Recollection and the Slave Boy

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RECOLLECTION AND THE SLAVE BOY

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A Thesis submitted to the Department of Philosophy in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Degree Awarded: Spring Semester, 2004
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to investigate what recollection in the *Meno* entails. In other words, what does the demonstration with the slave intend to show? Does the slave boy recollect Forms? Does the boy recollect empirical as well as *a priori* truths? What is the difference between true belief and knowledge as presented in the demonstration? In order to answer these questions, I outline each of the slave boy’s responses to Socrates’ questions with the intent of figuring out when and if recollection occurs in the dialogue.

I begin this project by investigating whether or not sense experience is a factor in recollection. In other words, I investigate the role that the diagrams play in the demonstration. I argue that the diagrams are a dispensable component in the process of recollection. The reason for this is that the process of recollection can be accomplished without their use. Plato’s ultimate intent in the demonstration is to show that the proof can only be done theoretically, that is, with the answer in front of the boy at the outset of the demonstration, the boy needs to work out the solution using his mind’s own resources.

The second component of this project is Dominic Scott’s distinction between the interpretations of recollection ‘K’ and ‘D.’ According to ‘K,’ recollection is used to explain how we form conceptual knowledge, understanding is therefore, the product of information provided by the senses and universal notions. According to ‘D,’ the purpose of recollection is to scrape away all of the deceptive notions provided by sense experience to reveal the Forms which lie beneath.

My main target throughout is Scott’s interpretation ‘D.’ I argue that nowhere in the dialogue does Plato explicitly or implicitly that sense experience is deceptive or that it is necessary to connect with universal notions. Contrary to this interpretation, I argue that recollection in the *Meno* occurs as merely a rough deduction of an interlocutor’s questioning. In other words, the slave boy deduces from a series of questions provided by Socrates the answer to the geometrical problem.

My secondary target is Bedu-Addo, who contends that the purpose of recollection is to stir up true beliefs of what a square is like in order to connect with the Square Itself. I argue that Bedu-Addo’s thesis rests on a faulty interpretation of the text. Nowhere in the dialogue, in the demonstration or elsewhere, does Plato tell us that the purpose of recollection is to reconnect with the Forms.
INTRODUCTION

The *Meno* begins like other Early Socratic Dialogues\(^1\), that is, it begins with an investigation into something ethical. In the *Meno* this investigation involves the search for an appropriate definition of excellence (*aretê*). However, something odd happens a third of the way through the dialogue (80a). After three unsuccessful definitions of excellence are investigated, Meno revolts and refuses to proceed with the investigation. Meno likens Socrates to a flat-fish (*narkê ouden thalattia*), who "always numbs whoever comes near and gets into contact with it" (80a6-7). Socrates responds that he is like the flatfish only in respect to being numb:

And now concerning virtue, I do not know what it is, you perhaps knew prior to coming into contact with me, but now you are like someone who does not know. (80d1-4)\(^2\)

After Socrates insists that the search for *what virtue is* should continue (80d4-5), Meno asks the question that one would wish any Socratic interlocutor to ask of him:

And in what way are you going to search for this, Socrates, since you do not altogether know what it is? For which of the things you don’t know will you set up when searching for it? And if you do happen to come to it, how will you know that this is the thing which you didn’t know? (80d5-8)

With Socrate’s clearer restatement\(^3\), Plato presents us with a new attack upon the Socratic *Elenchos*; inquiry is impossible into that which one knows and that which one does not know (80e). Likewise with the appearance of Meno's paradox\(^4\), we also find Plato developing an answer to this challenge: *what we normally call learning is just*

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\(^1\) *Euthyphro, Ion, Laches, Lysis, Hippias Major, Charmides*, and *Republic I* are traditionally held to be definitional dialogues.

\(^2\) All translations will be my own, with a little guidance from Dancy and Sharples, unless otherwise specified.

\(^3\) I know what you mean Meno. Do you see what an eristic argument you are bringing down on us, that it’s impossible for a person to search either for what he knows or for what he doesn’t? He couldn’t search for what he knows, for he knows it and no one in that condition needs to search; on the other hand he couldn’t search for what he does not know, for he will not even know what to search for (81e1-7).

I agree with White and Nehamas that there is no substantial difference between Meno’s statement (80d6) and Socrates’ (80e). White is correct when he states, “What Socrates does is simply to make clear that Meno’s puzzle can be cast in the form of a dilemma” (168).

\(^4\) I shall heretofore refer to the conjunction of Meno’s statement at 80d and Socrates’ statement at 80e as Meno’s Paradox.
recollection. While this strange answer seems to solve Meno’s paradox, it seems, at least for Plato, to be more than merely a solution to an eristic puzzle.

When Socrates answers Meno’s Paradox by stating that learning is really just recollection (81d5), Plato presents us with the most interesting attempt at proving that learning is really recollection (anamnēsis). Plato sets out to demonstrate recollection through the examination of one of Meno’s many attendants. While Plato may have had misgivings about whether or not the demonstration actually proves that recollection is the case (86b6), the demonstration does, at least in one sense attempt to provide some sort of formal proof that Plato believed theory to be plausible.

With this in mind, it is the purpose of this essay to examine precisely, as much as textual evidence will allow, what the demonstration with the slave boy is purporting to show. In other words, assuming that recollection is in fact the case, and assuming that the demonstration is a paradigm example of the recollection process, what types of knowledge are possible under this theory? In this vein, the following questions will be considered:

1. Does the slave recollect empirical truths as well as a priori truths?
2. Does the theory entail that one is capable of recollecting both conceptual knowledge as well as propositional knowledge?
3. Are Forms recollectable?
4. Is true belief of a different origin than knowledge?

I will investigate the answers to these questions only within the scope of the Meno. While I may touch upon both the Phaedo and the Phaedrus, I will only do so as a basis for comparing recollection in the Meno with these later dialogues. I will not therefore, offer any interpretations of the arguments presented in the Phaedo nor the Phaedrus.

