Does Socrates Have a Method? Rethinking the Elenchus in Plato's Dialogues and...

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The Review of Metaphysics; Mar 2004; 57, 3; Research Library Core
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the Creator as well as the participatory goodness of creatures, Augustine places the origin of evil in the free will which chooses lesser goods when Good itself is available. Evil is thus not a thing but an action explainable only through good, albeit misused, beings. Schäfer also offers two illuminating excursuses. The first is on the fall of the angels and it is here where we most easily see Plotinus' definition of sin as the prideful soul's turning away from the Good influencing Augustine. The second is on *der Birnendiebstahl* where Schäfer argues that Augustine chooses to recall his stealing of the pears so many years later because the sheer emptiness of such an act best represents the merging of sin as pride (*superbia*), as stifling of the self (*curvatio in se ipsum*), and as infidelity (*fornicatur anima*).

Without any depiction of the fall of Adam or of the *felix culpa* of Pauline theology, the pages of Dionysius the Areopagite do not seem to offer much by way of explaining evil. However, this work concludes (pp. 380–472) by examining the Pseudo's strict hierarchy of being (*Seinshierarchie*) and how evil disrupts the intended order of things. After a brief biography, there is a comprehensive survey of Dionysian scholarship and then Schäfer argues that evil actually plays a more venomousness and paradoxical role in the Pseudo's thought than in Augustine's (p. 423). How so? By working through the second half of *The Divine Names* 4, we see how the Pseudo grants disorder ontological status, a "minimal presence . . . subsisting at the lowest order" (*DN* 720C) and Schäfer makes sense of statements such as these by concentrating on and explicating other passages defining evil as parasitic. This section ends with a very helpful and welcomed look into Dionysius' understanding of Christian *theosis*, that mystical union in which no defect or lack can take hold.

By way of conclusion, Schäfer could have paid more attention to comparing these three thinkers; he could have also shown a greater appreciation of the scriptural and theological influences on Augustine and Dionysius. As it is, however, this is a very helpful volume, providing key texts and an excellent survey of scholarly treatments; the bibliography itself, naturally drawing from mostly Continental scholarship, runs over twenty pages. Originally began as a habilitation in philosophy at the University of Regensberg, Schäfer has produced an illuminating analysis of the three main advocates of explaining evil as *privatio boni*.—David V. Meconi, S.J., *University of Innsbruck*.

SCOTT, Gary Alan, editor. *Does Socrates Have a Method? Rethinking the Elenchus in Plato's Dialogues and Beyond*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002. ix + 327 pp. Cloth, $45.00—Since the publication of Gregory Vlastos's influential article, "The Socratic Elenchus" [*Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1983): 27–58], talk of "the *elenchus*" has dominated scholarship concerned with the nature of Socrates' method. Yet for all the attention it has received, consensus has proven remarkably rare. The broad diversity of scholarly opinion concerning precisely what Socrates is up to in the dialogues is powerfully reflected in this volume. There are those, like James Lesher and Hayden Ausland, who look to the philosophical and rhetorical tradition to uncover the rich diversity of meanings the term *elenchus* had taken on by the time of Socrates; there are others, like Fransico Gonzalez, François Renaud, John Carvalho and Joanne Waugh, who suggest that the Socratic method is directed toward a far more complex set of problems related to the philosophical life than the focus on the *elenchus* as refutation would lead us to believe; there are even those, like Michelle Carpenter, Ronald Polansky, Thomas Brickhouse, and Nicholas Smith, who suggest either that Socrates has no single method, or indeed, that he has no method at all to guide him through the multifarious and multifaceted conversations in which he engages. The great virtue of this volume is that it brings this polyphony of voices to bear on the central question concerning the nature of the Socratic approach to philosophy.

