Grote on Socrates: an unpublished essay of the 1820s in its context

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George Grote, the distinguished historian of ancient Greece, was born in Kent and attended Charterhouse until 1810, when he was removed by his father and taken into their family business, the bank known as Prescott and Grote. At Charterhouse Grote received a good, though dry, classical education. It is noteworthy that Connop Thirlwall, himself an erudite historian of classical antiquity, and Henry George Liddell (the Greek lexicographer) had been among Grote's schoolfellows. Outside a university environment, Grote retained his self-discipline and pursued his historical and literary research with outstanding dedication.[1] In the early nineteenth century the necessities of practical life, and the desire for social distinction, led many people to the path of self-education: the self-made man was a social phenomenon, a product of the age. John Stuart Mill's educational experience at the hands of his father has often been cited to explain his intellectual preeminence. Grote's self-education provides, in my view, another case-study for students of the educational process.

Grote's knowledge of German was, perhaps, one of his most important qualifications, and definitely a rare one in the period. German scholars were then pioneers in classical studies, and Grote did not neglect to study and criticize their works; with many scholars he had personal acquaintance. His conception of the character of Plato's philosophy, however unique it appeared in Britain, was partly based on Friedrich Ast's *Platons Leben und Schriften*. Ast maintained, and Grote followed him, that Platonic writings are not connected by any philosophical system and that no intellectual principle can be detected which might interrelate them.[2] Schleiermacher had been an equally powerful stimulus. The German scholar attracted great interest in Britain, especially after Thirlwall's translation of his piece 'On the worth of Socrates as a philosopher', which appeared in the *Philological Museum* for 1833. Yet Grote contested Schleiermacher's assumption that Plato had a preconceived philosophical scheme – an assumption that gave

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rise to a perfectionist conception of Plato, and prompted many scholars to reject a great number of dialogues as spurious for 'internal reasons'.[3] Grote had also been influenced by Barthold Georg Niebuhr, at least as far as his distinction between *mythos* and authentic history is concerned.[4] Niebuhr was the first to deal effectively with the history of Rome in a critical and scholarly spirit; Grote shared his solid historical approach, which discriminated the mythical element from pure fact. Augustus Boeckh, the learned author of the *Public Economy of Athens*, professor of classical literature at the University of Berlin, similarly impressed Grote, who acknowledged that his works 'form an encyclopaedia of philology in all its principal departments'.[5]

It has often been suggested that Grote's acquaintance with Ricardo in 1817, and through him with James Mill and the Utilitarians, was the turning-point in his intellectual life.[6] Grote, despite his timid character and habits of seclusion, subsequently became the leader of the Radicals and Member of Parliament. This influence, however, has been overstated. One can hardly deny that James Mill introduced him to the Utilitarian circle and strengthened his adherence to the empirical method of philosophic investigation. But by the 1820s Grote was already mature. The interested reader who goes through the mass of the German books Grote studied will understand that this influence, usually overlooked, was undoubtedly the greatest.

Again, it has been assumed that Grote's essay, presented here for the first time, was written at Mill's instigation.[7] There is no evidence for this, however, except for Mrs Grote's dating of the manuscript. To judge from the short structure and provocative character of the essay, it appears, on the contrary, that this piece of work was not primarily intended for publication, and indeed Mill may have been unaware of its existence. It might have been written in the context of Grote's preparatory notes and essays – that is, from the time he first contemplated the writing of the history of Greece.[8] If Grote wrote the essay on Socrates with Mill's encouragement, as he did in the case of *The Essentials of Parliamentary Reform* in 1831, then it remains a mystery why it was never published. Further, it should be observed that in this essay Grote paid little attention to the Socratic method of cross-examination, in contrast to his clear practice in his subsequent works, presumably under James Mill's influence.[9] Mrs Grote's careless dating accounts for the exaggerated idea she cherished of Mill's effect on her husband's thought.[10]

Moses Finley had no hesitation in asserting that the *History of Greece*, as written by the 'liberal and banker George Grote ... was the first major modern

work on the subject (and one of the greatest ever written)'.[11] Grote was the first to render Athenian democracy intelligible to the British reader;[12] the ancient democratic ideal, as actualized in the fertile environment of Attica, was throughout all his historical and philosophical works a constant source of reference. There Plato's political thought is criticized in the light of Periclean Athens. The sophists are considered as an inseparable part of a progressive society, as the natural offspring of a system of government founded on the rule of law. Rhetoric emerges as the only acceptable means of obtaining the consent of the governed, and the Athenian state appears as a remarkable phenomenon in the history of politics inasmuch as it was largely based on free speech. By his very existence Socrates, for Grote, symbolizes the idea of individual liberty. Nowhere but in the tolerant climate of fifth-century Athens could Socrates have been allowed to employ his annoying and often offensive method of cross-examination. From an Athenian point of view he died justly, because he had exhausted the patience and forbearance of his fellow-citizens. His general manner, and especially his religious mission, as well as his arguments in favour of a science (or art) of political rule, were regarded as undermining the roots of their constitution, to which the Athenians, Grote argued, were zealously faithful.

