'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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Forms) that was devised to deal with first-order perplexities. Yet another kind of perplexity is suggested in the *Theaetetus* by the comparison of Socrates with a midwife. Whereas the stingray image was used to indicate a 'paralysis that undermines one's confidence that one even knows how to use the language' (p. 91), the task of the philosophical midwife is to deliver viable theories and test for nonviable ones. In this way, M. suggests, Plato has found 'a way to honour Socrates and his philosophical barrenness without suggesting that the rôle of Socrates exhausts philosophy' (p. 92). In the *Sophist*, however, the puzzles about false belief are themselves the main object of investigation. Plato here 'retires Socrates so that he can present a way of doing philosophy quite distinct from midwiferic cross-examination'. He develops 'a philosophical method that defines *aporiai*, not just as obstacles to understanding the matter under investigation, but as themselves part of what needs to be investigated' (p. 107). This points to Aristotle's use of perplexity. For him, *aporia* is not a state of mental confusion but means 'problem' or 'puzzle'. He makes collecting perplexities an important step in organizing and directing an inquiry, and broadens the scope of perplexity to include puzzles in cosmology and biology. At the same time he brands some perplexities (for example, 'How do we know we aren't dreaming?') as illegitimate or spurious. The final chapter again criticizes interpretations of Plato's early dialogues which ignore or play down the rôle of *aporiai* and argues for the importance of perplexity in philosophy even today. Philosophy departments need teachers who can play the midwife rôle, even though they may do little for their departments' research ratings.

In many ways this is an admirable book which will certainly stimulate discussion. M. is clearly right to argue that perplexity plays an important part in Plato's dialogues, that there are different kinds of perplexity, and that interpretations, particularly of the early dialogues, which ignore perplexity cannot be regarded as adequate. One can also sympathize with his claims about the rôle of perplexity in the practice of philosophy. However, it is difficult to see quite what audience M. has in mind. The book is written in a simple and readable way, but it requires more familiarity with Plato and Platonic scholarship than one could expect in a general reader or beginning student. On the other hand, scholars and more advanced students may well complain that its interpretations of the dialogues need to be worked out in much more detail and that more attention needs to be paid to philosophical problems about perplexity. What distinguishes genuine perplexities from spurious ones? Are they just the result of linguistic confusions? If not, how do they arise?

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## PLATO'S IMAGES

E. E. PENDER: *Images of Persons Unseen. Plato's Metaphors for the Gods and the Soul*. (International Plato Studies 11.) Pp. xi + 278. Sankt Augustin: Akademia Verlag, 2000. Cased, DM 88. ISBN: 3-89655-006-8.

Students of Plato know well that the study of Plato's linguistic devices is crucial for elucidating his philosophical insights. Metaphors in particular are especially valuable in this regard, as they abound in Plato's work and often are the only way in which he

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