

MENTAL PERCEPTION, RATIONAL JUSTIFICATION IN INQUIRY AND SOCRATIC RECOLLECTION IN THE *MENO*

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I The Problem

In the *Phaedo* mental perception appears to play an essential role in the Socratic doctrine of Recollection,¹ but Plato also suggests that rendering an account or rational justification in inquiry is also important in understanding this theory. A person who knows must be able to “render an account of his knowledge” (*Phd.* 76b; cf. *Gorg.* 465a; *Men.* 98a; *Phil.* 62a; *Rep.* 510c, 531e, 534b; *States.* 286a; *Symp.* 202a; *Tht.* 175c-d, 202c; *Tim.* 51e), and it would seem that this entails the process of dialectical inquiry in which we ask and answer questions (*Phd.* 75d). An unresolved question, in the *Phaedo*, is whether, and if so how, the position that knowing is a product of mental perception is compatible with the view that knowing entails being able to rationally justify one’s opinions in dialectical inquiry?²

¹ The term “Socratic Recollection” or “Socratic doctrine of Recollection” is used merely as a label for what one can reasonably extract from such dialogues as the *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, and especially the *Meno* concerning what the Platonic Socrates, or the pertinent arguments in the respective dialogues, suggests about Recollection. It is not my intention to attribute what I say about “Socratic Recollection” to the historical Socrates and/or to Plato. The possible differences, here, between the historical Socrates and Plato are not essential to the argument in this paper.

² Hicken, for example, says that Plato believes that dialectical knowledge entails the ability to give an account of it, and this means the ability to rationally justify a position. But she argues, that Plato also believes that “knowledge is direct intuition of reality.” Winifred F. Hicken, “Knowledge and Forms in Plato’s *Theaetetus*” in *Studies in Plato’s Metaphysics*, ed. R. E. Allen (New York: Humanities Press, 1965), p. 188. She concludes, Plato “can find no way of translating the truths discovered by dialectic into descriptions of objects which will enable him to distinguish an act of knowing from one of no less immediate opinion” (p. 188). She is also clearly justified in being puzzled about the

The discussion of the theory of Recollection in the *Phaedo* (72e-77d) begins with Cebes recalling Socrates' belief that learning is recollection, and indicating that the argument for this is the one given in the *Meno* (the Slave Boy episode) or some argument like it. Cebes emphasizes inquiry rather than mental perception (73a-b). Socrates himself, then, attempts to show Simmias that learning is recollection, but his examples are drawn from perceptual experience (73c-d). One person may remind one of another person; one thing, by virtue of an association with a person, may lead to his or her recollection. Moreover, X may be like Y (a portrait of Simmias is like Simmias), and because of this similarity to X, one may be reminded of Y. Analogously, differing judgments concerning the equality of physical objects may remind one of the form of equality (as an ideal standard) which is necessary to evaluate (measure) the imperfect manifestations of equality in experience. Burger suggests the problem of mentioning both an inquiry and a perception-based theory of Recollection without considering their possible connection. "He [Cebes] seem to believe that recollection is awakened by both perception and Socratic questioning; but he is not concerned about how to understand the relation between these."³ The recognition of the form of equality "awakened" by perception is apparently a passive, rather than an inquiry-based, active recollection. What is recognized, the form of equality, should provide the impetus to question. Therefore, recollection in the fullest sense, that is, recollection which entails knowledge of a form, should take place in the context of dialectical inquiry.⁴

compatibility of the view that "knowledge is direct intuition of reality" and what Plato says about dialectic. "If knowledge is intuition of single forms, it is hard to see what we are to make of Plato's insistence that dialectic is essentially synoptic, that forms are fully known only in relation to the Good, and that knowledge of this form, as of every other, implies ability to give an account" (pp. 193-194).

³ Ronna Burger, *The Phaedo: A Platonic Labyrinth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 70. Cf. Henry Teloh, *The Development of Plato's Metaphysics* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981), pp. 103-104.

⁴ Allen correctly distinguishes between recognizing the need for a form, e.g., the form of equality, and knowing the nature of a form. The latter involves Socratic inquiry. "Even when they [the forms] are recognized, and consciously sought, their nature still remains obscure and difficult to penetrate. To know *that* they are is still not to know fully and clearly *what* they are. R. E. Allen, "Anamnesis in Plato's *Meno* and *Phaedo*," *Review of Metaphysics* 13 (1959): 172. This should help to answer Gulley's question: "But what are we to make of the apparent argument that when we are 'reminded' of 'equality itself' and so on in the way here described, we can be said to be gaining *knowledge* of Forms?" Norman Gulley, "Plato's Theory of Recollection," *Classical*

Socrates' use of perceptual examples in this discussion of recollection is consistent with his emphasis, in the *Phaedo*, on mental perception rather than inquiry in gaining knowledge of the forms. That is, his examples from perception-based recollection suggest that the theory of Recollection is linked to the view that the mind, if it is to know, must perceive the forms.⁵ There seems to be an analogy between the recollection of forms as simple objects and the recollection of objects or persons.⁶

The reliance on terms which suggest mental perception in apprehending the forms is strongest in the *Republic*. Of special importance, here, is the analogy of the Sun and the Good, and the

Quarterly, N.S. 4 (1954): 198. Knowing the form of equality in the sense of being acquainted with it is not the same as knowing the form of equality in the sense of knowing its nature. Possibly, this is what Gulley means when he says, "There is no possibility of knowledge of forms being directly afforded from sensible observation. What such observation can do is to put us on the right road towards a final solution, reminding us, without yet granting knowledge, of the reality we once knew" (Gulley, p. 203).

⁵ For example, Bluck says that the "upward path" of dialectic (511b-c) presupposes a power of intuition which Plato, presumably, could not have explained otherwise than as *anamnesis*. *Plato's Meno*, ed. with Introduction and Commentary by R.S. Bluck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 51. Cf., for example, Bernard Phillips, "The Significance of Meno's Paradox," in *Plato's Meno: Text and Criticism*, eds. Alexander Sesonske and Noel Fleming (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1965), p. 82, R.M. Hare, "Plato and the Mathematicians," in *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle*, ed. Renford Bambrough (New York: Humanities Press, 1965), pp. 23-24, and H.F. Cherniss, "The Philosophical Economy of the Theory of Ideas," in *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics*, ed. R. E. Allen (N.Y.: Humanities Press, 1965), p. 4.

⁶ In the *Phaedo* the forms are said to be simple, absolute and immutable (*Pbd.* 65d-e, 78d-79a). The mind relates to the realm of forms by virtue of a kinship with it, and because of this similarity, it is said to be immortal, intellectual, uniform, indissoluble, invisible and unchangeable (*Pbd.* 80b). But if the forms are simple, it would seem that the only way we can apprehend them is through the perceptive powers of the mind. "The unchanging things you can only perceive with the mind" (*Pbd.* 78a). Thus we must develop our "intellectual vision" in order to grasp the essences of things (*Pbd.* 65e). It may be the case that Plato's conception of the forms in the *Phaedo*, i.e., simple, immutable and thing-like, is logically tied to a perceptual or intuitive model of the mind. In the *Phaedo* Socrates suggests that the forms themselves cannot participate in opposing forms (they are simple, immutable objects), and, therefore, it would seem that they cannot be both one and many, same and other, etc. But if this is the case, rational discourse is impossible. Socrates, in the *Parmenides*, did not see this implication, but Parmenides helps him to see the problems entailed in believing the forms to be simple and object-like. Therefore, the context for the theory of Recollection in the *Phaedo*, the mental perception of simple, immutable objects, makes the inquiry-based theory of Recollection in the *Meno* impossible.

