACTER

Our earliest evidence comes from of the last quarter of the fifth century. *Clouds* 2, from 420–17, presents Socrates and Chaerephon as co-directors of the

²¹ Socrates mentions Chaerecrates, as Chaerephon’s brother, in the *Apology* (21a7–8), but Plato does not say that he was present.

²² Nails (2002: s.v. “Chaerephon”) says that Chaerephon “seems to have been a slightly younger contemporary.”

²³ Vander Waerdt (1993: 13–17, 27–29) assumes Xenophon follows Plato; Danzig (2010: 49–53) takes a cautious line. I discuss the plausibility of the Oracle story itself below, 296–298.

²⁴ In a variation on this view, Rudebusch (2009: 31–42) believes that Socrates’ victory over Protagoras is what impelled Chaerephon to ask the Oracle about him.

Phrontisterion (144–147, 156, 830–831, 1465).²⁵ Pheidippides knows of the two as a famous pair (104), and at the play's end he refers to Chaerephon as one of his teachers (διδασκάλους 1467). Though his father thinks Chaerephon is one of the learners (μαθητῶν, 502), the son, a closer student, would know better.²⁶ Another student refers to Chaerephon with his demotic (ὁ Σφήτιος 156), something he would be more likely to do for a teacher than a fellow student.²⁷ Granted, Chaerephon has no or little dialogue in the play.²⁸ Aristophanes may have not had the space to animate him as a complete character, but nevertheless Aristophanes squeezes satirical value from this man (e.g., 501–503), a well-known Athenian.²⁹ The play does not treat him as funny only because he emulates Socrates; he is funny because he fits the Athenian intellectual type so well.

Chaerephon's appearance in other comedies further reveals his public persona. He is linked with Socrates twice in the *Birds* of 414 B.C. (1280–93, 1554–64), but both times the connection is incidental, incited by talk of birds or caves; he is presumably funny aside from his Socrates connection. Chaerephon by this period was called the Bat (Νυκτερίς, 1296), presumably after his indoor haunts.³⁰ In three other fragments from Aristophanic plays, the context is too minimal to connect his character-traits to Socrates. He is called a sycophant (συκοφάντην, fr. 295) and a thief (κλέπτην, fr. 552), and is asked to be a witness (*Wasps* 1408–13). These three names suggest an active role in the democratic or public life, or some particularly public lack of participation. The

²⁵ At 1465 Chaerephon is mentioned first; cf. Starkie 1911: *ad loc.*; Tarrant (1991: 160–162, 179–181) argues that *Clouds* 1 depicted even greater equality between the two men, perhaps by staging a contest between Chaerephon and Pheidippides where *Clouds* 2 has the contest between Right and Wrong Speech. This view contrasts with Dover (1968: xcvi–xcvii), who thinks that *Clouds* 1 did not include Chaerephon at all.

²⁶ Dover (1968: xxxiii; cf. *ad* 1493–1507) takes this inconsistency as evidence for Aristophanes' incomplete revision of the play. But the same inconsistency could show that the popular imagination subordinated Chaerephon to Socrates, even when Chaerephon deserved acknowledgement as a near-equal.

²⁷ For this idea, see Dover 1968: *ad loc.*

²⁸ Sommerstein (1982: *ad* 1497 and 1506) believes it likely that Chaerephon does speak at the end of the play. At 1497, as the Phrontisterion burns, someone says οἱμοι, τίς ἡμῶν πυρπολεῖ τὴν οἰκίαν (“help, who’s putting the house to the flames?”); at 1499, ἀπολεῖς, ἀπολεῖς (“you’ll destroy us, you’ll destroy us”); and at 1505, ἐγὼ δὲ κακοδαίμων γε κατακαυθήσομαι (“I, wretched one, will choke”; first two tr. from Sommerstein). Sommerstein argues that Aristophanes could hardly pass up the opportunity to satirize the already-mentioned Chaerephon. Two verbs in this last part of the play, which ms E has as duals, could plausibly refer to Socrates and Chaerephon.

