

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE *MENO* ON THE TRANSITION
FROM THE EARLY TO THE MIDDLE PLATONIC
DIALOGUES

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE *MENO* ON THE TRANSITION FROM THE EARLY TO THE MIDDLE PLATONIC DIALOGUES

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The purpose of the present study is to signify the explanatory value of the *Meno* on the coherence as well as the disparateness of the Plato's early and middle dialogues. Indeed, the *Meno* exposes the transition on the content and form of these dialogues. The first part of the dialogue resembles the Socrates' way of investigation, the so-called *Elenchus*, whereas Plato presents his own philosophical project in the second part of the dialogue. Three fundamental elements of Plato's middle dialogues explicitly arise for the very first time in the *Meno*, namely; the recollection, the hypothetical method and reasoning out the explanation. Therefore, the connexion of the early and middle dialogues can be understood better if the structure of the *Meno* is analyzed properly. In other words, the *Meno* is the keystone dialogue which enables the readers of Plato to sense the development in Socratic-Platonic philosophy.

Keywords: Plato, Socrates, the *Meno*, recollection, elenctic investigation.

ÖZ

ERKEN DÖNEM DIALOGLARDAN ORTA DÖNEME GEÇİŞTE *MENON*'UN ÖNEMİ

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Bu alıřmanın amacı *Menon*'un Plato'un erken ve orta dialoglarının uyumluluđunu olduđu kadar farklılıklarını da aıklayan bir deđer tařıdığını iřaret etmektir. Gerekten de, *Menon* bu dialoglar arasındaki ieriksel ve biimsel deđiřikliđi ortaya koymaktadır. Dialogun ilk kısmı Sokrates'in arařtırma yolunu, yani Elenkus'u, ađrıřtırırken, Platon ikinci kısımda kendi felsefi planını sunmaya bařlamıřtır. Orta dönem dialoglarının temel paraları ilk kez *Menon*'da karřımıza ıkar: anımsama, hipotez yöntemi ve aıklamayı özümlemek. Bu yüzden, eđer *Menon*'un yapısı uygun biimde incelenirse erken ve orta dialoglar daha iyi bir řekilde anlaşılabilir. Bir bařka deđiřle, *Menon* Platon'un okuyucularının Sokratik-Platonik felsefede geliřmeyi sezmesinde kilit bir rol oynamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Platon, Sokrates, *Menon*, anımsama, elenktik sorgulama.

To my first tutor,
Binali Seferođlu

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: PLATO'S PROJECT

Vlastos (1991), as well as many other scholars, remarks that the style and theme of Socratic-Platonic philosophy changes dramatically in the so-called transition from early dialogues to the middle ones, that is; the content, format and subject of Platonic works come through a metamorphosis, if not a radical variation. Indeed, Plato - unlike his hero Socrates' apathy to such domains - puts an epistemological and ontological model in and after the *Meno*.¹ I believe, among all the transitional dialogues, the *Meno* involves outstanding philosophical implications. In other words, the development of Plato's ideas in the *Meno* indicates the transformation from pretty much moral content of the early dialogues to a theoretical and systematic framework of the middle dialogues.

In the middle dialogues, Plato undervalues Socrates' "*disavowal of knowledge*", and then he claims certain knowledge can be grounded and "*reasoned out from explanation*." In fact, whereas *logos* is instrumentally used in the moral investigations in the early dialogues, it becomes an essential element to have knowledge in the middle and late dialogues. That is to say, Plato, unlike Socrates, aims to give an elaborated reason and method for the pursuit of knowledge. In this

¹ The *Meno* is "*the first dialogue in which the impact of these new [mathematical] studies on the content and method of his philosophizing is allowed to surface freely*." (Vlastos, 1991, p.118) The *Meno*, according to Day, seems to be last of the early dialogues (1994, pp. 9-12).

respect, throughout this work, I intend to show the epistemic, ontological and methodological enhancements in Socratic-Platonic philosophy which lead the way to the Plato's most complex and comprehensive works. That is, my intention of writing on this subject is to re-evaluate the more or less diverging philosophical perspectives and motives of Plato and "*Socrates*" in Plato's dialogues.

I suppose Plato's new epistemology which is more or less initiated with the *Meno*, i.e.; recollection, hypothetical method and reasoning out the explanation (*aitias logoi*), can be distinguished from Socrates' way of examination, i.e.; the *elenchus*.²

I none the less have to note that I do not mean to take apart Plato's philosophy from Socratic perspective. That is to say, I will neither try to depict a non-Socratic Plato nor Socrates without Plato, on the contrary, I think that the Socratic *elenchus* may also be found at the core of Plato's middle dialogues, if not solely. I also believe Plato has never abandoned "*Sokratikoi logoi*" in his works, which is "*textually recreation of accounts of Socrates with his friends and interlocutors*".³

Another objective of this present thesis is to show the reason and format of the changeover from the early dialogues to the middle ones. In that sense, I come to believe that Plato systematizes a new philosophical outlook by developing Socrates' moral investigations and their implications. In fact, Plato, in my opinion, has "reconstructed" Socrates' philosophy by purposing a method to have certain and stable knowledge, which Socrates ceaselessly, if not consistently, disavows.

² According to Oxford dictionary *elenchus* is "*the Socratic method of eliciting truth by question and answer, especially as used to refute an argument*".

³ Wallach (2001), p. 73. Note also that historical accuracy of these conversations is controversial.

That is, Plato has in mind to “tie down” Socrates' divine inspiration⁴ on numerous cases. In fact, it may be argued that the early dialogues portray Socrates' philosophy whereas Plato begins to present his own understanding in the middle dialogues. However, it is better to keep in mind that the historical accuracy of this portrayal is debatable since Socrates himself did not write anything. In other words, I suppose Plato's interpretation of Socratic philosophy and Plato's own ideas can at least be distinguished, if not Socrates himself.

Indeed, there are four sources where we can find four different accounts for Socratic philosophy. Initially, Aristophanes, who is comedy writer, pictures a Socrates who is a notorious sophist and even a lunatic. On the contrary, Xenophon's Socrates is a dogmatic and arrogant man who professes expertise on philosophy. Plato, on the other hand, seems to reconcile these two extremes: Plato's Socrates disavows certain and stable knowledge, yet he, for Plato, believes to have some kind of knowledge, that is; elenctic knowledge. Lastly, Aristotle also informs us about the philosophy of Socrates. According to Aristotle, Socrates holds views which conflict sharply with the common sense and examines these opinions by means of tentative conversations.

On the other hand, it is better to note that Socrates in Plato's dialogues does not also form a unity, that is; we can find disparate portrayal of Socrates in different dialogues. Indeed, Plato attributes diverse epistemological and metaphysical

⁴ Brickhouse and Smith point that “[Socrates] professes a belief in various forms of divination.” They also inform us that Socrates says that he has derived his own activity from a “divine sign” (*Ap.* 40c3-4, 41d6, *Euthyd.* 272e4, *Rep.* IV. 396c4, *Phdr.* 242b8-9) or “voice” in (*Ap.* 31d3, *Phdr.* 242c2) since childhood (*Ap.* 31d2-3). (1994, pp. 189-190)

arguments to Socrates. And hence, it may be claimed that Plato not only informs us about Socrates' ideas, but he also declares his own position by using Socrates as well as some other characters. In this respect, one should focus on the dramatic structure, writing style and methodological construction of the dialogues in order to understand Plato's philosophical sentiments. That is to say, Plato develops ideas in the course of his "*academic career*" similar to the progress in the individual dialogues themselves. I suppose this change and development lead to various understandings of Plato's philosophy in the ancient and Middle Ages as well as in the modern time.

Plato, in the *Meno*, applies geometry as a pattern for obtaining all knowledge where Plato, for the first time, defines a method of investigation explicitly. That is, Plato manifests his philosophical purpose in accordance with his own method of investigation. In this respect, I believe that the *Meno* is a "manuscript" wherein Plato *grosso modo* depicts his philosophical understanding.

I will divide this thesis into four main chapters. In the first chapter, I am going to discuss the chronological and dramatic arrangement of Platonic corpus, the ancient and modern understanding of Plato, and the role of Socrates in Plato's philosophy. Following Schleiermacher (1856), I suppose that Plato's dialogues should be examined considering the connection between them.

In the second chapter, I will evaluate the so-called early Platonic dialogues. In where Plato presents us a Socrates who is engaged in the philosophical exercise of the young as well as trying to refute other philosophers. However, Socrates does not declare to know anything, in other words, he

disclaims to have wisdom or expert knowledge about virtue. Nor does he evaluate any method of investigation systematically. Indeed, the evaluation of his pattern is the practice itself, that is; he examines the effectuality and accuracy of his method by means of numerous “*Socratic conversations*”. Briefly, I will focus on (i) Socrates' moral aspirations, (ii) the use of the Socratic *elenchus* and *the Disavowal of Knowledge*, (iii) and metaphysical assessments of Socrates, if there is any.

In the third chapter, I will examine the differences between early and middle dialogues in respect to epistemological, metaphysical, methodological, and mathematical aspects. Afterwards, I will try to depict the transition from early dialogue to middle ones.

In the fourth chapter, I will focus on the *Meno* to reveal its peculiarity within the *corpus*. In order to show the *Meno's* significance in the Platonic corpus, I will analyze, (i) priority of definition over attributes, (ii) dialectical requirement for the possibility of investigation, (iii) Meno's *eristic* (contentious) paradox, (iv) mythical, religious, epistemological and ontological content of the recollection, (v) slave-boy demonstration, (vi) the distinction between knowledge and true belief, (vii) hypothetical method, and (viii) reasoning out the explanation.

In the last chapter, I will try to present the relationship between the *Meno* and the Platonic project in general, that is; I argue that the *Meno* presents a sketch of early and middle Platonic dialogues, even if not the late works.

Moreover, it is better to note that the range of this thesis is limited to the evaluation of early and middle dialogues. That is to say, throughout my work, I will not deeply engage in the analysis of Plato's late dialogues because (i) there is

not a major and extensive difference between the middle and late dialogues in respect to doctrinal or methodological aspects, that is, the separation of the late dialogues is primarily based on the stylometric analysis⁵ (ii) the aim of this thesis is only examining the division of seemingly Socratic philosophy and Plato's own philosophical perspectives in the middle dialogues. Indeed, whether or not Plato abandons the theory of Forms in the late dialogues is off topic in this work. In other words, I will focus on the contextual similarities between the early and middle dialogues as well as the methodological and epistemic diversity between them. Therefore, I will not claim that the *Meno* depicts Plato's entire project which includes the late dialogues, especially more or less dogmatic the *Laws*, that is, neither the hypothetical method nor mathematical approach can be found in the Plato's last work the *Laws*. Indeed, the

⁵ Cooper (1997), p. xiv. Note that for Chappel (2004) the Revisionist – who claims that there is no unity in Plato's thoughts - scholars, such as Ryle, Owen, Robinson and Runciman, argues that Plato abandons the theory of Forms in his later dialogues, such as; the *Theaetetus*, *Parmenides*, and the *Sophists*.

CHAPTER 2

THE DIALOGUES OF PLATO⁶

2.1. Constitution of the Platonic Corpus

Plato is widely accepted as the founder of Western philosophical tradition; his writings involve almost all subjects which are still examined by philosophers, political theorists, classicist, mathematicians as well as ordinary men. In fact, it is all but impossible to put him under a specific category; he is an ethicist, metaphysician, political scientist, epistemologist, dramatist, and even mathematician. Moreover, since Plato composes his works in dialogue format, it is quite difficult to extract authentic ideas of the author or pure philosophical ideas. Indeed, Rowe argues that “*Philosophy*,” for Socrates as well as Plato, “*is the art of dialogue whether internal or with others:*” It is “*dialektikē techne*”.⁷ I also believe that the philosophy of Plato is not a closed book containing certain and unshakable truths; rather it is a process of questioning and an intellectual progress.

⁶ All English translations of dialogues are from Cooper, J.M. & Hutchinson D.S. (1997), *Plato: Complete Works*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, if not by scholars own translations. All original Greek texts of Plato and other ancient Greek or Roman philosophers are from the collection at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cache/perscoll_Greco-Roman.html>.

⁷ (2007), p. 8.

The dialogues, according to Rowe, have also a “*persuasive function*,” that is; similar to Socrates' approach to shake interlocutor's beliefs, Plato aims to “*unsettle the reader*” with his works.⁸ Therefore, interpretation of Plato's works demands intense effort than any other ancient philosopher, that is; the chronological dating, philosophical content and dramatic setting also lead to diverse arrangements and understanding of his works.

The first arrangement of the Plato's work is made by the Hellenistic scholar Aristophanes of Byzantium as fifteen trilogies in respect to their dramatic dating.⁹ Another, but widely accepted, arrangement of Plato's works in nine tetralogies was composed by Thrasyllus who also gives second titles, in addition to interlocutor's name, to works which indicates the subject.¹⁰ Thrasyllus is the Emperor Tiberius' astrologer and an Egyptian Greek grammarian. For Tarrant, he has direct effects on ancient Platonic philosophy as well as modern scholarship since Thrasyllus' philosophical influence upon “*Neopythagoreanism, Middle Platonism, and Neoplatonic and early Christian thought; and influence upon Platonic interpretation down to our own times by means of an arrangement of the Platonic corpus that survives and presents the material to us in a particular manner.*”¹¹ According to Tarrant, Thrasyllus also divides Platonic corpus into two

⁸ *ibid.*, p.12.

⁹ “*Some, including Aristophanes the grammarian, arrange the dialogues arbitrarily in trilogies.*” (Diogenes Laertius, 3.61.).

¹⁰ According to Diogenes Laertius; Thrasyllus names Euthyphro; *On Holiness*, Phaedo; *On the Soul*, Sophist; *On Being*, Theaetetus; *On Knowledge*, Parmenides; *On Ideas*, Meno; *On Virtue* etc. (3.57-61).

¹¹ (1993), p. 208.

main categories, namely; *instructional (hyphegetic)* and *inquisitive (zetetic)*.¹²

Moreover, Tarrant informs that Socrates, for Plutarch, uses irony in the inquisitive works, not in the instructive ones, in that sense, this approach can be related to modern division of corpus to early, middle and late dialogues.¹³

Thrasyllus, for Diogenes Laertius, argues that Plato himself arranges his works in tetralogies in accordance to arrangement of Athenian tragedies:

But, just as long ago in tragedy the chorus was the only actor, and afterwards, in order to give the chorus breathing space, Thespis devised a single actor, Aeschylus a second, Sophocles a third, and thus tragedy was completed, so too with philosophy: in early times it discoursed on one subject only, namely physics, then Socrates added the second subject, ethics, and Plato the third, dialectics, and so brought philosophy to perfection. Thrasyllus says that he published his dialogues in tetralogies like those of the tragic poets. (3.56.)

Besides these thirty-six genuine works, Thrasyllus also indicates some spurious works which are mistakenly attributed to Plato.¹⁴ However, even if these works are not genuine, they should not be ignored complete. That is to say, although Plato is not the author of these works, they involve significant informational data.¹⁵

¹² (2000), p. 78.

¹³ *ibid.*, p.110.

¹⁴ Diogenes Laertius (3.62.) informs “*The following dialogues are acknowledged to be spurious: the Midonor Horse-breeder, the Eryxias or Erasistratus, the Alcyon, the Acephali or Sisyphus, the Axiochus, the Phaeacians, the Demodocus, the Chelidon, the Seventh Day, the Epimenides.*”

¹⁵ For example, the spurious Definitions, which is dictionary of 185 philosophically significant terms, “*are a valuable record of work being done in Plato’s Academy in his lifetime and the immediately following decades*” (Cooper, 1997, pp. ix-x). Note that all the references to the Definitions hereafter is just informative, I do not believe that the definitions are to certain, and even dogmatic, for the early and middle dialogues.

On the other hand, one should take into account that “*Thrasyllus tetralogies does not claim to present the in any supposed order of their composition by Plato*”.¹⁶ In this respect, the historical accuracy of the written dates is quite problematic as well the historicity of the dialogues.¹⁷

2.2. Ancient and Modern Interpretations of Plato

Furthermore besides the diverse arrangement of the dialogues, the ancient interpretations of Plato’s works alternate between dogmatic, or doctrinal, and skeptical considerations.¹⁸ The latter standpoint focuses on the *aporetic*¹⁹ character of the dialogues, that is, the works of Plato do not contain any absolute teaching.

One of the profound objectives of the Elenchus, viz. *aporia*²⁰, is destabilizing the traditional and unquestioned adoptions of the interlocutor.

Nevertheless, it is better to notice that the *aporia* is not peculiar to early dialogues: the *Theaetetus* and *Symposium*, which are the later works of Plato, also have

¹⁶ Cooper, 1997, p. xi.

¹⁷ Zuckert (2009), p. 10.

¹⁸ Rowe (2006), Wolfsdorf (2008). The immediate successors for the head of academy, Speusippus (347-339 BC) and Xenocrates (339-314 BC), accepted a doctrinal interpretation of Plato, even more than himself. Note that the *Definitions*, which is a doctrinal and dogmatic work, is attributed Speusippus. (Copper, 1997, p.1667)

²⁰ In Liddell-Scott-Jones ἀπορέω (aporeo) stands for: 1. *to be at a loss, be in doubt, be puzzled* in Prt.326e. 2. *to be at a loss how to do* in Phd.84c, Grg.462b 3. in Dialectic, *start a question, raise a difficulty* Prt.324d

aporetic conclusions. In this respect, Politis brilliantly informs that Plato, in the *Protagoras* (324d-e) uses aporia “to refer to a particular problem, not simply the mental state of perplexity and being at loss.” In a similar way, it should also be noted that in the *Philebus* (36e) Plato uses the word “*aporemata*” to meet “the problem.”²¹ However, the defenders of skeptic understanding focuses on the aporetic character of the dialogues, and hence they argue that Plato never proposes a doctrine; rather he offers ceaseless pursuit for knowledge, encourages doing philosophy, and searching the truth in ourselves instead of books or someone's say so. This view is supported in the days of middle Academy initiated under the σχολάρχης of Arcesilaus (c.266-240).²² Yet more, the Pyrrhonists considers Plato as their predecessor in respect to the *Timaeus* (40b):

The other was revolution, a forward motion under the dominance of the circular carrying movement of the Same and uniform. With respect to the other five motions, the gods are immobile and stationary, in order that each of them may come as close as possible to attaining perfection. This, then, was the reason why all those everlasting and unwandering stars—divine living things which stay fixed by revolving without variation in the same place—came to be. Those that have turnings and thus wander in that sort of way came to be as previously described.

Diogenes Laertius (9.72) also says that for Pyrrhonist skeptics; “*Plato, too, leaves the truth to gods and sons of gods, and seeks after the probable explanation.*”

²¹ (2006), pp. 90-91. In a similar manner, Zuckert argues that the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, and *Philebus* present “more positive teaching about the best form of human existence” rather than merely refuting and perplexing interlocutors”. (2009, p. 282).

²² σχολάρχης (scholarchēs) means the head of school in general, especially for the Academy. Cicero says in *De Oratore* 3.67; “Arcesilaus was the first who from several of Plato's books and from Socratic discourses seized with greatest force the moral that nothing which the mind or the senses can grasp is certain.”

Moreover, Tarrant informs that Plato, according to Sextus Empiricus (PH 1.221), is aporetic in mental gymnastics, which is; he imitates Socrates by means of wrestling with other's ideas. On the other hand, Plato is dogmatic when “*expounding his own views through 'Socrates' or 'Timaeus' etc*”.²³ I suppose, Sextus' attitude looses the rivalry between dogmatic and skeptic interpretations of Plato.

On the contrary, the dogmatists claim that Plato systematically manifests his ontological and epistemological ideas in his philosophical works. In other words, the works of Plato explicitly or implicitly contain positive doctrines about knowledge. Indeed, according to the immediate successors of the academy, Speusippus and Xenocrates, Plato proposes doctrines which are hidden behind fictional dialogues.²⁴

Moreover, although any universal consent cannot be found in twentieth century philosophy communities, two prevalent apprehensions are available, viz. unitarianism and developmentalism. The unitarians argue that the dialogues are consistent, that is; Plato's understanding has not changed throughout his life.²⁵ In other words, Plato is attached to same philosophy which he presents his own ideas in different aspects. Canevi notes that Zeller, Burnet, Taylor and Shorey believe following Schleiermacher that “*Plato from the very beginning had a completely*

²³ (2000), p.19.

²⁴ Rowe (2006), p. 14.

²⁵ Wolfsdorf (2008), p. 6. Shorey (1906) and Arnim (1967) defends the unitarian approach. Tarrant argues that most of the ancient interpretations were unitarian: “*They sought for Plato, not for early Plato, or late Plato, or esoteric Plato, or political Plato.*” Hence there was no chronological concern in antiquity (2000, pp.36-7).

developed system of philosophy centering on the Theory of Forms". They also argue that the so-called early, or Socratic, dialogues are fictional in which any accurate historical portrayal of Socrates cannot be a matter of interest.²⁶ Their other suggestion is that the philosophical content of the dialogues may be expended, that is, Plato's most profound objective is presenting a mathematico-metaphysical system. The dialogues, for doctrinal unitarians, are only contributions for propaedeutic purposes: The works of Plato is to educate philosophers on dialectics.²⁷ Wolfsdorf, on the contrary, criticizes those who view "*the dramatic style as merely instrumental*", he says; "*This view oversimplifies passages [without philosophical argumentation] and neglects whole dimensions of the dialogues, for Plato employs character and history as well as philosophical argumentation to value of philosophy over non-philosophy.*"²⁸ I also believe that Plato's works should be recognized as a whole body which he proposes various moral epistemic or ontological arguments as well as a general method for philosophical practice.

On the other hand, developmentalists²⁹ have focused on the doctrinal and

²⁶ Brickhouse and Smith inform that "*accurate historical reconstruction*" of Socrates cannot be found in "*complex and contradictory literature*" which includes the works of Aristophanes, Xenophon and Plato. Nor do Plato's dialogues themselves present any historical accuracy (2004, pp.3-4).

²⁷ According to esoteric interpretation of Plato, "*the dialogues are exoteric works*", that is, they are only introductions to Plato's fundamental philosophical purpose (Wolfsdorf, 2008, p.6).

²⁸ (2004), p. 19.

²⁹ For Rowe, this approach has dominated the Anglophone world since 1950s. (2006, p.15) Some works of the defenders of developmentalism are: A.E. Taylor (1956), Grote (1865), Guthrie (1976) Friedlander (1969).

literary progress of the dialogues. The defenders of Plato's historical development argued that the interpretation of the dialogues cannot only be based on logical examination of the doctrines in the dialogues³⁰; Plato's stylistic, historical and dramatic presentation of arguments should also be taken into account in order to have a more accurate understanding.³¹ Moreover, it is better to note that the conflict between the developmentalists, or revisionists, and the unitarians stems from the question that "*whether or not Plato ever abandoned the theory of Forms*".³²

Moreover, Schleiermacher argues that the works and philosophy of Plato is not exoteric since he also draws a picture of philosophical artistry, even if Platonic society and academy might have been an "*esoteric*" community. Indeed, Plato, for Schleiermacher, is an "*intermediate*" between the closed society of Pythagoreans and "*the popular method of instruction of the Sophists and the Socratic philosophers*".³³

On the other hand, it is better to keep in mind that the historical accuracy of Socrates' portrayal in the early dialogues is highly speculative. In this respect, one

³⁰ Wolfsdorf (2008, p.7) argues that this analytic approach can be traced back to Whitehead famous dictum that "*The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.*" (1979, *Process and Reality*: Free Press, p. 39).

³¹ Irwin argues that the constitution of the Platonic Corpus is generated in respect to (i) style and language, (ii) character, (iii) philosophical content (iv) Aristotle's evaluation (v) convergence (2008, p.77-81). See also Brandwood, L., *The Chronology of Plato's Dialogues* (1999); Cambridge University Press for an intense stylometric and statistical analysis (the incidence of words or phrases in a text) of Plato's works.

³² Chappell (2004), p. 17.

³³ 1836, pp.10-12

can hardly be confident about whether Plato was “*faithful*” to Socrates views in those dialogues. Therefore, I believe that Plato develops his views throughout his career, yet I expound to the historical accuracy.³⁴

Moreover, the *sine qua non* assumption of my thesis is based on the modern understanding of the Platonic works which have started with Schleiermacher's translations and introductions in contrast to Plotinus's interpretation.³⁵ Lamm, in a similar manner, argues that Schleiermacher dramatically changes the course of Platonic philosophy:

Now almost two hundred years, his translation not only dominates sales of paperback additions in Germany, but also an authoritative translation for scholars. As important as Schleiermacher's translation was the interpretation of Plato he offered in the accompanying introductions of the dialogues.³⁶

In this respect, it is better to remind that “*In no ancient source is there ever any suggestion that Plato changed his views in a radical way.*”³⁷ Indeed, the developmentalist, or revisionist, idea is dated back to early nineteenth-century stylometric studies of Plato works which reveals the change in writing style of

³⁴ Brickhouse and Smith divide the developmentalists into two categories, namely; the “*historicists*” and “*agnostic.*” Following them, I am more sympathetic to agnostic approach. (2004, p.6, fn.2)

³⁵ According to Canevi, Jaeger (1963) argues that “*in the eighteenth century the Neoplatonic approach to Plato was left behind...Plato had not presented...in a form of closed system but as a developing philosophical discussion.*” (1979, p. 4).

³⁶ (2000), p .200.

³⁷ Dorter (1994), p.3. Note that only the *Timaeus* was in circulation in the Western middle ages, and this doctrinal work lead to dogmatic interpretation (Wolfsdorf, 2008, p.5). According to Tarrant, the Platonic doctrines of Diogenes Laertius and Alcinous' *Didascalicus* are based on the *Timaeus* (2000, pp.33-4). Moreover, Wallach argues that the works on the chronology of the dialogues have started in the mid-nineteenth century (2001, p. 82).

Plato's works. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the rivalry between these two views is fundamentally based on the Plato's attachment to theory of Forms. In other words, in contrast to unitarians, revisionist argues that Plato "*criticize, reject, or simply bypass*" the theory of Forms in the late, or "*critical*", dialogues.³⁸

Schleiermacher argues that the modern scholars and philosophers are in a better position than the ancient commentators because they have the possibility to get access to Plato's entire works. Indeed, we, for Schleiermacher, "*might now be able understand Plato better than he understood himself*", since the philosophy of Plato can only be understood by observing the "*connexion of his writings*".³⁹ I suppose that the difficulty of comprehending this connection and unity is the reason why the philosophy of Plato has been understood in diversified manners. For Schleiermacher, the most basic, yet incorrect, interpretation of philosophy of Plato is (i) systematic division of Plato's works to "*separate compartments of several sciences*", (ii) fragmentary understanding which takes Plato's work as "*disconnected and particular investigations*".⁴⁰

Schleiermacher, furthermore, argues that the systematic form is fallacious to attribute Plato a division of philosophy since Plato himself is not aware of the so-called distinction of philosophy into pieces, In other words, Plato does not think that he is examining diverse sciences and this division was "*unknown to*

³⁸ Chappell (2004), p. 17.

³⁹ (1836), p.4.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

him". On the other hand, the fragmentary understanding is mistaken because Plato himself denounces that he is only investigating particulars, yet Plato declares his "subject-matters" in his works.⁴¹ In this respect, I suppose Plato does not divide his works into various categories for he deals with diversified matters in a dialogue which presents a unity, even if this unity might be slightly and loosely constructed.⁴² However, I also do not believe that Plato only deals with particular issues, that is, Plato has a project in his mind which he is searching an ultimate goal, even if he might have been changed his mind in this journey.⁴³ In connection with Schleiermacher's interpretations of Plato's works, the modern Platonic corpus is divided into three parts, namely; the early, the middle and the late dialogues by developmentalists.⁴⁴

In this work, I will intensely focus on the early and middle dialogues; since the goal is to illuminate the transition within them, if there is any.⁴⁵ However, I would like to note that the grouping of the dialogues is "interpretative" and lacks any certain historical accuracy except the group of late

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.7.

⁴² Schleiermacher says; "[Plato's works] gradually developed the ideas of the writer, so while every dialogue is taken as a whole in itself, but also in its connection with the rest, he may himself be at last understood as a Philosopher and a perfect artist." (*ibid.*, p.14).

⁴³ Note also that Plato, for Schleiermacher, is not a "logical Philosopher", he is a "dialectician". (*ibid.*, p.8) That is to say, Plato might even oppose to his propositions even if they are "first principles", for example; his critics on the Two World Theory in the *Parmenides*.

