

Between Dialectic, Eristic and Deconstruction: Of Socratic Methods and Higher Education in the 21st Century

Raymond Aaron Younis, CQUniversity Sydney, r.younis@syd.cqu.edu.au

Abstract

Plato linked the Socratic Method to dialectic – in contrast to “eristic” which characterised the discourses of the “sophoi” – as a way of attaining knowledge and understanding in the epistemological as well as ethical domains. It will be argued here the Socratic Method, with some modifications, remains a functional and significant method in education, in spite of a number of critiques from some advocates of deconstruction and in spite of some recent emphases on “aporia” and the problematic nature of the Socratic “elenchos”. It will also be argued that the “Socratic Method” far from being a tired or exhausted paradigm, can, with some modifications, allow for a significant degree of “play”, just as it can provide, in the age of informatics, an important catalyst by which the creativity of learners in distant or regional areas can be stimulated as well as realised.

This article has been peer-reviewed and accepted for publication in *SLEID*, an international journal of scholarship and research that supports emerging scholars and the development of evidence-based practice in education.

© Copyright of articles is retained by authors. As an open access journal, articles are free to use, with proper attribution, in educational and other non-commercial settings.
ISSN 1832-2050

Introduction

Plato linked the Socratic method to dialectic (understood as the use of question and answer methods in order to gain a clearer understanding or indeed a grasp of the truth of the matter) – in contrast to “eristic” (understood in terms of disputation for the sake of disputation or for some other rhetorical end) which characterised the discourses of the sophists – as a way of attaining knowledge and understanding in the epistemological as well as ethical domains. Platonic (and Socratic) dialectics have been studied in relation to persuasion (Morrow, 1950), discomfiture (Shorey, 1965), eristics and irony (Jackson, 1990; Vlastos, 1987), epistemology (Runciman, 1962, among many others), oppositions (Allen, 1961; Derrida, 1993), paradoxes (Demos, 1957), errors and fallacies (Robinson, 1940, 1942), method (Scott, 2002; Stenzel, 1940), “Socratic dialogues” and Plato’s creativity (Kahn, 1996), educational activity (Teloh, 1986), to mention just a few studies.

This paper is a speculative one to a significant degree that will draw upon a number of important *philosophical* sources. It will be argued here that there are methods and that these Socratic methods cannot be understood in terms of an uncomplicated unity – a single method with one or two unifying characteristics, and a single outcome; it will be argued that such dialectics remain a functional and significant method in education, in spite of a number of critiques from some advocates of deconstruction and in spite of some recent emphases on “aporia”. It will also be argued that the Socratic methods, far from constituting a tired or exhausted

paradigm, can, with some creative applications and extensions, allow for a significant degree of “play”, just as they can provide, in the age of informatics, an important tool by which creativity, education and/or regionality or rurality can be understood, explicated, analysed and evaluated in the 21st century. This paper will conclude with a brief discussion of four ways in which dialectics might make a significant contribution, particularly as a tool that lends itself to, and can be employed to generate, creative thinking and problem solving, in relation to some of the cultural obstacles, for example, to university learning in regional Australia; motivation and engagement in regional areas; the pursuit of lifelong learning; and the re-conceptualisation of some of the issues in rural education.

Dialectics and Eristics

Plato’s dialogues are a rich source of literature concerning learning, “play” (understood in particular in relation to wit and irony) and “creativity” (understood in relation to “inspiration”), which are linked to Socratic dialectics. One of the starting points of dialectics is the critique of the sophists and of eristics. A number of examples will make this clear. In *Euthydemus*, both Euthydemus and Dionysidorus, who are regarded as authorities on rhetoric, employ eristics as a method of teaching virtue, for a fee, and employ a method of word play which creates incredulity in Socrates. In *Thaetetus*, Socrates links eristic, sophistry and education:

As in education, a change of state has to be effected, and the sophist accomplishes by words the changes which the physician works by the aid of drugs. Not that anyone ever made another think truly, who previously thought falsely... But I must beg you to put fair questions: for there is great inconsistency in saying that you have a zeal for virtue, and then always behaving unfairly in argument. The unfairness of which I complain is that you do not distinguish between mere disputation and dialectic: the disputer may trip up his opponent as often as he likes, and make fun; but the dialectician will be in earnest, and only correct his adversary when necessary, telling him that errors into which he has fallen through his own fault, or that of the company which he has previously kept. If you do so your adversary will lay the blame of his own confusion and perplexity on himself and not you... I would recommend you, therefore, as I said before, not to encourage yourself in this polemical and controversial temper, but to find out, in a friendly and congenial spirit, what we really mean when we say that all things are in motion, and that to every individual and state what appears, is. In this manner you will consider whether knowledge and sensation are the same or different, but you will not argue, as you were just now doing, from the customary use of names and words, which the vulgar pervert in all sorts of ways, causing infinite perplexity to one another.... (Steph 167–168)¹