In what follows, I will argue that the best evidence in the Meno for the types of ‘things’, which can be recollected by the slave boy, indicates that they can only be a priori true beliefs. While the demonstration with the slave boy is not used to explain all the concepts and beliefs necessary for understanding Socrates’ questions, the demonstration does, however, show that the boy does acquire some beliefs which are necessary for figuring out the solution to the geometrical problem. Based upon this, I will argue that while the slave boy does acquire some true beliefs this in no way entails that the boy is

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5 Whether or not recollection does in fact solve Meno’s Paradox is not within the scope of this paper.
'recollecting' the Forms. Any notion of *anamnesis* as a reminiscence of Forms must be left for the later arguments in the *Phaedo*.

In order to show that what the slave boy recollects can only be relegated to *a priori* true beliefs, I will examine each of the slave boy's responses to Socrates' questions and break them down into the following categories:

1. Prior Knowledge- any concepts or beliefs which are already 'within' the slave boy before the examination begins.
2. Uncertainty- replies by which the slave boy either cannot provide or doesn't know the answer.
3. Aporia- puzzlement or impasse when faced with a question.
4. Agreement- replies that are in agreement with Socrates' assertions.
5. False belief- any replies which are believed to be true but are in fact false.
6. True belief- beliefs which are gained or ‘recollected’ during the demonstration, i.e. beliefs whose truth value is determined by ‘recollection’.

By placing each of the slave boy's responses into the appropriate categories, I intend to show that a few responses (and a few others which may be possible candidates) can lead one to conclude that ‘recollection’ does occur in the demonstration. Yet, this is not to say that ‘recollection’ is the case or that the boy possesses some sort of innate knowledge learned in a previous incarnation, but merely that he does acquire some true beliefs in the course of the demonstration. Likewise, I intend to show that some of the boy's responses may lead one to conclude that he does acquire some concepts necessary for understanding the solution to the geometrical problem. He acquires these concepts by deducing the consequences of a series of Socratic questions. In other words, at the very least the demonstration with the slave boy shows that ‘recollection’ is none other than deducing the consequences of questions posed in order to form a true belief concerning a given proposition. While I will not argue for the truth of recollection or that the boy's responses show that recollection is in fact the case, I will argue that based upon the available evidence, that is, the responses given by the slave boy, one can conclude that certain responses do support the general theory of recollection.

In the first section of this essay, I will outline Plato's argument for the theory of recollection in the *Meno* and likewise outline the supposed proof of the theory of recollection, the demonstration with the slave boy. In the second section of this essay, I will attempt to show that recollection in the *Meno* is not an empirical process and based upon this can only be relegated to *a priori* truths. In the third section, I will delve into two
interpretations of recollection in the *Meno*. One interpretation 'K' (for Kantian) states that Plato is advancing a thesis which is intended to show how conceptual thought is possible and that human understanding is the product of the information given to us by sense experience and innate universal notions. A second interpretation 'D', advanced by Dominic Scott, argues that the purpose of recollection is to scrape away all the deceptive notions given to us by sense experience in order to reveal what lies beneath. In other words, to reveal our innate knowledge of the forms. In the fourth section of this essay, I will outline each of the slave boy’s responses in order to determine if the demonstration provides any evidence for either ‘K’ or ‘D’. In the final section of this essay, I will argue that the *Meno*, provides little, if any, evidence that Plato was advancing a theory of Forms at the time of writing the dialogue. Before delving into these issues, it may be within our best interest to provide a brief outline of the *Meno* prior to the introduction of Meno's Paradox at 80d.

**What is Virtue?**

The *Meno* begins with Meno asking Socrates whether virtue can be taught or whether it is acquired by practice or given to man by nature (70a1). In reply, Socrates professes that he is unable to answer the question. He is so far from knowing whether it comes from teaching or not; he doesn't even know what virtue is itself (71a6-7). Since Socrates claims that he does not know what virtue is, Meno seems to be more than willing to remedy Socrates’ ignorance (71e).

But it is not difficult to say Socrates. First, if you wish to know virtue in a man, it is easy, virtue in a man is being able to take in the affairs of the city, and doing good to one’s friends and harm to one’s enemies and to be aware that he does not suffer anything like that. But if you wish to know virtue in a woman, it is not difficult to describe, that it is necessary that she manage the house well, both keeping up with the things of the house and being obedient to her husband. And there is another virtue in a child, female and male, and in an old man, or if you wish, a freeman, or if you wish, a slave. (71e3-72a5).

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6 Bluck views Meno’s opening statement as being abrupt, yet I see no reason to characterize it as ‘abrupt’ other than the fact that the *Meno* lacks the usual ‘stage-setting’ of other earlier dialogues.

7 Two versions of the Socratic fallacy appear in the *Meno*:
(A) In order to know that you are correctly predicating a given term “X” you must know what it is to be a “X”, in the sense of being able to give a general criteria for a thing’s being “X”.
(B) One cannot arrive at the meaning of “X” by giving examples of things that are “X”.

(A) Occurs at 71a5-7, 71b3-8, 80d1-2
(B) Occurs at 72a6-b8, 72c5-7, 74a5-8, 75a4-5, 77a5-9, 79b6-c2, 79c7-8, 79d7-10

For more on the Socratic fallacy see Beversluis, John “Does Socrates Commit the Socratic Fallacy?”
Meno’s first attempt to define virtue is to give instances of different varieties of virtue without saying what they all have in common. Therefore, when Meno attempts to define virtue as taking care of the affairs of the city, doing good to his friends and harming his enemies, Meno has violated one of the conditions for an appropriate Socratic definition. It is at this point that Socrates decides to show Meno what he is after, that is, not just a whole “swarm” (smēnoô) of virtues, but what virtue is itself (72a6b8). Based upon these Socrates attempts to give Meno further instructions as to what he wants:

Then this also concerning virtues; even if they are many and of all sorts, indeed they all have some one form (eidov) of which they are virtues (72c5-6).  