²⁹ On the physiognomic evidence for Chaerephon's indoor pursuits, see 103, 1112 (ὄχρῶντας, “sallow”), 504 (ἡμιθνής, “half-dead”), 718 (φρουδὴ χροιά, “lost tan”); *Wasps* 1413 (θάψινος, “yellow”); *Clouds* 1, fr. 393 (“copulating larvae”); *Seasons* fr. 584 (ἰσχρὸς καὶ ὄχρὸς, “dry and sallow”); Cratinus *Putine* fr. 215 (αὐχμηρὸς, “squalid”), *Cities* fr. 253, (πύχινος, “box-wood green-yellow”). On the comedic genre of the intellectual's appearance, see Cameron 1991.

³⁰ Sandra Peterson observes (in a personal communication) that a secondary etymology could be “talks (*eris*) through the night.”

fragments from Cratinus' plays refer only to his sallow complexion, and give evidence only of a broad familiarity with Chaerephon by the audience. How did he become so well-known? Maybe he was a public figure and referenced philosophy in his quasi-public conversations, or he was known to spend his leisure time with Socrates and Socratics. He is not, however, simply one of the boys Socrates talked whisperingly to in the corners of gymnasia, but would be better imagined to be a peculiar and identifiable public figure, one associated with but not subsumed by Socrates.

III. THE PLATONIC EVIDENCE FOR THE NATURE OF THE CHAEREPHON-SOCRATES FRIENDSHIP

Plato's dialogues provide evidence about the fifth century despite not recording actual conversations, and include real people in small cameo roles to create verisimilitude. Plato shows the world he believes Socrates lived and shone in, but he is constrained by the fact that many of his readers had heard stories about Chaerephon, Crito, Phaedo, and the other friends of Socrates. While the older readers would know such men personally, the younger ones would know of them through their membership in Athens' intellectual communities and through the proliferating distribution and publication of *Sokratikoi Logoi* (many of which were written by, about, and for Socrates' closest friends). Writing accurately about Chaerephon would be easy for Plato: Plato may have known Chaerephon through the younger man's teenage years, and Socrates may have told him many stories. By making sense of Chaerephon's roles in Plato's dialogues, we can come to understand what Plato wants us to understand about Chaerephon, and thereby about Socrates.

a. *The Charmides*

The *Charmides* begins with Socrates speaking to an anonymous interlocutor some indeterminate period after his military homecoming in 429. This period is long enough that his listener knows nothing about the battle from which Socrates had just returned. Even so, he still knows Chaerephon, who gets no formal introduction (153b2) and whose *μανικός* nature is assumed as familiar (153b3), thus speaking to Chaerephon's notoriety. Chaerephon's *μανικός* nature has become a primary point of interpretation. What does Socrates mean by it? It might seem to explain the greeting of a war veteran that is less somber than expected; he leaps out from the middle of a group of people waving (153b2–4). While Chaerephon may have been more discreet—his companions may have had worse luck with their friends—he is not riotous, ill-behaved, or tactless,³¹ so Socrates should not be thought of as chastising Chaerephon, but instead he seems to be identifying the transparency of Chaerephon's passions. There is a ring of the *Phaedrus*' good *mania* (244a7) here. Chaerephon acts on what he

³¹ Cf. Bruell 1977: 142.

wants to do. He lives free from the traditional norms of quietness, modesty, and self-involvement that the main character of the dialogue, Charmides, thinks define *sophrosune*.³² Chaerephon's strange character might really be the openness with which he manifests his loves. His concern for Socrates' well-being is deep. His first question, the first question of the dialogue, is "How did you survive the battle?" (153b4).³³ The concern is completely natural, untarnished by social posturing. Contrary to the ambition and flattery surrounding Charmides and Critias that is displayed in the ensuing pages of the dialogue, Chaerephon's devotion is unpretentious. Chaerephon assumes Socrates was a hero no more than he assumes he was a coward;³⁴ he is simply glad his friend is well. His two follow-up questions express the same relief, even amazement, that Socrates could have survived the fighting (153b9–c3). He requests, and gets, an account of the whole battle (153c5).

