

Socratic Ignorance and the Claim that Virtue Is Knowledge

David Jensen

Socrates professes several times to know and teach nothing.¹ Further, he claims that for individuals to be virtuous, they must possess a certain knowledge, hence the claim that virtue is knowledge. These two assertions imply, then, that Socrates himself lacks virtue since he denies in the first place his having any knowledge. Clearly these premises and the ensuing conclusion are problematic. First, Socrates obviously appears to have much knowledge. This throws into doubt the premise (his own claim) that he knows nothing. Second, his assertion that virtue is knowledge seems to overlook apparent cases of weakness of will, when one knows the better action but chooses the worse. Not only are these premises problematic, but also the conclusion that Socrates himself lacks virtue is disastrous to Socrates' philosophical project, which is primarily focused on ethical concerns (like virtue). How can the problem of Socrates' claim to ignorance and its related issues be resolved? In this essay I shall appeal to Socrates' epistemology as explained in the *Meno* to resolve the problems of both premises: his disavowal of knowledge and his assertion that virtue is knowledge.² Not only will this explanation resolve the problems of the premises themselves, but also, in consequence, it will avoid the conclusion that Socrates lacks virtue.

1. This essay was awarded second prize in the 1995 David H. Yarn Essay Contest.

2. In this paper, I shall make references to the *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Gorgias*, and *Meno*, all which I consider to be "Socratic" dialogues, that is, dialogues written by Plato in which the character Socrates indeed represents the historic Socrates and his philosophy. The most disputed of these dialogues is the *Meno*. Gregory Vlastos classifies the *Meno* as one of Plato's middle dialogues, wholly representative of Plato's ideas ("Disavowal" 1-2). However, J. H. Leshner, responding directly to Vlastos, notes that such an exclusion is "controversial and potentially significant" (278). He argues that only some aspects of the *Meno* are Platonic, namely, the doctrine of recollection and the discussion of mathematics. Among other things, Leshner notes, the distinction between knowledge and belief (which I shall use extensively in this paper) is implied in earlier dialogues and can be considered Socratic (278). Hugh Benson, also aware of Vlastos' exclusion of the *Meno*, notes that "opinion is sharply divided concerning the order of composition" (*Essays* 5). However, he continues, "the *Meno* does appear to be generally recognized to be the latest of this early period and as such to be a transitional dialogue: the Socrates of the early period remains" (*Essays* 5).

To develop this thesis, I shall, beginning with Socrates' claim to ignorance, examine assertions that state or imply his knowledge. Following a critical analysis of recent scholarship, I will present my own solution to this apparent contradiction. Then, addressing the assertion that virtue is knowledge and its paradoxical implication that all wrong acts are involuntary, I will also examine current scholarship. I will show how my solution to Socrates' disavowal of knowledge likewise resolves this problem and also conforms with Socrates' philosophy, specifically with the elenctic method.

In several of the Socratic dialogues, Socrates claims to know and teach nothing. To his prosecutors in the *Apology* Socrates states, "I am very conscious that I am not wise at all" (21d). Further, he notes that if "anyone says that he has learned anything from me . . . be assured that he is not telling the truth" (33b). After having questioned one who claimed to be wise, Socrates notes that "neither of us knows anything . . . I do not know, neither do I think I know" (21d). Speaking to Meno about virtue, Socrates claims that "I . . . am as poor as my fellow citizens in this matter, and I blame myself for my complete ignorance about virtue" (*Meno* 71b). Responding to Meno's accusation that Socrates perplexes his interlocutors, the latter confesses, "I am more perplexed than anyone when I cause perplexity in others" (*Meno* 80c). It is important to note that the *Apology* represents Socrates at the end of his philosophical career, just before his death. Hence, his denial of knowing in this dialogue in particular shows that he indeed claimed not to know anything, even after years of philosophical inquiry.

While not explicitly asserting his denial of knowledge in the *Euthyphro*, Socrates further exemplifies the disavowal by his interrogation of Euthyphro. Having previously heard the oracle at Delphi's claim that none are wiser than Socrates, the latter interrogates those who think themselves wise in order to prove his own lack of wisdom (see *Apology* 21a–e).³ Socrates' interrogation of Euthyphro, who professes to know piety, is a paradigm case of the former's attempt to demonstrate his self-perceived and self-proclaimed ignorance. In this dialogue, Socrates asks Euthyphro to define piety. However, Socrates not only refutes each definition that Euthyphro offers, but he also eventually gives Euthyphro a definition (11e–12a). But once again, as explained in the *Apology*, Socrates' purpose in such encounters is to demonstrate his own lack of knowledge.