Meno’s second attempt to define virtue, “the ability to rule over men” (73c6) is refuted by Socrates much in the same way that Meno’s first definition was refuted. As Socrates observes, “the ability to rule over men” does not cover all of the instances of virtue. This definition will not apply because it excludes a slave or child, for example, and the qualification ‘justly’ must be applied. With this second attempt at a definition of virtue, Meno either is not listening or does not understand the kind of definition Socrates wants.

Again, Meno, the same thing has befallen us. Once again, we’ve found many virtues while searching for one, but in another way from last time; but the one [excellence] which is through all of these, this we cannot discover (74a5-8).

While Socrates states that they cannot discover the one virtue that extends through all of these, he does propose that he will attempt to get them closer to a unifying definition (74b3). It is at this point (74d-76d7) that Socrates attempts to give general criteria and sample definitions for an appropriate definition (see note 7).

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8 While no successful definition of virtue appears in the *Meno*, there is evidence as to what form an appropriate Socratic definition should look like. This evidence lies in some of Socrates’ various objections to Meno’s attempts at a definition of virtue. For instance, a satisfactory Socratic definition is (1) unitary, that is, Socrates will not accept a definition based upon different parts or different varieties of virtue. (2) The definition must include only those items which are actual instances of virtue. (3) The definition must not be circular. Evidence for this is provided by three definitions that Socrates supplies in order to show Meno what he is after.

1. Shape is the only thing there is which always accompanies color (75b9-10).
2. Shape is the limit of a solid (76a5-6)
3. Color is the effluence of shapes, commensurate with sight (76d6-7).


9 This second appearance of eidov (72c6) along with the first occurrence (71b3) should not be construed as Plato already having a full blown theory of Forms at the time of writing the Meno. Excluding the third occurrence of eidôs (80a5), which should be translated as appearance rather than form, in the *Meno* eidôs should be construed as having the same merit as that which occurs in the *Euthyphro*, that is, as Socrates asking for a unifying definition rather than as a metaphysical entity.
Meno’s third and final attempt at defining virtue, “desiring fine things and the ability to procure them” is again refuted by Socrates. The first half is ruled out on the grounds that no one desires bad things, and the second half, if ‘goods’ entail riches and honors, then the qualifications ‘just’ and ‘pious’ are needed as an addition to the definition. As before (73d7-9), the qualification ‘justly’ leads to a definition of virtue as done with a part of virtue.

Because just now I asked you not to break excellence up or cut it in pieces and gave you patterns (paradeigma) of how you ought to answer, and you’ve neglected this and said to me that virtue is being able to achieve good things with justice, but this [justice] you say is a part of virtue?

After another commentary on the failure of this third definition (79b3-c8), Socrates reiterates the question that began the dialogue: “Well, answer all over again then: what do you and your friend\textsuperscript{10} too, say virtue is?” (79e4-5). Unable to answer Meno is left in utter bewilderment.

Socrates, I used to hear before I met you that you are nothing other than perplexed yourself and make others perplexed; and now, as it seems to me, you are bewitching me with potions and spells, so that I have become filled with perplexity. (79e7-80a4).

While Socrates admits that he, like Meno is in a state of perplexity, Socrates wishes for the investigation to continue. It is at this point (80d5) that Meno spouts his paradox, which will prompt Socrates to offer a strange although, interesting response: the theory of recollection.

\textsuperscript{10} Presumably a reference to Gorgias. See 70b2, 71c5, and 71d4.
CHAPTER ONE
THE THEORY OF RECOLLECTION

The General Theory

Meno’s paradox (80d5) is more than just a linguistic puzzle. For Plato, the paradox has much broader consequences. First, the paradox is an obstacle for discovering appropriate Socratic definitions. Second, the paradox may give some indication that Plato was having misgivings concerning the approach toward discovering definitions. With this in mind, Plato answers the paradox with an elaborate response: what we normally call learning is just recollection.

The theory of recollection as presented in the *Meno* contains two parts. First, is a general account of the theory of recollection which highlights the ways through which one learns; call this account the *general theory*. Second, a proof of this general theory is provided through a demonstration with one of Meno’s slaves, call this the *demonstration of the theory*.

The general theory can be summarized in the following way: Since the soul is immortal we have in our previous lives seen and learned all things. What we normally call learning is just simply recollection. Furthermore, all the things that make up nature are related to each other and thus if we recollected one part, nothing prevents us from discovering all the rest.

Socrates begins the argument for recollection by first citing a poem by Pindar. With this in mind, Socrates states at 81a9 that he has heard from certain ‘priests and priestesses' that 'the soul of man is immortal'. Since the soul is immortal, the soul 'has been born many times and seen both what is here, and what is in Hades, and everything’ (81c4-5). Because the soul has 'seen everything', it is not surprising that it's possible to recollect both virtue and other things, since the soul has known them previously (81d). We can therefore reconstruct the argument as follows:

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11 Moravcsik makes a similar distinction between a general theory of recollection and a demonstration of the general theory (118).
12 While Socrates does begin by citing a poem by Pindar, the argument following this (81c5-e3) in no way depends on this metaphorical or poetic element.
1. The soul is immortal (81c5).
2. Since the soul is immortal then there is nothing the soul has not learned (81c5-8).
3. Therefore, there is nothing that the soul has not learned (1,2).
4. All nature is akin (81d).  
5. Since all nature is akin and there is nothing that the soul has not learned then there is nothing to prevent someone who recollects from discovering everything else (81d1-5).
6. Therefore nothing prevents one who recollects from discovering everything else (3-5).
7. If there is nothing that the soul has not learned and nothing prevents one who recollects to discover everything else, then there is no learning (81d1-7).
8. Therefore, what we normally call learning is just recollection (3,6,7).

