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Meno's Paradox and Anamnesis.

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Statutory Declaration

I declare that I have written this Bachelor Diploma Paper, Meno's Paradox and Anamnesis, myself and on my own. I have duly referenced and quoted all the material and sources that I used in it. This Paper has not yet been submitted to obtain any degree.

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Abstract:

In one of the dialogues Socrates' interlocutor Meno is raising a set of serious questions, whether inquiry into something is possible if one doesn't know at all what it is. Socrates' reformulates those questions into the dilemma whether one does or doesn't know that which one is inquiring into, inquiry is impossible. The Meno's challenge and Socrates' dilemma happened to be known as Meno's paradox. In the same dialogue Socrates' introduces the theory of recollection, according to which we all have immortal souls that knew some range of things prenatally. Since recollection is possible, so too are inquiry and learning. It is generally supposed that theory of recollection solves the dilemma and answers Meno's questions. However, for some authors this explanation doesn't seem that obvious. I will try to answer why Socrates introduces theory of recollection and if it could be taken as the answer to the Meno's Paradox.

Keywords: knowledge, true belief, epistemology, Meno's paradox, theory of recollection, inquiry, Socrates' dilemma, foreknowledge principle, learning as recollection, priority of definition.

Content

Introduction.	1
Synopsis of Meno	2
The Myth.	4
Principle of Priority of definition	6
Foreknowledge Principle.....	7
Problem of discovery.....	9
Meno's Paradox.	11
Meno's challenge (80d5-8).	11
Eristic dilemma.....	13
Differences.	14
Theory of recollection and eristic dilemma	15
Second reading of M3 and Problem of discovery.	17
Interpretations.	18
Scott's version.	18
Fine's version. The Myth.	19
Geometrical discussion.	21
Knowledge which the boy has (Fine's interpretation)	23
Conclusion.	25
References.....	27

Introduction.

We routinely assume that we can inquire but are we right to do so. ? If so, what explains the possibility of inquiry and of successful inquiry? If, on the other hand, inquiry, or successful inquiry, is not possible, why is that? These questions are explored in Plato's Meno. It is a remarkable philosophical work. Perhaps its most significant claim to fame is the theory of recollection introduced in three stages. However, it also covers a sheer breadth of topics like virtue, definition, philosophical method, education, the origins of knowledge, the immortality of the soul, Athenian politics, and the distinction between knowledge and true belief.

After three unsuccessful attempts to define virtue, Meno makes three famous questions (Meno's challenge): *"But how will you inquire into this, Socrates, when you don't at all know what it is? For what sort of thing, from among those you don't know, will you put forward as the thing you're inquiring into? And even if you really encounter it, how will you know that this is the thing you didn't know?"* (80d5–8).

Socrates's reformulates it (Eristic dilemma): *"I understand the sort of thing you want to say, Meno. Do you see what an eristic argument you're introducing, that it's not possible for someone to inquire either into that which he knows or into that which he doesn't know? For he wouldn't inquire into that which he knows (for he knows it, and there's no need for such a person to inquire); nor into that which he doesn't know (for he doesn't even know what he'll inquire into)"* (80e1–5).

The puzzle, which Meno puts forward and Socrates repeats at 80D-E, is usually referred to as Meno's Paradox¹. A paradox about impossibility of inquiry: if you know what you are looking for, inquiry is unnecessary; if you don't know what you are looking for inquiry is impossible; hence inquiry is unnecessary or impossible.

Meno's paradox actually contains two separate paradoxes: identified by Scott (1995) as the paradox of inquiry and the paradox of discovery. The paradox of inquiry, asks how one can search for what one does not know. The second paradox is asking, how new discoveries can be made and verified. Later Socrates introduces theory of recollection which is supposed to provide answers to Meno's questions and explain how inquiry is possible. However, there are

¹ However, this label has been criticized. It has been argued that Meno raises questions, but questions aren't paradox(Moline,1969); that paradox in singular is misleading because Meno raises two paradoxes: one about inquiry, another about discovery (Scott, 2005). It also sometimes called "learners paradox" (Moravcsik, Learning as Recollection).

certain reasons so suppose that theory of recollection is not necessary to disarm eristic dilemma or explain how inquiry is possible.

In this thesis I will try to answer, why Socrates introduces theory of recollection and what solution it provides in response to Meno's paradox. I will mostly rely on the interpretation of D.Scott and G.Fine, who did some serious research on Plato's philosophy and anamnesis. Scott is trying to show that theory of recollection is not necessary for paradox of inquiry but is important for paradox of discovery.

First, I will explain the principle of priority of definition and foreknowledge principle, which are important in the context of Meno's Paradox. Second, analyze problems behind Meno's challenge and eristic dilemma. Third, point out reasons why theory of recollection is not necessary for solving the dilemma. Fourth, explain how theory of recollection solves the problem of discovery. Fifth, compare Fine's and Scott's interpretation in order to give the logical and complete answer to the main question.

By answering the main question of the thesis, I will also have to go through another question, whether knowledge is required for inquiry and discovery, which becomes crucial to the main topic. Along the way, I will be comparing interpretations of G.Fine and D.Scott, who have completely different views on the role that theory of recollection is playing in this dialogue.

Synopsis of Meno

In the dialogue, Socrates is having a conversation with Meno who is a young, wealthy Thessalian and a loyal disciple of sophist Gorgias. Another interlocutor who shortly appears in 'Meno' is Anytus, who will become one of Socrates' accusers at his trial. Main characters of the dialogue are trying to answer what is ἀρετή and whether it can be acquired by teaching. Greek word ἀρετή is usually translated as virtue or excellence and often functions as the abstract noun corresponding to *agathos*, 'Good'. It also serves as generic name for a set of specific virtues like wisdom, justice, courage, temperance and piety later known as 'cardinal virtues' (Sedley, Long, 2011, p.xii). The question of how virtue is acquired had been the subject of intense debate for a long period of time. It is partly explained by political changes through

which Athens was going in that period. The change from aristocratic rule to democracy during the fifth century led to increased social mobility allowing people from non-aristocratic backgrounds to achieve high political positions. These conditions led to serious questions about nature and nurture of qualities necessary for political success. Athens became the magnet for sophists like Protagoras and Hippias, professional intellectuals who promised to equip young and ambitious men with necessary skills to achieve power. They were charging fees for teaching oratory, virtue and other useful skills.