⁴⁵ Zuckert informs Plato presents also a change in Socrates' objects of investigation: (i) in the *Phaedo* Socrates' turn from the study of nature or the beings to the examination of the *logoi* (455-50), (ii) Socrates' conversation with Parmenides (450), then (iii) Socrates' turn from the *logoi* to the *doxai*, related in the *Symposium* and *Apology* (450-433) (2009, pp.8-9).

dialogues.⁴⁶ In this respect, I place emphasis on the philosophical content of the group of the early and middle dialogues since there is no reliable information about their chronological order. That is, the chronology of these two groups has a secondary position on the arguments in this work.

Although the constitution of Plato's corpus is debatable, since (i) the texts were found after Plato's death; (ii) Plato made revisions on the text during his life time; (iii) some dialogues were composed throughout years due to their length; (iv) the historical benchmark of stylometrists, the *Laws*, was printed by Philip of Opus and possibly revised by him.⁴⁷ Note also that the different parts of *Laws* may also be written simultaneously with other dialogues as well as at different times.⁴⁸ Therefore, all these problems set us apart to constitute an accurate chronological order. Notwithstanding all drawbacks, the prevalent tendency regards *Apology*, *Charmides*, *Euthydemus*, *Euthyphro*, *Gorgias*, *Hippias Major*, *Ion*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Meno*, *Protagoras*, and *Republic I* as early dialogues of Plato. In addition, *Euthydemus*, *Hippias Major*, *Lysis*, *Menexenus* and *Meno* are considered as transitional dialogues. The middle dialogues are: *Cratylus*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Republic II-X*, *Phaedrus*, *Parmenides*, and *Theaetetus*. The late dialogues are: *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, and *Laws*.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Cooper, 1997, p. xiv.

⁴⁷ Wallach (2001), p. 84.

⁴⁸ Cooper (1997), p. xi.

⁴⁹ See Irwin (1979), Nails (2002), Scott (2006), Vlastos (1991), Wolfsdorf (2008), Zuckert (2009), Guthrie (1975). Note that the list is not exhaustive. Moreover, I am also in favor of Cooper's suggestion that "it is better to relegate thoughts about chronology to the secondary

On the other hand, I would like to mention Kahn's⁵⁰ particular view about the chronology of the dialogues. In contrast to the more or less consensus within scholars, Kahn claims that the *Protagoras* and the four dialogues of the definition (*Laches*, *Charmides*, *Lysis*, *Euthyphro*) precede the *Gorgias*. More strikingly, Kahn argues that those five dialogues would not be studied to reveal Socrates' philosophy, or his memorial in Plato, instead, they are the preparatory for “*the doctrines of the middle dialogues.*” i.e.; we should read those five dialogues *proleptically* (p.39). In this respect, he also denies the distinction between Socrates' and Plato's moral philosophy. Kahn is in favor of a literary unity between the twelve dialogues⁵¹, yet he does not defend any fixation in Plato's thoughts (p. 40). Moreover, according to Kahn, two of those definitional dialogues, viz. the *Laches* and the *Euthyphro*, are in harmony with the *Meno* in respect to theoretical framework. That is, this trilogy focuses on the nature of things, F-ness.⁵² Unlike other two dialogues, the *Meno* not only examines F-ness practically, but it also advances broad systematic investigations (p. 41). On the

position they deserve and to concentrate on the literary and philosophical content of the works, taken on their own and in relation to the others.” (1997, p.xiv).

⁵⁰ In *Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates*, edited by Benson, “Did Plato Write Socratic dialogues?” pp. 35-52, 1994.

⁵¹ Those twelve are seven pre-middle or “Socratic” dialogues: *Laches*, *Charmides*, *Lysis*, *Euthyphro*, *Protagoras*, *Euthydemus*, *Meno*, and five Middle dialogues (the doctrine of Forms): *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Cratylus*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*. Note that Kahn regards *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus* as post-middle dialogues (ibid.; p.38).

⁵² It better to mention that I am not referring to “*theory of ‘Forms’—eternal, nonphysical, quintessentially unitary entities, knowledge of which is attainable by abstract and theoretical thought, standing immutably in the nature of things as standards on which the physical world and the world of moral relationships among human beings are themselves grounded.*” (Cooper, 1997, p.xiii). F-ness, in this work, loosely stands for the common qualities or characteristics of things which put them under in the same definition, that is; I am not in favor of essentialism or existence of the abstract entities.

contrary, in the *Gorgias*, any clear focus on this topic cannot be found. Nor does Plato investigate “*definiens and definiendum.*”⁵³ Finally, for Kahn, the *Meno* handles the issues left unanswered in the four definitional dialogues, especially the *Protagoras*.⁵⁴ In fact, Kahn says; the conclusion of the *Protagoras* is the premise for the *Meno* (pp. 43-4). To conclude, among many peculiar aspects of Kahn's assertion, I will center upon the ideas that (i) the sequential advancement in moral, epistemological and metaphysical theory, and (ii) the *Meno's* special condition within the twelve dialogues, and (iii) the *Meno's* linkage of the early and the middle dialogues.

Nevertheless, it is better to keep in mind that all classifications, irrespective of the reason, are speculative and debatable. In this respect, even so the early dialogues depict Socrates' own philosophy whereas Plato puts his own views forward in the middle dialogues this grouping is problematic. According to Rowe, (i) Plato would not have been turning his back on Socrates intellectually (ii) the differences between these groups, including the late dialogues, are overstated. He says that the stylometric investigation approach may weaken the classification, since the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium* and the *Cratylus* resemble the

⁵³ For my purposes, the argument about the relative date of the *Gorgias* and the *Protagoras* among the corpus is ignorable in respect to the main theme. Note that the opposition to Kahn's view may stem from the idea that the *Gorgias* is written after Plato's turn from Sicily and his acquaintance with Pythagoreans.

⁵⁴ Tarrant argues that the *Protagoras* is for “*virtue is knowledge*” while the *Meno* is against the same idea. In fact, Socrates “*seems*” to defend the argument at first, and then attacks it. Tarrant adds that Socrates also changes sides in the *Theaetetus*. (2000, p.12) This attitude, I suppose, clearly presents the “*dialectic*” method as well as “*argumentative*” skills. On the other hand, Irwin, contra Vlastos, asserts that Socrates sometimes cheats his interlocutor, i.e.; his defense of false premise on hedonism in the *Protagoras* (1992, pp.242-246).

“early” dialogues in respect to their style.⁵⁵

2.3. Who is Socrates?

The leading character of Plato's most dialogues is Socrates although there are some exceptions, i.e.; the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws* and the Eleatic Stranger in the *Sophist*.⁵⁶ And hence, this dialogue form none the less leads us to another controversial question: Who is Socrates? In fact, the famous so-called *Socratic Problem* arises due to disparate portrayal of Socrates in diverse sources, and within Plato's works themselves. On the other hand, it is better to note that this problem does not appear due to our lack of information of Socrates' life; it is a challenging puzzlement based extracting Socrates' ideas in Plato's works, if there is any.

Indeed, we have information about Socrates from four different sources who are supposed to have companionship with Socrates except Aristotle; yet they can hardly be reconciled. In the first instance the character Socrates appears in a comedy play of Aristophanes, namely; the *Clouds*. He caricatured Socrates who is an expert on sophistry, a lunatic, a rhetorician and a man who lacks prudence in

⁵⁵ (2006), pp. 15-7. On the other hand, according to Zuckert, some stylometric investigations also shows that “[T]he *Critias*, *Laws*, *Philebus*, *Statesman*, *Sophist*, and *Timaeus* are characterized by certain linguistic mannerism absent in other dialogues. Because this group includes the *Laws*, it is often said to be ‘late’” (2009, p.3).

⁵⁶Diogenes Laertius says; “His own views are expounded by four persons, Socrates, Timaeus, the Athenian Stranger, the Eleatic Stranger. These strangers are not, as some hold, Plato and Parmenides, but imaginary characters without names, for, even when Socrates and Timaeus are the speakers; it is Plato's doctrines that are laid down.” (3.52).

contrast to other two representations.⁵⁷

Actually, several definitions can be found for sophistry in ancient Greek philosophy and literature. Grote signifies Sophist; “*a wise man – a clever man – one who stood prominently before the public as distinguished for intellect or talent of some kind.*”⁵⁸ In accordance to this definition, Schofield says: “*Herodotus in the fifth century calls lawgiver Solon, the religious thinker Pythagoras, and Homeric seer Melampus all sophists (Histories 1.29, 2.49, 4.95)*”.⁵⁹ In fact, Protagoras himself criticizes the sophists:

(Prt. 318e-319a) The others [sophists] abuse young men, steering them back again, against their will, into subjects the likes of which they have escaped from at school, teaching them arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, music, and poetry”—at this point he gave Hippias a significant look—“but if he comes to me he will learn only what he has come for. What I teach is sound deliberation, both in domestic matters—how best to manage one’s household, and in public affairs—how to realize one’s maximum potential for success in political debate and action.

I suppose, what Aristophanes has in mind about a sophist is “*one who claims to refute any given argument.*” Zuckert points out that Socrates and sophists differs in (i) modesty; so called “say what you believe” principle, (ii) Socrates' encouraging attitude toward young men in contrast to sophists' discouragement of participants, (iii) Socrates' openness to challenges.⁶⁰ In this respect, Aristophanes may aim to criticize not only Socrates, but the philosophy in the 5th century

⁵⁷ Zuckert says that Xenophon’s and Plato’s, to an extent, is a response to Aristophanes. (ibid., p.135)

⁵⁸ (1850), p. 479.

⁵⁹ (2008), p. 39.

⁶⁰ (2009), pp. 494-501.

Athens. Prior also says; “*In Plato's eyes, the Clouds is, if not an accurate portrait of Socrates, an important source of the popular understanding of Socrates in the late fifth century.*”⁶¹

Yet, none has accounted this model as actually depicting Socrates. There are, of course, some exceptions. Zuckert informs us that Nietzsche adopts the Aristophanic Socrates. Indeed, the Nietzsche's extraordinary adoption of *this* Socrates can be traced back to his criticisms in “*The Twilight of Idols: in chapters the Problem of Socrates and Reason in Philosophy.*” In this respect, I suppose the reason of Nietzsche's sympathy to Aristophanic Socrates stems from the fact that “*Aristophanes' deeper-going criticism of Socrates concerns the philosopher's failure to understand the essentially unsatisfiable character of human desire.*”⁶²

That is, Nietzsche also puts down Socrates to simplify complexity of desires under the same notion; viz. *logos*.

In fact, Strauss claims that Socrates, in the *Clouds*, is not the one of Plato's or Xenophon's; Aristophanic Socrates might be pre-Socratic. That is, “the philosopher we encounter in Xenophon and Plato may be a man who took Aristophanes' criticism -or even friendly warning- to heart” and changes his methods and objects of investigation.⁶³

On the other hand, Xenophon pictures a dogmatic philosopher who is a

⁶¹ (2006), p. 26. Zuckert argues that Aristophanic Socrates is no more “sophist” than Plato's one in terms of “*teaching for money.*” (1985, p.135).

⁶² (1985), pp. 133-136.

⁶³ Zuckert (1985), p.135

professional on the moral and religious matters.⁶⁴ In the *Memorabilia*, he does not depict Socrates, in contrast to Platonic image, as a contestant who ceaselessly questions his interlocutor. For Xenophon, Socrates is as an expert who claims to have positive doctrines. Again unlike Plato, Xenophon presents a philosopher who indicates others ignorance *only*. However, this seems quite insubstantial for a man who constantly renounces wisdom *himself* in Plato's work.⁶⁵

On the contrary, Plato presents us a non-dogmatic and more or less skeptical Socrates who is devoted to moral examination and propounding ideas incompatible with the common sense of his age.⁶⁶ Lesher informs; “*Socrates steadfastly disavowed knowledge, or so say Plato, Aristotle, Aeschines, and Diogenes Laertius. In the eyes of the later skeptics, Socrates' refusal to claim knowledge represented a signal contribution to philosophy.*”⁶⁷

I suppose the clearest perspective which differentiates Xenophon's and Plato's presentation of Socrates is their Apologies. Indeed, the latter presents a philosopher who not only tries to persuade the jury about his “*divine mission*,” but also a dialectician who refutes the charges of his accusers. However, the former

⁶⁴ “*Socrates was so far from ignoring the difference between the human and the non-human, Xenophon states, that in contrast to all his philosophic predecessors, he restricted his inquiries to human affairs.*” (ibid., p.138).

⁶⁵ Santas (1979) claims that Xenophon's Socrates is “*too good to be true.*” Vlastos also argues that if Xenophon's Socrates were historical, he would have never been accused. (1971, p.3)

⁶⁶ Taylor claims that Socrates' disavowal of knowledge can only be found in the *Apology* 21d. Nevertheless, Socrates has been portrayed a man who rejects to know anything worthwhile (*kalos k'agathos*), for example; Cicero, *Academica I*, 16 and 45, II, 74. (2008, p.165)

⁶⁷ (1987), p. 275.

portrays an arrogant man who ignores his accusers and does not feel any need to defend himself.⁶⁸

Among those three Socrates, most scholars are sympathetic to the Platonic one.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, it is better to note that Socrates in Plato's works does not constitute a unity. In fact, Prior (2006) argues that we have three different portrait of Socrates within the dialogues:

(i) In the *Sophist*; a questioner who put his interlocutor to confusion and makes him to accept his ignorance,

(230d-e) Visitor: For all these reasons, Theaetetus, we have to say that refutation is the principal and most important kind of cleansing. Conversely we have to think that even the king of Persia, if he remains unrefuted, is uncleaned in the most important respect. He's also uneducated and ugly, in just the ways that anyone who is going to be really happy has to be completely clean and beautiful.

(ii) In the *Theaetetus*; a midwife who benefits his acquaintances and furnishes them with "a multitude of beautiful things":

(150d) So that I am not in any sense a wise man; I cannot claim as the child of my own soul any discovery worth the name of wisdom. But with those who associate with me it is different. At first some of them may give the impression of being ignorant and stupid; but as time goes on and our association continues, all whom God permits are seen to make progress— a progress which is amazing both to other people and to themselves. And yet it is clear that this is not due to anything they have learned from me; it is that they discover within themselves a multitude of beautiful things, which they bring forth into the light.

(iii) In the *Symposium*, a philosopher who has rich arguments, but not doctrines,

⁶⁸ Brickhouse & Smith (2004), pp. 69-71.

⁶⁹ See Benson (1992, p.12, fn.7) for a list of the defenders of Aristophanic and Xenophonic Socrates. I will not deal with those works since it is out of the range of this thesis.

on virtue beneath his ironic character:

(222a) Alcibiades: If you are foolish, or simply unfamiliar with him, you'd find it impossible not to laugh at his arguments. But if you see them when they open up like the statues, if you go behind their surface, you'll realize that no other arguments make any sense. They're truly worthy of a god, bursting with figures of virtue inside. They're of great—no, of the greatest—importance for anyone who wants to become a truly good man.

I suppose this portrait is the most favorable, but still debatable, one. It compasses the midwifery, Socratic irony, the misunderstanding of Athenians, and Socrates possession of a kind of “*knowledge*.” In spite of all these complexity and vagueness, I will acknowledge Plato's Socrates as most historical accurate, but also debatable, one. In other words, I admit the problem of Socrates cannot be taken for granted, yet it is almost impossible to surpass it. Kahn says “*the philosophy of Socrates himself, as distinct from his impact on his followers, does not fall within the reach of historical scholarship. In this sense the problem of Socrates must remain without solution.*”⁷⁰

Moreover, there is another portrait of Socrates which is drawn by Aristotle.⁷¹ Even if Aristotle was not born when Socrates was alive, he has familiarity to the philosophy of Socrates from the *Academy*. Socrates, for Aristotle, holds views which contradict with *Endoxa*, i.e.; common sense.⁷² For

⁷⁰ (1996) pp. 161-2. For an intense analysis of the problem of Socrates: See also Prior (1996), Zuckert (1985) and also Strauss' following works: *The City and Man* (1964), *Socrates and Aristophanes* (1966), *Xenophon's Socratic Discourse* (1970), *Xenophon's Socrates* (1972).

⁷¹ Prior informs that “[S]cholars have questioned Aristotle's general credibility as a historian of philosophy.” (2006, p.28)

⁷² ἔνδοξος (endoxos) means “resting on opinion, probable, generally admitted (τὰ δοκοῦντα πᾶσιν ἢ τοῖς πλείστοις ἢ τοῖς σοφοῖς)” in opposition to “what is necessarily true (τὰ πρῶτα καὶ ἀληθῆ)”

Aristotle, *endoxa* is the starting point Socratic examination, the *Elenchus*, which differs from ordinary beliefs, i.e.; *doxa*.

Aristotle also informs that Socrates examines those opinions knowledgeable to *experts* by means of peirastic method which is branch of dialectics.⁷³ Indeed, Aristotle distinguishes sophistry, which he attributes to Socrates, and dialectic, which he attributes to the *Philosopher*:

Metaph. (4. 1004b) For sophistry and dialectic are concerned with the same class of subjects as philosophy, but philosophy differs from the former in the nature of its capability and from the latter in its outlook on life. Dialectic treats as an exercise what philosophy tries to understand, and sophistry seems to be philosophy; but is not.

Aristotle, moreover, separates Socrates as himself and Socrates as mouthpiece of Plato. According to Fine, in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle uses the word *Socrates* when he refers Socrates as himself. At any time Aristotle puts Plato's arguments forward, he employs *the Socrates*. Fine also argues that according to Aristotle, Plato diverges from Socrates in respect to "*the Two World Theory*". She says; "*Aristotle sides with Socrates here, claiming that separation is responsible for the difficulties in Plato's theory of forms*".⁷⁴ In the same manner, Irwin associates theory of Forms with Plato. He adds that Plato, according to Aristotle, develops theory of Forms against Socrates' intention to apply the definitions to sensible

(Aristotle, Topics, 100b21).

⁷³ According to Bolton; it is supposed that "*Aristotle does not ascribe to Socrates the practice of dialectic*" which he contrasts with dialectic. (1993, p. 122) *πειραστικός* (*peirasrikos*) means "*fitted for trying or testing, tentative*". It is also used by Plato as *πειραστικός διάλογοι* (*dialogoi*) in the *Euthphyro*, *Theaetetus*, *Meno* and *Ion*.

⁷⁴ (1999), p. 12.

things. That is, since sensibles constantly change, they cannot be defined.⁷⁵

Consequently, if we leave aside the conflicts between that multifaceted information about Socrates, two common characteristics will arise; namely, Socrates is an ethicist and his method of investigation is questioning.⁷⁶ According to Cicero, Socrates changed the course of Greek philosophy. He says:

But numbers and motions and beginning and end of all things, were the subjects of the ancient philosophy down to Socrates, who was a pupil of Archelaus, who had been the disciple of Anaxagoras. These made diligent inquiry into the magnitude of the stars, their distances, courses, and all that relates to the heavens. But Socrates was the first who brought down philosophy from the heavens, placed it in cities, introduced it into families, and obliged it to examine into life and morals, and good and evil. (Tuscanian Discussions, IV).

In conclusion, I suppose that the understanding of Platonic philosophy as well as the “*Sokratikoi logoi*” cannot merely be based on analysis of the arguments; one may also focus the dramatic settings of the dialogues. In this respect, it is better to focus on the structure of the dialogues.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ (1999), p. 142 On the other hand, Prior argues that John Burnet and A. E. Taylor rejects Aristotle's testimony unlike most scholars; they base their view on two passages; i.e.; in the *Phaedo* (100b1-7) and the *Parmenides* (130b1-9), “*Socrates claims to be the author of the theory of [Forms]*” (2006, p.28).

⁷⁶ Brickhouse and Smith, on the other hand, put Socrates apart from Plato and Aristotle. In fact, they differ Socrates from “*most thinkers in the western philosophical tradition*” in respect to his sympathy towards “*puzzlements and paradoxes*” (2006, p.276).

⁷⁷ Note that R.M. Cornford, J.E. Raven and W.K.C Guthrie “*consider Plato's early dialogues as memorials to Socrates.*” (Canevi, 1979, p.3).

CHAPTER 3

THE EARLY DIALOGUES

3.1. Socrates Moral Aspiration

Socrates in the early dialogues is essentially a moral philosopher. He hardly puts forward a method of investigation explicitly.⁷⁸ He even does not have a methodological interest to constitute a theoretical framework. In this respect, Socratic investigation, the *Elenchus*, is moral and psychological in character rather than being an epistemological method. That is to say, the aim of Socrates elenctic practice is to canalize people to question and examine their beliefs, rather than intending for “truth”.

For Vlastos, the elenchus has two objectives; first is to search for a pattern of investigation. It should be noted that Vlastos consciously does not yield the elenctic examinations with an epistemological and logical property. I suppose this explains why Vlastos says that the target of Socrates is “*to discover how every human being ought to live*”. Secondly, the elenctic argumentation is also testing the individual's life, that is, to examine whether his life is consistent with his own belief system. Vlastos properly calls the former as “*philosophical operation*” and

⁷⁸ Ferejohn claims that the early dialogues do not contain any “*comparative assessments*” of former philosophies. Nor does Socrates show concern for “*developing a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the possession of knowledge*” (2006, p.146). Tarrant also argues that all early dialogues except *Republic I* and *Menexenus* are concerned with “*the exercise of the young or the refutation of false beliefs, not with the establishment of truths*” (2000, p.99).

the latter as “*therapeutic one*”.⁷⁹ Socrates only examines the interlocutors’ belief system; he does not name his way of inquiry as a theory of knowledge.⁸⁰ Nor does he analyze any “*proposition*” in isolation to dramatic setting.

Woodruff has a more extreme standpoint: He claims that Socrates does not attack “*the truth, the certainty, or even the source of the particular item of knowledge,*” instead; “*he challenges the reliability of the person who claims knowledge.*”⁸¹ I, on the contrary, suppose this view is not adequately grounded, Socrates investigates arguments, viz. “*whether prosecution of a wrongdoer is holy*” in the *Euthyphro*, or “*whether injustice is always wrong*” in the *Crito*. However, it is better to note that these investigations of arguments cannot completely be separated from interlocutor’s actions, indeed, most of the examination of Socrates stems from interlocutor’s actions themselves.

In addition, the truth value of an argument is based on neither “*deductive reasoning*” nor “*universal principles*”: The abandonment is due to the emergence of the inconsistent premises *within* the interlocutor’s web of belief. In this respect, Socratic elenchus does not grant the logical refutation of the propositions.⁸² It

⁷⁹ Vlastos (1994).

⁸⁰ Woodruff claims that Elenchus is not “*adequate for knowledge.*” He labels the elenctic knowledge as “*examined true belief,*” that is, there is no “*epistemic justification*” (1992, pp. 89-90). Moreover, Irwin says; “*Socrates should not believe, then, that the elenchus can never in principle meet his demand for definition and knowledge.*” (1977, p. 68). That is, he argues that Socrates never believed that the *Elenchus* could supply the conditions for knowledge; Socrates only intends to test interlocutor’s account or belief.

⁸¹ (1992), p. 87

⁸² Vlastos (1994) calls this as “*the problem of Socratic elenchus*”. On the contrary, Benson claims such problem does not exist, since Socrates has never promised anything else than “*establishing inconsistency*” (2002, p.106).

only reveals the inconsistency of interlocutor's beliefs.⁸³ Secondly, the early Socratic dialogues are not conclusive; most of them result in *aporia*.

Moreover, scholars distinguish “*zetetic aporia*” from “*cathartic aporia*.” The former is a step in searching and constructing a particular knowledge; whereas the latter is preparation for the search, which is stimulative. In this respect, the aporetic character of the early dialogues is *cathartic*, while the *Theaetetus* is constructive. Politis effectively attributes the *cathartic* function of *aporia* to the *Laches* 194a-c and 196a-b, the *Euthyphro* 11b-d, the *Meno* 80a-b and 72a, whereas he argues that the *zetetic* function can be found in the *Apology* 21b, *Charmides* 167b-c, the *Protagoras* 324d-e and 348c, the *Meno* 80c-d and 84a-c.⁸⁴ Note that the *Meno* is the only dialogue in which both function can be found, that is, I suppose this may support the idea that the *Meno* connects the early dialogues to the middle ones. Note that I ignore the distinction between epistemological and dramatic *aporia*. Besides, it is better to signify that the *Gorgias*, *Crito*, *Apology*, *Ion*, and *Euthydemus* have positive results.

On the other hand, the inconclusive facet of the Eclectic dialogues does not completely negative and shackling; Socrates explicitly sets forth moral arguments, and he takes a stand enthusiastically.⁸⁵ In this respect, the disavowal of knowledge

⁸³ See Vlastos (1994), cf. Kraut (1983).

⁸⁴ (2006), p. 93.

⁸⁵ Benson claims that the inconclusive facet of the early Socratic dialogues has led “...many scholars to understand as a merely destructive critic, having no positive moral doctrines of his own”. On the contrary, the studies dated after late 70s have addressed that in the dialogues “...Socrates can be found putting forth and defending moral doctrines” (1995, p.45-46).

may not immediately entail a skeptic point of view.⁸⁶ Indeed, Bolton informs that , for Aristotle, the elenchus can lead to *episteme* by distinguishing “two basic types of *Elenchus*.” (i) refutations which can be produced by whom has expert knowledge and know the *arkai* or first principles of given subject (ii) *dialectic*, or *peirastic*, refutations which do not need knowledge. The latter one is Socrates own account since he disavows knowledge and claims to refute arguments.

3.2. Socrates' Epistemology (the Elenchus)⁸⁷

Initially, I suppose that an explicit epistemological method can hardly be found in the earlier Platonic dialogues in contrast to systematic middle and late dialogues. In that sense, I will refer to the earlier dialogues when I call *Socrates_E* following Vlastos'.⁸⁸ In his illuminating and touchstone work *Socratic Studies* (1994), Vlastos claims that Socrates never tried to reason out his way of examination. That is to say, neither justification of his pattern is presented nor a particular word for it can be found. In fact, Socrates uses the word *methodos* in the *Phaedo* for the first time. Cebes says “...that even the dullest person would agree, from this line of reasoning (*ἐκ ταύτης τῆς μεθόδου* – *ek toutos tes methodon*), that soul

⁸⁶ (1993, p.131).

⁸⁷ Note that the word “*elenchus and its cognates*” do not originally belong to Socrates. It has a history from Homer to Socrates. The word stands for “*shame or disgrace*” in Homer. Its meaning has transformed to “*refutation*” in Parmenides. For an intense analysis of the Elenchus: Leshner, J. (2002). *The Parmenidean Elenchus* in G.A.Scott (Ed.), *Does Socrates Have a Method?*, pp.19-35: Pennsylvania State University.

⁸⁸ Vlastos, G. *Socratic Studies* (1994).

is in every possible way more like the invariable than variable. (79e)". In 97b

Socrates also says;

Nor can I now persuade myself that I understand it is that things become one, nor, in short, why anything else comes or ceases or continues to be, according this method of inquiry (*τρόπον τῆς μεθόδου* – *tropon tes methodos*). So I reject it all together, and muddle out a haphazard method of my own.

Indeed, what Socrates rejects is Anaxagoras natural philosophy. That is, Socrates presents positive doctrines, not only refutes the arguments. Vlastos argues that:

[Socrates' inquiries] are constrained by rules he [Socrates] does not undertake to justify. In marked contrast to "Socrates" speaking for Plato in middle dialogues who refers repeatedly to the "method" [*μεθοδος*]...the "Socrates" who speaks for Socrates in the early dialogues never uses the word and never discusses his method of investigation.

Moreover, Vlastos also points out that the first occurrence of the word, *μεθοδος*, is in the Phaedo (79e3, 97b6), in fact, "*methodos is a new word created by Plato in his middle period*".⁸⁹

In the early dialogues, Socrates' method of investigation, the elenchus, is not an explicitly evaluated epistemological model. In this respect, it is hard to distinguish Socrates' method from other fifth century sophists. Taylor argues that even if Socrates' elenctic investigation is different from Protagoras' or Prodicus' practice, Plato places it to sophistic side of *dichotomy* between philosophy and sophistry.⁹⁰ In fact, Plato accounts the *Elenchus* as "*noble kind of sophistry*"

⁸⁹ (1994), p. 1.