With this reconstruction in mind, we can see that the general theory has a two-fold purpose. First, as a response to Meno's Paradox, that knowledge is in fact possible into that which one does not know; and second, that knowledge and inquiry into the nature of ethical definitions, such as excellence, are possible. Based upon this two-fold purpose, we can now view recollection as a theory, which can make fruitful inquiry possible. Despite the fact that various attempts at ethical definitions have failed in the past, recollection will guide us toward correct definitions. In other words, recollection in the Meno attempts to provide an answer to Meno's Paradox and to show that 'What is X?' questions are not in vain.

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13 Tigner, Steven S. in "On the 'kinship' of 'all nature' in Plato's Meno" remarks that a fundamental difference between the Meno and Phaedo is that 'kinship' in the Meno should not be construed as on par with the Phaedo's notion of "association". This is so, according to Tigner, because "the character of the connection of things which can serve as "reminders" of each other, in the Phaedo account, is explicitly left indeterminate." For instance, these "reminders" unlike the "kinship" could be any arbitrary link, such as, Lysis' lyre or a portrait of Simmias. Likewise, in the Phaedo account of "association", it is not meant to function and explain how one can after recollecting a single thing proceed to discover everything else. I have seen no reason to suspect that Tigner is incorrect in asserting this contrary to Bluck (288) who views "kinship" as an association of ideas on par with the Phaedo accounts.

14 A third possible purpose for the general theory is that it will 'make us lazy' and 'industrious and eager to search'(81e). In other words, Meno's Paradox will make one give up searching without even trying, while recollection will make one eager to search. Even though this is difficult, one can accomplish fruitful inquiry if 'he is courageous and does not give up'(81d4).
The Demonstration of the Theory

When Socrates concludes the argument for the general theory, Meno asks Socrates what he means by saying that all learning is recollection and can Socrates teach him that this is so (81e4-6). After another _ad hominem_ attack by Socrates (81de7), Socrates agrees to show Meno that recollection is in fact the case.

Well then, it is not easy, but all the same I’m willing to try for your sake. Call to me one of the many attendants you have here, whichever one you wish, so that I can demonstrate on him for you (82a7-b2).

According to Gregory Vlastos, we have in the _Meno_ a chance rare in Greek philosophy, to compare a philosophic theory with its data. In other words, we can compare the demonstration with the slave boy against the argument for recollection in order to see if the former supports the latter. The demonstration of the theory is the only formal proof that Plato believes that recollection is in fact the case; a demonstration of this sort does not appear in either the _Phaedo_ or the _Phaedrus_.

The demonstration of the theory begins with Meno, per Socrates' request, calling over one of his many slaves. With the introduction of the slave boy (82b2), Socrates intends to show Meno that learning is in fact recollection. The demonstration can be broken down into four main stages with each followed by a commentary in which Socrates explains to Meno what he is doing. In the first stage (82b4-e4), Socrates asks and explains the question, which will occupy the remainder of the demonstration.

Well, there could be another figure twice [the size] of this one [figure 1] but similar, having all its lines equal just as this [one]? (82d4-6)

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15 This follows from another instance of Meno's lack of awareness. After asking Socrates whether he can teach if recollection is the case (81e4) Socrates replies:

“Just now, Meno, I said you were a rascal, and now you ask me if I can teach you; I who say there is no teaching, only recollecting, clearly to show me up as immediately contradicting myself” (82a).
The first stage of the demonstration may in fact be unnecessary. It is merely purported as an 'instruction' for Meno that Socrates is not teaching the boy but merely asking him questions. Based upon this, the recollection process may in fact only encompass three stages.

When the slave boy answers that twice the size of a four-foot square is eight, Socrates asks:

Well now, try to tell me how big each line of that one [double the size] will be. For the line for this one is two feet; but what about the line of that one which is twice the size? (82d7-e2)

The slave boy, certain that his answer is correct, responds:

It is clear, then, Socrates, that it will be double [figure 2].

Socrates' first commentary, which immediately follows the first stage, remarks that the slave boy thinks that he knows the answer:16

Do you see, Meno, how I'm not teaching him this but asking him everything? And now he thinks he knows what sort of line it is from which the eight foot figure will come to be (82e3-6).

Meno replies that the slave boy does think that he knows when in fact he does not know. Based upon this, Socrates states Meno should watch him recollecting in order as one has to do (82e12).

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16 The first stage of the demonstration may in fact be unnecessary. It is merely purported as an 'instruction' for Meno that Socrates is not teaching the boy but merely asking him questions. Based upon this, the recollection process may in fact only encompass three stages.
In the second stage (82e14-84a2), Socrates refutes the slave boy’s initial answer that a line four feet in length will produce a square double the size of the original square. Socrates does so by first showing the boy that a line four feet in length will lead to the conclusion that the original square has now been quadrupled.

*Soc:* So, from twice [the length], boy, a figure double the size does not come to be but one quadruple the size [figure 3].

*Boy:* You speak the truth (83b8-c2).

Since Socrates has convinced the boy that double the area of a four-foot square will not come from a line double the size, Socrates reiterates the original question: what line will produce an eight-foot figure (83c5-6)? After getting the boy to assent that the line will have to be larger than the original line (2 feet) and smaller than the new line (4 feet), the boy remarks that the line must be three feet. Again after realizing that this line (4 feet) will not reach the desired result, the slave boy falls into aporia.

*Soc:* But from what sort [of line]? Try to tell us exactly; and if you don’t wish to put a number to it, otherwise point out from what sort [of line].

*Boy:* But by Zeus, Socrates, I don’t know (83e11-84a3).