In these opening moments, Chaerephon speaks neither of himself nor of philosophy, which does not imply a weak-minded preference for people over intellectual conversation. After all, he had just been with Socrates' usual conversational party.³⁵ It is Chaerephon who directs Socrates to a seat besides Critias and the others present (153c6–9), and it is presumably he who moderates the immediate discussion (153d1). All this suggests not something about Chaerephon's frivolity but about his closeness to Socrates and his influential role among those who spend time at the Palaestra.

While the dialogue presents Chaerephon and Critias as the most influential men at the Palaestra, Socrates addresses his questions about the state of "philosophy" to his audience generally (153d2–3). Before anyone has a chance to answer, Critias announces the coming of beautiful Charmides (153d5–154b2). Everyone stares at Charmides as at a statue (154c8). This leads Chaerephon to ask Socrates how the youth seems to him, especially with respect to the fineness of his face (154d1–3). Chaerephon wants to reincorporate Socrates into the group, and may fear Socrates' paralysis before such a splendid sight (cf. 155c4–e1); he may also be the only one who feels so free to ask Socrates' opinion. Socrates agrees with Chaerephon. Chaerephon adds that Charmides' *eidos*, his form, is even better than his face (155d5–6), and everybody repeats Chaerephon's words (155d6). Nobody thinks Chaerephon is silly for making such a remark, not even Socrates, who we might expect to remark about the poverty of body relative to soul; he saves such comments for others. Socrates

³²This view is quite distinct from that of those who think Plato put Chaerephon in the dialogue to open it with political extremes: cf. Benardete 1986: 10; Hyland 1981: 23.

³³Levine (1975: 16–18) takes the impetuosity of Chaerephon's first question, which is basically an "attack" on Socrates, to be evidence of him being "mad."

³⁴Brown (1979: 28) wonders whether Chaerephon's incredulity at Socrates' survival depends on his belief that Socrates would act no differently in war than in peace, despite war being much more dangerous. This seems to have Chaerephon underestimating Socrates' courage even in peacetime.

³⁵Cf. Levine 1975: 71, n. 11.

must not think that Chaerephon lacks sensitivity for what really matters, but seems rather to think that Chaerephon is simply presenting to him something Chaerephon would know Socrates finds extremely interesting: a beautiful young man. Chaerephon says no more in the dialogue,³⁶ but lets Socrates engage with the most interesting men in the room, Charmides and Critias. As far as we can tell, Socrates liked to do this alone, or Plato liked to depict Socrates doing it alone.

What do we learn about the Socratic circle from the opening of the dialogue? During his absence, “Philosophy” has happened, by which I mean whatever sort of discussions unify and characterize the circle to which he has returned and to which Charmides has recently been added (περὶ φιλοσοφίας ὅπως ἔχοι τὰ νῦν, 153d3; ἐπεὶ τοὶ καὶ ἔστιν φιλόσοφος, 154e8). The circle to which he belongs has stability, lacks hierarchy, and accepts new members on its own terms. Spartophiles and democrats share in discussion (cf. *Wasps* 1280–93). Socrates is not a formal leader of the group, but its most enthusiastic and competent member. The dialogue is intended to remind readers not just of the Delphic Oracle, but of an entire culture of intellectual inquiry and debate.³⁷

b. *The Gorgias*

The *Gorgias* must depict a time a little later than the *Charmides*; we know of no visit to Athens by Gorgias before 427.³⁸ The dialogue begins with Socrates and Chaerephon meeting Calicles, Polus, Gorgias, and a sizeable audience after Gorgias’ public display. They had just been in the agora, and missed the whole thing.³⁹ It seems safest to assume that Socrates and Chaerephon had been in the agora listening, commenting, and examining, and in general engaging in the kinds of conversation Socrates calls “philosophy.” In the speech of the *Apology*, foreshadowed in the conversation of the *Gorgias* (486a6–b4, 522b3–c3),⁴⁰ Socrates says that he has always frequented the agora, that he listens for and to whomever is considered wise, and that he asks them questions (*Apol.* 17c8–18a4). That he engages in such listening and talking with Chaerephon himself seems obvious from the amount of time we know them to have spent together, the esteem Chaerephon has for Socrates’ wisdom, and Chaerephon’s ability to speak in the Socratic way without directly copying him. Socrates’ remark early in the *Gorgias* that they “spend time” (διατρῖψαι) talking echoes other conversations

³⁶Both Guthrie (1975: 155–158) and Grote (1888: 1.482), in otherwise full summaries of the *Charmides*, completely elide Chaerephon’s presence in the dialogue.