Many of Socrates’ key ideas are evident in passages such as these: dialectics has an important educational function (hereafter cited as “dialectics-ed”; these abbreviations will be used throughout to capture salient aspects and forms of dialectics for the reader and which will be useful later on when summaries are required); it effects changes that are profound and not merely verbal (“dialectics-

¹ All references to Plato refer to Jowett’s (1898) translation and use Stephanus numbering to identify specific passages.

ch”). Eristic, on the other hand, effects changes at the (mere) level of words (that is to say, through displays for example, of cleverness and at a price that is charged to the “student”). “Wise men” who employ methods that go beyond (mere) verbal displays, are like physicians inasmuch as they cause the “good” to “take the place of the evil” (that is, they seek to overcome ideas or arguments that may cause harm, in a metaphysical or epistemological sense), both in appearance and in reality (“dialectics-gd”), in contrast to eristics which operates on the level of appearances, generally and for profit. Dialectics is about questioning, at a crucial level: its questions must be “fair”, in the sense that word and action ought to be consistent (for example, the claim that one loves virtue ought to be supported by a lack of unfair or illicit behaviour in argument) (“dialectics-vr”), and Socrates draws a crucial distinction between “mere” disputation (that is eristics) and dialectic, in the sense that the eristic enjoys “tripping up” their opponent as often as they like whereas the dialectician is motivated by nobler concerns. It should already be clear that Socrates’ understanding of dialectics, as represented by Plato, is quite complex. Other passages will complicate the picture further.

Crucially, dialectic serves as an epistemological corrective but only “when necessary” (“dialectics-er”), even as it identifies the multiple possible sources of error (where one has gone wrong and why); it leads to deeper self-understanding and self-improvement (“dialectics-se”). Eristics is not “friendly and congenial” in the quest for understanding (“dialectics-fg”). Dialectic allows one to set out what is meant by claims that may seem to be clear on the surface but which conceal some confusion or some ambiguities which may, in turn, then generate perplexity (“dialectics-per”). Moreover, Socrates seemed to see dialectic as a way by which such perplexities could be resolved (“dialectics-clr”).

In *Republic*, Plato offers an extension of this kind of understanding:

But when a man begins to get older, he will no longer be guilty of such insanity; he will imitate the dialectician who is seeking for truth, and not the eristic, who is contradicting for the sake of amusement; and the greater moderation of his character will increase instead of diminishing the honour of the pursuit. (539)

Eristics concerns contradiction for the purpose of amusement (and by implication, for the purpose of entertainment and financial reward); the character of such disputers is questioned in light of the moderate influence of the dialectician, who seeks in an orderly and consistent way the truth of the matter or some deeper understanding of the concept or the issue in question (“dialectics-contr-er”).

Two or three other examples should suffice to show that Socrates (and Plato) developed their views on dialectics in ways that were often consistent. In *Meno* (Steph 75), eristic is associated with antagonism and, by extension, with a relative lack of congeniality; unlike dialectics which is associated with a friendly spirit that guides the investigation – one might say a spirit of respectful co-operation – or dialectics’ “milder strain” (“dialectics-ms”).

Philebus offers the reader one of the most explicit statements of the difference between eristics and dialectics:

To know how to proceed by regular steps from one to many, and from many to one, is just what makes the difference between eristic and dialectic [*emphasis added*]... (Steph 16)

Eristics, as employed by the sophists, leads to a confusion between the one and the many. Such fallacious reasoning leads in turn to perplexity. It is through dialectics, and its questioning modes (“dialectics-q”), that such fallacies can be dispelled and a genuine understanding of a subject can be attained (“dialectics-contra-f”). This is one reason why Socrates, in this dialogue, explicitly identifies dialectic as his favourite path to the truth (“dialectics-ftp”) and as a genuine educational “way”.