Allegory of the Cave.⁷ Plato relates the process of gaining knowledge of the forms and the good to the doctrine of Recollection (*Rep.* 518b-d). Knowledge is not put into the mind; rather, the mind or reason has the capacity to know the forms. To this end, reason must be developed, by degrees, so that it can perceive the forms and the good. Since dialectic is said to be the science that ascertains the nature or essence of each thing, the development of dialectical skill seems to be related to developing the powers of mental perception so that one can clearly see the forms and the good. Dialectic, however, is associated with rationally justifying one's opinions in inquiry (*Rep.* 533c-d; cf *Rep.* 510c, 531e, 534b) or, as Plato says, with "run[ning] the gauntlet of all objections" (*Rep.* 534c-d). Our problem, then, is this: If rational justification in inquiry is related to mental perception, as the *Republic* suggests, how should this former concept be understood, how should its connection with mental perception be explicated, and how are both of these notions related to the Socratic doctrine of Recollection? Stated in this way, the above problem is beyond the scope of this paper to solve. Therefore, I shall attempt to shed some light on this problem by confining my discussion to one dialogue—the *Meno*. First, Socratic dialectic, as a constructive

⁷ Gosling argues that "some people (e.g., Runciman ...) take it for granted that at any rate up to and including his middle period, Plato had a view of knowledge as a kind of intellectual perception." J.C. B. Gosling, *Plato* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 120. Nonetheless, he argues that the "visual imagery" used in the dialogues cannot, by itself, form the basis for a theory of Platonic epistemology. For example, he argues that "perception verbs" are often used to describe understanding without presupposing a perceptual model of knowing. I agree with Gosling that Plato may never have held the view that intellectual perception is sufficient for knowledge. But this agreement doesn't mean very much because Platonic dialogues, by their very nature, are meant to be problematical; that is, it is unclear which, if any, of the views expressed are Plato's. The more interesting problem is whether Plato used this imagery without recognizing the possible epistemological implications. I should think that the systematic development of such perceptual metaphors in the *Republic*, as well as their persistent use in other dialogues, suggests that they were deliberately used. Moreover, I have suggested that a perceptual model of the mind correlates, in the *Phaedo*, with a view of the forms as simple, immutable objects. Finally, Gwynneth Matthews [*Plato's Epistemology and Related Logical Problems* (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), p. 21] recognizes that, in the *Theaetetus*, Plato criticizes the notion that knowledge is mental perception. He correctly, I think, maintains that "the whole dialogue can be interpreted as a prolonged argument to show that this is not a satisfactory account of knowledge." Therefore, even if Plato never accepted the above model of the knowing mind as providing a sufficient condition for knowledge, he considered it misleading enough to bring it to the surface and criticize it. For further disagreement with Gosling, see, for example, Teloh, p. 101.

method, can be illuminated by analyzing the *Meno*.⁸ Second, the connection between Socratic Recollection and Socratic inquiry is best uncovered by examining the *Meno*. Third, an examination of the *Meno* can reveal important connections between rational inquiry and mental perception.

II The *Meno* and the Theory of Recollection – Part 1

If one were to choose a dialogue in which the theory of Recollection is intimately tied to inquiry, one would have to choose the *Meno*. As Moravcsik⁹ and White¹⁰ argue, Meno's paradox¹¹ is directed against learning as inquiry, rather than learning in general. According to Socrates, in the *Meno*, learning as a process of inquiry, is recollection (*Men.* 81d). The myth of Recollection, therefore, is offered by Socrates as a counter to Meno's paradox. The soul, potentially, has knowledge of all things, and by not growing weary of inquiry, it may "recall" the knowledge of virtue (and all other inquiry-based knowledge).¹² Possessing knowledge, as Plato says, implies being able to give an account of it; indeed, the process (rational inquiry) in which we give an account of our opinions is called recollection (*Men.* 98a). This process of rational justification, fundamental to the distinction between knowledge

⁸ In the *Meno* the elenctic method, as Irwin suggests, emphasizes the constructive role of Socratic dialectic. Terence Irwin, "Recollection and Plato's Moral Theory," *Review of Metaphysics* (1974):753. Cf. Terence Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), chapt. III.

⁹ Julius Moravcsik, "Learning as recollection," in *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Gregory Vlastos, vol. 1 (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1971), p. 54.

¹⁰ Nicholas P. White. *Plato on Knowledge and Reality* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1976), p. 43.

¹¹ "A man cannot try to discover either what he knows or what he does not know. He would not seek what he knows, for since he knows it, there is no need of the inquiry, nor what he does not know, for in that case he does not even know what he is to look for" (*Men.* 80e). This paradox, however, does not distinguish between absolute ignorance and relative ignorance, i.e., not having found an unobjectionable opinion. The latter position allows us to offer opinions; we can present what we do not know as if it were known, and inquiry can proceed by systematically attempting to overcome objections to preceding opinions.

¹² Nonetheless, in presenting the myth of Recollection, Socrates does suggest the notion of mental perception in a way that is reminiscent of the *Phaedrus* myth at 246a-256e (*Men.* 81c).

and opinion, involves, metaphorically speaking, appealing to what is inside of ourselves—our minds.¹³ Plato is apparently drawing an analogy between learning and remembering. Just as we are able to recall memory images “in” the mind so, by rational inquiry, we are able to actualize potential knowledge. Socratic inquiry, in the *Meno*, does appeal to what is “inside” ourselves. Meno is pressed to offer his own opinions, which are *endoxa*¹⁴, and these opinions are tested by regulative premises which, again, are *endoxa*. The ingredients of the inquiry are, so to speak, “inside” the interlocutor, rather than facts imparted by a teacher to a student. *Endoxa*, then, according to the *Meno*, appears to be the basis of, at least, ethical knowledge.

Endoxa, in the *Meno*, have two general forms which I shall call regulative and substantive. Regulative endoxic premises, in the *Meno*, have wide or universal acceptability. They are neither particular nor general substantive endoxic judgments, i.e., they do not purport to tell us something substantive about the nature of some subject matter. Although they are not, themselves, answers to the problem of defining virtue, they constitute requirements for any proposed definition. Regulative endoxic premises purport, then to guide a Socratic inquiry to a positive result.¹⁵

¹³ Most commentators recognize that the theory of Recollection emphasizes the importance of what is within ourselves. Cf. Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory*, p. 139; Bluck, p.9; Moravcsik, p. 59; Alexander Sesonske, “Knowing and Saying: The Structure of Plato's *Meno*,” in *Plato's Meno: Text and Criticism*, eds. Alexander Sesonske and Noel Fleming (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1965), p. 91.

¹⁴ I shall use the term “*endoxa*” in essentially an Aristotelian sense. Aristotle defines “*endoxa*” as opinions “which are accepted by everyone or by the majority or by the philosophers—i.e., by all, or by the majority, or by the most notable or illustrious of them” (T 100b22-24, cf. 104a6-13). However, as I use the term “regulative *endoxa*,” these premises may be acceptable on reflection although a person may not initially have been aware of them. Barnes suggests that, for Aristotle, *endoxa* are reputable opinions. Jonathan Barnes, “Aristotle and the Methods of Ethics,” *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* (1980): pp. 498-500. According to Barnes, *endoxa* can vary in their reputability, i.e., some *endoxa* are more *endoxon* than others, and the premises of a dialectical argument should be more *endoxon* than the conclusion (PA 81b18-23, SE 183b5-8, T 159B5-8). Evidently, opinions that are universally accepted are the most reputable opinions (T 104a5-10, NE 1172b35-1173a2). This seems to me to be a reasonable interpretation of *endoxa*.