³⁷See Levine 1975: 70, n. 5, on the notion that Chaerephon’s presence could remind the audience of Delphi, readying them for Critias’ discussion of the Oracle in the dialogue’s middle.

³⁸Gorgias in 427: Diod. Sic. 12.53. Pericles’ recent death, mentioned at 503c2, could push the dramatic date back to 429. But other markers suggest any number of other dates, up through 405: see Dodds 1959: 17–18.

³⁹The *Republic* starts similarly, with Socrates having mentioned a day spent with Glaucon; Glaucon, probably unlike Chaerephon, is much younger.

⁴⁰Cf. Allen 1984: 189–190.

Socrates has about how to spend one's time listening and talking and where his wonted conversations are depicted or referenced (e.g., *Euthyp.* 2a2, *Phdr.* 227b, *Clit.* 406a3). It is common in the Platonic dialogues to see Socrates listening to speeches and talking about them afterward (*Hip. Mi.* 363a2, *La.* 181d1–10, *Rep.* 2, *Prot.* 320b4–c5). Later in the *Gorgias*, Callicles charges Socrates with practicing philosophy ignobly: wasting time refuting people, talking endlessly with young men, and in general seeking leisure and being reactive rather than seeking honor and being productive (484c10–486d1). Socrates' response, accepting the outline of Callicles' impression, means that we should see Socrates as spending much of his public life in listening and talking about what he hears, and Callicles' pique would naturally be incited by Socrates and Chaerephon having been acting in this unmanly way that very morning. We also have at this point in the dialogue Socrates doing just this: listening to a speech and then saying they need to analyze it (486d4–488b8).

Socrates says that Chaerephon is the one who made them late. If Socrates is joking, he would be making a mean-spirited joke. Chaerephon's response—"I'll also cure it"—suggests that Chaerephon accepts some responsibility, even if good-naturedly.⁴² That he does so is supported by his allusion to the story in which Achilles takes some responsibility for Telephus' wound, even though he believes he did not intend to wound Telephus at just that moment.⁴³ If Socrates means sincerely that Chaerephon contributed to their lateness, we see that Chaerephon has some independent sway. Chaerephon may have wanted to keep up their philosophizing in the agora, or he may have been pursuing the arguments wherever they led. Of course, doing so might not have been wholly his idea. Maybe Socrates thought that they should keep talking for Chaerephon's benefit. It would then be Chaerephon's failure to understand that caused them not to be able to leave the agora. They may have known they were missing Gorgias' big talk, but Socrates might have expressed a lack of interest in the big speech, and Chaerephon might have said that his friendship with Gorgias could get them to hear whatever Socrates wanted to hear from Gorgias anyway. In any event, Socrates knows that Chaerephon has his own interests in talking in the agora—an interest either adequately mature or one that Socrates wants to nurture—and the ability to go where he wants.

Chaerephon's friendship with Gorgias, a friendship Socrates seems not yet to have, supports this sense of Chaerephon's independence (447b2) and suggests he has autonomy in meeting visiting political or intellectual figures. Perhaps Chaerephon has attended an earlier presentation (also sponsored by Callicles?) and talked to Gorgias afterward; perhaps he met Gorgias outside of Athens. Chaerephon knows that Gorgias's brother is a doctor, and feels at liberty to talk about him (448b4–6). Whatever the cause and nature of his relationship

⁴²Zanetto (1994: 15) claims that Chaerephon looks after the public image of his master.

