

# SOCRATES' ECONOMICS VERSUS ISCHOMACHUS' ECONOMICS

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**ABSTRACT.** The present study seeks to deepen the understanding of Xenophon's political philosophy as it is reflected in Socrates' investigation of economic knowledge in the dialogue titled *Oeconomicus*. The study concentrates on the six conventional parts of the *oikos* or household (house, things, slaves, land, horses, and wife), which are loosely connected with six facets of human life (pleasure, order, rule, leisure, enrichment, and education), as presented by the perfect gentleman (rich and successful) Ischomachus and his pupil, the (poor and wretched) philosopher Socrates. It demonstrates how the latter, learning Ischomachus' economic teaching, radically transforms it, simultaneously showing the most serious possibilities lying behind the common notions of economic and political life and the inherent limitations of their fulfillment and threatening to undermine (and, indeed, undermining, in the personal case of Socrates) said ways of life as they are conventionally perceived.

**KEYWORDS:** Xenophon, Socrates, political philosophy, economics, teaching, rule.

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Of all Xenophon's dialogues, the *Oeconomicus* is the most enigmatic. The *Oeconomicus* continues the theme of Socrates' defense against the charge that he 'commits injustice by not worshipping the gods worshipped by the city and of bringing other novel divinities; he also does wrong by corrupting the young'<sup>1</sup> (Mem. I, 1, 1), stressed in the *Memorabilia* but present in all the philosopher's Socratic dialogues (Dorion 2008, 278; Danzig 2010, 247; Danzig 2003, 62; Johnson 2017, 120). It has even

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<sup>1</sup> I use the translation by C. Lord, edited by R. Bartlett, in the case of the *Oeconomicus*, the translation by E. Marchant in the case of the *Memorabilia*, the translation by R. Bartlett in the case of the *Symposium*, and the translation by W. Miller in the case of the *Cyropaedia* (with my corrections when necessary).

been declared a lost or excluded chapter of the *Memorabilia*.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, without mentioning other parallels, the *Oeconomicus* is full of references to Aristophanes' *Clouds*, the very play that, in many ways, began the formation of Socrates' negative image in the eyes of many (Plato, *Apology*, 18b–d, 19c). Following Johnson, it can be said that 'the *Oeconomicus* clearly responds to the Aristophanic image of Socrates' (Johnson 2019, 158).<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the *Oeconomicus* turns out to be similar in content to another group of Xenophon's works, which includes technical treatises, with some of which the *Oeconomicus* shares a similar approach to title construction (Waterfield 2004, 81; Pomeroy 1994, 214–5). This is why many scholars have seen, or tried to see, it as a purely 'technical' or economic work, albeit one touching on other topics.<sup>4</sup> It is exactly because of its pronounced subject matter that the *Oeconomicus* has such an unusual structure: Socrates does not teach economic knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) in all its components to his interlocutor Critoboulus but makes him 'watch' (Oec. 2, 15–18 and 6, 11–12) as Socrates learns from the recognized economist. After all, how could poor Socrates be a successful or good economist (Oec. 2, 3; Mem. I, 6, 2–3)?<sup>5</sup> However, Xenophon definitely was a successful economist. It was therefore often thought that Socrates' pupil was hiding under the mask of Socrates' teacher, the rich man Ischomachus.<sup>6</sup> This would have been possible (though not necessary) if the teachings of Socrates and Ischomachus had coincided or, to put it more precisely, if the figure of Ischomachus had, in fact, been

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<sup>2</sup> This prejudice began with Galen but is hardly accepted today (see Pomeroy 1994, 93).

<sup>3</sup> The dramatic and linguistic parallels are highlighted by proponents of the 'ironic' approach to reading the *Oeconomicus* (Strauss 2016, 56; Strauss 1998, 112 and 163–4; Pangle 2020, 4, 184 n. 1, 188 n. 50, 202 n. 2–3; Stevens 1994, 223–4). Pangle after Strauss (Strauss 1998, 191, n. 6) stresses the 'comedic nature' (Pangle 2020, 7) of the dialogue, stating that 'the subtle comedy runs throughout the *Oeconomicus*' (Pangle 1994, 136). On the 'ironic' way of reading, see Flower (Flower 2017, 7–8).

<sup>4</sup> The number of scholars who support this position is enormous, and it still seems to be the dominant one despite all the evidence to the contrary (see, for example, Hobden 2017, 152; Pomeroy 1994, vii, 9, 33, 57; Pomeroy 2010, 131; Figueira 2012, 677, 678, 683–4; Dorion 2018, 521; Lu 2011, 146; Buxton 2017, 331; Gray 2007, 142; Johnson 2021, 231).

<sup>5</sup> Socrates' poverty (at least in the conventional sense of the word) achieved through his philosophical pursuits is evident, even despite his service as a hoplite in the Athenian army (Pomeroy 1994, 28; Higgins 1977, 34; Strauss 1998, 104; Danzig 2003, 75; Danzig 2010, 246).

<sup>6</sup> Kronenberg (Kronenberg 2009, 37, n. 2), referring to Stevens (Stevens 1994, 210, n. 5), gives a fairly exhaustive list of those who support this reading. However, a couple more names may be added to it, starting with L.-A. Dorion (Dorion 2008, 277, n. 86; Dorion 2018, 540; Petrochilos 1999, 229; Anderson 1974, 14 and 174–5).

the model of an economist.<sup>7</sup> Still, the character of Ischomachus as the perfect economist and perfect gentleman (καλός κάγαθός) turns out to be questionable because of two possibilities. First, because of a possible connection with a man of the same name who actually existed. Second, because Socrates retells to Cristoboulus his dialogue with Ischomachus rather than taking the young man to him (or to any other successful economist) to learn, although he promises to do so (Oec. 2, 14–16).

The historical Ischomachus utterly destroys the reputation of the hero of the *Oeconomicus*. First, after his death, the educated-by-him wife (Oec. 7, 4–7) commits unspeakable atrocities by entering into a *de jure* incestuous relationship with her son-in-law and producing a child from him (Andocides, On the Mysteries, 124–7).<sup>8</sup> Second, also after his death, during the inheritance process, it turns out that his wealth is nothing more than a sham (Lysias, XIX, 46). Almost all modern scholars agree<sup>9</sup> that the historical Ischomachus and the Ischomachus of the *Oeconomicus* are the same person.

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<sup>7</sup> This is a fairly common position (Field 1967, 138; Baeck 1994b 53–4; Waterfield 1990, 76; Waterfield 2004, 96; Baragwanath 2012, 646; Gray 2007, 142; Christ 2021, 79, 101), although it is not as robust as it might seem (Cf. Ambler 2006, 104). Today, the most prominent proponent of the position on the overlap between the economic teachings of Socrates and Ischomachus is Dorion (Dorion 2008; Dorion 2018). Admittedly, Dorion's view depends entirely on the correctness of his assertion that 'Xenophon's Socratic writings are not especially critical or speculative' (Dorion 2006, 94). This is extremely difficult to believe, considering, for example, the *Cyropaedia* (see Altman 2022) and the *Lacedaimonion Politeia* (see Mishurin 2021), which are clearly critical of their subjects. In the case of the *Oeconomicus*, many authors, even among those who do not adhere to the 'ironic' reading of Xenophon's writings, agree that Xenophon wants to replace the generally accepted view of the of perfect gentlemanship, represented by Ischomachus, with a new one (Christ 2021, 38, 43, 80, 101; Pomeroy 1994, 321; Johnstone 1994, 240; Waterfield 2004, 98) or draw the even more far-reaching conclusion that by pretending to be a supporter of traditional views, Xenophon is able to advance views that would otherwise be suspicious (Seager 2001, 387).

<sup>8</sup> The fact that Ischomachus could not educate his wife is also shown in the *Oeconomicus*, as Aspasia is stated to be the only person who successfully educated her 'wife' (Oec. 3, 10 and 14–15). The story of the historical Ischomachus is first told by Davies (Davies 1971, 264–5), and its most recent and complete version is given by Johnson (Johnson 2021, 267–73).

<sup>9</sup> There are three basic approaches to recognizing the unity of the two Ischomachuses. Ignoring: when this fact is either ignored completely (Oost 1978; Glazebrook 2009), or declared unimportant (Christ 2021, 79) or unknown to Xenophon (Anderson 1974, 174), or not interpreted at all (Pomeroy 1994, 263). A simple explanation: the description of the literary Ischomachus: reflects Xenophon's attempt to refute the scandalous charges against the perfect gentleman (Harvey 1984, 68–70); reflects Xenophon's own misogynistic

The fact that Ischomachus appears only as the hero of Socrates' retelling allows the philosopher to manipulate his position in every possible way: deleting, supplementing, and changing both its details and its fundamental positions. The difference between the philosopher and the perfect gentleman is also sharpened by the fact that Socrates could have presented to Critoboulus his conclusions from his conversation with Ischomachus. However, instead, Socrates practically disappears from their dialogue toward the end of it, forcing Ischomachus alone to say what he thinks.

Yet, if these two observations are valid, shouldn't the *Oeconomicus* contain two economic doctrines, just as it contains two notions of perfect gentlemanship and two notions of slavery?<sup>10</sup> Shouldn't Socrates' economic knowledge and Ischomachus' economic knowledge diverge? If so, the study of these two economic views would be complicated by the distorted chronology of the dialogue: Socrates' conversation with Critoboulus occurs years after Socrates' conversation with Ischomachus.<sup>11</sup> And because, on the one hand, Socrates turns out to be a pupil of

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position (Nails 1985, 97–9); demonstrates the questionable nature of human happiness (Marchant 2013, 383–4). A complex explanation that, in one way or another, boils down to the viciousness or fallacy of Ischomachus' teaching, causing him to ruin himself and his wife (Strauss 1998; Stevens 1994; Danzig 2003; Nee 2009; Ambler 2006; Pangle 2020).

<sup>10</sup> There is nothing unusual or surprising about the polysemantic use of terms. One would simply need to point out the obvious distinction between the generally accepted view on slaves as humans who belong to other humans and slaves as humans who do not ask and answer questions about 'human matters' (Mem. I, 1, 16). Similar treatment with different terms has been noticed before (see Johnstone 1994, 232; Danzig 2010, 246; Kronenberg 2009, 38, 54; Pangle 2018, 56; Pangle 1994, 144–5; Strauss 1998, 161; Strauss 2010, 42, 182; Baragwanath 2012, 654–60; Ambler 2006, 107–8; Alvey 2011, 716).

<sup>11</sup> The dating of both dialogues within the *Oeconomicus* is almost impossible due to what Davies calls Xenophon's 'faulty memory' (Davies 1971, 17) and what Nails calls Xenophon's 'laughter' (Nails 2002, 118). However, there are two possible approaches to the dating of Socrates' and Critoboulus' conversation (both relying on Xenophon's own testimony). Pomeroy, following the reference to Critoboulus' marriage in 422 BC in the *Symposium* (Symp. 2, 3), proposes dating the dialogue between Socrates and Critoboulus somewhere around 420–410 BC (Pomeroy 1994, 18–19). However, one can start from the reference in the *Oeconomicus* to the death of Cyrus the Younger (Oec. 4, 18). This would make the conversation between Socrates and Critoboulus occur shortly before the philosopher's execution and after 401 BC. This version is indirectly supported by Nails (Nails 2002, 117–8). However, both datings are clearly impossible: Critoboulus could not have married in 422 because this would imply that he was born when his father Crito was not

Ischomachus,<sup>12</sup> and, on the other hand, he turns out to be a teacher of Critoboulus (and Xenophon) (Oec. 1, 1 and 3, 1), although the coincidences between the two teachings might sometimes lead to the conclusion that they are indistinguishable (Dorion 2008–2018), it would be strange if Socrates, years later, had not changed or supplemented the economic teaching of Ischomachus and even stranger if Xenophon decided to write the same thing<sup>13</sup> twice instead of simply making Critoboulus be a pupil of Ischomachus (as he did in the case of Simonides and Hiero).