¹⁵ Irwin also argues that there are principles derived from the elenchos that guide the inquiry (in my sense, are regulative). “Certain principles about virtue and benefit guide the whole argument and heavily influence his conclusion; they are always assumed to be true; he never conducts a full elenchos without them” Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory*, pp. 69-70. Since regulative *endoxa*, as they are construed in this paper, are not

The substantive *endoxa* worthy of note are of two sorts. They are either general opinions which purport to be definitions of virtue or opinions about particulars pertaining to virtue.¹⁶

analytic, they can have substantive import. In an ethical inquiry possible solutions, e.g., the relevant substantive *endoxa*, are eliminated if they do not accord with the relevant regulative *endoxa*. However, although they guide inquiry, they are not the sort of beliefs that directly guide conduct. (See my discussion of the distinction between regulative *endoxa* and substantive *endoxa* as conventional moral beliefs). Particular and general substantive ethical endoxic beliefs, however, are used for guiding conduct; for example, such ethical principles as Aristotle's mean and Kant's categorical imperative purport to regulate conduct. Nonetheless, particular and general substantive *endoxa* cannot effectively regulate inquiry into, for example, the following questions. What is *eudaimonia* (Aristotle)? What is *aretē* (Plato)? What is the moral law (Kant)? The distinction between regulative and substantive endoxic beliefs (in our context) has been made to highlight this difference between beliefs which are useful for guiding ethical inquiries such as those mentioned above and beliefs which purport to make a substantive contribution to ethical conduct.

¹⁶ What Vlastos calls the standard Socratic elenchus is based upon premises that are agreed upon. Socrates uses them to refute the interlocutor's thesis, i.e., to show that it is false, but he does not argue for them. Gregory Vlastos, “The Socratic Elenchus,” in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Julia Annas, vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 39. Vlastos, however, also maintains that Socrates differs from Aristotle in appealing neither to self-evidence nor *endoxa* to support what I would call the regulative premises. Although I agree that Socrates does not emphasize self-evidence, I believe that the latter point is a fundamental mistake. Therefore, it is important to consider his reasons for denying that Socrates uses *endoxa* to support his premises. According to Vlastos, Socrates never argues that an interlocutor “must grant” the premises because they are *endoxa* —“the most generally accepted opinion on the topic”— (Vlastos, p. 41). But given the fact that Socratic regulative premises are mutually agreed upon, why would Socrates insist that they *must be* accepted because they are endoxic premises? Moreover, the closer these premises approach the ideal *endoxa*, i.e., universally accepted *endoxa*, the more Socrates can assume that both the interlocutor and reader *will* accept them. Polansky correctly argues that Vlastos should have considered why interlocutors rarely renounce premises that have been accepted. Ronald M. Polansky, “Professor Vlastos's Analysis of Socratic Elenchus,” in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Julia Annas, vol. III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 248. Kraut, in commenting on Vlastos's paper, says “that many premises in the early dialogues are so plausible that they are appropriately called ‘compelling’.” Richard Kraut, “Comments on Gregory Vlastos, ‘The Socratic Elenchus’,” in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Julia Annas, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 63. Vlastos's second point is that Socrates rejects Polus's appeal to *endoxa* in the *Gorgias*, and, in general, is constantly critical of an appeal to “the most generally accepted opinions” (Vlastos, pp. 42-43). Polansky correctly argues that Vlastos's appeal to passages at *Gorg.* 472b-c and 474a-b do not support his view, for Socrates “rejects common opinion at the level of the doctrines under consideration,...but not necessarily as evidence for propositions that may be used as premises in arguments against these doctrines” (Polansky, p. 250). As Polansky suggests, in considering Socrates' argument against Polus's position in the

Plato seems to believe that regulative *endoxa* alone have probative force; that is, he downgrades the evidential force of substantive *endoxa*. It is clear that, for Plato, the general substantive *endoxa* in the *Meno*, viz., endoxic definitions of virtue, should not, as such, warrant our confidence. They provide material to be evaluated, but, as such, have no probative force. Concerning the evidential force but of particular ethical *endoxa*, in the *Meno*, Plato suggests that a definition of X must be prior to determining correct particular judgments about X. Socrates asks, "Does anyone know what a part of virtue is, without knowing the whole?"¹⁷ Therefore, the fact that we generally apply the term "X" to certain persons or things does not entail that the term is correctly applied to the

Gorgias, "even in those contexts in which Socrates questions his interlocutor's too facile reliance upon what is universally believed, Socrates employs premises that gain acceptance and plausibility precisely because they are in accord with commonly held views" (Polansky, p. 251). Polansky's view can be reinforced by distinguishing between regulative endoxic premises and substantive endoxic opinions, a distinction that is implicit in the inquiry in the *Meno*. In the next section of the paper, I shall further clarify the distinction between regulative and substantive *endoxa* by distinguishing between the former opinions and conventional opinions. I shall also suggest criteria for adequate regulative *endoxa* which will further distinguish these two kinds of *endoxa*. My analysis will provide some reasons for Socrates' apparent belief in the difference in probative force between these two kinds of *endoxa*. Vlastos's third point is that Socrates could not have defended his own anti-endoxic beliefs, e.g., that it is better to suffer injustice than to do it, on the basis of endoxic premises. (Vlastos, p. 43). This is a particularly weak point. Polansky reminds the reader that Socrates' refutation of Polus, itself, shows how "unusual conclusions" can be derived from "most ordinary premises" (Polansky, p. 251; cf. Kraut, p. 63). Moreover, as Polansky suggests, Vlastos's narrow view of *endoxa* does not include the opinions of the wise, which are endoxic. Clearly, conclusions drawn from such *endoxa* need not be commonplace (Polansky p. 252). Polansky is evidently appealing to Aristotle's definition of *endoxa*. In addition, Polansky could have argued that Aristotle's use of universally or widely accepted regulative premises, in Books I and X of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (final end, self-sufficiency, that which is peculiar and proper to a person, permanence, and internality), leads to an *endoxon* of the wise, contemplative virtuous activity, rather than one of the more commonplace substantive endoxic opinions offered, by Aristotle, as other possible alternatives. Thus I agree with Polansky when he concludes, "There is, indeed, greater value to the elenchus of endoxic propositions than Vlastos allows and his arguments hardly destroy the view that Socrates nearly always depends upon *endoxa*" (Polansky p. 252).

¹⁷ *Men.* 79c. Cf. *Men.* 71b, 86c-d, 100b. The *Meno* concludes with a suggestion to the effect that a correct definition of virtue may yield a quite different view concerning people who are virtuous than the present, conventional, view. See Bluck's note on 100a, p. 434. Cf. *Lys.* 223b; *Euth.* 6e; *Charm.* 176a-b.

examples in question.¹⁸ I think that the basic reason Plato downgrades the probative force of substantive *endoxa* is that they are most often merely conventional opinions.