Grote's short essay on Socrates was preparatory to his maturer articulation of a Socratic understanding. Grote's approach to Socrates cannot, of course, be separated from the historical perspective of his work, for he was primarily a historian of ancient Greece. His eminence in this field need not be emphasized here. Grote's professed Utilitarian background obstructed for many decades a clear appreciation of his work: in the modern literature, however, his contribution to the opening of new avenues for the exploration of the ancient world is deemed incontrovertible.[13] This paper aims to show that by disputing the prevalent ideas regarding Socrates, Grote facilitated the development of proper Socratic studies. In Britain, indeed, Socrates became a subject of critical research only after Grote expounded his new ideas, which represented a radical departure from the traditional approach. His early piece on Socrates, forgotten in the mass of his manuscripts, deserves particular attention, as it delineates the substance of the major arguments later expanded in *History of Greece* and *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates*, and sheds light on the originality of his methodology. The future historian of ancient Greece here reveals the thrust of his approach: to be sceptical about long-accepted verdicts, and to investigate everything until a point is reached where common experience validates historical truth.

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Floyer Sydenham, an ardent Platonist, was arrested in 1787 for a trifling debt and died in prison a few days afterwards.[14] He was the first scholar to embark on the task of translating the entire Platonic corpus, but English readers were unresponsive to his efforts. His fate is suggestive of the position Plato then occupied in the field of ancient studies. Thomas Taylor, who completed the translation after Sydenham's death, was not able to cope with the technicalities of Plato's language, nor qualified to explain his doctrines consistently. He boasted of penetrating the Platonic 'mystical mind' and of comprehending his 'divine *mania*'. In fact, his unconcealed enthusiasm for Proclus and Plotinus as the chief interpreters of Plato's esoteric dogmas did more harm than good in the process of familiarizing an English readership with the ancient philosopher.[15] He simply managed to convince prospective readers that Plato was as unreadable as his own commentary.

Platonic studies were neglected throughout the eighteenth and a considerable part of the nineteenth century. There was good reason, even in 1865, to justify Benjamin Jowett's complaint that 'there is nothing good, I fear, in English on this subject', that is, on Plato.[16] John Stuart Blackie, the devoted Scottish Platonist, exclaimed a few years earlier that Plato was not yet studied in England: 'Between Plato and the English nation there is in fact a gulf which cannot be passed.'[17] And George Henry Lewes was perfectly right in reminding his readership that Plato 'is often mentioned and often quoted, at second hand; but he is rarely read'.[18] Plato had been seen as one pillar of classical perfection since Winckelmann, and while Romanticism opened new perspectives for scholars concerned with Platonic analysis, in Britain there were some who approached Plato 'not merely with indifference but with active dislike'.[19]

The roots of this tendency, however, can be traced much earlier. Ebenezer Macfait protested in the 1760s that those who assumed the task of analysing the Platonic dialogues 'have decided against him with great vehemence'.[20] This negative disposition towards Plato was apparently created by the emphasis laid upon his 'mysticism' and 'intentional vagueness' in the works of those few, usually Christian, theologians who had cursorily dealt with his philosophy. Scholars rarely engaged in a study of the ancients without first calling attention, in exceedingly contemptuous terms, to their superstitious and idolatrous religion. Thus, whereas Socrates was in most cases assumed to be a dissenter from established dogmas, Plato was reproached for cultivating other mystical and pernicious notions.

Socrates, as a rule, appealed to the most elevated feelings of admiration and praise; his image was poetically enhanced in statements full of eulogistic sentiment. The anonymous author of the *Essay on the Character and Doctrines of Socrates* could not hide his enthusiasm:

> He seems to have been created as an example to man, and as a proof of the excellence at which our nature can arrive. The colours of his character may soften, and may fade, but their unequalled brilliancy cannot be destroyed...[21]

Of all the great figures of antiquity the name of Socrates was the most easily clothed in sentimental Christian language. Historians of philosophy, especially in Britain, thought that his destiny and inflexible obedience to what he considered just and divine were reminiscent of Christ's sacrifice: Socrates, it was widely maintained, could be named 'the Christ of heathenism'.[22] He was accordingly portrayed as a deeply religious man who firmly believed in the immortality of the soul and in the doctrine of rewards and punishments in the ultimate court. As a divinely endowed person, living among the corrupt, superstitious and idolatrous Athenians, he laboured incessantly to bring them to 'the knowledge of the true God', and to accustom them to acts of piety. The Athenians appear as depraved and vicious, with Socrates' condemnation simply another instance of the unsteadiness of their character. How such a person was condemned to death was not difficult to understand, granted the fact that extraordinarily gifted persons provoked extraordinary enmities, and especially considering 'the degenerate age he lived in, and the universal corruption of manners that then prevailed in Athens'.[23] The age of Socrates was described as the most unprincipled and corrupt age in the entire history of ancient Greece. The sophists, politicians and demagogues promoted corruption; Socrates resisted it.