If, however, one wants to compare the two economic teachings, one must read the *Oeconomicus* in reverse order, starting with the teaching of Ischomachus and ending with the teaching of Socrates. The easiest way to do this is not by looking at both teachings in their entirety but by breaking them into the constituent parts which Socrates indicates in the third chapter of the *Oeconomicus*. Here, summarizing or anticipating his dialogue with Ischomachus, Socrates describes the parts of the household; caring for them would be the realization of economic knowledge (Strauss 1998, 107–11; Strauss 2016, 53–7). His enumeration includes six parts: house, things, slaves, land, horses, and wife (Oec. 3, 1–10). Assuming that Socrates did consider these subjects as being related to economics, it is easy to see why it might be difficult to consider him an economist. Socrates did not have a good house, nor did he have many possessions or slaves. He had nothing to do with land or horses, and he certainly did not succeed in educating his wife (Symp. 2, 10). However, these subjects appear to be directly related to certain themes, such as pleasure, order, rule, leisure, enrichment, and education. And Socrates could, or did, claim some kind of knowledge within these themes, as they are directly connected to 'human matters', the study of which constitutes political philosophy (Mem. I, 1, 16). Therefore, it does not seem to be a great mistake to follow the above-mentioned division and compare the economic views of Socrates and Ischomachus. One only has to accept beforehand the fact that, because Socrates is not the protagonist in most of the dialogue, some of his positions must be taken from other Socratic works of Xenophon.

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even twenty years old; nor could Xenophon have been personally present at the conversation between Socrates and Critoboulus after 401. In any case, the timeless character of the dialogue is clearly intentional.

<sup>12</sup> Xenophon shows Socrates not only as a teacher but also as a pupil (see, for example, Mem. III, 11). This is most evident in the *Oeconomicus*, as Socrates clearly learns something from Ischomachus, even if it is not always what Ischomachus wants to teach him (see, for example, Oec. 17, 15).

<sup>13</sup> It is always better to follow the famous formula: 'In a good author a repetition always teaches us something we could not have learned from the first statement' (Strauss 1998, 125–6; cf. Johnson 2021, 247–9; Buzzetti 2014, 15–16).

### House and Pleasure

In the ninth chapter of the dialogue, Ischomachus tells Socrates about the education of his wife, describing in particular his house (Oec. 9, 2–5). The house is oriented to the south so that it will be well-lit in winter and provide shade in summer. It is devoid of ornaments, and its rooms are built and arranged with an eye to their efficient use. The bedroom provides safety for expensive things; the dry rooms are good for storing bread, and the cool rooms for storing wine; the well-lit rooms are good for work and things which require light; the living rooms are good for staying warm in winter and staying cool in summer. Finally, the house is divided into male and female halves to prevent theft and the breeding of slaves without the master's knowledge. The reason for controlling breeding, according to Ischomachus, is that the useful slaves become 'more well-disposed' with the arrival of children, while the bad ones, by coming together, are given more opportunities 'to do evil'.

This description partly coincides with the description of the perfect house of Socrates given in the *Memorabilia* (Mem. III, 8, 8–10).<sup>14</sup> The house that the philosopher first calls beautiful (*κάλη*) and useful (*χρήσιμος*), and then becomes the most pleasant (*ἡδίστη*) and the most useful (*χρησιμωτάτη*) (Cf. Strauss 1972, 76–8; Pangle 2018, 142–3), includes the following. It must be cool in summer and warm in winter, facing south so that it is well-lit in winter and gives shade in summer, provide safety for things, and be devoid of ornaments. In describing the perfect house, Socrates says the word 'pleasant' (*ἡδύς*) six times. This, it seems to some, clearly demonstrates the difference between the two houses. Socrates' perfect house is clearly distinguished by the pleasure it brings, whereas Ischomachus' house is much more oriented toward usefulness. There are no ornaments in it, not because they 'deprive one of more delights than they give' (Mem. III, 8, 10) but because they would prevent things from occupying the rooms as effectively as possible (Oec. 9, 2). The rooms must be lighted so that they can be worked in; cold so that they can store wine, etc. Decisive here seems to be the fact of sexual segregation: the house of Ischomachus is built in a way that deprives humans of bodily pleasures (Pomeroy 1994, 297–8; Strauss 1998, 146–7; Pangle 2020, 65).

Still, both of these remarks turn out to be questionable. Ischomachus' house is well ordered: each room is for a certain type or types of things and must contain these things in a certain order (Oec. 8, 10). However, 'there is nothing neither so useful (*εὐχρηστον*), nor so beautiful (*καλόν*) for human beings as order' (Oec. 8, 3). That is to say, the order necessarily reveals itself through the pleasure that brings the contemplation of its beauty (Oec. 8, 6). In general, one could say that the household of Ischomachus is filled with pleasure, as it will be shown later. As for sexual

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<sup>14</sup> Socrates says nothing about his views on the structure of the house in the *Oeconomicus*.

segregation, Ischomachus does not say a word about its existence as a condition of deprivation or control over pleasure. On the contrary, he clearly identifies two purposes for having a door separating the two halves of the house. The first is to maintain order. Slaves should not be able to use or move things without their masters' permission (Oec. 9, 10, 14, and 16–17). The second is the inevitable presence of bad slaves in the house (Oec. 12, 19; cf. 21, 10). Although good slaves clearly have self-control (ἐγκράτεια) in sexual matters,<sup>15</sup> the very fact that such slaves end up in leadership positions indicates that most of Ischomachus' slaves are bad, or at least more concerned with their own pleasure than with their responsibilities. In other words, sexual segregation (like the 'laws' that Ischomachus enacted in his household as a whole (see Oec. 14, 4–7 and 9, 15)) is not intended to deprive or control pleasure but to preserve order and therefore the beauty and efficiency of the house by preventing the vicious acts of those inclined to commit them.

Socrates' perfect house, however, lacks not only a door that would separate the male and female halves of the house but also the halves themselves; nor is there any mention of rooms except, apparently, the bedroom. One can assume that Socrates is thinking of a house for one.<sup>16</sup> One even might go further and conclude that there is a clear connection between philosophical pleasure and solitude. Moreover, the house of Socrates seems to demonstrate the possibility of the existence of 'a kind of skilled household management that does without household slaves' (Pangle 2020, 25). This divergence between the philosopher and the perfect gentleman cannot help but raise the broader question of things and order in general.

### Things and Order

As has already been said, Ischomachus is sure about the beauty (or nobility) of order. Thus, beauty is something intrinsic to order<sup>17</sup>; things that are ugly by definition, e.g., chamber-pots, when placed in order, appear to be beautiful (Cf. Plato, *Hippias Major*, 288c–290d); even the space between things becomes beautiful if things are placed in order (Oec. 8, 20). To be in order is to be in the proper place, and each thing must have or receive this place. This is what the house is for (Oec. 9, 2). So Ischomachus sees the master of the house as the one who creates or sets the order

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<sup>15</sup> See the description of self-control (ἐγκράτεια) in sex as one of the decisive traits for the highest rank of slaves: the housekeeper and stewards (Oec. 9, 11 and 12, 13–14).

<sup>16</sup> The idyll of rural life with family and friends that the philosopher draws for Critobolus (Oec. 5, 8–11) is clearly a far cry from Socrates' own life.

<sup>17</sup> Ischomachus repeats the word 'καλὸν' nine times in a couple of sentences during his description of the good order (Oec. 8, 19–20).

in the first place by dividing things into tribes (Oec. 9, 6), ‘according to function not nature’ (Pomeroy 1994, 301).<sup>18</sup>

Needless to say, it is an artificial order and therefore it requires constant maintenance and endless efforts on the part of humans; it is unable to reproduce itself. Things require constant extraction, distribution, and use (Oec. 7, 33–6 and 9, 14), and slaves require care, control, punishment, and reward (Oec. 12, 19–20; 7, 37; 9, 14–15). The *oikos* as an artificial order (in this sense indistinguishable from the *polis*)<sup>19</sup> ‘is by no means self-sustaining’ (Pangle 2020, 62) and requires the efforts of men in unequal positions to maintain it.<sup>20</sup> The *oikos* (like the *polis*) does not belong to all its participants but to only some of them (Cf. Oec. 4, 2–3), namely, the masters. While slaves may use things, their use does not create possession. According to Ischomachus, possession lies in the possibility of unauthorized use and of granting use to others (Oec. 9, 16–17).

Nevertheless, the artificial order is not the only one that exists. Ischomachus also declares the existence of another: natural order. Man and woman are its basic units.<sup>21</sup> ‘The god’, says Ischomachus, ‘made them [man and woman] partners in children’ (Oec. 7, 30; cf. 7, 19). By doing this, the god also separated humans from other animals, depriving them of their ability to live ‘in the open air’ (Oec. 7, 19). But the god gave man and woman different abilities according to the functions they were to perform in order to reach the goal he had set for them (Oec. 7, 28). The man was given parts of self-control (ἐγκράτεια): the ability to endure heat and

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<sup>18</sup> All the tribes of things described by Ischomachus can be divided into six pairs: 1) divine and human; 2) male and female; 3) military and peaceful; 4) festive and everyday; 5) long spent and fast spent; 6) mastery and servile (Cf. Strauss 1998, 147).

<sup>19</sup> Beginning with Aristotle (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252a7–9), Xenophon is thought to advocate the recognition of the art of ruling as a single art regardless of whether it is private or political (Mem. III, 4; cf. Oec. 13, 5), i.e., that ‘the economist’s art is only the other side of the coin of the political art’ (Wellman 1976, 311). Despite the obvious limitations of such an association, there are reasons to believe it is true (see Strauss 1998, 162; Nelsestuen 2017, 78; Pangle 2020, 118; Johnstone 1994, 231–3).

<sup>20</sup> It seems that, as such, any division implies a hierarchy, as can be seen, for example, in the division of things into tribes. See footnote 18.