Dialectics do not offer a foolproof set of methods (no pun intended!) or a set of methods that are infallible (the plural is important here: it is crucial to keep in mind the manifold uses and procedures of dialectics: for example, concerning fair and consistent questioning; a way of proceeding logically; tools of clarification or of division, or rather, differentiation; and so on). Burbules (1997) links *aporia* to the uncovering of misconceptions and the revealing of a platform for the truth. This much is true but Socrates goes further. In *Cratylus*, for example, Socrates notes that caution and vigilance are important in the investigations; that a failure to see some things clearly is a very real risk; that some things must be passed over. He explicitly identifies impediments to progress or to going on (Steph 69). Accordingly, it is not surprising that he concludes the dialogue by noting the difficulty of the subject of inquiry, the emergence of different possibilities, the need to reflect further and not to accept things prematurely (notwithstanding the lack of any clear way forward, so to speak) and his openness to instruction or to different ways of approaching the problem. All of this can be captured by the term *aporia* (“dialectics-ap”).

If one is interested in accuracy, it becomes necessary to reject a simplistic, or reductive, understanding of dialectics. Moreover, if one seeks a true understanding of dialectics, that is, an understanding that is not only accurate but also thorough, it certainly will not suffice to speak of dialectics simply or purely in terms of opposites or antinomies or contradictions, as these dialogues make clear: dialectics is at times concerned with opposition or with contradiction, but it is also concerned with questioning (“dialectics-q” and “dialectics-contra-er”), with therapy (“dialectics-se”), with perplexity (“dialectics-per”), with virtue (“dialectics-vr”), with irony, with the need for further and deeper reflection, with instruction (“dialectics-contra-f”), with an opening and with *aporia* (“dialectics-ap”), and so on. An understanding of dialectics that does not preserve these manifold aspects might be termed a reductive or simplistic understanding of dialectics, even though it is granted that we have not gone beyond a reading of some dialogues by Plato.

Dialectics and “*aporia*”

Dialectics, which clearly have numerous uses and quite distinct functions and outcomes and which seem to offer many positive things, have nonetheless been critiqued recently by some advocates of deconstruction or postmodernism (which are not one to be sure). Jean-Francois Lyotard, for example, understood dialectics in terms of different, or rather oppositional, “modalities” and in terms of a transition between such modalities. The transition is manifest in a “displacement”, that is to say, from some negative characteristic to its opposite, which Lyotard identified as an “assertive modality” (1994, p. 128). So on this reading, dialectics is concerned with the movement so to speak from a negative to an assertive, or positive, modality. This much will sound familiar, perhaps, to the reader who is familiar with modes of dialectics found in Hegel and Marx, to be sure, and in the earlier dialectical structures, for example, in the fragments of Heraclitus.

But this understanding of dialectics is hardly sufficient, since it suggests that dialectics is concerned with one kind of displacement; there is little or nothing here to bring into view those complexities evidenced in some of the Socratic forms identified earlier: “dialectics-ch”, “dialectics-gd”, “dialectics-er” or “dialectics-se”, to name but four. Nor is there an account of just why dialectics *should be reducible* to the oppositional displacement of modalities. In the absence of such accounts it is difficult to accept Lyotard’s characterisation as a sufficient or well-informed one; indeed, the earlier discussion of the numerous dimensions of dialectics would problematise such characterisations.

The relation between dialectics and deconstruction is also a vital and thought-provoking one. Derrida was keenly aware of the link between aporia (literally “no way through”) and dialectics, even if he also tended to describe dialectics in terms of oppositions or contradictions (see, for example, 1973, pp. 57–59 and 1993, p. 15). He wrote, for example, in *Aporias*:

What if the exoteric aporia therefore remained in a certain way irreducible, calling for an endurance, or shall we rather say an experience other than that consisting in opposing, from both sides of an indivisible line, an other concept, a nonvulgar concept, to the so-called vulgar concept? (p. 14)

What is striking about this passage and about Derrida’s understanding of aporia here, which he situates in terms of the tradition from Aristotle to Hegel, is the belief that aporias are somehow an alternative, *an other, to dialectics and as such, represent the very possibility of deconstruction in relation to dialectics*; that, in his words, it is linked to the “nondialectizable” (p. 15), understood as that which is not subject to dialectics *of any kind and therefore, that which opens up a space for deconstruction as the other of dialectics*.

