

*Meno* Outline

Plato

Poage

I. Can virtue be taught? (70a)

- A. Result of practice
- B. Possessed by nature
- C. Thesalians formerly famous for horsemen now famous for wisdom with Sophist Gorgias (70b)
- D. Dearth of wisdom in Athens
  - a. Don't even know what virtue is (71b)
  - b. If one doesn't know who Meno is then one can't know if he's rich or goodlooking
  - c. Socrates has never known one who knows what virtue is (71c)
  - d. Maybe Gorgias knows: you tell us Meno (71d)

II. Meno's view

- A. Virtue of a man (71e)
  - a. Manage public affairs
  - b. Benefit friends and harm enemies (cf. Polemarchus *Republic* 1)
  - c. Make sure not to be harmed oneself
- B. Virtue of a woman
  - a. Manage home well
  - b. Preserve the property
  - c. Submissive to husband
- C. Virtue of a child
- D. Virtue of elder
- E. Virtue of freeman or slave (72a)
- F. Virtue for every task and age (same with wickedness) (72a)
- G. Socrates: you've given not just one virtue but many
  - a. What is the nature of bees?
    - i. Many
    - ii. Many *qua* bee or something else e.g. beauty, size etc (72b)
  - b. They don't differ *qua* (as) bees
- H. What is the form of virtue (72c-d)
  - a. Is health the same for men and women
  - b. Same for both (72d-e)
- I. To manage a city or house well requires justice and moderation
  - a. If a man or woman is to be good they require the same qualities then (73b)
  - b. **All humans are good in the same way then, by acquiring the same qualities** (73c)
  - c. What is the *same* here?
- J. **Ruling over people (73d)**
  - a. Virtue then is the same for a slave and a child: rule over the master?
  - b. To rule justly
  - c. Justice *is virtue*

- d. Or is *a* virtue?
- e. Roundness is *a* shape but not *shape* (73e)
- K. Many virtues: courage, moderation, wisdom, munificence (74a)
  - a. We've found many again but not one
  - b. The same problem applies to everything (74b)
    - i. shapes, color
  - c. What is it to be the same in shape ? (75a)
    - i. You tell me?
    - ii. Shape is of existing things which always follow color (75b-c)
    - iii. What if one doesn't know what color is?
    - iv. Shape is the limit of a solid (76a)
  - d. What is a color?
    - i. Socrates: I can see you are still handsome you give orders to others and behave like a tyrant (76c)
    - ii. Empedocles: effluvia and channels (76c-d)
      - 1. Some effluvia fit channels others don't
      - 2. Color is an effluvium from shapes which fights sight  
And is perceived (76d)
- L. What is virtue?
  - a. Stop making many out of one like people who break things (77a)
  - b. **Virtue to find joy in beautiful things and have the power to acquire them** (77b)
    - i. Those who desire beautiful things desire good things
    - ii. Do all desire good things or do some desire bad (77c)?
    - iii. Can one know something to be bad and yet desire it? (77c)
    - iv. All desire what they think to be good but are in fact bad (77e)
    - v. What is bad necessarily harms, which makes miserable, which makes unhappy
    - vi. Being miserable is desiring bad things and securing them (78a-b)
  - c. Virtue: desiring good things and having the power to secure them (78b)
    - i. Everyone is the same in terms of desiring
    - ii. They differ in their ability to secure them
  - d. The power of securing good things (78c)
    - i. Health, wealth, office
    - ii. Justly piously acquiring them (78d)
    - iii. Acquisition must be accompanied by some part of virtue to be virtuous
    - iv. Even if it provides good things it is not a virtue (providing good is not sufficient for virtue)
    - v. Providing or not providing is not virtue on its own (79a)
    - vi. Justice and moderation are parts of virtue
    - vii. You split up virtue again (79b)
    - viii. How can we know a part of virtue without knowing virtue itself?
  - e. What is virtue again?

- i. Socrates is like a torpedo fish: numbing
- f. How can someone search for something they don't know
  - i. If you meet it how will you know it
- g. Debater's trick
  - i. Can't search for what one knows (he knows it already)
  - ii. Can't search for what he doesn't know (doesn't know what to look for)?

