



Philosophical Review

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BOOK REVIEWS

The central problems considered by Causey—the unity of science and the nature of theoretical reduction—are very much at the interface of philosophy of science and philosophy of language. Many of the issues are introduced with clarity, and his scientific examples, presented without unnecessary technicalities, are all illustrative of important facets of the discussion. Nevertheless, a completely satisfactory account of these questions will be written only when the insights of both fields of philosophic investigation are thoroughly integrated.

WILLIAM DEMOPOULOS

University of Western Ontario

The Philosophical Review, XC, No. 1 (January 1981)

SOCRATES, PHILOSOPHY IN PLATO'S EARLY DIALOGUES. By GERASIMOS XENOPHON SANTAS. London, Boston and Henley, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979. Pp. xiii, 343. \$25.00.

Scholars have long agonized over the celebrated Socratic problem: how accurately does the portrait in Plato's early dialogues depict the historical Socrates? But, as Santas correctly perceives, the Socrates that contemporary philosophers are really interested in is the Platonic one; many of us first learned (and some continue to learn) philosophy from our encounters with him in the pages of Plato's dialogues. This book (one of a series entitled "The Arguments of the Philosophers") is devoted to Plato's Socrates, "a philosopher whose views and arguments it is still profitable to discuss and analyze today" (p. x).

The book is divided into three parts. The first deals with Socrates as philosopher and citizen, the second with Socratic method, and the third with Socratic ethics. In Part One Santas looks mainly at the *Apology* and the *Crito*, laying out the more important arguments advanced in those dialogues, and discussing in detail the question whether the views of civil disobedience expressed in the two dialogues are inconsistent. Here Santas is able to derive immediate benefit from his patient dissection of the arguments. Having already teased out the principles used in the *Apology* to support disobedience, and those used in the *Crito* to oppose it, he is able to apply the principles of one dialogue to the case considered in the other to see if contradictory conclusions can be derived. Apparently they can, but in the end Santas is able to vindicate Socrates by distinguishing (following Rawls)

between judgments "other things equal" and judgments "all things considered," pointing out the inapplicability of some of the *Apology's* principles to the case of the *Crito*, and noting a fundamental difference in the kinds of disobedience envisaged in the two dialogues.

Part Two contains a number of exciting novelties. Santas begins with a chapter on Socratic questions, discussing their pragmatics, syntax, and semantics. Here he makes considerable use of Belnap's analysis of the logic of questions. A *primary* Socratic question (e.g., "What is piety?" "What is justice?") turns out, not surprisingly, to be a request for a Socratic definition. Somewhat more surprising, perhaps, are the presuppositions of a Socratic question—propositions that must be true if the question is to be answerable. "Most of these propositions are about kinds or universals and about general terms and abstract singulars in the Greek language," Santas tells us, and most are "highly controversial" (p. 93).

A chapter on Socratic definitions begins with a very useful list of all forty-one of the definitions "which are accepted by Socrates as syntactically or formally correct though not necessarily as true or adequate" (p. 98). Here again Santas divides his discussion into the areas of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. The section on semantics is highlighted by a provocative discussion of the difficult question of the relation between *definiendum* and *definiens* in a Socratic definition. Santas easily demonstrates that extensional equivalence is required, but wavers on the issue of property-identity. He is attracted by Nakhnikian's proposal that Socratic definitions are identity statements about properties,¹ but is well aware that it has a serious defect that Sharvy has pointed out: Socratic definitions, unlike identity statements, are nonsymmetrical.² Sharvy proposes, instead, that Socratic definitions be viewed as *analyses*. Santas attempts to combine these two proposals by suggesting that a Socratic definition is a conjunction of a statement of property-identity with a nonsymmetrical analysis. This seems a very neat solution, but there is a wrinkle in Santas' hybrid version. Whereas Sharvy can explain the nonsymmetry of definitions by claiming that *definiens* and *definiendum* are distinct properties only one of which is an analysis of the other, Santas must account for the nonsymmetry of analyses in spite of the fact that, as he has it, *analysans* and *analysandum* are one and the same property. He can no doubt accomplish this by claiming that the context ' . . . is an analysis of . . . ' is referentially

¹ G. Nakhnikian, "Elenctic Definitions," in *The Philosophy of Socrates*, ed. G. Vlastos (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1971), pp. 125–57.

² R. Sharvy, "Euthyphro 9D–11B: Analysis and Definition in Plato and Others," *Nous*, 6 (1972), 119–37.

opaque, but his otherwise excellent discussion fails to consider this complication.

Just as one encounters arguments in nearly every Socratic conversation, one finds analyses of Socratic arguments on nearly every page of Santas' book. In addition, Santas has included a chapter on Socratic arguments, in which he uses the resources of a natural deduction system for the predicate calculus as an aid to clarifying their structure. His regimentation of the sample arguments he considers is for the most part very impressive, but there are some lapses. In the argument at *Lysis* 214E–215A, for example, Socrates attempts to refute the hypothesis that those who are alike will be friends by offering a counterargument: those who are alike cannot be of mutual benefit, and so cannot cherish one another, and thus will *not* be friends. Santas wrongly characterizes this argument as a *reductio ad absurdum*, and is thus forced to recast it considerably in an effort to make it read as a *reductio*. But the “contradiction” arrived at in his reformulation is the proposition $(x)(y)(x \text{ is like } y \supset x \text{ is not like } y)$, which is not formally contradictory. (One might attempt to help Santas here by claiming that this proposition is logically false, at any rate, since it entails that nothing is like itself, and thus conflicts with the logical truth that likeness is a totally reflexive relation. But what is one to say on behalf of his similar analysis of the *Lysis*' next argument, whose “contradictory” conclusion is $(x)(x \text{ is good } \supset x \text{ is not good})$? That it is a logical truth that there are good things?) The deductions themselves are fairly straightforward, although several of their steps technically violate the rules of the system (Copi's) employed.