Whatever one might think of this kind of analysis, certainly Derrida did not arrive at this kind of understanding from a close reading of the Platonic dialogues cited earlier; as has been made clear already, aporia is an *important and integral part of a more encompassing understanding of dialectics*, but only when the latter is understood and preserved in its complexity and manifold structures and functions. It is notable that in his analysis he did not mention the Socratic tradition, nor is there a detailed analysis of the Socratic-Platonic understanding of aporetics. Furthermore, in both *Aporias* and *Deconstruction Engaged*, he noted that aporia is a “Greek word that you find in Aristotle” (p. 63 – not Plato!). (He asked in the same passage from *Aporias* cited earlier in the paragraph: can an *experience* of aporia “ever concern ... crossing an oppositional line?” The answer to his question had already been given almost 3000 years ago: lines of opposition or “oppositional lines” cannot proceed or be resolved in light of the appearance of the aporia (as stated earlier).

The point is reinforced in other texts, such as *Rogues*, where Derrida wrote of dialectics in terms of reason and power:

Plato speaks ... [in *Republic*] about force and dialectical power, about what the logos touches through its dialectical power, ... about the sun and the good, which analogically, have the power and right to reign ... the superpowerful origin of a reason that gives reason or proves right, that wins out over everything, that knows everything and lets everything be known (p. 138)

Once again, it is notable that dialectics, on Derrida's reading, is bound to the reign of reason, manifest in one form in and through dialectics, and to winning out "over everything". Certainly this sort of dialectical ambition can be defended in relation to the panlogism of Hegel, but one would not want to argue that Hegelian forms of dialectics are representative of dialectics as a whole, or even representative of reason and its essential forms, if there are such things – not after the critiques articulated by Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and many of the Existentialists, among others, at any rate.

But Derrida, in linking logos, reason, dialectics and victory ("over everything") seemed to miss the irony here: Socrates had complained, as we have seen, that eristics, involving clever wordplay and opportunism, seeks victory for example, by turning arguments, through acts of linguistic cleverness, upside down, whereas dialectics seeks fairness, congeniality, necessary rather than arbitrary corrections for the good of the learner, further as well as deeper reflection and instruction. In other words, in the Derridean context, dialectics is linked with a process of opposing, the sovereignty of logos and by association, the *sovereign practice* of reason. In the Socratic context, dialectics is indeed a search for the truth of the matter, but it is much more: for example, it is certainly useful, systematic, effective, therapeutic and so on, on occasions, but it is also clearly aporetic, fallible, at times anything but efficacious or "sovereign", though in those moments it embraces not terminal paralysis but rather a call to further reflection, analysis, evaluation, dialogue, instruction, fair-minded interlocution.

A full exploration and exposition of the implications of Platonic and Socratic dialectics in terms of education, specifically in relation to play and creativity in regional and rural communities, today, is outside the scope of this paper. However a number of preliminary points can be made and will be augmented and developed in future papers.

What of education, dialectics, creativity and play? Socrates certainly emerges as an imaginative speaker in the Platonic dialogues; and many have recognised this. Timon of Phlius called him a "wizard" and a "good ironist"; Epictetus praised his ability to defuse fighting (of a verbal kind, among others, no doubt) (see Long 1988, p. 150). Socrates' gift for irony has attracted much attention, understandably, and was recognised by subsequent great thinkers such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Jackson, for example, notes Socrates' imaginativeness in relation to simile and analogy (1990, p. 378) and Vlastos among many others devotes much attention to the (imaginative) figure of the ironist. Socrates famously compared the dialectician with a midwife (in *Thaetetus*) – not just an audacious analogy to be sure, but one which is tied to his understanding of the learning process and how it should begin.

Dialectics as understood by Socrates concern processes of questioning that are intended to allow the ideas of the student to *emerge* – for it was often assumed by Socrates that the student has some innate knowledge – hence the emphasis on a fair, congenial and friendly atmosphere. In this context, the dialectician attempts to keep their own prejudices out of the picture as far as possible. This is one of the reasons why the whole process is driven forward at this point not by contradiction or oppositional stances, but by the posing of a related but different question – another reminder of the fact that dialectics are not necessarily impelled by an oppositional, antinomial or contradictory position or modality – which is intended to bring out more of the learner's knowledge (or lack of knowledge). This can be facilitated and it can be effective without any kind of commitment necessarily to Plato's metaphysics of recollection – for example, the emergence of what the

learner has in fact learned in the course of their lives, what presuppositions and assumptions they favour, and why, and what opinions they hold and facts they know would furnish some significant and interesting material for the questioner (and for the learner).