Socrates' claim to ignorance implies serious consequences. First, it seems obvious that Socrates possesses and teaches much knowledge,

3. The disavowal of knowledge, here seen in the *Meno*, is clearly Socratic. See footnote 2.

hence making his claims to ignorance contradictory. On the one hand, he leads his interlocutors through his elenctic method of inquiry—rejecting, affirming, and proposing various definitions. His ability to do this implies some knowledge. This is clearly seen in the *Euthyphro*, as noted above. On the other hand, both readers and interlocutors (to a varying degree), learn some knowledge of the subject pursued by Socrates. In the *Crito*, for example, Socrates appears to teach Crito many things about the nature of obedience to political laws. If nothing more, the interlocutors understand the error of their previous conceptions. A second implication of the claim to know nothing relates to Socrates' assertion in the *Meno* that virtue is knowledge (88c-d).⁴ Hence, his claim to ignorance is also an admission to lacking virtue. It is difficult to accept that the man who is the god's gift to Athens, who stands in contrast to the sophists, who engages at length in discussions about virtue, piety and so forth, and whose very philosophy centers on ethics should himself be devoid of virtue (see *Apology* 30e).

In reaction to the disavowal of knowledge and its ensuing problems, several explanations purport to resolve the contradiction. One could argue that Socrates does indeed know nothing but learns as he experiences the elenctic process of inquiry with his interlocutors. This could explain both his claim to know nothing and his approaching various interlocutors with the desire to be taught by them. In addition, it would explain the source of his apparent knowledge. However, how is Socrates able to accept and reject the various definitions and assertions of his interlocutors if, according to this solution, he knows nothing at the beginning of a particular inquiry? Because of his ability to respond to his interlocutors, he appears to know already the definitions in question, or at least to have knowledge of the subject matter. Perhaps one could argue that he does not know the topic being examined, but rather he possesses some "skill" which allows him to distinguish between the true and false assertions discussed in the elenctic process, a skill which his interlocutors lack. But Socrates makes no indication of any sort of special skill. Even if he did have such a skill, why would his interlocutors consistently lack it? In addition, the elenctic process is generally not constructive of beliefs, but destructive. Even were it constructive, Socrates still claims in the *Apology* to having learned nothing, though he admits to having interrogated the wise men of Athens. Hence, explaining Socrates' claims to ignorance as a declaration of his initially

4. This notion, though found in the *Meno*, is generally accepted as belonging to Socrates. See footnote 2.

ignorant disposition which he alleviates by elenchus (thus explaining his apparent knowledge) is not plausible in light of the actual working out of elenctic inquiry.

Socrates' claim to know nothing could also be explained as a self-juxtaposition to "the god" whose vast knowledge makes Socrates' knowledge seem worthless. Socrates would essentially be saying then that although he knows some things, he admits to knowing nothing because next to the god, his knowledge is negligible. This would appear to explain the contradiction. Additionally, Socrates' strong identification with the god in the *Apology* makes this explanation plausible, especially since his interrogation of the so-called wise, to whom he asserts his ignorance, results from his mission from the god. However, this position presents problems. It explains his claims to ignorance but not his claims to knowledge. That is, if Socrates does know things, but also knows nothing compared to the god, then he should claim to know nothing. But then why does he, on some occasions, claim to know things (see *Gorgias* 486e and *Apology* 29b6, for example)? Does he momentarily forget about the god who makes his knowledge as if nothing? In addition, this position is problematic since the god himself claims that Socrates is the wisest man. His devotion to the god should lead him to recognize his knowledge, not denounce it and then seek to prove the god wrong.

Another argument explaining Socrates' claim to ignorance purports that his disavowal is a rhetorical device used to incite his interlocutors to engage in discussion. This explanation is advocated by Norman Gulley. However, it seems inconsistent with Socrates' character and his ethical philosophy to use deceptive or less truthful means, though his end be worthy. In fact, in light of Socrates' criticism of and opposition to the sophists, it seems highly unlikely that he would use uniquely rhetorical techniques. Vlastos argues likewise against this position, stating that Socrates could not be "saying what he does not believe . . . when his own first rule in elenctic dialogue is 'to say what you believe'" ("Disavowal" 4). Vlastos notes that Socrates says to the judges in the *Apology*, "Now I shall tell you the whole truth" (5). For this reason alone it seems unlikely that Socrates would consciously use explicitly rhetorical techniques, or at least that his disavowal of knowledge would be exclusively or primarily rhetorical.

