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John Lombardini, The Politics of Socratic Humor.

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to content, when appropriate, giving an ample interpretative analysis or metrical analysis when relevant. The notes are a treasure trove of information on both ancient sources and secondary scholarship. The syntax is commented on in detail.

By Finglass' admission his text differs substantially in 56 places from the 1992 revised text by Lloyd-Jones and Wilson. Many of those 56 places have major implications for sense and interpretation. He gives the following lines as examples: 162, 175/5, 230, 463/4, 510/11, 611-12, 624, 625, 677, 892-893/4, 906-907/8, 1196/7, 1453, [1524-30]. Here is an example in which I concur: Finglass' decision to read ἐξ ἄλλης χθονὸς ("is a different person from a different land") rather than Vauvilliers's emendation ἢ ἕξ ἄλλης χθονὸς ("another of you, or a foreigner") followed by Lloyd-Jones/Wilson is indeed preferable since Oedipus has already asked the Thebans to identify Laius' killer from amongst them, and there is no need to repeat the request. I found no case with which I would necessarily be at odds with Finglass regarding the reading and the sense of his preferences.

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John Lombardini,
The Politics of Socratic Humor.

Oakland, CA: The University of California Press, 2018. Pp. 296. Cloth
(ISBN 978-0-520-29103-4) \$95.00.

Lombardini argues that "we can think about the depictions of Socratic humor we find in Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, and the Cynics as part of a larger debate, one that encompasses both the nature of Socratic humor and its political significance, as well as the broader questions of the ethics and politics of humor during the classical and Hellenistic periods" (8). This Herculean task is made manageable by focusing primarily on whether these authors see something anti-democratic in Socrates' humor. The material is well organized, intelligently argued, and clearly written. Lombardini's views will have to be taken into account by anyone concerned with Socratic irony, or with the attitudes of these authors towards Socrates. I restrict my

critical comments to the first two chapters.

In Chapter 1 Lombardini argues that in the *Clouds*, “the Aristophanic Socrates deploys mockery in order to demonstrate his superiority over ordinary citizens in a way that suggests that those citizens ought not to wield the authority they do in democratic Athens” (45-6). I would add three things to Lombardini’s successful argument.

First, Lombardini does not confront the fact that Socrates’ mockery would be just as troubling from an oligarchic standpoint as from a democratic standpoint. Socrates’ mockery ridicules another’s lack of knowledge (37) or intellectual incompetence (38). If there is a political attitude evinced in such mockery, we should call it “epistemocracy,” which is just as troubling to an oligarchy based on economic class as to a democracy based on citizenship.

Second, Aristophanes is more of an “equal opportunity offender” than Lombardini presents him. Politics is dangerous ground for a comedian, especially if you are trying to win a competition in comedy. Socrates is the butt of Aristophanes’ humor because there is something about him that is ridiculous to supporters of oligarchy as well as democracy. What oligarchs and democrats can agree on is this: those egghead intellectuals are utterly ridiculous because they think that they’re smarter than everybody else, and that they can invent new *nomoi* that are superior to our shared traditional *nomoi*, but in fact they only spew absurdities and blasphemies.

Third, although Lombardini is correct to see epistemic elitism in Socrates’ humor, which is adopted briefly by Strepsiades, Lombardini misses something important. For example, at 1249-51 Strepsiades insults the grammatical intelligence of his first creditor by mocking his use of “*kardopos*” rather than “*kardopê*” to refer to a kneading trough. This is a version of the chicken joke at 659-66 where Socrates insists on the feminine *alektruaina* for a hen. What Lombardini has missed is that these jokes are on Strepsiades and Socrates respectively. The joke is not that *alektruaina* and *kardopê* are novel but that they are wrong and they sound wrong to any competent speaker of Greek (cf. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, section 199). With grammatical gender, “*nomos pantôn basileus*” (Custom is the king of all; Herodotus 3.38.4, attributed to Pindar). In other words, the joke isn’t about political authority, rather the joke is about those who would set themselves above traditional *nomoi* (including grammatical *nomoi*) by questioning them and thinking that they can improve on them. The audience laughs because they know that *alektruaina* and *kardopê* are pedantic and wrong, and that Strepsiades’ rationalizations for not paying his debts will fail when his creditors sue him in court.

