enigmatic mathematical physics of his oral teachings on the One and the Indefinite Dyad. The Forms, the theory of Recollection, the search for the good life, all represent Plato's attempts to rationalize Pythagorean teachings about the afterlife and moral and ritual purity.

Even more than a trenchant sketch of Plato's debt to the past, students of Pythagoreanism have been in need of guidance through the post-Platonic morass. K. provides this in terms that are clear and convincing, starting with the Early Academy and ending with Iamblichus (fourth century A.D.). After delineating an almost lost Hellenistic succession, he recounts the Pythagorean reawakening in the first centuries B.C.–A.D., which flourished side by side with Middle Platonism and a renewed interest in Aristotle. He then proceeds to acquaint his readers with the contributions of Moderatus of Gades (first century A.D.), Nichomachus of Gerasa (second century A.D.), and Numenius of Apamea (second century A.D.). This last founding father of Neopythagoreanism will be familiar to students of Plotinus (third century A.D.), who was accused by his opponents of stealing Numenius' ideas. Thus K. devotes considerable effort to drawing distinctions between what we know of Numenius' doctrine of the Three Gods and Plotinus's ineffable One, Intellect, and Soul.

I feel such admiration for K.'s account up to this point that I cannot help being a bit disappointed that he chose not to trace Pythagorean motifs in later Neoplatonism. Perhaps, had he done so, he would have defeated his own purpose of writing a brief history. But I for one would have welcomed a fuller treatment of this tangled subject. Instead, he gives us snapshots of the divergent views of Pythagoras presented in the extant lives of Porphyry and Iamblichus. He speculates upon what these portraits owe to the figure of Christ and rather abruptly concludes with the truism that Iamblichus and his successors, most importantly the extraordinary Proclus, kept a Pythagorean spark alive through the Middle Ages until it blazed again in the Renaissance. This to me is short shrift for these remarkable thinkers, who speak directly to us in numerous, voluminous treatises that are not only the starting point of the modern study of Pythagoras, but also the final sublime flowering of antique Platonism.

In a last tantalizing chapter on 'The Pythagorean Heritage' K. turns to three popular strains of Pythagoreanism that, early and late, have most affected imitators of the mythic Antique: theurgy, asceticism, and that fusion of mathematics, harmonics, and astronomy usually denominated the Music of the Spheres. The last strain leads to brief discussions of Copernicus and Kepler, poignant reminders that the dust classicists now study once had relevance for modern science.

Chapel Hill GEORGIA MACHEMER

SOCRATIC EPISTEMOLOGY

H. H. BENSON: *Socratic Wisdom. The Model of Knowledge in Plato's Early Dialogues*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Pp. ix + 292. Cased, £40.00. ISBN: 0-19-512918-0.

This book grew out of a critique of Vlastos' account of the elenchus and Socrates' commitment to the priority of definition and the wish to support it by a comprehensive interpretation of the dialogues (p. vii). Parts of it are revisions of published articles, and it represents Benson's attempt to collect and coordinate his Socratic studies over more than a decade. The result is a thorough investigation of what B. calls 'Socrates, the Epistemologist' in opposition to a prevailing trend (with Vlastos

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as the most prominent spokesman) that Socrates was not an epistemologist. B. divides his examination into three parts inspired by Aristotle's testimony: method (elenchus), definition, and ignorance. B. also points out, rightly, that Socrates' ethical intellectualism (paradoxes of impossibility of weakness of the will and virtue as knowledge) has epistemological implications. It is the presuppositions and implications of these areas of Socratic philosophy that are his subject of scrutiny. The Socrates to be examined is the Socratic character in Plato's early dialogues, but B. declares that he agrees with Vlastos that the views of this character represent the views of both the historical Socrates and the early Plato (pp. 8–10). B.'s point of departure is to treat Socrates' knowledge vocabulary: *episteme*, *sophia*, *techne*, and cognates as 'essentially interchangeable' (p. 10), and his project is to discover what it is that Socrates has in view when he employs his knowledge vocabulary. In this way he hopes to avoid an apparent inconsistency in Socrates' position implied by his disavowal of knowledge and simultaneous confidence, and the obvious fallacy that one cannot have *episteme* about what one cannot define. By not importing pre-conceptions about the translation of knowledge vocabulary (such as justified true belief) B. expects to be able to save Socrates from such infelicities. Does this project succeed? Yes, in a way it does. The book is studded with brilliant analyses and solutions to many problems of detail. However, I was not so impressed by the solutions of the general urgent questions which often did not seem so new as by the well-documented, empirically based, and consequent well-balanced and full discussion by which B. reaches his results.

