Nicholas Denyer, *Plato and Xenophon. Apologies of Socrates*, Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, xi+148 pp., $25.99, ISBN 978-0-521-14582-4.

Nicholas Denyer, author of two previous commentaries on Plato for the Cambridge green and yellow series (*Alcibiades* 2001, *Protagoras* 2008), has now added the Platonic and Xenophontic *Apologies* to the mix. Unlike the case of the *Alcibiades*, which had been very little studied in the decades leading up to 2003 (though rather more so since) or the *Protagoras*, which long lacked an English language commentary, we do not lack for commentaries of various sorts on the *Apologies* (Plato: Burnet 1924 and oft reprinted, de Stryker and Slings 1994, Stokes 1997, Miller and Platter 2010; Xenophon: Pucci 2002, Macleod 2008). But the appearance of Denyer's work in the Cambridge series will probably mark it as the first stop for readers approaching Plato's *Apology* in Greek. Denyer's edition is valuable, but one's judgement of it will depend in large part on what one is looking for in a commentary aimed at the audience of "readers of all levels" that this series quixotically claims to serve.

I will start with the commentary rather than the introduction, as the former is the heart of a book of this sort. If the prime test of a commentary is whether it answers one's questions about the meaning of a given passage, Denyer's passes with ease. He provides clear and sensible interpretations of the vast majority of challenging passages. He also provides guidance that will deepen many readers' understanding of the text, particularly on matters of verbal aspect, register, particles, and Platonic idioms.

Denyer does much more interpretation than grammatical analysis. He rarely provides grammatical terminology, and cites no Greek grammar (none appears in his bibliography), though he puts Denniston's *Greek Particles* to good use. This is obviously a deliberate decision meant to streamline the readers' experience. Denyer instead provides a sampling of parallels. A commentary that aims at concision cannot provide a full grammatical discussion of every point, of course. And it is decidedly not the case that Denyer misunderstands the Greek—I did not note a single occasion on which he misunderstood the grammar of a passage. But his interpretations are often not explicitly supported by citation of grammatical concepts or rules. If a reader wants to know why Denyer is right, she will have to pick up her grammar and find the relevant section without any help from Denyer. This makes the commentary less valuable as an instructional tool.

Denyer also provides guidance on historical, literary, and philosophical matters. He is particularly good on parallels to the orators, an important service given Socrates' claim that he is speaking in his own peculiar manner, given his lack of courtroom experience (the latter itself an oratorical *topos*, of course, as Denyer notes). Denyer is also keen at pointing out apparent inconsistencies within the text, particularly within Plato's *Apology*, and provides creative ways of resolving those inconsistencies. His treatment of such matters is fairly sparse,

however, particularly from a philosophical angle. He does not, in commentary or introduction, point readers to the scholarly debates about issues like Socratic method or irony, or raise the question of whether Plato's account of Socrates' mission in the *Apology* provides us with a template for understanding the rest of Plato's (or Xenophon's) Socratic works.

If Denyer's commentary is sparing in some regards, it is rich in parallels. But here too I would have expected more analysis and explanation; the reader is often presented with several passages, sometimes translated in full and with some Greek provided, without being told how they should inform our understanding of the *Apologies*. Bare parallels do provide a starting point for further analysis, but student readers may find them of limited interest.

Denyer's introduction clearly and concisely introduces Socrates, places the *Apologies* within a generic context, sketches relevant Athenian legal procedures, discusses the charges against Socrates, and explores the relationship between Plato and Xenophon. These are of course tremendously controversial issues, as Denyer notes. Denyer aims to emphasize matters about the historical Socrates that "should not rouse controversy" (1), and presents a sensible overview of our biographical information about him. He could, however, have been clearer about why there is so much controversy and what criteria he employs for suggesting some matters need not rouse it. And of course the deeper one wades into these matters, the more controversial they become. Denyer's discussion is in keeping with the mainstream of scholarly accounts of the trial, and so provides new readers with one sound introduction to it. But he only rarely references scholars' work on the trial. In that his introduction is of a piece with his commentary: Denyer wears his learning lightly, arguably too lightly. Denyer does argue, clearly, for his own views, on the basis of his considerable knowledge of the relevant texts. But the lack of explicit engagement with scholarship on the trial is striking.

Our *Apologies* once had plenty of company in other accounts of Socrates' trial, most famously the *Accusation* of Polycrates, Denyer argues, and he usefully compares the *Apologies* to showpiece oratory like Gorgias' *Palamedes.* This, together with the contradictions between the *Apologies*, Denyer takes to demonstrate the limit of their historical accuracy. Denyer also compares Thucydidean speeches, aptly enough, but he does not pause to ask whether Thucydides or Gorgias is a closer model, nor does he mention Xenophon's claim at the outset of his *Apology* that the agreement among all that Socrates was arrogant at his trial demonstrates that Socrates really did speak like that. That claim shows that Xenophon had at least some concern with historical accuracy, and a method for determining accuracy—agreement among sources.

