

PLATO'S EUTHYPHRO & MENO  
TUTORIAL READING  
AND ESSAYS

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## INTRODUCTION

### READING

Generally the reading is given in the order in which I'd suggest reading it. Usually I assign relatively little reading, but it's really important that you read it all: if you leave any out, you're likely to have a gap in your understanding of the topic that will make it very difficult to answer the essay question. (Note also that for the vast majority of papers, reading them once is not enough: there are very few papers that I could understand after one reading.) By all means let me know if there's any week in which you think I've assigned too much (or too little) reading.

### ESSAY

Your essays should be around 2000 words; that's about four single spaced pages. A little more or less is fine, but keep it under 2500 words. When you email your essay to me, *cc everyone else in your tutorial group*. And be sure to read and think about your tutorial peers' essays. Email your essay to me by 3 PM the day before the tutorial (unless I specify another time). If it's later than this, I might not get a chance to read it.

Please pay close attention to the following pieces of advice, especially 1 and 2. They try to cater for the most common and most easily solved problems I find in students' essays.

- 1 *Explain*. In short: explain *everything*. It should be possible for an intelligent peer who hasn't studied philosophy to understand your essay without needing to look up the words you use or read the authors you're writing about. So, for example: if you use a technical term or mention a concept that has particular significance for an author, make absolutely sure you clearly define/explain it; similarly, for any argument or position you discuss, you must clearly explain this argument or position to your reader. This is partly because good academic writing should be easily understood, but this is not the only or even the main reason. Rather, your ability to explain the ideas you're discussing—clearly, precisely, and succinctly—is one of the principal things you're being assessed on. You might well know, say, what a categorical imperative is, but you need to *show* that you know it and how precisely you know it. Explaining even small, simple ideas well is a lot harder than you might think; don't underestimate how important it is, and how much work it takes.
- 2 *Justify*. Assume that for every claim you make, the reader is asking 'why should I believe that?' In a philosophy essay, there should always be an excellent answer to this question. You should consider this to be, above all else, your aim when writing an essay. The worst thing you can do is to make bold assertions without defending them, and the second worst is to make bold assertions and defend them weakly. Note that this includes interpretive claims: if you write 'Plato believes that p', you need to show your reader, perhaps by giving a supporting

quote, that this is indeed something Plato believes.

*A bad essay:* ‘p!’

*A good essay:* ‘For reasons x, y, and z, it seems that p.’

*An excellent essay:* ‘Reasons x, y, and z give us good grounds for thinking that p, although someone might offer an objection along the following lines ... However, I think there is a promising response to this objection ...’

- 3 *Use headings.* Before you start writing, sketch a structure for your essay. When writing, use headings that reflect this structure. A typical essay might have 2–4 headings.
- 4 *First understand, then assess.* Be careful not to rush into criticisms of what you read before you’ve fully understood it. Approach everything you read with charity. That is, assume (since it is likely) that the author has thought intelligently and carefully about what they’ve written, so is unlikely to have made simple, obvious mistakes. For example, if you notice a *prima facie* objection to something you’re reading, read it again carefully to see if there’s a way to understand it that avoids the objection or try to think of a plausible implicit assumption the author might have made that caters for the objection.
- 5 *Ensure your conclusions reflect your arguments.* You might have been taught that strong, persuasive prose requires confident assertions, rather than hesitant, qualified ones. This is not the case in philosophy: your assertions should reflect the actual degree of confidence that is warranted by the evidence you’ve provided. Decisive arguments are rare—even rarer are decisive arguments in just a few lines of a student’s essay. So be very careful not to mistake considerations that give us a good reason for believing that p for an argument that conclusively proves that p. A good essay is likely to have a large range of (appropriate) qualifying phrases: ‘this shows decisively that p’; ‘this is a very strong reason to believe that p’; ‘this suggests that p’; ‘this makes it less implausible that p’; and so forth.
- 6 *Use quotes.* Especially in historical subjects, including quotes from the relevant primary texts can be an excellent way to illustrate, justify, and give some focus to your discussion. One way (of many ways) to use a quote would be the following: make a claim; present a quote that you think backs up the claim; and then explain and interpret the text of the quote in order to show that and why it backs up your claim. (Two cautions: first, quotes from secondary sources are often less useful; second, avoid using a quote as a way of *saying* something; rather, a quote should play the role of evidence *about which* you have something to say.)
- 7 *Go from general to particular.* The topics we’ll look at are very broad. One could reasonably spend years writing hundreds of pages about them—you only have a few pages and one week. This presents a challenge: on the one hand, you want to cover the whole topic, showing that you’re familiar with all the major issues that arise; on the other hand, you want to do more than simply scratch the surface, never looking at any issue in detail. This can be a difficult balance to achieve, but in general it is much better to *err on the side of detail*. A good approach might be to devote about the first third or half of your essay to a more general discussion of the essay topic and then use the last half or two-thirds to examine one