It is notable that Socrates often responded with questions rather than with dogmatic assertions. Though his questions were clearly not always unbiased, as many thinkers have pointed out – it would scarcely be possible to imagine a human interlocutor who *always* asks unbiased questions! – it is important to recall once again his (counter-eristical) insistence on fair-mindedness, congeniality and a shared love of the truth, and of the genuine search for the truth, of the matter.

Whatever one thinks of such methods, it is clear that the employment of such question and answer strategies can and does allow learners to express their own understanding of the issue at hand. The focus is on their understanding and, consequently, on any dialectical corrective, or “therapy” that needs to be administered (with regard to the treatment of ignorance and knowledge, in particular). One might imagine a discourse on “multiculturalism”, for example, and on the importance of ensuring that it is not confused with “assimilation” (a significant and timely topic now in this country). A student may claim, following some reports in the press, that to be “Australian” means to be “assimilated”. This would provide a very good opportunity to begin a dialectical process in order to disentangle the concept of assimilation from the concept of “cultural diversity”, for, as Socrates makes clear, dialectics are among other things, very useful tools of division, differentiation and clarification. Many other examples would work. Dialectics would be of particular use in regional or rural learning environments because questions drive the dialogue or learning situation forward, because questioning is valorised and reinforced – questions are seen *as* manifestations of creativity and allow possibilities of play (for example in relation to novel ideas and associations) – and such dialogues can be readily integrated in virtual environments or through computer mediated communication technologies which certainly allow a significant degree of interaction and dialogue.

Conclusions and implications

A systematic articulation of the ways in which dialectics can be used to facilitate, effect, analyse and evaluate educational provision and processes and outcomes in the context of creativity and play in the regions, or a detailed study of the implications of Socratic dialectics in relation to such forms and functions of education, is undoubtedly important but it is a vast undertaking that is clearly beyond the scope of this paper. However a few preliminary points can be made in relation to possibilities and will provide a number of fruitful directions for future research. Four points should suffice in order to show how dialectics, in their complexity, *can offer means of analysis and evaluation but also of creative transformations at a number of levels – strategic, pedagogical, cultural, philosophical, and so on – in terms of education in regional and rural areas.*

Existing research points to areas of “substantial disadvantage” (Doolan & Zimmer, 2002), “rurality” and isolation (DETYA Report, 1998, among others), remoteness (D’Plesse, 1992), equity (Griffin & Batten, 1991; Robinson & Ainley, 1995; among others), conditions of education (Stern, 1994), the situation of teachers (Boylan & McSwan, 1998; Higgins, 1993; Partington, 1997), rural communities (McSwan & McShane, 1994), rural development (Sher & Sher, 1994), and so on. A detailed understanding of dialectics in its complexity is important in this context:

dialectics is helpful in terms of clearing the path so to speak (in order, for example, to change ingrained and not always encouraging attitudes towards university cultures and higher education in regional Australia); in setting up ameliorative measures (one might recall here the Socratic connection between dialectics and a kind of therapy); and in analysing and evaluating existing structures and their effectiveness.

First of all, a number of sources note that socioeconomic circumstances colour the attitudes and perceptions of many students towards university cultures in rural areas (for example, James et al., 1999). The “rurality effect” is sometimes discussed in this context: many students express doubts about the benefit of a university education and what it can contribute to their lives and communities in rural areas. If more imaginative and creative ways are needed to create a more positive engagement with such students – clearly, the relevance and benefits of a university education need to be demonstrated, at least broadly, in such circumstances – dialectics would seem to be a useful tool, because of its emphasis, often, on clearly defined and methodically developed questions and answers. There are certainly worse ways of structuring and disseminating information through rural and regional areas. If done with Socratic imaginativeness and creativity, certainly with clarity, coherence and rigour, many students may adopt a more positive view of the place and role of a university education in the regions, notwithstanding the persistence of the “rurality effect”. Another positive consequence might also follow since dialectics is, in one sense, about relationship and dialogue in a congenial, and mutually enriching, situation: communities may be encouraged to see higher education, particularly at the level of interpersonal engagement, as a potentially significant way of overcoming the isolation, marginalisation and estrangement that the “rurality effect” also encompasses for many students (James et al., 1999; Skuja, 1995). One might recall here that Socrates’ interlocutors, whether or not they had been won over by Socrates’ arguments, generally spoke positively of, and benefited in many ways as learners from, their encounter with him. Such developments could form a significant part of what James (et al., 1999) identify as necessary “system and institutional initiatives” (p. 7); they could certainly be utilised to highlight the value of cultural capital as an enabler.