### III. Socrates' divine story (Pindar etc).

- A. The soul is immortal (81b)
- B. Experiences dying and being reborn but is never destroyed
  - a. Thus one must live as piously as possible
  - b. The soul has seen everything here and in the underworld: searching and learning then are recollection
  - c. The debater's trick makes us idle; my argument makes us energetic in the search (81e)
- C. A demonstration: calling the slave boy (82b)
  - a. Doubling the square
  - b. 4 times as big (83b-c)
  - c. The answer from the diagonal (85b-c)
  - d. He does not know it but has true opinions within him about what he does not know (85c-d)
    - i. They have been stirred up like a dream
    - ii. Finding knowledge within oneself is recollecting (85d)
  - e. No one has taught him
  - f. He must know it from a previous life (86a)
  - g. We'll be better men, braver and less idle if we believe that we must search for what we don't know (86c)

### IV. Return to the question of virtue

- A. Meno would return to whether virtue is teachable or not
- B. We don't know what virtue is yet
- C. Hypothesis on virtue
  - a. Don't know what it is
  - b. or what qualities it possesses (87b)
  - c. Among the things existing in the soul of what sort is virtue: teachable or not (87c)
  - d. If it is other than knowledge is it teachable or not?
  - e. If it is knowledge then it should be teachable
  - f. Is virtue knowledge or something else (87d)?
  - g. Virtue is something good
  - h. virtues makes us good and thus is beneficial
    - i. Health, strength, beauty, wealth benefit sometimes and harm sometimes (87e-88a)
    - ii. The directing factor (right use) is what benefits us (88a)
- D. Qualities in the soul: moderation, justice, courage, mental quickness, memory, Munificence (88a)
  - a. When these lack wisdom or understanding they are harmful

- b. All that the soul undertakes or endures which is directed by wisdom leads to happiness (88c)
      - c. All the qualities of the soul in themselves are neutral: accompanied by wisdom they are beneficial (88d)
      - d. Virtue is a kind of wisdom
      - e. Virtue is either a whole or part of wisdom
    - E. Are we good or not by nature (89a)
      - a. If by nature we'd know which children are to be good (89b)
      - b. Learning makes one good (89c)
      - c. If virtue can be taught shouldn't there be teachers and students of it?
        - i. If not then it can't be taught (89e)
- V. Anytus joins the discussion (90a)
- A. Anytus has a good upbringing
    - a. The citizens think so as they've elected him to high office
  - B. We send to craftsmen to learn crafts
  - C. To sophists to learn virtue?
    - a. Anytus: no they corrupt their followers (91c)
      - i. But the whole of Greece hasn't noticed this about Protagoras for 40 years (91e)
      - ii. Anytus has never visited one but knows they are bad without experiencing them (92b ff; cf 80d-e)
    - b. One can go to any gentleman among the Athenians and they make one better than the sophist would (92e)
    - c. How did the gentlemen learn?
      - i. From gentlemen before them (93a)
  - D. Good men (teachers of virtue?)
    - a. Themistocles
      - i. His son is a good horseman but not like his father (93e)
    - b. Aristrides son of Lysimachus (94a)
    - c. Pericles
    - d. Thucydides
    - e. These men couldn't teach their sons to be virtuous
  - E. Virtue can't be taught (94e)
    - a. Anytus: you're speaking ill of people (warning) (94e-95a)
- VI. Anytus angry, Meno rejoins the discussion (95a)
- A. Gorgias doesn't promise to teach virtue but to make clever speakers (95c)
  - B. Theognis: if virtue could be taught there'd never be a bad son (95e-96a)
    - a. If there are neither teachers nor students of virtue then it can't be teachable (96c)
    - b. If no teachers: no learners, it can't be taught
  - C. True opinion no worse guide than knowledge (97b-c)
    - a. The one with knowledge always succeeds
    - b. They one with true opinion only sometimes (97c)
    - c. Like statues of Daedalus they must be tied down (97e)
    - d. true opinions must be tied down with an account that gives the reason why

- i. this is recollection
    - ii. thus knowledge remains in place
  - e. One of the things Socrates claims to know is that knowledge differs from true opinion (98b)
  - f. Because virtue can't be taught it no longer seems to be knowledge (99a)
  - g. Knowledge and right opinion are beneficial guides (98b)
    - i. they are acquired
  - h. the statesmen mentioned don't have knowledge but only right opinion and thus can't teach others (99b)
    - i. Like soothsayers and prophets they lead by inspiration
    - ii. Called divine (99c-d)
    - iii. Like poets they have no knowledge (99d-e)
    - iv. Women and Spartans also call good men divine
  - i. Virtue is neither inborn nor taught: it is a gift of the gods (not accompanied by understanding)
    - i. If this wasn't the case then there'd be statesmen who could make other statesmen
    - ii. Such a person with knowledge would be like the dead among the living like reality among the shadows (100a-b)
- D. Virtue appears to be a gift of the gods: we'll have a clear knowledge of this When we know what it is itself (100b)
  - a. **Convince Anytus of these things and you'll benefit the Athenians.**