The dialogue begins with Meno asking how virtue is acquired. To his surprise, Socrates admits that he can't answer: since he doesn't even know what virtue is, he can't know how it is acquired. Opening part (70a–79e) is concerned with the question what virtue is. According to Socrates, first, they have to know what virtue is, and only after they can proceed to another question: how it's acquired. This opening move appeals to one of the Socratic principles, usually referred to as “Priority of definition”: one can't know what something is like unless one knows what something is; one has to know what is F, to say what F is like. It is disputed however how far Socrates thinks that without a definition a term can't be understood. This issue will be discussed in the next chapters.

Meno doesn't see any problem yet, and he gives some definitions which he learned from Gorgias. In 71e–72a he describes different virtues of a man, women and a child. Socrates suggests that there should be some unifying property that entitles them all to the same name. After some argument, Meno accepts that his first try is inadequate, and offers another definition – virtue as a power to rule- which is also rejected. The third definition is the desire for fine things and ability to acquire them. After this is rejected Meno compares Socrates to a stingray or torpedo fish which “benumbs anyone who approaches and touches it” (80a). He believed he has some serious arguments which were easily destroyed. Obviously, the state of intellectual perplexity is something new and terrifying to Meno which leads him to compare Socrates to the aggressive predator which inflicts aporia to his interlocutors. Socrates agrees to accept this comparison if this is a stingray which numbs the others as much as itself. Moreover, he admits to be more numbed or perplexed than others are (80c8–9). However, he suggests that they have to seek an answer together. Meno in return asks three related questions known as Meno's challenge. Socrates's reformulates it into the dilemma.

Meno is happy to make a good argument and surprised to hear Socrates answer. Socrates proposes a theory of genuine importance, which resonates in at least two other dialogues, the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus*. Socrates replies in three stages. First, he asserts that the soul is immortal and has had many previous lives (First statement of recollection); what we call learning is actually recollection of knowledge that the soul had before. Second, to explain his words he offers one of Meno's slaves to join them. By drawing figures on the sand, he sets the boy a geometrical puzzle: initially, the boy gives some wrong answers, but after being questioned more he gives the correct one. Third, Socrates is making a serious conclusion: as he has only questioned the boy and never taught him, the answers must have been in him and that the knowledge "which he has now, he either acquired at some point or else always possessed" (85d). This is another controversial point known as Foreknowledge principle (Scott, 2005), according to which knowledge has to derive from pre-existent knowledge; hence to inquire one has to know the very thing one is inquiring into. Commentators argue whether Socrates endorses foreknowledge principle or not and what he actually meant that slave always possessed the knowledge.

There is a lot of disputes about how to interpret each of these stages and how they fit together. Another dispute about how exactly the three-stage reply responds to Meno's Paradox. Since Socrates is introducing his theory straight after the dilemma (reformulation of Meno's questions), the general point of view is that he is trying to solve it with theory of recollection. However, there are certain issues which make scholars doubt whether Socrates is honest to introduce it as a serious philosophical reply.

The Myth.

The first part of the dialogue is about definitions of virtue, epistemological principles and the paradox itself. After 81a the dialogue is experiencing a notable change: Socrates is introducing theory of recollection. Meno asks Socrates whether he finds eristic argument to be a good one. For his surprise, Socrates disagrees and proposes a doctrine which he heard from priests, priestess and poets:

"So, since the soul is immortal, has been born many times, and has seen all things both here and in the underworld, there is nothing it has not learned. So it is not at all surprising that it can recollect the things it knew before, both about virtue and other things. For since the whole of

nature is akin, and the soul has learned everything, nothing prevents one, having recalled just one thing—which people call learning—from discovering everything else for oneself, if one is brave and does not tire of inquiring. For inquiring and learning are, as a whole, recollection. So one shouldn't be persuaded by that eristic argument; for it would make us lazy, and it is pleasant for fainthearted people to hear. But this one makes them hard working and eager to inquire. Being convinced that it is true, I want to inquire with you into what virtue is"(81b-e).

I would assume that the change in the course of the dialogue might seem striking not only for Meno but for everyone who reads it for the first time. As I have mentioned, It is generally supposed that purpose of the myth is to solve Meno's paradox, and it makes sense why. According to the myth inquiry is possible; hence the conclusion of eristic argument is unsound. It also says that not only inquiry but discovery is possible as well (81d).

However, the way this doctrine appears in the dialogue raises a logical question whether Socrates is serious to rely on some religious sources. There are things about this passage that seem a little bit weird. Socrates runs through questionable ideas: the soul is immortal, been born many times, has seen all things and there is nothing the soul has not learned; it can recollect about virtue and other things; searching and learning is recollection. However, Socrates doesn't pause after each point to make sure that Meno is following him like he usually does in elenchus. It is also suspicious that Socrates is referring to something that he "has heard from wise men and women"(81a). Another question is about passage 81d "there is nothing the soul hasn't learned" as a result of her worldly and underworldly experiences. Socrates doesn't specify where exactly did soul learn about virtue; If the soul could learn about virtue during previous earthly experience, then it can learn now as well. If it is so, then purpose of recollection is undermined. Despite all these issues Meno doesn't seem to question credibility of doctrine and Socrates gets his attention.

Weiss (2001, p.63–76) suggests that theory of recollection shouldn't be seen as a serious resolution to Meno's paradox: "First, there is the sheer fact that he presents a myth, as opposed to a reasoned logos, in response to Meno's paradox. . . . Second, by presenting the myth as something he has heard, Socrates packages it to appeal to Meno, who regularly quotes approvingly the words of others. . . . Third, Socrates hints at the selfserving motive of those from whom he has heard it: the priests and priestesses who are its source endorse the myth so as to be able to give an account of their piety business. Fourth, it is unlikely that Socrates thinks

he has solid grounds for accepting the myth as true" (Weiss 2001, 64–66). Moreover, according to Weiss, Socrates doesn't really believe in theory and the only reason why he introduces it is to bring back Meno's motivation to inquire.

It is an interesting point of view. However, if Socrates didn't believe in theory of recollection at all, he probably wouldn't devote to this topic so much time. And Meno would be the only dialogue where it appears.

According to Scott's interpretation, the purpose why Socrates introduces theory is multilayered. On the one hand, he is trying to solve an epistemological problem, but on the other hand – to intrigue Meno with exotic details and make him eager to inquire. The First statement of recollection (81b-e) is full of unusual ideas and elements to catch Meno's interest.