⁴³Olymp. *On Gorgias* 1.7; Moore 2012a.

with Gorgias, Chaerephon knows Gorgias well enough that he, but not Socrates, could call on Gorgias to repeat his performance. Chaerephon might be a bit forward in thinking that Gorgias would want to go through his performance again, but we should not assume that Chaerephon's *μυνικός* nature is the naïveté to ask for something so forwardly. If Chaerephon could befriend Gorgias on his own, and do so successfully enough to be able to call on him to go through a long performance again, Chaerephon must have some eagerness for knowing intellectual or pedagogical personalities, the interest in seeking out companionship with them, and the reasonableness to cause them to be friends with him.

Are we to think that Chaerephon misjudges Socrates' interest in hearing this rhetorician? Socrates would very likely have expressed interest in Gorgias, a most remarkable rhetorician and, so it seems, a theoretician of language and ethics.⁴⁴ Chaerephon may have come to appreciate Gorgias, who from this dialogue comes across as an affable and conscientious—though not absolutely self-aware—person. Gorgias, in his previous meetings with Chaerephon, may have expressed his interest in talking about justice, freedom, and power, the matters of greatest significance to people (cf. *Phlb.* 58a7–b3, *Men.* 76c4–5, 95c1–8, *Phdr.* 267a6–b2). Any pessimism about Chaerephon's social intelligence would be especially misplaced if Socrates and Chaerephon spent much of their time listening to and sometimes querying popular, voluble, or smart people. Gorgias' big speech might not have provided, in Socrates' estimation, the right venue for querying the man, but this says nothing about Socrates' interest in talking to Gorgias himself.

Callicles and Gorgias agree to extend the meeting for Socrates' and Chaerephon's benefit (447b7–8). Socrates says he wants Gorgias to say what sort of person he is (447c1–3). Rather than ask him himself, though, Socrates gives Chaerephon the assignment (447c9–d5). It is hard to know why he does this. Olympiodorus suggests that Socrates wants both to show off his success at teaching his manner of conversational engagement, and to check Chaerephon's progress.⁴⁵ These explanations play somewhat against one another. Others think that Socrates reveals the failures of his student.⁴⁶ Why Plato would do this is unclear, unless he had un-discharged jealousy directed at Chaerephon. Other scholars see this as a mini-match between two human types, the Socratic type and the Gorgianic type.⁴⁷ The moral would be that the outcome to such a match, when practiced by amateurs, is indeterminate. Socrates' method is good

⁴⁴ On Gorgias' abilities, see Dodds 1959: 6–10; MacDowell 1982: 9–19; Mourelatos 1987.

⁴⁵ Olymp. *On Gorgias* 0.3, 2.10. Cf. Dodds 1959: 6: "This minor figure is given a short innings in the prelude as a kind of 'sorcerer's apprentice'."

⁴⁶ This is the general line of interpretation by Plochmann and Robinson (1988: 8–16, 20), which is entirely negative about Chaerephon without, to my mind, providing an adequate defense of Plato's choice to include Chaerephon in the dialogue. Arieti (1993: 202) wonders whether Plato is showing that "it is easy to imitate rhetorical eccentricity but hard or impossible to imitate Socratic argument."

⁴⁷ Cappuccilli 2003: 1804, n. 7.

only when practiced by an expert, and likewise with Gorgias', which would be an unsurprising lesson. A final idea worth mentioning (but one that does little justice to the details of this engagement) suggests that the mere presence of Chaerephon brings to mind the Oracle's pronouncement that Socrates is the wisest of men, even relative to the oratorical, sophistic form of wisdom taught by Gorgias.⁴⁸

There is a simpler explanation. Chaerephon has said that he and Gorgias are friends (φίλος, 447b2). This might imply that he, rather than Socrates, should do the talking, and that Socrates finds Chaerephon capable of asking the questions. It is consistent with Socrates wanting to encourage his friend to have the opportunity to engage in some public philosophy. It is obviously also consistent with Chaerephon asking Socrates what to ask (447c10) and how to ask it (447d2). Neither question means that Chaerephon does not know how to ask questions, but rather they mean simply that Socrates has asked Chaerephon to do something, he is happy to comply, but he wants to know just what Socrates is asking for.