The book is divided into four sections, each featuring three essays followed by a response that serves as a sort of antistrophe. The first section addresses the historical origins of Socratic method, the second reexamines Vlastos's analysis of "the *Elenchus*"; the third section challenges the assumptions of those who read the dialogues dogmatically by focusing on specific dialogues and highlighting the protreptic and deconstructive dimensions of Socrates' philosophizing; finally, the fourth section offers a set of interpretations of the *elenchus* at work in the *Charmides*. According to Scott, the intention behind this structure is to "offer something of interest to all readers of Plato and students of Socrates" (p.7). While the volume certainly does this, its structure, as Scott himself recognizes, precludes genuine dialogue by granting the last word to the critics. Taken as a whole, however, the volume points to and helps flesh out the tension that has come to underlie Platonic scholarship in the English-speaking world over the past thirty years.

Broadly speaking, this tension concerns precisely how to approach the dialogues themselves. In his response to the three essays that make up the third section of the volume, Lloyd P. Gerson sets out a strong critique of those who approach the dialogues "non-dogmatically." Gerson, who espouses a developmentalist position and claims "that the two fundamental pillars of Plato's speculative or systematic philosophy are the separate existence of Forms and the immortality of the soul" (p. 221), criticizes nondogmatic interpretations for their unwillingness to ascribe definitive doctrines to Plato while simultaneously arguing that the dialogues do teach something. For Gerson, this is tantamount to saying that there is and is not a discernible doctrine in the Platonic corpus. Yet while Gerson suggests that nondogmatists equivocate on the term "nondogmatic," it seems that he himself has too broad a vision of dogmatism. What many of the so-called nondogmatic interpreters have in common is not the belief that Plato's philosophy teaches nothing, but rather, that there are no definitive doctrines that can be unequivocally ascribed to Plato, that Plato was not a systematic philosopher in the modern sense and that he had profound philosophical reasons for writing dramatic dialogues. Thus, while Gerson is perhaps correct when he writes: "I do not think it is possible to say what any dialogue means without a theory about Plato's philosophy," it by no means follows that Plato's philosophy was either systematic or intent on firmly establishing a set of determinate doctrines. Plato's philosophy seems to be nondogmatic in the more modern sense of dogmatism as the unwarranted and arrogant positive assertion of opinion, not in the more ancient sense that Plato had no opinions.

The various positions set forth in this volume on the Socratic *elenchus* testify to the great fecundity of the Platonic dialogue as a mode of philosophical expression; for each interpretation find solid justification in the text. The fact that each interpreter is able to lend insight into one or another dimension of Platonic thinking without ever establishing anything like a definitive account of the Socratic method speaks well of both the genius of Plato and the construction of this collection of essays.—Christopher P. Long, *Richard Stockton College of New Jersey.*

SHANLEY, Brian J. *The Thomist Tradition.* Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002. xiv + 289 pp. Cloth, $90.00—This collection of well-crafted reflections on philosophy of religion places Aquinas in dialogue with his interpreters as well as advocates of differing starting points and philosophical positions. Departing from an overview of twentieth-Century Thomisms, eight topics are comprehensively examined without presenting Aquinas as offering simplistic resolutions to any of them: religious knowledge/faith and reason; religious language; religion and science; evil and suffering; religion and morality; human nature and destiny; conception of the absolute; and religious pluralism.

Close examinations of competing interpretations of Aquinas complement insistence on the profound coherence of Aquinas's reflections without any caricature of his works as a manualist encyclopedia with ready responses to all questions. Yet the author firmly holds that one can adjudicate competing interpretations of major issues and indicates those he considers more certain or correct. Familiarity with virtually all "thomasian" interpretive genotypes is evidenced.

The careful inventory of last century's diverse Thomisms highlights tensions between prominent figures who tended toward conservative fidelity or innovative dialogue. Opposing positions often centered on the notion of "Christian philosophy," and Shanley establishes why his own analyses are not tainted by such controversies since "metaphysics approaches God as its own *telos*, and that *telos* has nothing to do with providing evidentiary grounds for revelation based theology but rather is meant to satisfy the mind's search for an ultimate causal explanation for the world" (p. 38). Delineation of the profoundly interrelated yet distinct orders of philosophy and revelation is sharpened by affirming that "while it is true to say that analogical predication of divine names is not itself a metaphysical doctrine, it does presuppose a metaphysical foundation" (p. 45). Ultimately, "we can gain no conceptual purchase on the