

XENOPHON'S 'SUSTAINED CIVIC INCOME'
IN THE *WAYS AND MEANS*:

NAÏVE, EXPLOITATIVE AND/OR A PLAN AHEAD OF ITS TIME?

by

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ABSTRACT: This article examines Xenophon's proposal for what will be termed here a 'Sustained Civic Income' in his *Ways and Means* (*Poroi e peri Prosodon*) as an approach for preventing civil strife and promoting a type of self-sustaining prosperity among citizens, based (not unequivocally) on non-imperialist methods. The article considers some of the observable, epistemological roots for Xenophon's scheme, with particular regard to the moral and political philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, alongside some Spartan exemplars. The article also contrasts Xenophon's plan with Pericles' juror pay along with some similar notions put forward by Aristophanes, particularly in his *Wasps*. The practicality of Xenophon's plan is assessed with recourse to such real-world figures, in terms of size and population, as are available, albeit within obviously limited degrees of accuracy. The article asserts that the subject of something like a universal basic income is of considerable relevance to the present, perhaps even more so than it was pertinent to Xenophon's own historical context.

The prospect of a universal basic income (UBI) for all citizens is a subject of contention in the modern world. The notion is increasingly being regarded seriously by both academics and policy-makers¹. It is seen more and more as an attractive possibility given the sheer number of traditional jobs that are being taken, and will continue to be taken, by automation and the advancing state of artificial intelligence, and which are not likely to be replaced in numbers by equivalent posts. At its most fundamental, a UBI amounts to "an unconditional, periodic cash payment that a government makes to everyone with no strings attached" giving them sufficient means for food, housing etc. at a basic level,

¹ See K. MILLER, *Radical Proposal: Universal Basic Income to Offset Job Losses Due to Automation*, HAI: Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence, Stanford University, 20 October 2021 [hai.stanford.edu/news/radical-proposal-universal-basic-income-offset-job-losses-due-automation, last accessed 24 June 2024].