

Jamar Johnson

Phi101:Introduction to Philosophy

LOUIS SANCHEZ

04/17/2023

### Reading Questions Week 1

#### **Plato, "Innate Knowledge" (*Meno*) – pp. 3-12**

1. What does Meno accuse Socrates of at the start of the reading? How does Socrates interpret this criticism?

Meno compares Socrates to a torpedo fish who uses his inquiries to numb people's minds. Meno feels Socrates possesses a kind of wisdom that he does not, which Socrates perceives as a praise, calling Meno a flatterer. He contends that by challenging people's assumptions, he might get them to consider their beliefs more carefully. Additionally, he asserts that Meno's charge is an illustration of the Sophists' rhetorical strategy, which focuses on convincing others rather than pursuing the truth.

2. Explain the paradox/problem (the "Learner's Paradox") that Meno and Socrates talk about on the second page, concerning enquiry and learning and interpreting what we know

Meno and Socrates examine the conundrum of how it is possible to enquire about or seek knowledge about something that one does not already know. According to Socrates, learning is the process of recalling or remembering what the soul already knows. However, this assumption that the soul existed before the body and senses creates a new issue. This raises questions about the nature of knowledge and whether it comes from experience or is innate.

3. Explain Plato's theory of innate knowledge, and how Socrates's conversation with Meno's servant boy is an attempt to demonstrate its truth. According to Plato's conception of innate knowledge, humans are born with knowledge that cannot be learned or obtained by sensory experience. By demonstrating that the youngster was

able to solve a challenging arithmetic problem without any prior instruction, Socrates intended to prove the validity of this notion. He contended that the boy was not being taught anything new by the questioning and prompting, but rather was being reminded of what he already understood. The proof provided by this example supports Plato's thesis of intrinsic knowledge.

**Aristotle, "Demonstrative Knowledge", pp. 18-21:**

1. In your own words, explain the deductive aspect of Aristotle's view of how we gain knowledge. What is a syllogism? What is a demonstration? Aristotle's syllogism is a logical argument made up of three parts: a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion, which is indubitably deduced. Demonstrations are deductive arguments that prove a statement is true using logical reasoning and premises that are known to be true. They are applied to prove the correctness of a theory or concept in both philosophy and mathematics.

2. What point does Aristotle make about how deduction by itself doesn't lead to truth about the world?

According to Aristotle, deduction is only valid if the premises are genuine and exact representations of reality, and precise premises for deduction to be valid require knowledge gleaned through experience and observation.

3. Present in your own words the inductive process of gaining knowledge according to Aristotle, including the role of the senses, memory and generalization. Observing specific instances of a phenomenon and using those observations to draw generalizations or principles is the inductive method of learning. For example, we observed fish, and we can see a pond full of fish with all different kinds of colors, we may be able to infer a general principle that all fish live in water and they have a backbone even if they have different colors and patterns.