or two smaller points in much greater detail—you might, for example, focus on one argument, premise, or objection that you think is especially important or interesting.

#### SOME BASICS OF TYPOGRAPHY

The following are a few typographic conventions worth learning:

- 1 *Indent paragraphs.* But do not indent the opening paragraph of the document or the first paragraph after a section heading. You may instead—not in addition—separate paragraphs with a blank line, although this is better suited to list-like texts, such as legal documents, than continuous prose.
- 2 *Use single line spacing.* It's easier to read. Double spacing is only necessary when a printed copy of your work will be annotated.
- 3 *A footnote mark is always placed after punctuation.*<sup>1</sup> It is almost always best to place a footnote at the end of the sentence, *after* the sentence-ending full stop, even if you are referring to something earlier in the sentence. Avoid consecutive footnotes; instead, place all information in one footnote if possible.
- 4 *Indicate quotes with either quotation marks or by using a block quote.* Extra flourishes, such as italicising, are unnecessary. And never place a block quote within quotation marks.
- 5 *Learn the difference between a hyphen (-), en-dash (–), and em-dash (—).* Use an en-dash like 'to' in ranges of dates or numbers (e.g. 87–142) and to express certain relationships between words: for example, an 'on–off switch' or 'Irish–American relations'. Either an en- or em-dash can be used to indicate a parenthetical phrase. If you use an en-dash, add a space either side – like so – but em-dashes are always unspaced—like so.
- 6 *Make ellipses with three full stops separated by spaces.* Like this . . . , with a space either side. You will most commonly use an ellipsis to indicate portions of text that you've omitted from quotes. Don't omit any sentence-ending full stops that precede an ellipsis (i.e. together they make four stops). For example:

[P]articulate care needs to be exercised when eliding text to ensure that the sense of the original is not lost . . . A deletion must not result in a statement alien to the original material. . . . Accuracy of sense and emphasis must accompany accuracy of transcription. (CMS, 16th, 13.49)

- 7 *Use a single space after full-stops.* A double space, once common, is now rightly recognised as unnecessary.

#### REFERENCING

In your essays you should reference both quotes and claims or arguments that originate from one of the authors you've been reading. You should also have a bibliography of all the works you've referred to in the text.

1. This includes full stops, commas, colons, semi-colons, and quotation marks.

You can use whatever bibliographical style you choose, so long as it's consistent. The following is an example of a typical author-year referencing style, starting with what the bibliography will look like:

**Book:** Author (Year) *Title*, Place: Publisher.

Fine, G. (1993) *On Ideas*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Freeman, S. (ed.) (2003) *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Article:** Author (Year) 'Title', *Journal*, Volume, pp. Pages.

Irwin, T.H. (1977) 'Plato's Heracleiteanism', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 27, pp. 1–13.

**Article in book:** Author (Year) 'Article Title' in Editor(s) (ed(s)). *Book Title*, Place: Publisher.

Scanlon, T.M. (2003) 'Rawls on Justification' in S. Freeman (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

**In-text citation:** (Author, Year, Page(s))

It has been argued that the charge of conservatism laid against Rawls' idea of reflective equilibrium is unsound (Scanlon, 2003, pp. 150–151).