Chaerephon's first question to Gorgias gives us evidence that he knows how to ask elenctically useful questions: "Is Callicles right when he says that you claim to answer whatever you're asked?" (447d6–8). Although Socrates has told him only to ask what Gorgias is, what sort of worker he is, Chaerephon reveals that he knows how to prepare a respondent to answer a question. This shrewd gambit prevents Gorgias from temporizing or changing the topic. When Gorgias makes his self-satisfied response—"He is right; I did just claim that [i.e., before you arrived], and I haven't had a new question in a long time" (448a1–3)—Chaerephon responds: "So it'll be easy for you to answer" (448a4).

Once Chaerephon is about to ask Gorgias about himself, Polus interrupts and tells him to ask him, Polus, the questions. After a withering rhetorical question—"Do you think you would answer more finely than Gorgias?" (228a9–10)—Chaerephon accepts this replacement. This might seem to show Chaerephon's spineless capitulation, but it seems more likely, however, to be intended to show Chaerephon's urbanity, his conscientiousness of the norms of this conversation, and his desire to avoid a conversational forfeit before he has even begun.

Chaerephon asks Polus four questions, two of them advancing new examples. The first seeks the name "doctor," the second, "painter" (448b4–10, b11–c1). Socrates had asked about shoemakers, so it may seem that Chaerephon should also have asked about producers. But Socrates did not limit the acceptable answers to his question ὅστις ἐστίν to kinds of manufacturer: he gives only one example, and his example seems only to be the simplest kind. Even if Socrates had limited his question, Chaerephon would be following orders. Both doctors and painters have products: health, in the first case, and paintings or aesthetic experiences, in the second. Both products are conceptually similar to whatever

⁴⁸ Reale 2001: 18.

a rhetorician might be said to produce: speeches, persuasion, influence. Most importantly, Socrates takes no issue with Chaerephon's questioning when he refers back to it (448d2, e2, e8).

After Polus gives his oratorical "what it's like" rather than "what it is" definition of Gorgias' teaching, Socrates takes up the conversational thread (448d1). This shows no disaffection with Chaerephon's abilities. Socrates jumps in to assess Polus' response; we do not see that Chaerephon could not have dealt with it himself. Socrates addresses his assessment to Gorgias, and so Gorgias responds. Gorgias tells Socrates to ask the questions himself (448d6). Once Socrates has engaged with Gorgias, he takes himself to be free to start talking to Gorgias (448d7), and so he does (449a2–4). The dialogue is obviously about Socrates, and so Socrates needs to gain control of the conversation somehow. He does so with no antipathy to Chaerephon.

Despite Socrates' assumption of the lead role, Chaerephon does not go completely silent, as he did in the *Charmides*. Twice more he speaks, both times to keep the conversation going. The first time is after Socrates has just indicated that he is about to refute Gorgias (457e1–3). Socrates talks about how he himself likes being refuted, and how he and Gorgias are talking about the most important possible topics. He says he is the sort of person who finds nothing worse than ignorance about what he has been talking about. If Gorgias is the same sort, he says, they should continue the conversation; if not, then they should stop (458a1–b3). Gorgias agrees that he is that sort (458b4–5), but expresses concern for the audience; maybe they are too tired to have to keep listening (458b5–c2). At the point that Gorgias thinks of leaving, Chaerephon steps up. Addressing both men, Chaerephon says that the applause they hear means that the audience wants them to keep talking. He then adds of himself that he would hope never to be so busy with more important things that he had to leave such a presentation of arguments (458c3–7).⁴⁹

Chaerephon's interest in refutative exchange is obvious here. Why does he announce it? He must not take himself to be one of the people Gorgias could pretend might become bored and tired, but rather he must consider himself to be an influential person. Since he believes in the value of listening to Socrates, he would use whatever authority the crowd sees in him to encourage them to accept that value too. Callicles also wants Gorgias to continue. Since Callicles later berates Socrates for whispering with boys, he must think that this is an important enough conversation, with important enough people, to be worth everybody's time. The wishes voiced by Chaerephon and Callicles are sufficient to keep Gorgias talking; we can assume they have a shaming and encouraging effect on him.