In Part One B. argues, first (as others have done), that the elenchus has various aims, the most important being the testing of knowledge, and secondly (as has been argued before), that individual elenctic episodes neither can nor indeed do establish more than the inconsistency of the interlocutor's beliefs. A consequence of this is claimed to be that Socrates must distinguish between knowledge and belief and that consistency of beliefs is a necessary condition of knowledge. In Part Two it is contended, first, that the required answer to the definitional question must specify the one and only universal which belongs to all and only F things, explains why those things are F, is called F-ness, and belongs to all things called F. Secondly, and more interestingly and controversially, that such definitional knowledge is both necessary and sufficient for knowledge of anything else about F-ness. In Part Three B. first argues that Socratic professions of ignorance are sincere. Then he deals with the model of knowledge presupposed by the examination so far. The claim is here, unsurprisingly, that knowledge is a *dunamis* which is directed at a field. Possession of such a *dunamis* makes one infallible regarding that field. Finally, B. turns to meeting some textual and philosophical difficulties (e.g. knowledge acquisition) raised by his Socratic model of knowledge. He ends with some observations on Platonic epistemology that are assumed to support the model.

First, the method. In Chapter 3 B. presents 'the problem of the elenchus', giving first a sketch for the form of the elenchus as he sees it (following Vlastos): (1) p (apparent refutand), (2) q, r, and s (premises), (3) premises entail ¬p, and (4) the conjunction p and r and s is false (prima facie conclusion of the elenchus). Vlastos (but not B.) thinks that Socrates from (4) inferred (5) the falsehood of p. B. thinks that the problem (inferring from inconsistency to falsity) can only be solved if Socrates supposes that the premises of the elenchus have some special alethic status that the apparent refutand lacks (p. 35). However, B. argues that Socrates does not suppose such special status, and argues for a nonconstructivist account of the elenchus (no falsehood follows from or is taken to follow from an individual elenchus). All that follows and Socrates

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concludes is that the beliefs of the interlocutor are inconsistent. Hence 'the problem of the Socratic elenchus' does not arise.

The crucial issue is the status of the 'premises' of the elenchus. Here B. (against Vlastos) believes that being believed by the interlocutor is not only a necessary but also a sufficient condition ('doxastic constraint'), and he adduces three supports: methodical remarks, the aim of elimination of interlocutor's conceit, and the practice of the elenchus. The last mentioned, i.e. Socrates' actual premises, is the empirically best founded. However, I have some reservations on the following points. For example, of the first elenchus in the *Euthyphro* we are offered a not entirely clear analysis (p. 48). It has the form of a reductio (Vlastos' indirect elenchus), which might disqualify it as evidence for Socrates' lack of belief in the premises. But B. argues (as have Brickhouse and Smith) that the distinction between direct and indirect elenchus is untenable and immaterial for the question of whether Socrates believes the premises or not. He denies first that the indirect version (the reductio) cannot establish the falsehood of the refutand. If the latter does not have the same alethic status as the premises, then the refutand *can* be proved false. But then, it may be objected, the goal is no longer just to show up inconsistency. Secondly, he argues *ad hominem* against Vlastos that the distinction is upheld just to avoid the unreal 'problem' of the elenchus. I do not think this will do. The direct arguments notably do contain 'premises' that mirror Socratic sympathies (e.g. *Apol*. 27a ff., *Gorg*. 476c ff.) to an extent not shared by indirect arguments (e.g. *Apol*. 24c ff., 25c ff., *Lach*. 192b10 ff., *Rep*. arguments against Polemarchus, and the elenchi of the *Charmides* and the *Euthyphro*). Hence I find B.'s (Vlastos') sketch of the form of the elenchus too simple. B.'s analysis of the second argument of the *Euthyphro* as direct (p. 59) does not seem convincing either. It is on the model of the two first elenchi of the *Charmides* which are clearly indirect (which would actually help B.'s thesis that no positive proof is forthcoming). Moreover, the first elenchus in the *Laches* is not that courage is some endurance (as B. claims, p. 65) but *Lach*. 190e3–191e8, and I fail to see the stretch of text 194c–197e as elenctic; rather, it is elucidation and weeding out a possible objection (dilemma), both aimed at clarifying Nicias' definition.