(Thea.231a-b). I suppose that this can explain the reason why Plato does not accept the *Elenchus* as the *one* and *only* way for knowing in and after the *Meno*.

What is more, Socrates does not claim knowledge. Nor does he investigate any proposition in isolation to interlocutor's character.⁹¹ I none the less do not claim that Socrates' examination is solely educational or didactic, since he asks for general definitions. What I mean, Socrates bases his inquire on interlocutor's beliefs, not on universal, or endoxic, judgments. In that sense, the Socratic method in the earlier dialogues is distinguished from the one in the middle dialogues due to its instantaneous and momentary quality, that is to say; Socrates never claims explicitly that he is searching for universal moral truths which are plausible for all man.

On the other hand, the question “*whether a unity of Socratic elenchus can be found or not*” should also be evaluated. Indeed, Carpenter and Polansky claims that the *Elenchus* cannot be accounted as having one unique object to accomplish for all cases; on the contrary, it has diverse aims in investigation.⁹² In other words, it is plausible to claim that in the *Elenctic* dialogues Socrates does not systematically evaluate a comprehensive and unique method of investigation.

⁹⁰ (2006), pp. 164-165.

⁹¹Vlastos defines Socratic elenchus as “...a search for moral truth by question-and-answer adversary argument in which a thesis is debated only if asserted as the answerer's own belief and is regarded as refuted only if its negation is deduced from his own beliefs.”(ibid., p.4). Brickhouse and Smith also claims that “Socrates does not say that he examines what people say, or even what they believe; he says he examines people” (1991, p.136). This is the main reason for “say what you believe principle”.

⁹²“Socrates manages to investigate claims to techne, to examine the life of his interlocutor, to puncture conceit of wisdom, to begin reorient the life of the interlocutor, to seek suitable friends, and so on.” (2002, p.89).

Indeed, the evaluation of his pattern is the practice itself, that is; he examines the effectuality and accuracy of his method by means of numerous “*Socratic conversations*”.

Significantly, the elenchus is not a method of proof or justification in modern sense. On the other hand, it is a way to show the inconsistency of the interlocutors’ other belief with the first argument proposed by them. Benson addresses two diverse points of views on the Socratic elenchus: (i) Vlastos claims that “*in point of logic the elenchus can only establish inconsistency*” that is, Socrates does not investigate the “*epistemic status of the premises.*” In other words, Benson claims that “*they [the premises] do not have the status of first principles, axioms, endoxa, or even common opinion*” for Vlastos. Benson rephrases (ii) Kraut that “*numerous passages besides those contain the word apodeiktai show that Socrates takes his elenchus to establish the falsehood of the apparent refutand*”.⁹³ However, I suppose Vlastos does not dismiss the refutation of the main proposition by inconsistent beliefs of the interlocutor, rather his idea is to show that the method of analysis does not provide epistemic ground for the refutation of those beliefs.

In fact, Socrates does not immediately evaluates or analyze the judgment in order to refute it, yet he constantly investigates his answerer's other beliefs to find a contradiction in respect to the primary proposition. For Vlastos the method of elenchus is to “*demonstrate inconsistency within the premise set (p, q, and r),*

⁹³ (2002) pp. 102-103.

Socrates takes to prove p is false, not-p true".⁹⁴ In brief, because of the inconsistency of the interlocutor's belief system, proposition is counted as being refuted. Vlastos brilliantly puts non *prima facie* problem of Socratic elenchus as refuting *p*, he analysis that the interlocutor can modify *q* or *r*, rather than accepting *p* as false, that is, the answerer can give up the contradicting premises in order save the truth of *p*.

However, the interlocutor, for example Polus, hesitates to defend his fundamental argument and he accepts that the premises of elenchus had refuted his thesis.⁹⁵

According to Vlastos, the retreat of the Polus is due to *Socrates'* confidence of elenchus; Vlastos asserts that if the interlocutor denies *q* instead of *p*, Socrates "*would have the resources to recoup that loss in a further elenchus.*"⁹⁶

Nevertheless, in *the Meno*, the interlocutor have not withdrawn his thesis, rather he, *Meno*, attacks to Socrates' and his method, i.e.; the elenctic refutation and disavowal of knowledge. In that sense, it may also be claimed that Plato himself have lost the confidence to *elenchus* and *the disavowal of knowledge*, thence he proposes new models for investigation.

Moreover, the contemporary interpretations of the elenctic method are divergent. In fact, the core of the debate can be traced back to Vlastos' provocative

⁹⁴ (1994), p. 20.

⁹⁵ In fact, Vlastos re-acts Polus in Gorgias, he speaks that "*I see the inconsistency in what I have conceded, and I must do something to clean the mess. But I don't have to concede that p is false. I have other options. For example, I could decide that p is true and q is false. Nothing you have proved denies me this alternative.*" (ibid., p.21). These examples could be multiplied. See Vlastos, *Socratic Studies*(1994), pp.11-12

⁹⁶ ibid., p. 22.

paper “*the Socratic Elenchus*”⁹⁷. He argues that the Socratic elenchus does only show the inconsistency of the interlocutor's premises, instead of logically refuting them;⁹⁸ this is what Vlastos defines as “*the Problem of Socratic elenchus*”. According to Vlastos, the elenchus is a method of proof in which Socrates uncovers the interlocutor's inconsistent beliefs by relying upon two assessments: “*Whoever has a false moral belief will always at the same time true beliefs entailing the negation of the false belief.*”, and secondly “*The set of elenctically tested moral beliefs held by Socrates at any given time is consistent.*”⁹⁹ Brickhouse and Smith, on the other hand, argues that Socrates’ does not have any method which he relies the examinations of wisdom on, that is; Socrates was like one of us who pronounces his ignorance.¹⁰⁰ I believe this argumentation is legitimate to an extent for Socrates never conducts the investigations *on pre-established* line although he has some “*technical*” skills, that is, he has not a systematic method of justification.

On the contrary, Benson argues that “*the problem of Socratic elenchus*” does not exist, for the reason that Socrates has never claimed in any passage that he has

⁹⁷ Oxford Studies of Ancient Philosophy I (1983): 27-58. Scott claims that those critics of Vlastos’ are due to “*assigning a label to Socrates' method neither Socrates nor Plato gives to it*” (2002, p.4).

⁹⁸ Note that Aristotle, for Vlastos, makes a distinction between *peirastic* and *dialectical* demonstration, which he attributes the former to Socrates. Vlastos claims that Aristotle criticizes Socrates because “*peirastic arguments could easily be mistaken, since Socrates says nothing about the epistemic status of the premises from which he deduces the negation of the refutant.*” However, he adds that this critic is not quite appealing (1988, p.367).

⁹⁹ (1995), p. 25 & p. 28.

¹⁰⁰ (2002), p. 157.

proved his interlocutor's primary proposition to be false, and the lack of such evidence dissolves the problem. He says:

Socrates take his encounters to show that his interlocutor fails to have the knowledge he thought he had...[then] 'in point of logic' the elenchus can only establish inconsistency, but Socrates nowhere claims to have established anything else.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, the investigation pronouncement of the Delphic Oracle in the *Apology* (20e-23c) may propose that Socrates' claims to have "*truth*". That is to say, after his continuous attempts to refute the proposition "*no one is wiser than Socrates*", he consequently attains the opposite of what he aims; "*I am the wisest since I know that I do know nothing*" unlike those whom pretend to have "*knowledge*". I suppose this passage may weaken Benson's argument; Socrates claimed to refute others elenctically. McPherran says; "*But one lesson to be taken from our study of Socrates' long investigation of the oracles' meaning seems to be that one single elenchus does not a sufficient...*"¹⁰² After over and over elenctic investigation's failure to refute or showing inconsistency of the pronouncement, he confirms that the proposition was true. In fact, I suppose early dialogues depicts Socrates' elenctic investigation, that is; the only justification of Socrates practice is "the practice" itself.

Moreover, Benson also claims that there actually is a "problem of the Socratic elenchus", yet it is quite different from Vlastos' proposal. He suggests that:

The problem [is] instead to explain how Socrates and his interlocutors are

¹⁰¹ (2002), p. 106.

¹⁰² (2002), p. 143.

to acquire the knowledge that they lack. Lacking knowledge of something, one needs some source for the premises...To do this, Plato turns to the theory of priests and priestesses and to recollection”.¹⁰³

In that sense, the problem of Socratic elenchus is not epistemic, rather it is ontological. That is, the origin of “true beliefs”, or elenctic knowledge, is missing. In fact, even if Benson and Vlastos define the problem in diverse aspects, they find the solution in the same place, that is; the *Meno*. And hence, the reason of the peculiarity of the *Meno* arises, i.e.; to understand Plato and to distinguish him from Socrates. Vlastos comes up with a similar proposition:

“Would not this have struck Plato as answering as answering the question he never makes Socrates ask: how could it happened have happened that each and every one of Socrates' interlocutors did have those true beliefs he needs to refute all of their false ones? That wildest of Plato's metaphysical flights, that ultra-speculative theory that all learning is “recollection,” is understandable as, among other things, an answer to a problem in Socratic elenchus.”¹⁰⁴

3.3. Disavowal of Knowledge

Another common disposition of the elenctic dialogues is the “disavowal of knowledge”, that is, Socrates disclaims knowing anything “fine and good”. Indeed, Socrates does not only disclaim knowledge himself, he also accuses the interlocutors for lacking it. For the examples of this view, see Ap. 21b-d7; Euthphr. 5a3-c8, 15c11-16a4; Chrm. 165b5-c1, 166c7-d6; La. 186b8-187a8, 200e1-2; Ly. 212a4-7, 223b4-8; Grg. 509c4-7. In this respect, the claim of

¹⁰³ (2002), p. 113.

¹⁰⁴ (1994), p. 29.

knowledge, certain and stable, in the middle dialogues as well as in the *Meno* is an attempt to enable knowledge not only in Socrates' own philosophy, but also for 5th century Greek philosophy and society. Besides, I suppose Socrates cannot be labeled as a skeptic, for he never undermines the possibility of knowing: Socrates attacks the dogmatic and “*unexamined*” beliefs of the people. In other words, Socrates' intention is not disposing the truth, but he aims to suppress the false beliefs: Socrates does not shake the very foundations of truth, instead; he devaluates the arguments of the interlocutor, and the interlocutor himself.¹⁰⁵

Moreover, I suppose Socrates puts an epistemic and ontological standpoint by implementing the disavowal, yet he does not present a systematic evaluation. Indeed, the disavowal of knowledge is ontological since he claims what can be accounted as knowledge can just be found in *this* world, and hence it cannot be stable or certain, as divine knowledge. It is epistemic for *Socrates* states that he shows that “no one is wiser than himself” elenctically. What I mean; the only pattern to have *true beliefs* for Socrates is the *Elenchus*.¹⁰⁶

In fact, Socrates exposes his motivation in the *Apology*. That is, he investigates “*poets, politicians, and craftsmen*” in order to find “*someone wiser than him*”, yet he fails. I suppose Socrates chooses “those experts” consciously because they have a reputation for *sophia* in the city (Ap. 22a). Moreover, it appears that

¹⁰⁵ Woodruff says; “This is close to skeptical issue, but deceptively so” (1992, p.87).

¹⁰⁶ The most essential content of elenctic investigation is asking clear and accurate questions. (Benson, 1992, p.125) In the *Laches*, Socrates says; “*You speak well Laches; but perhaps I am to blame, not to speaking clearly, for your failure to answer the question I meant to ask, but a different one.*” (190e7-9).

Socrates equates *techne* with *sophia*. Properly speaking, there are two may be implications of Socrates' targeting on experts: (i) *sophia* departs from *techne*, (ii) *sophia* and *techne* can be used interchangeable. Woodruff is in favor of the latter option; he argues that what Socrates knows he lacks the “*professional*” knowledge on virtue. Moreover, after his investigation of experts, Socrates concludes that there is no one who has the professional knowledge, or *sophia*. Thereupon, Woodruff claims that Socrates rejects any *techne* about *sophia*. In contrast, Socrates claims to have non-expert knowledge. That is, Socrates disavows “expert” knowledge, yet he claims to have “a kind of knowledge”.¹⁰⁷

On the contrary, even if I agree with Woodruff on the idea that Socrates rejects “certain” or “divine” knowledge, I suppose the *sophia* departs from *techne*. Since, (i) Socrates is still ironic¹⁰⁸ to label “poets, politicians and craftsmen” as wise (ii) he does not clearly relate expert knowledge and *sophia*.

Here, it is better to introduce a debate on the relationship between moral knowledge and craft knowledge. In contrast to most scholars Irwin claims that “*virtue is simply craft knowledge*” for Socrates.¹⁰⁹ In fact, Irwin claims that (i) the technical knowledge, crafts such as medicine, or carpentry, is productive, therefore (ii) the moral knowledge is also productive, which produces

¹⁰⁷ (1992), pp. 90-93.

¹⁰⁸ In the *Symposium* (216e), Alcibiades says about Socrates that “*In public, I tell you, his whole life is one big game—a game of irony.*” He adds that in private conversations he puts “*so bright and beautiful, so utterly amazing*” arguments forward. In this respect, I suppose Plato tries to depict two Socrates; one is ironic and shares similar, though different character with Aristophanes' Socrates. The other is positive and dogmatic with a slight resemblance of Xenophon's Socrates.

¹⁰⁹ Roochnik (1992), pp. 185-186.

eudemonia.¹¹⁰ Roochnik attacks (i), and argues that “for Plato *techne* does not refer to productive knowledge. Instead, it is a much more flexible term covering a wide range of different kinds of arts, sciences, and crafts”.¹¹¹ Moreover, according to Roochnik, the role of *techne*-analogy in the early dialogues is only functional, which is dialectical exhortation and refutation. Thence, he claims that virtue is moral knowledge and the translation of *techne* as “craft” is wrong, that is, “*techne* should be translated as simply knowledge, not productive knowledge”.

Roochnik also uses “episteme” and “*techne*” interchangeably.¹¹² In this respect, Woodruff and Roochnik have the same point of view on the relation between “*techne*” and “episteme” to some extent. Yet, the latter does not posit any correspondence with “sophia”.

However, I believe, poets, for example, are not able to talk about the nature of poetry, but they “say many fine things”. Socrates likewise admits that craftsmen who “knows many fine things.”¹¹³ Nevertheless, none of those experts knows the essential qualities of their work. They cannot give any universal or principal definition for their profession.¹¹⁴ Nor do those experts possess any

¹¹⁰ εὐδαιμονία (*eudaimonia*): “*success in life: the good composed of all goods; an ability which suffices for living well; perfection in respect of virtue; resources sufficient for a living creature.*” (Def. 412e).

¹¹¹ 1992, pp.185-186.

¹¹² *ibid.*, pp. 190-193.

¹¹³ Socrates says; “these [poets] also say many fine things (πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ – *pallā kai kalā*), but know none of the things they say (ἴσασιν δὲ οὐδὲν ὧν λέγουσι – *isasin de ouden on legousi*)” (22c). For craftsmen, he says “they know many fine thing (πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ ἐπισταμένους – *pallā kai kalā epistamenous*)” (22d).

sophia. That is to say, they do not possess *sophia*, but they only have *technical knowledge*.¹¹⁵

Once Socrates exposes that their *techne* is not wisdom, the “*poets, politicians, and craftsmen*” are then able to examine themselves to attain knowledge. In fact, Socrates himself was voluntary to accord them in the pursuit of truth. In the *Gorgias*, he says:

(506a) I'll go through the discussion, then, and say how I think it is, and if any of you thinks that what I agree to with myself isn't so, you must object and refute (*ἐλέγχειν* - *elenchein*) me. For the things I say I certainly don't say with any knowledge at all; no, I'm searching together with you so that if my opponent clearly has a point, I'll be the first to concede it. I'm saying this, however, in case you think the discussion ought to be carried through to the end. If you don't want it to be, then let's drop it now and leave.

Although the disavowal of knowledge may *prima facie* seem to be “*a destructive critic*”, Socrates have much more positive attitude towards wisdom and knowledge. I suppose the most lucid and wide-open occurrence of Socrates' position on wisdom is the examination of the pronouncement of the Delphic oracle. The priestess of Delphi's answer to Chaerephon's question; whether there is anyone who is wiser than Socrates is, that there was none. Nevertheless, Socrates hesitates to accept this pronouncement even if “*for surely he [Oracle] does not lie; it is not legitimate for him to do so*” (*Ap.21b*). Then, Socrates tries to

¹¹⁴ Irwin argues that Socrates searches for an “*objective explanatory property*” in the *Meno*; this demand cannot be satisfied by giving a property which applies to all individuals. That is, Socrates does not ask for a “*conventional recognition*” which makes all Fs an F (1999, p.149).

¹¹⁵ I suppose the distinction between *techne* and *sophia* in the *Apology* loosely corresponds to the distinction between *doxa* and *episteme* in the 85c and 97a-99a in the *Meno*. That is, slave has the solution, but he cannot *explain* it.

refute the pronouncement by means of searching someone wiser than him. Here, it is better to mention substantial meaning of “*searching someone wiser*”: Socrates elenctically conducts this investigation since he does not *believe* in the priestess. Socrates tries to refute the proposition, by finding instances which are inconsistent with p.¹¹⁶ However; he could not find anyone wiser than him since he refuted those claiming to be wise at each cross-examination.¹¹⁷ Hence, Socrates reaches to a more or less ironic proposition:

Ap. (23a-b). What is probable, gentlemen, is that in fact the god is wise (τῷ ὄντι ὁ θεὸς σοφός - *to onti Theos sophos*) and that his oracular response meant that human wisdom (ὅτι ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία – *oti e anthropine sophia*) is worth little or nothing, and that when he says this man, Socrates, he is using my name as an example, as if he said: “This man among you, mortals, is wisest who, like Socrates, understands that his wisdom is worthless (ἄξιός ἐστι τῆ ἀληθείᾳ πρὸς σοφίαν *acios aletheis pros sopian*).” So even now I continue this investigation as the god bade me—and I go around seeking out anyone, citizen or stranger, whom I think wise. Then if I do not think he is, I come to the assistance of the god and show him that he is not wise. Because of this occupation, I do not have the leisure to engage in public affairs to any extent, nor indeed to look after my own, but I live in great poverty because of my service to the god.¹¹⁸

It is better to note that Plato connects the real wisdom with the Truth (*aletheia*). In

¹¹⁶ Vlastos says; the method of elenchus is to “*demonstrate inconsistency within the premise set {p, q, r}, Socrates to prove p is false, not-p true*” (1994, p.20).

¹¹⁷ Socrates concludes that he is wise since he knows the cognitive capacity of human understanding. That is, Socrates possesses the knowledge of ontological and epistemic status of things. In fact, he says in the *Apology* (21d): “*I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows (εἰδέναι - eidenai) anything worthwhile (καλὸν κάγαθὸν kalos k'agathos), but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know; so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know.*” (21d).

¹¹⁸ See also the *Apology* 29b, *Charmides* 165bc, *Laches* 200e, *Gorgias* 509a, and *Hippias Minor* 372be for other examples of the disavowal of knowledge.

this respect, it can be claimed that Socrates discloses “*ontos*” to human beings.

Indeed, Heidegger argues:

In the scope of this question, we must acknowledge the fact that *aletheia*, unconcealment in the sense of the opening of presence, was originally only experienced as *orthotes*, as the correctness of representations and statements. But then the assertion about the essential transformation of truth, that is, from unconcealment to correctness, is also untenable.¹¹⁹

That is to say, the truth for human differs from *aletheia*: Human wisdom does not carry “*the certainty of absolute knowledge.*”

On the other hand, there is another implication of the passage above, which is literal. It presents an implicit epistemological, and even ontological, feature of the disavowal of knowledge. The distinction between human and divine wisdom implies the limits of humane cognitive capacity. That is to say, only knowledge to be attained is *elenctic*, not certain.¹²⁰ In the *Euthyphro* (4e), Socrates says:

Whereas, by Zeus, Euthyphro, you think that your knowledge of the divine, and of piety and impiety, is so accurate that (*akribôs epistasthai*121), when those things happened as you say, you have no fear of having acted impiously in bringing your father to trial?

Socrates’ dialogue with Euthyphro results in *aporia*. At the end, the conclusion

¹¹⁹ 1972, p. 70.

¹²⁰ “One cannot attain divine wisdom: the point of calling it divine is that it is beyond human reach.” (Scott., 2006, p.90) For Kant’s similarity about humane cognitive capacity: See Critique of Pure Reason Bxxvi-xxvii

¹²¹ Compare Isocrates, *Helen*, 5. He is in favor of *epieikôs doxazein*, which is beneficial against to *akribôs epistasthai*, which is useless.

which they reached is identical to one in the beginning. For that matter, Socrates offers to start over the examination of piety. Euthyphro none the less flies away.

Socrates does the epilogue:

(15e-16a). What a thing to do, my friend! By going you have cast me down from a great hope I had, that I would learn from you the nature of the pious and the impious and so escape Meletus' indictment by showing him that I had acquired wisdom in divine matters from Euthyphro, and my ignorance would no longer cause me to be careless and inventive about such things, and that I would be better for the rest of my life.

Prima facie, the runaway of Euthyphro may seem as a negative effect of the Socratic *elenchus* and *aporia*. Nevertheless, if the character of Euthyphro is taken into consideration, the only implication arises will be that; the unquestioned beliefs *ipso facto* are subject to evaporation.¹²²

Furthermore, when Socrates claims that “*I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know; so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know*” (Ap.21d), he may not be merely ironic. It may be more proper to claim that the subject of the disavowal is not the Socrates himself; on the contrary, those who pretend to have knowledge are actually ignorant. In that sense, the sentence may be revised as “I believe that you, *the men of Athens*, know nothing”. Socrates

¹²² “*Like a Sophist too, he is incapable either of framing a general definition or of following the course of an argument. His wrong-headedness, one-sidedness, narrowness, positiveness, is characteristic of his priestly office.*” (Jowett, Euthyphro’s Introduction)

denounces those who come with the divine knowledge are *de facto* not wise.

In conclusion, I suppose the disavowal of knowledge involves epistemic and ontological features though Socrates does not lay down those properties systematically.¹²³ Indeed, Socrates claims one can have a kind of knowledge, which is the object of sense-experience.¹²⁴ Therefore, the Disavowal cannot be stable or certain, as divine knowledge which is beyond human cognition. Aristotle, in this respect, claims that “[W]hereas Socrates regarded neither universals nor definitions as existing in separation, the Idealists gave them a separate existence, and to these universals and definitions of existing things they gave the name of Ideas.” (*Metaph.* 1078 B30-32).¹²⁵

Furthermore, it has epistemic implications because Socrates' elenctic investigation to find “someone wiser than him” fails. That is, the pronouncement of the Delphic Oracle that “*Socrates is the wisest of all men*” is investigated by means of the Elenchus, that is, Socrates have tried to “refute” the prophecy, yet he failed. Thence, he concluded that the stable and certain knowledge can only be “*the Disavowal*”.

¹²³ Socrates never intends to show logical necessity of his theses. Nor does he indicate a universal source for their truth (Vlastos, 1991, p.84).

¹²⁴ “...he [Socrates] thinks one can have a kind of knowledge - the kind that does not make one wise – through divination, through elenctic examination, and through everyday experience” (Brickhouse & Smith, 1994, p.60). On the other hand, Socrates assumes in the *Phaedo* (66b-67b) that the more soul departed from body, the more man gets close certain knowledge. That is, divine knowledge may be possible if we move away from senses towards mind.

¹²⁵ See Fine (1998) for an intense analysis of “*chorismos*”.

CHAPTER 4

THE EARLY AND MIDDLE DIALOGUES: A DIVISION?

4.1. Epistemic Differences

As it has been discussed above, knowledge cannot be stable or certain for humans for Socrates. In regard to the *Apology* 20d-e and 23a-b “*real wisdom*” can only be possessed by Gods. On the other hand, “*human wisdom*” has “*little or no value*” in comparison to divine knowledge. The distinction between human and divine wisdom can be accounted to the limited cognitive capacity of human being.

Scott claims that

Knowledge of the virtue would constitute '*divine wisdom*'; all he has, and anyone had ever had, is mere '*human wisdom*' – the awareness that one does not have divine wisdom (*cf. Ap. 20d6-e3 and 23a5-b4*)...one cannot attain to divine wisdom: the point of calling it divine is that it is beyond human reach.¹²⁶

Then, it may be claimed that one of the primary signs that presents us the difference between early and middle Socratic dialogues is on the cognitive capacity of humans.

Furthermore, according to section between 21a-23a in the *Apology*, Socrates “refutes” all experts who pretend to possess wisdom, that is; elenctic investigation

¹²⁶ (2006), p. 90.

indicates the truth of Socrates' disavowal.¹²⁷ According to Vlastos, the idea of certain knowledge can be found in Parmenides and Democritus. The former claims that genuine knowledge can be attained by divine revelation, that is, a goddess reveals “*the unshaken heart of well-grounded truths (ἀλήθεια – aletheia)*” (BI.29).¹²⁸ It should also be noted that in the Protagoras Socrates uses the same word for truth, ἀλήθεια, in a similar context:

(343d) But to become good, indeed, is hard for a man, Pittacus, truly (ἀληθῶς - *alethos*)¹²⁹—not truly good (ἀληθεία ἀγαθόν - *aletheia agathos*); he does not mention truth (ἀλήθειαν - *aletheian*) in this connexion, or imply that some things are truly good (ἀληθῶς ἀγαθῶν - *alethos agathon*), while others are good but not truly (ἀληθῶς - *alethos*) so.

Then, Socrates says that “*to be a truly good man is impossible (ἀδύνατον – adunaton*¹³⁰) and superhuman (οὐκ ἀνθρώπειον – *ouk anthropeion*).¹³¹ In that sense, I suppose Socrates only disclaims involves certain or divine knowledge, that is, knowledge which can be possessed by cross-examination, testing or refutation is not stable and property of Gods.¹³²

On the other hand, Democritus, for Vlastos, claims “*In reality we know nothing in*

¹²⁷ But then, the next line may also be mentioned in order to reveal the Parmenides' difference with Socrates. Parmenides continues; “*as the opinion of mortals in which is no true belief at all. (BI.30).*” However, Parmenides does not disclaim to possess “*divine knowledge*”.

¹²⁸ (1994), p.55.

¹²⁹ ἀλήθεια means “*truth, reality*” in opposition to mere “*appearance*”.

¹³⁰ ἀδύνατος means “*unrealizable; unable to do a thing; and without power or skill.*”

¹³¹ οὐκ ἀνθρώπειον simply means “*not human.*”

¹³² Vlastos simply but intelligently puts forward; “*...when he says he knows something he refers to knowledge_E; when he says he is not aware of anything – absolutely anything, “great or small” - he refers to knowledge_C*”(ibid.; p.58).

certainty.”(fr.B9) Hence, Vlastos infers from the line, which I also agree: “*In reality we know only what we know with certainty*”. In that sense, Vlastos calls such knowledge as certain knowledge, i.e.; knowledge_C (1994; p.55) Socrates none the less disagrees with Parmenides and Democritus: he claims neither divine knowledge nor certainty can be attained. Rather, Socrates claims that elenctic knowledge (knowledge_E) is only achievable: “*he [Socrates] knows in the domain of ethics would have to be knowledge reached and tested through his own personal method of inquiry, the elenchus; this is his only method of searching moral truth.*”¹³³

What is more, the difference between early and middle Socratic dialogues arises on diverse understanding about knowledge. In other words, Socrates, in the early dialogues, never proposes stable and certain knowledge whereas Plato¹³⁴ claims unchangeable knowledge by recollection in the *Meno* and the middle dialogues.¹³⁵ For that reason, a clear distinction arises between knowledge by elenchus and knowledge by recollection.

Furthermore, in respect to use of hypothesis, Socrates keeps himself apart from

¹³³ (1991), pp. 55-56.

¹³⁴ Following Vlastos; I also take Socrates in the middle dialogues is depicting Plato's own philosophy (ibid., p. 50, fn.27). Moreover, Plato decides to propose a theory of knowledge, that is; not knowledge_E, but knowledge_C. Benson, accordingly, points out that the problem of Elenchus is its deficiency to present epistemic source for premises. Thence, in order to establish a ground for knowledge_C “*Plato turns to the theory of priest and priestess and to recollection.*”(2002; p.113).

¹³⁵ It is better mentioning that Plato's knowledge by recollection is different from Parmenides' knowledge by revelation. Vlastos remarks that the latter is “*instantaneous and absolute grasp of 'immovable' truth*”, that is; it is not “*the way of techne.*” (1946, p.76) On the contrary, I believe that the former is cumulative correction by means of gradual grasp.