If the myth of Recollection suggests that the practical knowledge "within ourselves" that can be recovered are *endoxa*, we must conclude, from what I have argued, that it is not substantive *endoxa* that guarantee such knowledge. These endoxic opinions may be recalled, as Meno does, but the recollection of these opinions has no epistemic value.¹⁹ It would seem, therefore, that the *endoxa* that are intimately tied to the theory of Recollection are regulative *endoxa*. If, in the *Meno*, practical knowledge is based upon some sort of *endoxa*, and substantive *endoxa* are eliminated as the source of practical knowledge, Plato, by a process of elimination, is left with regulative endoxic principles as the premises

¹⁸ In the *Meno* Socrates' uses the regulative endoxic premise virtue is something good to defend the opinion, "virtue is *phronesis*, either as a whole or in part." On the basis of this premise, he eliminates proposed values of the soul which do not entail knowledge. Thus if actions which are thoughtless purport to be courageous acts, this cannot be the case, since courage is a virtue, for such acts will be harmful. But there are examples of generally accepted cases of courage which are not based upon thoughtful action, e.g., some cases of boldness which are generally thought to be examples of courage are not cases of true courage (*Men.* 88b; cf. *Lach.* 196d-197c). For a similar view, but one based upon the premise, virtue is something *kalon*, see *Prot.* 350b-c.

¹⁹ It is a commonplace of Platonic scholarship to maintain that the characters in a Platonic dialogue must be understood in order to comprehend the dialogue itself. The *Meno* is no exception. For example, Klein argues that understanding who Meno is helps us to understand virtue, for as he represents the identity of ignorance and depravity, by contraposition we can recognize the Socratic belief that virtue is knowledge. Jacob Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's Meno* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965), pp. 200-201. More pertinent to our problem is Meno's reliance on his memory rather than on rational inquiry (following the argument wherever it goes). As Klein says, "He [Meno] seems to be nothing but his 'memory'" (p. 72). His mind is a repository for the "widely accepted views" (p. 80) he has acquired, and "we cannot help gaining the impression that the remembered opinion of someone else *always* 'accompanies' what Meno thinks" (p. 71). To draw a parallel to Klein's point mentioned above, we learn from Meno that just as non-learners (in a Socratic sense) rely exclusively on sense perception and memory without subjecting the consequent opinions to critical inquiry, so people who do subject their perception-based opinions to critical inquiry (so as to produce inquiry-based recollections) are learners. Indeed, Meno's conception of learning (overreliance on sense perception and memory) is as much a parody of Socratic Recollection as the aviary illustration in the *Theaetetus* is. Meno's mind is like the passive receptacle symbolized by Plato's aviary. A mind full of "memories", some of which are true and some of which are false, can be recalled, but how can Meno distinguish between a bird of knowledge and one of ignorance by relying on his own intuitions?

which provide the basis of practical knowledge. In an earlier article on the *Meno*, I attempted to show that regulative *endoxa* are necessary for guiding Socratic inquiry in the *Meno* to a positive, satisfactory result. It might be helpful to summarize my argument for this point in order to understand the connection between regulative *endoxa* and the theory of Recollection.

In the *Meno* Plato uses a method of elimination based upon regulative endoxic premises which implicitly leads to a positive, acceptable conclusion about virtue. The method has the following form. A number of alternatives are considered as possible solutions, and regulative endoxic premises guide the inquiry by an eliminative procedure. The premises and the alternative solutions are *endoxa*. Falsification (elimination) is based upon non-accordance with one or more of the regulative premises. The opinion(s) that accords with all the regulative premises is probably the correct solution, i.e., X is probably the correct solution, because it is not eliminated by the regulative premises, and the other plausible solutions are eliminated. I turn, now, to the argument in the *Meno*.

The following regulative premises are revealed in the inquiry:

- (1) Socrates' requirement for a definition of virtue: A definition of virtue must be able to make virtue manifest in its wholeness rather than its parts (W).
- (2) A derivative requirement: A definition of virtue should incorporate the grounds for distinguishing the (specific) virtues from the corresponding vices (V).
- (3) The differentiation between virtues and vices must be made on the basis of being able to correctly distinguish apparent from real goods (R).
- (4) "Virtue is a good, and, as such, is always beneficial" (G). (G) and (W) appear to be the essential regulative *endoxa*.

Determining the alternative(s) that alone accords with (G) —i.e., is a good— entails determining the alternative that accords with (R). But in conforming to (R), we may think that the definition will distinguish cases of virtue from cases of vice. In so doing, we may hope that it accords with (W), and, consequently, solves the problem. Thus the inquiry has led us on to (G) as the regulative premise essential to the solution of the problem.

According to my analysis of the argument in the *Meno*, the substantive opinions, virtue is knowledge of a kind (K) and virtue is a form of true opinion (TO), are the most plausible candidates for a solution. Both can be seen to accord with (G), (R), and (V), but neither, by themselves, conform to (W) in one sense: the whole of virtue has different kinds of virtue as parts, e.g., of a man, woman, child, freeman, slave. Both (K) and (TO) are necessary to characterize virtue as a whole in this sense. But the whole of virtue can also be characterized in terms of specific virtues (as parts), e.g., wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage. In my analysis, I attempt to show that in this sense of (W), both (K) and (TO) can be seen to conform to (W), but (K) conforms to (W) in a more ideal sense than does (TO).

Sesonske argues that the theory of Recollection attempts to answer the question, how do we know that we have found the truth when we find it?²⁰ Since White correctly suggests that Meno's paradox is about the possibility of successful inquiry, the problem is one of recognizing when an inquiry is successful.²¹ In discussing the myth of Recollection, Socrates says that the soul has learned everything (*Men.* 81c-d), and, on the basis on this, Sesonske argues that "in this inarticulate knowledge in the soul lies the possibility that we may recognize the truth when we come upon it in inquiry."²² I agree with Sesonske. However, I think he misses the point in arguing that "when the Socratic inquiry reaches the 'thing we are looking for' we simply know that is it—we could not say how, nor does Socrates try to explain how."²³ His point illustrates the dangers of attempting to understand the theory of Recollection by relying exclusively on mental perception. It is as if we know by again mentally perceiving (recalling) what we originally saw while following Zeus to the heaven above the heavens. But we say that the *Meno* connects the theory of Recollection with rational justification in inquiry and not directly with mental perception. Socrates argues that when we "tie down" true opinions, by "working out the reason," these opinions become knowledge. "That process, my dear Meno, is recollection" (*Men.* 97e-

²⁰ Sesonske, p. 19.

²¹ White, p. 43.

²² Sesonske, p. 91.

²³ Sesonske, p. 91.

98a).²⁴ Because of this, Socrates can distinguish between true opinion and knowledge.

Given my analysis, then, it should be clear how one recognizes when an inquiry is successful. I have argued that in order to understand the theory of Recollection in the *Meno*, one should distinguish between substantive endoxic opinions, which purport to correctly define virtue, and regulative endoxic premises, which guide the inquiry by providing the evaluative criteria. One "recognizes" a definition of virtue to be correct (or, at least, a part of the correct answer) when it accords with all the regulative premises. That is, recollection of a form (as knowledge) occurs when one realizes or recollects that one knows what one knows, and this is based upon "working out the reason."

One may argue that even if my analysis in this section is correct, it takes no account of the emphasis placed on mental perception in the theory of Recollection presented in the *Phaedo*. Does mental perception play any part in the inquiry-based theory of Recollection in the *Meno*, and if it does, how is it connected with Socratic inquiry in this dialogue?

