Manetti's Socrates and the Socrateses of Antiquity

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Abstract
This article argues that Giannozzo Manetti's Life of Socrates (c. 1440), seemingly a random pastiche of ancient sources, is in fact carefully constructed to present a particular image of Socrates, a Socrates who can serve as a model for the humanistic movement of the early fifteenth century.

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Giannozzo Manetti was the most important disciple of Leonardo Bruni, so it was natural that his biography of Socrates should reflect the pains his master had taken to make Socrates acceptable to Christian readers. As Bruni was the leading republican thinker of the early Quattrocento, it is not surprising that Socrates, in Manetti’s account, became a model civic humanist and republican. Socrates lived in Athens’ golden age of military and literary glory, Manetti wrote, and gave himself in youth to the study of letters. He was remarkably eloquent.