“*if-sentences.*” That is, he opposes to any conditional argument. When Protagoras replies Socrates “*But what does it matter? Let it be so for us, if you wish.*” Nevertheless, Socrates dismisses this proposal, he says; “*I won't have this 'if you wish' and 'if you think so' that I want to be refuted, but you and me. I say 'you and me' for I think the thesis is best refuted if you take 'if' out of 'if'*” (Prt. 331c). Vlastos proposes three accounts for Socrates' disposal of “*hypothesis.*” Briefly, first is honesty in order not to be eristic. Secondly, one should be eagerly devoted to pursuit of knowledge even if he is intercepted. Thirdly, since the elenchus is also one's own life, a therapeutic test, Socrates demands exactness of the interlocutor's arguments, i.e.; “*say what you believe*” principle (1994; p.8). Note that does none stem from epistemological preferences. Nevertheless, it is better mentioning that Socrates does not reject hypothetical sentences for epistemological reason; rather he avoids for moral and “*dialectical*” reasons.

4.2. Ontological Differences:

In the early dialogues Socrates does not ask questions concerning the source of knowledge or wisdom, that is; he does not have explicit ontological investigations. Indeed, Socrates admits the existence of certain knowledge, yet he does not ontologically elucidate it. That is to say, Socrates in the earlier dialogues affirms the “*divine wisdom*” (Ap.23b), but he completely ignores it. For Socrates, certain and stable knowledge is beyond the capacity of human cognition. Moreover, the source of knowledge_E is the cross-examination and refutation, and

Socrates had accounted it only pattern for wisdom: “*it was best for me [Socrates] to be as I was.* (Ap.22e)”. However, Plato is not satisfied with those explanations; hence he proposed *recollection* in the *Meno*. In that sense, I suppose Vlastos' distinction between *Socrates_E* (*Socrates in the early dialogues*) and *Socrates_M* (*Socrates in the middle dialogues*) is quite legitimate:¹³⁶

IA. Socrates_E is exclusively a moral philosopher.

IB. Socrates_M is moral philosopher and metaphysician and epistemologist and philosopher of science and philosopher of language and philosopher of religion and philosopher of education and philosopher of art. The whole encyclopedia of philosophical science is his domain.

IIB. Socrates_M had a grandiose metaphysical theory of “separately existing” forms and of a separable soul which learns by “recollecting” pieces in pre-natal fund of knowledge.

IIA. Socrates_E has no such theory.

IIIA. Socrates_E, seeking knowledge elenctically, keeps avowing that he has none.

IIIB. Socrates_M seeks demonstrative knowledge and is confident he finds it.

VB. Socrates_M mastered the mathematical sciences of the time.

VA. Socrates_E professes no interest in these sciences and gives no evidence of *techne* in any of them throughout the Elenctic dialogues.

Firstly, concerning the *Thesis I*, I suppose the disavowal of knowledge is not only an irony, but it also propose some epistemic and ontological entailments. What I mean, even if an explicit and systematic unity cannot be found in Socrates_E, he conducts the pursuit of knowledge with a unique pattern, namely; the Elenchus.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ (1991), pp. 47-48

¹³⁷ Vlastos quotes Aristotle's critics for both Socrates and Plato to justify his thesis. In fact, Aristotle criticizes Socrates for “*Concerning himself with moral topics and not at all with the whole nature*” (Metaph.987b1-2). He also argues that Plato is erroneous, since “*separating them [universals and object of definitions] is the source of the embarrassing consequences of the ideas*” (Metaph.1086b6-7). Then, Vlastos concludes that “*Thus at each those salient points marked off in the first four of the Ten Thesis at which Socrates_E thought is antithetical to that Socrates_M*” (ibid., p. 97).

Secondly, if we take Socrates' distinction between “human” and “divine” wisdom into consideration (Ap.23a-b), it may be claimed that Socrates also puts existence of a stable and certain knowledge forward. I suppose Socrates has *forms* in mind, yet he believes that they cannot be possessed. According to Fine; “...in *Metaphysics (1086b3-7)* Aristotle clearly says that Socrates recognized universals; he sees, on Aristotle's view, that universals are necessary for knowledge. It is just that Socrates does not ascribe IE [independent existence] to them – this is further, and to Aristotle's disastrous, move of Plato's.”¹³⁸ I none the less suppose that Socrates posits two types of forms: (i) divine; which requires wisdom of Gods (ii) human; which can be attained by cross-examination.

What is more, the conflict between Socrates_E and Socrates_M has dissimilar insights about “what” and “how” can we know, i.e.; the cognitive capacity of human beings. In the early dialogues, Socrates abandons the claims about accurate knowledge.

What Socrates_E understands about essential qualities of an action is that they should be same in all single action:

Euth. (5d) “Is not the holy always one and the same thing in every action, and, again, is not the unholy always opposite of holy, and like itself? And as unholiness does it not always have its one essential form, which will be found in everything that is unholy?”

Vlastos argues that Socrates only mentions *form* of an action only if he is searching for “*What is F?*” question. In that sense I suppose that Socrates' aim

¹³⁸ (1998), p. 196.

have never been founding a theory of *essential qualities*. What I mean, he does not examine the F-ness to put a systematic understanding forward. Instead, Socrates_E aims to pursue *moral* knowledge. Therefore, Socrates' ontological claim cannot be ignored since he is searching for “*the essential form of holiness which makes all holy actions holy.*” (*Euth.6d*) That is, he tries to find out a form which makes each different instance or individual to be “the same”.¹³⁹ In respect to ontology, the fabric of early Socratic dialogues is “non-systematic”. Otherwise, it would be senseless to label Socrates_E completely ignorant about certain knowledge whom manifests himself as a pilgrim “*undertaken to establish the truth [certain and stable] of the oracle once for all.*” (*Ap.22a*). Socrates_E, for Vlastos, has ontology, but he is not an ontologist:

He never asks what sort of things forms must be if their identity can be so different from spatio-temporal individuals and events that the identical form can be “in” non-identical individuals and events. The search for those general properties of forms which distinguishes them systematically from non-forms is never on his elenctic agenda.¹⁴⁰

In that sense, it would be hard to locate a Socrates in the early Dialogues who researches into the essential properties of the Forms. On the contrary, we can find a Socrates who examines forms of individuals, such as; beauty, holiness, and courage.

On the contrary, in the middle Socratic dialogues, the investigation about the

¹³⁹ Vlastos also indicates that Socrates_E search for non spatio-temporal items. (ibid; pp. 56 - 58)

¹⁴⁰ ibid., p. 58.

Form of a thing is far cry deepened.¹⁴¹ That is to say, Socrates_M aims to get the bottom of the nature of the *eidos* that turns out “*something a thing*” by generating an all-covering thesis, viz. doctrine of Forms.¹⁴² Consequently, the fundamental separation of early and middle dialogues is based upon epistemic, ontological and methodological reasons.

4.3. Methodological Differences

In the Elenctic dialogues, Socrates limits his examinations to moral inquiry; he hardly shows methodological interest to justify his argumentation. I may remind that Socrates does not restrict himself to make metaphysical assessments. That is, Socrates takes validity of ontological claims granted. In that sense, Kraut takes the blame out of Socrates, he says; “*If we want to know why Socrates thinks those premises are true, he may have no answer to our question, but that is no fault of his. One can't always give a reason for everything one believes, and this fact does deprive one of proof.*”¹⁴³ Nevertheless, I suppose Kraut may be misleading. Inasmuch, first of all, Socrates thinks that his premises

¹⁴¹ Aristotle claims that “*Socrates devoted his attention to the moral virtues, and was the first to seek a general definition of these.*” (Metaph. 1078B17-18). On the other hand, Vlastos asserts that Aristotle puts a distinction between “*the universal definition of virtues*” and “*the nature of universals*”, which cannot be found in *Socrates_E*. (ibid.;p.93) Fine argues that for Aristotle: (i) Socrates does not separate some universals but allow them to be essences (ii) Socrates argues that “*all universals are sensible properties*” unlike Plato's commitment to the irreducible nature of the Forms. In respect to these two items, not in all manners, Aristotle and Socrates coincides (1998, pp.198-9).

¹⁴² “*We are in the habit, I take it, of positing a single idea or form in the case of the various multiplicities to which we give the same name.*”(Rep. X. 596a).

¹⁴³ (1983), p.62.

are true, as they remain unrefuted after the *Elenchus*. Secondly, Socrates has an implicit agnostic attitude due to the fact that he limits human's cognitive capacity as a result of the examination of the pronouncement of the Delphic Oracle. Even so, it is still sound to claim that Socrates has an ontology, but he does not reason out his statement.

In other words, Socrates_E does not investigate certain and stable knowledge. Nor does he methodologically go over the *Elenchus*. Indeed, as we have pointed out earlier, Socrates argues that knowledge can be located in this world by constant examination. However, he has little interest to elucidate it. Vlastos says:

Socrates never does [meta-elenctic] studies in Plato's earlier dialogues. In every one prior to *Meno* Socrates maintains epistemological innocence, metaphysical naivety. He assumes that he has the right to search for moral truth, but never attempts to justify the assumption.¹⁴⁴

It may also be reminded that justification, even if Socrates aims to refute it, “*the pronouncement of the Delphic Oracle*” can be regarded as an *inductive* proof for the *Elenchus*. However, the justification is neither a theoretic nor logical one. Instead, it is just a practical and discursive. On the one hand, it is better noting that Socrates denies divine and stable knowledge, since “*Real wisdom is property of God*” (*Ap. 23a*): Socrates claims that if there is knowledge to be possessed, it is the elenctic knowledge which is “*in respect of [divine] wisdom is worthless.*” (*Ap.23b*) On the other hand, contrary to Socrates' nontechnical and

¹⁴⁴ (1994), pp. 25-6.

unsystematic attempt to justify his understanding of knowledge, Plato goes further to prove both the existence of certain knowledge more reasonably and the possible patterns to have it.

Only when we take the *Meno* into consideration, Socrates makes an effort to expose the source of knowledge, which is unchangeable and unconditional. In that sense, the *Meno* is substantially chief dialogue for presenting Plato's intention to pass off the Socrates' limited philosophy.¹⁴⁵

Socrates examines a particular topic at each of the early dialogues. Indeed, the main theme of a dialogue ranges over diverse moral examinations. On the other hand, the common nature of them can be seen on the formatting of the dramatic structure. Every dialogue search excellence or a division of it, in the form of “*What is F?*” question¹⁴⁶ For example:

Euthph.5d. Is not the holy always one and the same (ταυτόν - *toútōn*) thing in every action (πράξει - *prāxei*), and, again, is not the unholy always opposite of holy, and like itself? And as unholiness does it not always have its one essential form (ιδέαν - *idēan*), which will be found in everything that is unholy?

Note that Socrates uses *eimi* and *idea* to define holiness and unholiness, that is; he intimates the definition. Aristotle says; “*Socrates devoted his attention to the moral virtues, was the first to seek a general definition of these*” (Metaph.1078B 30-32). On the other hand, I suppose Socrates, in the *Meno*, has some metaphysical claims, if not explicitly; Socrates implies “*things being separate in*

¹⁴⁵ In fact, Tarrant says; “*The tentative nature in which it [recollection passage in the Meno] is employed actually shows that the author is trying to feel his way forward, and to overcome the limitations of his agnostic Socrates.*”(2005, pp.37-38).

¹⁴⁶ Wolfsdorf, 2008, p. 8.

definition”. In this respect, according to the proposition, “*if virtue is knowledge, then it is teachable,*” knowledge and teachability are not separate *existens*. That is, the Aristotle's definition of *choriston logoi* (Metaph. 1042A29); “*A definitionally separate from B just in case A can be defined without mention of (definition of) B*” corresponds to Socrates' argument about virtue.¹⁴⁷ I suppose following passage clarifies what Socrates in mind about definitional separation:

Men. (87d) If then there is anything else good that is different and separate (χωριζόμενον-chorizomenon) from knowledge, virtue might well not be a kind of knowledge; but if there is nothing good that knowledge does not encompass, we would be right to suspect that it is a kind of knowledge.

In this respect, Socrates is searching for “*the genus of a thing*”, that is; he is actually conducting an ontological practice. Nevertheless, Socrates does not aim to give any systematic definition for the *Forms*.¹⁴⁸

In the Hippias Major (287c-d), Socrates' search for the beautiful can be another example for his ontological stance:

SOCRATES: “Then all fine things (τὰ καλὰ πάντα – tā kalā pānta) , too, are fine (καλὰ – kalā) by the fine (τῷ καλῷ – tō kalā) , isn't that so.”

HIPPIAS: Yes, by the fine (τῷ καλῷ - tō kalā).

SOCRATES: “. . . by that being something (ὄντι γέ τι τι τοῦτο – ónti gé tini toúto)¹⁴⁹?”

HIPPIAS: It is. Why not?

SOCRATES: “Tell me then, visitor,” he'll say, “what is that, the fine (τί ἐστὶ τοῦτο τὸ καλόν – tí ěsti toúto tò kalón)?”

¹⁴⁷ Fine (1998), p. 163.

¹⁴⁸ Canevi argues that “*the idea or the eidos is a generic unity, a kind or class*” (1979, p.101).

¹⁴⁹ Alternatively, “*onti ge tini touto*” can be translated as “*something has a real existence.*” (Canevi, 1979, p.111) In this respect, I suppose Socrates believes that the Forms “*really*” exist.

HIPPIAS: Doesn't the person who asks this want to find out what is a fine thing?

SOCRATES: I don't think so, Hippias. What is the fine.

HIPPIAS: And what's the difference between the one and the other?

SOCRATES: You don't think there is any?

HIPPIAS: There's no difference.

SOCRATES: Well, clearly your knowledge is finer. But look here, he's asking you not what is a fine thing (οὐ τί ἐστὶ καλόν - *ou ti esti kalon*), but what is the fine (ὅτι ἐστὶ τὸ καλόν - *oti esti to kalon*).

Hence, Socrates distinguishes "*ou ti esti kalon*" and "*hoti esti to kalon*," that is, the one and the many is not the same.

In the *Crito*, Socrates rejects to follow many, yet he claims to rely on the *techne*.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, Socrates argues that to learn justice makes one just¹⁵¹, and justice resembles holiness.¹⁵² Nevertheless, Socrates does not analyze the epistemic and ontological foundations of those questions. That is, he takes the logical necessity of those premises for granted, since anyone who he has talked failed to *refute* them.

When considered from this point of view, the noteworthy variation of the early and middle dialogues is that Socrates in Plato's middle dialogues aims to provide a ground for knowledge, similar to certain knowledge in geometry, unlike

¹⁵⁰ Cr.47d: "*Ought we to be guided and intimidated by the opinion of the many or by that of one – assuming that there is someone with expert knowledge?*". But Socrates does not attempt to define necessary conditions of the expert knowledge.

¹⁵¹ Ap.460c: "*...the man who has learned anything becomes in each case such as his knowledge makes him...then according to this principle he who has learned justice is just.*" Yet, the nature of learning has not been examined.

¹⁵² Prt.331b: "*...Then it is not the nature of holiness to be something just, nor of justice to be holy; it will be unholy, and holiness will be not-just – that is, unjust, and justice unholy?*" Socrates none the less does not question the nature of F-ness.

Socrates' disavowal of knowledge in the Elenctic dialogues. As it has been discussed above Socrates rejects a “*type*” of knowledge, not all of them, and hence it would be an underestimation of Socrates' epistemic and ontological standpoint to deprive him from any ontology and epistemology. Along the same line, it would be overinterpretation to attribute Socrates systematic and methodological reasoning in his philosophical practice. That is to say, Socrates claims to have a particular type of knowledge, which cannot be refuted,¹⁵³ but then he does not aim at the justification of epistemic or ontological character of it. In the Gorgias (508e-509a)

These facts, which were shown to be as I have state them some earlier time in our previous discussion, are buckled fast and clamped together- to put somewhat crudely – by argument of steel and adamant – at least so it would appear as matters stand (ἐγὼ ταῦτα οὐκ οἶδα ὅπως ἔχει – ego tauta ouk oida opos echei)¹⁵⁴.

Vlastos argues that Socrates again disavows knowledge, yet this time “*he does not know whether or not this theses (whose truth he has established by “arguments of adamant and iron”!) are true*”.¹⁵⁵ In that sense, I suppose this argument support the fundamental notion that Socrates_E does not question his thesis concerning

¹⁵³ After his discussion with Polus on whether to suffer or to escape is right, Socrates shows the inconsistency of Polus' premises. On the other hand, his thesis is unrefuted, in fact, it is stronger at the end as Polus himself admits: “*That of course is more difficult to than your first point Socrates*” and then, Socrates says: “*Not difficult, Polus, but impossible, for the truth is never refuted (τὸ γὰρ ἀληθὲς οὐδέποτε ἐλέγχεται – τὸ γὰρ ἀληθὲς οὐδέποτε ἐλεγχεται)*.”(G. 473b). The truth Socrates mentions here is not a divine one since he uses ἀληθεία πρὸς σοφίαν (*aletheia pros sophian*) or σοφὸς εἶναι (*sophos einai*) for specifying the “*genuine knowledge of Gods.*” (Ap. 23b) That is, Socrates again indicates the elenctic knowledge.

¹⁵⁴ Alternatively, “*I do not know how these things hold on a ground*”.

¹⁵⁵ (1991), p. 84, fn.9

epistemic (how?) and ontological (what?) aspects. In view of such information, I suppose Plato tries out proving and justifying the legitimacy of the judgments derived from Socrates' moral investigations by means of the elenchus, that is to say, Plato's purpose is to show the possibility of the certain and stable ground for moral knowledge which can be found in the elenctic dialogues.¹⁵⁶

On the other hand, the *Republic VII* propounds another crucial as well as controversial question: Does Plato disagree with Socrates in use of the *dialectic*? That is, unlike Socrates in the *Apology*, does Plato restrict the scope of the *dialectic* to a certain age and educated people in the *Republic VII* (537e-539d)? If this is the case, it would be surprising, as Lublink points, that Plato attributes harmful practices to “*the Socrates of the Elenctic dialogues*” to whom he has a “*long standing admiration*”.¹⁵⁷ In the *Republic* (538c-539a), Plato defines the dangerous dialectic as follows:

We hold from childhood certain convictions (δόγματα)¹⁵⁸ about just and fine things; we're brought up with them as with our parents, we obey and honor them.

Indeed, we do.

There are other ways of living, however, opposite to these and full of pleasures, that flatter the soul and attract it to themselves but which don't persuade sensible people, who continue to honor and obey the convictions of their fathers.

That's right.

¹⁵⁶ In fact, Vlastos claims that such ignorance cannot be found after the *Meno* (ibid; p.84).

¹⁵⁷ (2011), p. 3. She, moreover, claims that “Given the remarkable similarity between Plato's portrayal of the Socratic elenchus in the elenctic dialogues and his portrayal of the dangerous dialectician in the *Republic VII*” implies that Plato criticizes Socrates' practice of philosophy (p.5).

¹⁵⁸ *Dogmata* stands for “*that which seems to one, opinion or belief*” in the *Rep.538c*. That is, I suppose it does not have a certain *doctrinal* implication. In this respect, it may be accounted as “*predispositions*” or simply “*doxa*”.

And then a questioner comes along and asks someone of this sort, “What is the fine?” And, when he answers what he has heard from the traditional lawgiver, the argument refutes him, and by refuting him often and in many places (καὶ πολλάκις καὶ πολλαχῆ ἐλέγχων)¹⁵⁹ shakes him from his convictions (δόξαν καταβάλλει)¹⁶⁰, and makes him believe that the fine is no more fine than shameful, and the same with the just, the good, and the things he honored most. What do you think his attitude will be then to honoring and obeying his earlier convictions?

Of necessity he won’t honor or obey them in the same way.

Then, when he no longer honors and obeys those convictions and can’t discover the true ones, will he be likely to adopt any other way of life than that which flatters him?

No, he won’t.

And so, I suppose, from being law-abiding he becomes lawless.

However, I believe Plato does not blame Socrates at all; rather he attacks to sophistry or oratory which is of no worth in comparison with Socrates “divine” and “noble” mission:

Rep. (534b-c) Then, do you call someone who is able to give an account of the being of each thing dialectical? But insofar as he’s unable to give an account of something, either to himself or to another, do you deny that he has any understanding of it?

How could I do anything else?

Then the same applies to the good. Unless someone can distinguish in an account the form of the good from everything else, can survive all refutation (πάντων ἐλέγχων διεξιῶν)¹⁶¹, as if in a battle, striving to judge things not in accordance with opinion but in accordance with being, and can come through all this with his account still intact, you’ll say that he

¹⁵⁹ *Kai pollakis kai pollakhē elenkhōn*. I suppose Plato may refer to Socrates elenctic refutation of his interlocutors.

¹⁶⁰ When Euthyphro escapes in front of the king-archon, since he fall into aporia, Socrates uses *katabalon* to define his hopelessness on not get rid of Meletus’ indictment that “*Socrates is corrupting divine matters*”. Nevertheless, I believe Socrates is ironic when he says; “*I would learn from you the nature of the pious and the impious and so escape Meletus’ indictment by showing him that I had acquired wisdom in divine matters from Euthyphro, and my ignorance would no longer cause me to be careless and inventive about such things, and that I would be better for the rest of my life.*” (Euth. 16a).

¹⁶¹ *Pantōn elenkhōn diexiōn*. Note the similarity between Socrates’ investigation for “someone wiser than him” in the *Apology*. In fact, he was not able to find any one, and hence “*Socrates is the wisest*” survived all “*refutations.*”

doesn't know the good itself or any other good.

In contrast, Lublink argues that “*Plato believed by the time of writing the Republic that figure such as Socrates should not question others except in carefully controlled situations.*”¹⁶² However, I suppose Plato does not “*accuse*” Socrates for corrupting young, since it would be quite contradictory to his admiration of Socrates and the content of *the Apology* itself. Rather, I believe Plato must have been charging Socrates' interlocutors as well his accusers for not understanding Socrates' aim at truth and a kind of knowledge. In this respect, Lublink mistakenly recalls the idea that “*true belief can be as beneficial as knowledge for living well*” (Men.98b-c) in order to support the view that Plato restricts knowledge to a minority. That is, everyone does not need to have knowledge; they can live according to true opinions.¹⁶³ However, as we shall see in the following chapter, the distinction between doxa and episteme does not poses political implications, rather it serves for epistemological and ontological reasons. Moreover, Plato, in my opinion, may only be warning the dialecticians not to examine people in an unintellectual society since the dialectics is the ultimate purpose of philosophy which cannot be attained instantaneously.¹⁶⁴ That is, Plato merely advises philosophers for not sharing the fate of Socrates. In this respect, this is the reason why Plato found the *Academy*.

¹⁶² (2011), p. 9.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 12

¹⁶⁴ Note also that diverse methods can be found in the Plato's writings. As Rowe puts forward that “*Philosophical dialectic is one of his [Plato's] tools*” (2007, p.13). However, it is better keeping in mind that dialectics is not the only style of writing, yet it is only way of the philosophy itself (*ibid.*, p.14).

4.4. Mathematical Differences

Fourthly, in the early Socratic dialogues, Socrates has no affection towards mathematics. Even though, he refers to mathematical, their simplicity hinders us to attribute him any interest in mathematical or geometrical method.¹⁶⁵

In fact, Xenophon's remarks support this argument. He says:

[Socrates] said that the study of geometry should be pursued until the student was competent to measure a parcel of land accurately...He was against carrying the study of geometry so far as to include the more complicated figures, on the ground that he could not see the use of them. Not that he was himself unfamiliar with them, but he said that they were enough to occupy a lifetime, to the complete exclusion of many other useful studies.”(Memorabilia, 4.7.2-3)

Xenophon also informs us that Socrates slightly interested in astronomy, that is, he determines the limits of interest to practical needs. According to Xenophon, “*he [Socrates] held that their [heavens] secrets could not be discovered by man...*” (Mem. 4.7.4). I suppose the information from Xenophon fits to Socrates' distinction between divine and human knowledge in the *Apology*.¹⁶⁶

On the contrary, Socrates' expertise on mathematics in the middle dialogues can be discovered for the first time in the *Meno*(86e): “*...in considering*

¹⁶⁵ Vlastos claims that Socrates is “*obsessive on ethical inquiry*”. He is not interested in any *techne* on mathematics. In *Gorgias* (451a-c), “*Socrates distinguishes number theory from calculation*” and in *Euthyphro* (12d) explains the “*even number*”, yet he is not expert of the “*definitions*” or “*method*” unlike the Socrates in the *Meno* (1988; 389-392).

¹⁶⁶ Taylor asserts that Socrates distinguish “*the highest level of epistemic achievement*”, which he rejects to have and “*knowledge of particular moral truths*,” which he claims to possess (2008, p.166). Moreover, Tarrant claims that opposition to Socratic ignorance can also be seen in the ancient commentator, that is; some, Peripatetic Aspasius (*On Nicomachean Ethics* 54) and Julian (*Against Heraclitus* 24) believes that Socrates distinguishes divine and human knowledge, and ignores the former only (2000, p.199).

*whether or not it[virtue] can be taught, to make use of a hypothesis – the sort of thing, I mean, that geometers of use in their inquires.” Vlastos pins down this exchange to “Plato's personal association with Archytas, who is a 'brilliant mathematician, statesman, general, metaphysician.’”¹⁶⁷ Actually, Archytas himself fits in the Plato's later idea “the philosopher king.”(Rep.V.473d) Moreover, I should also add that his declining trust in the elenchus may also be an impetus for the application of “*geometers method of examination*”.*

In fact, according to legend, at the entrance of the Academy, it is said that Plato places a motto: “*Ageometretos medeis eisito*” (“Let no one unskilled in geometry enter”).¹⁶⁸ What does Plato mean by this phrase? Does he oblige dialecticians to know geometry to attain the Form of Good? Or is the *techne* of geometry needed for educational and instrumentalist purposes? This is actually a vital as well as a debatable topic.

Beforehand focusing on the doctrines of Plato about mathematics, it is better to note some critical points in Plato's life. Three years after the death of Socrates, Plato has lived at Megara with some Socratics where he engaged in mathematics as well as philosophy. Diogenes Laertius (3.6) informs:

When Socrates was gone, he attached himself to Cratylus the Heraclitean, and to Hermogenes who professed the philosophy of Parmenides. Then at the age of twenty-eight, according to Hermodorus, he withdrew to Megara to Euclides, with certain other disciples of Socrates.

¹⁶⁷ (1988), p. 387.

¹⁶⁸ For an intense analysis for the legend: See Fowler, (1999), pp.199-204.

Then, he traveled to Italy as a guest of Dionysius II, tyrant of Syracuse. It is also said so that Plato visits the Archytas of Tarentum who is a “*Pythagorean, musical theorist, and enlightened political leader.*”¹⁶⁹ Diogenes Laertius also informs that Plato also meets Theodorus the mathematician in Cyrene and the Pythagorean philosophers Philolaus and Eurytus in Italy (3.6). After Plato has returned to Athens, he establishes the academy and wrote the *Meno*. I suppose those travels has lead to Plato's enhancement in the philosophy as well as mathematics. According to Huffman, during his visit in 388-7 BCE, Plato must have worked on mathematics with Archytas; and Archytas must have instructed in dialectics. He adds that neither Plato become an Archytan, or Pythagorean, nor Archytas become Platonist.¹⁷⁰ However, although I agree that Plato has never been an absolute or heart and soul Pythagorean, I suppose that Platonism have not broken through yet when this visit takes place. In fact, what many people accepts a *Platonist philosophy* today may have originated after this *guest-friendship*. Therefore, he aims to go beyond Socrates' moral doctrines. In fact, Diogenes Laertius also notices the change in Plato: “*In his doctrine of sensible things he agrees with Heraclitus, in his doctrine of the intelligible with Pythagoras, and in political philosophy with Socrates*” (3.8). In 383, after his return from Sicily, Plato founded the Academy. Therefore, I believe that Plato’s acquaintance with Archytas directly

¹⁶⁹ Nails (2006), p.6. Schofield says that “*Plato was wanting to make contact with the Pythagorean philosophers in South Italy, and especially with Archytas of Tarentum.*” (2008, p.44). Guthrie says makes “*a direct and personal impact on Plato himself.*” (1962, p.333) Vlastos also calls him a “*master metaphysician*” and “*a new model philosopher for Plato*” (1991, p.129).