<sup>21</sup> This means that master and slave are not such units. This is also proved by the fact that Ischomachus never begins the training of slaves (housekeepers, stewards, workers) with a prayer, although he tries to begin with it every worthwhile task (Oec. 11, 8; cf. Hipp. 1, 1; Cyr. I, 5, 6; II, 1, 1; III, 3, 21; Mem. I, 1, 7–9). As part of the domestic order, slaves are not dependent on the gods but on their masters (Cf. Pangle 2017, 313). Pomeroy concludes from this that Xenophon ‘did not have a theory of natural slavery’ (Pomeroy 1994, 67; 2010, 40). The extent to which this conclusion, totally uncharacteristic of classical political philosophy, is correct will be discussed below.



cold and labor (Oec. 7, 23) and one virtue, namely, courage (Oec. 7, 25),<sup>22</sup> as he must be out of the house, toil, and be able to defend himself against injustice, i.e., to participate in warfare (Oec. 7, 22–3 and 25).<sup>23</sup> The woman, on the other hand, received the bodily ability to bear and nurture children and cowardice<sup>24</sup> so that she could stay at the house and manage the things that the man had obtained (Oec. 7, 24–5).<sup>25</sup> In everything else, i.e., memory (μνήμη), caring (ἐπιμέλεια), the remaining parts of self-control (ἐγκράτεια), Ischomachus declares men and women equal (Oec. 7, 26–7).

However, even the natural order created by the god – according to the perfect gentleman – needs maintenance by the gods, who punish and reward human beings. Ischomachus says virtually nothing about punishment (Oec. 7, 31) except that the gods are more likely to punish a man than a woman (Oec. 3, 11). Still, in an example that seems to be reserved for Socrates (Oec. 8, 11–16) (Johnson 2021, 251), Ischomachus goes further, saying that the god (unlike the gods) does not at all distinguish between bad men and good men.<sup>26</sup> As for the reward, it is the bodily pleasure of intimacy, which alone guarantees the birth of children (Oec. 10, 5–7). The ‘baseness’ of this reward from the gods is evidenced both by the fact that in this aspect humans are no different from animals (Oec. 10, 7) and by the fact that decent persons of both sexes, who deserve to be treated as free, must – according to Ischomachus – have self-control in sexual pleasures (Oec. 9, 11 and 12, 13–14).

It seems to be the low character of the natural order that makes Ischomachus rather oriented toward the artificial order and the gods that maintain it – the gods

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<sup>22</sup> That said, Ischomachus does not use the word ‘ἀνδρεία’, replacing it with the word ‘θρασος’. Although the adjective ‘ἀνδρείος’ appears in the text (Oec. 9, 6), it does not carry the meaning of manliness. Xenophon does the same thing in the *Lacedaimonion Politeia*, wishing to demonstrate the absence of true virtue (see Mishurin 2021, 114, n. 30).

<sup>23</sup> Unlike Socrates (Oec. 1, 15), Ischomachus does not consider war to be a part of economics, nor does he see it as a source of income but only as a direct threat to his wealth (Cf. Oec. 2, 6), life, and fame, or what he shamefully calls ‘noble safety in war’ (Oec. 11, 8). Regarding the relation of Ischomachus’ wealth and fame, see Johnston (Johnston 2021, 250).

<sup>24</sup> Ischomachus completely deprives women of some parts of self-control. Even the best of women are deprived of the ability to endure heat and cold and labor (see Oec. 9, 11).

<sup>25</sup> Based on these lines, some scholars conclude that Ischomachus had the first doctrine of ‘the gendered division of labor’ (Saller 2007, 87; Scaife 1995, 227).

<sup>26</sup> Humans should thank not the god but the gods for salvation from natural phenomena (Oec. 8, 16; cf. 5, 20).

of the city.<sup>27</sup> They – and they alone – can make him happy (εὐδαίμων) or divine (θεῖος) (Oec. 11, 8 and 21, 11–12). Still, the order and the good order are two different things (Oec. 21, 9–12). The key property of the good order turns out to be voluntary participation in it (Oec. 21, 12) or, even more broadly, voluntary support of it, which Ischomachus calls justice. Justice within the *oikos* means that things are in their places, slaves are slaves, and masters are masters. It means that the masters own or determine the use of things and watch that the slaves perform their duties (Oec. 7, 33; 8, 10; 9, 10 and 14–17; 14, 6–7). However, Ischomachus does not see how this can be accomplished without the voluntary consent of, if not all the participants in the order, at least those who have authority in it: the wife, the housekeeper, and the stewards. The same is true of the *polis*. Although there are clearly elements in the *polis* who are ready to live unjustly (Oec. 20, 15), still the men on whom the city counts as its pillars (Oec. 2, 5–6 and 11, 9–10) (and whom it rewards, if not with outfits (Cf. Oec. 13, 10–12), then with praise or glory (Oec. 6, 17 and 11, 1; cf. 14, 9)) must be just.

In Ischomachus' view, justice consists of three parts. First, 'doing injustice to no one' (οὐδένα ἀδικῶ), i.e., not trying to destroy the order by taking or placing others in the wrong place in it. Second, treating friends well, i.e., to demonstrate to others the validity or usefulness of the order, to induce them to voluntarily participate in it. Third, to accuse those who do injustice to the order and do not treat it well, i.e., to attack those who are opposed to it, who refuse to be voluntary participants in the order and thus become its enemies (Oec. 11, 22). In other words, Ischomachus acts within the traditional formula of justice: 'it is just to do good to the friend and bad to the enemy' (Plato, *Republic*, 335a, 332d).<sup>28</sup> It seems to be the union of Ischomachus' orderliness and justice that makes him both 'beautiful and good' (καλός καγαθός).

Socrates, in the *Oeconomicus*, says practically nothing about justice (Cf. Oec. 3, 11). However, his justice is described by Xenophon in the *Memorabilia*. At first glance, it looks like a modification of Ischomachus' justice (Dorion 2018, 526; cf. Mem. IV, 8, 4; Oec. 11, 22). In his final word about Socrates in the *Memorabilia*, Xenophon says that Socrates' justice is defined by the fact that he 'did no injury, however small, to no one' and 'conferred the greatest benefits on those who dealt with

<sup>27</sup> This might explain, in part, why the economic teaching of Ischomachus does not contain a section on children (as reflected by the absence of a section on cattle in Socrates' agricultural teaching (Strauss 2016, 61, 86, 97, 101; cf. 1998, 196)).

<sup>28</sup> Xenophon uses it so frequently that sometimes one might think it is the formula for the virtue of a real man (ἀνδρὸς ἀρετήν) (Mem. II, 6, 35). Jordović gives an exhaustive but not complete list of places where this formula is used (Jordović 2016, 35, n. 2; see more in Cyr. I, 5, 13; Anab. I, 3, 12; Ages. 11, 10; Mem. II, 9, 8).

him' (Mem. IV, 8, 11).<sup>29</sup> Given the possible connection or analogy between the justice of Socrates and the justice of Ischomachus, one might ask: Can not one find in it a reflection of some kind of order?

Following the division into the natural and artificial order implied by Ischomachus, one can say that Socrates is much less interested in the latter. Neither the *oikos* nor the *polis* as such arouse in him a desire to be their active participant (see Oec. 20, 15–16; Mem. I, 6, 15). It seems that Socrates is much more preoccupied with the study of the natural order (Mem. IV, 5, 11–12; cf. Oec. 9, 6).<sup>30</sup> Also, he definitely goes beyond the question of the sexual division of labor or the inequality of the sexes.<sup>31</sup>

Apparently, the first to suffer from the process of the investigation of the natural order are the gods or god.<sup>32</sup> For example, in the *Memorabilia*, Socrates goes as far as possible, almost substituting the gods for the earth, the Moon, and the Sun (Mem. IV, 3, 3–9; see Strauss 1972, 104–5; Pangle 2018, 185).<sup>33</sup> In the *Oeconomicus*, he is no less explicit. In particular, one can see a shift from the statement that 'seeing that we need food... [the gods] make the earth to give it...' (Mem. IV, 3, 5) to 'the food by which men live the earth gives' (Oec. 5, 2). Socrates then explicitly calls the earth 'the god' (θεός) (Oec. 5, 12) and assures that 'the god' is the source of the universal consent of men (Oec. 17, 2–3). However, because of the imperfection of 'the god', the universal consent of men is threatened even in matters directly pertaining to the earth – matters of farming (Oec. 17, 4). On the one hand, it makes 'the god' not so much the creator of the perfect natural order as part of it. On the other hand, it raises a new question about the role of the god and gods in human life. Now the gods appear to be no more than a source of partial agreement in cases where universal agreement is impossible (see Oec. 2, 5; cf. 15, 4).<sup>34</sup> As for the god, Socrates

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<sup>29</sup> Of course, it turns out to be somewhat more complicated, as Xenophon distinguishes two types of Socrates' justice: one referring to the city (the artificial order) and another referring to the natural order (Mem. IV, 4, 1 and 4, 11–12). After all, Socrates was a citizen of Athens. However, Socrates' justice in relation to the city is not decisive or philosophical.

<sup>30</sup> This is reflected in language as well. While Ischomachus divides things by 'tribes' (φυλαί), Socrates divides things by 'kinds' (γενή) (Mem. IV, 5, 11–12; cf. Pangle 2020, 206).

<sup>31</sup> This will be discussed later.

<sup>32</sup> In the words of Pangle, there is 'scientific ground for Socrates' ignoring of Fortuna, and/or the divinities to whom humans pray' (Pangle 2020, 19).

<sup>33</sup> One should never forget the charge against Socrates that led to his execution.

<sup>34</sup> By asserting the supreme role of the gods in matters of war and farming, Socrates finally removes Cristoboulus' main counterargument against farming, thus reaching an agreement with him (Oec. 5, 19–20).

uses him to point out the inequality of humans. The god who helps to achieve success in learning or in war reminds one more of natural gifts (Mem. IV, 1, 2; cf. Oec. 2, 18 and 5, 13) than of some will that can be drawn to one's side by sacrifices (Cf. Oec. 5, 43; 5, 19; 6, 1). How Socrates' conception of the natural order among humans differs from that of the perfect gentleman becomes clear from the very beginning of his conversation with Critoboulus. Already in the first chapter, he openly asserts the existence of natural or true slaves and natural or true masters (perfect gentlemen) (Oec. 1, 17–22). The latter are the men whose soul is by nature good (Oec. 11, 5; cf. Mem. IV, 1, 2); the former are those deprived of the ability to resist pleasures (even those of higher types)<sup>35</sup> and therefore prone to vice.<sup>36</sup>

If Socrates' justice is as much a part of the natural order as Ischomachus' justice is of the artificial order, it becomes clear why the part of 'accusing... those who are acting unjustly' (Oec. 11, 22) is missing in the case of Socrates. No one can successfully resist, try to get out of, or destroy the natural order. In other words, it does not need the efforts of men to preserve it. Even if someone consciously tried to harm oneself, i.e., to become corrupt, it would not change the natural order in any way, as the vicious are included in it as well as the virtuous.<sup>37</sup> This also explains why, unlike Ischomachus, Socrates cannot 'do injustice' or try to avoid harming the order and 'treat many well' to motivate others to actively participate and support the order. Since all men are embedded in or constitute the natural order, and none are or could be outside it, there are no enemies among the members of humanity, no one to whom it would be just to harm or do evil. However, in that case, the classical formula of justice, i.e., 'to do good to the friend and bad to the enemy', would turn into the formula 'to do bad to no one and good to the friend', i.e., to everyone (because the natural order is universal). This, in turn, would imply knowledge of what makes one good and what makes one bad.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, it would indicate the need for a universal artificial order in which the virtuous could help the vicious 'to live more easily' (Oec. 1, 23). To put it more clearly, it would imply the need for the perfect regime. Outside the regime, the activity of helping one's 'friends' remains partial, i.e., helping those whom the just can reach; helping one's surroundings.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Deprived of what Ischomachus calls 'the mysteries of moderation (σωφροσύνη)' (see Oec. 21, 12).