Scanlon argues that the charge of conservatism laid against Rawls' reflective equilibrium is unsound (2003, pp. 150–151).

## PLAGIARISM

The university guidelines are here: [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/plagiarism](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/plagiarism). From the college regulations:

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work without acknowledgement as if it were your own. Typically, this involves copying an essay from another student or from the Internet, or copying passages from a book without quotation marks and a clear page reference. It is a very serious offence to plagiarise someone else's work, and there are serious academic penalties which may include the offender being sent down from the College and the University. ... Please also be aware that poor academic work practices, such as copying sections directly from academic articles into your notes for information, might lead to unintentional plagiarism, but that this unintentional offence will still be dealt with severely by the University as 'reckless' plagiarism.

Two good reasons not to plagiarise. 1. I'll spot it. It's really easy. 2. If you think about it, there is really no advantage to plagiarising an essay, just serious disadvantage if you're caught. The most you'll gain, if you're lucky, is to make me believe that you wrote an essay when you didn't—but why would you care what I believe? If you genuinely can't write an essay for whatever reason, try to write part of an essay, some notes, or—in the worst case—nothing.

Some advice on philosophy gobbets. Gobbets in the original language are usually something like fifteen lines; gobbets in translation tend to be shorter, usually between one to five lines. Most of the following advice applies to longer gobbets, since this is where one's approach will differ most significantly from standard essay questions—a one-line gobbet is often more or less the same as a mini essay question.

There isn't one right way to approach gobbet commentaries. It depends a great deal on the gobbet in question, as well as the kind of approach that you're most comfortable with. But the following approach is at least a pretty good place to start and can be applied to most gobbets:

*Step 1: Context.* In an opening paragraph, begin by briefly—often just a line or two—giving the context of the passage. Importantly, this does not mean stating where in the text the passage occurs or what is said immediately before or after. What we are looking for is the *philosophical* context: e.g. what argument is the passage a part of and what contribution does it make to this argument?

*Step 2: Preliminaries.* Briefly outline anything one would need to know to understand the passage. E.g. if a Plato gobbet mentions the appetitive part of the soul, it might be a good idea to outline—succinctly—Plato's tripartite psychology and what is distinctive about the appetitive part. If the passage presents an argument (not all gobbets do), this might be the right place to summarise the argument. Note, however, that this should never amount to simply repeating what the passage says. Rather, it should be an interpretive summary that makes explicit and clear your view of the structure of the argument, which will often be far from obvious at first glance. Sometimes it is useful to formalise the argument:  $P_1, P_2, \text{ therefore } C$ . And be sure to think about whether the argument has any implicit premises: these can be a good basis for discussion for step 3. Finally, this might also be a good place to mention what you're *not* going to discuss. You might notice, for example, that there are three or four important questions that the passage raises. Naturally, you can't discuss them all in a short gobbet, but it is good to show that you're aware of them and maybe also to explain why you're going to focus on the particular question or questions you do plan to address.

*Step 3: Your argument.* So far, you'll have written only one or two paragraphs. The bulk of your commentary should be a more detailed discussion of the interpretive/philosophical issues that the passage raises. Be very careful not to make too many individual points: a detailed discussion of one point is far better than a long list of smaller, less well-established points. You'll have time to look at, say, one or two separate issues—at most three. Also keep in mind—this is really important—that you're being asked to discuss the passage you are given, not to engage in a general discussion of broader issues that the passage raises. For example, if the passage is part of a larger argument, you shouldn't discuss this larger argument and the issues it raises without making the gobbet passage central; rather, your discussion should directly concern the gobbet passage's contribution to the larger argument. As to the kind of points you'll make, a good strategy is to do either or both of the following:

- (a) Give, where possible, a close textual reading of the passage (this is easiest

with longer passages, especially if your doing a gobbet in the original language). Perhaps the passage has two possible readings one has to decide between, uses a metaphor or analogy that needs careful explication, or has a difficult sentence that needs to be deciphered. These are just examples: a detailed look at a passage will bring up many surprises. The important thing is that you carefully engage with the text, showing that you realise that even a few lines can give rise to many interpretive difficulties. (But note that, unlike other gobbets in Classics, the aim is not to discuss the language for its own sake: you are looking for textual points that have a significant impact on the philosophical point of the passage.)