¹⁷⁰ (2005), pp. 41-42.

affects his philosophical understanding which leads him to new methods for investigation and construction of knowledge.¹⁷¹

As we have discussed earlier, no attraction for mathematics can be found before the *Meno*; that is, the presentation of two geometry problems and the hypothetical method indicates this interest for the first time.¹⁷² Nevertheless, it should be also noted that the ontological status of mathematical objects is not evaluated in the *Meno*; yet Plato only shows a methodological interest to geometry. In fact, Plato introduces his understanding on mathematical objects systematically in the *Republic VII*. (i) mathematics turns “*the soul around, away from becoming and towards truth and being.*”(525c), that is, I suppose, in respect to theory of Forms, mathematics helps us to answer “What is X?” questions; it enables us to enter the realm of beingness. (ii) “*It [geometry] draws the soul towards truth and produces philosophic thought by directing upwards what we now wrongly direct downwards.*”(527b): I suppose Plato means the upward path which leads to knowledge of Forms, in fact; what Plato has in mind is the hypothetical method. (iii) Socrates moves to the elucidation of the solid geometry, yet he says it is not developed, since “*There are two reasons for that: First, because no city values it, this difficult subject is little researched. Second, the*

¹⁷¹ It is better noting that the age of Plato coincides with the age of Greek mathematics. Proclus informs that “*At this time [Plato’s age] lived Leodamas of Thasos, Archytas of Tarentum and Theaetetus of Athens, by all whom the theorems were increased in number and brought into a scientific order.*” (Commentary on Book One of Euclid’s Elements, Prologue II. 66.4-18)

¹⁷² Most modern scholars do not attribute the solution of “*doubling the square, or cube*” to Plato. Their main reason is that the solution does not provide a theoretical framework (White, 2006, p.229). Indeed, according to Huffman, Heath (1921, p.246) and Mueller (1997, p.312 n.23) acknowledge Archytas solution to “*doubling the cube*” as “*the most remarkable*” and “*a tour de force of the spatial imagination.*” (2005, p.46).

researchers need a director, for, without one, they won't discover anything." (528b).¹⁷³ (iv) Socrates proposes astronomy should study not body or visible, yet "Then if, by really taking part in astronomy, we're to make the naturally intelligent part of the soul useful instead of useless, let's study astronomy by means of problems, as we do geometry, and leave the things in the sky alone" (530b).¹⁷⁴ In respect to these themes, I suppose Plato takes "mathematical science" to be the investigation of soul, if not alone.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, it may be reminded that the role of mathematics may not be "purely instrumentalist," that is; the content of mathematics is not irrelevant.¹⁷⁶ In fact, some mathematical concepts are essential for ethical understanding.¹⁷⁷

In this respect, Plato's clear interest in mathematics in the *Meno* presents that Plato aims to go beyond the Socratic *elenchus* although he does not give a technical explanation of mathematical objects. That is to say, Plato begins to

¹⁷³ White says "there were certainly known results in stereometry in the late fifth and early fourth centuries BCE." (ibid., p.231). On the other hand, Huffman argues that Plato's criticism of stereometers, especially Archytas, is due to the fact that he does not grasp the "real good of his work on 'doubling the cube'" although Archytas employs "a proper mathematical form" (2005, p.401).

¹⁷⁴ Huffman argues Plato has "Archytas' set of four sciences" in mind, and adds solid geometry as fifth, when presenting his own understanding although Plato differs in (i) positing dialectics as highest science (ii) separation of sensible and intelligible realm. (2005, pp.57-8) Moreover, for Huffman, Plato criticizes the Pythagoreans and especially Archytas for they do not understand these two points. (ibid., p.84)

¹⁷⁵ "Mathematics is the route to knowledge of Good because it is a constitutive part of ethical understanding." (Burnyeat, 2000, p.73)

¹⁷⁶ "The content of mathematics is a constitutive part of ethical understanding" (ibid, p.6).

¹⁷⁷ "Burnyeat denies that Plato holds the relationship between these concepts [concord, attunement, proportion, order and unity] in their mathematical and ethical contexts is equivocal or simply metaphorical. Indeed their ethical sense is fixed by their mathematical sense." (White, 2006, p.235).

generate his own philosophical system, yet any perfection is out of sight.

4.5. The Beginnings of Transition

As it has been discussed above, the *Meno* presents us a manifold which can hardly be found in any early dialogue, that is; Socrates aims to give an account that of which he barely searches the nature of knowledge. In fact, Socrates intends to present arguments about the nature and essential qualities of *F-ness*, or *Forms*, teaching and expert knowledge.

In the *Elenctic* dialogues, although the questions concerning the F-ness of actions can be found, Socrates does not aim to examine the question “*What are the Forms?*”¹⁷⁸ In this respect, Plato takes the investigation of moral propositions further in the *Meno*, i.e.; the technical and universal examination of the Forms themselves, yet he does not present a comprehensive account.¹⁷⁹

Moreover, Socrates’ understanding about generic qualities of a thing is that those qualities should be same in all instantiation of that thing, i.e.; every instance of the same genus have a common nature. Fine argues that Socrates proposes the existence of Forms for epistemological reasons, i.e.; explanation for the cause.

¹⁷⁸ Day argues that the recollection part of the *Meno* “marks the watershed between Socrates philosophy and Plato’s own developing metaphysics.” (1994, p.22).

¹⁷⁹ Klein says; “*beingness, or simply 'being', has the flavor of a 'technical' term, that is, of a term coined to signify aspects of thing which are usually not touched upon in common speech and which come into sight only after reflection and repeated investigation.*” (1965; p.47-48). In that sense, the *Meno* is also a threshold for further analysis of being which will be implemented in following dialogues.

She says;

Socratic forms are universals in the sense that they are explanatory properties. The fact that they are self-predicative paradigms does not jeopardize their status as explanatory properties; on the contrary, they are self-predicative paradigms because they are explanatory properties.¹⁸⁰

Nevertheless, Socrates does not search for the “*What is form?*” And hence, it is better to indicate again that Socrates has “*ontology*” in the early dialogues, yet he has never investigated it.¹⁸¹

In the *Meno*, Socrates seeks an answer to “*whether there is teaching or not,*” then he proposes the recollection as a response: there is no teaching or learning, but recovering knowledge.¹⁸² In respect to expert knowledge, Socrates claims that it would not be possessed naturally. In the *Crito*, Socrates does give a definition of expert knowledge, he mentions that expert knowledge can be possessed by only experts naturally and such knowledge has a good effect on humans.(47a-d). Nevertheless, Socrates does not pay attention to the method how expert knowledge can be reached, on the other hand, he, in the *Meno*, says there are no expert knowledge possessed by nature, it can only be attained by recollection.

¹⁸⁰ (1993), pp. 53-54

¹⁸¹ “The search for those general properties of forms which distinguishes them systematically from non-forms is never on his elenctic agenda.” (Vlastos, 1991, p.48). See also Irwin (1999).

¹⁸² The theory of recollection affected the ancient readers of Plato. Proclus, for example, agrees with Plato about “*the latent knowledge.*” In *Rempublicam*, Proclus reclaims scientific poetry; “*induces recollection of the revolutions of the soul and of the eternal logoi contained in them and of their diverse powers.*”(I. 179, 13-5). Plato develops his ideas about recollection and the mathematical objects in his later books, for example; (R. VI.508-9, Phd.72-77), yet the *Meno* is the touchstone of middle and late Platonic philosophy, since it is the first time Socrates has changed his course of philosophizing. In fact, Tarrant claims that “*the passage on recollection itself came in for special mention by Aristotle, Cicero, and later Platonists.*” (2005; p.37).

(Men.89a-e)

In the light of these references, the elementary prominence of the *Meno* for pointing the transformation of Socratic-Platonic philosophy may be come out: The systematic and methodological line of reasoning from the pre-existing principles, which are latent in the soul, can hardly be found before the *Meno*. Socrates, in the early dialogues, has no notion of pre-existing principles since he even questions the divine knowledge in Apology, in that sense, any claim for knowledge is open to cross-examination and any moral knowledge which will be possessed can only be attained elenctically. That is to say, there is no metaphysical source for knowledge. On the contrary, in the *Meno*, Socrates:

*“...hopes that the theory of recollection can help solve the problem of discovery, a problem caused in part by his commitment to foreknowledge principle, which demands that any successful inquiry must start out from pre-existent knowledge.”*¹⁸³

Indeed, Plato does not recognize Socrates as a systematic philosopher: He believes that his teacher does not propose a method to search for the “*fundamental structure of reality*,” instead; Socrates was only conducting a “*divine dispensation*,” which is awaking the Athenians from their *dogmatic slumber*.¹⁸⁴

Moreover, in the *Meno*, Plato presents the readers a new doctrine in which he states the ontological and epistemic outlook of his *developed* philosophy on recollection and immortality of soul. Indeed, the immortality of soul and

¹⁸³ Scott, 2006, p.106.

¹⁸⁴ Taylor argues that Socrates, for Plato, is a “*very special and noble sophist*”, not “*a philosopher*” in Platonic standards (2006, pp.167-8).

recollection can also be found in which are dated after the *Meno*: “Now our first step towards attaining the truth of the matter is to discern the nature of soul, divine and human, its experiences, and its activities. Here then our proof begins.” (*Phdr.* 245c). Also in the *Phaedo*:

(75c). And if it is true that we have squired our knowledge before birth, and lost it at the moment of birth, but afterward, by exercise of our senses upon sensible objects, recover the knowledge which we had once before, I suppose that we call learning will be the recovery of our own knowledge, and surely we should be right in calling this recollection.

On the other hand, Socrates_E examines the soul and the life simultaneously; no early dialogue can be found which analyzes the nature of soul as a distinct *form* whereas Socrates_M elucidates the immateriality and the immortality of soul which is independent from body.¹⁸⁵ Vlastos says; “*The queries 'Is the soul material or immaterial, mortal or immortal?' have are never on his [Socrates] elenctic agenda*”. Vlastos none the less points out that Socrates in the Relenting dialogues alludes the mortality only in the *Apology*, *Crito* and *Gorgias* just as a belief¹⁸⁶ (1991; p.55). In fact, soul consists the moral beliefs of a person, that is to say, the soul is identified with the life. There is the plain idea of soul's immortality, but the person's soul and body have never been distinguished explicitly. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates corresponds arts of body with arts of soul, he

¹⁸⁵ *Phd.* (79a-b): “So soul is more like the invisible, and body more like visible.”

Phd. (80a): “[Cebes] Obviously, Socrates, soul resembles the divine, and body the mortal.”

¹⁸⁶ (1991), p. 55.

says: “*But this single art that cares for the body comprises two parts, gymnastics and medicine, and in the political art what corresponds to gymnastics is legislation, while the counter part of the medicine is justice.*” (246b). Again in the *Gorgias*, Socrates says: “[*tyrants, orators, and potentates*] know not how much miserable than a union with unhealthy body is a union with a soul that is not healthy but corrupt and impious and evil...” (479b-c). In conclusion, those passages remains implication that body and soul is two complementary elements of person's being, and in a way that does not exclude each other's qualities.

In sum, Socrates and Socrates as Plato's mouthpiece is two incommensurable characters; especially in the understanding of the nature of philosophy. Indeed, according to Diogenes Laertius:

Plato has employed a variety of terms in order to make his system less intelligible to the ignorant. But in a special sense he considers wisdom to be the science of those things which are objects of thought and really existent, the science which, he says, is concerned with God and the soul as separate from the body. And especially by wisdom he means philosophy, which is a yearning for divine wisdom. (3.63)

I suppose this passage may reveal the differences between practice of Socrates and Plato: (i) Plato demands *techne* in science; Socrates *ignores* any *techne*, (ii) Plato searches for certain knowledge; Socrates engages in *moral matters*, (iii) Plato *lectures* in the Academy; Socrates *questions* in gymnasium, agora, or private houses, (iv) Plato seems to limit philosophy to wise; Socrates renders philosophy possible for everyone, even a *slave-boy*.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Note that these differences do not mean that Plato abandons the ideas of Socrates. As Rowe

points out; “*What the situation in the 'non-Socratic' (or post-'Socratic') dialogues marks is a change of strategy, not change of mind. If Plato writes in a different way, that is because he has decided to approach his readers by a different route.*” (2007, p.13).

CHAPTER 5

THE *MENO*

5. 1. Significance of the Dialogue

The *Meno* is accounted as Plato's first epistemological work in which Plato indicates his philosophical perspective.¹⁸⁸ In contrast to the other early Socratic dialogues, Plato explicitly gives a systematic account for the search of knowledge in the *Meno*.¹⁸⁹ In this work, he proposes three main arguments, viz. the *anamnesis*, the *hypothesis*, and the *aitias logismos*. Similar to other early dialogues, the *Meno* involves the search of a moral quality, in fact, it examines Socrates most profound concern; “What is excellence?”¹⁹⁰ On the other hand, the subject is not only the examination of the moral argument; Plato also postulates a method of investigation which covers every kind of knowledge.¹⁹¹ It may be vague whether Plato means “the mathematical sciences” or “that which is learnt”

¹⁸⁸ Vlastos says that “*In the Meno we see Plato well started on a course that will take him to the other extreme from the convictions shared with Socrates in the Elenctic dialogues: the doctrine of philosopher king looms ahead.*” (1988, p.383).

¹⁸⁹ Note that I do not mean a clear definition is given by Plato. In fact, Socrates does not present a well-demonstrated explanation for *F-ness* in the *Meno*. Neither does he puts forward anywhere else in the early dialogues. cf. Robinson (1953).

¹⁹⁰ In the *Protagoras* subject is excellence, in the *Euthydemus*; piety, in the *Republic I*; the just ruler, in the *Gorgias*; pleasure, in the *Ion*; poetry, in the *Laches*; courage, in the *Lysis*; friendship.

¹⁹¹ After the recollection of the slave boy, Socrates says; “*He [the slave boy] will behave in the same way [recollection] with all geometric knowledge, and every other subject (allon mathematon apanton)*”(85e1-2).

by *mathematon*. I suppose the latter is more plausible, since Socrates proposes to search “what excellence is” with the same method.¹⁹²

I suppose the *Meno* can help us to reconcile diverse contents and style of the Plato’s dialogues. The dialogue can be regarded as a guiding spirit in the sense that constituting a relevancy within the corpus and comprehending the systematic development in Platonic philosophy. The structure of the *Meno*, both dramatic and philosophical, may accommodate the readers with a framework for the Platonic project.

Moreover, some scholars claim that the objective of the early dialogues was to prepare the readers, in fact the Athenians, to Plato's highly sophisticated late philosophy by means of de-grounding traditional beliefs. Kahn says; “*In developing the Socratic dialogue...Plato sought to replace Achilles, Oedipus, and Pericles with his own hero, Socrates.*”¹⁹³ And Jaeger defines the course of the Platonic dialogues as “...*the goal was fixed and the outlines of the whole scheme were already visible to him, when he took up pen to write the first of his "Socratic" dialogues. The entelechy of the Republic can be traced with full clarity in the early dialogues.*”¹⁹⁴ In the same manner, Cooper claims that the *Parmenides* points forward the *Sophist*, the *Statesman* and the *Philebus* as refurnishing the

¹⁹² According to *Liddell-Scott-Jones* Greek-English Lexicon “μάθημα - *mathema*” stands for (i) that which is learnt, lesson, (ii) learning, and knowledge in the *Meno*. Supposingly, only after Archytas Plato means “mathematical sciences, i.e.; arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. See the *Laws* 817e. Scott claims that “*the slave boy demonstration [is] to say that the boy can recollect not just geometry, but also all other technical disciplines (mathemata)*”. (1999, p.100)

¹⁹³ (1996), p. 15

¹⁹⁴ (1944), p. 96

theory of Forms presented in the *Symposium*, the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*.¹⁹⁵ In this respect, I suppose Plato has a project in his mind, which he informs the readers in the dialogues. Note again that I believe the *Meno* involves the schema of the early and middle dialogues.

The *Meno*, in fact, can be accounted as a cornerstone in the Socratic-Platonic philosophy. In the dialogue, Socrates is more interested in theorizing his method and way of thinking.¹⁹⁶ The dialogues dated after the *Meno* are not only devoted to moral investigation, but Socrates also tries to put a theory of knowledge forward. Indeed, one of the most significant developments begins with the *Meno* is the distinction between knowledge and true belief which constitutes a base for the theory of forms. Fine rightly claims that “*it is not until the Meno that Plato explicitly defines knowledge and distinguishes it from true belief.*” She, on the other hand, notes that “*If Plato, in the middle and later dialogues, endorses the Two Worlds Theory, then his theory of knowledge undergoes a dramatic change.*”¹⁹⁷ In this respect, the *Meno* differs from middle and late dialogues in respect to the possibility of co-existence of true belief and knowledge. That is, knowledge is more or less pictured as justified, or explained, unity of true beliefs. *Episteme* and *doxa* does not exclude each other. Nor do the sensibles and

¹⁹⁵ (1997), Introduction to the *Parmenides*, pp. 359-360.

¹⁹⁶ Matthews argues that Socrates aims to solve the problem of Socratic elenchus. (2008, pp.132-133)

¹⁹⁷ (1999), pp. 9-10.

intelligible objects differ sharply.¹⁹⁸

5.2. Priority of Definition

Socrates fundamental proposal in the definitional dialogues (*Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Euthyphro*, and *Protagoras*) is to give the definition of a thing, namely; friendship, courage, piety and virtue. He argues that the consistent definition of a thing should be extended to each instance. That is to say, without proper definition, a thing cannot be known, yet one can still inquire and talk about it. In the *Lysis*:

Now we've done it, Lysis and Menexenus—made fools of ourselves (καταγέλαστοι γεγόναμεν – katagelastoi gegonamen), I, an old man, and you as well. These people here will go away saying that we are friends of one another—for I count myself in with you—but what a friend (ὅτι ἔστιν ὁ φίλος – *oti estin o philos*) is we have not yet been able to find out (ἐγενόμεθα ἐξευρεῖν – *egenometha exeupein*).”

I suppose Socrates implies that one can inquire into a thing or “believe” that he has it even if he may not define, or know, it properly. Socrates also argues that they come into being (γίγνομαι – *gignomai*) fool; they cannot come into being discovered (ἐξευρίσκω – *exeupisko*) “what (*ti esti*) friendship is.” As we shall see in the evaluation of the priority of definition in the *Meno*, Socrates has a similar

¹⁹⁸ Irwin also argues that knowledge is not “*explicitly contrasted to sense-perception*”. Nor does Plato discuss “*the role of sense-perception in the process of recollection*” (1999, p.161). According to Taylor, in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates distinguishes perception and reasoning. He says, perception, for Socrates, is “*the contentless reception stimuli*.” (2008, p.184) Lastly, For Gulley, in contrast to the *Phaedo*, Plato “*neither explicitly postulates the Forms, nor it is concerned with the role of sense-experience*” in the *Meno* (1954, p.196).

attitude in respect to the investigation of “what virtue is.”

However, it is better to note that “*priority of definition*” is dissimilar to “*explanatory priority*.” That is, the former is to put essential qualities of a thing over its attributes whereas the latter is “*priority of definition of a thing*” to another one. To illustrate, in the *Euthyphro*, Socrates places explanation of being pious prior to explanation of being loved by god, since the “knowledge” of the former explains the latter:

Euth. (10e-11a). “But if the god-loved and the pious were the same, my dear Euthyphro, then if the pious was being loved because it was pious, the god-loved would also be being loved because it was god-loved; and if the god-loved was god-loved because it was being loved by the gods, then the pious would also be pious because it was being loved by the gods. But now you see that they are in opposite cases as being altogether different from each other: the one is such as to be loved because it is being loved, the other is being loved because it is such as to be loved.”

In this respect, if two concepts are different, the definition of one may be *essentially bound* to other one.¹⁹⁹

The *Meno* begins with the question which is left unanswered in the *Protagoras*²⁰⁰:

(70a) Can you tell me, Socrates, can virtue be taught (διδασκτὸν – didakantos)? Or is it not teachable (μαθητὸν – matheton) but the result of practice, or is it neither of these, but men possess it by nature (φύσει παραγίγνεται – physei paragignetai) or in some other way?

¹⁹⁹ Irwin claims that “*the explanatory relation is metaphysical, not conceptual*” (2006, p.62). I suppose that the explanatory priority can be connected to *the Dialectical Requirement*.

²⁰⁰ Protagoras says; “*We shall pursue the subject on some other occasion, at your pleasure: for the present, it is time to turn to another affair.*” (361e). Most scholars places the *Meno* after the *Protagoras*. For example, see Kahn (1992), Guthrie (1975), Vlastos (1994), Zuckert (2009).

As it is an usual reply in the earlier dialogues, Socrates disavows knowledge.²⁰¹

He says;

I myself, Meno, am as poor as my fellow citizens in this matter, and I blame myself for my complete ignorance about virtue (*οὐκ εἰδῶς περὶ ἀρετῆς τὸ παράπαν* - *ouk eidos peri aretos to parapan*). If I do not know what something is (*οἶδα τί ἐστίν* – *oida ti estin*), how could I know what qualities (*ὅποῖόν γέ τι εἰδείην* – *hopoion ge ti eideien*) it possesses? (71b)

In this respect, Socrates does posit a complete, *to parapan*, ignorance on virtue;²⁰²

he loosely refers to early definitional dialogues, namely, the *Laches*, *Charmides*, *Lysis*, *Euthyphro*, and *Protagoras*. *Prima facie*, it may seem that Socrates does not change his views on knowledge in the *Meno*, yet the readers may notice that he will support the possibility of certain and stable knowledge in later passages.

Moreover, Socrates rejects to answer “*ho poion ti esti*” questions prior to “*its definition*”²⁰³. And hence, Socrates avoided answering whether virtue is teachable unless they will not find “*what it [virtue] is*” (71b).²⁰⁴ In that sense, Socrates try

²⁰¹ In this respect, Taylor labels the *Meno* as an early dialogue of Plato's literary activity; he says it is prior to the *Phaedo*, which gives more elaborated accounts for the similar issues in the *Meno*. He, on the other hand, also says; “*The dialogue opens with an abruptness hardly to be paralleled elsewhere in the genuine work of Plato by the propounding of a directly for discussion.*” (1926; p.130). Although I agree with Taylor's account for the dates of dialogues, it may also be noted that the immediate presentation of the issue is not directly due to Plato's immaturity on literature and philosophy as Taylor claims. Plato, I suppose, enthusiastically aims to solve the problems of Socrates' method of investigation and present the possibility of knowledge vividly. *Scott* also has a similar attitude (2006; pp.11-12).

²⁰² ἀρετή (*arête*), virtue: “*the best disposition; the state of a mortal creature which is in itself praiseworthy; the state on account of which its possessor is said to be good; the just observance of the laws; the disposition on account of which he who is disposed is said to be perfectly excellent; the state which produces faithfulness to law.*” (Def. 411d)

²⁰³ “...whenever we apply the same term *F* to many different things, and say that they are all *F*'s, each one no less than the others, there is a unitary property, *F*-ness, that they have in common.” (ibid.; p.25).

²⁰⁴ Socrates' proposal can be named as “*the priority of definition (PD).*” (Scott; 2006) Ionescu,

to explain Meno what he means by “*priority of definition*”²⁰⁵ with an example, he says; “*Do you suppose that somebody entirely ignorant (γινώσκει τὸ παράπαν – gignoskai to parapan) who Meno is could say whether he is handsome and rich and well-born or the reverse?*” (71b). Nevertheless, in comparison to other examples Socrates will apply in succeeding passages of the dialogue, this one may seem a quite simple and plain model. In fact, it may also be accounted as misleading, since neither in the *Meno* or any other dialogue Socrates being-ness of an individual person. In that sense, this first pattern can be considered as a way to invoke Meno to participate the discussion.²⁰⁶

After declaring his ignorance on the issue, Socrates enthusiastically as well as ironically demands Meno to define virtue. Nevertheless, Meno presents instances of virtue instead of satisfying the claim of defining “what virtue is?” Socrates says that he is lucky, and says: “*I wanted a one virtue and I find a whole swarm of virtues to offer.*”(72b). Thence, following the metaphor of swarm, Socrates tries to present another analogy for the priority of definition. He asks Meno to find a definition for “many and various” virtues which will be a common character for all of them similar to the one makes different “bees” to be considered as the same

claims that the priority of definition does not mean that unless the essence of a something is established, the attributes of it cannot be known. (2006; p.6)

²⁰⁵ PD simply is the epistemological preference of the essential qualities of a thing over its attributes or instances. (Scott, 2006; pp.20-21).

²⁰⁶ Scott says; “*the analogy...is best treated as a pedagogical device to give Meno an intuitive hold on the idea of one question (what is x?) having priority over another (what is x like?).*” (ibid.; p.21)

nature. This is the second attempt which Socrates aims to make Meno understand what he means by “the definition”. Even if it is a more advanced example than the first one, for Socrates moves from an individual to a genus, it still may have some drawbacks. In fact, the “*bee-ness*” is a natural phenomenon in contrast to metaphysical character of virtue.²⁰⁷ Then, from 72c to 73d, Socrates tries to “separate” *virtue* and *a virtue*. And hence he constantly questions Meno to make him understand priority of definition over attributes.²⁰⁸

As it have been mentioned before, in the early dialogues Socrates does not aim to define “F-ness.” He only examines essential nature of diverse moral qualities even if the priority of *ti* (what) questions *to ho poion* (what sort) questions would also obtainable in some early dialogues.

La. (190b) Then our first requisite is to know what virtue is? (τὸ εἰδέναι ὅτι ποτ' ἔστιν ἀρετή – to eidenai oti pot estin arête) For surely, if we had no idea at all what virtue actually is... (εἰ γὰρ που μηδ' ἀρετὴν εἰδείμεν τὸ παράπαν ὅτι ποτε τυγχάνει ὄν – ei gar pou med areton eideimen to parapan oti pote tugganei on). Note that in the Meno Socrates says; “I actually do not even know what the thing itself, virtue, is at all.

Hi.Ma. (304d-e) [I]t's clear I don't even know at all what that is itself! “Look,” he'll say. “How will you know whose speech—or any other action—is finely presented or not, when you are ignorant of the fine?”

Ly. (223b) Now we've done it, Lysis and Menexenus—made fools of ourselves, I, an old man, and you as well. These people here will go away saying that we are friends of one another—for I count myself in with you—but what a friend is we have not yet been able to find out.

²⁰⁷ Klein claims that “we should not overlook at least one considerable difference between “bee” and “excellence”: the latter has its counterpart in “insufficiency” or “badness”, the latter...there is no counterpart.”(1965; p.49).

²⁰⁸ “[According to Socrates]...if one those not know what a thing is, τί ἐστίν [ti estin], one cannot know what it is like, ὁποῖόν [hopoion]. He insists that the prior question of what virtue is must be settled before consideration of the subsequent question of whether it is teachable or not.” (Bedu-Addo, 1984, p.1).

On the contrary, in the *Meno*, Socrates tries to present a definition of “*F-ness*” to Meno.²⁰⁹ In the search of the definition of *arête*, Socrates epitomizes his understanding of definition with a couple of arguments. In fact, Socrates aims to give account that of which he has barely searched in the earlier dialogues. In the *Meno*, Socrates intends to present arguments about the nature of *F-ness*:

Men. 72b. What a bee is, what is its essential nature...is it being bees were that they are many and various and different to one another.

Men. 75a. 'What is it that is common roundness and straightness and the other things which you call shapes?' Do your best to answer, as practice for the question about virtue.

Men. 76d. Color is an effluence from shapes commensurate with sight and perceptible by it.²¹⁰

Men. 77a. Just leave virtue whole and sound (*ολην και υγιη* – *olen kai hygie*) and tell me what it is, as in the examples (*Παραδείγματα* – *paradeigmata*) I have given you.

In that sense, Socrates intends to give a universal formula of the definition.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Benson (1992) claims that Plato also examines *F-ness* in the *Laches* and the *Euthyphro*, yet “the longest explanation of *WF-question*” within the *corpus* is found in the *Meno* 74b-77a. Tarrant, moreover, points out that the *Meno* is not considered as a contribution to the nature of virtue in the antiquity in contrast to other early definitional dialogues, that is; it is accepted as an investigation into learning-process and the nature of true belief and knowledge. (2000, p.102).

