

As Athenaeus long ago noted (*Deipnosophistae* X. 413 f), Xenophanes' harsh polemic against Olympic victors had already been echoed by Euripides in his lost satyr play, *Autolycus*. Both elegiac poet and tragedian voice their fervent disapproval of the pan-hellenic custom of granting to athletes conspicuous honors in the form of free meals at public expense (Xenoph. Fr. 2, 6–9; Eur. Fr. 282 N², 14–15). And both voice their indignation by contrasting the uselessness of the 'athletic tribe'—in particular, their failure to give back anything worthwhile to their city—with the significant civic contributions that intellectuals make in terms of their wise words and actions (Xenoph. Fr. 2, 10–12; Eur. Fr. 282 N², 23–28). Both of these passages are echoed in Socrates' outrageous proposal in the *Apology* that he is much more deserving of σίτησις ἐν πρυτανείῳ than any Olympic athlete (*Ap.* 36b3–37a2). Despite the familiarity of the topos, there are significant differences between the two formulations. Whereas Xenophanes and the Euripidean character focus upon the overtly public nature of their intellectual contributions, Socrates insists upon the private nature of his benefactions which self-confessedly lack σοφία, yet which he paradoxically claims are of the greatest benefit and so deserving of similar public recognition. This paper will examine Socrates' proposal in relation to these two passages. I will suggest that Socrates' deliberately provocative counter-proposal derives much of its punch from its evocation of this familiar topos, but one with a pungent twist: whereas Xenophanes and Euripides's character could at least claim as basis for their boast the bedrock of σοφίη/σοφία, Socrates deliberately deprives himself of this foundation, making his proposal all the more outrageous.

Xenophanes' main contention is that even should someone take first prize in any of the Olympic events, nonetheless he would still not be as worthy a recipient of civic honors as Xenophanes himself, since "our wisdom is better than the strength of horses and men." (Fr. 2, 11–12 ... ῥώμης γὰρ ἀμείνων/ἀνδρῶν ἢδ' ἵππων ἡμετέρη σοφίη; and cf. 13–14: ... οὐδὲ δίκαιον/προκρίνειν ῥώμην τῆς ἀγαθῆς σοφίης). The Euripidean fragment frames the polemic similarly by emphasizing intellectual over athletic achievement: Fr. 282 N² 23–25: ... ἄνδρας χρὴ σοφούς τε κάγαθούς/φύλλοις στέφεσθαι, χῶστις ἡγεῖται πόλει/κάλλιστα σῶφρων καὶ δίκαιος ὦν ἀνὴρ. As other scholars have noted (e.g. Marcovich [1977, 1978], Adkins [1985], Brickhouse and Smith [1989], Leshner [1992], De Strycker and Slings [1994]), the Socrates of Plato's *Apology* also claims Olympic victor-style treatment for his benefactions. But what these and others have failed to note is that whereas both Xenophanes and Euripides stake their claim to civic honors on the basis of their intellectual contributions to the city's well-being and the conspicuous failure of athletes to do so (Xenoph. Fr. 2, 23: οὐ γὰρ παίειν ταῦτα μυχούς πόλεως; Eur. Fr. 282 N² 16–18: τίς γὰρ παλαίσας εὔ, τίς ὠκύπους ἀνήρ/ἢ δίσκον ἄρας ἢ γνάθον παίσας καλῶς/πόλει πατρῶα στέφανον ἤρεσκεν λαβῶν;), Socrates paradoxically stakes his claim to similar honors on the basis of his private benefactions (*Ap.* 36c3–4: ἐπὶ δὲ τὸ ἰδίᾳ ἕκαστον ἰὼν εὐεργετεῖν τὴν μεγίστην εὐεργεσίαν), but ones which, according to Socrates' own admission, do not depend upon any claim to σοφία (cf. *Ap.* 19c5–d1, 20d6–e8, 21b3–7, d4–e1). And just as Xenophanes believes that an Ὀλυμπιονίκης is not as worthy of these honors as he (Fr. 2, 11: οὐκ ἐὼν ἄξιός ὥσπερ ἐγώ), so Socrates phrases his proposal of a counter-penalty in terms of his worth: τί ἄξιός εἰμι παθεῖν ἢ ἀποτεῖσθαι; (*Ap.* 36b5). As the phrasing of the immediately preceding passage shows, Socrates' proposal is carefully framed so as to distinguish what he believes he truly deserves (παθεῖν) from what he realizes he actually must offer by way of a penalty that would be acceptable to the jury (ἀποτεῖσθαι; cf. Brickhouse and Smith [1989] 219–221; Reeve [1989] 169–176). So although, in the end, Socrates adheres to proper legal procedure and makes an acceptable counter-proposal, his initial suggestion, while invoking a familiar motif, does so in typically Socratic, that is, paradoxical fashion, by undercutting the very ground he is standing on.