This said, in general B.'s identification and analysis of elenchi in the chosen paradigmatic dialogues (*Euthyphro*, *Laches*, and *Charmides*) are painstaking and admirable. However, his conclusion, depending as it does also on assumptions, e.g. about the status of the premises, is debatable: that the elenchi do not necessitate attributing positive moral doctrines to Socrates, 'the problem of the elenchus' need not arise (p. 80), or it is dissolved (Chapter 4). It is, however, absolutely necessary and commendable that this empirical textual work has been done as a check on the many current theories and generalizations about the nature of the elenchus.

The Socratic definition is an answer to the 'What is F-ness?' question, which is spelled out as: What is the one and only one universal that belongs to all and only F things, explains why those F things are F, is called F-ness, and belongs to all the things called F? (Chapter 5). More interestingly, Socrates is also committed, we are told, to the priority of definitional knowledge (one must know what F-ness is in order to know anything about F-ness), which B. defends vigorously (Chapter 6), and the sufficiency of definitional knowledge (Chapter 7). Definitional knowledge is thus both necessary and sufficient (p. 159). But there are problems with the conjunction of the two theses: an individual knowledge claim seems to entail endlessly many other knowledge claims, and it appears also to require a foundational epistemology (whereas the elenchus can do with coherentist epistemology); so definitional knowledge is not justified true belief at all (pp. 162–3), and B. seeks to solve this problem by proposing a new model of

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Socratic knowledge. But we may raise additional queries: is the strong claim about the priority of definitional knowledge compatible with other aspects of Socratic thought (and B.'s picture of it)? B. honestly admits and deals with these problems (see below), but the question is whether this defence is adequate and entirely successful.

Coming to the central chapter (Chapter 9) of his enterprise, B. offers his view of the Socratic theory of knowledge underlying the elenchus and the conception of definition. The elenchus requires that knowledge be at least true belief consistent with one's other beliefs, while the conception of definition understood as giving one and only one universal is necessary for any other knowledge about it and sufficient for the truth of any belief about it. B. determines knowledge as the kind of *dunamis* that is associated with a true cognitive state consistent with an appropriately related system of other cognitive states. It is a *dunamis* that in given circumstances produces judgements that result in true cognitive states. The object of that *dunamis* is a distinct F-ness (e.g. health in the case of medicine), and the relationship to its object is such that it enables an answer to the Socratic what is F-ness question and correct judgements involving F-ness, yielding true cognitive states consistent with the knower's other cognitive states (p. 211). The problem with the Socratic concept of knowledge is that it appears not to fall into any known epistemological category, historical or contemporary. It requires both coherent and foundational beliefs. Hence B. introduces contemporary 'understanding' as an interpretation of Socratic knowledge. This leads B. to interpreting knowledge as involving both aquaintance (wisdom, expertise) and (at least) consistent propositions.The two entail each other (p. 220).

In Chapter 10 B. deals with two challenges allegedly to his model of knowledge, though it seems rather to his conception of definition and ignorance: Socratic avowals of moral knowledge collide with his definitional ignorance (which is seriously meant, and which has wide implications), and his claims to virtue collide with ignorance and knowledge being necessary for virtue. Moreover, two philosophical problems arise on his interpretation: the 'explosion problem', i.e. that knowledge of anything requires knowledge of nearly everything, and, secondly, that aquisition of definitional knowledge depends on prior knowledge of instances and properties, which is excluded by the interpretation of B. (priority of definitional knowledge). I think this part of B.'s project is too sketchy to be satisfactory.