III The *Meno* and the Theory of Recollection – Part 2 Mental Perception, Rational Inquiry and Justification

In what follows I shall argue that, in the *Meno*, mental perception and rational inquiry are necessary in discovering both plausible opinions and regulative *endoxa*. Indeed, inquiry and mental perception are interconnected. But discovering X and justifying X are not identical. Justifying a definition of virtue requires both the discovery and defense of relevant regulative *endoxa*. Thus it may be argued that mental perception is a necessary condition for knowledge (discovering plausible opinions and regulative *endoxa*), but it is not both necessary and sufficient.

One may argue that the discovery of a correct substantive opinion about some subject is dependent upon mental perception as well as rational justification in inquiry. Meno's opinions are substantive *endoxa*. However, Socratic inquiry is basically share or cooperative inquiry, and it is the quality of such inquiry that determines plausible opinions. The quality of an inquiry depends, in part, on the degree of order or

²⁴ Klein, p. 248.

rationality exhibited, i.e., being willing and able to inquire systematically so as to overcome difficulties in preceding opinions.²⁵ An opinion will have some plausibility if it is a reasonable attempt to counter previous difficulties. Important difficulties are revealed by lack of accord of the substantive opinions with the relevant regulative *endoxa*. We are systematically led on by what may be called the connectedness of opinions (in shared inquiry, opinions presented are connected in that succeeding opinions purport to counter difficulties in preceding opinions) so that, hopefully, the plausible opinions can be uncovered.²⁶ More precisely, the perception of problems with the opinions offered in inquiry is often dependent upon the recollection of relevant regulative *endoxa* [opinion X is seen not to accord with a relevant premise(s)], and the inquiry progresses when one attempts to perceive (recollect) an opinion that accords with the relevant regulative premise(s) uncovered in the inquiry. That is, the inquiry progresses when one attempts to perceive (recollect) an opinion that overcomes the objection(s) to the preceding opinion(s). Thus it is possible to argue for some connection between recollection and mental perception. One should remember, however, that a distinction must be made between discovering plausible opinions and justifying them.

The discovery of substantive *endoxa* in inquiry is a recollective process, but we must distinguish between perception-based (see the *Phaedo* discussion) and inquiry-based recollection; it is this latter form of

²⁵ In the Slave Boy illustration Socrates mentions one rule for conducting a Socratic inquiry, viz., one ought to recollect the steps in an argument in an orderly way (*Men.* 82e). Robinson maintains that "the general idea of orderly progression, of doing one thing first in order to get at what you really want, is very common in the dialogues." Richard Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 63.

²⁶ The quality of a Socratic inquiry, and the consequent determination of the possible, plausible solutions, also depends upon highlighting basic problems. A Socratic inquiry can exhibit progress on the surface, while on a deeper level substantial progress is not made. For example, Socrates maneuvers each of Meno's attempts at a definition of virtue into examples of breaking up the whole of virtue into parts. Since solutions are solutions to problems, a proper solution can only be forthcoming if the fundamental problems are uncovered. Recurring problems, such as the persistent violation of the (W) requirement, is illustrative of such a basic problem. Understanding these problems, then, is essential for delimiting the area in which the most plausible solutions are to be found. Highlighting basic problems depends upon the ability of interlocutors to recognize false or dead end tracks (those leading to basic difficulties).

recollection that is important in our analysis.²⁷ In the context of the *Meno* argument for virtue, Meno recalls the definition, virtue is the power of governing mankind, as an attempt to meet the (W) requirement. Possibly, he recalls the definition, "virtue...is when he who desires the honorable is able to provide it for himself," as a way of conforming to (V) and also to (W). However, one may doubt that Meno is very conscious of the requirements revealed by the inquiry. If he were not so intellectually lazy (*Men.* 86b-c), he would have been able, by considering the previous inquiry, to "perceive" the (G) requirement and (K) solution. Due to the acceptance of the regulative *endoxa*, one is forced to recollect opinions that meet these requirements. Rational recollection, as I have argued, is intimately tied to both rational perception and rational inquiry. However, if these possible opinions were only recollected as conventional beliefs, rather than those which are "seen" to be required by the inquiry, the correct solution would not be forthcoming. The following opinion of Gadamer, if applied to regulative *endoxa*, captures what I consider important.

Questioning is seeking, and as such it is governed by what is sought. One can only seek when one knows what one is looking for. Only then, only with what is known in view, can one exclude the irrelevant, narrow the inquiry down, and recognize anything. That is what the *Meno* teaches us.²⁸

Having discussed the problem of discovering plausible substantive *endoxa*, we should now consider how regulative *endoxa* can be discovered. I have maintained that these premises are essential to Socratic dialectic in the *Meno*; that is, the uncovering of the relevant regulative *endoxa* is essential to Recollection. This process, like the procedure for discovering plausible substantive *endoxa*, is associated with rational inquiry rather than non-inquiry-based recollection. Although the discovery of regulative *endoxa* involves mental perception or intellectual intuition, such discovery takes place within the context of

²⁷ Vlastos makes this distinction when he maintains, "In the *Meno* Plato speaks of recollecting opinions as suggested ("awakened") by questions (86A 6; cf. *Phaedo* 73A 7) not by sense experience; the latter point is first made in the *Phaedo* (73c 6ff)." Gregory Vlastos, "Anamnesis in the *Meno*," *Dialogue* 4 (1965): 148, n.7.

²⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, trans. with intro. by P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 59.

rational inquiry. In the *Meno* (W), which Socrates thinks is essential for the conduct of the inquiry, is not discovered in the inquiry, but Socrates attempts to defend it as an essential requirement for such an inquiry, and he seems to convince Meno by appealing to *endoxa*.²⁹ The other regulative premises, which are required for the inquiry to be satisfactory, are derived from the inquiry itself. (V) and (R) are implicit in the inquiry—they are seen to be rationally required. (R) leads to (G), for unless something is a real, rather than apparent, good (really, rather than apparently, beneficial), it cannot be a virtue. Generally, in the course of rational inquiry, regulative *endoxa* are recollected as criteria related to perceived problems with substantive *endoxa*. However, although used by Socrates with negative force, they purport to lead, as Socratic Recollection is supposed to do, to knowledge. How may we discover such *endoxa* in inquiry? The following is an example from the *Meno*. We are looking for some requirement which can help us discover a definition of virtue which accords with (W). Socrates' criticism of Meno's third attempt at a definition helps one to recognize that unvirtuous or bad actions are based, at least in part, on not distinguishing real from apparent goods. The discussion of the second part of Meno's definition also helps us to recognize this. Thus (R), which leads to (G), grows out of reflection on the argument. Socrates helps us to recollect, and therefore to "see", by means of the shared inquiry, what we may not have "seen" without his help, and what is required for the progress of the inquiry, namely, the regulative *endoxa*. No wonder that Socrates argues that inquiry, as well as knowledge, is recollection.

Having shown that Socratic Recollection involves mental perception and rational justification in inquiry, we might return to the doctrine of Recollection in the *Phaedo* and attempt to determine its connection with the above discussion of Socratic Recollection in the *Meno*.

