

EXPLORATIONS IN ANCIENT AND MODERN PHILOSOPHY

M. F. Burnyeat taught for fourteen years in the Philosophy Department of University College London, and then for eighteen years in the Classics Faculty at Cambridge, twelve of them as the Laurence Professor of Ancient Philosophy, before migrating to Oxford in 1996 to become a Senior Research Fellow in Philosophy at All Souls College. The studies, articles and reviews collected in these two volumes of *Explorations in Ancient and Modern Philosophy* were all written, and all but two published, before that decisive change.

Whether designed for a scholarly audience or for a wider public, they range from the Presocratics to Augustine, from Descartes and Bishop Berkeley to Wittgenstein and G. E. Moore. Their subject-matter falls under four main headings: 'Logic and Dialectic' and 'Scepticism Ancient and Modern', which make up the first volume with 'Knowledge' and 'Philosophy and the Good Life' contained in this, the second volume. The title '*Explorations*' well expresses Burnyeat's ability to discover new aspects of familiar texts, new ways of solving old problems. In his hands the history of philosophy becomes itself a philosophical activity.

M. F. BURNYEAT is an Honorary Fellow of Robinson College, Cambridge, and an Emeritus Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. He is also a Fellow of the British Academy and a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and was awarded a CBE for his services to scholarship in 2007.

EXPLORATIONS IN ANCIENT AND MODERN PHILOSOPHY

VOLUME II

Part I Knowledge

Part II Philosophy and the Good Life

M. F. BURNYEAT



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-0-521-75073-8 — Explorations in Ancient and Modern Philosophy Volume 2
M. F. Burnyeat
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521750738

© M.F. Burnyeat 2012

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2012
3rd printing 2014

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-75073-8 Hardback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	x

PART I: KNOWLEDGE

1 Examples in epistemology: Socrates, Theaetetus and G. E. Moore	3
2 Socratic midwifery, Platonic inspiration	21
3 The philosophical sense of Theaetetus' mathematics	36
4 Plato on the grammar of perceiving	70
5 Socrates and the jury: paradoxes in Plato's distinction between knowledge and true belief	99
6 Aristotle on understanding knowledge	115
7 Platonism and mathematics: a prelude to discussion	145
8 Wittgenstein and Augustine <i>De magistro</i>	173

PART II: PHILOSOPHY AND THE GOOD LIFE

9 Message from Heraclitus	195
10 Virtues in action	205
11 The impiety of Socrates	224
12 The passion of reason in Plato's <i>Phaedrus</i>	238
13 Aristotle on learning to be good	259

vi	<i>Contents</i>	
14	Did the ancient Greeks have the concept of human rights?	282
15	Sphinx without a secret	289
16	First words	305
	<i>Appendix</i>	326
	<i>Bibliography</i>	327
	<i>Index locorum</i>	341

Preface

'If a philosophical argument is worth attention, so is its history'. The first words of this two-volume collection make an apt beginning to the whole. Philosophy, argument and history are what readers will find in the sequel. The proportions vary: sometimes one ingredient will predominate, sometimes another. But each chapter, long or short, whether written for a professional audience or for a more general readership, contains all three.

The collection reprints just about every publication of mine that I think still worth reading from two places and periods where I have taught: the Philosophy Department at University College London (1964–78) and the Faculty of Classics, Cambridge University (1978–96). Volume II closes with 'First Words', the Valedictory Lecture (delivered on 31 May 1996), with which I left Cambridge and teaching for a quite different existence at All Souls College, Oxford. I remain deeply grateful to my colleagues and friends in London and Cambridge for all the philosophy, argument and history we shared together in those most companionable years.

I am most grateful to Laura Macy for her careful and precise work on the index.

To Pauline Hire and Jeremy Mynott of the Cambridge University Press I owe thanks for their support and patience through the years during which the project was delayed – for some while even mislaid – by my preoccupation with other projects made possible by the freedom I enjoyed at All Souls. It is Pauline who compiled the consolidated bibliographies. Less visible is the finicky work she undertook, page after page, of translating US spelling conventions back into English and standardising the reference conventions of so many different publishers. Such accuracy and consistency sustained over so many pages is a gift to marvel at as well as to give thanks for.

To Jeremy I am grateful for ensuring that the Press remained committed to the project even at times when I was not making the progress expected. His tactful insistence on my corresponding commitment has achieved its goal at last.

MFB

Acknowledgements

The chapters in this book, with the exception of chapter 12 which is previously unpublished, first appeared in the following publications, and we are grateful for permission to reproduce them.

- 1 'Examples in epistemology: Socrates, Theaetetus and G. E. Moore': *Philosophy* 52 (1977) 381–98
- 2 'Socratic midwifery, Platonic inspiration': *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 24 (1977) 7–16
- 3 'The philosophical sense of Theaetetus' mathematics': *Isis* 69 (1978) 489–511
- 4 'Plato on the grammar of perceiving': *Classical Quarterly* NS 26 (1976) 29–51
- 5 'Socrates and the jury: paradoxes in Plato's distinction between knowledge and true belief': *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 54 (1980) 173–91
- 6 'Aristotle on understanding knowledge': in E. Berti, ed., *Aristotle on Science: 'The Posterior Analytics'* (Proceedings of the Eighth Symposium Aristotelicum), (Padua, 1981) 97–139
- 7 'Platonism and mathematics: a prelude to discussion': in A. Graeser, ed., *Mathematics and Metaphysics in Aristotle* (Proceedings of the Tenth Symposium Aristotelicum), (Bern and Stuttgart, 1987) 213–40
- 8 'Wittgenstein and Augustine, *De magistro*': *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 61 (1987) 1–24
- 9 'Message from Heraclitus': *New York Review of Books* 13 May, 1982
- 10 'Virtues in action': in G. Vlastos, ed., *The Philosophy of Socrates* (New York, 1971) 209–34
- 11 'The impiety of Socrates': *Ancient Philosophy* 17 (1997) 1–12 (revised version of a paper first published in A. Dykman and W. Godzich, eds., *Platon et les Poètes: hommage à George Steiner* (Geneva, 1996) 13–36)
- 13 'Aristotle on learning to be good': in A. Oksenberg Rorty, ed., *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1980) 69–92

Acknowledgements

ix

- 14 'Did the ancient Greeks have the concept of human rights?': *Polis* 13 (1994) 1–11
15 'Sphinx without a secret': *New York Review of Books* 30 May, 1985, 30–6
16 'First words: a valedictory lecture': *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 43 (1997) 1–20

Note: To give help in following up references, the original pagination of the reprinted articles is indicated at the top of each page on the inner margin, and the original page divisions are marked in the course of the text by a pair of vertical lines, ||.

Abbreviations

- DK H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 10th edn, Berlin 1960–1
- LSJ H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek–English Lexicon*, 9th edn rev. H. Stuart Jones, Oxford 1925–40
- RE A. Pauly, G. Wissowa and W. Kroll, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen altertumswissenschaft*, 83 vols., Stuttgart 1893–1980
- SVF *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, Leipzig 1903–24

Classical references are abbreviated according to *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* 3rd edn, with the exception of the following:

- M* Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians*
- P* Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*