First, the knowledge claims in so far as they are expressions of confidence do not amount to strict knowledge. Also, Socrates did not profess universal ignorance. However, the number of moral theses that Socrates claims to know are too many to just discount. Secondly, the virtue claims (boiling down to Socrates' confidence that he is virtuous) seem to contradict that knowledge of good and evil is necessary for virtue, and that Socrates is ignorant of good and evil (p. 240). B. chooses to explain away the virtue claims which he does not think imply virtue after all. Finally, the philosophical problems of explosion and aquisition are admitted to be real problems, not to B.'s interpretation but rather to Socrates' view, and to be problems tackled by his successors Plato and Aristotle (p. 249). B. may, of course, be right that Plato and Aristotle struggled with the explosion problem identified by B., but that does not in itself prove that it was a Socratic problem and that this can be used as corroborating evidence for the model of knowledge B. attributes to Socrates. B. ends, however, with a convincing demonstration that the *Meno* shows Plato dealing with the Socratic aquisition problem (the paradox) in the conversation with the slave-boy.

I missed a final summary and conclusion, though the book otherwise abounds with useful summing-ups. It should be added that we get a twelve-page bibliography and eighteen-page general index. I noted a few misprints and two slips: 'predecessors' for

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'successors' (p. 252), and n. 36 at p. 27 does not render the needed Oxford text of *Charm*. 155a1 ἑαυτῷ.

Generally, this excellent book tackles in a most professional and meticulous way the problem it sets itself. The result is perhaps more a thought provoking and useful synopsis of the state of the art than a new revolution in our conception of Socrates. But this is meant as a praise because this is what is needed at this stage. We are clearly now getting a much more nuanced and hence realistic picture of the philosopher as a reaction to and modification of the paradigmatic shift introduced by Gregory Vlastos. We are offered a very full response to and discussion of the literature, and B. is openly facing the actual and possible objections to his views.This intellectual honesty at some points threatens the consistency of the final picture of Socrates. But perhaps this is unavoidable, an objection to the multi-faceted Socrates rather than to B.'s interpretation of him. Hence I would unhesitatingly recommend *Socratic Wisdom* to any student wishing a deeper understanding of the (still) enigmatic and immensely important figure of Socrates, and I have no doubt that future scholarship would need to refer to this carefully balanced monograph.

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SOCRATIC *APORIA*

G. B. MATTHEWS: *Socratic Perplexity and the Nature of Philosophy*. Pp. 148. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999. Cased, £19.99. ISBN: 0-19-823828-2.

This short book uses the idea of perplexity (*aporia*) as a key to the interpretation of several Platonic dialogues and at the same time makes a plea for perplexity as an important part of the life of modern philosophy departments. M. interprets Aristotle's claim that philosophy begins with wonder as meaning that it begins with perplexity. Socrates, likewise, is depicted in Plato's dialogues as coming to philosophy by recognizing that 'the attempt to offer definitions of basic ethical terms generates perplexities that one doesn't know how to resolve' (p. 21). M. illustrates this with an examination of *Laches*, arguing that this dialogue ends in genuine perplexity rather than with hints of some positive view. Socrates really cannot say whether courage is part of virtue or the whole of it. The *Euthyphro* also ends in genuine perplexity. M. thus takes issue with scholars, such as Vlastos and C. C. W. Taylor, who believe that a positive doctrine is to be discerned behind Socrates' professions of bewilderment.

M. finds in the *Meno* a transition between different conceptions of perplexity. In the early part of the dialogue there is genuine philosophical perplexity about the question how one can look for virtue if one does not know what it is. Again we must reject interpretations such as that of Vlastos which would explain this perplexity away. The image of Socrates as a self-stinging stingray is thus to be taken seriously. But the *Meno* does not end at this point. Rather, Socrates tries to steer Meno away from perplexity through the argument with the slave boy. Here there is perplexity, but of a purely instrumental kind. Its function is simply to make the listener work out the answer for himself. M. argues that there are similar instrumental uses of perplexity in dialogues such as the *Republic* and *Phaedo*.

In the first part of the *Parmenides* we meet a third kind of perplexity. This is second-order perplexity, i.e. perplexity about a philosophical theory (the theory of

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