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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO  
SOCRATES

*The Cambridge Companion to Socrates* is a collection of essays that provides a comprehensive guide to Socrates, the most famous Greek philosopher. Because Socrates himself wrote nothing, our evidence comes from the writings of his friends (above all Plato), his enemies, and later writers. Socrates is thus a literary figure as well as a historical person. Both aspects of Socrates' legacy are covered in this volume.

Socrates' character is full of paradox, and so are his philosophical views. These paradoxes have led to deep differences in scholars' interpretations of Socrates and his thought. Mirroring this wide range of thought about Socrates, this volume's contributors are unusually diverse in their background and perspective. The chapters in this volume were authored by classical philologists, philosophers, and historians from Germany, Francophone Canada, Britain, and the United States, and they represent a range of interpretive and philosophical traditions.

Donald R. Morrison is Professor of Philosophy and Classical Studies at Rice University. He has also been a Rockefeller Fellow at the University Center for Human Values at Princeton University, a Junior Fellow of the Center for Hellenic Studies, and a visiting professor at the University Paris I-Sorbonne. His publications have appeared in edited collections and scholarly journals, including *Polis*, *Ancient Philosophy*, and *History of Political Thought*.

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## Editor's Preface

Socrates is the patron saint of philosophy. Although he was preceded by certain philosophical poets and surrounded by some learned sophists, he was the first real philosopher. If you wish to know "What is philosophy?" one good answer is that philosophy is what Socrates did and what he started.

Socrates was a revolutionary. He revolutionized the intellectual method by searching for rigorous definitions of concepts such as "courage" and "justice." He revolutionized values by arguing that what matters most to human happiness is not money or fame or power, but the state of one's soul. He revolutionized ethics by insisting that a good person will never harm anyone. He was a spiritual revolutionary who remained obedient to the law; unjustly condemned to death, he refused his friends' offer to break him out of jail and lead him to exile.

Socrates was a revolutionary who began a tradition. He wrote nothing. What we know of him comes from several sources. He had the good fortune to number among his devoted followers one of the greatest geniuses, and most gifted prose stylists, of all time – Plato. Socrates is the major character in most of Plato's dialogues. The historical person Socrates exerted his greatest influence on history by way of the literary figure "Socrates" in Plato. The greatest of Socrates' followers was Plato; Aristotle was a dissident Platonist; later, the Stoics and Skeptics saw themselves as heirs of Socrates; many of the Church Fathers christianized Plato; and so on through history.

Plato is not our only source for Socrates. Our earliest substantial source for information about Socrates is Aristophanes' comic play *Clouds*. In addition to Plato, other followers of Socrates wrote Socratic dialogues. Xenophon wrote a memoir of Socrates and other Socratic works that have survived intact. From the other followers of Socrates – often described as "the minor Socratics" – we have only fragmentary remains. Aristotle was only one generation removed from Socrates, and so his reports about Socrates' philosophy are important evidence. Among various later sources, the most important is the life of Socrates by the late ancient historian of philosophy Diogenes Laertius.

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What do we know about the real, historical Socrates who lies behind this varying literary evidence? The "problem of the historical Socrates" is a famous scholarly crux, akin to the problem of the historical Jesus. Chapter 1 is devoted to this problem. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 discuss the main contemporary sources other than Plato. The concluding essay in this volume, Chapter 15, covers later sources – that is, the reception of Socrates in later Greek philosophy.

The deepest problem facing the editor of a general volume on Socrates is the lack of a single subject-matter. *Socrates is essentially contested territory*. "Socrates" can of course mean the historical Socrates. But some scholars have thought that the historical Socrates is best found in the writings of Xenophon, others in Plato, and others only in certain dialogues of Plato. The portraits of Socrates found in our various sources partially agree: in all our sources, Socrates is intellectually brilliant and (by conventional standards) physically ugly. However, the sources also have clear disagreements: the Socrates in Aristophanes' *Clouds* is devoted to cosmology and physics, whereas the Socrates of Plato's *Phaedo* abandoned such studies in his youth. In other areas, the compatibility of our sources is unclear. Plato's Socrates is known for his biting irony. Does Xenophon's Socrates lack irony, or merely display it more subtly and less often? Can one speak of a "Socratic ethics" common to the dialogues of Xenophon and Plato, or not? These are disputed questions. Despite such complications, since Plato's Socratic writings are the most extensive and philosophically brilliant of our sources, most scholars who write about Socrates have in mind Plato's Socrates, or the Socrates of one or more particular Platonic dialogues.