Chaerephon enters the conversation a final time when he helps Callicles out of his bafflement at Socrates' refutation of Polus. Callicles asks Chaerephon

⁴⁹ ἐμοὶ δ' οὐδὲν καὶ αὐτῷ μὴ γένοιτο τοσαύτη ἀσχολία, ὥστε τοιούτων λόγων καὶ οὕτω λεγομένων ἀφεμένῳ προὔργιαίτερόν τι γενέσθαι ἄλλο πράττειν.

whether Socrates is playing or whether he means what he says seriously (481b6–7). Chaerephon responds that it seems that Socrates is supremely (ὀπερφυῶς) serious, but that there is nothing like asking him himself (481b8–9). Chaerephon has once again taken up the role of mediator in the conversation. Callicles' question about Socrates suggests that Callicles both knows Chaerephon well and knows that Chaerephon knows Socrates well. Chaerephon can keep a discussion going.

What can we conclude from Chaerephon's role in this dialogue? He spends significant time with Socrates, a fact particularly emphasized by his skill in epagogic argument, a peculiarly Socratic activity (Arist. *Metaph.* 1078b7–32; cf. McPherran 2007). Chaerephon and Socrates accompany one another in relative social equality, but they also maintain independent social ties. Chaerephon's energy helps get things done, and he may act sometimes as Socrates' go-between or proxy. He must also be an important independent contributor to the Athenian intellectual dynamic.

c. *The Apology of Socrates*

Chaerephon does not appear in the *Apology*; by Socrates' trial he has been dead for up to four years. Socrates mentions him, however, as his longtime friend, a devoted democrat and exile in 404, and the man who queried the Delphic Oracle about his wisdom. It seems impossible to determine the truth of Socrates' claim about Chaerephon's journey. The obstacle here is the difficulty of determining the truth of Plato's depiction of Socrates making such a claim.⁵⁰ The best we can do is show what we could know of Chaerephon if the depiction and the story were true. A related goal would be to show what Plato meant for his audience to believe about Chaerephon, even if that audience took the central fact to be fictitious. Readers convinced that in the *Apology's* Oracle passage Plato aims solely to explain Socrates' mission, adapting Chaerephon's character to fit that aim, will find the following remarks utterly speculative. The results are indeed speculative; fortunately, they mostly corroborate what our earlier readings have shown.

In reminding the audience about his friend, Socrates calls Chaerephon "vehement" (σφοδρός, 21a3) and gives some examples, saying that he "rushed into things" (ὀρμήσειεν, 21a3) and "was bold" (ἐτόλμησε 21a4). By identifying Chaerephon's forwardness and his lack of bashfulness about getting information, Socrates explains what allowed Chaerephon to act unlike everyone else in asking the god about Socrates. Chaerephon did what he wanted to do, and did it with vigor. Socrates says that his audience knows these characteristics (21a1, 3). Chaerephon must have been a public figure, known for being eager,

⁵⁰ On doubts about taking the *Apology* as a source of historical information, see Morrison 2000; Prior 2001. On the oracle story being too implausible to be true, see Stokes 1992; Montuori 2003. On the story being plausible enough, see Guthrie 1975: 405, n. 2; Brickhouse and Smith 1989: 40; Danzig 2010: 49–53. For an agnostic view, see Vander Waerdt 1993: 27–29.

impetuous, and bold, for not just any spontaneity becomes publicly known. To be known for eagerness requires doing things eagerly that have some gravity or public significance.