Principle of Priority of definition

Most of Plato's dialogues start with introduction, where he gives some details about the introductory scene. "Meno" in contrast starts straight with the question which becomes the main topic: *"Can you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue is teachable? Or is it not teachable, but acquired by practice? Or is it acquired neither by practice nor by learning, but comes to people by nature or in some other way?"* (70a1–4). Being a student of Gorgias Meno got used to a straightforward model of education, where teacher acts as informant and learner memorizes whatever the teacher has to say. Socrates' approach to education is totally different: the basis lies in the theory of recollection: learning is a process of drawing on one's own internal resources rather than receiving information from outside. According to this model of education, learner is supposed to come to the right answer by answering the questions. Being true to his approach Socrates doesn't give an answer; moreover, he honestly admits that he doesn't know:

"So far am I from knowing whether it is teachable or not, that I don't even in fact know at all (parapan) what virtue is" (71a5–7). Then he explains: *"I blame myself for not knowing at all (parapan) about virtue. But if I don't know what something is, how could I know what it's like? Or do you think someone who doesn't at all know who Meno is could know whether he's handsome, wealthy, or well-born, or the opposite of these?"* (71b1–8).

This is the so-called principle of priority of definition (Scott, 2005, p.85): you cannot know what something is like without knowing what something is. If one doesn't know what x is, one cannot know anything about x. For example, in case of the main question of the dialogue, Socrates wants to know the one form (eidos, 72c7, d8) of virtue, by which everything that is virtuous is so (72c6–d1). Hence, in case of virtue, knowing what something is is knowing its essence, and this in turn revealed by its definition, which specifies the one property because of which everything that is virtuous is so (Fine, 2014, p. 35). According to this reading, priority of definition requires knowledge of what x is for any other knowledge about x; hence one can't know whether virtue is teachable if one doesn't know what virtue is; one can't know whether Meno is handsome and wealthy, if one doesn't know who Meno is. Virtue as a genus explains why specific types are virtues. To know that a particular is F, one has to have the knowledge of the form, expressed in the definition.

Foreknowledge Principle.

Another detail, which is important in the context of Meno's paradox, is the foreknowledge principle (Scott, 2005). According to this principle, successful discovery requires previous knowledge. Scott insists that Socrates endorses foreknowledge principle. This assumption is made from the following passage. After conversation with a slave boy arrives one of the most important passages or the second statement of theory of recollection (85c7–d10) where Socrates connects progress the boy has made with doctrine. This part of the dialogue is very important because it sheds more light on the theory itself, but on the other hand, it's not that straightforward and raises more contradictions among the scholars. Socrates says:

” So that he who does not know about any matters, whatever they be, may have true opinions on such matters, about which he knows nothing?

Men. Apparently.

Soc. At present, these beliefs have just been stirred up in him like in a dream. But if someone questions him about the same matters on many occasions and in many ways, you can be sure that he will end up with as exact knowledge of them as anyone.

Men. So it seems.

Soc. So without anyone having taught him, but only by being asked questions, he will recover for himself the knowledge within him?

Men. Yes.

Soc. And recovering knowledge for oneself that is in oneself – is this not recollection?

Men. Certainly.

Soc. So the knowledge that he has now—he either acquired it at some time or else always possessed it, didn't he? (85c7–d10).

Socrates aims here is to establish that we can attain knowledge by recollection. Secondly, true belief could be converted into the knowledge if one is being asked "about the same matters on many occasions and in many ways". Socrates probably means that that the same topic or problem should be questioned from different angles, depth and complexity. If it is done in such way connections between true beliefs become tied down and eventually convert into knowledge. So the slave attains knowledge not by learning from someone, but by recovering it from oneself.

Scott (2005) understands the "knowledge which the boy has now" as knowledge which became explicit; however, the boy had always latently possessed it. This passage plays a key role in his interpretation because he sees it as a proof that Socrates endorses foreknowledge. He believes that theory or recollection solves the problem of discovery, a problem which is partly caused by Socrates' commitment to foreknowledge principle, which demands that any successful inquiry starts out from preexistent knowledge (Scott, 2005, p. 106). Acquisition of explicit knowledge is explained by the presence of knowledge that is already latent in him. At 85c2–7 Socrates points out the slave boy does not have explicit knowledge of geometry; at 85c9–d1, he claims that he will acquire this explicit knowledge. This moment involves: recovering the knowledge from himself (85d4). Hence there must already be in him knowledge to be recovered. According to the next sentence, 'recovering knowledge that is in him is recollection' (85d6–7) Socrates is saying here: first, that when the boy acquires explicit knowledge he will be recollecting; second, that recollection consists in the recovery of knowledge that is already in him.

From this passage Scott is making a conclusion, that slave boy will come to know about geometry because he already has the knowledge of it, as he says: "Socrates takes it for granted that knowledge must derive from pre-existent knowledge" (Scott, 2005, p. 85) So in Scott's

point of view Socrates accepts foreknowledge principle. On the contrary, Fine believes that Socrates isn't committed to foreknowledge principle. As she says, the more demanding a condition one takes knowledge to be, the less reasonable it is to require knowledge for inquiry.

Here I would like to point out that both scholars have different views on whether Socrates endorses foreknowledge or not. It is important to acknowledge this difference from the beginning because it results in two totally different views on theory of recollection and its purpose in the dialogue. According to Scott's interpretation, foreknowledge coupled with priority of definition raises problem of discovery (Scott, 2005, p. 83) which is solved by the theory of recollection. Fine doesn't agree that inquiry requires foreknowledge; hence there is no problem of discovery to be solved. This issue will be closely explored in the next chapters.

Problem of discovery.

According to the principle of priority of definition, one must know the object of inquiry to say what it is like. According to foreknowledge principle, knowledge has to derive from pre-existent knowledge. The problem occurs if Socrates endorses both these principles.

If one is trying to discover whether virtue is acquired, then, Scott thinks, all that's needed is knowledge of what virtue is: one first discovers what virtue is, and then uses that knowledge in an effort to discover whether it's acquired. In this case, the foreknowledge principle doesn't raise any special problem, aside from the fact that it's proved difficult to discover what virtue is.