²¹⁰ Klein associates the definition of color to the definition of virtue. The introduction complementary nature of surface to color of a thing can also be attributed to the relationship between virtue and knowledge. That is, “*knowledge always accompanies excellence.*” (ibid.; p.60)

²¹¹ Charles argues that three different explanation for definition; namely, *real definitions*, *conceptual definitions*, *true factual claims which identify phenomenon*. (2007, p.110) The third option seems to be Socrates basic proposal which is exemplified as follows: “*Color is an effluence from shapes commensurate with sight and perceptible by it.*”

Moreover, Plato, in the *Meno*, defends priority of definition²¹² in a similar vein to the Elenctic dialogues. Socrates rejects to answer “hopoion ti esti” questions unless they will find “*the definition*” or “*F-ness*” of a thing. This priority simply is the epistemological preference of the essential qualities of a thing over its attributes or instances.²¹³

5.3. The Dialectical Requirement (DR)

Socrates says; “*surface is that which alone of existing things always follows color.*” (72c)²¹⁴. Concerning the first definition, Socrates attributes a co-existential nature to “schema” and “chroma”. In that sense, I suppose Socrates definition can be rephrased as such: “Something will be colored if it has a surface.” Significantly, I suppose Klein proposes a provocative semblance of the definition of color and surface with virtue and knowledge. That is to say, Socrates exposes his pattern for giving a definition. Klein says; “*He [Socrates] would be satisfied, it seems, to hear from Meno that knowledge always accompanies excellence. And the exercise Meno is urged to make with regard the schema would actually provide him with the pattern of the answer concerning arête?*”²¹⁵ In that

²¹² Scott, (2006), pp. 20-21. See also Bedu-Addo (1984)

²¹³ ho mê oida ti esti, pôs an hopoion ge ti eideiên

²¹⁴ Scott claims that in Plato schema can mean to shape, figure or surface. In the *Meno*, for Scott, Plato uses the word meaning as “*surface*,” and I accept that meaning.(Scott, 2006, p.37)

²¹⁵ (1965), p. 60.

sense, it appears to be that Plato does not choose this particular example to display his interest in geometry, yet he presented it as a sketch for the definition of virtue. Nevertheless, Meno refuses the definition, for he claims that “*there may be some who does not know what color is?*”(75c).

Socrates challenges Meno’s objection that there is an unknown term in the definition, since one may not know what color is. Socrates says:

(75c-d). “A true one, surely, and if my questioner was one of those clever and disputatious debaters, I would say to him: 'I have given my answer; if it is wrong, it is your job to refute it.' Then, if they are friends as you and I are, and want to discuss with each other, they must answer in a manner gentler and more proper to discussion. By this I mean that the answers must not only be true, but in terms admittedly known to the questioner. I too will try to speak in these terms. Do you call something 'the end?' I mean such a thing as a limit or boundary, for all e those are, I say, the same thing. Prodicus might disagree with us, but you surely call something 'finished' or 'completed'—that is what I want to express, nothing elaborate.”

I suppose Socrates aims to expose his difference from the sophists by means of presenting the dialectics. That is, he believes that his way of conversation is milder and more fruitful than *orators*.

Thereupon, Socrates tries to establish a dialectical way in which the one questioned also knows the terms in the proposition.²¹⁶ Plainly, Socrates intention for the introduction of the *DR* is to present the possibility of inquiry in terms of known terms. Nonetheless, what does Socrates mean with known? In other words, it is ambiguous whether the familiarity of the one questioned to the term or the

²¹⁶ Scott calls it “dialectical requirement(DR),” and he claims DR has “a moral as well as a methodological dimension.”(2006; p.37).

definition of term (*F-ness*) is meant with the *DR*. I suppose first option is more favorable. In the following course of the dialogue, Socrates asks just for the familiarity of Meno to geometric terms “*solid*” and “*surface*”, or their attributes “*limited*” and “*ended*”. That is, Socrates demands for partial knowledge. What I mean, partial knowledge or true belief is sufficient to inquiry, which corresponds to the slave’s knowledge about the solution of the geometry problem. There are none the less diverse views about this issue. On the one hand, Scott says; in 75d, the *DR* does not demand a deeper understanding of the term, yet “*Meno only needed to acknowledge a non-technical familiarity with the items appearing in the definition: limit and solid*”.²¹⁷ On the other hand, Klein claims that Socrates changes the first definition, “*schema always accompanied by color,*” in order to put forward an exact and technical definition similar to *Euclid’s Definition 14 in Elements I*. He says; “*Schema, in Socrates’ second definition, is a “technical” word signifying a “bounded surface area” akin to epipedon and to epiphaneia. Socrates’ second definition is indeed a strictly geometrical definition.*”²¹⁸ I may propose a milder comment; partial knowledge is sufficient to inquire *a thing*, yet the definition demands *technical* and *epistemic* understanding.

Moreover, Meno actually imitates Socrates insistence of priority of definition over attributes to some extent. That is to say, similar to Socrates rejection of searching “*whether virtue is teachable or not*” unless they first find “*what virtue is*”; Meno

²¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.57.

²¹⁸ (1965), p. 65.

argues that one cannot know “*whether surface always follows color or not*” unless they first define “*what color is*”. Nevertheless, I suppose the differences between Meno's and Socrates' attitude are quite clear: (i) color is not the explanation, or *aitia*, of surface (ii) knowledge is the essential quality of virtue since it explains and is prior to “teachability.”

Nevertheless, Socrates fulfills the definition of the shape and the color for Meno in favor the DR, and hence, he equips Meno with a pattern (*paradeigmata*) for the defining virtue whole and intact (*holen kai hygie*) to define “what virtue is”.²¹⁹ Meno none the less fails to give a definition for virtue, since at the end of the attempt he cannot establish an all-covering definition of virtue. Meno does not even use the Socrates' pattern for definition.²²⁰ In fact, Meno can only provide Socrates a partial knowledge of virtue, and hence Socrates rejects this definition.

(79b-c). [*Y*]ou say that every action is virtue if it is performed with a part of virtue, as if you had said what virtue is as a whole, so I would already know that, even if you fragment it into parts. I think you must face the same question from the beginning, my dear Meno, namely, what is virtue, if every action performed with a part of virtue is virtue? For that is what one is saying when he says that every action performed with justice is virtue. Do you not think you should face the same question again, or do you think one knows what a part of virtue is if one does not

²¹⁹ “[*C*]olor is an effluvium from shapes which fits the sight and is perceived.” (76d)

²²⁰ In fact, I suppose Plato again expose Meno's intellectual deficiency to the readers. For Klein, this cannot be only accepted a singular critic for Meno, but he also put Gorgias' pedagogical practice into trial. (1965; p.71)

know virtue itself?—I do not think so.

5.4. Meno's Paradox

After Socrates last denial of the definition of virtue,²²¹ Meno rejects to search anymore and blames Socrates to numb his interlocutors like an “*electric ray*”. That is to say, Meno have fall in *aporia* and puzzlement: “*My soul and mouth truly are numb, and I have no answer to give you* (80b)”. Scott says; the image drawn by Meno is what Socrates does not desire as a model. On the contrary, Socrates claims in *Apology* (30e) that he “*arouse, persuade and reprove*” everyone in the city.²²² In fact, in the *Letters*, Plato says; “*no serious man will think of writing about serious realities [truth in regard to moral concepts] for the general public so as to make them a prey to envy and perplexity.*” (7.343c) I suppose “*the stringray image*” is ironic since Socrates says “*the ray itself numb*” (80c) which presents, in my opinion, the disavowal of knowledge.

Moreover, the condition which Meno feels puzzled is what Socrates actually aimed at the very beginning of the dialogue. That is to say, Socrates intends to show Meno that his beliefs on virtue are inconsistent and he actually

²²¹ Socrates reminds the DR, that is; unknown terms cannot be involved in the definition. Hence, Socrates asks again; “*What do you and your friend say that virtue is?*” (79e)

²²² (2006), p. 69.

does not have the answer.²²³ Thence, Socrates invites Meno to search the topic which they both do not know “what it is”. In fact, I suppose Socrates proposal to search is distinct from the preceding course of the dialogue since he is not demanding the definition from Meno, on the contrary, Socrates offers a cooperation.²²⁴ Nevertheless, instead of examining with Socrates, Meno challenges him, and presents the famous paradox which is accounted as eristic by Socrates.

I suppose the *dialectical* and the *eristic* arguments should be distinguished. Socrates accepts Meno's objection to him for the application of an *unknown* term, color, as a dialectical requirement for further inquiry. Nevertheless, the paradox is intended to demolish the possibility of inquiry. Klein claims; as being a pupil of Gorgias, Meno is following the method of sophists, he tries to escape the image of numbness and put his argumentative skills forward.²²⁵ In the same manner, Scott also claims that Plato distinguishes eristic arguments, which have purely competitive purposes, and dialectical arguments, which support further inquiry.²²⁶ Zuckert, moreover, lucidly points that Plato shows the drawbacks of Socrates'

²²³ Soc : “I don't know the answer[what virtue is], and as for you, perhaps you did know it before you came into contact with me, but now you seem as if you didn't know it.” (80d).

²²⁴ Scott claims that Meno's perplexity is beneficial, since Socrates notices that Meno only present ideas which he adopted from others, Gorgias and a poet. Nevertheless, Meno cannot give a definition by relying on them. (2006, p.71) And hence, Meno have to turn his own beliefs; he can only look into his own soul after *aporia*.

²²⁵ (1965), p.62 & 91.

²²⁶ (2006), pp. 72-74.

argumentative skills to persuade his interlocutor, that is, Gorgias is not convinced to “teach his students to be just.” Nor does Meno act justly.²²⁷ I suppose the *Gorgias* is an epitomic work which exhibits the deficiencies the Socratic “method” to persuade, while Plato, in the *Meno*, deals with this “problem” and intends to put positive presumptions forward.

Meno’s paradox is as follows:

How will you look for it, Socrates, when you do not know at all what it is? How will you aim to search for something you do not know at all? If you should meet with it, how will you know that this is the thing that you did not know? (80d)

And Socrates reformulates it:

I know what you want to say, Meno. Do you realize what a debater’s argument you are bringing up, that a man cannot search either for what he knows or for what he does not know? He cannot search for what he knows—since he knows it, there is no need to search—nor for what he does not know, for he does not know what to look for. (80e)

Before investigating the paradox itself, I would like to present a similar notion in the corpus. In fact, the first appearance of a similar dilemma can be found in the *Charmides* (172b)²²⁸:

[T]he advantage of the knowledge of science and absence of science (τὸ ἐπιστήμην ἐπίστασθαι καὶ ἀνεπιστημοσύνην – *to epistemen epistasthai kai*

²²⁷ (2009), pp. 561-562.

²²⁸ I owe this reference to Besim Karakadilar.

anepisremosunen)²²⁹, which we are now finding out to be temperance (*σωφροσύνην* - *sophrosunen*)—that the man who has this science will learn whatever he learns more easily, and everything will appear to him in a clearer light since, in addition to what he learns, he will perceive the science? And he will examine (*ἐξετάσει* - *exetasei*) others on the subjects he himself knows in a more effective fashion, whereas those without the science will conduct their examinations (*ἐξετάζοντες* - *exetaxontes*) in a weaker and less fruitful way.

Nevertheless, after the investigation, Socrates concludes that such a science cannot be found:

Chr. 175c. [W]e conceded that there was a science of science when the argument did not allow us to make this statement. Again, we conceded that this science knew the tasks of the other sciences, when the argument did not allow us to say this either, so that our temperate man should turn out to be knowing, both that he knows things he knows and does not know things he does not know. And we made this concession in the most prodigal manner, quite overlooking the impossibility that a person should in some fashion know what he does not know at all—because our agreement amounts to saying he knows things he does not know.

This simply means to “*one cannot know what he does know.*” On the other hand, I believe that Socrates does not completely reject the possibility of a science which distinguishes knowledge from non-knowledge; he merely “*refutes*” that temperance is “*what science is*”.

If we may return to the *Meno*, the original presentation of the paradox proposes two aspects for the impossibility for knowledge: first is the lack of knowledge of a

²²⁹ I take the *epistemen* simply to mean “understanding”, *epistasthai* as “science of knowledge”, and *epistemosunen* as “pseudo-science.” In this respect, I suppose that Socrates may consider worthwhile to search for a *science* of all knowledge. Moreover, even if the dialogue ends in a negative conclusion for the possibility of such a science, Socrates is willing to continue examination. Nevertheless, Charmides leaves.

thing to enable us to start searching it, and the second is the unfamiliarity with a thing which prevents its recognition. Scott calls the former “*the problem of inquiry (PI)*”²³⁰ and the latter as “*the problem of discovery (PD)*.” Nonetheless, when Socrates rephrases the paradox, he omits the part concerning the PD. What can be the reason? I suppose, we have two explanations: first is Socrates' avoidance of questions, for he have no resolution. Yet, it would be incompatible for one who claims “*unexamined life does not worth living*”.

The other, which is much more plausible, Socrates actually does not omit “PD”; on the contrary, he supposes the “PI” does not worth examining. In other words, Socrates and Meno are attached to inquiry²³¹ by fulfilling the “DR”, which actually leads to way for inquiry.²³² Even if Socrates does not address the “PD” in his reformulation, he intends to solve it by means of presenting the “*recollection*”. Consequently, he simply ignores the impossibility of inquire. In his reformulation,

²³⁰ Scott says; this problem does not arise any difficulty, since Socrates has never claimed to be in a “*complete cognitive blank*.” Socrates, according to Scott, disavows only the “*philosophical understanding*” of the topic (2006, pp.76-77). That is to say, Socrates has true beliefs in order to examine “what virtue is?”, yet he has never claimed, unlike Meno, to possess the knowledge.

²³¹ Fine says; “*he [Socrates] has been emphasizing that he and Meno lack knowledge; none the less, they have been enquiring*” (2007; p.342). In that sense, the distinction between true belief and knowledge enables the inquiry, since Fine claims for Plato that “*one can provide an adequate specification on the basis of true belief; knowledge is not needed.*”(ibid.; p.44) For Plato, I suppose, the reformulation was just to display the superficial aspect of the eristic dilemma. Socrates does not consider the Meno's proposal of the “PI” worthwhile, which he focuses on reformulation, thence he replies “*No, I don't*” to the Meno's question; “*Don't you think this argument a good one*”(81a).

²³² I suppose, Socrates have already established the possibility of inquiry in the former parts of the dialogue, in the second definitions of schema and color, by means of the DR, that is, one should never define a thing with “*unknown*” terms.(ibid.; p.344). On the other hand, Socrates will also develop his idea on the DR by the exposition of “the hypothetical method” which enables one to deduce an unknown term to known one.

Socrates leaves *the PI* behind, yet he focuses on *the PD*.²³³

5.5. The Anamnesis

Initially, I would like to remind that the recollection cannot completely be Platonic method. Nor can it be attributed to Socrates at all. That is, the recollection is a Socratic-Platonic theory in which we can find the Socrates' ideas as well as "*future of Plato*." As we shall see, the presentation method of *hypotheses* and *aitias logismos* distinguishes Plato from his teacher. Taylor, in fact, claims in the *Meno* Plato "*intends to depict Socrates as a genuine philosopher in contrast to the sophists*" by means of furnishing him with "*theory of recollection*." He adds that Plato, however, abandons the anamnesis to establish a "*systematic*" philosophy in the middle and late dialogues.²³⁴ I none the less do not agree with Taylor that Plato completely leaves the *recollection* as an epistemic method as well as the *Elenchus* in the middle dialogues. Alternatively, Plato combines different elements of investigation with the recollection as well as many others.

²³³ Fine (2007). Taylor also suggests that "PD" can be overcome by positing a *pre-theoretical* understanding for a *thing*, that is, the specification of the problem enables us to pose, or determine, the object of inquiry (2008, p.169). In fact, the recollection is introduced for granting the possibility of knowledge.

²³⁴ (2006), pp. 167-168

5.5.1. Religious and Mythical Content

(812-d.)As the soul is immortal, has been born often, and has seen all things here and in the underworld, there is nothing which it has not learned; so it is in no way surprising that it can recollect (ἀναμνησθῆναι - anamnesthenai) the things it knew before, both about virtue and other things (περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ περὶ ἄλλων – peri aretos kai peri allos). As the whole of nature is akin (τῆς φύσεως ἀπάσης συγγενοῦς²³⁵ οὔσης – to physeos apases suggenes ouses) , and the soul has learned everything, nothing prevents a man, after recalling one thing only—a process men call learning—discovering everything else for himself, if he is brave and does not tire of the search, for searching and learning are, as a whole, recollection.

When Socrates introduces “*anamnesis*”, it does not only come out as an epistemological and metaphysical doctrine: It also presents mythical and highly speculative aspects. The transmigration and immortality of the soul appears to be the basis for all knowledge. In this respect, the theory of recollection bears a resemblance to the Pythagorean doctrine that attributes the knowledge to “*immortality of the soul*” and “*reincarnation.*” The effects of Pythagorean idea, the purification of soul and its liberation from the body, can be explicitly seen in the *Phaedo*²³⁶ and the allegory of Cave in the *Republic VII*.

On the contrary, I suppose the Pythagoreanism is not immanent to the *Meno*.

²³⁵ Note that Συγγενοῦς (suggenous) means: (i) congenital, inborn, (ii) akin, cognate, of like kind. I suppose Plato leads up to “all truth is latent in the soul and it is whole.”

²³⁶ Vlastos says; the imagery in the *Phaedo* (67d, 81e, 82a, 82e) is Pythagorean. For the Pythagoras doctrines on reincarnation; see. *Xenophanes B7, Emodocles B129, Dicaearchus fr.29*. (1991, p.56) According to Diogenes Laertius, the semblance of Plato's theory of Ideas is derived from Pythagorean Epicharmus of Kos. He informs that Plato delivers the nature of Ideas as archetypes and permanent existence of Ideas in memory from Epicharmus. (3.9-17)

According to Aristotle (*Metaph.987b*), Plato and Pythagoreans differ in the sense that the latter does not attribute a peculiarity to mathematical objects. However, the effect of Pythagoreanism on later Plato cannot reasonable be denied. Even so, it is better noting that the distinction between the form of *Good* and mathematical objects is *ontological* as well as *epistemological*. In other words, the form of Good can be achieved by dialectic which is superior to mathematical method, that is, their essential nature is distinct. Aristotle also claims that:

Further, he[Plato] states that besides sensible things and the Forms there exists an intermediate class, the objects of mathematics, which differ from sensible things in being eternal and immutable, and from the Forms in that there are many similar objects of mathematics, whereas each Form is itself unique.” (*Metaph. 987b*).

In this respect, Plato may attribute a peculiar place to mathematics in the middle and late dialogues, but not in the *Meno*. White says; “[*T*]here is more to dialectic than mathematics...the Forms and the Good is superior to mathematical knowledge,” yet he also argues that “meta-mathematical” analysis is conducted to the foundations of ethical matters.²³⁷ As we shall observe in following part, Plato adopts the method of geometers, *hypotheses*, merely as a pattern to search for an *unknown* term. That is to say, Socrates is just in favor of “*all nature is akin*” in the *Meno*; he does not attribute any particular character to mathematical objects, rather to geometrical method. Aristotle informs:

Metaph. 985b. Pythagoreans applied themselves to mathematics, and were the first to develop this science; and through studying it they came to believe that its principles are the principles of everything.

²³⁷ (2006), p. 236

Metaph. 986a. [T]hey assumed the elements of numbers to be the elements of everything, and the whole universe to be a proportional number. Whatever analogues to the processes and parts of the heavens and to the whole order of the universe they could exhibit in numbers and proportions...

Moreover, the Pythagorean doctrine is much stronger than the Plato's theory; indeed, Pythagorean believes that all knowledge in one's memory in the former lives can be remembered. On the contrary, Plato does not claim that one could recover his experiences as a man in the former lives.²³⁸ Nor does he propose to probe the memory in order to remember any kind of knowledge. The exercise of memory in Pythagoreans has strong mystical aspects, that is, the method of exercise have never stated explicitly in correspondence to the Socrates' demonstration by using slave-boy. According to Cherniss, Cameron claims that with the recollection of the slave in the *Meno*, Plato presented a Pythagorean scheme that “*mathematics is shown to be the prenatal divine knowledge of the soul through which man can win back knowledge*”; that in “*bringing a geometrical proof to the theory of recollected divine knowledge.*” Nevertheless, Cherniss objects to Cameron on the idea that Plato proposes mathematical scheme is the way to understand whole truth. He also argues that the phrase in the *Meno* 81c “*περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ περὶ ἄλλων* - both about virtue and about other things” shows “*Plato does not give mathematical objects any special place in the doctrine of reminiscence*”, the idea in the *Meno* that all nature is akin does not mean the

²³⁸ Scott says; “...the objects of recollection [are] abstract: mathematical theorems, definitions, perhaps general concepts, but not particular events that were once conceived.” (2006, p. 96).

Pythagorean doctrine, which reduces all nature to numbers.²³⁹

Therefore, I suppose the mystic and religious features embodied in the Pythagorean doctrine of the immortality of the soul and reincarnation does not support any epistemological or metaphysical ground for the recollection: They can only serve as a *psychological* cause.²⁴⁰ What I mean, the recollection as a method of attaining knowledge through true beliefs is prior to the transmigration of soul, in fact, the recollection is an epistemological doctrine, rather than serving as a speculative source for the knowledge. Cherniss says; “*Plato's theory of recollection could not be deduced from the transmigration, any “recollection” following merely from this would not answer Meno's question but would only postpone the answer to it.*”²⁴¹ He also proposes that 86b is in favor of his argument:

I shouldn't like to take my oath on the whole story, but one thing I am ready to fight for as long as I can, in word and act – that is, that we shall be better, braver and more active men if we believe it right to look for what we don't know than if we believe there is no point in looking because we don't know we can never discover.

I suppose, 81d is also an affirmation:

We ought not then to be led astray by the contentious (*ἐριστικῶν - eristiko*)²⁴² argument you quoted. It would make us lazy, and is music in the ears of weaklings. The other doctrine produces energetic seekers after

²³⁹ 1940, p. 363.

²⁴⁰ Fine says; “...although he [Aristotle] does mention Anamnesis, he does not seem to believe it is important to the metaphysics (as opposed to the epistemology) of the theory of Forms.” (1998, p.170). The ontological status of anamnesis generates a positive confidence for the possibility of knowledge.

²⁴¹ (1940), p. 364

²⁴² Note that Plato uses ἐριστικὴν τέχνην (*eristikos techene*) is define sophistry.

knowledge, and being conceived of its truth (*ἀληθει* - *alethei*), I am ready, with your help, to inquire into the nature of virtue.

In that sense, the transmigration can be neglected since it is not an essential element for gaining knowledge.

In this respect, I suppose the transmigration of soul may not be accounted literally, but it is introduced to achieve a goal; which is taking Meno - who no more trusts in Socrates since he feels ashamed - back into the conversation by means of arousal of his curiosity.²⁴³ Indeed, Meno puts forward other people's ideas to define what virtue is; at first his teacher Gorgias', and secondly a poet's. It should be noted that Socrates hardly ever refers to “*hearsay*” as a true doctrine; he barely shows interest to learn their ideas.²⁴⁴ In this respect, Socrates stirs Meno up to involve him again to search what virtue is, since Meno argues inquiry is impossible, by offering him a new chance to learn another *sentiment*. Klein says;

Meno, aroused by Socrates' solemnity, seems to sense an opportunity to add something “new” to the treasures of his vast storehouse, his memory. He is, therefore, interested no less in the names of the authors than in the content of the promises to be a memorable piece of wisdom Socrates is about to divulge.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ The enthusiasm of Meno is quite obvious. Socrates begins his word: “*Yes. I have heard both men and women who are wise about divine matters...*” (81a), and he abruptly stops. Klein claims that such pauses happen “*when he comes near touching the truth. On such occasions he acts as if he were 'looking at something within himself'*(Phd. 95e, Phaedr. 277d).” (1965, p. 92-3). I suppose it is better keeping in mind that the setting of arguments are “particular” to each dialogue; since they are also “dramatic” and “literary” works. Zuckert also claims that the readers of Plato should “*understand the status and character of arguments are not in themselves or in abstract.*” (2009, p.6)

²⁴⁴ Socrates says; “*Let's forget about him, since he isn't here anyway. But as for you, by the gods, Meno, what do you say about virtue.*” (71d). He also does not expose any curiosity to know the name of the poet whom Meno cites, unlike Meno's excitement on learning the names of the people whom Socrates put into words.

Klein clearly has a point, Meno solicitously asks: “Saying what?” Socrates replies serenely and evocatory, but without any rush: “A true statement, I think, and a noble one.” Again, Meno asks in a hurry: “What is it, and who are the people who say it?” Socrates at last continues, and Meno is in once more.

On the other hand, Socrates' attitude is distinguishable from Meno's, in the sense that he evaluates the doctrines of “priests and priestesses” similar to his approach towards the pronouncement Delphic oracle in the *Apology*. In that sense, Socrates' intention is to propose an accountable and reasoned doctrine, rather than hesitating to propose his "own" ideas like Meno.²⁴⁶ I suppose the other semblance between “*the Oracle*” and “*the Anamnesis*” is that both have been *attained by* the cross-examination; the former is established by *refuting* every interlocutor, which is inductive, whereas the latter is *justified* by proposing an individual case to show the truth of the recollection, which is deductive²⁴⁷. In both cases, the elenchus is implemented, yet the *Oracle* shows the impassivity of certain and stable knowledge for humans, the *Anamnesis* exposes a *pattern* to have “knowledge”.

²⁴⁵ (1965), p. 94.

²⁴⁶ Scott claims that Socrates differs the knowledge of “*priests and priestesses*”, which “*gives an account*”, and poets, who are “*divine*” but do not “*reason out*,” and hence, the latter has only true beliefs. (2006, p9.94-5) Nevertheless, I will not agree with Scott, even though had the doctrine of priest and priestesses elucidated in Socrates' presentation, poets had distinguished since he refers to “them.”

²⁴⁷ *The Oracle* is inductive; since Socrates has tested the proposal for several times, and it had remained “*unrefuted*”, *The Anamnesis* is deductive, since he rules out an individual case (the slave-boy demonstration), and *deduce* a universal theory.

5.5.2. Epistemological and Metaphysical Aspects

In respect to *anamnesis* thesis, it can be inferred that knowledge is latent in the soul and one can recollect all knowledge which he “*has seen both in here and in Hades*” (81c). Once a man has knowledge of a thing, he would attain the knowledge all other things. On the one hand, because all knowledge has kinship, any knowledge can be recollected by using the very similar method. On the other hand, since all knowledge is interrelated, one cannot have the knowledge of a thing in isolation.²⁴⁸

Furthermore, as it has been mentioned above, Socrates offers the *anamnesis* as a solution to the PD; he argues that a person who is completely ignorant of a thing can recollect the correct answer of a problem. In order to justify his theory, he examines a slave-boy to attain the solution of “doubling the area of a square.”

In fact, Kahn divides recollection of slave-boy into four stages; (1) his false belief to know the solution, (2) recognition of ignorance and perplexity, (3) possession of true belief which doubles the area of the square (4) constant questioning to attain accurate knowledge.²⁴⁹ Vlastos, moreover, suggests that the first two stages is an example for Socratic elenchus, yet in the other two stages, where positive

²⁴⁸ Scott says; “...*the recollection of one proposition creates an associative link which leads to the next.*” (*ibid.*; p.97) The interrelation of “true belief” another is actually results in the knowledge. Socrates claims that once the slave has solved the problem, he acquired a true opinion about geometry. The method of gathering true opinions is Socratic cross-examination. Nevertheless, He will have knowledge only if he gains more opinions about geometry and bring them together. (85d)

²⁴⁹ (2006, p.120)

results are attained, do not involve elenctic method.²⁵⁰ Nevertheless, not everyone accepts this view. I suppose the process to have episteme, if not orthe doxa, requires more than elenchus, since it is not a method to attain “certain” and “stable” knowledge.

5.5.3. The Slave Boy Demonstration

It is better to investigate the demonstration a bit more thoroughly. In the very first stage of the recollection, Socrates starts examination with explicit true opinions about geometry which are possessed by the slave-boy.

82b-c. Soc. Now boy, you know that a square is a figure like this?
(Socrates begins to draw figures in the sand at his feet. He points to the square ABCD.)
Boy. Yes
Soc. It has all these four sides equal?
Boy. Yes
Soc. And these lines which go through the middle of it also equal?
Boy. Yes
Soc. Such a figure could be either larger or smaller, could it not?
Boy. Yes.