Further, Socrates was believed to have erected, on the firm basis of transcendental knowledge, a complete system of morals and politics. Girot, a Frenchman who found in London a responsive public, went so far as to assert that Socrates had established a school of his own: he was a rational dogmatist, who diffused certain positive doctrines.[24] Scholars ascribed to Socrates a great number of metaphysical and ethical doctrines; ideas and arguments of a positive, and rather dogmatic character, that were taken from Plato and Xenophon and treated as Socratic in substance. In his time Socrates assumed the character of a moral educator: 'on

moral subjects he always expressed himself with confidence and decision.'[25] On the other hand Plato, it was asserted, had distorted the authentic Socratic teaching by introducing into Socrates' system various and contradictory influences. Plato was criticized for constructing upon the supreme Socratic teaching an impure superstructure of his own. Xenophon, on the contrary, committed the doctrines of his master to writing with perfect fidelity and never mixed them with his own ideas. He was therefore assumed to be the most trustworthy guide to Socrates' doctrines and life. Potter, a violent anti-Platonic writer, believed that the philosophical principles of Socrates stood in opposition to the 'metaphysical imagination' and 'sensual polytheism' of Plato's teaching. Plato's influence, he argued, 'has lasted long, but must be *eventually* overthrown; Socrates' influence, as established by his great pupil, Aristotle, must be *more and more* extended in proportion as it is understood.'[26]

What further exalted Socrates in the minds of English scholars was his supposedly total opposition to the sophistic movement. It was assumed that the Socratic and the sophistic teachings had nothing in common, either in content or in tendency. Scholars adhered to the long-established notion of a polemic between Socrates and the sophists. The sophists hated Socrates, and he despised them. Socrates, according to the French scholar André Dacier, whose work was very popular in Victorian Britain, made it the distinctive goal of his life to oppose the sophists, who by their 'poisonous maxims labour to corrupt the minds of men, and to destroy truth and good sense'.[27] The sophists taught people how to deceive and flatter in order to fulfil their political and social ambitions. Such a teaching could not but lead to universal scepticism, atheism and hypocrisy. Socrates could not remain inactive at the sight of this growing evil: his teaching, by contrast, aspired to cultivate the rules of right reasoning and investigation, as well as to propagate the ultimate principles of moral conduct. Socrates, it was argued, fell a victim to the machinations of the sophists, priests, and other pseudo-philosophers of his era, who were threatened by his growing influence. The sophists, like the priests, were treated with deference by their contemporaries, and bribed Aristophanes, 'a mercenary, witty poet', to ridicule Socrates on the stage, thus artfully turning the Athenians against him. This sort of argument, that Aristophanes was engaged by these men to ridicule Socrates in the *Clouds,* made itself felt quite often.[28]

The sophists themselves, as distinct from Socrates, were constantly referred to as a wicked and immoral *set*, or *race*, or *class* of men, who had made it their profession to introduce the young to false reasoning, and in return, received large

sums of money. Joseph Priestley called sophistic theories a 'wretched philosophy' that Socrates had to expose.[29] It was very rare for a scholar to discriminate between the celebrated sophists of an earlier period, like Protagoras and Prodicus, and sophists of a more degenerate kind, usually of later times (fourth century B.C.). On principle, the sophists were indiscriminately grouped together as an odious set of public corruptors. Explicitly or otherwise, the sophistic movement was closely associated with an historical fact: the growth of democratic institutions. It was unanimously postulated that their democratic age was one of moral degeneracy, political factionalism, unprincipled political action, and unrestricted personal ambition. The sophists were, somewhat paradoxically, supposed to have been both products of their times and partly responsible for this general depravity.