We have seen that, in the *Phaedo*, Cebes emphasizes inquiry rather than mental perception when he mentions the theory of Recollection (73a-b), but Socrates proceeds to show Simmias that learning is

²⁹ One may argue that it is by an appeal to endoxic opinions, which Meno shares, that Socrates finally convinces Meno to accept his position. See, for example, Bluck, pp. 217-218, notes on 71e1-7; G. C. Field, *Plato and His Contemporaries* (London: Methuen, 1948), pp. 103-104. If this is the case, it may be argued that implicit in received opinion is the view that there are common characteristics that make people virtuous. Cf. R. E. Allen, *Plato's 'Euthyphro' and the Earlier Theory of Forms*, *International Library of Philosophy and Scientific Method* (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), pp. 109-110.

recollection using examples drawn from perceptual experience (73c-d). The confusion which results from emphasizing mental perception in gaining knowledge while also suggesting that knowledge entails rational justification in inquiry was mentioned in the brief discussion of the *Phaedo*. My discussion of Socratic Recollection in the *Meno*, as a process of rationally associating ideas, helps to clear up some of the difficulty.

In Socratic inquiry, prodded by the discovery of objections or problems with the proposed opinions (with the help of the regulative *endoxa*), we are led on to perceive (discover) opinions which, hopefully, are more plausible than the preceding opinions by countering the objections to these opinions. Thus I argued that recollection, as a process of rationally associating ideas, yields a perception of new, and hopefully more plausible, substantive solutions, as well as regulative *endoxa*. However, this takes place in the context of rational inquiry, and Socratic inquiry purports to yield a justified solution. Since the association of ideas is based upon inquiry, principles pertaining to the logical or rational ordering of ideas apply rather than contiguity in time and space, as was the case with the perception-based recollection in the *Phaedo*.

Using association by resemblance —Socrates suggests how a portrait of Simmias can remind one of Simmias himself (73e)— Socrates, in the *Phaedo*, provides an analogue for the recollection (recognition) of the form of equality. Absolute equality is recollected in the following way. We may judge, for example, stones or sticks to be equal to one another. But we recognize that the equality, here, is relative rather than absolute, for they may appear equal to one person or in one respect, but unequal to another person or in another respect (74b).³⁰ According to Socrates, we are reminded of absolute equality (as an ideal standard or paradigm) by the imperfect approximations to this ideal in perceptual experience. We are puzzled by such problems that sense experience poses but cannot solve. However, the very perception of such problems necessitates a recognition of the existence of the forms, e.g., the form of equality (75b). That is, it is only by recognizing these forms as ideal standards that imperfect examples of the forms are determined and the relative degrees of imperfection of these instances can be measured.

We may draw a parallel between Socrates' discussion of the recognition of the form of equality and the recognition of regulative

³⁰ For a discussion of the ambiguity involved here, see K.W. Mills, "Plato's *Phaedo* 74b7-c6," *Phronesis* (1957): 128-133.

endoxa in the *Meno*. In the *Meno* one may consider the *phainomena* to be the substantive *endoxa* presented as definitions of virtue.³¹ But just as we are confused by problems in experience that sense perception cannot solve, so we are puzzled about problems with these substantive *endoxa* that our memory and sense experience cannot solve. Moreover, just as Socrates, in the *Phaedo*, insists that without a recognition of the form of absolute equality, puzzles relating to imperfect examples of equality in experience would not be perceived, so we can agree that, in the *Meno*, without a recognition of the relevant regulative *endoxa*, problems relating to the substantive endoxic definitions of virtue would not be perceived. The discovery (perception) of regulative *endoxa* is as dependent upon the existence of problems relating to the *phainomena* of inquiry as the discovery of the form of equality is dependent upon puzzles relating to sense experience. Moreover, just as the form of equality measures the degree of equality or inequality in physical objects that some people may judge equal to one another, so the regulative *endoxa* should be used as standards to measure the degree of accordance or lack of accordance of the substantive *endoxa*. Thus the *phainomena*, the substantive *endoxa* in the *Meno*, fall short of standards provided by the regulative *endoxa* in a way analogous to perceptual *phainomena* falling short of the standards provided by the forms.

We should now consider the problem of justifying regulative *endoxa*. Discovering regulative *endoxa* in inquiry and defending them are intimately connected but not identical. Mental perception and rational inquiry, as suggested above, are necessary for discovering these premises, but I shall argue that criteria for determining adequate regulative *endoxa* should also be provided. Insofar as the *Meno* gives hints for determining these criteria, they can be shown to be inquiry related.

Since the defense of regulative *endoxa* is essential to the Socratic enterprise, conceived of positively, the following difficult question must be faced squarely: Why, according to Plato, will the regulative *endoxa* in some inquiry have probative force? Positions familiar from the history of modern ethical theory suggest themselves. R.M. Hare would argue that his ethical regulative *endoxa*, i.e., prescriptivity and universalizability,

³¹ I am using the term '*phainomena*' in an Aristotelian sense. Owen remarks that, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle uses the term '*phainomena*' to mean *endoxa*. G.E.L. Owen, "Tithenai Ta Phainomena," in *Aristotle et les Problèmes de Méthode* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1961), p. 85.

have probative force because they are analytic; that is, one is constrained by linguistic necessity to accept them. Socrates, however, insists that interlocutors have the option of accepting or rejecting regulative *endoxa*; therefore, we do not seem to be constrained by linguistic necessity to accept them.³²

One might argue that although we are not linguistically constrained to accept regulative *endoxa*, they may be so widely accepted, and so little questioned, in a particular society that Socrates can use them without fear of contradiction. In this way Socrates can score dialectical points, but such a conception of regulative *endoxa* makes them contingent on specific societal beliefs. Therefore, they could not have the probative force that Socrates seems to attribute to them. It is here that the more mythical aspects of the theory of Recollection become important. The myth of Recollection does not suggest that what is recollected is contingent upon the peculiar values of particular societies. If the myth is applicable to knowing regulative *endoxa*, it would seem that they are concepts innate to human reason. Assuming that we have the requisite rational capacity and are not corrupted by vice, rational inquiry will reveal them as necessary to the inquiry. But it must be emphasized that Plato presents this as a part of the *myth*, and he tells us, in the *Meno*, that the only aspect of the myth about which he is sure is that it is better to inquire about what we don't know than to believe that such inquiry is pointless (*Men.* 86b-c). If we are to test the validity of the myth with regard to the position that regulative *endoxa* proposed by Socrates, in an inquiry, are innate, it would seem that we must participate in these inquiries and determine for ourselves whether the inquiry constrains us to accept them.

³² Socrates, in the *Meno*, maintains that the premises used by the dialectician are mutually agreed upon (*Men.* 75d; cf. *Rep.* 348a-b). They are offered, therefore, as premises which interlocutors will probably accept. Moreover, if an essential rule of dialectical inquiry is that the premises be mutually agreed upon, Socrates could not logically insist that a premise be accepted because it is analytic or linguistically necessary. This interpretation can be defended by considering Socratic practice. In the *Republic* Socrates wants to examine the position that perfect injustice is more profitable than perfect justice (*Rep.* 348b). He suggests the premise, justice is a virtue and injustice is a vice, which Thrasymachus rejects (*Rep.* 348c-d). Socrates does not attempt to logically force Thrasymachus to accept the endoxic premise by appealing to the meaning of words. On the contrary, he searches for another premise which can be mutually agreed upon and will refute Thrasymachus' position. Cf. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, p. 78.