The capstone of the chapter on Socratic arguments is a masterful treatment of the long and complicated argument in the *Protagoras* (358D–360D) that culminates in the definition of courage. Santas carefully divides it into nine subarguments, analyzes each of these, supplies missing premises where needed, and offers alternative ways of repairing or explaining lapses in the argument. Two claims made about the ninth subargument, however, seem to me to be questionable. In this argument, Socrates tries to establish that courage is knowledge of the fearful on the grounds that the former is the opposite of the same thing that the latter is the opposite of (since cowardice is ignorance of the fearful). Santas claims that the argument as it stands is not valid, requiring the additional premise that each opposite has only one opposite (*Prot.* 332C–D). Of course he is right that the uniqueness of opposites is assumed, but his translation of the argument contains definite descriptions (“the opposite of cowardice,” etc.) which guarantee that uniqueness. Thus, Santas' own version of the argument

is valid as it stands in any system containing a standard Russellian analysis of definite descriptions. In addition, Santas (unwisely, I think) follows Vlastos in taking 'opposite' in this argument to have the force of 'complement' in set theory. He then makes trouble for the argument by noting, plausibly enough, that courage and cowardice, wisdom and ignorance, are not opposites in this sense. But Socrates' argument requires only the uniqueness, not the exhaustiveness, of pairs of opposites; what is wanted, then, is the ordinary, informal notion of opposition. One may perfectly well say that *white* has one and only one opposite, namely, *black* (*nonwhite* is *white's* complement, not its opposite) without being committed to the conclusion that everything is either black or white.

The first two chapters of Part Three, which deal with the Socratic paradoxes and with explanations of weakness, originally appeared, in substantially their present form, as articles in *The Philosophical Review*.³ These brilliant essays should be required reading for anyone interested in Socratic ethics, and I can only applaud their reappearance in this volume, where they serve as a perfect introduction to that topic. Santas' position in these chapters is generally a supportive one: there is more to the seemingly bizarre Socratic contentions than may appear at first glance. The situation is somewhat different in the long concluding chapter which takes up the *Gorgias'* treatment of the relation between virtue and happiness. Here Santas' conclusions tend to be more negative, although he never ceases to interpret sympathetically. Two examples will have to suffice to give the flavor of Santas' rich and rewarding discussion. In criticizing the argument at 474D–475E that it is worse to do injustice than to suffer it, Santas points out what seems to me to be its crucial flaw: Socrates needs to establish that doing injustice is worse *for the wrongdoer* than suffering injustice is *for the sufferer*, but his premises entail no more than that "the *total* harm caused by doing wrong is greater than the harm of suffering wrong is to the sufferer" (p. 240). (What Santas does not point out is just how trivial this result really is, since the total harm caused by doing wrong will typically include the harm of the sufferer as a proper part.)

The account of the argument (*Gorgias* 497E–499B) designed to show the inconsistency of Callicles' hedonism contains a delightful surprise. In a gem of sensitive and sympathetic reconstruction, Santas finds definite, although limited, virtues in a seemingly hopeless argument. He takes Callicles to be a hedonist concerning the good and an egoistic tele-

³ "The Socratic Paradoxes," *Philosophical Review*, 73 (1964), 147–64; "Plato's *Protagoras* and Explanations of Weakness," *Philosophical Review*, 75 (1966), 3–33.

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ologist concerning the right, and construes the argument as showing that Callicles, even though his position may be logically consistent, can give no adequate account of the good man.

Throughout, Santas' approach to his material is carefully balanced: he is sympathetic without being reverential, hardheaded without being condescending. While many of the discussions are detailed and technical, there is nearly always enough background material provided to make the book accessible to novices as well as to professional philosophers. Santas has made a substantial contribution to our understanding and appreciation of the philosophical content of Plato's early dialogues.

S. MARC COHEN

University of Washington

The Philosophical Review, XC, No. 1 (January 1981)

A HISTORY OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY, VOLUME V: THE LATER PLATO AND THE ACADEMY. By W. K. C. GUTHRIE. New York, Cambridge University Press, 1978. Pp. xvi, 539. \$42.50.

The fifth volume of Professor Guthrie's *History of Greek Philosophy* completes his two-volume account of Plato. He discusses the later dialogues from the *Parmenides* onwards, including the *Cratylus* and the *Timaeus* (the latter with, the former without, a commitment to its belonging chronologically to the later period). He deals with the doubtful and spurious dialogues, and with the letters attributed to Plato. There is a chapter on the "unwritten doctrines" and the Tübingen school's theories about them. The book concludes with a brief but useful compendium of information about Plato's associates in the Academy (other than Aristotle): Eudoxus, Speusippus, Xenocrates, Heraclides Ponticus, and some others.

The two volumes together comprise a work on Plato of over a thousand pages. While there are many books, and many kinds of book, on Plato, it is a long time since English scholarship has produced a work so comprehensive in design, so detailed in its coverage. If it is very much a scholar's rather than a philosopher's account of Plato