But Scott thinks a special problem arises when one is trying to discover what virtue is. He calls this the problem of discovery: "There is, apparently, no preexistent knowledge to fall back upon – except knowledge of the definition itself. But then one will not be discovering anything, as one already knows the object of inquiry" (Scott, 2005, p.87).

The reason the prior knowledge needs to be of the definition itself is because of principle of priority of definition: it says that we can't know anything about F unless we know what F is—that is, unless we know the definition of F. The problem, then, is this: on the one hand, Socrates thinks one can discover (i.e. come to know) something only if one has prior (and current) conscious, explicit knowledge: he accepts a foreknowledge principle. At least in the case of attempting to discover definitions, the foreknowledge principle, coupled with priority of

definition, requires one to have prior (and current) knowledge of the very definition one is trying to discover. But in that case, discovery of the definition isn't possible, since one can discover only what one doesn't already know. A necessary condition for discovering definitions therefore makes it impossible to do so. As Scott puts it, Socrates "seems to have boxed himself into a corner where definitional discovery is concerned" (Scott, 2005, p.87). In the following chapters it is explained how Socrates deals with this epistemological problem.

Meno's Paradox.

After the third attempt to answer what is virtue, Meno gets angry and admits that “now he is numbed in mind and word” (80b). Meno is another classic example of someone who initially thinks he knows something but after being cross-examined, realizes that he doesn't.

Frustrated by his failure he compares Socrates to a stingray that numbs those who touch him, he admits that he no longer has any views about virtue. Socrates says that he is also perplexed and even more than others. Stingray passage 79e–80d is a turning and probably the most well-known point of the dialogue. Both of them end up in a state of aporia; however it is different: Meno declares not to have any views about virtue, takes himself to be in a cognitive blank; while Socrates admits not to have knowledge (essence) of virtue, but he still has some views. Socrates doesn't abandon his attempt to learn what virtue is and encourages Meno to join him in the process of discovery: „Nevertheless I wish to examine with you and seek in common what virtue is" (80d3–4). At this point, Meno is surprised even more, how would they inquire if they have just both admitted to be perplexed with respect to virtue. Meno's response became an epistemological challenge to the possibility of inquiry and discovery and is known as „Meno's Paradox. There are two stages: first Meno challenges Socrates with three questions (80d5–8); then Socrates reformulates those questions into „the eristic argument": a dilemma about the impossibility of inquiry(80e1–5). Scott (2005) called the first one „Meno's challenge"; the second one, „Eristic dilemma". To answer whether theory of recollection could be taken as answer to the paradox it is important to clarify what are the questions behind it. Later it will be also shown how each stage of Socrates' reply, where he demonstrates theory of recollection, responds to Meno's questions and dilemma.

Meno's challenge (80d5-8).

- (M1) And how will you inquire, Socrates, into something when you don't know at all what it is?
- (M2) Which of the things that you don't know will you propose as the object of your inquiry?
- (M3) Or even if you really stumble upon it, how will you know that this is the thing you didn't know before?

M1 asks how one can inquire into virtue if one doesn't know at all what it is. M2 explains why it is problematic. To propose the object of inquiry one has to have the initial specifications of it, but if one is in a cognitive blank he will not be able to do that. When Socrates says that he doesn't know at all what virtue is, Meno takes him to be in a cognitive blank. So he reasonably asks how are they supposed to inquire. But Socrates doesn't lack all knowledge; there are cognitive conditions that fall short of knowledge like true beliefs or relevant true beliefs. So first two questions are good, but Socrates doesn't have to worry about them, because he isn't in a cognitive blank with respect to virtue.

Question number three is a little bit more interesting and, as I will demonstrate later, it is capable of two different interpretations. How do you realize that you found the thing you didn't initially know? In the first two questions Meno makes a point that it's not possible to inquire into something if one doesn't know that thing. Now, even if one somehow starts, how does he match the answer with the object of inquiry one didn't know? Meno imagines a situation where a would-be inquirer has to match one thing (that you have just stumble upon, x) is another thing (you have started from, y). But this is impossible because you are in a total blank about Y. M3 differs from M1, but it has similar idea: one won't be able realize that one has found what is virtue if he is in a cognitive blank with respect to virtue.

Meno asks questions which could be easily reformulated into the argument to make it more clear (Fine, 2014, p. 81):

1. Socrates doesn't at all know what virtue is.
2. If one doesn't at all know what virtue is, one can't specify it in such a way that one has a target to aim at.
3. If one can't specify the target one is aiming at, one can't inquire.
4. If one can't specify the target one is aiming at, then, even if one finds what one was looking for but didn't know, one won't know, or realize, one has done so.
5. Therefore, Socrates can't inquire into virtue; and even if he finds what he was looking for, he won't know, or realize, that he has done so"

Meno asks his questions because he believes that Socrates is in a cognitive blank with respect to virtue; however, he is wrong to think that. Socrates lacks knowledge of virtue (essence of virtue), but he has a lot of views and beliefs about it. The first ten pages of the dialogue are full

of different beliefs about virtue, so neither Meno nor Socrates are in a state of total cognitive blank.

Meno's challenge presented above contains two problems. Problem of inquiry: how do we inquire into something we don't know at all. And problem of discovery: how do we realize we have found the object of inquiry we didn't initially know. Problem of inquiry is slightly changed and repeated in Socrates' reformulation (eristic dilemma).

Eristic dilemma.

Socrates doesn't give a straight reply to Meno's questions; first, he reformulates them (80e1–5):

"I understand the sort of thing you want to say, Meno. Do you see what an eristic argument (eristikos logos) you're introducing, (S4) that it's not possible for someone to inquire either into that which he knows or into that which he doesn't know? For (S2) he wouldn't inquire into that which he knows (for he knows it, and there is no need for such a person to inquire); nor (S3) into that which he doesn't know (for he doesn't even know what he'll inquire into).

In 75c9 Socrates is explaining the difference between discussing something eristically and dialectically. By the use of 'eristic' Socrates might want to show Meno his aggressive motives in raising first three questions, that his concern is less with epistemology than with finding a successful debating tactic. However, the fact that Socrates gives a long and serious reply suggests that he takes the argument seriously. Socrates claims to reformulate Meno's questions however there are some differences. To make it more clear let's break down the dilemma schematically (Scott, 2005, p. 78):

"(S1) If you know the object already you cannot genuinely inquire into it.

(S2) If you do not know it, you cannot inquire, because you do not even know what you are inquiring into.

(S3) Either you know something or you do not.