(b) Treat the passage like a mini-question, inviting a concise but convincing discussion of some philosophical question or puzzle the passage raises. Perhaps you could give a careful exposition of one of the claims the passage makes, together with either some reasons the author might have for believing the claim or a good objection to it. The trick is to find the right question for the passage. For example, if an Aristotle gobbet mentions virtue, that does not necessarily mean that you can treat it as a question about what Aristotle thought virtue is: be sure to keep your discussion specific to the point the passage is making.

Depending on the passage, either (a) or (b) or both might be appropriate. Often—and this is often the best kind of answer—the textual issues of (a) will serve as a basis for the mini-question of (b).

## WEEK 1: SOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY

Quite a lot of reading this week: I'd suggest reading 1–3 over the break, and 4–5 in term. The Brickhouse & Smith is long, but it's also a pretty easy and an incredibly helpful read. Especially helpful is their discussion of interpretive methods in the introduction—read this carefully and keep an eye on how they put this into practice in later chapters.

The aim this week is to get an overview of what Socrates is trying to do in the early dialogues, focusing in particular on the *Euthyphro*. What is Socrates' method? Why does he seek definitions of ethical concepts? And what kind of definition is he looking for?

### READING:

- 1 P. Woodruff, 'Plato's Shorter Ethical Works' *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
- 2 Plato's *Apology*, *Euthyphro*, & *Meno*
- 3 T. Brickhouse & N. Smith, *The Philosophy of Socrates* (Westview Press: Oxford, 2000), up to chapter 5 [though you would benefit from reading the whole book]
- 4 H. Benson, 'Socratic Method' in D. Morrison (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates* (CUP: Cambridge, 2011) 179–200
- 5 P. Geach, 'Plato's *Euthyphro*: An Analysis and Commentary' *Monist* 50 (1966) 369–382

### TO THINK ABOUT:

There's no essay this week, but think about the following:

- 1 Two concepts that are very important in Socratic philosophy are ἀρετή and ευδαιμονία. Do these words mean what we mean by 'virtue' and 'happiness', respectively? If not, in what ways do they differ?
- 2 What is the so-called Socratic 'elenchus'? Is it a merely a destructive method? Or can it lead to positive epistemic or ethical results?
- 3 As you read the *Euthyphro*, mark each of Euthyphro's definitions of piety in the text. For each definition think about why it fails to satisfy Socrates. What would Socrates consider a successful definition of piety? And why does Socrates think it is important to find such a definition?

## WEEK 2: SOCRATES' SEARCH FOR DEFINITIONS

This week we take a closer look at one putative problem with Socrates' demand for definitions. Socrates claims that Euthyphro cannot know whether his action is pious until he knows what piety is and, similarly, he claims that he and Meno cannot know whether virtue is teachable until they know what virtue is. We might generalise these claims as follows: (1) If one does not know what  $F$  is, one cannot know for any  $x$  whether  $x$  is an instance of  $F$  and (2) If one does not know what  $F$  is, then one cannot know whether  $F$  has a property  $P$ . At least a first glance, both (1) and (2) seem to be false—last week, you might have noticed that Geach labelled this the 'Socratic Fallacy'. Is Socrates really committed to (1) and (2)? If he is, do they really commit him to a fallacy?