Socrates' claim to ignorance can also be explained as literally meaning that he has no knowledge. Terence Irwin supports this position and argues that Socrates has only true belief (39–40). But, argues Vlastos, why then does Socrates search for knowledge, and not true belief, if he knows he can have only true belief ("Disavowal" 5–6). "If after decades

of search Socrates remained convinced that he still knew *nothing* . . . [then] his life is a disaster, he has missed out on virtue and, therewith, on happiness" (6). In addition, Vlastos cites several passages wherein Socrates clearly asserts that he knows a truth. Hence this position, while explaining the claims to ignorance, does not explain the claims to knowledge. Also, in light of its claim that Socrates has only true belief, it leaves unanswered the Socratic claim that virtue is knowledge.

Vlastos, having rejected both Gulley's and Irwin's explanations, argues that Socrates uses knowledge in two senses. This, he asserts, explains the apparently contradictory claims ("Disavowal" 1-2). Vlastos distinguishes knowledge_c, certain knowledge, from knowledge_e, which is knowledge as a result of the elenctic method of inquiry. He states:

To resolve the paradox we need only suppose that he is making a dual use of his words for knowing. When declaring that he knows absolutely nothing [knowledge_c] he is referring to that very strong sense . . . where one says one knows only when one is claiming certainty. . . . This would leave him free to admit that he does have moral knowledge in a radically weaker sense. ("Disavowal" 12)

Hence, Socrates' claim to know nothing is a claim referring to knowledge_c which as "certain" knowledge is nearly impossible to have (18). Though elenctic knowledge is only probable knowledge, because its denial is certainly false and its degree of probability is high (after elenchus), it deserves nevertheless to be called knowledge, hence knowledge_e. J. H. Leshner, however, argues that the process of elenchus that creates knowledge is itself "uncertain" and whatever it might produce must be knowledge in some special inferior sense (277). Indeed, it seems difficult that such "weak knowledge" could support the requirement of knowledge for Socrates' assertion that virtue is knowledge. Additionally, Leshner continues, "Socrates need not have responded to the limitations of his elenctic route to knowledge by carving off a special, inferior, sense of 'know'" (277). Leshner argues, the "multiplication of senses of 'know' would be thoroughly 'un-socratic'" (278). In fact, Vlastos makes the distinction by explaining ways or senses in which *we* presently use "know" ("Disavowal" 11), and yet there is no necessary connection with our use and Socrates' use. Certainly one cannot sufficiently make a connection between present-day usage and Socratic philosophical discourse without specific indications from the text. Hence, it seems difficult to verify that Socrates intended different senses of knowing, though this solution does provide an interesting reconstruction of Socrates' ideas.

Leshner himself argues in a manner that also seems to split knowledge. He states that "Socrates' denials of moral knowledge are denials of knowledge concerning the truth of certain basic theses *about virtue, the good, and the noble*, and are therefore compatible with claims to knowledge *about the moral character of specific actions*" (282). Thus, Leshner argues, Socrates cannot say that he knows the essence of virtue, but still can say that he knows certain actions are good or bad (284). But "knowledge concerning" and "knowledge about" seem to multiply the senses of knowledge as much as Vlastos' knowledge_c and knowledge_e, though the latter may also be problematic for other reasons. Interestingly, Leshner continues by saying that Socrates is upholding the conventional morality, which is general knowledge to the community, even though Socrates does not know the definitions which apply. But if so, then why does Socrates argue for definitions and essences if one need only follow the conventional morality? This seems to compromise and contradict much of Socrates' efforts, which consist of insisting upon essential definitions from his interlocutors.

In addition to their individual problems, the preceding explanations fail to lend significant philosophical import to the contradiction of Socrates' disavowal of knowledge in light of his apparently abundant knowledge. It seems that such a blatant and repeated contradiction regarding a fundamental issue such as the status of knowledge (and its relation to virtue and to Socrates) must be intended to expound a significant philosophical position. To argue away the distinction based on a less significant explanation should cause one to ask why Socrates bothered with the contradiction in the first place? Here I propose a solution that in some ways draws upon ideas already expressed; yet it is simpler, more readily justified, and more powerful in its application.⁵

Indeed, Socrates' claim to know nothing must be understood as a result of Socrates' having a different notion of knowledge. Hence, he speaks literally in making his claim to know nothing. However, he is not as skeptical as he may appear, and his claims to know some things can be justified.