Second, a number of researchers draw attention to the importance of motivation and engagement in learning environments in rural areas: “students from all groups are keen to learn about things that interest them, with no significant differences according to either location or socioeconomic background” (James et al., 1999, p. 30). Dialectics is demonstrably an effective tool for motivation, since it engages the student at the level of their existing knowledge and beliefs and proceeds along these lines, as noted earlier, systematically and coherently, where possible. Extraneous matters can be consistently bracketed; the focus remains on the student’s own responses. In other words, the student’s dynamic learning experience in relation to their own understanding of the world is at the forefront of the encounter. This is a creative way, and it needs to be done imaginatively as well as rigorously, of engaging the student in ways that will challenge them. If done imaginatively, once again, and rigorously, and in ways which engage the student’s own reflection and experiences of the world, motivation may not be such a problem. Certainly the picture that Plato presents rarely involved de-motivated interlocutors (though the dialogues are of course, fond representations and recollections of Socrates); even when an aporetic situation arises, the interlocutor is motivated to seek a solution and return.

Third, the existing literature highlights the importance of lifelong learning as a community and social objective, but this objective is sometimes thought of as something that borders on myth, due to deep inequalities and disadvantage which may be manifest, for example, in declining participation rates in education in rural areas. It is necessary to identify clearly the causes of such problems. One effective way of identifying the causes of a problem is to proceed dialectically for dialectics often demands unstinting focus and a systematic process of questioning. It is an effective analytical and clarificatory tool (as we have seen, for example, in “dialectics-q” and “dialectics-contra-er”, among others). It promotes and indeed instantiates creativity in the pursuit of deeper questioning that might conceivably lead to an identification of certain fallacies, or illicit processes, as well as biases, that may prevent a true understanding of the causes of a problem: for example, two such fallacies in relation to causality that might be identified by an imaginative process of dialectical questioning are *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (literally “after this, therefore because of this”, a fallacy that entails confusing mere succession with causality) and *non causa pro causa* (literally, “not the cause for the cause”, a fallacy that entails a confusion over what the actual cause is). In contrast to eristics, dialectics serve the purpose of trying to keep personal biases at bay as much as possible. So Socrates will remind the interlocutor that what really matters in the dialogue is not the teacher or the instructor (or their fame or reputation for example) but *the truth of what they are saying or the understanding that is attained*. Indeed, personal biases are one of the legitimate targets of dialectics. It may take some imaginativeness and creativity to bring such biases out (the point here is not that all biases will be revealed and corrected but those biases which lead to illicit or invalid conclusions or which pose obstacles to effective learning; there is no question here of removing all biases).

James (et al., 1999) argues that what is required now is a “thorough re-conceptualisation of the problem” (p. 93 – of declining participation rates, socioeconomic divisions, social imbalances, and so on) in rural areas. It is hard to disagree, if the data collected is accurate. But re-conceptualisation in turn requires not just merely adequate tools; it requires coherent, profound, systematic, cogent, questioning processes which are geared towards a clear apprehension of the truth of the matter; it requires a pursuit of an understanding that is free of invalid arguments, illicit processes or fallacious structures; it requires an honest acknowledgment of aporetic situations; just as it requires an openness to other and deeper ways of thinking about the problem. In short it requires – amongst other things to be sure, for dialectics as we have noted is not an all encompassing or flawless tool – the sort of focus and questioning that drives at the truth of the matter even as it makes room for complexity, and indeed for “play”, in the sense of reflection on, and the apprehension of, other possibilities out of one’s (dialectically) augmented and extended understanding, and that further and deeper (dialectical) engagement of the imagination and of thinking, particularly in its critical forms.

