Plato’s *Meno*

I. What is Virtue? (21-36)

A. What is the problem Socrates finds with Meno’s first answer (23) to this question?

B. What is the problem Socrates finds with Meno’s second answer that “virtue is to desire handsome things and be able to provide them”? (31)

1. Is there anyone who does not desire handsome/good things?

2. Does it matter whether one is able to provide these handsome/good things for oneself justly or unjustly?

II. Meno’s “Numbness” and the Question of Learning (36-49)

1. How has Socrates made Meno numb? (36) Do you see any connection between what he describes as his numbness and what Socrates describes as his distinctive form of wisdom?

2. What is the difficulty in making sense of how we learn new things with which Meno confronts Socrates? (37)

3. Does Socrates make his point that learning is a kind of remembrance with the example of the boy learning principles of geometry? Do you see him teaching the boy at any point? What do we learn about learning from Socrates’s interaction with the boy?

4. What does the interaction with the boy teach us about the value of Meno’s numbness? (See 43-44)

5. Does Socrates take the story about reincarnation that supports his ideas of learning as remembrance literally? What do you think?

III. Can Virtue be Taught? (49-69)

A. Why virtue can be taught. (49-53)

1. If virtue is teachable it must be a form of knowledge.

2. How does Socrates argue that virtue must be a form of knowledge/wisdom?

B. Why virtue cannot be taught. (53-69)

1. What leads Socrates to suspect the validity of his conclusion that virtue must be teachable?

2. What possibility does Socrates say he overlooked in his earlier argument that virtue must be a form of knowledge? What else could it be and still be a necessarily good or helpful thing?

3. What do you think of the conclusions Socrates comes to in this dialogue? Is he pulling our leg or what?!?