<sup>36</sup> It is amazing how Pomeroy refuses to see such openly stated views. See footnote 21.

<sup>37</sup> This conclusion would explain why, among the serious pupils of Socrates, or those who are good by nature, there are men who have deliberately sided with vice and complete apoliticism (see Mem. II, 1–13).

<sup>38</sup> In this sense, at least, the virtue of justice would be knowledge.

<sup>39</sup> This is what Socrates' activity is like as one sees it in the *Memorabilia*, *Symposium*, *Apology*, and *Oeconomicus*.

Knowledge of the natural order, i.e., knowledge of human nature and its perfection, presupposes – as has already been said – knowledge of what is harmful and what is useful for human beings as human beings. Because it is clear that true justice forbids harming men and requires benefiting them, one cannot avoid the question of the usability of things. It is this conclusion that enables Socrates to state that, on the one hand, the nobility or beauty of a thing arises from its usefulness to men (*Mem.* IV, 6, 9; *Symp.* 5, 4) and, on the other hand, that possession of a thing means only the knowledge of how to use it (*Oec.* 1, 7–15). This, however, would mean the possibility of (simultaneous or consecutive) use of the same thing by several different men, or, more simply put, the abolition of private property.<sup>40</sup> This, in turn, would lead to the abolition of wealth, as Ischomachus understands it. However, it would also mean something more, namely, the use or possession of human beings as human beings (Cf. *Oec.* 1, 13).

### Slaves and Rule

The problem of the rule in the artificial order is the problem of connecting private and common interests. To be more precise, it is the problem of connecting the goals of the individual participants of the order (whether slaves or free, men or women) and the goals of the beneficiaries of the order. Ischomachus is the master in his own household and so he formulates the goal of the domestic order: enrichment (*Oec.* 7, 10–13, 15–19, 30). He is confident that he can induce the participants of the order – his slaves and his wife – to voluntarily maintain or care for the order. In both cases, he tries to make their selfish interests overlap or include the goal of the order, i.e., enrichment or an increase in his household.

The wife, whose relationship will be discussed in the corresponding section, takes an enormous and 'rather unpleasant' (*ἀχαριστότερον*) part in the management of the household (*Oec.* 7, 37). Therefore, Ischomachus is sure that, for her to perform all her duties, she must, if successful, be promised the household. In other words, her activity turns out to be motivated by the prospect of becoming the beneficiary of the domestic order, replacing her husband in this position. He consistently leads her to this conclusion, first saying that there is no separation between his and her possessions and that the calculation of who has contributed more to their enrichment must be based not on the original shares (his wealth before the wedding and her dowry) but on who will enrich the household more (*Oec.* 7, 13).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> This is precisely the requirement that Plato poses for potential philosophers in the perfect regime (Plato, *Republic* 416d, 464b–d; *Timaeus* 17b; *Laws* 739b–d).

<sup>41</sup> Xenophon makes Socrates speak of Ischomachus' family life as a competition (*ἀγών*) (*Oec.* 7, 9). How destructive competitions are for maintaining ties within a community,

He then assures her of the equality of the sexes regarding enrichment. This means that she has an equal chance with him to possess the whole household (Oec. 7, 26–7). Then he explicitly speaks of the opportunity to lead the household and subdue Ischomachus himself (Oec. 7, 17, 32, 34, 38, 42; cf. 11, 25). In doing so, the perfect gentleman never tires of reminding her that the marker of the rightness of her actions is a pleasure.<sup>42</sup> And the wife learns this lesson (Oec. 7, 41–2), saying that ‘it is more pleasant (ἡδίων) for a sensible woman to be concerned for those of the possessions that delight her because they are her own than to neglect them’ (Oec. 9, 19).

The same, in many ways, would be true in the case of slaves. Although Ischomachus’ property certainly cannot belong to the slaves (even potentially), he sees no other way but to relate their lust for enrichment to his own. To this end, he practically makes them ‘shareholders’ of his household (Cf. Hiero 11, 13–14; Cyr.VIII, 2, 7–8; 7, 13). It is literally so in the case of ruling positions: The housekeeper is willing to increase Ischomachus’ household, as he has given her ‘a share in its [the household] prosperity’ (Oec. 9, 12), and Ischomachus shares his wealth with his stewards, making them interested in increasing it (Oec. 12, 6–7). As for the working slaves, the perfect gentleman tries not only to reward them according to their merits but to single out or elevate those who have done more for him over those who have done less. To this end, he makes the clothing and shoes of the slaves of different quality, distributing them accordingly (Oec. 13, 10). That said, Ischomachus does not doubt that the pleasure he gives to the slaves through this approach<sup>43</sup> stems from their greed (φιλοκέρδεια) (Oec. 12, 15 and 14, 7). However, he is sure that the best of the slaves are subject to a higher source of pleasure – ambition (φιλοτιμία). This means that they crave recognition of their merits or praise and, because of this lust, deserve the title of free (ἐλεύθερος) or perfect gentleman (καλὸς κάγαθός) (Oec. 9, 13; 13, 9 and 12; 14, 9–10). Therefore, Ischomachus considers it necessary to treat, as free men, the slaves who are useful to the order.

Although he is confident that his actions benefit the ruled (Oec. 13, 9), he does see some problems. First, not all the slaves in general are able to perceive the opportunity that Ischomachus offers to integrate themselves into the order. Apparently, some among them are deprived of even the parts of self-control that the

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Xenophon shows in the *Cyropaedia* (see Ambler 2001, 17–18; Illaruga 2020, 203, 205) and the *Lacedaimonion Politeia* (see Mishurin 2021).

<sup>42</sup> Ischomachus apparently adopted the doctrine of pleasure from his father (see Oec. 20, 23–5).

<sup>43</sup> The idea that the result of actions (reward) must correspond to the effort (labor) seems to be the lesson in the justice of the earth as distinguished from the justice of Socrates and the justice of Ischomachus (see Oec. 5, 12; cf. 20, 14).

housekeeper and stewards should possess.<sup>44</sup> Second, the usage of the slaves' greed might send this quality out of control and encourage them to steal (Oec. 14, 8). Third, the same is true of ambition; it too can get out of control by causing the stewards to obey 'flattery or some other favor' (Oec. 13, 12) and thereby lead them away from the purpose of the order.

To combat these problems of ruling, the perfect gentleman resorts to two means of varying power, working, as it seems, on the same principle of reliance on self-interest. Those who accept the coincidence of their goals with the purpose of the order must be rewarded, i.e., must enjoy the satisfaction of their greed or ambition. Those who do not accept this coincidence and (consciously or not) act against the order, thereby committing injustice, should receive the opposite of pleasure; they should be punished. In other words, domination or rule must be directly related to the ability to inflict on men what they perceive as harmful (to deprive them of things and honor).<sup>45</sup>

The first of such means is laws. Ischomachus offers assurance that in acting as a lawgiver for his own household, he managed, as it seems at first sight, to correct the error of all the Greek lawmakers. They, in making laws, thought only of those 'who go wrong' (Oec. 14, 4–7). Therefore, in accordance with his own principles, Ischomachus had to supplement the Greek laws with the Persian laws. They 'not only punish those who act unjustly, but... also benefit the just' by enriching them (Oec. 14, 7). However, if the Persian or king's laws punish and reward, and the Greek laws only punish, it would have to be admitted that it is the first ones that Ischomachus takes as the basis for his house. The Greek laws merely supplement the Persian. But supplement in what? Judging by the description given by the householder, the answer is in the severity of punishment. According to him, in Athens, in contrast to Persia, resistance during the prevention or punishment of a crime is punishable by death (Oec. 14, 5). Does Ischomachus think that there is no death penalty in Persia, or that it is imposed only for treason against the king but in no way for resisting the law enforcement activities of the authorities? (Cf. Cyr. III, 1, 12; Anab. I, 1, 7; 2, 20; Hellen. II, 1, 8). In any case, Ischomachus' notion of the Persian laws that he supposedly imitates is hardly adequate (see Cyr. I, 2, 3; II, 4, 10; VII, 2, 4).

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<sup>44</sup> For the housekeeper, it is self-control in food, wine, sleep, and sex (as a woman, she is unable to endure labor and heat and cold and, therefore, is locked in the house) (Oec., 9, 11). For the stewards, it is self-control in wine, sleep, and sex (Oec. 12, 11–14) (as men, they are able to endure labor and heat and cold by default (Oec. 7, 23)).

<sup>45</sup> Poverty and dishonor, or a bad reputation, are precisely what Ischomachus sees as the proof of man's wickedness (Oec. 20, 15). And this is exactly the situation in which Socrates finds himself at the time of his conversation with the perfect gentleman (Oec. 11, 3).

However, Ischomachus thinks that the laws alone are not enough, as their punishments and rewards are concerned only with greed (*φιλοκέρδεια*). He counts much more on, and values much more highly, ambition, which the laws cannot satisfy or punish (Oec. 14, 9–10; 13, 9; 12, 16). Therefore, he is forced to apply a second, far more serious means, which he calls ‘the master’s eye’ (Oec. 12, 20). Only the ultimate beneficiary of the order (as opposed to its creator, i.e., the lawmaker) can determine and dispense the most substantial rewards and punishments; only he can treat slaves as free men and his wife as an equal partner; only in his presence can everybody be fully ‘willing to toil or risk danger’ (Oec. 21, 4; 6, 7; 14, 10; cf. Cyr. V, 3, 48; VIII, 1, 16 and 39). Without him who determines the purpose of the order, all its participants are more likely to oppose it with their own interests.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps it is this problem that causes Ischomachus to correct himself at the end of his conversation with Socrates and say that rewards and punishments might not lead to the desired result; that, in fact, rule over men – that is to say, men who justly or voluntarily maintain the order – depends only on their master, who is capable not only of using ambition but also of instilling it (Oec. 21, 6–10).

As has already been said, for Socrates, who points to the theory of natural slavery in the *Oeconomicus*, slaves by nature are those who are unable to overcome their vices (Oec. 1, 22; cf. Mem. IV, 5, 2–5). This refers not only to those who have proved incapable of self-control<sup>47</sup> but also to those who have succumbed to greed (*φιλοκέρδεια*) and ambition (*φιλοτιμία*) (Oec. 1, 22). It means those who act with the orientation of pleasure (Oec. 1, 20) and thereby injure their body and soul, deepening their vices in the process (Oec. 1, 13). Yet, does not Ischomachus himself have ‘some foolish and expensive ambitions’ (*φιλοτιμιῶν τινων μώρων και δαπανηρῶν*)? Does he not want to be rich so that he can take pleasure in honoring the gods, helping his friends, and supplying the city with money (Oec. 11, 9)? Does not his

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<sup>46</sup> In this sense, Ischomachus is a true king (Cf. Strauss 2016, 110, 141) and the fate of his household echoes that of the Persian empire as described by Xenophon. The emphasis on ambition, on the need to distinguish oneself, to be the best just in the eyes of the king or master, coupled with an actively fostered rivalry among subjects or slaves, leaves no bond but only mutual hatred between them after the death of the one who rewarded them. Here, Ischomachus (or the Persian king, as he puts it) is right – only ‘the master’s eye’ or ‘the seeing law’ (Cyr. VIII, 1, 22 and 2, 27) can ‘improve’ the slaves (see Tamiolaki 2012, 572–7; Ambler 2006, 127; Bartlett 2015, 151, 152; cf. Oec. 13, 10–12; 21, 10).