(S4) Therefore you cannot inquire into any object"

Differences.

There are at least five differences between Meno's version and Socrates'. First, Meno asks questions, Socrates formulates a dilemma. Second, Meno asks how Socrates can inquire into virtue if he doesn't at all know what it is. Socrates generalizes this worry. He asks how anyone can inquire about anything if one doesn't know that thing. Third, Socrates raises a question which Meno doesn't, how can one inquire into something if one already knows that thing. Fourth, Socrates doesn't explicitly mention M3: how can you realize that you found something you initially didn't know. So, on the one hand, he raises assumption which Meno didn't, but on the other hand, he fails to mention an issue that Meno mentions. Five, Meno asks how Socrates can inquire into virtue if he doesn't know at all (παράπαν) what it is. Socrates omits 'at all'. The fifth difference is usually taken to be significant (Fine, 2014, p. 86). One thing not to know something and another thing is not to know something AT ALL. It's plausible to think that Socrates agrees with Meno that one can't inquire into something if one doesn't at all know what it is, so he focuses instead on the question of whether one can inquire if one doesn't know, without its thereby being the case that one doesn't know at all. Another difference is that Meno's version of the paradox contains two difficulties for searching for what one does not know—the beginning problem (the problem of starting inquiry, “paradox of inquiry”) and the ending problem (Problem of discovery) — while Socrates' version only mentions the beginning problem (Benson, 2015, p. 60). Although Meno raises two different issues in his questions, he is more interested in M1 than in M3 (Scott, 2005, p. 79). That's why Socrates lets M3 to disappear from his reformulation; however, it doesn't mean that Socrates forgets about it. Despite these differences, Meno doesn't seem to notice them and approves the new version (81a1–2). Then Meno asks if he made a good point, Socrates disagrees and introduces theory of recollection.

One thing is to recognize differences between both versions (Meno's challenge and eristic dilemma), and another is to suggest that they are philosophically significant. Scott believes that they are significant, that's why he distinguishes two separate problems.

Fine's interpretation is completely different. She does agree that Meno makes a mistake that they are in a blank with respect to virtue, but she doesn't agree about the differences between Meno's and Socrates's version of paradox. She suggests that the fact that Socrates omits “at all, parapan” in his reformulation shouldn't be seen as significant change. According to her interpretation, Socrates doesn't repeat 'at all' because “The casual way in which he moves

between speaking of 'not knowing' and 'not knowing at all' suggests this is just stylistic variation; 'at all' simply emphasizes that he really, in fact, doesn't know" (Fine, 2014, p. 86). Another difference is that Socrates doesn't explicitly mention M3. However, M3 can be answered in the same way as M1 and M2 so if Socrates answers M1 and M2, he thereby answers M3, even if he doesn't mention it separately (Fine, 2014, p. 86). While Scott believes that Socrates is more concerned in the end point of inquiry (discovering what one was looking for), Fine suggests that Socrates is concerned with successful inquiry, inquiry as a process in which one is acquiring new true beliefs and improves one's cognitive condition. As she says: "Socrates is interested in the whole process, not just in the achievement of the ultimate goal" (Fine, 2014, p. 110). And the most significant difference from Scott's interpretation is that Fine believes that Socrates isn't committed to foreknowledge principle. For example, in order to discover what is F one must know the things through which F is defined – A and B. If one can know what A and B without knowing what F is – the problem of definitional discovery doesn't arise (Fine, 2014, p. 168). "Similarly, one can know what porridge is only if one knows what oats and water are; but one doesn't need to know what porridge is to know what oats and water are" (Fine, 2014, p. 169). In Scott's version theory of recollection is meant to solve the problem of discovery raised by two epistemological principles which conflict with each other. Fine doesn't agree with foreknowledge principle; hence there is no problem of definitional discovery and theory of recollection is meant to explain how inquiry and discovery are possible.

Theory of recollection and eristic dilemma.

According to Scott, there are three strong reasons against supposing that Socrates introduces recollection to disarm the eristic dilemma or problem of inquiry. The first is philosophical. Way to solve the problem of inquiry is to appeal to distinction between knowledge and true belief (97c9–98b5). Having a true belief about something helps to identify it with the object of inquiry without knowing all about it. Hence, if Socrates was really interested in solving the dilemma, he would probably invoke his distinction between knowledge and true belief rather than recollection (Scott, 2005, p. 79).

Second reason according to Scott (2005, p.80) is coming from the “dynamics of the relationship between Socrates and Meno”. After Meno challenges Socrates on possibility of inquiry Socrates uses term ‘eristic’ (75c8–d2) to describe dilemma. He is switching from philosophical side of the problem to psychological blaming Meno’s motives to be bad. Eristic arguments are made to defeat opponents but not to help them. “The word ‘eristic’, which comes from the Greek word for strife, denotes a competitive approach to argument and applies to those who engage in argument as if it were a battle” (Scott, 2005, p. 36). After presenting the theory Socrates adds: *“So one shouldn’t be persuaded by that eristic argument. It would make us idle and is pleasant for the faint-hearted to hear. But this one [sc. recollection] makes us hard working and eager to inquire. Trusting it to be true, I’m willing to inquire with you into what virtue is”* (81d5–e2).

Scott sees this passage as another proof that eristic argument is seen by Socrates as an argument supported by lazy and weak people. Meno is trying to block Socrates’ request to engage in cooperative inquiry. It is another reason why recollection isn’t supposed to solve the dilemma directly but is used to psychologically motivate Meno, make him eager to inquire. Describing theory Socrates is using references to priests and priestesses, lyric poetry to arouse Meno’s curiosity “We might see Socrates as trying to create a gestalt shift in his interlocutor: what Meno previously saw as wearisome now becomes something irresistibly intriguing” (Scott, 2005, p. 81)

Fourth reason is coming from this section of the dialogue: *“As for the other points, I wouldn’t absolutely insist on the argument. But I would fight, both in word and deed, for the following point: that we would be better, more manly and less lazy if we believed that we ought to inquire into what we do not know, than if we believed that we cannot discover what we do not know and so have no duty to inquire”* (86b6–c2). This suggests that Socrates is concerned with possibility of SUCCESSFUL inquiry rather than inquiry. All in all, recollection according to Scott’s interpretation isn’t supposed to solve the eristic dilemma directly, but it has another purpose.

Second reading of M3 and Problem of discovery.