The view that regulative *endoxa* are innate suggests the position, also familiar in the history of modern ethical theory, that these principles are synthetic a priori propositions known by intellectual intuition. The *Meno* does seem to suggest that regulative *endoxa* are innate. Overtly, we may not be aware of the regulative *endoxa* pertinent to guiding a specific inquiry, although they may well be the criteria we would accept if we were aware of them. Thus they may be in the mind, but remain unknown, i.e., not brought to consciousness.³³ There is a sense, then, in which they may not be known and a sense in which they are (they are latent in the capacity of human reason). However, I think that it is a mistake to equate Plato's position on this question with that of the ethical intuitionist. We may first note the general difficulty of maintaining the self-evidence of regulative *endoxa*.

If regulative *endoxa*, as necessary synthetic truths, are (rationally) self-evident, we would, evidently, have direct cognition of these truths. In virtue of this, there cannot, and need not, be any rational justification of these truths; reason, here, would function intuitively and not discursively, e.g., as in the case of grasping axioms in mathematics. Contemporary philosophers, however, have subjected the claim to self-evident truths in ethics to severe criticism. The claim to self-evident truths in mathematics has, itself, been questioned. Self-evidence has, often enough, turned out to be a will-o-the-wisp; how, then, can one say that our premises are self-evident? How can one distinguish between veridical and non-veridical intuitions? It would seem, then, that even if Socrates did think that his regulative *endoxa* were necessary synthetic truths, he could not plausibly argue, nor did he in fact argue, that they are intuitively self-evident—at least not in any sense that precludes further argument or justification. Mental perception appears to be necessary to discover regulative *endoxa*, but since they are not self-guaranteeing, such perception, by itself, does not constitute an adequate defense of them.³⁴

³³ Moravcsik, p. 59.

³⁴ Vlastos says that for Plato, in the *Meno*, recollecting truths means coming to know them from within ourselves. "Because 'in' one are the already know propositions from which one can derive knowledge of others, hitherto unknown, merely by seeing that they are entailed" (Vlastos, p. 159). Vlastos argues that the model for recollection in inquiry, according to Plato in the *Meno*, is deductive argument which leads to demonstrative knowledge (pp. 160-161). That is, recollection as a process of inquiry is deductive in form and leads to "formal certainty" (p. 163). According to my analysis, this view is mistaken. Demonstrative argument does not apply to Plato's theory of Recollection in the *Meno*. I have suggested that the regulative *endoxa* are not, and are not intended to

Nonetheless, although one may argue that a distinction between discovery and justification can be made with reference to plausible opinions as substantive *endoxa*, I have suggested that it is more difficult to make this distinction with reference to regulative *endoxa*. We must, therefore, consider the thorny problem of the defense of regulative *endoxa*.

It is important to note crucial dissimilarities between the ethical intuitionist's position concerning ethical principles and my view concerning regulative *endoxa*; the dissimilarities render regulative *endoxa* less prone to the types of criticisms that have been leveled against ethical intuitionists.

Henry Sidgwick calls a common type of ethical intuitionism "dogmatic intuitionism." This position maintains that general moral principles are self-evident, and that these "intuitions" can be supported by an appeal to what Sidgwick calls "common consent." This procedure, however, does not provide a way of evaluating the claims of more or less equally, but competing, endoxic principles. Clearly as, for examples, Sidgwick and D.D. Raphael argue, there may be more than one moral system implicit in common sense moral judgments. Moreover, an appeal to self-evidence, in putting an end to argument, may tend to reduce

be, axiomatic truths. Moreover, the eliminate form of argument in which plausible alternative solutions are evaluated by the regulative *endoxa* does not preclude more than one true solution, as I have argued. It is not enough, then, to say that X is the correct solution because it is entailed by the regulative *endoxa*, unless one has eliminated all other plausible, possible solutions. Finally, how can one ever determine that some proposed solution is certain? Can one be sure that one has uncovered every possible, plausible alternative? Can we be certain that the argument has run the gauntlet of every possible objection? There is a sense in which the diagonal which solves the Slave Boy's problem is symbolic of the fruitless quest for certainty. The value of the diagonal is 2 times the square root of 2. But there is no numerical expression for the square root of 2. More precisely, we can come increasingly closer to a numerical expression for the square root of 2, but such a numerical expression is an ideal limit which can be ever more closely approximated but never reached. Heath argues that "they [the Pythagorians] showed how to find any number of successive approximations to the value of $\sqrt{2}$ by finding any number of integral solutions of the above equations. The pairs of values of X, Y were called 'side-' and 'diameter-' (diagonal-) 'numbers' respectively and, as the values increase, the ratio of Y to X approximates more and more closely to $\sqrt{2}$." Thomas L. Heath, *Greek Mathematics* (New York: Dover Publications, 1963), p. 55. If knowledge implies certainty, then the procedure illustrated by the discussion between Socrates and Meno (of attempting to systematically eliminate inadequate opinions, leading to hopefully more adequate opinions) can only increasingly approximate the ideal limit of knowledge, but never reach it.

discussion, at this level, to a type of name-calling, i.e., X supposedly sees the truth of some ethical proposition, but Y does not.

It is important to understand that the above criticisms do not readily apply to regulative *endoxa*. The ethical rules and principles that ethical intuitionists (e.g., dogmatic intuitionists) most often consider are what we have called substantive *endoxa*. Although substantive *endoxa* are readily equatable with conventional opinions, regulative *endoxa* are not. Much of the criticism of appealing to *endoxa* in arguments is based upon the mistaken belief that all *endoxa* are conventional opinions, and, therefore, are subject to the objections to such beliefs. However, in contrast to conventional opinions, the *Meno* illustrates how looking for regulative *endoxa* stimulates, rather than stifles, inquiry by encouraging a search for agreed upon premises. Second, it shows how regulative *endoxa* can evaluate the claims of alternative substantive *endoxa*. Third, regulative *endoxa* are not substantive principles, in our sense, and, consequently, do not provide people with the type of beliefs they desire as conventional people. It is clear that the regulative *endoxa*, in the *Meno*, are not the concrete substantive answers that people want. Nor, for example, are the regulative *endoxa* Aristotle uses in Books I and X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It does not make much sense to argue that such endoxic premises as the good for man is a final end or is self-sufficient or is peculiar and proper to people or any of the other Aristotelian regulative premises (in the *Nicomachean Ethics*) provide a concrete answer to the question, what is *eudaimonia*? Moreover, the fact that regulative *endoxa* are useful for guiding inquiry but not for directly determining conduct, removes them from the personal concerns of people, and, therefore, from the source of much personal prejudice. Fourth, although substantive *endoxa* are well known, and therefore, useless to resolve doubts about the correctness of such beliefs, we are often not overtly aware of endoxic regulative premises even though they may well be the criteria we would accept if we were conscious of them. This is clearly illustrated in the *Meno*. One reason for this is that only philosophers, or people who are philosophical, seem to be concerned with investigating the grounds for our judgments, and, therefore, would attempt to determine the criteria they would accept as premises for guiding inquiries. One point that emerges from this, which I shall again consider, is that Plato is emphasizing rational acceptability rather than conventional acceptance with respect to regulative *endoxa*.

Many of the objections, therefore, to the so-called self-evident rules and principles (ethical substantive *endoxa*) of ethical intuitionism do not apply to regulative *endoxa*. Nonetheless, not all proposed regulative *endoxa* are adequate. Is it possible, then, to specify criteria for adequate regulative *endoxa*? I believe that the following requirements can be abstracted from an analysis of the *Meno*. One should note that these criteria are intimately related to rational inquiry.