Following the second stage (84a2) Socrates asks Meno whether the boy has been benefitted from being numb. After agreeing that the boy has benefitted, Socrates explains that they have in fact done a service to the boy: “At any rate, we have done something useful, it seems, towards discovering which way it holds; for now he could inquire gladly for what he doesn’t know,” (84b9-11). While this is the first remark made by Socrates that
recollection may in fact be an answer to Meno’s Paradox, Plato may also be, in this passage, comparing Meno’s perplexity with that of the slave boy’s.

And so, do you think he would have attempted to search or learn what he thought he knew not knowing, prior to falling into perplexity coming to think he didn’t know and longing for knowledge (84c4-7)?

Socrates remarks prior to the third section of the recollection process that Meno again should watch out in case he finds Socrates teaching the boy rather than merely asking questions. With this in mind Socrates proceeds to help the boy ‘recollect’ the correct answer. Socrates does so by asking the boy whether there are lines (diagonals), which can cut each of the two-foot area squares in half. [See Figure 4, below]

![Figure 4.](sixteen-foot square with diagonals)

When Socrates elicits the answer that double the area of a four-foot square comes from the diagonals of four squares of the same size, Socrates asks Meno whether, during the interrogation, the boy has provided any opinions that were not his own. When Meno again assents that the boy has provided his own opinions, Socrates describes to Meno the state of the boy’s knowledge at the end of the demonstration:

And now these opinions have been stirred in him just as in a dream. But if someone questions him in the same way many times and in many ways, you know that in the end he will come to have exact knowledge of these no less than anyone (85c9-d1).17

While the demonstration with the slave seems to be over, the recollection process has not ended. If the boy had continued recollecting then he would have knowledge of such

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16 In this passage, Socrates describes the slave boy’s knowledge in a similar way that Hobbes would later on describe ‘association of thoughts’ or in his terminology ‘mental discourse’. Hobbes states that thoughts are “unguided, without design and inconstant; wherein there is no passionate thought, to govern and direct those that follow... in which case the thoughts are said to wander, and seem impertinent [unrelated] one to another, as in a dream.” Leviathan, Chpt. III.
matters (in this case geometry) as thorough as anyone does. Therefore, the fourth stage in recollection is a tying down of true opinions because:

    For true opinions, as long as they would remain for a time, are useful and good and everything they do is good; but they are not willing to remain for a long time, but they run away from a man’s soul, so that they are not worth much, until someone ties them down by reasoning out the cause (97e7-98a4).

The purpose of the fourth stage is therefore to ‘tie down’ those true beliefs, which have already been recollected. One accomplishes this ‘tying’ down of true opinions by reasoning out the cause.

    Therefore, the demonstration of the theory involves four stages. The first stage involves both the introduction of the geometrical problem and involves the slave boy’s false belief. The second stage involves a refutation of these false beliefs and a falling into aporia. The third stage involves discovering the solution to the geometrical problem, while the fourth stage is used to tie down the opinions gained in stages one through three.

    Now that we have a basic summary of both the general theory of recollection and the demonstration of the theory, I will, in the next section argue that recollection is wholly an \textit{a priori} process.
CHAPTER TWO
A PRIORI OR EMPIRICAL PROCESS?

In "Anamnesis in the Meno", Vlastos asks a fundamental question that may or should cross any reader’s mind when attempting to understand the demonstration of the theory: “Can a process of discovery which leans so heavily on seeing- not in the sublimated sense, but in the literal one-be anything but an empirical process?”18 In other words, how can a process, which relies so heavily on sensory perception, that is, on diagrams, be anything but empirical in nature? While I completely agree with Vlastos’ assessment that the demonstration of the theory is not intended or should be taken in any way as an empirical process, I will in this section propose to strengthen Vlastos’ argument against those who view the demonstration as nothing but an empirical process.19 I will do so by showing that even if diagrams are utilized in the demonstration, sense experience cannot aid the boy in determining the solution to a given geometrical problem.

Before showing that sense experience cannot aid the boy in determining the solution, I will first outline more recent attempts to argue that sense experience and diagrams are an essential part to the recollection process.

Relying on Cebes’ statement at Phaedo 73a10-b1 "if one takes them to diagrams or any other of the things like that,”20 Bedu-Addo and Brown argue that diagrams are an essential component in the demonstration. In this regard Bedu-Addo states, "the summary of the Meno [sic] theory of recollection at Phaedo 73A-B indicates that Plato was aware of the importance of sensible diagrams in the slave boy experiment;" (230). Likewise, Brown states the following:

It is a curious point about Plato's own summary of the slave-boy passage in Phaedo 73A-B that the lesson is sharply divided into an "asking and answering questions" part and a part "based on diagrams." It is true that in the arithmetical part of the argument, the diagrams could have been eliminated without essential loss (the numbers suffice), and that in the geometrical part, they cannot. (my italics,61).

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19 Vlastos cites Ross, David in Plato’s Theory of Ideas [1951]. Pg.18.
20 R.M. Dancy's translation
Therefore, both Brown and Bedu-Addo hold that while sense-experience of diagrams does not constitute knowledge, sensory experience of diagrams is an "important element in the process of recollection" (236). In other words, the use of sensible diagrams will aid us in the process of recollection. As Bedu-Addo states, "it would seem that in the slave boy experiment, Plato, by the conspicuous use of sensible diagrams, is deliberately preparing his reader's minds for what is to come in the Phaedo, namely that sensible particulars are images of the Forms" (240).

While I shall in section five argue that recollection of Forms is nowhere apparent in the Meno, I shall first focus on Brown’s and Bedu-Addo’s claim that Cebes' statement at Phaedo 73a10-b1 entails that diagrams are a necessary component in the process of recollection.