<sup>47</sup> Although, as has already been shown, nobody in the household of Ischomachus fully possess self-control (*ἐγκράτεια*). See footnote 44.



ambition go so far that he is even willing to harm himself, just to preserve his reputation (Oec. 12,1–12)?<sup>48</sup> However, it would mean that in the eyes of Socrates, the perfect gentleman Ischomachus belongs to the ranks of the slaves; that Socrates' views – directly in opposition to those of the master – imply treating (formally) free men as slaves.

If pleasure really is always, or almost always, the marker of vice, then the rule over men cannot rely on it. Otherwise, the rule would be an act of corruption. It would actively make humans worse by fomenting their vices. It would harm them and therefore be an act of true injustice. Genuine rule, therefore, obviously being subjected to or consistent with justice, must be exclusively beneficial to the ruled (Oec. 1, 23; Mem. IV, 1, 2 and 2, 11). This means that genuine rule must rely on knowledge, as the ruler must know what the benefit of the ruled is and be guided by this knowledge. Of course, this makes ruling impersonal (Oec. 1, 3–4) due to the universal character of knowledge (Pangle 2020, 11). There is no, and cannot be any, difference between the slaves as slaves regardless of their formal status – whether they are formally slaves, formally free, formally metics, 'friends', or 'enemies'. Moreover, because the natural order cannot be destroyed, it makes no sense to seek voluntary submission on the part of the slaves for the sake of its preservation. Voluntary submission is now nothing more than a convenience that can be achieved by, among other things, mere deception (Oec. 5, 14–16; cf. Cyr. I, 6, 19 and VII, 1, 18; Mem. IV, 2, 17).<sup>49</sup> This is especially true given that men tend to listen to the best, the 'knowers' or those who promise them happiness (Mem. III, 3, 9; 9, 11; 2, 2–4; cf. IV, 1, 2; Hell. VII, 3, 1).<sup>50</sup>

The problem of ruling, as Socrates sees it, lies not in its goals or methods but in its principle. It seems that the virtue of justice itself bears a paradox, for it obliges the best (the true or natural masters) to help the worst (the true or natural slaves). To put this problem in somewhat simpler terms: Can virtue stem from the same grounds as vice?<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> There is a clear connection between the public order (*polis*) and ambition. Socrates repeats more than once that the Athenians surpass all other nations in ambition (*φιλοτιμία*) (see Mem. III, 3, 13 and 5, 3). The same is true of Plato: All Athenians care about 'reputation and honor' (*δόξης και τιμῆς*) (Plato, *Apology*, 29e), for the city demands it (Plato, *Apology*, 35a–b).

<sup>49</sup> Ischomachus denies lying to slaves as virtually impossible (Oec. 10, 8).

<sup>50</sup> In this sense, the successful rule of a tyrant is hardly different from the successful rule of a king, and legitimate rule from illegitimate rule: 'to rule human beings means to serve them' (Strauss 2010, 198; cf. Hiero 9–11).

<sup>51</sup> Plato also sees this problem, and his proposed solution is also questionable (see Plato, *Republic*, 346e–347a).

### Land and Leisure

As befits a rich citizen, Ischomachus owns a considerable amount of land. Both the stewards and his other slaves are engaged mainly in cultivating the land (Oec. 12, 2). Because cultivation of the land is the main source of Ischomachus' wealth, and he is successfully engaged in it (Oec. 20, 22–5), he must be the perfect expert in it (Cf. Oec. 11, 16) and, simultaneously, the perfect teacher of it (Oec. 12, 4 and 18). However, Ischomachus renounces this title. He offers assurance that farming is the only occupation that has no theory and whose teaching does not require practice but only observation and common sense (Oec. 15, 10). The farmer even goes so far as to declare farming an embodiment of philanthropy (φιλανθρωπία) (Oec. 15, 4; 19, 17). That said, he considers philanthropy to be something supremely noble (γενναιοτάτη); he links philanthropy and nobility so strongly that they almost become interchangeable (Cf. Oec. 18, 10 and 19, 17).<sup>52</sup> Also, in saying that it is noble (γενναῖος), he implies that farming is 'the most beneficial and pleasant to do, the noblest and most beloved of gods and humans, and in addition, the easiest to learn' (Oec. 15, 4). Farming makes men noble to the utmost (γενναιότατος) because it does not enable them to conceal their activity. On the contrary, it directly links usefulness (harvest), nobility (proper planting) (Oec. 4, 21), and pleasure. For the farmer who 'most beautifully' (κάλλιστα) plants his plants 'would be extremely pleased' (μάλλιστ' ἂν ἤδοιτο) for others to observe him (Oec. 15, 11–12; cf. 20, 13). However, later, Ischomachus would reduce the claim of nobility or philanthropy of farming only to the ease of learning it (Oec. 18, 10 and 19, 17–18).<sup>53</sup>

Farming has no theory because what should be its theory is replaced by observation and common sense. Observation of nature, for example, reveals the quality of the soil (Oec. 16, 3–8), the change of the seasons (Oec. 16, 12), the competition between plants for nutrition (Oec. 16, 14), the difference between wet soil and dry soil (Oec. 19, 6), the necessary conditions for plants to flourish (Oec. 19, 18–19), etc.; the observation of other farmers' practices enables an observer to accumulate the experience of previous generations (Oec. 17, 2) and thus to understand the use of cattle in farming (Oec. 18, 3–4), the depth of digging holes for planting trees (Oec.

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<sup>52</sup> Ischomachus even calls the animals noble, i.e., philanthropic (Oec. 15, 4; cf. Peri Hipp. 2, 3; Cyn. 3, 9 and 6, 25). However, he does not say anything about philanthropy of the gods, as this would lead him to inappropriate conclusions (see Mem. IV, 3, 5–8 and I, 2, 60; Cyr. I, 2, 1 and 4, 1; IV, 2, 10; VIII, 2, 1; cf. Cyr. III, 7, 25 and 4, 7–8).

<sup>53</sup> He will also completely ignore the question of why it is 'most beloved' (προσφιλέστατος) by the gods and men.

19, 3–5), the methods of planting olive trees (Oec. 19, 13–14), etc.<sup>54</sup> Common sense, on the other hand, allows one to draw conclusions about what he has not yet seen – for example, when and how to eliminate weeds (Oec. 16, 14–15), which kind of soil requires more seed (Oec. 17, 8–11), when to take care of the shoots (Oec. 17, 13), how to cut the grain (Oec. 18, 1–3), how to winnow (Oec. 18, 6–7), etc. The qualification for successful farming therefore is not knowledge, as anyone could observe and have the common sense to know what to do and what not to do (Oec. 20, 3). Rather, it is care (ἐπιμέλεια). Thus, the presence or absence of care (Oec. 20, 4–6) seems to be dictated only by the presence or absence of self-control (ἐγκράτεια) (Oec. 12, 10–14) and partial viciousness, i.e., greed or ambition (Oec. 12, 15–16; 13, 9 and 12; 14, 9–10; cf. 11, 9 and 20, 22–5).

From the point of view of Ischomachus, only one vocation in the world is as noble or philanthropic as farming, and that is warfare (Oec. 20, 6–10).<sup>55</sup> Success in farming and warfare – or, rather, the nobility of that success<sup>56</sup> – is one of the most important tasks of a perfect gentleman. Yet, there are others as well. On the one hand, he speaks of health and bodily strength (Cf. Mem. IV, 7, 9), which come from engaging in farming and seem to be necessary for engaging in warfare. On the other hand, he speaks of 'honor in the city, [and] good will among friends' (Oec. 11, 8; cf. 2, 5–6). They are evidently achieved through wealth, the sources of which must lie in farming and warfare. One would think that the whole activity of Ischomachus (inasmuch as, caring for his reputation, he gives an account of it) lies in enrichment through farming and preparation for war (Oec. 11, 14–18).<sup>57</sup> That said, it seems that Ischomachus devotes the minimum of his time to farming or managing the farming slaves, as well as to preparing for war (horsemanship); activities in both occur

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<sup>54</sup> It seems that in his idealistic portrayal of farming, Ischomachus only once stumbles over the necessity of having practical experience of sowing (Oec. 17, 7).

<sup>55</sup> Among other things, farming and warfare are also connected by the art of ruling (Oec. 21, 2–11).

<sup>56</sup> He literally speaks of 'noble (κάλη) safety in war, and noble (καλῶς) increase of riches' (Oec. 11, 8).

<sup>57</sup> Socrates, however, doubts the success of the perfect gentleman. Although he says 'we see (ὁρῶμεν) you generally healthy and strong', merely indicating the possibility of concealing the truth about his health (see Oec. 10, 4–8), Socrates immediately adds 'we know you are spoken (λεγόμενον) of as one of the most skilled in horsemanship and one of the very rich' (emphasis added) (Oec. 11, 20). Apparently, the second qualification is even more dubious than the first (see Buzzetti 2014, 13–15).

even before breakfast (Oec. 11, 8)<sup>58</sup> and only if Ischomachus has no other, more important business (Oec. 11, 14–15). The latter occupy his entire day<sup>59</sup>, so much so that he is completely deprived of leisure (Oec. 7, 1–2; Nee 2009, 267).<sup>60</sup>

Although Socrates seems to have doubts about the nobility of farming, he never says so directly.<sup>61</sup> And even though he states that this ‘kind of work *seemed* to be at once the easiest to learn and the most pleasant to work at’ (emphasis added) (Oec. 6, 9), there are things that prevent one from believing this statement. First, Socrates says this to Critoboulus: The son of a farmer certainly knows farming better than Socrates. Second, observing the practice of others as a method of learning is suitable for many arts and is not exclusive to farming (see Oec. 2, 16–18; cf. 3, 4–9).<sup>62</sup> Third, Socrates is silent on the fact that the earth teaches farming.<sup>63</sup> While farming and warfare are indeed connected, they are certainly not connected through their philanthropy (φιλανθρωπία). Socrates is certain that warfare must be learned (Mem. III, 1–4; cf. Cyr. I, 6, 12–15). However, he gives the impression that farming and warfare are similar or noble, arguing that the noble (καλόν) is associated with leisure (σχολή) and care (ἐπιμέλεια) for friends and the city (Oec. 4, 3).<sup>64</sup> This description of the noble refers so obviously to warfare that Socrates first must conflate it with farming, declaring that both are practiced by the Persian king (Oec. 4, 4–12), and then assure that the life of a Greek farmer-warrior is full of leisure (Oec. 5, 8–11). Leisure, which consists of taking ‘warm baths’ (cf. Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 1043) in the winter and spending ‘the summer more pleasantly... amid waters and breezes and shade’ (Oec. 5, 9) instead of working ‘with the team in the middle of

<sup>58</sup> In this, too, Ischomachus tries to imitate the Persian king and the customs of Persia (Oec. 4, 24; cf. Cyr. II, 1, 29).

<sup>59</sup> Even now, Ischomachus will spend the whole day in the city (Oec. 7, 1; 12, 1).