I have noted that question number three is capable of two readings. According to the first reading of M3, it is a problem to make sense from the statement that x is y because if one is in a total blank about the object of inquiry (y) one can't match it up with something that could be an answer (x). It could be solved as M1 and M2: having a partial grasp of an object (belief) could work as specification of the final answer.

However, according to the second deeper reading, Scott asks a good question: how can one know that initial specifications are correct ones. In this case another problem occurs: “the assumptions included in the specification play a crucial role in determining the direction and outcome of the inquiry; they constitute its premises. Yet, unless you already know that the specification is correct, how can you know that this proposed answer is the right one, even if it happens to be?” (Scott, 2005, p.83). He names it the Problem of discovery², also known as the ‘ending problem’ (Bensons, 2015). Socrates and Meno had some beliefs and ideas about virtue which they could use to decide about the future candidate definitions, the problem here according to Scott is that they will never get the knowledge of virtue, because they “will always be trapped within the circle of beliefs” (Scott, 2005, p. 84) This leads him to the conclusion that process of discovery or learning is matching the final answer with something that one already knows. Hence initial specification consists in the knowledge of the very thing being sought.

Let's suppose that instead of knowing the definition of virtue, one might need to know that certain things count as instances of virtue, allowing one to specify virtue as the property that all these instances share. Such pieces of knowledge might be enough to propose the candidate. However, suggestion that one might know something about the object of inquiry without knowing the actual definition of it conflicts with the principle of priority of definition. So if Socrates endorses foreknowledge principle according to which knowledge derives from preexistent knowledge and principle of priority of definition "he seems to have boxed himself into a corner where definitional discovery is concerned" (Scott, 2005, p. 87). The problem is that to make any true specifications of virtue one has to know the definition of virtue if one knows the definition – one can't discover it again. This problem according to Scott is solved by theory

² Scott seems to characterize the problem of discovery in two different ways. On “Plato’s Meno, 87”, the problem seems to be about acquiring knowledge of what is in fact the correct definition. But on 83–4, the problem seems to be about how one can realize, or know (Scott uses both terms), that one has found the correct answer.

of recollection which explains how one can discover something what he already knows. One starts the inquiry with belief at conscious level, but latently there already exists knowledge that was once explicit. And this latent knowledge helps to match the object of inquiry with the initial belief: "It is in virtue of this knowledge, as it gradually comes to the surface, that we are able ultimately to know that the answer we have hit upon is the right one" (Scott, 2005, p.87)

It is a very interesting interpretation of anamnesis; however, scholars argue what was the real Socrates' position about foreknowledge principle and priority of definition, which taken together conflict with Socrates' belief in possibility of discovery.

Interpretations.

Scott's version.

I have described Meno's questions (Meno's challenge) and Socrates' reformulation (Eristic dilemma). Questions M1 and M2 are not taken seriously, Meno is obviously wrong to think that they are in a cognitive blank with respect to virtue because beginning of the dialogue is full of ideas and beliefs about virtue and its definition. M3 is about realizing that one has found the object of inquiry without initially knowing about. Socrates reformulates Meno's questions, however, makes some important changes: he omits specification 'at all (parapan)" and doesn't mention Meno's question number three. Meno's challenge and Socrates' argument are usually known as Meno's paradox; Scott argues that there are two paradoxes: one about inquiry another about discovery. The paradox of discovery is more important, because if we can't discover (come to know) than there is no need to inquire. Scott (1995, p. 30) says: "paradox about inquiry is a trivial problem and easy to solve, whereas the paradox about discovery is more difficult". If knowledge is understood as "all or nothing affair", if one knows – knows everything (so no further knowledge is possible), or one doesn't know – being in a state of total ignorance (so inquiry can't even start), then solution is easy. The way to solve the problem is to point out that one can grasp something partially without knowing it in the full sense (Scott, 1995, p. 30). Having a true belief about something enables to identify it with the object of inquiry without knowing about it; hence the process of inquiry could start.

The paradox of discovery is much more difficult to solve. The assumptions included in the specification determine outcome of inquiry; the question is how can one know that those assumptions are correct ones. Initial belief enables to start the inquiry; however, we can't know

if this belief is correct or not, hence "one will be always trapped in a circle of beliefs" (Scott, 2005, p. 84). So there has to be preexisted knowledge which allows to match one thing with another. Scott is positive that Socrates endorses a foreknowledge principle. The problem arises if Socrates accepts priority of definition as well, since taken together they conflict with possibility of discovery. That's why according to Scott Socrates is introducing theory of recollection, which main purpose is to solve an epistemological problem but not to disarm dilemma.

Fine's version. The Myth.

Fine points out that maybe Socrates isn't entirely convinced about the details of the theory; however, he is convinced that we can inquire, and that theory of recollection is the best explanation how we can do so. She takes the myth as it is: since inquiry is possible, then the conclusion of the eristic argument is unsound. However, she does some more conclusions which are important for her interpretation. For example, besides inquiry and discovery, Socrates also mentions learning. She says: "I take it that when Socrates says that 'inquiry and learning are, as a whole, recollection', 'and' is epexegetic. Socrates' claim is that inquiry—or, more precisely, successful inquiry—is a type of learning, that consists in recollection"(Fine, 2014, p. 108) Hence, It might be possible that not all inquiry consists in recollection, for example, completely failed inquiries, where one doesn't learn nothing don't do so. Or one can learn something through inquiry without discovering what one was looking for and without acquiring knowledge. This is not always a bad scenario. One can acquire new true beliefs without discovering what one was looking for, but these beliefs would make one closer to the ultimate goal.

Fine believes that Meno inquires and learns in this way: he doesn't discover the definition of virtue, but he makes progress in understanding simile in multis and priority of definition; in this sense, he learns something (Fine, 2014, p.109). It is different from Scott's view that Socrates' main interest is in final stages of inquiry. It has been stated earlier that Scott distinguishes two paradoxes one about inquiry, another about discovery, and in his view, Socrates is more concerned about discovery: "Plato proposes recollection only to explain the later stages of learning...Recollection only enters the story when we have already reached the level of ordinary

conceptual thought and start to become puzzled and dissatisfied with the perspective thus gained of the world" (Scott, 1995, p.8). Fine argues that Socrates is concerned in the whole process, not just the final stage. Discovery is the endpoint, but there are also intermediate stages that also count as learning and discovering: "Recollection is meant to explain the whole process, not just the final stage; in this sense, it explains not just discovery but also inquiry" (Fine, 2014, p. 110).