In Chapter 2 Lombardini focuses on Socratic irony (and *eirôneia*) in Plato. The

problem for Lombardini's argument is that in the entire Platonic corpus, there isn't a single unambiguous example of either.

An unambiguous example of irony and *eirōneia* is Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis* 687-90, where Agamemnon tells Clytemnestra how painful it is for a father to send his daughter to another man's house. In the preceding 686 lines Euripides unambiguously established (1) Agamemnon's pretended meaning (he will marry Iphigeneia to Achilles), (2) Agamemnon's hidden meaning (he will sacrifice Iphigeneia, sending her to the house of Hades), and (3) Agamemnon's deliberate pretense to get Iphigeneia to Aulis. There is no Socratic statement in the entire Platonic corpus that unambiguously establishes all three elements like this.

Lombardini's main argument for Socratic irony relies on three passages. First, why does Socrates ask Anytus if he thinks that sophists like Protagoras are mad (*mainesthai*, *Meno* 92a4)? Perhaps (ironic interpretation) Socrates is pretending to affirm that they ought to send Meno to the sophists because they will make him a good man—although Socrates never actually says any such thing. But perhaps (non-ironic interpretation) Socrates is going along with (a) Anytus' earlier claim that if they wanted Meno to be a doctor, then they ought to send him to those who profess to be expert doctors, and who charge a fee for teaching others to be expert doctors (90d), and (b) the fact that the only ones who fit this bill for virtue are the sophists (91b). Socrates often sincerely follows a line of reasoning through to its conclusion: if reasonable assertions lead to an unreasonable conclusion, then it might be worth re-thinking those initially reasonable assertions.

Second, why does Socrates claim to be enthusiastic at *Phaedrus* 238c9-d3, 241e1-5, and 234d? Perhaps (ironic interpretation) Socrates is lying. But perhaps (non-ironic interpretation) Socrates is telling the truth because Plato wants to portray him as a role model. We may admire someone who is insensible to some of the forces that sway us, but we won't emulate them if we think they simply lack a vulnerability we possess. By admitting that he feels the passions we feel—though without being mastered by them — we can hope to approach his equanimity. Plato often adds these kinds of humanizing moments into his dialogues (e.g. *Charmides* 155d3-4; *Protagoras* 328d4-5, 339d10-e6; *Euthydemus* 301a2, 303a4-5, 303b7-c3; *Ion* 535d1-9). Of course, one might claim that all these passages are examples of irony, but then we have given up evidence-based interpretation for *a priori* dogma.

Finally, Lombardini appeals to Socrates' treatment of Euthyphro (84-85). Perhaps (ironic interpretation) Socrates presumptuously assumes that Euthyphro's avowals of knowledge are false, but insincerely praises him to laugh at him. But perhaps (non-ironic interpretation) Socrates' disavowal of knowledge entails that

he is in no position to contradict Euthyphro's avowals of knowledge without giving him a fair opportunity to prove himself.

By interpreting Socrates ironically, Lombardini sees Socrates as indulging in “hierarchical positioning” (91). I think this is a profound misunderstanding. Plato's Socrates develops a form of dialogue that allows non-experts to put self-avowed experts to a fair test. Socrates shows that this form of dialogue may be used on our political leaders (e.g. *Apology* 21b-d, *Meno* 93b-94e). Politically, Socrates favors epistocracy, which is neutral with respect to oligarchy and democracy. If only a few are knowledgeable, then Socrates would say that they should rule; if the many are knowledgeable (which the gadfly analogy indicates he would prefer), then Socrates would support democracy.

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Frank L. Holt,
*The Treasures of Alexander the Great: How
One Man's Wealth Shaped the World.*

New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 320. Paper
(ISBN 978-0-19-0866625-9) \$19.95.

How rich was Alexander III of Macedon? Did he have a financial plan to administer his empire? Did his release of massive numbers of gold and silver coins minted from the Persian bullion he captured fundamentally transform the economy of the ancient world? Was Alexander a kind of prototype CEO? These are some of the questions Frank Holt poses and answers in his fascinating, entertaining, and convincing book *The Treasures of Alexander the Great: How One Man's Wealth Shaped the World* (Oxford 2016).

In Chapter 1 “Introduction,” Holt explains the problem of quantifying Alexander's wealth. He rightly argues that Alexander's wealth cannot be quantified simply on the basis of coins and bullion (as many scholars have done in the past). We