<sup>60</sup> This is a problem because leisure was seen as *the* aristocratic trait (Raaflaub 1983, 529–30; Jonstone 1994, 222; Alvey 2011, 720).

<sup>61</sup> Socrates doubles down on doubts about the nobility of farming, stating of the Persian king that ‘*they say* (φασιν) he *believes* (ἠγούμενον) farming and the art of war are among the noblest and most necessary concerns, and concerns himself emphatically with both of them’ (emphasis added) (Oec. 4, 4). He says, then, that ‘for the gentleman (ἀνδρὶ καλῷ τε κάγαθῷ) the best (κρατίστην) work and knowledge is farming’ (Oec. 6, 8). However, it is not Socrates but Critoboulus who concludes that ‘farming is indeed the most beautiful and most noble and most pleasant (κάλλιστόν τε καὶ ἄριστον καὶ ἡδιστόν) way to make a living’ (Oec. 6, 11).

<sup>62</sup> In the *Memorabilia*, Xenophon states that Socrates believed it was ‘easy to learn’ (ῥάδιον μαθεῖν) geometry and astronomy (Mem. IV, 7, 2 and 4).

<sup>63</sup> Socrates assures that the earth ‘teaches’ only justice (Oec. 5, 12–13; cf. 20, 15).

<sup>64</sup> Thereby expressing ‘the aristocratic ideal of leisure’ (Raaflaub 1983, 531), inaccessible to the vast majority of Athenian citizens.

the summer and in the middle of the day' (Oec. 16, 14), as Ischomachus says. Leisure, which turns the obligatory exercise of horse-riding into hunting with dogs (Cf. Oec. 11, 14; 5, 6; see Cyr. VIII, 1, 34–9). Leisure, which alone can pleasure one's friends (Oec. 5, 10; cf. 15, 4). Leisure for which alone the good men wage wars.<sup>65</sup>

At the same time, however, Socrates implies the dubiousness of the connection between farming, warfare, and leisure. Speaking of the Persian king as the richest man in the world (Oec. 4, 4; cf. Strauss 1998, 113–4) and therefore the example of a successful economist, the philosopher talks of two different Cyruses (Oec. 4, 16; see Pomeroy 1994, 248–50). One of the reasons for the tacit substitution of Cyrus the Great for Cyrus the Younger in the course of the conversation seems to lie in the fact that Persia (as Socrates describes it to Critoboulus) employs the philosophical principle 'one soul – one job' (Cf. Cyr. VIII, 2, 5; Plato, *Republic*, 370c, 423d): The military administration is separated from the civil (Oec. 4, 5–8 and 15). For this reason, the Greek farmer-warriors turn out to be worse than professional warriors in matters of war and worse than professional farmers in matters of farming (Oec. 5, 13).<sup>66</sup> However, the same must be true of the king. Although Cyrus says in Socrates' account that he is both a warrior and a farmer (Oec. 4, 16), Xenophon shows that this is not true. Cyrus the Great, the warrior-king, successful invader of foreign lands, and creator of the Persian empire, had gardens (παράδεισος) in his dominions. Yet, they were full not so much of plants as of beasts used for hunting (Cyr. I, 3, 14 and 4, 5; VIII, 1, 38 and 6, 12). Whereas Cyrus the Younger is a farmer-king, busy beautifying his gardens and planting plants there (Oec. 4, 21–4),<sup>67</sup> he is such a poor warrior that he dies in the first major battle of his campaign against his brother (Oec. 4, 19; cf. *Anab.* I, 8, 12–27).

However, leisure begins where warfare and farming end (Cf. Oec. 4, 8–10). Still, for Ischomachus, as a man who cares about his reputation and wealth, 'warfare' and 'farming' never end (Oec. 20, 26). As he is convinced that care (ἐπιμέλεια) is the only quality distinguishing a good warrior, good farmer, and good man. He believes that success proves the goodness of his soul (Oec. 20, 14–15). Socrates agrees: Care (ἐπιμέλεια) does lead to success but only to successful enrichment (Oec. 2, 16–18).

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<sup>65</sup> Cyrus clearly sees the limits of a successful war, declaring: 'If great success is to have such consequences that a man is not able to have some leisure for himself or time to enjoy himself with his friends, I am ready to bid farewell to that sort of happiness' (Cyr. VII, 5, 42; cf. VII, 5, 54 and VIII, 1, 12–13).

<sup>66</sup> Ischomachus, therefore, as befits a farmer-warrior, must be an under-warrior (he does not hunt but merely rides a horse) and an under-farmer (he does not plant crops himself but only occasionally watches his slaves do so) (Oec. 11, 14–18).

<sup>67</sup> Socrates clearly distorts this image. In the *Anabasis*, Xenophon says that Cyrus the Younger used at least one garden for hunting (*Anab.* I, 2, 7).

However, not only is wealth unrelated to the goodness of the soul (Oec. 11, 3–6) but, on the contrary, its pursuit presupposes the viciousness of the pursuer. Particularly because vice always promises pleasure (Oec. 1, 19–20) and, through it, harms the soul of its bearer (Oec. 1, 13). In other words, from Socrates' point of view, it is vice that makes Ischomachus enrich himself, makes him engage in 'farming', thereby completely depriving him of leisure.

### Horses and Enrichment

Ischomachus, like the earth, does not hide the truth. The desire for the satisfaction of his own ambition (*φιλοτιμία*) drives him to enrichment – and not every kind of enrichment but only that which, from the city's point of view, corresponds to a decent man, i.e., enrichment 'by noble and just means' (Oec. 7, 15; cf. 11, 8 and 14, 8–9; Cyr. VIII, 2, 23). And the perfect gentleman does believe that he is a participant in the order (*polis*) and voluntarily maintains it, taking pleasure both in his activity (Oec. 20, 22–6) and in its result (Oec. 11, 9). What remains unclear, however, is the question of who is the beneficiary of this order. In other words, on whom does the reward and punishment for Ischomachus depend? He seems to think it is the gods (Oec. 11, 8), and yet, his fame clearly depends on other participants of the order: He is called the perfect gentleman 'by everyone – by men and women, foreigners and townsmen alike' (Oec. 6, 17; cf. 2, 5 and 17, 9). However it may be, Ischomachus understands his position within the order – he is not its ultimate beneficiary, and any attempt to become one would make him a criminal deserving of punishment rather than the 'name of gentleman' (Cf. Oec. 14, 8). Moreover, the city is suspicious of those who, while being rich and just, are nevertheless not bound to the order. Artisans, at any moment, can leave the city, refusing to defend it (Oec. 4, 2–3). At the end of the day, the main reason to defend the city in any situation is the impossibility of leaving it, the impossibility of taking one's possessions and fleeing. However, the only serious form of immovable property is land. This is why the city encourages and exalts only the farmers.<sup>68</sup>

Yet, farming itself is not a very profitable business. That is why Ischomachus' father (and, after him, Ischomachus as well) had to resort to innovation. To enrich himself, he added the trade of land to farming (Oec. 20, 22–6). Ischomachus is not

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<sup>68</sup>Therefore, there is 'an intrinsic contradiction between being a citizen and practicing a banausic craft' (Cartledge 2002, 164; cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1277b33–1278a13). At the same time, there is a clear connection between being a good citizen and owning a piece of land (Crowley 2020, 33; Rhodes 2006, 167). Since the landowner 'is the only one disposed to defend the land, is sensible in political affairs, and practices an irreproachable way of life' (Gallego 2007, 8; cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1318b9–16).

personally engaged in farming because he has much more important (i.e., profitable) activities, namely, buying and selling plots of land. He buys neglected plots, refines them through the labor of his slaves, thereby making them 'worth many times their old value', and then sells them, earning the coveted profit.<sup>69</sup> The reason why Ischomachus thinks this is possible is because the earth can be improved. Ischomachus never speaks of improving human beings,<sup>70</sup> not even in the case of children, whom he looks upon either as part of his household (Oec. 7, 19) or as allies (Oec. 7, 12). And although he considers it possible to make better (βελτίων) things (κτῆμα) and animals (θρέμμα),<sup>71</sup> the perfect gentleman still believes that there is no 'greater improvement than inactive land when it becomes fertile' (Oec. 20, 23). This is exactly what should justify the vocation of land-trading as the most efficient one, for Ischomachus believes that he knows what enrichment is; his formula is 'to produce a surplus over the expenditures' (see Oec. 20, 21 and 21, 9). And his approach to its realization consists of a continual increase in income. Ischomachus' ambition requires him to provide material assistance to the city (and a great one) (Oec. 2, 5–6; cf. Hiero 4, 8–9; Mem. IV, 2, 38); requires him to maintain his reputation, continue to be encouraged by the city, work constantly, and engage in effective (and encouraged) enrichment without having time for anything else (Cf. Hiero 4, 29–32). In addition, Ischomachus defines poverty (πενία) as 'not to have a thing to use when it is needed' (Oec. 8, 2). And, given the needs of the perfect gentleman, his household must be and is full of things and men.

Socrates seems to agree with Ischomachus both on the definition of enrichment and on the definition of poverty (Oec. 11, 10; cf. 1, 4). However, his attitude or approach to the attainment of wealth and the avoidance of poverty (Oec. 2, 10) is directly opposite to that of Ischomachus. To make income exceed expenditure, Socrates reduces his expenditure, and to have everything he needs at hand, he reduces his needs (Mem. I, 6, 10; cf. Symp. 4, 34–45). This is what enables him, on the one

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<sup>69</sup> It is a great problem because, from honored by men and the city patriot-farmer (Oec. 4, 4–7; 6, 9–10), spurred by the city, Ischomachus turns into a merchant, capable of taking his money at any moment and leaving the city in case of danger. That is to say, he actually engages in an activity that is shameful or unacceptable for a good man (see Aristotle, *Politics*, 1328b33–41; cf. Dover 1974, 111; Pomeroy 1994, 341).

<sup>70</sup> In contrast to Socrates (Oec. 1, 23 and 3, 10). One is torn between the impression that, for the perfect gentleman, humans have no intrinsic value or the impression that he does not think that humans are significantly different from animals. In any case, the value of human beings arises or manifests itself only in their relationship to and connection with the order.

<sup>71</sup> Yet, Ischomachus never speaks of the improvement of animals, even when he talks about the horse (see Oec. 11, 15–18; 12, 20 and 20, 13).

hand, to assert his wealth (Oec. 2, 2 and 4), and, on the other hand, to refuse the anonymous accusers in acknowledgment of his poverty (Oec. 11, 3). These two facts prompt the conclusion that Socrates was an economist or practiced economics in the conventional sense of the word, though in a completely nonconventional way (Cf. Strauss 2016, 100; Strauss 1998, 103, 191). This approach to understanding enrichment and poverty, as well as the absence of 'foolish and expensive ambitions' (Oec. 1, 22), i.e., more broadly speaking, viciousness, exempt Socrates from having to engage in 'farming' as a profitable and city-encouraged activity.