There is also another important conclusion which Fine makes from the passage 81b-e. It is usually claimed that theory of recollection is a theory of innateness. Fine supports another point of view; she believes that the first statement of theory of recollection posits prenatal knowledge, which is completely forgotten after the birth in such a way that one doesn't remember it at all (Fine, 2014, p. 113). Fine suggests that Socrates clearly thinks that prenatal knowledge plays a crucial role in explaining our ability to inquire and discover in this life. If Socrates believes that we can inquire and discover because we had some range of prenatal knowledge, then he accepts foreknowledge principle; however, it is completely different from the one Scott is talking about. She calls it prenatal foreknowledge (Fine, 2014, p.113): we can inquire and discover in this life only if we had prenatal knowledge. The whole argument between scholars is about knowledge which is required for inquiry and discovery. According to Scott successful discovery requires knowledge either conscious and explicit or innate and unconscious and Socrates endorses foreknowledge principle which creates the problem of discovery solved by theory of recollection. Fine denies that Socrates accepts any kind of foreknowledge in current life; however, she introduces prenatal foreknowledge. Prenatal foreknowledge doesn't conflict with priority of definition since knowledge which is required for inquiry and discovery is prenatal and completely forgotten in current life.

All in All, Fine has quite a lot to say about the first statement of recollection. We can inquire and discover through inquiry because we can recollect things that we knew prenatally. The eristic dilemma is unsound because we can inquire; question M3 is also answered because we can discover. According to Scott's interpretation Socrates believes that we can recollect about virtue; however, we should not take too serious the religious background of doctrine, because it might been used by Socrates as a psychological trick to motivate Meno to inquire.

Geometrical discussion.

Geometrical discussion with a slave boy is a transitional stage between first and second statement of recollection. It provides useful data which Socrates demonstrates to explain how recollection works on practice. Meno invites slave boy for Socrates' request. Socrates makes sure that the boy speaks Greek and examination begins. He draws a square with two-foot sides, establishes that its area is four feet and asks the boy to determine the side of the square whose area is twice as big. Slave passes through the following stages: he confidently gives the wrong answers; understands his errors; reaches state of aporia; starts from the beginning and finally arrives to the correct answer. Along the way, Socrates insists that he is only asking questions but not teaching. Though the majority of this dialogue (82b–85d) is between Socrates and slave boy, Meno is also involved. At important points Socrates asks Meno if he follows the progress the boy is making. Hence besides the geometrical discussion, there is also a meta-dialogue with Meno, where Socrates reflects the stages which Meno passed through as well. The parallel between Meno and the slave boy is obvious: he believed that he knew what virtue is, three times gave wrong answers and also achieved aporia. On the one hand the meta-dialogue shows how each stage of slave boy progress supports the theory, but on the other hand, it plays another role: Socrates is trying to change Meno's attitude towards inquiry and explains the benefits of elenchus. For example, previously Meno compared Socrates to a stingray, here (84a3–c9) Socrates explains the benefits the stingray is doing for the boy. Socrates emphasizes that discovering that one doesn't know something one thought he knew is not harmful but beneficial; moreover, the proper inquiry is useless without this stage.

Fine believes that slave-boy passage proves that successful inquiry and discovery doesn't require innate knowledge in current life : „Socrates claims that relying on the elenchus—and hence inquiry—can get one all the way to knowledge" (Fine, 2014, p. 122) Slave boy started his inquiry from false beliefs, obviously he didn't know that they are false, but it doesn't matter because „when confronted with a conflict among our beliefs (or among the claims considered), we tend to reject the false ones and retain the true ones; and, if we do so, we make progress in inquiry“ (Fine, 2014, p. 123). Hence relying on true beliefs explains the progress in inquiry.

The logical question is how do we know that beliefs are true or false. As she explains, we don't have to know that. Relying on relevant true beliefs is already enough for inquiry and discovery. Not everyone is guaranteed to succeed in every inquiry; some inquiries will fail. However “if

untutored slave could successfully inquire in geometry, we can do so in moral inquiry as well" (Fine, 2014, p. 123). Slave boy is an example how we can inquire relying on beliefs, hence the conclusion of dilemmatic argument is wrong. Socrates has also answered all of M1–M3. M1 asks how one can inquire into something if one doesn't at all know what it is. M2 explains why it is problematical to think that one can do so: if one doesn't know that which one is inquiring into, one won't be able to fix the target one is aiming at. Socrates shows that it is possible to fix a target to aim at, even if one lacks all relevant knowledge. For, though the slave doesn't at all know the thing he is inquiring into, in the sense that he lacks all knowledge of it, he can inquire on the basis of his beliefs. Knowledge isn't necessary since beliefs are sufficient. Discovery through inquiry is also possible: slave finds the right answer (as a true belief, but further inquiry according to Socrates will convert it into knowledge). Hence, one can find what one was looking for and realize that one has done so, even if one doesn't initially know what one is looking for.

Scott raised a problem of discovery: how are we supposed to know that initial specifications of the thing we are looking for are correct ones – and the answer is that we match the final answer with the initial belief because we recollect innate latent knowledge.

According to Fine's interpretation, no knowledge is required: the slave didn't know what he is inquiring into, but he could rely on mixture of true and false beliefs. When the contradiction among those beliefs was uncovered he favored true over his false beliefs: "His ability to reason well, and his tendency to rely on true over false beliefs, explain how he is able to realize when he's found the right answer." (Fine, 2014, p. 128). She emphasizes that inquiry is a process and one needs some suitable relevant beliefs. If one succeeds in inquiry, one increases one's stock of true beliefs; this leads to further progress towards the final goal. However, as she adds, there is no guaranty here.

As it was explained above Fine believes that favoring true over the false beliefs can lead one all the way to knowledge. From the dialogue with a slave boy Socrates proves that inquiry is possible and he also answers questions M1-M3. But then why does he introduce theory of recollection if simply relying on relevant true beliefs is enough to start inquiry and successfully finish it.