### READING:

- 1 *Euthyphro*
- 2 *Meno* 70A–80E & 86D–87E
- 3 P. Geach, 'Plato's *Euthyphro*: An Analysis and Commentary' *Monist* 50 (1966) 369–382 [This week look in particular at pp. 370–372.]
- 4 T. Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (OUP: Oxford, 1995), sections 12–18 & 88–91
- 5 T. Brickhouse and N. Smith, *The Philosophy of Socrates* (Westview Press: Oxford, 2000), chapter 3

### Optional reading:

- 6 D. Wolfsdorf, 'The Socratic Fallacy and the Epistemological Priority of Definitional Knowledge' *Apeiron* 31 (2011) 35–68 [A very thorough examination of the Socratic Fallacy, with good summaries of the various positions commentators have taken.]

### ESSAY:

How should we understand Socrates' claim that until one knows what piety is one cannot know whether or not one's action is pious, or that until one knows what virtue is one cannot know whether or not it's teachable? Are these claims fallacious?

### WEEK 3: THE PIOUS AND THE GOD-LOVED

This week we look at *Euthyphro* 7A–11B, where we find an influential argument that is still used—in various forms—against theories that identify morality with God’s will.

#### READING

- 1 *Euthyphro* 9D–11B [Take a look at the Greek too]
- 2 S. Cohen, ‘Socrates on the Definition of Piety: *Euthyphro* 10A–11B’ *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 9 (1971) 1–13
- 3 J.L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Penguin 1977), pp. 229–232

#### EXERCISE:

Before reading Cohen or Mackie, carefully read *Euthyphro* 9D–11B and try to figure out what Socrates’ argument is here. Write out your reading of the argument formally (P<sub>1</sub>, P<sub>2</sub>, ... C), setting out each premise—whether explicit or implicit—that is necessary to reach Socrates’ conclusion.

#### TO THINK ABOUT:

Could Euthyphro respond by simply biting the bullet, claiming that what makes a pious act pious is nothing over or above the fact that it is loved by all the gods? If so, how could he justify this position? If not, why not?

#### ESSAY:

Two parts; do both.

- 1) Choose a premise from Socrates’ argument at *Euthyphro* 9D–11B that you find questionable, interesting, or puzzling. What objections could be made against it? How might Socrates defend the argument against these objections?
- 2) How does the argument about the pious and the god-loved help us understand what Socrates wants from a good definition? Consider the passages in which he asks for a definition (5D, 6D–E, *Meno* 70A–80E and 86D–E), and show why Euthyphro’s definition fails to meet those standards.

## WEEK 4: ALL DESIRE IS FOR WHAT'S GOOD I

In a number of early dialogues Socrates makes some extremely interesting, and controversial, psychological claims. This week we'll be examining what the *Meno* tells us about this psychological theory and how it relates to Socrates' broader philosophical beliefs.

No essay this week; the essay will be in week 5. Instead, in addition to doing the reading and thinking carefully about the topic, your main tasks are to (a) translate and comment on the gobbet below; (b) write a summary (about a page) of the argument of the *Meno*; and (c) think about ways in which this argument is similar to and different from the corresponding arguments in either the *Gorgias* or the *Protagoras*.

You have the option to choose your own essay question for week 5, so look carefully for an interesting topic that seems worthy of further investigation. At the end of this tutorial, we'll discuss your essay titles and I'll suggest some further reading.

### READING:

- 1 *Meno* 70A–79E [Read carefully, especially 77C–78B]
- 2 *Gorgias* 467C–468E [Read carefully—how is this argument similar to *Meno* 77C–78B? How is it different? Compare, in particular, 77D7–E4]
- 3 *Protagoras* 351B–END [Read carefully]
- 4 C. Bobonich 'Socrates and Eudaimonia' in *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, 293–332 [An excellent introduction to Socratic psychology—longish, but also easy to read.]
- 5 D. Scott *Plato's Meno* (CUP: Cambridge, 2006), chapter 4 [Especially pp. 46–53, but read whole chapter]

### Optional reading:

- 6 T. Irwin *Plato's Ethics*, sections 97–98

### GOBBET:

Οὐκοῦν δῆλον ὅτι οὗτοι μὲν οὐ τῶν κακῶν ἐπιθυμοῦσιν, οἱ ἀγνοοῦντες αὐτά, ἀλλὰ ἐκείνων ἃ ᾤοντο ἀγαθὰ εἶναι, ἔστιν δὲ ταῦτά γε κακά· ὥστε οἱ ἀγνοοῦντες αὐτὰ καὶ οἰόμενοι ἀγαθὰ εἶναι δῆλον ὅτι τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐπιθυμοῦσιν. ἢ οὐ; (*Meno* 77D7–E4)

Translate and comment (about a page).