The development of Greek studies in British universities during the first decades of the nineteenth century did not result in any substantial alteration to the way scholars understood the character of Socrates. He was treated in the traditional way, as a figure of exquisite piety, whose life they deemed proper to compare with Jesus. John Forster represented this spirit simply enough when he argued that to 'doubt [whether] Socrates believed in One God, is to doubt if Socrates existed'.[30] It is clear that Socrates attracted a great deal of attention in the 1830s. C.S. Stanford translated those Platonic dialogues directly connected with Socrates' teaching and life, not omitting to emphasize the difficulty and complexity of the subject, for Plato, in his estimation, had wrapped in a veil of mysticism Socrates' more substantial arguments. In the view of Henry Cary, who prepared the publication of Plato's writings a few years afterwards, Socrates' 'Apology' appeared worthy even of a Christian.[31] Scholars like John Forster, William Sewell and Connop Thirlwall, whose works reflected the new learning of Schleiermacher and other distinguished German classicists, still insisted on the antagonistic spirit of sophistic and Socratic teaching: sophistic doctrines were seen as a mass of falsehood and absurdity; Socrates helped the great forms of 'Certainty and Truth' to arise out of that very chaos. Thirlwall argued that the sophists' growing influence gave rise to Socrates' opposition; but the method by which he tested the opinions of others, while always careful not to reveal his own, was finally mistaken, and not only by Aristophanes, for sophistic scepticism.[32] The sophists could not fail to 'disgust a man like Socrates, who hated show and pretension, and who had a deep veneration for truth'.[33] The obnoxious sophistic 'worldliness' was decisively opposed by Socrates with his 'evangelic trait of ... morality' and his 'lofty supersensualism'.[34]

Grote's early essay on Socrates was in fact an attempt to justify the decision of the Athenian court to condemn Socrates to death. In the 1820s, when the essay was written, Grote was contemplating a defence of Athens and democracy. This piece of work bears a marked resemblance to the modern treatments of the subject. In the modern literature it would appear a commonplace to say that Socrates was not a revolutionary saint, and that the sophists did not lead a life of immorality.

Grote called attention to the fact that the image of Socrates had been formed exclusively from the writings of his more enthusiastic pupils, and that the reader should therefore exercise particular caution in constructing any theory. For Plato and Xenophon, Socrates was outstandingly virtuous and just. But if one takes into account the feelings of the mass of his contemporaries, which is among the primary duties of a historian, Socrates can be characterized as an eccentric. He incurred the wrath of the Athenian public, since his negative dialectic brought him into conflict with those whom the public revered. He mistrusted authority and ridiculed common sentiment. Furthermore, Socrates disapproved of the rules established by the democratic constitution of Athens. His belief that the functions of government should be operated by those who knew the best way to exercise them contributed to his condemnation.

Grote differed significantly from earlier British scholars in that he disentangled Socrates from the guise of a Christian saint, positive and doctrinaire. Socrates' influence in the history of philosophy was in fact rooted, according to Grote, in his negative and inquisitive spirit. Whereas Plato had been attacked for spoiling Socratic philosophy by adding his own spurious ideas to those of Socrates, Grote went on to argue that there was no consistent Socratic philosophy other than his dialectical method of enquiry.

An annotated version of Grote's unpublished essay now follows:

The Character of Socrates

The death of Socrates, as it is usually conceived and commented upon by moderns, appears a case of atrocity almost incredible. The injustice and wickedness of the proceeding, indeed, can neither be denied nor defended: yet the modern conceptions of it are both defective and erroneous, and represent it in far blacker colours than an impartial spectator of the time would have done.[35] There are sufficient means of accounting for the exaggerated odium thus raised against an act quite guilty enough, when all the circumstances and qualifications as they would then

have presented themselves are taken into view.

i The modern idea of Socrates himself is formed exclusively from the writings of his most enthusiastic partisans: from Xenophon and Plato.[36] Now not only are these two authors devotedly attached to Socrates, and animated by the strongest possible desire to ennoble and beautify his character: but they are, besides, both of them inimitable in point of style and expression: the greatest masters of language, and the most finished models of taste, that the world has ever produced. How different would have been the general conception of Socrates had his portrait been drawn only by men like Porphyry or Jamblichus! No individual has ever enjoyed the same advantage of Socrates in this respect. We are familiar with all his virtues and excellences, with the justification for his weaknesses, and with the triumphant refutation of all the charges advanced against him. His peculiarities appear to us softened and coloured over by a friendly pencil; a puerile superstition is transformed into an amiable weakness: a malicious pleasure in humiliating and torturing antagonists is disguised under the exterior of exemplary modesty and self-degradation.[37] What colour would an unfriendly writer, or even a cool and unprejudiced observer, have given to the apotreptic daemon of Socrates? How would those have described him, who without any preexisting partiality, saw him day after day disputing in the public market-place, and heard him using frequently arguments hardly less sophistical than his antagonists? What would they have said when they observed that his arguments scarcely ever led to any positive result, or solved any difficulty: when he appeared to leave the subject involved in impenetrable confusion, and the negative just as probable as the affirmative? It is easy to see that a keensighted and unbiassed observer would have described all these details very differently from Plato and Xenophon, who were admitted to the privacy of their master, and who saw the useful application which he probably made of these controversial exhibitions, to guide the reasoning of those who sought his continuous instructions. The Athenian public could only have known him as an expert sophist: to his disciples alone could he have appeared as a wholesome or improving instructor.