First, the word used by Cebes, diagrammata, can sometimes be translated geometrical demonstration, mathematical proof or diagrams. While Bedu-Addo feels that diagrammata should be translated as diagrams, there does not seem to be any indication that Plato is not alluding to geometrical demonstration or mathematical proof. Despite this, Bedu-Addo feels that diagrammata must refer to the diagrams in the demonstration because we are explicitly told that the boy has never learned geometry (Meno, 85e). And likewise one can hardly expect the boy to be capable of doing a "rigorous" geometrical proof without diagrams (242). Although Bedu-Addo feels that diagrammata must be referring to both the difficulty of the geometrical proof and the lack of the boy's knowledge concerning geometry, it does not follow that this is what Cebes is actually referring to. In fact, diagrammata, if translated as 'geometrical proof' could just as easily be seen to referring to Socrates' statement at Meno 85c9-d1:

But if someone questions him in the same way many times and in many ways, you know that in the end he will come to have exact knowledge of these [geometry] no less than anyone (85c9-d1).

Even if we do grant Bedu-Addo's translation as 'diagrams' this in no way entails that Cebes is referring to the demonstration with the slave boy.21 The passage is too ambiguous to make such an assertion. If in fact, the translation should read as 'diagrams' we would, if it is a reference to the Meno, want Cebes to at least invoke the demonstration directly. We

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21 Klein makes a similar point when he states “But why should the words of Cebes (73a7-b2) imply an allusion to the episode in the Meno? (127).
would at least want Cebes to either mention the geometrical proof utilized in the demonstration or mention the boy directly.

Second, diagrammata is not the full thrust of Cebes' statement. In fact, Cebes' states, "diagrams or any other of the things like that". What could Cebes possibly mean by allo ti tôn toisotôn (any other of the things like that)? In other words, if we take diagrammata to be referring to the *Meno*, in what way should we be construing the right side of the disjunctive (any other of the things like that) as referencing? It could in fact be the case that Cebes is merely referring to the recollection process as a whole. But, even this assessment of Cebes' statement is faulty. Cebes' statement in the *Phaedo* is too ambiguous and unclear as to what he is referring to.

Despite the supposed ambiguity arising from Cebes’ statement, does the recollection process depend upon sensible diagrams as Bedu-Addo and Brown claim? In opposition to Bedu-Addo and Brown’s contention that the diagrams aid in the boy’s recollection, I shall maintain that the recollection process is in no way dependent on any sensory experience, diagrams or otherwise.

In order to show that diagrams or for that matter sensory experience is not a necessary condition for recollection, we should first look to the demonstration of the theory to see if in fact diagrams do help the boy to recollect.

According to Bedu-Addo, Socrates has drawn no less than sixteen diagrams (235). Despite the fact that the boy has seen all of the diagrams, Bedu-Addo states that Socrates feels that the boy does not yet know what a square and a diagonal are. Likewise, the boy only possesses true opinions of what they look like through Socrates’ questioning and by actually looking to see what a square and diagonal look like (235). Therefore, what the diagrams give to the boy are only true opinions, they do not as it were, give him knowledge. Thus, diagrams can only provide us with what squares and diagonals and other geometrical figures look like, they cannot provide us with true representations of these figures. So, according to Bedu-Addo, diagrams aid us in the process of recollection by ‘stirring up’ true beliefs, which are not yet knowledge (235).  

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22 Bedu-Addo’s explanation of the role of diagrams in the demonstration is very similar to Scott’s summary of the traditional interpretation ‘K’. In fact, Bedu-Addo, is closer to ‘K’ than any other interpreters.
Is there textual support for Bedu-Addo’s claim that sensible diagrams aid us in recollection by ‘stirring up’ true beliefs about what a thing is like? In order to foster his case, Bedu-Addo cites the following exchange between the boy and Socrates:

Soc: Tell me, boy, do you know that a square figure is like this?
Boy: I do.
Soc: And so a square then is a figure is one that has all these sides equal, being four?
Boy: Yes Indeed.

There are two ways to read the preceding passage. First, according to Bedu-Addo, the boy does not possess knowledge of what a square is. In other words, “If Socrates really thought that the boy knew what the square is like he would not feel it necessary to give him one of the principal properties of the square” (235). Therefore, since the boy doesn’t know what a square is like, it is through Socrates drawing diagrams and Socrates’ telling the boy that a square has four sides that stir up true opinions of what a square is like. A second reading, fostered by Dominic Scott and Thomas Williams, states that the boy already possess the knowledge necessary for understanding Socrates’ questions. In other words, the boy comes into the demonstration already possessing the requisite concepts such as square, diagonal, bigger and smaller. If the boy does not possess these concepts, Scott and Williams agree that the boy would not be capable of understanding what Socrates is saying.

With the preceding in mind, Scott and Williams seem to have the correct interpretation of not only this passage but also other passages, which highlight what the boy previously knows. Bedu-Addo seems to be mistaken in his assertion that the boy does not possess the requisite concepts for understanding Socrates’ questions. First, Bedu-Addo’s claim that Socrates provides the boy with “one of the principal parts of a square” clearly contradicts Socrates’ repeated insistence that he does not teach the boy but merely questions him. Second, the passage in question could just have easily been interpreted as Socrates stipulating that the diagram he had just drawn before him is to be taken as having all its sides equal and not as Socrates telling the boy that a square has four sides. If Socrates had not stipulated that the sides should be considered as equal, the boy could just as easily thought that the diagram in question does not have all equal sides. We therefore have the following summation of the passage which Bedu-Addo cites as aiding the boy in the process of recollection: 1) the diagrams are wholly unnecessary in this exchange. The diagrams could have been eliminated without loss of any content. In other words, Socrates
could have merely asked the boy if he knew what a square is and that a square could have all of its sides equal without the use of a diagram. 2) Socrates cannot be telling the boy that a square is such that it has all equal sides for that would be a violation of a necessary condition for recollection, that is, one does not teach but merely question his interlocutor. 3) If we accept Bedu-Addo’s interpretation then other passages in which Socrates is asking the boy preliminary questions, such as, “could a figure be bigger or smaller?” would lead one to conclude that the boy does not possess any concepts such as equality, largeness and smallness.

