

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE SOCRATIC PROBLEM.

THE purpose of this paper is to present some considerations in support of the thesis that Plato's account of the character and philosophic opinions of Socrates is substantially correct, as against the view commonly held.

The usual interpretation of Socrates is based on scepticism of Plato's trustworthiness. In 1741, Brucker, sceptical of the accuracy of ancient writers, first refused to accept the unanimous opinion of antiquity as to the genuineness of Plato's account, and reasoned that Plato was a creative thinker, and so would naturally put his own original thoughts into the mouth of his master, Socrates; whereas Xenophon, just because he did not have any philosophic originality, would be more likely to preserve the historic Socrates. Therefore our knowledge of Socrates must be founded on Xenophon's account. This opinion gained the assent of Hegel and the Hegelians, and through their influence became accepted by the philosophic world. Schleiermacher proposed to add to Xenophon's testimony those elements from Plato's account which would be necessary to justify the picture of Plato. Zeller accepted that canon, and so there grew up the received interpretation of Socrates—that he was interested chiefly in ethics and conceptual definition, and certainly did *not* propound the theory of ideas.

The two chief foundations of this interpretation are the almost universal lack of a historic sense by writers of the ancient world, and the fact that Plato was undoubtedly an original thinker. When Xenophon wished to express his own views upon household