ii To oppose to these partial and fascinating representations of his friends, we have no memorials remaining from his enemies, except the *Clouds* of Aristophanes. The picture given in that drama is assuredly a gross caricature: yet it must have borne some resemblances to the idea which most of the spectators entertained of the person represented, in order to succeed as a piece of wit. Socrates treated every one except himself as mere pretenders to knowledge and charlatans:[38] Aristophanes

treats Socrates as a pretender and charlatan no better than the rest, just as he treats Meton in the *Aves* (998-1020). Socrates attended the lectures of the physical philosophers then in vogue and made himself master of their doctrines: nor is there any reason to doubt that he discussed physical subjects with them in the same spirit as he discussed moral subjects – in a way purely negative and elenctic, so as to refute the dogmatist and expose the insufficiency of his proofs without substituting any more certain conclusions. The public who only heard Socrates openly arguing on physical as well as on moral subjects, would not be aware of his disposition to depreciate the former and to busy himself exclusively about the latter. Dissen[39] indeed imagines that this indifference towards the physical sciences was not acquired until the later years of Socrates' life, and that it did not exist at the earlier period when the *Clouds* were acted. There is much probability in this conjecture: but whether we admit it or not, it will be no less true that the general public would not know Socrates intimately enough to distinguish him from the physical philosophers with whom he was often conversing; and Aristophanes must have suited his picture to the preconceptions of the mass of spectators.

iii The sympathy of the moderns is so preengaged in favour of Socrates, that they never consider what must have been the feelings of eminent sophists and rhetoricians, whom Socrates unmercifully encountered and exposed. These men, illustrious amidst the general public for their acuteness, eloquence and expository powers, found themselves inextricably ensnared by the cunning series of questions which he successively put to them. Each question in itself seemed trivial and easy: but each contained the germ of that which followed it, and at last, the respondent was reduced to the absolute necessity of contradicting in the last answer what he had affirmed in the first. Because Plato and Xenophon tell us so, we are apt to imagine that the men thus refuted and held up to ridicule must have been all ignorant quacks and boasters. But the fact is quite otherwise with regard to many of them.[40] Though there were some no better than Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, there were others like Protagoras and Gorgias, the most renowned preachers and expositors of the day, whose lectures were paid for at a price absolutely exorbitant. Men of this unexampled eminence, admired by all their contemporaries, must have been stung to the quick by the successful traps which Socrates laid for them in the dialogue: their admirers and the spectators, in all probability, shared their feelings, and exclaimed against the victories of Socrates as obtained by mere sophistical trickery.[41] The tone of Socrates, throughout all

his conversations, is altogether polemical and aggressive: he seeks purely and simply to wound and disarm an antagonist: and the sympathies of an indifferent bystander, in a controversy so managed, are more likely to have been on the side of the defender than on that of the aggressor.[42]

iv While Socrates thus incurred the hatred of all the most eminent and of their surrounding cortege, he acquired no counterbalancing popularity either with any other individuals or with the bulk of the people.[43] With the latter, the tone of his discussions was eminently calculated to render him unpopular. The scope and tendency of his remarks was altogether sceptical: leading to no determinate or positive conclusion: suggesting difficulties on all sides, and resolving none: inculcating the necessity of subjecting all opinions to a rigorous enquiry: and impugning without reserve all authority, whether of poets, of teachers, or of ancestors. It is to no purpose that this is all accomplished under the mask of profound reverence and in the language of childlike humility. The sceptical influence is no less certain and predominant in the last result: all confidence in received opinions is undermined: nor is any thing offered beyond dark hints for the discovery of better. On the principles of morals, especially, an infinite number of the most perplexing difficulties are started: the ultimate drift of the moral rules, the motives to observe them, the power of communicating the disposition to observe them, are all exposed to analysis. Enough is said only to shew that there are difficulties on both sides of the question, and that neither the affirmative nor the negative can be confidently assumed. The philosopher leaves his hearers in a state of conscious ignorance and self-mistrust: he has puzzled, unsettled, and humiliated them. He intends this indeed as a prelude to ulterior instruction, wherein positive results are to be established and enforced. But the public could not be privy to these final parts of the process: they were witnesses chiefly to the striking dialectic assaults, to the upsetting of settled and dogmatical opinions with which Socrates began to work upon the mind;[44] and judging from what they saw, they could treat him only as a proselytising sceptic – a character likely to be very odious to them.

v Another circumstance must be added, calculated to sharpen both the special provocation of the eminent literati, and the dislike of the general mass, towards Socrates. He was poor and of no family distinction. He was not entitled by his birth or position to claim any influence or ascendancy. The meanness and penury of his habits is unmercifully derided by Aristophanes, while it is appealed to by himself and his friends as a test of disinterestedness.[45] He was destitute of all those

circumstances which dispose men to recognise pretention and to acquiesce in superiority, and when a man thus friendless presumed to declare war against intellectual eminence and to lay bare all the weak points of the current doctrines, what would be presumption in any one would be double presumption in him.