My own response to this problem has been to invite a diverse group of contributors to define the Socrates who is the subject of their individual chapters differently. For example, Josiah Ober in Chapter 7 is concerned with the "Socrates constructed by the tradition." Like Ober, Paul Woodruff in Chapter 5 and Mark L. McPherran in Chapter 6 draw on multiple sources for their Socrates. Richard Bett in Chapter 10 and Melissa Lane in Chapter 11 concentrate on Plato on the grounds that their topics appear almost exclusively in Plato's writings. Hugh H. Benson in Chapter 8, Terry Penner in Chapter 12, and Christopher Bobonich in Chapter 13 restrict their attention to a range of Platonic dialogues regarded as written early in Plato's career. Christopher Rowe in Chapter 9 focuses on two famous passages in Plato, one from the *Apology*, which may be the earliest of Plato's writings, and one from a much later dialogue, the *Phaedrus*. Charles L. Griswold in Chapter 14 means by Socrates the character Socrates in all of Plato's dialogues where he appears.

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This volume has been many years in preparation. The blame for delay is mine, and I apologize to the contributors. As a result of this delay, the bibliographies to some contributors' essays are not fully up to date.

I thank Beatrice Rehl, my editor at Cambridge University Press, for her patience, goodwill, and expert advice. For their painstaking labors, cheerful encouragement, and expert computer assistance in preparing the manuscript for publication, I am very grateful to Brandon Mulvey and Anthony Carreras, graduate students in Philosophy at Rice.

## Abbreviations

### I. ARISTOTLE

<i>EN</i>	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
<i>Met.</i>	<i>Metaphysics</i>
<i>Pol.</i>	<i>Politics</i>
<i>Rhet.</i>	<i>Rhetoric</i>
<i>Soph. El.</i>	<i>De Sophisticis Elenchis</i>

### II. PLATONIC TEXTS

<i>Alc.</i>	<i>Alcibiades</i>
<i>Ap.</i>	<i>Apology</i>
<i>Chrm.</i>	<i>Charmides</i>
<i>Cri.</i>	<i>Crito</i>
<i>Euphr.</i>	<i>Euthyphro</i>
<i>Euthd.</i>	<i>Euthydemus</i>
<i>Grg.</i>	<i>Gorgias</i>
<i>H. Ma.</i>	<i>Hippias Major</i>
<i>Men.</i>	<i>Meno</i>
<i>Phd.</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>
<i>Phdr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Phil.</i>	<i>Philebus</i>
<i>Prm.</i>	<i>Parmenides</i>
<i>Prt.</i>	<i>Protagoras</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Republic</i>
<i>Smp.</i>	<i>Symposium</i>
<i>Theag.</i>	<i>Theages</i>
<i>Tht.</i>	<i>Theaetetus</i>

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III. XENOPHON

*Apol.*     *Apology*  
*Cyrop.*    *Cyropedia*  
*Mem.*     *Memorabilia*  
*Oec.*      *Oeconomicus*  
*Symp.*    *Symposium*

IV. DIOGENES LAERTIUS

D.L.        *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*

V. MODERN TEXTS

DK         Diels, H. *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed.,  
 rev. W. Kranz, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1952; first ed. 1903).  
 LSJ        Liddell, H. G. and R. Scott. *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev.  
 H. S. Jones, 9th ed. with new supplement. Oxford, 1996.  
 SSR        Giannantoni, G. *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae*. Naples,  
 1990.  
 CPF        *Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini*. Florence, 1989–.

VI. JOURNAL ABBREVIATIONS

*AGP*       *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*  
*CQ*        *Classical Quarterly*  
*JHP*        *Journal of the History of Philosophy*  
*OSAP*      *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*  
*RhM*        *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*  
*GRBS*      *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*  
*PBA*        *Proceedings of the British Academy*

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