Farming, on the other hand, as the practice of 'improving' the earth, is a meaningless endeavor if one follows the teaching of Ischomachus. Because every plot of land can or cannot already produce plants and trees (Oec. 16, 15 and 20, 13), 'there is no advantage in fighting against the god. For he [the farmer] wouldn't obtain more of the necessary things by sowing and planting what he himself needs rather than what the earth is pleased to bring forth and nourish' (Oec. 16, 3). This means that the farmer, by means of labor, could increase the value of a plot of land by refining a neglected plot but is unable to improve it. This, of course, would again point to the problem of the discrepancy between the conventional valuation of goodness or success and the natural valuation of it (Cf. Oec. 11, 5–6).

However, Socrates seems to think that Ischomachus is wrong not only in this,<sup>72</sup> as he speaks not of the improvement of the earth but of the possibilities of improving horses (and dogs) and men (Oec. 1, 23 and 3, 10).<sup>73</sup> Men and horses are similar in many ways. First, they can be improved by training (Oec. 3, 10; Symp. 2, 10; Mem. III, 2–5 and IV, 4, 5; Peri Hipp. 8). Second, they may possess 'a soul by nature good' (τὴν ψυχὴν φύσει ἀγαθὴν) (Oec. 11, 5; Mem. IV, 1, 3). Third, deprived of proper or good education, they are rather dangerous and capable of harming others (Oec. IV, 1, 3; Hiero 6, 15). Fourth, improper handling of them can be harmful, while correct handling (i.e., based on knowledge) must lead to benefit (Oec. 1, 8; Mem. II, 3, 7 and 6,

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<sup>72</sup> After all, while saying that the earth cannot be improved, Ischomachus nevertheless, at some point, begins to talk about fertilizers (Oec. 20, 10), soil-cleansing, and lowering soil's salinity (Oec. 20, 12). Knowing this, it is hard not to agree that Ischomachus really has knowledge of farming. At the same time, it casts a shadow on his teaching on the philanthropy and nobility of this vocation.

<sup>73</sup> One gets the impression that, as with the guardians-dogs in the case of Plato (Plato, *Republic*, 375a–376c, 404a, 416a–b, 451c–d; cf. Bloom 1991, 350–351; Saxonhouse 1978, 898–9), Xenophon, speaking of dogs and horses, also implies only kinds or groupings of humans (there are at least two examples of human dogs in the *Memorabilia* (Mem. II, 7 and 9); in the *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus equates the behavior of eunuchs and geldings (Cyr. VII, 5, 62–4). It might help explain, for example, why *On Hunting*, which begins as a treatise on the training of dogs, ends with a call for the training of young men (Cyn. 12–13).



7). Finally, both horses and men are the property of one who can benefit from them (especially through training, i.e., improvement) (Oec. 2, 11; Mem. IV, 1, 2).<sup>74</sup>

As has been said before, defining property as something useful and excluding the harmful from it certainly raises the question of gaining knowledge as the primary mean of enrichment (Strauss 1998, 95–6; Strauss 2016, 46; Ambler 2006, 108; Pangle 2020 17; Johnson 2021, 232). It is not novel to see human beings as property. But Socrates' economic teaching clearly transcends the formal framework established by Athenian laws. Starting from Theodote's teaching on friends as a form of property (Mem. III, 11, 4–5) and practicing it on his own (Oec. 2, 8), Socrates gradually (Mem. II, 4 and 5) extends it, first to enemies (Oec. 1, 14–15) and then to all humans in general (Oec. 1, 22–3). Provided that most men are incapable of enrichment due to their corruption (Oec. 1, 17–22), they must be deprived of false – harmful to themselves and others – property (Cf. Cyr. I, 6, 31–3). Yet, this conclusion clearly leads to another: Not only war and tyranny now can or should be parts of economics (Oec. 1, 15; Aristotle, *Politics*, 1256b23–6; see Strauss 1998, 96; Strauss 2016, 45–6, 70; Ambler 2006, 109; Pangle 2020, 15) but this understanding of economics has no connection whatsoever to the law of the city (and the gods of the city), to the artificial order.<sup>75</sup> On the contrary, one could use the city for his own benefit and therefore find himself owning it – thus, it might seem, transcending it.

### Wife and Education

Apart from Ischomachus, the only other free human in his household is his wife. This determines the fact that his rule over her, as it seems at first glance, cannot be directly linked to rewards and punishments from Ischomachus. Nor does her position as a woman allow her to enjoy rewards and fear punishments from the *polis*, as she belongs exclusively to the *oikos* (Oec. 7, 22–5, 30, 33 and 9, 15).<sup>76</sup> This makes her position dubious, requiring an explanation of how she relates to Ischomachus.

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<sup>74</sup> One must always remember that the key characteristic of horses (and dogs) here is that they cannot own property (see Oec. 11, 4–5). It once again is reminiscent of the guardians-dogs of Plato and the slaves of Cyrus.

<sup>75</sup> An example of this can be found in Socrates' application of his economics ('friends are money' (Strauss 1998, 95; Strauss 2016, 45)) during the trial. Xenophon (as well as Plato) demonstrates the possibility of paying Socrates' fine by others (Xenophon, *Apology* 23; Plato, *Apology*, 38b), thereby *de facto* leaving Socrates unpunished or punishing others (potential fine payers) instead of him.

<sup>76</sup> In the *Oeconomicus*, ambition (*φιλοτιμία*) belongs only to men: Cyrus the Younger (Oec.4, 24), Ischomachus, and some of his slaves (Oec. 14, 10). The fact that women, as belonging to the domestic order, care little for reputation in the city seems to be confirmed by the historical Chrysilas.

After all, is she not just ‘a guardian of the laws’ (νομοφύλαξ) or ‘a commandant of a garrison’ (φρούραρχος) (Oec. 9, 15; cf. 4, 7 and 10), that is to say, no king, no master of the household? Can she really be the beneficiary and therefore the master of the household order? At any rate, it seems that the problematic nature of her position in the *oikos* reflects the more serious theoretical problem of the relationship between the sexes. This means that before one can understand what position she, as a wife, can occupy in the household of Ischomachus, one must understand what position she, as a woman, occupies in the world.

Both of these questions Ischomachus attempts to answer through his innovative teaching (Pomeroy 1994, 281–2). The teaching begins by postulating the relative inequality of the sexes. Of course, men and women are not equal in their abilities because they are condemned to different types of activities. Man possesses parts of self-control (ἐγκράτεια): the ability to endure heat and cold and labor and the courage (θράσος)<sup>77</sup> to work outside the house. Meanwhile, woman, from the point of view of the perfect gentleman, is condemned forever, or almost forever (Oec. 7, 30; cf. 7, 38), to be in the house, and is deprived of these qualities. Nevertheless, having said this, Ischomachus then corrects himself by saying that woman and man are equal when it comes to self-control (ἐγκράτεια) (Oec. 7, 27). Ischomachus seems to exaggerate, as the equality in self-control he speaks of precisely excludes the male part of its list, leaving only self-control in food, wine, sleep, and sex. This is confirmed by the housekeeper’s list of self-control (Oec. 9, 11). The only things in which man and woman are truly equal are memory (μνήμη) and care (ἐπιμέλεια) (Oec. 7, 26). The apparent god-given superiority of man over woman is marked by the fact that he alone can be punished for violating his duties and turning to ‘the woman’s works’ (Oec. 7, 31).

However, postulating inequality within the family, as previously stated, would lead the wife to inactivity, rendering her useless, if not harmful, to the household. Therefore, Ischomachus takes it upon himself to train the wife further. One gets the impression that, for Ischomachus, education is achieved by the same stick and carrot method by which ruling is achieved (Oec. 13, 6 and 12). This means that, to make the wife useful and subservient, Ischomachus is only going to use words to convince her that in the course of performing her duties, she will enjoy his words. And since the purpose of the perfect gentleman is dictated by his own (brought up in him by his father) (Oec. 20, 22–3) corruption, his training must also make his wife, who is to serve this purpose, corrupted. Thus, he will educate her by fomenting the desires that he himself has awakened when he explained to her the inequality of the sexes.

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<sup>77</sup> See footnote 22.

This inequality is the main obstacle to her becoming the beneficiary of the domestic order (she will never become the beneficiary of the public order). However, to become the head of the household, she must be able to become equal to the man, to overcome the natural inequality of the sexes and enter into direct competition with her husband for rule over the household. To this end, Ischomachus explains to her that their household belongs to both of them (Oec. 7, 11–12) and that their inherently unequal participation in the household (his wealth clearly exceeds her dowry) can be equalized and even completely overturned by her own efforts to enrich it (Oec. 7, 13).<sup>78</sup> Thus, she can, and even must, replace her husband in the household by becoming ‘the leader of the bees’ (ἡ τῶν μελιττῶν ἡγεμῶν),<sup>79</sup> ruling the slaves through rewards and punishments (Oec. 9, 15 and 7, 41), training them (Oec. 7, 41), and seeking their loyalty by caring for them (Oec. 7, 37).<sup>80</sup> The latter might displease her. However, she denies it, revealing ‘masculine intelligence’: The undeserved and unequal gratification of others’ selfishness encourages men to treat their benefactors better. She must also take care of things because they all belong to her as the mistress (or master) of the household (Oec. 9, 16–17). Therefore, she takes pleasure in the fact of possessing them (Oec. 9, 29).<sup>81</sup> Finally, Ischomachus goes so far as to state that the wife can manifest not only greed but also ambition. He is sure that ‘the most pleasant thing of all’ (τὸ πάντων ἡδιστον) (Oec. 7, 42) is to win the competition (ἀγών) with him (Oec. 7, 9) and gain superiority over him (Cf. Oec. 11, 25) and therefore respect (τιμῆ) in the household (Oec. 7, 42).<sup>82</sup>

The education of Ischomachus, one might say, is non-discriminatory. The training of the wife is no different from the training of the slaves (Cf. Oec. 13, 5 and 12, 15–16) and the training of Ischomachus himself (Oec. 20, 20–3). As the slaves must be

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<sup>78</sup> Because, as has already been said, Ischomachus thinks that enrichment depends on care (ἐπιμέλεια), and then it comes to care that men and women are equal (Oec. 7, 26).

<sup>79</sup> ‘The image of queen bee in Greek literature is highly political’ (Lu 2011, 148; cf. Pomeroy 1994, 278–9), and in this particular case designed to replace what the wife by definition cannot have: political ambition.

<sup>80</sup> Ischomachus never says that he takes care of the slaves. He only trains and rules them. In doing so, he clearly separates training and rule from caring. After all, he believes that care improves the earth but it seems impossible to improve human beings.

<sup>81</sup> Finally, obeying the teaching of Ischomachus, the wife recognizes such behavior as reasonable (σώφρων). It means she becomes what her mother wanted her to be (Oec. 7, 14), while Ischomachus was taught what to be by his father (Oec. 7, 15; cf. 20, 22).