This understanding of knowledge is explained in the *Meno*. Here, Socrates asks Meno whether virtue is a type of knowledge. If virtue

5. Again, I must note that Vlastos rejects the *Meno* as a Socratic dialogue. It hence plays no part in his analysis. However, this does not impede the preceding criticism of his position, though the inclusion of the *Meno* could obviously alter his argument.

is knowledge, then it can be taught, since knowledge can be taught. Socrates continues by explaining that there are many qualities in the soul, such as courage, intelligence, memory, and so forth which can be used either for one's benefit or detriment. To use these qualities wisely constitutes virtue. Since using them wisely requires knowledge of what is a wise (beneficial) use as opposed to a detrimental use, then virtue must be a sort of knowledge. In addition, Socrates notes, since all persons act for their own good, evil acts (which lack virtue) must be the result of ignorance.⁶ But surprisingly, Socrates makes a seemingly ridiculous and contradictory conclusion. He states that if virtue could be taught, then there would be teachers of virtue. But since there are no teachers of virtue, then virtue must not be teachable (96c-d). Hence, people cannot obtain or act according to virtue.

Quickly responding to his own conclusion, Socrates admits that he does not want to deny that there can be virtuous people. He states that "it is ridiculous that we failed to see that it is not only under the guidance of knowledge that men succeed in their affairs" (96e). Socrates notes that it is incorrect to assume that one cannot guide others because of a lack of knowledge (97a). In fact, one can also lead another by true opinion, it can also bring about virtue (97c).

However, though true opinion can function the same (produce the same effects) as knowledge, Socrates makes an important distinction between the two. He says:

True opinions, as long as they remain, are a fine thing and all they do is good, but they are not willing to remain long, and they escape from a man's mind, so that they are not worth much until one ties them down by (giving) an account of the reason why. . . . After they are tied down, in the first place they become knowledge, and then they remain in place. (97e-98b)

Hence, true opinions, though cognitively (and ethically for Socrates) as useful as knowledge, are fleeting until they become knowledge. To become knowledge, one must give an account or proof of the thing in question. Concerning knowledge, Socrates admits:

6. This assertion itself, that all people act for the good, is controversial. I will not take up the debate on it here. However, it seems that Socrates is asserting that when people do good or evil, they do so because they think it will bring about some benefit or good. Even in committing an act such as suicide, a person at that time thinks that he or she will be better off after the act, though most would agree that it is a desperate act resulting in no good.

Indeed, I too speak as one who does not have knowledge but is guessing. However, I certainly do not think I am guessing that right opinion is a different thing from knowledge. *If I claim to know anything else—and I would make that claim about few things—I would put this down as one of the things I know.* (98b, italics added)

The preceding two passages are crucial to understanding Socrates' claim to ignorance. From them it follows that Socrates' claim not to know or teach is an epistemological statement that conforms to his understanding of knowledge. He knows nothing because knowing is so difficult. This truth itself is one of the few things he does know. However, his opinions, though not knowledge, are largely correct. Hence, though Socrates knows nothing, it would appear that these correct opinions allow him to conduct elenctic inquiries, rejecting and accepting various assertions of his interlocutors. It is these elenctic inquiries that attempt to give an account, and thus produce knowledge, though knowledge is seldom reached.

This interpretation of the Socratic claim to ignorance solves the apparent contradiction in similar ways as some of the previous explanations. It also seems to distinguish between two types of knowledge. Although in this case, one is knowledge and the other is, somewhat like Irwin's account, a sort of belief or opinion. Vlastos might object that Socrates should then search for true opinion, not knowledge. But Socrates, in my explanation, does not completely reject knowledge (see above quotation) as Irwin claims he does. In addition, this explanation upholds that knowledge should be pursued though one may only arrive at true opinion in the process. This interpretation is advantageous over the others also because it is supported by statements made by Socrates about himself, explaining his own position. Additionally, it lends more philosophical import to the apparent contradiction; namely, it explains a clear epistemological distinction evident in Socrates' ambiguity.