In the *Meno* endoxic premises which are regulative must not only state requirements for putative definitions of virtue, they (one's proposed set of regulative *endoxa*) must effectively bring the inquiry to a positive result.³⁵ Second, this positive result should provide an explanation of our ethical experience, and unify it into a whole. In the *Meno* (W) states the criterion of a coherent view, viz., one which unifies the "parts," and the other regulative *endoxa*, especially (G), are indispensable to the realization of such a coherent view. In the *Meno* it is fundamentally by discovering *phronēsis* that the basis for, and unification of, the specific virtues is determined, and the virtues of different types of people can be explained. Third, ideally, regulative *endoxa* should be universally acceptable. Concerning universality, one may remark that regulative premises which are controversial would require some procedure for adjudicating the differences. Since we have reached, with regulative *endoxa*, what may be called the limiting conditions of Socratic dialectic, it would be difficult to provide such a procedure. In spite of the difficulty, as Plato shows with the (W) criterion, possibly conditions may be advanced, e.g., on the basis of other accepted views, that can at least reduce disagreement. The nature of the acceptance or agreement in the criterion, universally acceptable, must also be considered. Here, the importance of rational inquiry as a supplement to mental perception is clearly in evidence.

Using my discussion concerning the discovery of regulative *endoxa*, one can distinguish rational acceptability from conventional acceptance. Conventional acceptance can readily lead to name-calling, if one does not agree with the so-called best people. Socrates does not resort to such

³⁵ These requirements help to distinguish regulative from substantive *endoxa*. Particular or general substantive *endoxa*, in the *Meno*, purport to tell us something concrete about virtue or are proposed definitions of virtue respectively. At best, such *endoxa* can guide conduct, but, unlike regulative *endoxa*, they cannot, and are not intended to, guide inquiry. Thus there is no way in which they can effectively bring an inquiry to a positive conclusion.

a low tactic, for Socratic inquiry, itself, helps one to determine what is rationally acceptable. Regulative endoxic principles arise out of a specific inquiry by rational agents reflecting on the requirements of that inquiry, and on the opinions offered as answers to the problem (s). We are not concerned, here, with mere acceptance, or with a conventional type of acceptance, but rather with principles which, on reflection, are deemed acceptable.

My final point is that we should insulate ourselves from potentially prejudiced substantive *endoxa* in order to ensure impartiality in the acceptance of regulative *endoxa*. A corollary of this is Socrates' methodological point: regulative premises should be accepted, not for the sake of argument or unreflectively, but because we honestly believe that they do adequately express our regulative beliefs relative to some inquiry.³⁶ Consider the following problem. What if, on the basis of determining the consequences of the use of a set of regulative *endoxa*, we opt for changing one or more of the premises in order to hold some preferred substantive endoxic opinion? A claim of foul might be lodged against this move, if we accept the above Socratic corollary. However, the problem is deeper. How can a set of alternative possible solutions be evaluated if, each time some preferred alternative is rejected, we opt to reject the regulative endoxic premise instead? Not only can we claim partiality to one's pet conclusion(s) on the part of the inquirer, but the basis of such rational inquiry is, in effect, nullified.

The above analysis of the doctrine of Recollection might give one the misleading impression that, for Plato, this theory is explained sufficiently by properly analyzing Socratic dialectic. This view does not adequately account for the fact that the theory of Recollection is presented in the form of a myth.

I have argued that the ability to correctly recollect the solution to the problem, what is virtue, depends upon the adequacy of the regulative *endoxa*. But the comprehension of both the specific regulative premises and the criteria offered for determining their adequacy, to some extent, point beyond what we find in the dialogue. Meno's attempts to define virtue continually fragment the whole of virtue into parts. But it is far from easy to fulfill the (W) requirement, for knowledge of the whole of virtue necessitates an understanding of the human soul as a whole. However, such comprehension points to an understanding of the cosmos

³⁶ *Crito* 49d; *Lach.* 193c; *Men.* 83d; *Parm.* 137b.

—*the whole*— which provides a paradigm for the human soul. For Plato the individual and the city (in the *Republic*) and the city and the cosmos (in the *Timaeus*) are analogous. Again, besides the (W) requirement, the other essential regulative *endoxa* is the (G) premise, but one must understand the good to properly understand this premise; does this not again point to the cosmos as the paradigm for *the whole* that is good? Finally, the coherence requirement for regulative *endoxa* clearly points in the direction of the above paradigm of wholeness, and the hope of discovering universally acceptable regulative *endoxa* may also point in the same direction—in this case, certain innate ideas “in” the human soul which mirrors the cosmic soul.

The myth of Recollection emphasizes the connection between the human soul and the whole. “All nature is akin, and the soul has learned everything [‘all things here and in the other world’] so that when a man has recalled a single piece of knowledge...there is no reason why he should not find out all the rest” (*Men.* 81c-d). Therefore, everything that the soul recollects can be understood as a part of the whole—the cosmos.³⁷ This brings us to the importance of Platonic myth. Plato develops his analysis of the cosmos in the context of a myth (the *Timaeus*), and he elaborates on the Recollection myth in the cosmic setting of the *Phaedrus* myth (246a-256e). In the *Phaedrus* Plato suggests that we can only describe the human soul mythologically (246a), but such a description by “resemblances” entails a cosmic setting. Socrates insists that he practices dialectical inquiry and is not a mythologist or a teller of stories (see, for example, *Phaedo* 61b). Yet, in the Platonic dialogues he often constructs myths. Myths are poetic and, according to Strauss (in commenting on Plato’s *Republic*), “the genuine ‘quarrel between philosophy and poetry’ (607b5-6) concerns, from the philosopher’s point of view, not the worth of poetry as such, but the order of rank of philosophy and poetry. According to Socrates, poetry is legitimate only as ministerial...to the king (597e7) who is the philosopher, and not as autonomous.”³⁸ Strauss argues that, according to Socrates, the poets understand the nature of the passions, but are unwilling to be directed by the philosopher’s wisdom. The Platonic dialogue is an excellent example of poetry subordinated to philosophy.³⁹

³⁷ See Klein, p. 96.

³⁸ Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1964), p. 136.

³⁹ Strauss, pp. 136-137.

Strauss’s position, I believe, has merit. If this is true, Platonic myths combine truth with fiction (*Rep.* 377a). As Friedländer suggests, like Socratic irony, a myth is ironic, for it both reveals and conceals.⁴⁰ In an insightful passage about Platonic myths, Friedländer says,

The achievement of the myth is that it renders intelligible the mysterious aspects of life, and it does so not only by evoking a vague sentiment. Our intuitive imagination is led along a clear and firm path of ancestral tradition; both the knowledge gained through the dialectical method and the moral obligations immediately felt lead to the myth, and the myth leads back to knowledge and obligation.⁴¹

If my analysis is correct, it shows how Platonic myth (poetry) is subordinated to Platonic philosophy. In the *Meno* Socratic dialectic points the way to the myth of Recollection, and this myth, as presented in the *Meno*, points the way to its elaboration in the *Phaedrus* myth and the paradigmatic *Timaeus* myth. Nonetheless, these myths require the rational support of dialectical inquiry.

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⁴⁰ Paul Friedländer, *Plato: An Introduction*, vol. I, trans. Hans Meyerhoff (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), p. 209.

⁴¹ Friedländer, p. 210.