vi Farther, his opinions were avowedly hostile to several essential parts of the democratical constitution, and not friendly, as far as we can judge, to any considerable popular controul exercised over the government. He entertained a virtuous indignation against misgovernment, but he does not seem to have ever contemplated the popular intervention as a check upon it. He treated the mode of governing mankind as a scientific process, to be acquired by study, by experience and by reflexion, combined with a fortunate natural disposition.[46] With such sentiments, he did not harmonise either with oligarchical or democratical persons, and he had no party to protect him against any malicious prosecutions.[47] It is easy to believe, on the testimony of Xenophon, that he boldly censured the misconduct of Critias and Alcibiades, whenever he had an opportunity: to such an extent as to drive them away from him.

vii There is sufficient evidence from Plato himself that the impression made by Socrates on those who heard him once or a small number of times was by no means favourable. People wondered at him as an eccentric and out-of-the-way thinker:[48] his homely illustrations, derived from the commonest objects, seemed at first absolutely ridiculous: and his extreme ugliness added to the ludicrous effect. He had a flat nose and a bald head like the statue of a Seilenus or of a Satyr, to which Alcibiades in the *Symposion* of Plato more than once compares him.[49] His illustrations too were unvarying and monotonous, and their sameness rendered the speaker contemptible to ordinary listeners. He had not the air of being in earnest when he conversed. He seemed like one who set little value either upon his audience, or upon the world in general, and he treated all worldly dignities and recognised titles to preeminence with consummate indifference. But to those who surmounted this unfavourable feeling at the outset and who persisted in listening to his conversation, it ultimately became most delightful and instructive. He attached the hearers to him by the strongest feelings both of affection and of respect and of conscious improvement.[50]

NOTES

1 For more biographical details see H. Grote, *The Personal Life of George Grote* (London 1873); and *The Philosophical Radicals of 1832* (London 1866); A. Bain, ed., *Minor Works of George Grote* (London 1873); J. Owen, 'George Grote', *Theological Review* 10 (1873) 503-23; G. W. Greene, 'Reminiscences of George Grote', *Atlantic Monthly* 44 (1879) 770-4; W. MacIlwraith, *The Life and Writings of George Grote* (London 1885); L.A. Tollemache, 'George Grote'; in *Safe Studies* (London 1895) 131-45; M.L. Clarke, *George Grote: A Biography* (London 1962). In Grote's early manuscripts can be found extensive notes on Hesiod, Homer, Euripides, Plato, Cicero and many others. See Grote's 'Verse Translations and Miscellaneous Notes from 1809 to 1824', BL Add. MS 29,527.

2 F. Ast, *Platons Leben und Schriften* (Leipzig 1816) 40.

3 See F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *Introductions to the Dialogues of Plato*, trans. W. Dobson (Cambridge 1836). Heinrich Ritter, *The History of Ancient Philosophy*, trans. A.J.W. Morrison (Oxford 1838); Joseph Socher, *Ueber Platons Schriften* (Munich 1820); K. F. Hermann, *Geschichte und System der Platonischen Philosophie* (Heidelberg 1839), rejected as spurious almost half of the Platonic corpus.

4 See Grote's 'Grecian Legends and Early History', first published in *Westminster Review*, 1843. Reprinted in *Minor Works* (75-134). This article was intended to be a review of Niebuhr's *Griechische Heroen Geschichten*, published in 1842.

5 See H. Grote, *Personal Life*, 156-7: Grote, writing to Boeckh on 12 March 1867 (on the occasion of the Professor's retirement), asked him to accept the gratitude of one of his 'foreign brothers-in-hellenism'.

6 See, for instance, E. Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism* (London 1934) 418; R. Fenn, *James Mill's Political Thought* (New York and London 1987) 111; W. Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals, Nine Studies in Theory and Practice 1817-1841* (Oxford 1979) 406-38.

7 Mrs Grote dates the manuscript in 1825; so does Clarke, *George Grote*, 135.

8 See Grote's notes on the ancients and extracts from various sources (Herodotus, Thucydides, Isocrates, Aristotle, Diodorus, Pausanias), as well as his thoughts on several subjects (ancient law, finance, slavery, education, poetry) – all done before 1824, in BL Add. MS 29,515 (1818-1824), and University of London Library, MSS 429/4 (1820).

9 James Mill had already highlighted the importance of the 'negative' Socratic investigation, designed, in his view, to enable his students to discern and expose fallacies. See his little-known articles on Plato and Socrates: 'Taylor's Translation of Plato', *The Literary Journal* 3 (1804) 449-61; and 'Taylor's Plato', *Edinburgh Review* 14 (1809) 187-211.

