'Figures of Socrates' include Kahn's piece; a piece by J.-F. Mattéi on 'Socrates the Stranger' as an ontological figure, related to the origin and nature of philosophy; a compelling article by M.-C. Bataillard showing the failure of Aristotle as a historical source for Socrates, as his Socrates, throughout the *Metaphysics* and especially the three ethical works, is none other than the author of the (erroneous) thesis that virtue is knowledge; and a piece by M. Gourinat on Karl Popper's *Socrates*.

The nine essays on the Socratics open with three pieces supposedly addressing the transition from Socrates to his followers (although this is an issue that characterizes every occasion on which Socrates entered written literature). C. Natali gives an interesting reading of the Socrates in Xenophon's *Oikonomikos*. Giannantoni looks at Alcibiades as a positive example of the converted Socratic pupil in Aeschines and other Socratic literature. R. Muller proposes that Socrates and his followers are crucial players in the evolution of western concept of freedom, and that amid a rhetoric of 'negative freedom' (after I. Berlin), we see a positive freedom for virtue, which itself remains ill-defined. The section on Antisthenes includes Romeyer Dherbey on the *Ajax* and *Odysseus* as opposing views of warfare and A. Brancacci and M. Balmès on the tortuous questions of Antisthenes' logic in, respectively, Socrates' dream in Plato's *Theaetetus* 210c–202c and Aristotle's *Metaphysics* H.3. In a final set of essays on the schools, S. Husson compares Diogenes' *Politeia* to that of Plato, A. Boutot asserts the importance of the Megarians for Heidegger's reading of Aristotle, and Brunschwig reassesses Cyrenaic epistemology.

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RETHINKING THE ELENCHUS

G. A. Scott (ed.): *Does Socrates Have a Method? Rethinking the Elenchus in Plato's Dialogues and Beyond*. Pp. xiii + 327. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002. Cased, US$45. ISBN: 0-271-02173-X.

In his famous paper on Socratic method, 'The Socratic Elenchus' (*Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* I [1983], pp. 27–58, reprinted with revisions in G. Vlastos, *Socratic Studies* [Cambridge, 1994], pp. 1–37), Vlastos claimed that although Socrates was himself exclusively a moralist and therefore not reflective or self-conscious about methodology and its terminology, there was nevertheless a logical structure common to many important arguments in the early Socratic dialogues. The interlocutor asserts a thesis, p. Socrates shows the interlocutor that he is also committed to other views, q, r, which are inconsistent with p. Socrates and his interlocutor conclude that p is therefore false. Vlastos claimed to be not merely describing the structure of Socratic method, but also revealing a rather serious threat that lurks within it. How can Socrates possibly claim to have proved that p is false, when all he has actually done is show that p and q are inconsistent? The interlocutor, had he been a little more shrewd, might have gone on to deny q, leaving p unscathed.

What we must see is that this is not a narrowly logical or methodological problem, but one that cuts to the core of any Classicist's or philosopher's attempt to understand Socrates in Plato's early dialogues. At stake here is nothing less than the question of whether there is a viable constructive side to Socratic philosophy. Does Socrates merely show that his interlocutors are inconsistent, or does he draw conclusions that

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he affirms are true and basic for moral reform? Construed less charitably, does Socrates mislead us into thinking that he has made some progress in defending moral positions, when all he has really done is catch his hapless interlocutors in logical inconsistencies that do not in themselves point toward a particular conclusion?

There can be no doubt that Vlastos called our attention to a problem of fundamental importance to Socratic philosophy. He also formulated an intriguing solution, which offers an explanation for how Socrates' conclusions can be justified. Both his formulation of the problem and his solution have sparked a history of controversy, the results of which are, in this reader's mind at least, not quite so inconclusive as the introduction to our current volume would suggest. *Does Socrates Have a Method?* aims to 'reorient the discussion of the multifarious strategies and tactics employed by Socrates in Plato's dialogues and to spawn new scholarly research into previously neglected aspects of the topic' (p. 6). Viewing Vlastos as emblematic of the 'analytic' approach to philosophy, many (but not all) contributors to this volume fault his focus on the logic of arguments at the expense of what they take to be larger concerns. Although the authors in this collection do not in general do justice to the philosophical significance of Vlastos' contribution, they do ask new questions, and the answers they provide, if they do not in the end supersede or even fully address the most intriguing puzzles Vlastos raised, broaden the discussion in welcome ways. The volume is divided into four sections, each containing three essays followed by a response written by someone taking a contrasting interpretive approach.