One might object that on several occasions Socrates claims to know something. Hence, this explanation only explains the claims to ignorance (in contrast to his apparent knowledge), not the claims to knowledge which still result in a contradiction with the claims to ignorance. However, in light of previously cited passages, it seems reasonable to infer that Socrates completely disavowed knowledge because for the most part his "knowledge" was just true belief. The few times that he does claim to know something are so negligible compared to the number of true beliefs which he holds that in essence he can still claim to know

nothing. If so, it seems reasonable to infer that Socrates uses knowledge both in the sense that he has learned a thing (as opposed to having true opinion), and in the sense that he is following the standard, nonphilosophical, undifferentiated use of knowledge that his interlocutors would have used. By doing the latter, he conforms to the beneficial and common place belief that knowledge is possible.

Having established how Socrates can know or appear to know, the question of virtue as knowledge, and its consequential paradox that no one knowingly does wrong, can be answered. As quoted above, the *Meno* makes the assertion that virtue is knowledge. In addition, the *Gorgias* makes the stronger claim, implied by the assertion that virtue is knowledge, that no one voluntarily (knowingly) does wrong. Socrates, speaking to Gorgias, affirms that "a man who has learnt about right will be righteous. . . . He will in fact of necessity always will to perform right actions. . . . [He] will never will to do wrong" (460).

Several scholars have argued for the inadequacy of Socrates' claim that virtue is knowledge. Quite simply, it appears from normal experience that people who know right from wrong still at times choose wrong, even being aware of the consequences. Gerasimos Santas, though himself not supporting this claim, explains that the general criticism against Socrates is that the intellect is emphasized and the will neglected (183). Santas notes that Aristotle, Aquinas, Jaeger, Cornford, and Gould all share this opinion (184). Jaeger states that "this belief held by Socrates is opposed to the opinion which has been current throughout the history of morals. Most people have always thought that, too often, a man sees perfectly well what he ought to do, and yet decided to do what is wrong" (64–65). Cornford likewise argues that the true self is a faculty of will, not of the intellect. Hence, to ascribe ignorance to wrong doing is a mistake (51). Gould claims "Socrates was wrong in supposing that if a man achieved an understanding of what justice involves, he would necessarily become just in behavior, since the whole problem of choice intervenes between knowledge and action" (qtd. in Santas 184).

Jaeger and Cornford, unlike Gould, have not detailed their objections other than the obvious contradiction Socrates' position seems to pose with normal experience. Vlastos, in criticizing Gould, notes that Gould attempts to explain the problem of virtue as knowledge by asserting that Socrates' notion of knowledge is know how, or in the case of virtue, knowing how to be moral ("Pessimism" 227). But, Vlastos notes, this leads to serious problems when applied to all of Socrates' uses of knowing (228). In addition, the whole of Socrates' method is

meant to be "intellectualist," and hence this interpretation seems to overlook a necessary element that creates the problem of virtue's being knowledge in the first place (228). In other words, to abandon the intellectualist aspect (by a "know how" interpretation) does not solve the problem because it eliminates the very essence of the relation.

Santas also offers an explanation of the paradox. Santas notes that knowledge is typically interpreted as knowledge of virtue. However, he proposes another interpretation involving two types of knowledge. "If a man has knowledge of [1] what is virtuous and *also* [2] knowledge that it is always better for one to do what is virtuous, then he will always behave virtuously" (190). Santas argues that this overcomes the problem because if a man commits injustice, then either (1) he does not know he is being unjust or (2) he does not know that what he is doing will harm him, or both (190). While this seems to be a coherent explanation, it explains little, and seems to take the force out of Socrates' argument. Nor is there much textual support that Socrates intended such an interpretation of the paradox. Most importantly, however, it does not respond to the issue of weakness of will. That is, how can a person, using Santas's distinction, (1) know a thing is virtuous, (2) know that it is better to act virtuously, but still not perform this action. Human behavior seems to show that people fulfill both requirements of Santas and yet still act without virtue.

I propose that the same notion of knowledge that answers the problem of Socrates' claim to ignorance justifies his claim that virtue is knowledge. As is explained in the *Meno*, what one holds to be knowledge is not really knowledge, but true opinion. And opinion is transitory, unless "tied down" by certainty. Hence, how can individuals do wrong when they know? Individuals can do wrong because their knowledge was only true opinion, not knowledge. As a result of its fleeting nature, individuals can appear to know or have known and still do wrong. That is, true opinion does not remain with a person the way knowledge does. Thus, knowledge is indeed virtue, and the person who knows will not commit wrong. However, we often mistake true opinion in others for knowledge, and hence the person appears to know but does not.