<sup>82</sup> As the wife is confined to the house, respect from Ischomachus is the limit of her possible ambition. However, this, of course, is only a pale copy of the respect in the city to which the perfect gentleman aspires. In addition, Ischomachus’ respect seems to be only as valuable as he himself is valuable (i.e., useful) for the household.

trained to be just (as otherwise, by their efforts, they would harm the order rather than serve it), so also the wife must be made just by training. Again, the perfect gentleman is far more willing to motivate her just behavior through rewards (pleasure) rather than through punishments. The wife must understand that besides greed and ambition, another kind of pleasure arises from living together – that is, bodily pleasure arising from the satisfaction of sexual needs. For the latter to bring pleasure, it must be voluntary or mutual: The partners must desire each other's bodies (Oec. 10, 7 and 12). Such desire arises directly from the beauty of the body (Oec. 10, 9). However, bodily beauty can be false or true. False beauty is achieved by cosmetics and clothing, whereas true beauty is achieved by maintaining health and bodily strength (Oec. 10, 3).<sup>83</sup> The problem with deception (injustice) in family relationships does not lie in deception as such; for example, who would not want to hide his mistake from his partner so as not to feel shame (Cf. Oec. 8, 1)?<sup>84</sup> The problem is that in the sexual life, the deception will inevitably be revealed (Oec. 10, 8).<sup>85</sup>

Nevertheless, Ischomachus certainly recognizes that education has its natural limits. The point is not only that there are men whose viciousness or inability to self-control makes them untrainable (Cf. Oec. 12, 8–16 and 14, 8)<sup>86</sup> but also that education (and ruling) by the stick and carrot method does not guarantee the very sincere commitment or voluntariness that is so necessary for the flourishing of the order (Oec. 12, 19; 21, 4–5 and 8–12). Education or training by the stick and carrot method proves to be defective or unworkable in practice as well. As the only one whom Ischomachus successfully educates – as opposed to the stories of successful education – is Socrates. It is clear, however, that Ischomachus can neither punish

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<sup>83</sup> Ischomachus does the exercises described in chapter 11 (Oec. 11, 11–18) in the first place (if not entirely) for the pleasure of intimacy with his wife.

<sup>84</sup> This is why Ischomachus continues to sit on the Agora, even though he has already realized that the men he is waiting for will not show up. He wants to preserve his reputation (Oec. 12, 1–2).

<sup>85</sup> This raises the separate issue of what the wife should do in the case of deception, which is not revealed as easily as in the use of cosmetics and clothing (see Oec. 11, 25). The desire for pleasure might well outweigh the desire to preserve order, i.e., justice (cf. Oec. 14, 8).

<sup>86</sup> Speaking of self-control during the training of the slaves in care, Ischomachus offers assurance that the inability to self-control in wine, sleep, and sex does not allow men to be caring; in the case of women, food is added to the list (Oec. 9, 11). The latter raises a serious question about the wife, whose only named quality of self-control, according to the perfect gentleman, is the ability to endure hunger (Oec. 7, 6).

Socrates for the poor learning of his lessons with displeasure nor reward the good learning with pleasure.<sup>87</sup>

Socrates, who spends all his time outside his house and does not engage in household chores, postulates the opposite position to that of the perfect gentleman. He states that 'the feminine nature is not at all inferior to man's, but it lacks resolve (γνώμη) and strength' (Symp. 2, 9; cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1260a13).<sup>88</sup> He also states that with some training or education, a woman can obtain manliness (ἀνδρεία) (Symp. 2, 12).<sup>89</sup> If this is true, then the wife must be equal (ἀντιροπος) to her husband in the household and beyond (Oec. 3, 15). Socrates proves the first by deed: The head of his failed household is Xanthippe. Enrichment, as the process of income exceeding expenses of the household, is the business of Xanthippe, not of Socrates. The second, on the other hand, would have to mean the woman's entry into politics, her becoming a full-fledged citizen of the city. The reason why the vast majority of wives are not in charge of their households and do not participate in the affairs of the city is improper education (Oec. 3, 10–11; cf. Mem. IV, 1, 4) or, at least, the lack of proper education. Thus, education should not compensate for the defective female nature (as Ischomachus thinks) but should elevate a healthy or good nature, exactly as it does for men (Mem. IV, 1, 3–4). And yet, the vast majority, taking wives and trying to educate them, ruin them (Oec. 3, 10), not because of the manner or content of the education but because of the very role that women must assume. A woman devoid of political ambition, a woman locked within the confines of the house, literally finds herself in the role of a craftsman. She is forced 'to sit still and remain indoors, or in some cases even to spend the whole day by a fire', making her body 'enervate' and her soul 'much more diseased' (Oec. 4, 2); she is also deprived of leisure (Oec. 4, 3). If what the city thinks of craftsmen is true, then

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<sup>87</sup> Socrates says that he is pleased by the very process of learning, though not all learning. Thus, he states that it would be 'very pleasantly' (πάνυ ἡδέως) for him to know how Ischomachus taught his wife (Oec. 7, 4 and 9) and that to him it would be 'much more pleasant' (πολὺ ἥδιον) to learn of the virtue of a living woman' (Oec. 10, 1); that he 'would pleasantly learn' (ἄν ἡδέως πυθοίμην) what labors it takes to be healthy and strong and enrich himself (Oec. 11, 13); and, finally, that he would 'learn pleasantly' (ἡδέως μαθηάνειν) how to work the earth so as to obtain the greatest harvest of barley and wheat (Oec. 16, 9). The last, of course, does not coincide with the expected pleasures of the philosopher unless one recalls Ischomachus' response (see Pangle 2020, 102–3).

<sup>88</sup> Which would mean that men and women are equally capable of all parts of self-control (ἐγκράτεια), including the ability to endure heat and cold and labor.

<sup>89</sup> Here, Socrates uses a word that Ischomachus never utters. See footnote 22.

everyone, including Ischomachus,<sup>90</sup> has deliberately ruined the souls and bodies of their wives, turning the original natural equality into inequality necessary or inevitable as long as there is some kind of household. This problem seems altogether unsolvable because of Socrates' own behavior. For if even the 'proper' education of a wife as wife leads to corruption or makes her worse, then the best a married man can do is not to educate his wife at all (Symp. 2, 10),<sup>91</sup> condemning himself to what everyone reasonably sees as poverty (Oec. 11, 3). This becomes more evident when one considers that Socrates – the pupil and teacher *par excellence* – learned from women<sup>92</sup> but never taught women. Socrates is not a champion of equality (Cf. Barker 1959, 145). Beginning by postulating the relative equality of the sexes, he ends by acknowledging the practical impossibility of achieving such equality.

Education clearly has boundaries. Beyond them, ruling begins as distinct from teaching (Oec. 1, 23). Although Socrates does not teach women, one sees him engaged in teaching young men. In the case of the *Oeconomicus*, the young man is explicitly stated to be Critoboulus. In a sense, the education of the wife by Ischomachus and the education of Critoboulus by Socrates are similar. The teacher and the pupil are not related by blood; the teacher is much older than the pupil; the teacher and the pupil are formally free citizens; in both cases, Xenophon does not explicitly demonstrate how successful the education was.<sup>93</sup> However, there is a

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<sup>90</sup> Ischomachus asks his wife to exercise and keep her body in shape (Oec. 10, 9–13) but only for his own pleasure in intimacy with her.

<sup>91</sup> Plato must have seen the same problem, making the price of equality between men and women, and the entry of women into the order of the city, the total destruction of the family and, therefore, of the domestic order (Barker 1959, 143; Bloom 1991, 383–6; Benardete 1989, 119–20).

<sup>92</sup> Socrates seems ready to learn from anyone, since this is 'what particularly becomes a man who is a philosopher (Oec. 16, 9). He says that he learned from Theodote (Mem. III, 2) and Aspasia (Mem. II, 6, 36; Oec. 3, 14). There is also evidence of his education by Aspasia in Plato (Plato, *Menexenus*, 235e). One cannot but notice that Aspasia alone managed to make her 'wife' an active participant in the order of the *polis* through education (Oec. 3, 14). Apparently, this success was possible exclusively due to the 'wife's' physiology.

<sup>93</sup> However, it clearly depends on who is considered Socrates' pupil in the dialogue. If Socrates teaches Critoboulus, as, for example, Johnson thinks, repeating this thesis more than once (Johnson 2021, 252, 257, 258, 260, 266, 274), then the dialogue really ends with nothing, as it often does with Socratic dialogues in Xenophon. In the *Memorabilia*, the exhortations of Socrates have no described outcome most of the time. For example, Xenophon does not describe the outcomes of the philosopher's dialogues with Critoboulus (Mem. I, 3, 13), Aristodemus (Mem. I, 4), Aristippus (Mem. II, 1), Lamprocles (Mem. II, 2), Chaerocrates (Mem. II, 3), Eutherus (Mem. II, 8), Pericles the Younger (Mem. III, 5), Glaucon (Mem. III, 6), Charmides (Mem. III, 7), Epigenes (Mem. III, 12). If Xenophon (Oec. 1, 1)

significant difference between these cases. The young man has the potential to become a full-fledged citizen; he does not belong to the order of the *oikos* alone but is a participant in the *polis* order. In this sense, Critoboulus already has what seems to be absent from Ischomachus' wife, namely, ambition (Oec. 4, 1–2). Besides, the young man had already received some education, while the wife came to Ischomachus as a 'blank slate', if not a wild animal (Oec. 7, 5; cf. 3, 13).<sup>94</sup> Finally, Ischomachus, initially superior to his wife, trains her (as much as possible) by the stick and carrot method: He promises her, in the case of good work, a great reward, and, in the case of failure, shame in old age (Oec. 7, 42). However, Socrates and the young man are not in a situation of domination of the former over the latter.<sup>95</sup> On the contrary, it is Critoboulus who could, if not bring pleasure to Socrates, at least cause him troubles in the conventional sense. And yet, he appears ready and even willing to learn from Socrates (Oec. 2, 9 and 14; 3, 1; 4, 1). One might even say that Socrates' education of Critoboulus is much more like Ischomachus' education of Socrates than is the training of his wife or slaves. Because, in fact, the aim of this education is not 'improvement' or, to put it more precisely, the transformation of a man harmful (or useless) to the order into a useful one, and not even to uncover something new but, strangely enough, to reach an agreement (Oec. 17, 2 and 6; cf. Mem. IV, 6, 15). And its main method is the question-and-answer method or dialectics (Oec. 19, 15).

### Conclusion

One would agree that, even recognizing the similarities in the understanding of economic knowledge and its parts (house, things, slaves, land, horses, wife) between Socrates and Ischomachus, one still could not avoid discovering the radical differences between the positions of the philosopher and 'the perfect gentleman'. It is not difficult to see that Socrates, starting from or confronting the teaching of Ischomachus, radically transforms the latter, making it his own, making it philosophical, removing some contradictions and revealing others – more fundamental,

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is *the* pupil of Socrates in the dialogue, then it is known, at least, what was the general outcome of his education.

<sup>94</sup> Notice how Ischomachus uses the words 'tame' (χειροθήτης) and 'domesticated' (ἔτετιθάσεντο) in reference to his wife (Oec. 7, 10; see Pomeroy 1994, 272). If indeed he is not always able to distinguish between human beings and animals (see Oec. 13, 6–9), it would again bring him closer to Cyrus, who deliberately 'turns men into beasts' (Whidden 2007, 153).

<sup>95</sup> Socrates' attitude toward the method of Ischomachus is, to say the least, questionable (cf. Mem. I, 2, 10–11).

deepening and thereby destroying Ischomachus' view of the order of the *oikos*, of the *polis*, and of the *kosmos*. Yet, this is not for the sake of destruction (Socrates, after all, learns something from Ischomachus) and not because of criticism as an exercise. Rather, it is for the sake of achieving the truly good life.

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