10 See H. Grote, *Personal Life*, 21; and Lady Eastlake, *Mrs Grote, A Sketch* (London 1880) 43.

11 M. I. Finley, *Aspects of Antiquity* (London 1968) 29.

12 Historians like William Mitford and John Gillies, who preceded Grote, were talented scholars and unquestionably familiar with ancient sources, but deficient in the task of historical criticism. Democracy appeared to them capricious and tyrannical, and their admiration was reserved for the British constitution. If they wrote the history of ancient Athenian democracy, it was particularly in order to condemn the *idea* of democracy: democracy was equated with mob rule and terror. The rule of the *demos* was considered anarchical and the rule of envy and passion. Their works were very popular in a period of anti-revolutionary feeling.

13 See, e.g., A. Momigliano, *George Grote and the Study of Greek History* (London 1952); Finley, *Aspects of Antiquity*, 29; V. Ehrenberg, *From Solon to Socrates* (London 1968) 338; W.K.C. Guthrie, *The Sophists* (Cambridge 1971) 11, 13 n.1; G.B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge 1981) 8-9; P. Spahn, 'George Grote, John Stuart Mill und die antike Demokratie', in *Der Klassische Utilitarismus* (Berlin 1992) 145-71.

14 E.I. Carlyle, 'Sydenham, Floyer', *Dictionary of National Biography* 60 (1898) 245. See also M.L. Clarke, *Greek Studies in England: 1700-1830* (Cambridge 1945) 113 n.3.
15 T. Taylor and F. Sydenham, *The Works of Plato* (London 1804).
16 Benjamin Jowett to John Stuart Blackie, 22 March 1865; quoted in F.M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven 1981) 371 n.4.
17 J.S. Blackie, 'Plato', *Edinburgh Essays by Members of the University* (Edinburgh 1857) 6.
18 Lewes ascribed the tendency to ignore Plato in that he is a 'somewhat repulsive writer'. See *A Biographical History of Philosophy* (London 1845) II 30.
19 Clarke, *Greek Studies*, 113.
20 E. Macfait, *Remarks on the Life and Writings of Plato. With Answers to the Principal Objections Against him; and a General View of his Dialogues* (Edinburgh and London 1760) 3.
21 Anon., *An Essay on the Character and Doctrines of Socrates* (Oxford 1802) 22; similarly J.G. Cooper, *The Life of Socrates* (London 1771) 20-1.
22 J. Welwood, *The Banquet of Xenophon. Done from the Greek, with an Introductory Essay ... concerning the Doctrine, and Death of Socrates* (Glasgow 1750) 12: Socrates, according to Welwood died as 'a martyr for the unity of God'. J. Toulmin argued that Socrates can be considered as a 'type of Christ to the Heathens. See *Dissertations on the Internal Evidences and Excellence of Christianity: And on the character of Christ, compared with that of some other celebrated founders of Religion or Philosophy* (London 1785) 30. Blackie called Socrates the 'Messiah' of the 'Heathen Church': 'Plato', 30. See further, Anon., *Phedon: or, a Dialogue of the Immortality of the Soul. From Plato the Divine Philosopher* (London 1777) iii, 10; J.P. Potter, *The Religion of Socrates* (London 1831) 60-1, 80.
23 Welwood, *The Banquet of Xenophon*, 23.
24 M.E.A. Girot, *La Morale Des Anciens* (London 1807) 343-4. See also E. Edwards, *The Socratic System of Morals* (London 1773).
25 J.J. Brucker, *The History of Philosophy from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Present Century*, trans. and abridged from the original *Historia Critica Philosophiae* (London 1819) I 168. Brucker, who wrote the most influential eighteenth-century work on the history of philosophy and exerted a great influence on his British colleagues, was very critical of Plato's purely speculative tendencies, which, in his judgment, did not harmonize with Socrates' practical utilitarianism.
26 J.P. Potter, *The Mysticism of Plato, or Sincerity rested upon Reality* (London 1832) 47-8. See also R. Nares, *An Essay on the Demon or Divination of Socrates* (London 1782) 9.
27 A. Dacier, *Plato's Divine Dialogues* (London 1839) 14. See also W.A. Butler, *Lectures on the History of Ancient Philosophy* (Cambridge 1856) II 27-8.
28 This was Aelian's assertion modified. See II.13. Cooper believed Aelian (*The Life of Socrates*, 37); so did Brucker, *History of Philosophy*, I 175; Spens, *The Republic of Plato* (Glasgow 1763) xi-xvi; Welwood, *The Banquet of Xenophon*, 2-4; and even Moses Mendelssohn in his *Phaedon; or, the Death of Socrates*, trans. C. Cullen (London 1789) xxiv.
29 See *Socrates and Jesus Compared* (London 1803) 11. Floyer Sydenham described the sophists as a sect of professors, a 'set of men, smitten, not with the Love of Wisdom, but of Fame and Glory', *The Greater Hippias* (London 1759) 10. The sophists are called a tribe: *The Dialogues of Plato* (London 1767) IV 24.n. Thomas Mitchell called the sophists a 'pestilent race': 'Panegyrical Oratory of Greece', *Quarterly Review* 27 (1822) 385. William Sewell, in his *Introduction to the Dialogues of Plato* (London and Oxford 1841) 44-5, designated them a 'crew'; John Forster, a 'school of wisdom-mongers' ('Socrates and the Sophists of Athens', *Foreign Quarterly Review* 30 [1843] 341-2); and Connop Thirlwall, the historian of Greece, 'a new class of pretenders to wisdom' (*History of Greece* [London 1836] III 326; see also IV 259).
30 Forster, 'Socrates and the Sophists of Athens' 361.
31 See C.S. Stanford, Plato's *Apology of Socrates, Crito, and Phaedo* (Dublin 1835) ii-iii; H. Cary,