## WEEK 5: ALL DESIRE IS FOR WHAT'S GOOD II

### READING:

Same as last week and whatever extra reading I've recommended

### ESSAY:

Whatever question you choose; make sure, however, that the *Meno* plays prominently in your essay.

Here's an optional essay question. I'll be unimpressed if you choose it, but we'll be discussing this question in the tutorial, so do think about it even if you're not writing about it. Two parts; do both, but focus on the first.

1) Outline Socrates' argument for the claim that no one desires bad things (77C–78B). Does this argument conclude that it is psychologically impossible to desire something that we believe to be bad? Even if your answer is 'yes', be sure to find and assess the reasons why some commentators have thought it only licences a weaker conclusion.

2) More briefly: how does the psychological theory implied by 77C–78B relate to what you've learned so far about Socrates' broader philosophical and ethical views. How, for example, might it relate Socrates' view of virtue or of the importance of definitional knowledge?

## WEEK 6: MENO'S PARADOX & RECOLLECTION

### READING

- 1 *Meno* 79E–86B & 97D–98A
- 2 *Phaedo* 72E–84B & *Phaedrus* 245C–249D [Two statements of the theory of recollection]
- 3 T. Irwin *Plato's Ethics*, sections 92–95 [Reading all of chapter 9 would be excellent preparation for the next few week's topics]
- 4 G. Fine 'Inquiry in the *Meno*' in R Kraut (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (CUP: Cambridge, 1992), 200–226

### Optional reading:

- 5 D. Scott *Plato's Meno* (CUP: Cambridge, 2006), chapter 6 and 7 [Useful on both the paradox and the role of recollection; Scott has written on recollection for many years.]
- 6 A. Nehamas 'Meno's Paradox and Socrates as a Teacher', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 3 (1985), 1–30; reprinted in J. Day, *Plato's Meno in Focus*

### TO THINK ABOUT:

Meno comes up with three rhetorical questions. What are these three questions, and what answers are they expecting? What is the difference in meaning between the three questions?

How do the second and third questions relate to the first (clue: the word *gar* in the Greek at 80D6, meaning 'for' or 'because', which some translations omit)?

Which of the three rhetorical questions 'states' Meno's paradox? Or do all three?

What is Socrates' reformulated paradox (80E1–5)? (Again note the *gar* in the Greek at 80E3)

Does Socrates' reformulation differ in significant ways from Meno's statement?

Why does Meno's paradox count as a paradox? Consider the meaning of the word 'paradox', making clear the definition you're working with.

### ESSAY:

What is Socrates' response to Meno's paradox? Does it succeed?

## WEEK 7: KNOWLEDGE AND TRUE BELIEF

A common modern definition of knowledge is ‘justified, true belief’. A true belief falls short of knowledge, then, if it lacks adequate justification. At first glance, Socrates’ view that true belief becomes knowledge only when it is tied down by an αἰτίας λογισμός (98A) seems quite close to this modern account. This week we’ll be considering whether or not, on closer inspection, this is indeed the case.