Therefore, Bedu-Addo seems to be incorrect of his assessment of the state of prior knowledge. The boy already possessed knowledge of what a square is along with certain concepts such as bigness and smallness.

Next, while Vlastos utilizes a mathematical example in order to show that recollection is not an empirical process, I shall, in what follows, show that even if we utilize a geometrical example, the diagrams can be shown to be wholly unnecessary.

However, before do so, we must first distinguish between two senses by which commentators have argued that diagrams are related to the process of recollection.

1. *Weaker sense*- the diagrams are used only to suggest the correct answer to the problem, they cannot provide an answer. The diagrams become a dispensable part of the demonstration, the problem can be solved without them.

2. *Stronger sense*- the diagrams are an indispensable component in recollection. Without the diagrams the boy never would have been able to solve the geometrical problem. Therefore, the diagrams are a necessary condition for recollection.

The first of these senses, which I take Taylor to be advancing\textsuperscript{23}, argues that diagrams are utilized only in suggesting the correct answer to the problem. In conjunction with Socrates’ questions and the diagrams the boy is thereby able to come to the correct solution. While the diagrams themselves cannot provide a solution, if they are combined with Socrates’ questions they do foster a solution. While Vlastos has argued that Taylor’s claim does not

\textsuperscript{23} Taylor states “[Socrates] has merely drawn diagrams which suggest the right answers to a series of questions.” A.E. Taylor. *Plato: The Man and His Work*. [1937] pg. 137
hold water\textsuperscript{24}, it does however seem to at least have some textual backing. For instance, Socrates does at various places in the demonstration uses diagrams to refute the boy’s false belief (83a4-b6, 83e2–10). Despite this, it does not seem to follow that the diagrams in anyway suggest the solution to the problem. After Socrates has drawn in the diagonals (84e5-85a), the boy could have immediately realized that double the line of a four-foot square would come from the diagonals. Instead of pointing to the diagonals and saying that the solution lies in the diagonals of the square, Socrates asks seven more questions (85a2-b6) before the boy reaches the solution. Therefore, while the diagrams are utilized in the demonstration to show the boy what he originally thought was false, they in no way suggest the correct solution to the problem. They do not suggest the solution because if they had, the boy would have been able to ‘see’ the solution without having Socrates ask any further questions. Despite this, the boy fails to hit upon the solution even when it is right in front of him.

The second of these senses, which I take Bedu-Addo, Brown and Ross to be advancing, argues that diagrams are completely indispensable in the process of recollection. In other words, the diagrams are a necessary condition for recollection; without them the boy never would have reached the desired solution. While Vlastos has shown that the demonstration and therefore recollection can be accomplished without the use of diagrams and thereby correctly shown that it does not depend upon sense experience, I shall attempt to show that even if diagrams are utilized in the demonstration, sense experience can in no way be used to determine the correct solution to a given geometrical problem. I shall do so by relying on a proof found in Euclid.\textsuperscript{25}

Let it be proposed for us to prove that in square figures the diagonal is incommensurable with the side in length.

\textsuperscript{24} Vlastos provides the following example in order to refute Taylor’s claim:
Brothers and sisters have I none;
But this man’s father is my father’s son.
According to Vlastos, the puzzle’s solution cannot be arrived at through suggestions or images of a son or father. If one did, Vlastos states, “he would be wasting his time” (92). Despite this, Vlastos’ example does not fully dispense with Taylor’s claim. In order to do so, Vlastos would have to show that the diagrams in the demonstration are not suggestive.

\textsuperscript{25} While this proof can be found in Euclid it actually predates Euclid. For more on the history of incommensurability see Szabo, Arpad. The Beginnings of Greek Mathematics [1978] pgs. 213-216.
In order to provide a proof that the diagonal of any given square is incommensurable with any of the square’s sides, Euclid assumes for *reductio ad absurdum* the following:

Let there be a square ABGD, and its diagonal AG; I say that GA is incommensurable with AB in length. For if possible, let it be commensurate; I say that the same number will be both odd and even.

With this in mind, I propose that Euclid’s proof of the incommensurability of a square’s diagonal with any of its sides can be supplemented for the geometrical problem in the demonstration. This can be accomplished by supposing that Plato, rather utilizing the problem of doubling the square in the demonstration used the following proof for the incommensurability of a square’s diagonal with any of its sides:\(^{26}\)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
S \\
S & D & S \\
S \\
\end{array}
\]

Figure 5. [incommensurable square]

Suppose for *reductio ad absurdum* that the diagonal of the square (d) and any of the sides of the square (s) are commensurable. Since the diagonal (d) and two adjacent sides (a) form a right angle isosceles triangle, utilizing the Pythagorean Theorem we get \(s^2 + s^2 = d^2\) or \(2s^2 = d^2\). Since (d) and (s) are numbers, assume that they are relatively prime\(^ {27}\). So, either (d) is even or (s) is even. The equation \(2s^2 = d^2\) says that \(d^2\) is even. So, (s) must be odd. Yet, if (d) is even then there is some number (n) such that \(d = 2n\). So utilizing the previous equation \(2s^2 = d^2\) we get: \(2s^2 = 4n^2\) and dividing 2 we get: \(s^2 = 2n^2\). So, (s) must be an even number. Therefore, (s) is both even and odd. Therefore (d) is incommensurable with any of its sides (s).\(^ {27}\)

Based upon the preceding proof, I propose that if we suppose that Socrates draws an assortment of diagrams (similar to figure 5) and replaces all of the variables with numerical values, then we could, like the demonstration in the *Meno*, watch the boy recollect the solution to the proof. In other words, the diagrams are merely sufficient for solving a given geometrical problem, they are not, as it were, necessary.

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\(^{26}\) This is a much simpler version of the proof of incommensurability than Euclid’s. This simplified proof is Szabo’s. Szabo, Arpad. *The Beginnings of Greek Mathematics.* [1978] pgs. 214-15.