Denyer raises questions that will be foremost in the minds of many readers of these *Apologies*: Just what did the charges against Socrates amount to, and was he guilty as charged? Denyer notes, rightly to my mind, that Plato's *Apology* does not directly address the religious charges; Xenophon does, but Denyer finds Xenophon's responses incomplete and unpersuasive and hence concludes that both

texts essentially concede that Socrates was guilty. He does so, however, largely by following Plato's lead in limiting the scope of the charges while limiting his own discussion of Xenophon to Xenophon's avowedly non-apologetic *Apology*.

For the problem with addressing the issue of Socrates' guilt or innocence solely through the *Apologies* is that it relies on the assumption that those works present a forensic defense of Socrates—an assumption itself based on the belief that Socrates himself aimed to defend himself during his trial. Both assumptions are probably wrong. Xenophon certainly didn't think that Socrates aimed to secure an acquittal. He opens his *Apology* by saying that everyone agrees that Socrates spoke arrogantly, but none have explained why he did so. Xenophon's explanation is that Socrates was ready to die and did not intend to secure acquittal. Plato's failure to directly address the charges against Socrates suggests he had a similar view of Socrates' intentions at his trial, though Denyer is right to note that some passages appear to show Socrates had some interest in persuading the jury (19a, 35b-c). But ultimately the *Apologies* don't effectively defend Socrates against the legal charges because Socrates chose not to effectively defend himself. The *Apologies* are thus not particularly good evidence for the reconstruction of the charges against Socrates or evaluation of his guilt or innocence: the best source is Xenophon's defense of Socrates in *Memorabilia* 1.1-2, a text Denyer does not, naturally enough, consider in this volume.

The amnesty, Denyer argues, probably protected Socrates from the charge that he corrupted Alcibiades, Charmides, or Phaedrus (Denyer is strangely silent about Critias). This is a common but likely ahistorical reading of the amnesty (see E. Carawan, *The Athenian Amnesty and Reconstructing the Law*, Oxford 2013). It also flies in the face of Xenophon's evident concern to distance Socrates from Critias and Alcibiades in the *Memorabilia* (1.2.12-48). But it allows Denyer (as others) to accept Plato's effort to limit the corruption charge to the teaching of impiety. Denyer grants that the *Apologies* raise other forms of corruption, particularly Socrates' habit of undermining men of high repute and willingness to alienate sons from fathers, and he closes by elevating the corruption charge to the question of whether the philosophy Socrates inspired was corrupting, clearly implying that it was not. It is not clear why an Athenian jury could not have considered such wider matters.

Denyer's comparison of Xenophon and Plato nicely sketches the ancient evidence for their rivalry, while also noting that the two had quite different approaches to Socrates—which suggests they may not have been rivals in a particularly straightforward way. Denyer is a bit snide about Xenophon, who was "ostentatiously versatile" (24); he also seems a bit confused about Xenophon's chronology (misreading *Anabasis* 3.1.4 to say that Xenophon had not served as a soldier at Athens). He also provocatively suggests that both men were corrupt by Athenian standards. Xenophon was exiled, true enough, but Denyer doesn't address the likelihood that Xenophon was reconciled with Athens. He will naturally not have had access to Matthew Christ's 2020 *Xenophon and*

the Athenian Democracy, where Christ argues that Xenophon wrote largely to convince elite readers to take on leadership roles in the democracy. The case against Plato is more circumstantial but perhaps more convincing. At any rate, it is a bit deflating to end the substantive part of the introduction (followed only by a quick introduction to the evidence for the text) with the charge that Xenophon and Plato were themselves corrupt, by Athenian standards. But it is worth reminding contemporary readers that neither author was a committed democrat, as this will have influenced their approach to defending their teacher against charges made under the democracy.

Most of my observations about Denyer's introduction boil down to my sense that he has not given the evidence from Xenophon as much weight as it deserves. But I will be among the distinct minority of readers to come to this book with more interest in Xenophon than Plato. No commentary can please all readers. Denyer's provides much sane, clear, and intelligent interpretation of these texts and an introduction which addresses fundamental questions raised by them. It is a welcome addition to our tools for understanding Socrates, Plato, and Xenophon.

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Martin J. Cropp, *Minor Greek Tragedians, Volume 2: Fourth-Century and Hellenistic Poets. Fragments from the Tragedies with Selected testimonia*, Aris & Phillips Classical Texts, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021, xx+455 pp., £90.00 (ebook), £95.00 (hb), ISBN 978-1-80034-872-1.

A distanza di due anni dal primo[1], nel 2021 ha visto la luce il secondo volume dell'edizione commentata dei tragici minori curata da Martin J. Cropp, dedicato all'epoca postclassica (IV secolo a.C. ed ellenismo). L'impostazione è naturalmente la stessa del primo volume: a ciascun poeta è dedicato un capitolo con un profilo biografico basato su una selezione delle principali testimonianze raccolte nei *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* di Snell-Kannicht, quindi il testo dei frammenti tragici[2] accompagnato da un apparato essenziale, dalla traduzione a fronte (comprensiva della fonte che li tramanda) e da note di commento e preceduto, per ciascuna tragedia, da uno *status quaestionis* sui problemi di

[1] Su cui cfr. *ExClass* 24, 2020, 299-310.
[2] Sono esclusi quelli di sicura o probabile natura satiresca.