Knowledge which the boy has (Fine's interpretation)

Fine's interpretation of this passage is completely different; throughout the dialogue she was arguing that Socrates doesn't commit himself to any kind of foreknowledge principle. The first statement of theory of recollection is about recollecting prenatal knowledge; however, prenatal knowledge doesn't become innate; moreover, it is forgotten in such a way that after the birth one doesn't remember it at all. She also offers a slightly different translation of the passage:

(1) Won't he know without having been taught by anyone, but <only by> being questioned, taking up (anabôn) the knowledge himself from himself (autos ex hautou)? (85d3–4)

Yes.

(2) Isn't it the case that to take up (analambanein) knowledge oneself in oneself (auton en hautô(i)) is to recollect (anamimnêskesthai)? (85d6–7)

Certainly.

(3) Isn't it the case that he either acquired the knowledge which he now has at some time or else always had (aei eichen) it? (85d9–10).

Yes. (Fine, 2015, p. 149)

She translates the word *analambanein*, which occurs at 85d4 and 85d6 a bit differently than Scott: "It can mean 'to recover'. But it can also mean, and is sometimes used by Plato to mean, 'to take up', in a sense that is compatible with, though it doesn't imply, learning for the first time" (Fine, 2014, p. 150). As she reads (1) and (2), the slave has the ability to work things out for himself and, if all goes well, he will eventually acquire knowledge. What's said to be in the slave isn't knowledge, but his *analambanein* knowledge: the process of working things out for himself in a way that can eventuate in knowledge (Fine, 2014, p. 151). (2) The slave's ability to work things out for himself is best explained by saying that he is recollecting. It follows that the slave once knew. For one can recollect only what one once knew. But according to Fine's interpretation to say that one once knew doesn't mean that one now knows: one can forget what one once knew in such a way that one no longer knows it at all. The first statement of the theory of recollection posits prenatal but not innate knowledge. "*Socrates says that 'to analambanein knowledge oneself in oneself is recollection'". She takes this to mean, not that knowledge is in one, but that taking things up oneself in a way that (if all goes well) eventuates in knowledge is recollection. The knowledge that is mentioned in 85d4 and 6 is the future knowledge that 85c9–d1 says the slave will have if he is questioned further. She take 'oneself in*

oneself' in 85d6 to have the same force as 'himself from himself' in 85d4, which she interpret to mean that the slave himself works things out by, or for, himself. (The first passage mentions just the slave; the second generalizes.)" (Fine, 2015, p. 151)

In (3) Socrates is talking about "the knowledge which the slave now has" (85d9) According to Fine's interpretation 'now' is forward-referring to the time when he will acquire knowledge. In the present he doesn't have knowledge, but he will eventually acquire if all goes well.

Fine states that that the slave can work out things for himself not because he has innate or latent knowledge but because he is recollecting things which he knew prenatally, though this knowledge has been forgotten. In her view having prenatal knowledge doesn't imply having innate knowledge: "Even if we say that not only does the slave have prenatal knowledge but, also, he recollects, it still doesn't follow that he has innate knowledge. The most that follows is that there is some trace of the prenatal knowledge; but the trace doesn't need to be knowledge. (fine, 2014, p. 158) Explicit knowledge arises merely from the operation of tendencies to favor true over false beliefs.

In contrary, Scott argues that passage 85d is all about latent knowledge. In his view Socrates is talking about latent knowledge which is waiting to become explicit in the future, however by stating that "knowledge which the boy has now" he assumes that it is already latent in him.

Conclusion.

The initial Meno's question whether virtue is teachable and how it can be acquired ended up in a serious epistemological challenge which provoked Socrates to introduce theory of recollection presented in three stages: the myth, geometrical demonstration and argument for immortality, where Socrates connected the progress the slave has made with theory of recollection. Going deep into the details of doctrine and the way it presented in the dialogue made some scholars doubt if it should be taken as a serious philosophical reply to Meno's paradox. To answer this question, I analyzed two interesting interpretations which help to observe problematics from completely different positions. As I have demonstrated, the main reason why they differ so much is because Scott and Fine don't agree on foreknowledge principle. Referring to the "knowledge which the boy now has" Scott is coming to conclusion that successful inquiry and discovery requires innate latent knowledge, knowledge has to derive from pre-existent knowledge. Foreknowledge principle coupled with priority of definition leads to the so-called Problem of discovery and the only way to solve this problem is theory of recollection, which explains how one can inquire into something and know it at the same time. According to the theory of recollection, our current (as opposed to prenatal) foreknowledge is latent, not explicit: we have the foreknowledge that is needed for discovery; but since it is latent, discovery is possible after all. It consists in making explicit what is now merely latent, though it was once explicit.

It was explained that problem of inquiry doesn't require theory of recollection to explain how one can inquire into something one doesn't know. Distinction between true belief and knowledge is more than enough to start the process of inquiry. In the Geometrical discussion chapter it was explained how the slave started to inquire into something he didn't know at all. Referring to G.Fine one can start inquiry from the relevant true beliefs; they don't even have to be true, because along the process of elenchus one will favor true over the false beliefs and eventually come to the belief set which corresponds with the initial beliefs. Hence eristic argument is unsound and questions M1-M3 are answered.

Although Fine's interpretation is very detailed, it is not very clear how are we supposed to favor true over the false beliefs, if initially we don't know which ones are true and false. Another thing, she denies existence of innate knowledge but doesn't clarify how one recollects prenatal knowledge which doesn't become innate.

That's why Scott's version seems to be more logical and provides more plausible explanation of theory of recollection as a response to the paradox.

Theory of recollection is also introduced to answer a second version of M3 that Meno didn't really think about. Meno is asking how do we realize that we have found the object of inquiry if at the beginning we are in complete cognitive blank about it. This version of M3 is answered as the first two questions: relying on true beliefs give specifications which help to look for the final answer. Scott draws attention to another reading of M3: beginning with mere belief helps to find the answer; however, if we don't know that initial specification of the target is correct, how do we know that proposed answer is correct one, even if it happens to be? The difference between knowledge and true belief doesn't answer the question: proposed answer can only match initial belief. Hence, one will always be trapped in a circle of beliefs. The only way to escape the circle of beliefs is to have the very knowledge of the object of inquiry: discovery is the process of realizing that one thing matches something that one already knows (Scott, 2005, p. 84).

All in all, the purpose of theory of recollection in the dialogue is multilayered. Socrates introduces it to motivate Meno and make him eager to inquire. Secondly, theory of recollection solves the epistemological problem raised by foreknowledge principle and principle of priority of definition. Thirdly, it answers the second version of the third Meno's question and helps to escape circle of beliefs.

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