References

- Allen, R. (1961). The argument from opposites. In *Republic V. Review of Metaphysics XV*, 325–35
- Boylan, C., & McSwan, D. (1998). Long staying rural teachers: Who are they? *Australian Journal of Education*, 42. Retrieved December 15, 2006, from <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&se=gglsc&d=5001414491>
- Burbules, N. (1997). Aporia: Webs, passages, getting lost, and learning to go on. In S. Laird (Ed.), *Philosophy of education* (pp. 33–43). Urbana, Ill: Philosophy of Education Society.
- Demos, R. (1957). Paradoxes in Plato's Doctrine of the Ideal State, *Classical Quarterly*, VII, 164–74.
- Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs. (1998). *Differential access to higher education: The measurement of socioeconomic status, rurality and isolation*. Canberra, ACT, Australia: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Derrida, J. (2005). *Rogues: Two essays on reason*. Translated by Anne-Pascal Brault & Michael Naas. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1993). *Aporias*. Translated by Thomas Dutoit. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1973). Letter of Jacques Derrida to Jean-Louis Houdebine. *Diacritics*, 3(2), 57–59.
- Doolan, W., & Zimmer, E. (2002). *Australian rural students face severe disadvantage*. Retrieved December 21, 2006, from <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2002/feb2002/edu-f06.shtml>
- D'Plesse, P. (1992). Redefining remoteness in the post industrial society. *Education in Rural Australia*, 2(1), 1–6.
- Griffin, M., & Batten, M. (1991). *Equity in schools: an independent perspective: A study of equity policies, programs and practices in nongovernment, nonsystemic schools*, Canberra, ACT, Australia: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Higgins, A. (1993). *Rural difference: A challenge for beginning teachers*. Townsville, QLD, Australia: Rural Education Research and Development Centre, James Cook University.
- Jackson, R. (1990). Socrates' Iolaos: Myth and eristic in Plato's *Euthydemus*, *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, 40(2), 378–395.
- James, R., Wyn, J., Baldwin, G., Hepworth, G., McInnis, C., & Stephanou, A. (1999). *Rural and isolated school students and their higher education choices: A re-examination of student location, socioeconomic background, and educational advantage and disadvantage*, Commissioned Report No. 62. Melbourne, VIC, Australia: Centre for the Study of Higher Education and Youth Research Centre, The University of Melbourne.
- Kahn, C. (1996). *Plato and the Socratic dialogue*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Liotard, J. (1994). *Lessons on the analytic of the sublime: Kant's critique of judgment*. Translated by Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.
- Long, A. (1988). Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy. *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, 38(1), 150–171.
- McSwan, D., & McShane, M. (Eds.). (1994). *An international conference on issues affecting rural communities*, Proceedings of the conference held by the Rural Education Research and Development Centre at Sheraton Breakwater Casino-

- Hotel, Townsville, Queensland, Australia, 10-15 July 1994, Townsville, Rural Education Research and Development Centre, James Cook University.
- Morrow, G. (1950). Necessity and Persuasion in Plato's *Timaeus*. *Philosophical Review* LIX, 147–63.
- Partington, G. (1997). Practice teaching in remote Aboriginal communities: The need for adaptation to the social and cultural context. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 22(1), 31–39.
- Plato. (1898), *Dialogues of Plato*, (B. Jowett, Trans.). New York: D. Retrieved December 12, 2006, from <http://graduate.gradsch.uga.edu/archive/Plato1.html>
- Robinson, L., & Ainley, J. (1995). *The availability of baseline data on equity in Australian schools*. Canberra, ACT, Australia: Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET).
- Robinson, R. (1940). *Plato's earlier dialectic*. Oxford UK: Oxford University Press.
- Robinson, R. (1942). Plato's consciousness of fallacy, *Mind*, LI, 97–114.
- Runciman, W. (1962). *Plato's later epistemology*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Scott, G. (Ed.). (2002). *Does Socrates have a method? Rethinking the elenchus in Plato's dialogues and beyond*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Sher, J., & Sher, K. (1994). Beyond the conventional wisdom: Rural development as if Australia's rural people and communities really mattered. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 10(1), 2–43.
- Shorey, P. (1965). *What Plato said*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Skuja, E. (1995). Performance of the Australian university sector in access and equity. In G. Postle, J. Clarke, J. Skuja, E. Bull, D. Batorowicz, & H. McCann (Eds.), *Towards excellence in diversity: Educational equity in the Australian higher education sector in 1995: Status, trends and future directions* (pp. 71–86). Toowoomba, QLD, Australia: USQ Press.
- Stenzel, J. (1940). *Plato's method of dialectic*. Oxford UK: Oxford University Press.
- Stern, C. (Ed.). (1994). *The condition of education in rural schools*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.
- Teloh, H. (1986). *Socratic education in Plato's early dialogues*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Vlastos, G. (1987). Socratic irony. *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, 37, 79–96.