The authors in the first part take an historical and philological view of Socratic method and methodological terminology. Both Lesher and Ausland argue that Socratic method inherits earlier traditions of literary and philosophical methodology (Parmenides' use of *elenchos* in fr. 7 and traditional rhetorical *topoi* in forensic contexts, respectively). These comparisons illuminate the literary and rhetorical significance of Socratic method, and I would suggest that they also summon us back to the poets and to elements we may now see as nascent structures of philosophical argumentation within the early poetic tradition. Although Charles Young (in his critical response) raises some shrewd objections, H. Tarrant's important piece on Plato's use of *elenchos* and *exetasis* seriously questions the entrenched assumption that *elenchos* is the term that best describes Socratic interrogation.

A focus on logic and the specifics of Vlastos's position generates some provocative essays in the book's second section. An article authored jointly by M. Carpenter and R. Polansky, together with Brickhouse and Smith's critical comments, challenges the notion of a unique Socratic method by undermining the attempt to provide a univocal account of the Socratic elenchus (although it should be noted that Vlastos never claimed there was a single form of Socratic argument, only that many important arguments were formulated in the pattern he described). In his 'Elenctic Interpretation and the Delphic Oracle', M. McPherran makes some headway into the philosophical issues at stake by suggesting an alternative to Vlastos' explanation for how the elenchus generates truth. Brickhouse and Smith's conclusion to this section, a spirited, democratic attempt to see Socrates as 'only like us', misguidedly infers from the (questionable) assumption that Socrates' method was not unique, that it does not, and does not claim to, generate reliable truths.

Authors in the third and fourth sections turn to an eclectic selection of dialogues to discuss the nature of Socratic argumentation. A polemical relationship between 'analytic' and 'continental' styles of interpretation surfaces throughout, and the debate in these sections boils down to the contrast between 'dogmatic' and 'non-dogmatic' readings of Plato. This general controversy has particular relevance

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for our basic question of whether Socratic method is constructive philosophically. Representing the 'continental' approach, Gonzalez uses the (possibly spurious) *Clitophon* and the *Euthydemus* to argue that Socratic method is 'essentially protreptic', while in a discussion of the *Lysis*, Renaud suggests that, along with its logical function, the elenchus aims to humble the individual. Heavily influenced by the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, P. Christopher Smith argues that the *Philebus*' real theme is philosophical method. Gerson's comments on all three essays raise salient objections on behalf of a standard developmentalist view of the Platonic dialogues.

Like the essays in the third section, three pieces on the *Charmides* (by Schmid, Press, and Carhvalho, followed by a critical response by Waugh) suggest that Socratic method is not constructive of moral doctrine in the way that Vlastos claimed. Carvalho could be said to speak for all three when he concludes that 'the formation of [a] virtuous character, not the formation of a positive moral doctrine, is the constructive effect of the Socratic method' (p. 267). It seems to me that our authors stand in danger of drawing a false distinction, and of misunderstanding the nature of Vlastos's position. Vlastos took Socrates to be attempting to prove moral truths, but this search for moral truths is compatible with an attempt to reform his interlocutors' character. Why must examining his interlocutor's moral beliefs and making some progress toward constructing a moral view exclude Socrates' reforming their character? Moreover, if we are to do full justice to the repeated suggestion in Plato's early dialogues that the arguments give Socrates, and not only his interlocutor, good reason to accept the conclusions and act on them, we may do well to take seriously the suggestion that Vlastos's work has demonstrated the current philosophic significance of the Socratic elenchus as 'our best hope for moral justification in an imperfect world' (M. Nussbaum, *Journal of Philosophy* XCIV [1997], p. 37).

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CRATYLUS

D. SEDLEY: *Plato's* Cratylus. Pp. xii + 190. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Cased, £40, US$60. ISBN: 0-521-58492-2.

Sedley begins by posing a question—'Why did Plato write dialogues?'—and suggesting an answer: because of a growing belief that conversation, in the form of question and answer, is the structure of thought. Philosophical questioning and answering may take place internally, in a single individual's mind, or in conversation between individuals; Platonic question-and-answer sequences may be taken as dramatizations of Plato's own thinking. S.'s reading of the *Cratylus* illustrates this view of Platonic dialectic in detail. More particularly, S. shows how the *Cratylus* may be taken to dramatize Plato's sorting out mentally the two major components in his intellectual make-up: the views of Cratylus, the first major influence on Plato, and those of Socrates.

S. also asks himself where the *Cratylus* fits into the overall chronology of Plato's career, answering 'not in any one place' (p. 7). S. places the 'hard core of the dialogue as we have it' (p. 14) not later than the middle of Plato's middle period, but argues that there are traces of later revision, perhaps from about the time of composition of the *Sophist*. Except for two passages which S. considers to belong properly to the original

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