### READING:

- 1 *Meno* 85B–86C & 96D–END
- 2 T. Irwin *Plato’s Ethics*, sections 96–103 [This will also help with next week’s topic]
- 3 D. Scott *Plato’s Meno* (CUP: Cambridge, 2006), chapter 14
- 4 M. Burnyeat ‘Socrates and the Jury: Paradoxes in Plato’s Distinction between Knowledge and True Belief’ *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Suppl. vol. 54 (1980) 173–191 [Burnyeat argues that Plato’s distinction is between true belief and understanding, where the latter requires more than justification (e.g. I have a justified, true belief that  $E=MC^2$  but I certainly don’t understand it)]
- 5 G. Fine ‘Knowledge and True Belief in the *Meno*’ *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 27 (Winter 2004) 41–81 [Fine argues that knowledge in the *Meno* is closer to justified, true belief than is often assumed]

### GOBBET:

SOCRATES: Τῶν ἐκείνου ποιημάτων λελυμένον μὲν ἐκτῆσθαι οὐ πολλῆς τινος ἄξιόν ἐστι τιμῆς, ὡς περ δραπέτην ἄνθρωπον—οὐ γὰρ παραμένει—δεδεμένον δὲ πολλοῦ ἄξιον· πάνυ γὰρ καλὰ τὰ ἔργα ἐστίν. πρὸς τί οὖν δὴ λέγω ταῦτα; πρὸς τὰς δόξας τὰς ἀληθεῖς. καὶ γὰρ αἱ δόξαι αἱ ἀληθεῖς, ὅσον μὲν ἂν χρόνον παραμένωσιν, καλὸν τὸ χρῆμα καὶ πάντ’ ἀγαθὰ ἐργάζονται· πολὺν δὲ χρόνον οὐκ ἐθέλουσι παραμένειν, ἀλλὰ δραπετεύουσιν ἐκ τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ὥστε οὐ πολλοῦ ἄξια εἰσιν, ἕως ἂν τις αὐτὰς δήσῃ αἰτίας λογισμῶ. τοῦτο δ’ ἐστίν, ὃ Μένων ἐταῖρε, ἀνάμνησις, ὡς ἐν τοῖς πρόσθεν ἡμῖν ὠμολόγηται. ἐπειδὴν δὲ δεθῶσιν, πρῶτον μὲν ἐπιστήμαι γίνονται, ἔπειτα μόνιμοι· καὶ διὰ ταῦτα δὴ τιμιώτερον ἐπιστήμη ὀρθῆς δόξης ἐστίν, καὶ διαφέρει δεσμῶ ἐπιστήμη ὀρθῆς δόξης. (*Meno* 97E2–98A8)

Translate and write a critical commentary (a page or so). (Think carefully about how αἰτίας λογισμῶ should be translated and what it means. You’ll find a good discussion of the phrase in Fine, pp. 55–61.)

### ESSAY:

How, if at all, does Socrates’ definition of knowledge differ from modern accounts of knowledge as ‘justified, true belief’? [Be sure to defend your view by citing and carefully interpreting the relevant passages.] If it does differ, what significance might this have for Socrates’ philosophy?

## WEEK 8: VIRTUE AS KNOWLEDGE

In a number of early dialogues we find that Socrates strongly implies that he thinks that a certain kind of knowledge is necessary and sufficient for virtue. In the *Meno* this view is ostensibly rejected on the grounds that if virtue is knowledge, then it is teachable—but there are no teachers of virtue. Our first question, then, is whether or not we should take this rejection seriously. And if not, how not?

Second, how should we understand the claim that virtue is knowledge? Is it plausible? And how might it relate to Socrates' other views? Consider in particular the claims that, first, virtue is good and, second, that we desire, and only desire, good things.

### READING:

- 1 *Meno* 86C–96D
- 2 *Laches* 194C–201C, *Gorgias* 466A–479D, & *Protagoras* 352A–362A
- 3 T. Irwin *Plato's Ethics*, sections 96–103 [Same as last week—read again]
- 4 D Devereux 'Nature and Teaching in Plato's *Meno*' *Phronesis* 23 (1978) 118–126
- 5 K. Wilkes 'Conclusions in the *Meno*' *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 61 (1979) 143–153

### ESSAY:

What conclusion, if any, does Socrates reach about virtue in the *Meno*? Does he reject the thesis that virtue is knowledge? Should he reject it?