The Works of Plato (London 1848) I 2.
32 Thirlwall, *History of Greece*, IV 267-8.
33 T.D. Woolsey, *The Gorgias of Plato* (Cambridge 1848) xiv.
34 Blackie, 'Plato', 18, 34
35 The concept of the 'impartial spectator', which appears several times in the MS, is obviously borrowed from Adam Smith (*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*).
36 W.K.C. Guthrie remarked, like Grote, that 'our information has to be taken from men who not only knew him well but were his devoted admirers, and may therefore be thought suspiciously *partial witnesses*': *Socrates* (Cambridge 1971) 69, my italics.
37 Diogenes Laertius indeed refers to Socrates' 'disdainful, lofty spirit', τὸ ὑπεροπτικὸν καὶ μεγαλόφρον (II. 28).
38 Macaulay wrote in the same spirit: 'I do not much wonder at the violence of the hatred which Socrates had provoked. He had evidently a thorough love for making men look small. There was a meek maliciousness about him which gave wounds which must have smarted long, and his command of temper was more provoking than noisy triumph and insolence would have been.' See G.O. Trevelyan, *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* (London 1959) 603; cf. W.J. Dannhauser, *Nietzsche's View of Socrates* (Ithaca 1974).
39 L. Dissen, *De Philosophia Morali in Xenophontis de Socrate Commentariis Tradita* (Göttingen 1812).
40 Grote went on to develop his account of the sophists in the famous sixty-seventh chapter of the *History of Greece*. Henry Sidgwick declared his argument a 'historical discovery'. See 'The Sophists' in *Lectures on the Philosophy of Kant* (London 1905) 323.
41 Historians, Grote was later to argue, 'do not like to see Sokrates employing sophistry against the Sophists: that is, as they think, casting out devils by the help of Beelzebub': *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates* (London 1865) I 395.
42 Anytus in the *Meno* (94.E) observes: 'Socrates, I consider you are too apt to speak ill of people. I, for one, if you will take my advice, would warn you to be careful', etc.
43 Given the fact of the general dislike against Socrates, the wonder, in Grote's judgment, is how it happened that the indictment was postponed until he was seventy years of age. See *History of Greece* (London 1888), sixth ed., VII 141, and *Plato* I 265, II 493. The same wonder is expressed by T.C. Brickhouse and N.D. Smith, *Socrates on Trial* (Oxford 1989) 23; I.F. Stone, *The Trial of Socrates* (Boston 1988) 133-9; J.W. Roberts, *City of Sokrates* (London 1984) 73.
44 See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I.iv.4.
45 See Xen. *Mem.* I.iii.5-15.
46 Xen. *Mem.* III.ix.10.
47 Grote thus called attention to the political grounds of the trial. It is worth observing that even fifty years after the trial Aeschines addressed the following words to an Athenian jury: 'You put to death Socrates the sophist, because he was shown to have been the teacher of Critias' (*Contra Tim.*173).
48 Socrates was 'an isolated and eccentric individual, a dissenter, not only departing altogether from the character and purposes general among his fellow-citizens, but also certain to incur dangerous antipathy, in so far as he publicly proclaimed what he was': *Plato* I 303.
49 *Symposium*, 215.A-B
50 Grote never argued that Socrates was justly condemned, but that, paradoxically, the death penalty was justifiable. See *History* VII 91, 138-141, 157, 169; *Plato* I 286-7. P.W. Forchhammer in his *Die Athener und Sokrates. Die Gesetzlichen und der Revolutionär* (Berlin 1837) argued that Socrates deserved the punishment. Hegel also believed that the accusation against Socrates was just: see *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (London 1968) I 426. Cf. also M. Montuori, *De Socrate Juste Damnato* (Amsterdam 1981).