What do we learn about Chaerephon from the fact that he found nobody wiser than Socrates? It shows that he found Socrates reasonable and not crazy. He thought that Socrates lived better than anybody else. Chaerephon must have esteemed wisdom enough to dwell on people's relative quantities of it. He took a critical attitude toward other people's purported wisdom. If he had any confidence about Socrates' relative wisdom, in a city full of local and visiting intellectuals, doctors, sophists, politicians, businessmen, and generals, he must have interacted with many of them. It seems likely, then, that he would have been both old and worldly enough to appreciate the superiority of Socrates' wisdom when seen against the wisdom of all the other potential champions of wisdom.

What do we learn about Chaerephon from the fact that he thought to ask the Oracle about his friend, and paid money and risked embarrassment in going to ask his question? Despite Chaerephon's impetuous character, the long trip to Delphi, the high admission price, and the tedious wait would seem to rule out a completely whimsical decision to go there.⁵¹ So why did he decide to do it? One possibility is that Chaerephon came to want to spend his time with the wisest person. Why waste one's time with anybody else? To make sure spending time with Socrates was spending his time with the wisest person, he went to the Oracle to get the truth.⁵² The reputation-seeking version of this possibility is that Chaerephon wanted to be identified as a comrade of the wisest person; he could get social capital from such an association. The trip to the Oracle could also have been defensive. Perhaps Chaerephon worried that people might have started doubting Socrates' piety (a worry realized some years later), and maybe even by extension his own. By getting divine imprimatur, he could reassure others and himself of Socrates' goodness, and perhaps even by extension his own. Or perhaps Socrates had been in contests of wisdom, and had been slandered by other local and visiting intellectuals; Chaerephon could have become so exercised, thinking Socrates was obviously better than them, that he went to a final arbiter. It is even imaginable that the trip to the Oracle was aimed to settle scores between Chaerephon and Socrates. Chaerephon may have tired of Socrates' disavowals of knowledge and wanted to show Socrates that obviously he had plenty of wisdom.⁵³

⁵¹Kurke 2011: 55–59.

⁵²De Strycker and Slings (1994: 74–78) suggest that Chaerephon could have known the stories of people asking the Oracle about who was wisest.

⁵³We see the alternative to this view in Ath. 218e–219a: Masurius infers from Chaerephon's inquiry about Socrates' wisdom, even though Socrates had already said he was not wise, that Chaerephon must have been a fool.

Though we cannot know what motivated Chaerephon's trip—Socrates says nothing about it—we can assume that Chaerephon took his affiliation with Socrates to be a close one and that he would see a vindication of Socrates as a vindication of his own way of life. This suggests that Chaerephon was not Socrates' student, for being an ignorant student is usually vindication (or excuse) enough. It suggests instead that they could be fairly judged as morally distinct, and that they could be seen at most as leading partner and associate partner in a joint venture of intellectual inquiry.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is clear Chaerephon had a life distinct from Socrates'. He stayed in Athens when Socrates went to war; and he left Athens during the oligarchy when Socrates stayed home. He knew people Socrates did not know, and had qualities Socrates might not have had. From what we know, however, Chaerephon's life shared many qualities with Socrates'. Both participated in the talking-clubs depicted in the *Charmides* and the more formally organized groups caricatured in *Clouds*. Both spent time examining speeches in the agora, interrogating those with high reputations, and thinking about the nature and distribution of wisdom. It is clear that Chaerephon loved and revered Socrates, and spent time with him. Perhaps he aimed to emulate Socrates, or maybe he simply found in Socrates a friendly, sympathetic, incisive, and intriguing soul.

Can we say anything about the nature of those who surrounded Socrates? Perhaps it is not so distinct from what we imagine about Plato. Plato may have had students, and he may have had fellow researchers. He may have had close associates who read and critiqued his work, with whom he reminisced about Socrates, to whom he disclosed his ideas about travel. And so with Socrates. He would surely have had friends: not just students, and not just age-mates with whom he had acquaintances or adverse engagements. He would have had people with whom he could share his favorite activities: listening, questioning, examining, and refuting. Our evidence from the late fifth century indicates that Socrates was not the exclusive practitioner of his characteristic mode of investigation. He may have been the best: the one with the most charisma, analytic brilliance, and lasting effect. But he did not do it alone.⁵⁴

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