I suppose the use of drawings is more probably due to methodological causes, since Socrates does not mention anything about sense-perception. In other words, no commitment to empirical claims can be found in the *Meno*. Plato does not intend to refer sense-data in point of knowing. Neither has he said the true opinion which the slave has is based on sense-experience. When viewed from these aspects; the role of sense-experience is stimulative.²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ (1988, p.375). cf. Fine (2006)

²⁵¹ Bedu-Addo, on the other hand, claims that “...acquaintance with sensible particulars

Moreover, Socrates assumes that slave boy have true opinions about arithmetic since he ask questions concerning multiplication. Therefore, Socrates not only fulfills DR to some extent, but he also suppresses PI, that is; (i) there is no *unknown* term in the definition (ii) slave possesses some *explicit* “true beliefs” to inquire. However, I do not mean slave boy has an expert knowledge about the nature of square; he simply has partial knowledge. Otherwise, slave would have been solved the problem immediately. In a similar manner, Bedu-Addo argues; “*We are meant to understand that the boy does not yet know that the square of the diagonal is twice the size of the given square precisely because he does not what the square is.*”²⁵²

I also believe that Socrates' choice of *this* problem is due to the fact that the solution cannot be found at the first glance.²⁵³ In fact, Socrates refutes slave boy's answer for two times.²⁵⁴ The cross-examination of slave's beliefs shows that they are inconsistent. Thereby, the false beliefs in his belief system have been revealed. On the other hand, it may also be claimed that the slave has never answered for

constitutes knowledge properly so-called, and then it seems reasonable to suppose that he wants us to see in this conspicuous use of sensible diagrams that sense-experience is an important element in the process of recollection.” (1983, p. 236). Ross also says; slave-boy's recollection is “*a purely empirical one.*” (1951; p. 18) In contrast, Gulley claims that his use of sensible diagrams is to present the theory in as simple and striking a form “*rather than to stress sense-experience as an essential element in the process.*” (1954, p. 194) Zuckert, moreover, notifies that recollection “*presents an unusual, if not singular, incident in the Platonic corpus. Socrates is not shown giving any other such geometrical proof.*” She adds that Socrates, in the *Meno*, is not entirely attached to the “*immortality of soul*” and anamnesis; he will establish a more elaborated theory in the *Phaedo*. (2009, pp. 563-564)

²⁵² p.236, 1983

²⁵³ Even if slave boy has some “*true beliefs*” about arithmetic, the solution of the problem demands a geometrical analysis, that is; drawing a *diagonal* (Vlastos, 1991, p.119).

²⁵⁴ Vlastos argues that Socrates implements the Elenchus in order to make slave-boy come to know that “*he does not know the answer*”. However, for Vlastos, the elenctic investigation is “*only good for this,*” i.e.; letting slave boy fall into *aporia* (ibid., p.119).

himself. He only tones in Socrates' ideas. The knowledge of the slave only consists of Socrates' own propositions. I suppose such an argument is legitimate to some extent. The slave moves along the path which Socrates has offered for him. However, one should also take into consideration that Socrates has indicated wrong directions to the slave. Socrates disguises as a teacher, and then he has intentionally deceived the slave. In this respect, Socrates tries to guide the slave to look into his soul, in which the truth lies. In fact, Socrates force slave to “say what he believes”. Klein brilliantly informs;

[The slave] cannot trust on Socrates to make the right suggestions to him: he cannot adopt towards Socrates the attitude an inexperienced mountain climber can and does adopt towards an experienced guide. If the climber sees or guesses his guide wants him to take a certain path, he is entitled to use this as good evidence of being its being the right path. By misleading him badly a couple of times, Socrates makes the boy realize that he is not entitled to the same assumption.²⁵⁵

Thirdly, the slave falls into aporia:

(84a) At the beginning, he did not know the side of the eight feet square. Nor indeed does he know it now, but then he thought he knew it and answered boldly, as was appropriate – he felt no perplexity. Now however he does feel perplexed. Not only does he not know the answer; he doesn't even think he knows.

This kind of perplexity is not only a preparation for a mental state, but it is also a step towards solution.²⁵⁶ Aristotle's define aporiai as follows:

²⁵⁵ (1965), p. 159

²⁵⁶ Tarrant, in a similar manner, argues that perplexity can be “*the beginning of philosophy rather than being end of philosophy.*” He says; “*three dialogues [the Meno, Theaetetus and Sophist] with*

(Met. B1 995^a34-b1). Those who search without first engaging with aporiai are like people who don't know where they need to be going; moreover, they do not even know whether or not they have found what they are searching for. For the end [of a search] is not clear to such a person, but it is clear to the person who has first considered the aporiai.

Socrates also argues that the slave boy's disavowal of knowledge has taken him to a better condition. He says; “*we helped him to some extent toward finding out the right answer, for now not only is he ignorant of it but he will be quite glad to look for it.*” (84b).

At the end, the slave boy attains the solution of the problem.²⁵⁷ His true beliefs have been brought into open by cross-examination.²⁵⁸ The solution of the problem is to draw a diagonal, yet it is quite difficult to find out this answer for a slave-boy who had never educated on mathematics. In that sense, it can also be argued that it is also quite uneasy to find out “what virtue is” for who are not expert on the topic.²⁵⁹ On the other hand, one can recollect any knowledge if he is questioned by an expert. In this respect, Socrates argues that he has only questioned the slave boy and makes him recollect. Indeed, Socrates refuses to teach anything in

the most obvious epistemological content signify this.” (2000, p.16)

²⁵⁷ Kahn perfectly corresponds the process of recollection to Descartes' explanation of mathematical truths in the Fifth Meditation: “*Mathematical truths reveal themselves with such evidence and agree so well with my nature that, when I begin to discover them, it does not seem to me that I am learning new but rather that I am remembering what I already knew, that is to say, that I perceive things that were already in my mind, although I had not yet turned my thought to them.*” (2006, p.122).

²⁵⁸ Socrates says; “*So a man who does not know has in himself true opinions on a subject without having knowledge.*” In this respect, it can be claimed true opinions are latent, not knowledge. See Fine (1992), Gulley (1954).

²⁵⁹ “*Socrates is intent on reforming Meno's intellectual character – or at least changing his attitude to inquiry and to the benefits of the elenchus.*” (Scott, 2006.; p.99).

similar, though different, way to the early dialogues.²⁶⁰

Moreover, the *Meno* proposes the method of investigation of all nature for anyone²⁶¹ which can also be found in the *Theaetetus*.²⁶² Socrates says:

Thea.210c-d I am, then, not at all a wise person myself, nor have I any wise invention, the offspring born of my own soul; but those who associate with me, although at first some of them seem very ignorant, yet, as our acquaintance advances, all of them to whom the god is gracious make wonderful progress, not only in their own opinion, but in that of others as well. And it is clear that they do this, not because they have ever learned anything from me, but because they have found in themselves many fair things and have brought them forth. But the delivery is due to the god and me.²⁶³

This passage shares similarity with the *Meno* in respect to the theory of *anamnesis* (cf. Men.85d-e). Moreover, on the results of *aporia*, the *Theaetetus* and the *Meno* proposes positive properties. Politis says; “*purgation or catharsis is the exclusive*

²⁶⁰ In the *Clitophon* (410c-e) and *Republic I* (336b-338b), Socrates not only disclaims knowing, but he also does not point any direction for any conclusion. On the contrary, Socrates points several methods for attaining knowledge, i.e.; *recollection*, *hypotheses* and *reasoning out the explanation*.

²⁶¹ Burnyeat claims that the recollection of slave-boy is an overwhelmingly general claim for learning, in fact; it can hardly be found in any other dialogue. He says; in the *Theaetetus* (210bc), Plato is much more rigorous about learning (1992, pp.56-7).

²⁶² Runciman says that there are three definitions of knowledge in the *Theaetetus*: (i) as perception; 151d-187a (ii) as true opinion; 187a-201c (iii) as true opinion with *logos* (201c-210b). Yet, none is found satisfactory, and hence dialogue ends without a conclusion. The investigation continues in the *Sophist*. (1962, p.6). Dorter, moreover, claims that the *Meno* and the *Theaetetus* has a common nature in respect to their content. He adds that their dramatic dates also indicate a relation. (1994, p.71) cf. Zuckert (2009) Tarrant, with a parallel approach, argues that the *Meno* points the *Theaetetus* for the presentation of whole theory, since the *Meno* puts positive attitude towards investigation. That is, the *Meno* depicts the whole process which will continue in the works after it (2000, p.103). In this respect, I suppose the similarity between these two dialogues is quite obvious.

²⁶³ Note that there is also a similarity to the *Apology* in respect to Socrates' claim that he is in service of gods (cf. *Ap* 24a, 28c, 31c).

aim of the Socratic aporia.” He claims also that the Socratic *elenchus* is the way to perplex and purify the interlocutor from false beliefs.²⁶⁴ In the *Sophist*, Socrates says: “*For all these reasons, Theaetetus, we have to say that refutation (ἔλεγχον) is the principal and most important kind of cleansing (καθάρσεων).*” (230d). Thereupon, two implications may arise: (i) the aporia is a necessary stage to have knowledge cf. the *Meno* 84a-c; (ii) the early dialogues are a purgatory where the readers can wipe the false beliefs off. In this respect, the *Meno* informs us about the Plato's project. In fact, Kahn claims that the examination of aporia in the *Meno* can “*be read as Plato's comment on the aporetic dialogues generally.*”²⁶⁵ In this respect, it is striking that in the *Theaetetus* aporia treated “*as a productive state, the first stirring of creative force*”. That is, the perplexity is not only a stage for whom are pretending to be wise is benefited; it is an element of the examination. Again, in the *Meno*, Socrates perplexes the slave boy in order to make him recognize the requirements for the solution. cf. *Meno* 84b-c Indeed, Politis says; “*the aporia here is not the perplexity and being at a loss in the face of the Socratic demand for definitions; it is a particular puzzle and problem.*”²⁶⁶ In conclusion, I suppose *Meno's* stringray metaphor for aporia corresponds to the dialogues before the *Meno*, while Socrates' definition of aporia points future dialogues where puzzles to be solved. In the *Meno*, the perplexity of the slave-boy enables him to

²⁶⁴ (2006), pp. 88-89.

²⁶⁵ (1996), p. 99

²⁶⁶ (2006), p. 88 & p. 105.

solve the problem:²⁶⁷

(84c-d).Socrates. Now do you imagine he would have attempted to inquire or learn what he thought he knew when he did not know it, until he had been reduced to the perplexity of realizing that he did not know, and had felt a craving to know?

Meno. I think not, Socrates.

Socrates. Then the torpedo's shock was of advantage to him?

Meno. I think so.

In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates claims that the puzzlement impregnates the interlocutor:

(148a) But I assure you, Socrates, I have often tried to work that out, when I heard reports of the questions that you asked, but I can neither persuade myself that I have any satisfactory answer, nor can I find anyone else who gives the kind of answer you insist upon; and yet, on the other hand, I cannot get rid of a feeling of concern about the matter. Socrates. Yes, you are suffering the pangs of labor, Theaetetus, because you are not empty, but pregnant.

Therefore, the only principle to seek knowledge is to accept that one has the latent knowledge.²⁶⁸ The source of the truth is one's own soul, knowledge cannot be based on hearsay or some other's testimony. In that sense, I believe that Socrates' assertion of latent knowledge in the *Meno* does not point the intelligibility of the knowledge; he tells us that it can only be attained by looking through and digging out ourselves. I suppose this is not only an epistemological and ontological thesis,

²⁶⁷ Burnyeat (1992), p. 58.

²⁶⁸ I agree with Scott that the concept of *a priori* cannot be applied to the *Meno*: Socrates have never claimed that sense-perception is inadequate to have knowledge. On the other hand, Scott says; “*Socrates discusses the possibility of knowledge whose justification is independent of testimony, not sense experience.*” (2006, p.104)

but it also has psychological and methodological implications. The constitution of knowledge can be achieved by following the true steps of justifications by ourselves. The trust on the existence of latent knowledge makes one follow the “*inherent plausible proof sequence*” in the soul. The guidance of Socrates is an activator. The slave chooses any path of reasoning according to his own “soul”.

Scott argues that:

It is precisely these internal criteria that are lacking in someone who takes someone's word on trust – hence their cognitive dependence on the other party. In other words, the presence of internal criteria underlies perceiving their logical interrelations. According to Socrates, the existence of these criteria amounts to the possession of latent knowledge.²⁶⁹

Nevertheless, Socrates argues that the slave has not possessed the knowledge yet, he just has “true opinions.”²⁷⁰ He says;

85c-d. At present these opinions, being newly aroused, have a dreamlike quality. But if the same questions are put to him on many occasions and in different ways, you can see that in the end he will have knowledge on the subject as accurate as anybody's.

²⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 108.

²⁷⁰ There are diverse arguments on the Plato's definition of knowledge. I none the less do not engage them, since they do not have direct affects on the aim of the thesis. Briefly, Bluck claims that “*knowledge requires acquaintance*” (*Plato's Meno*, 1961), Burnyeat suggests that “*acquaintance is not prerequisite for any kind of knowledge, but there are different routes to have knowledge*”(Socrates and the Jury, 1980), Shope says; “*knowledge is something other than true belief, but neither does knowledge is a species of true belief nor excludes it*”(The Analysis of Knowing, 1961), and Sedley argues that “*knowledge and true belief excludes each other*” (*Three Platonist Interpretations of Theaetetus*, 1996). Lastly, Zuckert points out that the slave boy should “*give proof on his own*” rather than “*memorizing*” the solution to have knowledge (2009, p.634). I simply assume that “*knowledge requires acquaintance, explanation (or proof) and should be constituted by interrelating true beliefs of the same ground*”.

Accordingly, the slave boy only has true opinions about geometry, since he cannot reason out an explanation for “*doubling the area of a square*”.²⁷¹ The slave boy implements the “*Pythagorean Theorem*” without having any explanatory understanding of it.²⁷² I suppose the slave-boy only has some innate intuitions, such as; equality and similarity. This cognitive capacity leads him to solve the problem. In this respect, two interpretations are available; the boy answered the question since he simply sees the figure on the sand, that is; the empirical data lead him to the solution. Kahn calls this view as skeptic one.²⁷³ Secondly, the slave-boy grasps the sequential construction of the solution which is accompanied by his innate intuitions. That is, the slave boy recollects the solution, since he has innate intuitions, let's put it in Platonic terms: He has acquaintance to the Form of square, equality, similarity as well as many others. Moreover, after the recollection, slave-boy now has the “true belief” of what *diagonal* is; his innate cognitive capacity is enhanced.²⁷⁴ However, boy has not possessed the accurate knowledge, because he needs a swarm of other true beliefs to constitute an

²⁷¹ According to Fine, the existences of true beliefs enable searching. She says; “...though the slave lacks knowledge, he has, and relies on his, true beliefs (85a-c). In just the same way, someone who doesn't know the road to Larissa can none the less arrives there successfully, if she has true beliefs about the route.” (1999, p.8).

²⁷² Schofield claims that there is no ancient evidence which attributes the theorem to Pythagoras. He adds that the pioneers of mathematical inquiry are the eastern Greek from the Asia Minor, such as; Hippocrates of Chios (2008, p.46).

²⁷³ 2006, p.120.

²⁷⁴ Kahn says; “*it [recollection] is a process that begins with the capacity to understand simple questions and make simple numerical calculations and potentially ends with the acquisition of full scientific knowledge.*” (2006, p.121) I believe that Socrates, in the Meno, supports evolutionary development in “knowing”.

explanatory account for his solution.²⁷⁵ That is to say, he does not have any knowledge about geometry, yet he only possesses a true belief for unrelated and untied geometrical object. Fine argues:

Plato's claim is then to that to know p is to have the true belief that p and for that true belief to be bound by reasoning about the *aitia* [explanation] of p . That is, for one's true belief that p constitutes knowledge that p , one must bind it properly by being able to explain why p is so.²⁷⁶

Taylor also claims that slave can have a “*systematic grasp of geometry*” in order to see “*not just that this is the correct solution of this problem but why it is.*”²⁷⁷ Furthermore, in the *Theaetetus*, when Socrates and Theaetetus examining the nature of geometrical objects, Plato distinguishes “*naming a thing*” from “*referring to thing itself.*”²⁷⁸ I suppose the nucleus of this distinction, as well as the doctrine of *Forms*, is implied in the *Meno*, since Socrates demands explanation for virtue, not simply name it as knowledge. That is to say, Plato intimates a method of investigation which provides not only knowledge of a thing, but also gives the explanation of the process of attaining knowledge.

²⁷⁵ Vlastos brilliantly indicates that recollection is “*any enlargement of our knowledge which results from the perception logical relationships.*” (1995, p.157) Taylor, moreover, suggests that recollection does not mean “*an inferential knowledge*”, that is, the slave does not recollect the solution by inferring to the “truth in his immortal soul.” In fact, “*there is no inference, merely serial reminding.*” (2008, p.171) In this respect, I suppose the knowledge is *cumulative*; it is the constitution of a *logical network*.

²⁷⁶ (2004), p. 61.

²⁷⁷ (2008), p. 173.

²⁷⁸ Zuckert (2009), p. 605.

5.6. The Distinction between True Belief and Knowledge

At the end of the recollection, as it is mentioned before, the slave boy has true beliefs, but not knowledge. In other words, Plato does not admit that the slave has the knowledge. He has true belief, yet the constitution of knowledge requires “*reasoning out the cause.*”²⁷⁹ The slave boy does not attain knowledge, yet he purifies his belief system and develops the consistency of his network. The process is beneficial for the slave.

On the other hand, in contrast to the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus*, Socrates does not draw the line between knowledge and true belief in the *Meno* (98b):

SOCRATES: Indeed, I too speak as one who does not have knowledge but is guessing. However, I certainly do not think I am guessing that right opinion is a different thing from knowledge. If I claim to know anything else—and I would make that claim about few things—I would put this down as one of the things I know.—Rightly so, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Well then, is it not correct that when true opinion guides the course of every action, it does no worse than knowledge?—I think you are right in this too.

SOCRATES: Correct opinion is then neither inferior to knowledge nor less useful in directing actions, nor is the man who has it less so than he who has knowledge.—That is so.

SOCRATES: And we agreed that the good man is beneficent.—Yes.

SOCRATES: Since then it is not only through knowledge but also through right opinion that men are good, and beneficial to their cities when they are, and neither knowledge nor true opinion come to men by nature but are acquired—or do you think either of these comes by nature?—I do not think so.

In fact, Fine points that “*The Meno tells us that knowledge is true belief bound by*

²⁷⁹ Scott says; according to Gail Fine “[Plato] believes that once – long ago – the soul has explicit knowledge, but it lost it; what it retains is a tendency to favor true over false beliefs, which enables it to inquire successfully.” (1999, p.100).

an aitia logismos, an explanatory account (98a): The Phaedo tells us that all aitiai refer to Forms (96ff).” Nevertheless, she adds that neither the *Meno* nor the *Phaedo* can supply the readers with the epistemological or metaphysical structure efficiently: “We must wait until the middle books of the *Republic* (5-7) for the details of how Forms figure in knowledge.”²⁸⁰ (1999, p.215). Moreover, Scott claims that although the *Phaedrus* and the *Phaedo* is in favor of “separation of copy and model” which correlates to the theory of *Forms*, both dialogues are against the view that sense-data has any role for attaining knowledge. Yet the *Meno* does not offer any argument in favor of the separation of sensibles and forms.²⁸¹ Irwin also suggests that Plato, in the *Phaedo*, attaches some qualities to forms which are not applied in the early dialogues.²⁸² Fine none the less claims that Plato does not discuss separation, *choris*, of Forms, that is; Plato, for Fine, does not mention existence of separate forms any of these dialogues.²⁸³

As we have mentioned earlier, Socrates claims that the slave-boy does not possess the knowledge. The slave boy does not know the “*Pythagorean theorem*.” Nor does he have any idea on the “*irregular numbers*”. That is to say, a diagonal can only be defined in relation to a square, and their necessary and conceptual interconnection can be grasped *to parapan* by means of “reasoning.” In brief, I suppose that the definition of the problem may only be founded if all

²⁸⁰ (1999), p. 215.

²⁸¹ (1999), p. 124.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 151.

²⁸³ (1998), p. 178) cf. Ross (1951), Cornford (1939).

relevant connections of the solution are revealed.²⁸⁴

Furthermore, I would like to notify again that in the *Meno*, Plato does not distinguish true belief and knowledge similar to the Two World Theory²⁸⁵ in the middle and late dialogues. In the *Meno*, Plato does not claim that one cannot have true beliefs and knowledge of an object at the same time. Nevertheless, it would likely be assumed that Plato does not present an identity on the essences of true belief and knowledge, yet they are not disjoint in action. Actually, I suppose, in the *Meno*, there is a distinction between a peculiar species of knowledge, and its similarity to true belief is assumed. In 97a – d, Plato proposes a parallelism between practical wisdom and true belief:

Socrates

But our assertion that it is impossible to give right guidance unless one has knowledge (*φρόνιμος* - *phronimos*)²⁸⁶ looks very like a mistake.

Meno

What do you mean by that?

Socrates

I will tell you. If a man knew the way to Larissa, or any other place you please, and walked there and led others, would he not give right and good guidance?

²⁸⁴ For Ferejohn, the role of explanation is to give a definatory account, that is, the definition should explain the cause. He adds that the extension of definition to *aitiai* has begun with the *Meno* where Socrates concerns with theory of knowledge (2006, pp.150-2). For Taylor, Forms are ultimate *aitiai*; “*it is by reasoning of them we achieve the systematic understanding of reality which constitutes knowledge*” (2008, p.176). With a parallel approach, Zuckert argues that there is a difference between “calculating” the length of a “given line of the square” and describing a “diagonal.” (2009, p.575)

²⁸⁵ Fine says, “*According to the Two Worlds Theory, there are no objects that one can both know and have beliefs about, and no propositions that can be the content of both knowledge and belief, whether at the same time or at different times.*” (2004, p.44).

²⁸⁶ (*phronesis*), practical wisdom: “*the ability which by itself is productive of human happiness; the knowledge of what is good and bad; the knowledge that produces happiness;2 the disposition by which we judge what is to be done and what is not to be done.*” (Def. 411d).

Meno

Certainly.

Socrates

Well, and a person who had a right opinion as to which was the way, but had never been there and did not really know (*ἐπιστάμενος* - *epistamenos*), might give right guidance, might he not?

Meno

Certainly.

Socrates

And so long, I presume, as he has right opinion (*ὀρθὴν δόξαν* - *orthes doxan*) about that which the other man really knows (*ἐπιστήμην* - *epistemen*), he will be just as good a guide—if he thinks the truth instead of knowing (*φρονῶν* - *phronon*) it—as the man who has the knowledge (*φρονοῦντο* - *phronounto*).

Meno

Just as good.

Socrates

Hence true opinion is as good a guide to rightness of action as knowledge (*φρόνησις* - *phronesis*); and this is a point we omitted just now in our consideration of the nature of virtue, when we stated that knowledge (*φρονήσεω* - *phroneseo*) is the only guide of right action; whereas we find there is also true opinion.

I suppose, in the light of the section above, Socrates proposes an affinity between *phronesis*²⁸⁷ and *orthes doxa*, that is, whenever he refers to “*guidance of true belief*” in action, he identifies it *phronesis*. On the contrary, each time Plato uses “*episteme*”, he refers to “*genuine knowledge*.” When Plato uses the word *φρόνις* (*phronis*) in the earlier sections (88c-d-e and 89a), he refers to its beneficial

²⁸⁷ “...although the young may be experts in geometry and mathematics and similar branches of knowledge, we do not consider that a young man can have Prudence. The reason is that Prudence includes a knowledge of particular facts, and this is derived from experience, which a young man does not possess; for experience is the fruit of years.” (Nic. Eth. 1142a). If we compare Aristotle and Plato on the distinction between *episteme* and *phronesis*, it can be claimed that Plato assumes *episteme* as more genuine than *phronesis*. Even if they both assume *phronesis* is connected to experience and *pragmata*, Plato is in favor of *episteme* as real knowledge, *phronesis* is merely on the same epistemic level as “true belief”.

feature.

In this respect, I suppose “true beliefs” can only be accepted as a peculiar type of knowledge if they are beneficial. Hence, knowledge as *episteme* is more than being beneficial. Thence, in my opinion, Plato has already in mind had an antagonism between *doxa*²⁸⁸ and *episteme*²⁸⁹, but he had not explicitly proposed it yet. Consequently, within the context of this thesis, I would like to remind Socrates in the early dialogues and Socrates in the *Meno* is similar to the extent that true belief is as beneficial as knowledge. That is to say, “*elenctic knowledge*” has not been still surpassed. In fact, Socrates' elenctic knowledge does not contradict with the recollected knowledge of slave due to the fact that both do not involve any claim for certain and stable characteristics.

Moreover, Fine asserts that “if Plato speaking literally in saying that only the traveler can know the way to Larissa, he explicitly countenances knowledge of sensible parts” (2004, p.44).²⁹⁰ However, I do not agree with her at all. It is true that Plato proposes knowledge of sensible objects; he none the less does not directly present a similarity to *episteme*. Rather, he chooses to construct a parallelism with its profitable feature. I suppose Plato accepts Socrates elenctic

²⁸⁸ δόξα (*doxa*), opinion: “*conception which is open to persuasion by reason; fluctuation in reasoning; the thinking which is led by reason to the false as well as the true.*” (Def. 414c).

²⁸⁹ ἐπιστήμη (*episteme*), knowledge: “*conception of the soul which cannot be dislodged by reasoning; ability to conceive one or more things which cannot be dislodged by reasoning; true argument which cannot be dislodged by thinking.*” (Def. 414c).

²⁹⁰ I just skip the option that the example is just an analogy. I agree with Fine that if it is an analogy, then Plato may only suggests having firsthand experience, not to rely on “someone's say so.”(2004,p.45) In this respect, the problem of knowledge of sensible objects and the question whether all knowledge requires acquaintance or not would vanish.

knowledge as beneficial as knowledge, but he believe that it can be overwhelmed. In this respect, it could be inferred that Plato does not strongly claim that objects of knowledge are formal and intelligible, on the contrary, he is, to some extent, still Socratic in the Meno. What I mean, Plato also asserts the possibility of knowledge in this world, i.e.; the sensible world.

Consequently, true beliefs are constitutive elements of knowledge, and if they are not interrelated, they will be unstable. That is, I suppose Socrates means to create a manifold of true beliefs by “reasoning out the explanation.” Scott says,

The hold of this belief [true belief] is not experienced atomistically: that is the point of 81c9-d3, where each recollected belief comes with an associative link (however indistinctly felt) leading us on to the next stage in the process of re-discovery. Gradually we extend our network of true beliefs, increasing the number of explanatory inter-connections.²⁹¹

Therefore, a true belief can be turned into knowledge, yet a swarm of true belief can establish knowledge.

5.7. Hypotheses²⁹²

Socrates has presented recollection to solve the problem of discovery; since all “truth” is latent in our souls, one can search for “what he does not know.”

²⁹¹ (2006), p. 130.

²⁹² ὑπόθεσις (hypothesis), hypothesis: “*indemonstrable first principle; summary of the principal points in a discourse.*” (Def. 415b).

Nevertheless, the *anamnesis* does not evaporate the priority of definition.²⁹³ In this respect, Socrates proposes the “*hypothetical method*”. He says at 86e-87a:

So we must, it appears, inquire into the qualities (εἶναι ποῖόν τι ἐστίν – einai poion ti estin) of something the nature of which we do not yet know (ἴσμεν ὅτι ἐστίν – ismeo oti estin). However, please relax your rule a little bit for me and agree to investigate whether it is teachable or not by means of a hypothesis. I mean the way geometers often carry on their investigations. For example, if they are asked whether a specific area can be inscribed in the form of a triangle within a given circle, one of them might say: “I do not yet know whether that area has that property, but I think I have, as it were, a hypothesis that is of use for the problem, namely this: If that area is such that when one has applied it as a rectangle to the given straight line in the circle it is deficient by a figure similar to the very figure which is applied, then I think one alternative results, whereas another results if it is impossible for this to happen. So, by using this hypothesis, I am willing to tell you what results with regard to inscribing it in the circle—that is, whether it is impossible or not.”²⁹⁴

In respect to the passage above, Socrates claims that one can search a thing, *viz.* whether an area can be inscribed in a circle as a triangle or whether virtue can be taught, if he reduces it to some other hypotheses, *viz.* whether an area can be inscribed in a circle as a rectangle or whether virtue is knowledge.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ What I mean, in search of virtue, Socrates and Meno need to know “What virtue is?” before investigating whether virtue is teachable or not. None has it unlike the slave boy's recollection. In this respect, Socrates loses the PD, and proposes the hypothetical method which enables to start with conjectures. cf. Scott (1999); pp.101-2.