Consequently, the Socratic imperative that virtue is knowledge does account for a notion of the will, though not explicitly. For example, it is not cognitive problems that stop Euthyphro from learning but his lack of moral commitment. Hence, if Euthyphro does fail to achieve knowledge, it is because of a moral irresponsibility, a failure of the will. Those who endure elenchus not only gain correct opinion, but also

undergo a moral "conversion" such that they can have knowledge. Because knowledge will accompany only such a "conversion" Socrates *can* assert that one who has knowledge (of a certain thing) will never do wrong (as concerns that thing).

Socrates' use of the elenctic method in fact does support this explanation of the claim that virtue is knowledge. Richard Robinson defines the elenchus as a means of "examining a person with regard to a statement he has made, by putting to him questions calling for further statements, in the hope that they will determine the meaning and the truth-value of his first statement" (78). But certainly, as previously stated, the elenchus has a fundamentally ethical end. James King notes that the elenchus "has the potentiality of occasioning a fundamental reorientation in an individual's values which . . . might even be likened to a moral conversion" (105). Hugh Benson notes that the "elenchus, by aiming at genuine perplexity in the interlocutor, aims at the elimination of conceit. . . . Socrates is concerned to eliminate the conceit that one knows what virtue is, what wisdom is, what courage is" (*Essays* 597-598). Robinson also states that "the ultimate end of the elenchus is not . . . intellectual education but . . . moral improvement" (86). Conceit, moral improvement, and conversion all refer to issues of the will, not the intellect. It seems clear that before individuals can gain knowledge and hence be bound by the maxim that no one unknowingly does wrong, they must undergo a certain moral conversion, or conversion of the will. If they do not undergo this conversion, then they will obtain only opinion, and it will be transitory.

Understanding the assertion that virtue is knowledge as explained above further strengthens the preceding interpretation of Socrates' claim to ignorance. If Socrates were to claim a certain knowledge, then he would be absolutely morally responsible for his actions. Or rather, he could not philosophically justify making a mistake. By claiming to know nothing, he meets the requirements of his belief that virtue is knowledge, and he conforms to his own epistemology in which knowledge is scarce and true opinion is abundant.

In conclusion, Socrates asserts that he knows and teaches nothing while, at the same time, claiming that virtue is knowledge. His actions throughout the Socratic dialogues seem to indicate not only that he knows much but also that he is virtuous. If these two claims are not resolved, then one must conclude that Socrates himself lacks virtue. I have attempted to interpret these statements in a way that justifies Socrates' claims and lends significant philosophical meaning to Socrates' claims. Although the distinction between knowledge and belief seems to

pacify the issue of weakness of will, the solution still raises important questions. Namely, what is the nature of knowledge which resists weakness of will, and how can we know when we have that knowledge. The difficulty of answering such questions raises doubts as to how ethically applicable Socrates' insights can be, with or without a charitable reconstruction.

Works Cited and Consulted

- Benson, Hugh H., ed. *Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992.
- . "Notes and Discussions: A Note on Eristic and the Socratic Elenchus." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27.4 (1989): 591–599.
- Cornford, F. M. *Before and After Socrates*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1960.
- Irwin, Terence. *Plato's Moral Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
- Jaeger, Werner. *Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture*. Trans. Gilbert Highet. Vol. 2. New York: Oxford UP. 4 vols. 1943.
- King, James. "Elenchus, Self-blame and the Socratic Paradox." *Review of Metaphysics* 41.3 (1987): 105–126.
- Leshner, J. H. "Notes and Discussions: Socrates' Disavowal of Knowledge." *Journal of the History of Philosophy*. 25.2 (1987): 275–288.
- Robinson, Richard. "Elenchus." *The Philosophy of Socrates*. Ed. Gregory Vlastos. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980. 78–93.
- Santas, Gerasimos Xenophon. *Socrates*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979.
- Shorey, Paul. *What Plato Said*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955.
- Vlastos, Gregory. "Socrates' Disavowal of Knowledge." *Philosophical Quarterly*. 35.1 (1985): 1–31.
- . "Socratic Knowledge and Platonic 'Pessimism.'" *Philosophical Review*. 66 (1957): 226–238.
- , ed. *The Philosophy of Socrates*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980.