²⁹⁴ See Scott (2006); pp. 134-137 for a solution in detail. Note that the solution can be attributed to Book IV of Euclid's in respect to: (i) *Definition 3*: A rectilinear figure is said to be *inscribed in a circle* when each angle of the inscribed figure lies on the circumference of the circle. (ii) *Definition 7*: A straight line is said to be *fitted into a circle* when its ends are on the circumference of the circle. In a similar manner, Mueller brilliantly describes the second problem in respect to Euclid's notion of *diorismos*. He adds that “*the absence of perfect fit is a reflection of a practical difference between mathematics and geometry*”(2006, pp.177-80). I also believe that the search for virtue is *metaphysically* different, if not *epistemologically*.

²⁹⁵ I suppose the problem can be related to Euclid:

A *Theorem* is the formal statement of a property that may be demonstrated from known propositions. These propositions may themselves be theorems or axioms. A theorem consists of

Consequently, the application of the hypothetical method gives an eligible account to the problem of “*priority of definition over attributes*”. The exact definition is not a prerequisite for searching; the attributes and the definition can be searched simultaneously.²⁹⁶ I suppose Plato’s clearest presentation of searching the first causes, or explanations, by hypothetical method can be discovered in the *Phaedo* (100a):

I do not grant in the least that he who studies realities (σκοπούμενον τὰ ὄντα)²⁹⁷ by means of conceptions is looking at them in images any more than he who studies them in the facts of daily life. However, that is the way I began. I assume (ὑποθέμενος - *hupothemenos*) in each case some principle (λόγον - *logos*)²⁹⁸ which I consider strongest, and whatever seems to me to agree (συμφωνέω)²⁹⁹ with this, whether relating to cause or to anything else (καὶ περὶ αἰτίας καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων ὄντων – *kai peri aitias kai peri tos allos apanton outon*)³⁰⁰, I regard as true, and

two parts, the hypothesis, or that, which is assumed, and the conclusion, or that which is asserted to follow there from. Thus, in the typical theorem, if X is Y, then Z is W; the hypothesis is that X is Y, and the conclusion is that Z is W.

A *Problem* is a proposition in which something is proposed to be done, such as a line to be drawn, or a figure to be constructed, under some given conditions.

The *Solution* of a problem is the method of construction which accomplishes the required end.

The *Demonstration* is the proof, in the case of a theorem that the conclusion follows from the hypothesis; and in the case of a problem, that the construction accomplishes the object proposed.

²⁹⁶ Scott claims that Socrates offers Meno to continue the investigation of attributes of virtue in respect to its nature. He says; “*the difference between the preferred methods is that they base their investigation only on a conjecture about the nature of virtue rather than knowledge.*” (2006, p.133).

²⁹⁷ I may translate “*skopeumenon ta onta*” as “*looking in or into the beings.*” I suppose that Socrates means the search for the Forms.

²⁹⁸ “*to assume that there are such principles*”

²⁹⁹ *Sumpheon* can mean “*sound together, be in harmony or unison.*” Mueller alternatively accepts “*logical consistency*” which I also agree. (2006, p.181) I believe Plato proposes that the elements of explanation of a *thing*, or an action, should be in *accordance*.

³⁰⁰ I believe Plato means *aitias* (*causes or explanations*) and *everything that exists* (*allon apanton ontos*). That is, it is a complete and all-covering method of investigation.

whatever disagrees with it, as untrue.

Moreover, according to Farquharson, Socrates' plan in executing second problem is to show to gain knowledge about a thing without having a definition, that is, knowledge can be attained even if *ti esti* question of object remains unanswered.

In fact, Farquharson claims that:

Socrates agrees to investigate with Meno the question whether human goodness can be taught (that is, whether youths can be educated in morality) before human goodness has been precisely defined. He proposes to attempt this problem by borrowing a leaf from the geometry of the day. The method he adopts from mathematics was currently termed the "by hypothesis" method.³⁰¹

In this respect, Socrates proposes this method in order to construct the knowledge of *attributes* of an object even if we do not identify "*F-ness*" of it. That is, hypothetical or provisional experience of an object would also be sufficient to attain knowledge.

In the first problem, Socrates knows the solution of the problem, and hence he can question the slave boy properly. On the contrary, the solution of second problem is unknown to Socrates himself, so he has to make assumptions.³⁰² Klein clarifies Socrates' idea:

³⁰¹ (1923), p. 21.

³⁰² "The problem of discovery required us to start with a known specification of the object of inquiry. In the case of a definitional inquiry, however, there is nothing we can know about virtue without knowing the definition itself. Socrates' solution is to say that we have knowledge unconsciously, but at the conscious level we have to start from mere conjecture." (Scott, 2006,

And so I am disposed to tell you what will happen with regard to inscription of your amount space (*autou*) into the circle, whether it is impossible or not impossible, by way of hypothesizing (*hypothenos*).³⁰³

In this respect, the difference between two problems underlies in the diverse method of constituting knowledge. That is to say, the former is solved via just referring pre-given geometry theories since the problem is defined sufficiently. Along with this sufficiency, the object in question – doubling the square – can be solved by means of drawing the diagonal and the application of the *Pythagorean Theorem*. Hence, there is no need to make any hypothesis. On the other hand, second problems necessitates to make an assumption since there are three different objects – a given area, a triangle and a circle – those of which should be related to each other. Those relations can be only be set forth by making hypothesis.³⁰⁴

In that sense, it cannot be known whether virtue is something teachable or not, if one does not know what virtue is. In other words, this question concerning sort of *virtue* is indefinable without making a *hypothesis*.³⁰⁵ Because of this resemblance Plato goes through with this geometrical method; he implements same analytic

p.129)

³⁰³ (1989), p. 206.

³⁰⁴ “*The one method cannot get above these hypotheses, but, treating them as if they were first principles, builds upon them and, with the aid of diagrams or images, arrives at conclusions: this is the method of geometry and mathematics in general.*”(Heath, 1921, p.290).

³⁰⁵ “*The answer, however, which Plato puts into the geometers mouth shows, or seems to show, that he was interested not in stating a truism, but in finding a possible construction upon which the conditions of an answer would follow.*” (Farquharson, 1923, p.21).

procedure that geometers apply to their problems.³⁰⁶

In sum, the hypothetical method enables us to investigate the nature of an object devoid of acquaintance; in addition, the indefinable objects can be examined “from a supposition” without knowing *what it is absolutely*. According to Bedu-Addo:

...to settle the point question of whether virtue is teachable or not, leaving this question unsettled, it is not recognized that he is merely pretending to yield to Meno and that the introduction of the argument ‘from a hypothesis’ is really a subterfuge on the part of Socrates to facilitate Meno’s recollection of the nature of virtue.³⁰⁷

Indeed, if the method of recollection were sufficient to gain knowledge, Socrates would not have been introduced the second problem hypothetical method.

5.8. *Aitias Logismos*

As it has been mentioned above, slave has only true beliefs, since he cannot reason out an explanation for the solution of the “*doubling the area of a square*.” In fact, slave implements the “*Pythagorean Theorem*” without having any explanatory understanding of it.³⁰⁸ Accordingly, he cannot have any

³⁰⁶ “the problem hinted at must be solved by ‘analysis’: ‘the inscription’...has to be considered as ‘done’ so that a sufficient condition for its being feasible can be inferred as a consequence.” (Klein, 1965, p.207).

³⁰⁷ (1983), p. 287

³⁰⁸ Here, I would like to note that a theorem in an axiomatic system should give an explanation of the causal relation of F and G. That, an axiomatic system, or *episteme* in Platonic terms, requires

knowledge about geometry, yet he only possesses true beliefs about unrelated and untied geometrical object.³⁰⁹ Consequently, the characteristics of knowledge which distinguishes it from true belief is that knowledge requires “reasoning out the explanation”.³¹⁰

Moreover, in the *Gorgias*, Socrates argues “to suffer injustice is better than to commit it” is bound by the “arguments of steel and adamant.”

(508e-509a) These facts, which were shown to be as I have state them some earlier time in our previous discussion, are buckled fast and clamped together (κατέχεται καὶ δέδεταίν – *katechetai kai dedetain*) - to put somewhat crudely – by argument of steel and adamant (σιδηροῖς καὶ ἀδαμαντίνοις λόγοις – *siderois kai adamantinuis logois*)– at least so it would appear as matters stand. For my story is ever the same, that I cannot tell how the matter stands (ὅτι ἐγὼ ταῦτα οὐκ οἶδα ὅπως ἔχει – *oti ego tauta ouk oida opos echei*), and yet of all whom I have encountered, before as now, no one has been able to state it otherwise without making himself ridiculous.

I suppose this passage appears similar to the example of Daedalus' statues in the *Meno*.

(97d) That if they are not fastened up (δεδεμένα - *dedemena*) they play truant and run away; but, if fastened (δεδεμένα – *dedemana*), they stay where they are.

the explanation of the cause. Hintikka points that “It [an axiomatic system] thus constitutes an explanation of the connection between *F* and *G* in a vivid sense. In this sense, the axioms of a system can provide explanations of theorems” (2011, p.84.) In that sense, I suppose Plato not only points slave-boy’s lack of knowledge, but he also propounds the conditions of *episteme*.

³⁰⁹ Fine argues; “Plato’s claim is then to that to know *p* is to have the true belief that *p* and for that true belief to be bound by reasoning about the *aitia* [explanation] of *p*. That is, for one’s true belief that *p* constitutes knowledge that *p*, one must bind it properly by being able to explain why *p* is so.”(2004, p.61) Moreover, Gulley points out that true opinions are conversed to knowledge by “showing them to be elements in a coherent system of propositions where their relation to premises and axioms of the system is clearly intelligible.”(1954, pp.194-5).

³¹⁰ Scholars dissociate on the meaning of *aitia*. I am following Fine's suggestion that *aitia* refers to *explanation*, rather than *cause*. See Fine (2004). On the contrary, Harte attributes “causal responsibility” to Forms (2008, pp.193-4).

(98a)[B]ut they do not care to stay for long, and run away out of the human soul, and thus are of no great value until one makes them fast (*δήση - dese*) with causal reasoning (*αίτίας λογισμῶ - aitias logismo*). And this process, friend Meno, is recollection, as in our previous talk we have agreed. But when once they are fastened (*δεθῶσιν - dethoin*), in the first place they turn into knowledge (*ἐπιστήμαι γίνονται - epistemai gignontai*), and in the second, are abiding (*μόνιμοι - monimoi*). And this is why knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη - episteme*) is more prized than right opinion (*ὀρθῆς δόξης - orthes doxes*): the one transcends the other by its trammels (*δεσμῶ - desmo*).

I suppose the semblance of these passages is clear; Socrates proposes arguments which are “fastened.”³¹¹ Nevertheless, in the *Gorgias*, Socrates *believes* that his proposition is bound by “*iron and adamant*” arguments, yet he does not give an explanation.³¹² On the other hand, in the *Meno*, Plato defines knowledge as true belief which “*reasoned out the explanation.*”

What is more, I believe that Plato implicitly presupposes the kinship of the soul to the objects of recollection as the primary *explanation* of all knowledge, that is; the soul has affinity with the *Forms*, which are primary *aitai*. The kinship of the soul with its objects of recollection enables to “learning” all knowledge without failing to present the first causes. Ionescu claims that

³¹¹ Note that Socrates uses the same word δέω. On the other hand, Socrates in the *Gorgias* cannot give account for his arguments whereas in the *Meno* he claims to explain his arguments, yet he does not present a systematic definition to “*tie down*”.

³¹² Fine says; “*Socrates does not claim to know that his beliefs are tied down by arguments of iron and adamantine. He says that it appears so far to him that this is so; he believes that this is so.*” (2004, p.65) I suppose that there is fine distinction between standard disavowal of knowledge and the disavowal in the *Gorgias*, since Socrates does not simply refers to not have knowledge, certain and stable, yet he claims not to have any explanation. Even so the disavowal is different by a narrow margin; Socrates still disclaims knowledge in the *Gorgias*. In this sense, I agree with Vlastos, he claims that no dialogue after the *Meno* can be found in which Socrates says “ἐγὼ ταῦτα οὐκ οἶδα ὅπως ἔχει”; he does not know whether or not his thesis are true.” (1991, p.84)

[K]inship of all things to be known may reasonable explain the possibility of the soul's recollecting something else (all other things) from something that it is just recollected, but it cannot explain how the initial thing is recollected. To explain that, we need to assume affinity also between the soul and the objects to be recollected, or else we fall into an infinite regress unable to explain how the initial "seeing" of one thing might have taken place.³¹³

Therefore, the knowledge of the soul, like its objects, can be recollected.³¹⁴ That is to say, the soul itself is an object of knowledge. I none the less suppose that we cannot be found this notion at least in the *Meno*.³¹⁵

In this respect, the description of soul as a object of recollection would be exceed the content of the *Meno*, since the *nature* of the objects does not defined properly. And hence, I suppose the knowledge of soul cannot be identified with other object's knowledge; such as geometry, virtue, "the road to Larissa". Scott also claims that "*Socrates argues that knowledge (of definitions) of forms is innate*" in the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, in which "*these definitions acts as principles (explanations or causes)*". For Scott, the *Meno* implies the existence of transcendent forms with the application of the priority of the definition.³¹⁶ Nevertheless, I suppose the slave recollects without definition, but he is actually

³¹³ (2007), p. 60.

³¹⁴ "...the soul itself is knowable (with respect to its virtue) precisely insofar as it is itself akin to its objects of knowledge." (ibid; p.61).

³¹⁵ Grote claims that "When truth is presented to us (he [Socrates] intimates), we recognize it as an old friend after a long absence. We know it by reason of its conformity to our antecedent, pre-natal, experience (in the *Phaedon*, such pre-natal experience is restricted to commerce with substantial, intelligible, Ideas, which are not mentioned in the *Meno*): the soul and the mind is immortal." (1867, p.17).

³¹⁶ (2006), p. 109.

on his way to know the definition by means of “reasoning out the explanation.” That is to say, a systematic understanding of geometry is needed to have the definition of knowledge. In brief, I suppose that explicit definition or knowledge of an object is not prior to inquiry, since it is latent in the soul. In fact, one does not have to know the definition; he can also make an assumption, which is hypothetical method. Actually, the soul is not akin to the objects of knowledge, yet it is only acquainted with the objects of knowledge.

Moreover, to know the way to Larissa cannot be accomplished without “really” walking on it. On the other hand, without having any pre-given map, let's say method, it would be hardly be achieved by any man. The importance of first explorer is highly crucial. He is the one who left the prints of his footsteps on the lands where anyone had never been before. In fact, the explorer illuminates the path for his followers. In this respect, although the true beliefs are not actually knowledge, they are not completely blank. First, they are beneficial as the first hand knowledge, and second they may reveal a path to knowledge.

In this respect, the kinship of the objects to be recollected seems to mean that the constitution of the knowledge is sequential and systematic. The example of slave's recollection reveals us that the true beliefs can be acquired by means of taking false beliefs out the network of beliefs. This is the first step. Secondly, the latent knowledge in the slave will be recollected by means of further questioning which may result in constitution of a consistent and explanatory account.³¹⁷ I suppose, in

³¹⁷ Gulley claims that “...there are two stages in the recollection: (a) the 'stirring up' (ἀνακινέειν: 85c9) of true opinions, which are innate (85c4, 6; 86a7), (b) the conversion of these to knowledge

the *Phaedo*, Plato reasons out this understanding much more lucidly and technically:

(101d) And if anyone attacked the principle (*ὑποθέσεως* - *hypothesemos*), you would pay him no attention and you would not reply to him until you had examined the consequences to see whether they agreed with one another or not (*συμφωνεῖ ἢ διαφωνεῖ*)³¹⁸; and when you had to give an explanation of the principle (*διδόναι λόγον* - *didonai logos*), you would give it in the same way by assuming some other principle (*ὑπόθεσιν ὑποθέμενος*)³¹⁹ which seemed to you the best of the higher ones, and so on until you reached one which was adequate. You would not mix things up, as disputants (*ἀντιλογικοὶ*)³²⁰ do, in talking about the beginning and its consequences (*περὶ τε τῆς ἀρχῆς διαλεγόμενος καὶ τῶν ἐξ ἐκείνης ὠρμημένων* – *peri te tos archos dialegosmenos kai tos ekeinos ormemenon*), if you wished to discover any of the realities; for perhaps not one of them thinks or cares in the least about these things.

In fact, what soul “*has seen all and learned both in here and in the other world*” is unbound things which are apart from each other. Then, the duty to inquire is to connect them in a correct sequence and create a whole body *dialectically*.³²¹ In those respects, Socrates' epistemology in the *Meno* does not relies only on acquaintance with the object; yet it also involves construction “*from a supposition*” that of which will be more clearly

(98a, etc.). It systematic questioning which initiates further process (82e5, 84c11 – d2; 85c10, d3; 86a7).” (1954, p.194).

³¹⁸ “*Sumphonei or didaphonei*” may be translated as “*harmony or discord*” similar to relation of musical notes to each other, which I suppose requires a consistent and logical structure.

³¹⁹ hypothesizing another hypothesis

³²⁰ Note that *antilogokoi* also stands for contradiction of arguments. That is, Plato may also mean “*forming an inconsistent manifold due to jumbling the arguments together.*”

³²¹ Scott also claims that reality is structured. This structure is in our soul, and hence we can recollect the items in a true sequence to form a “*true belief.*” He says; “*The holding of this belief is not experienced atomistically: that is the point of 81c9-d3, where each recollected belief comes with an associative link (however indistinctly felt leading us on to the next stage in the process of re-discovery. Gradually we extend our network of true beliefs, increasing the number of explanatory inter-connections.*” (2007, pp.129-30).

put forward by the application of second geometry problem.³²²

³²² Zuckert simply, but not weakly, encapsulates the several co-existent essentialness of wisdom for Socrates; she says that “[P]ractical wisdom cannot be acquired merely by practice; nor does it arise spontaneously by nature. It seems to require ‘a good nature and capacity, some education, suitable associates, experience and practice, as well as the proper occasion or circumstances.’” (2009, p.582) I suppose those reasons are latent to the Platonic corpus “to parapan,” yet they need to be revealed.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Hitherto, I have tried to show the common characteristics of the early dialogues and middle dialogues, and the peculiarity of the *Meno* among them. In this respect, I claim that any systematic examination of arguments or a theory cannot be found in the early dialogues, that is; the elenctic dialogues contains moral aspirations of Socrates without proposing any method of investigation explicitly. On the other hand, if the widely accepted chronology of dialogue is more or less accurate, Plato begins to present a theoretical framework in the *Meno*, that is; the dialogues dated after the *Meno* depicts Plato's own philosophical examinations in comparison to the portrayal of Socrates' conversations with his friends and interlocutors—yet the historical accuracy of Socrates in Plato's dialogues is still debatable - in the dialogues before the *Meno*. In fact, I suppose the *Meno* is an all-covering exemplar. The elements proposed as a theory of knowledge can be applied for constituting the coherence within the early and middle dialogues. In other words, the structure of the book is akin to the schemata of the dialogues themselves. I also believe that slave-boy's recollection as a minor model which implies the coherence of the dialogues.

According to model above, I suppose the early dialogues can correspond to slave boy's recollection to some extent. In those dialogues, (1) Socrates does not claim

to have knowledge, he just has true opinions. (2) Socrates starts the inquiry with some true opinions. (3) Socrates shows that the interlocutor's belief system is inconsistent, he has false beliefs. (4) The interlocutor falls into *aporia*.³²³ Nevertheless, the dialogue ends at this point. Unlike slave boy's motivation to continue searching, they give up. Even so, the dialogues are not blank, they involve true opinions.

In the *Laches*, Nicias claims that the Socratic examination leads to a complete perplexity; one cannot give account for his arguments. Nor does he escape from intense questioning. Yet, Nicias does not have a negative approach to this procedure; he believes that it is beneficial:

(187e-188a) You strike me as not being aware that, whoever comes into close contact with Socrates and has any talk with him face to face, is bound to be drawn round and round by him in the course of the argument (*βασανίση* - *basanise*)³²⁴—though it may have started at first on a quite different theme—and cannot stop until he is led into giving an account of himself (*διδόναι περὶ αὐτοῦ λόγον* – *didonai peri autos logos*), of the manner in which he now spends his days, and of the kind of life he has lived hitherto; and when once he has been led into that, Socrates will never let him go until he has thoroughly and properly put all his ways to the test.

I suppose the crucial point indicated by Nicias is the impossibility “*giving an account*” for arguments. In fact, in the *Meno* and the dialogues after it, Plato presents a method to give account and to explain; i.e.; *aitias logismos*.

³²³ Wolfsdorf perfectly notes that early dialogues, *aporetic* or *non-aporetic*, have a “*pedagogical function*,” that is; they lead to replacement of “*conventional or traditional*” conceptions with “*unconventional Socratic-Platonic*” ideals. (2004, p.21)

³²⁴ “*of persons, examine closely, cross-question.*” Aristotle refers to “*scientific investigation.*”

More importantly, I assume that the *Meno* also depicts the coherence between the early and the middle dialogues. That is to say, the distinction between *doxa* and *episteme* in the *Meno* corresponds to the epistemological structure of the early and middle dialogues, in fact, I suppose the early dialogues have affinity to *doxa*, thereunto the middle dialogues are symmetrical to *episteme*.³²⁵

Henceforth, I suppose the *Meno* is a “hypothesis” itself. That is, the book corresponds to the “hypothetical method.” One can take the method proposed in the *Meno* as a point of origin to attain knowledge. One can gain knowledge on a subject lacking of tangible definition (such as second geometry problem in the *Meno* or virtue) by means of making assumptions and construct his solution on those provisional definitions.

Moreover, I would like to consider the slave boy demonstration in respect to Euclid's Elements:

(i) definition of the square (82c1): by definition Book.I.XXX. A lozenge which has a right angle is called a square.

Note that Socrates does not mention “right angle,” yet he draws it.

³²⁵ According to Karasmanis; “*Scholars usually divide the Meno into two main parts: (a) 70-9 and (b) 80 to the end.*” He adds that part (a) is similar to early dialogues, while part (b) involves the framework of the middle dialogues. (2007, p.129) Karasmanis refers to following works of the scholars who are in favor of this view: Bluck (1961), Robinson (1953), Sharples (1985), Friedlander (1964), Irwin (1996), Thomas (1980).

- (ii) dividing the 4-foot square to equal four squares by book I. axiom I: Things which are equal to the same, or to equals, are equal to each other and axiom IX': The whole is equal to the sum of all its parts. Socrates also uses book I postulate I: A right line may be drawn from any one point to any other point. (82c3-4)
- (iii) Slave-boy presents two false solutions between 82d-84a, and he fall into *aporia*.
- (iv) Socrates builds a 16-foot square by joining four 4-squares by axiom I, II: If equals be added to equals the sums will be equal and axiom ix' (84d3-e9)
- (v) Socrates draw the “diagonals” to each 4-foot square without “naming” diagonals by axiom iii. If equals be taken from equals the remainders will be equal and axiom VII: The halves of equal magnitudes are equal. (85a-85b5)
- (vi) Solution of the problem: Socrates names diagonals, but he does not define what a diagonal is like in proposition 47: In right-angled triangles the square on the side opposite the right angle equals the sum of the squares on the sides containing the right angle. (85b6-8)
- (vii) Slave boy will attain knowledge when he can explain the relation of all terms involved in the solution.³²⁶

Consequently, I suppose that *aitias logismos* coincide with Plato's middle

³²⁶ He also should know the essential nature of the terms. *Axioms* are certain general propositions, the truths of which are self-evident, and which are so fundamental, that they cannot be inferred from any propositions which are more elementary; in other words, they are incapable of demonstration. *Propositions* which are not axioms are properties of figures obtained by processes of reasoning. They are divided into theorems and problems. I suppose axioms loosely correspond to innate true beliefs by *anamnesis* whereas propositions are slightly similar to knowledge attained by *aitias logismos*.

dialogues where he intends to establish a logical system.³²⁷ There are several passages about *aitias logismos*:

Men. 98a. For true opinions, as long as they remain, are a fine thing and all they do is good, but they are not willing to remain long, and they escape from a man's mind, so that they are not worth much until one ties them down by (giving) an account of the reason why.

Phd. 76b. A man who has knowledge would be able to give an account of what he knows...

Rep. 531e. But did it ever seem to you that those who can neither give nor follow an account know anything at all of the things we say they must know? - My answer to that is also no. That is to say, he tries to explain the moral arguments presented in the early dialogues.

On the other hand, the inconclusive end of the *Meno* points the benefit of cross-examination:

(100b) It follows from this reasoning, Meno, that virtue appears to be present in those of us who may possess it as a gift from the gods. We shall have clear knowledge of this when, before we investigate how it comes to be present in men, we first try to find out what virtue in itself is. But now the time has come for me to go. You convince your guest friend Anytus here of these very things of which you have yourself been convinced, in order that he may be more amenable. If you succeed, you will also confer a benefit upon the Athenians.

The slave boy and Plato *himself* -since Socrates drank hemlock three years after his conversation with Meno in respect to *dramatic dates*- have to continue

³²⁷ In the *Theaetetus*, 201c-210b, Socrates rejects four options that "knowledge is true opinion accompanied by logos." Hicken (1957, p.48) claims; Socrates, in the early dialogues, associates knowledge with "*logos echein or logos didonai dunathai*." Nevertheless, Runciman opposes this view, he says; "*There is no evidence, except, perhaps, a single passage of the Meno, that he [Plato] ever supposed the simple addition of logos to be adequate to convert true opinion to knowledge.*" He adds that "*dosai aitas logismo need not to be equivalent to logos didonai*", since "*aitias logismos is explicitly stated to mean anamnesis*" (1967, pp.8-9). Like Runciman, I believe that logos is closely associated with "investigation of knowledge" in all stages of Plato's writings.

investigating to unveil the nature of things. They have to put forth “*reasoning out an explanation*” for the memory of Socrates: Plato, I suppose, feels obliged to take the philosophy of Socrates further, since he cannot persuade the accusers not to execute Socrates himself.

I believe the *Meno* is the *magnum opus* of Platonic corpus, since the schema of Socratic-Platonic philosophical practice is *demonstrated* in a broad systematic form, that is; the Dialogue offers us an understanding for background of Platonic project. Indeed, the notions suggested in the *Meno*, such as the *Elenchus*, Priority of Definition, Dialectical Requirement, Innateness, *Hypothesis*, and *Aitias Logismos*, determines the structure of investigation for the subsequent dialogues as well as allowing us to differ the Socratic and Platonic philosophy.

Moreover, I suppose the hypothetical method and reasoning out an explanation intuitively, if not systematically, indicates the axiomatic theory of knowledge in respect to connecting various “true beliefs” as logical manifold and to searching unknown objects by means of making assumptions.³²⁸

In conclusion, the presentation of new philosophical aspects is not logically determined, on the contrary, Plato's development in the *Meno* as well as in and between other dialogues is a dialectical progress. In conclusion, I think that Plato cannot be understood properly unless the connection between dialogues is established in respect to dramatic, stylistic, epistemological, metaphysical, social,

³²⁸ According to Agashe, two purposes of axiomatic method is: (i) *organization of knowledge*, which is creating a body of knowledge or *systematizing* a discipline by *discovering* the connection of seemingly “*unrelated truths*” (ii) *discovering unknown causes*, which is discovery, or *derivation*, of unknown and undefined terms by defining in respect to a set of defined “*body of knowledge*” (1985, pp.8-9).

political, and even psychological parameters. I suppose this composite and complex structure is the reason why “*all western philosophy is a footnote to Plato*” as Whitehead says.

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APPENDIX I



TEZ FOTOKOPİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

YAZARIN

Soyadı : Seferoğlu

Adı : Tonguç

Bölümü : Felsefe

TEZİN ADI : THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MENO ON THE TRANSITION FROM
THE EARLY TO THE MIDDLE PLATONIC DIALOGUES

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans

Tezimin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılsın ve kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla
tezimin bir kısmı veya tamamının fotokopisi alınsın.

İmza

29/05/2012