\(^{27}\) Two numbers are relatively prime (or coprime) if they have no common factor other than 1.
Based upon this, what conclusions can be drawn by supplementing Euclid’s proof with the demonstrations? The first thing that may be noticed is that the diagrams [figure 5] can only be utilized as an introduction to the problem. The diagram(s) cannot, as it were, provide a solution to Euclid’s proof merely by looking. In this vein, Szabo remarks, “The proof has nothing to do with visual or empirical evidence. Although we can easily draw a picture of the two quantities whose incommensurability is to be proved, the argument is purely a theoretical one” (215). In other words, while drawing diagonal and the sides is easily done, the proof can only be conducted theoretically, that is, by ‘working it out’ through reason or in ‘recollection’ terminology, ‘recovering the knowledge from within oneself.’ Merely looking at the diagram cannot tell us that the diagonal of a square is incommensurable with its sides. Following this, it seems that this is precisely Plato’s point not only in the demonstration but also in the mini-definitional dialogue at the outset of the *Meno* (70a-79e). If one could just look around to find a correct definition of an ethical term one would do so by just looking at just men or virtuous people. Despite this, Plato seems to be alluding to the fact that while seeing just people or virtuous people can provide sufficient evidence of justice and virtue, this in no way entails that just by looking one can come to an appropriate definition of these ethical terms. Likewise in the demonstration, the diagrams, while they may provide sufficient evidence for a proof, it is not and cannot be necessary that they are utilized to solve a given geometrical problem.

Furthermore, the assertion that merely looking at diagrams cannot yield the correct solution is evident from Socrates’ repeated insistence that the boy should “work it out” (*logisamenos eipe*) 82d3-4 and “always answer what you think” (*to gar soi dokoun touto apokrinou*) 83d2. Even on the one occasion in which Socrates does ask the boy to “point out” (*all deixon apo poias*) the answer (84a), the boy is at a loss to do so. Despite this, it seems as if Plato is putting the weight of the demonstration not on what the diagrams will show but on what the mind’s own resources can provide. In this regard, Vlastos states “looking over the whole course of the demonstration, we see that while it is never even implied that he should decide anything by merely looking, there are several times when it is definitely implied that he should judge by merely thinking”(94).

Finally, if Boter is correct that the lines (*dia mesou*) (82c1) should be translated as diagonals rather than transversals, then the slave boy would have had the answer in front of
him all along. While Boter insists that in translating *dia mesou* as diagonals rather than transversals adds irony to the whole demonstration, it would seem that if translated in this way, we could conclude that Plato had something more substantial in mind. In other words, Plato may be alluding to the fact, if this translation is accurate, that diagrams are not necessary and cannot provide the solution to geometrical problem in the demonstration. While Sharples disagrees with Boter’s thesis that this translation adds irony, he does state however that “If we are to suppose that Meno himself knows how to double a square, the drawing of diagonals at 82c2-3 would have a dramatic point as making clear to Meno that the slave-boy cannot see the answer when it is under his nose.”

Therefore, the demonstration does not depend upon sense-experience in order for the slave boy to ‘recollect’ the solution to the problem of doubling the square. This follows if: 1) we treat Cebes’ statement at *Phaedo* 73a10-b2 as not referencing the demonstration in the *Meno*, and we suppose, 2) the diagrams are not utilized to provide the boy with a definition of a square, further more, 3) that the diagrams, contrary to Taylor, are not suggestive; and 4) Euclid’s proof provides us with an example that even if diagrams are used they are wholly unnecessary and cannot provide a solution, and finally, 5) by translating *dia mesou* as diagonals rather than transversals, Plato is making a substantive point that merely looking at diagrams cannot yield a solution.

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CHAPTER THREE
RECOLLECTION AND EXPERIENCE

According to Dominic Scott, Plato, upon proposing the theory of recollection, was not troubled by the fact that empirical knowledge might be unable to account for the formation of conceptual thought. However, what Plato was concerned about was the movement from true opinions to knowledge (PA 349). In other words, Scott argues that the theory of recollection already presupposes conceptual thought, that is, it is not a recollectable item, and that the theory is intended merely to explain how true beliefs become knowledge (PA 351).

In order to show that the preceding is the case, Scott differentiates between two interpretations of recollection. The first argues that Plato is proposing a thesis which is intended to explain how we form our conceptual knowledge. Likewise, this interpretation argues that understanding is the outcome of the information given to us by sense experience and information provided by universal notions, that is, concepts. Therefore the product of sense experience and concepts explains how we classify our sense data. Based upon this, recollection takes a rather Kantian tone (Call this interpretation ‘K’ for Kantian)(PA 348-49).

Contrary to this interpretation, Scott advances a thesis which states that the purpose of recollection is to scrape away all the deceptive notions given to us by sense experience, hearsay, opinions, etc., in order to reveal the universal concepts which lie beneath. These universal concepts that must be prodded away are the Forms. Contrary to ‘K’, which interprets recollection as a union between sensory experience and concepts, Scott’s interpretation argues for a strict separation between sense experience and conceptual knowledge (Scott calls this interpretation ‘D’ for Demaratus) (PA 349).

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30 I shall refer to citations from “Platonic Anamnesis Revisited” as PA and those from Recollection and Experience as RE.
31 Scott’s choice of ‘D’ (Demaratus) is adapted from a story in Herodotus. See pg. 34 for further details.
**Traditional Interpretation**

According to Scott, 'K' adherents interpret the general theory and the demonstration of the theory by attending to the way in which we may classify sensory experience under certain concepts (RE 17). For instance, Allen holds the following view in regard to recollection:

> And if by "experience" we mean as, Kant meant, not the causal flow of data, but the ordered structure of perception, Kant's goal and Plato's are fundamentally one. For the structure and order of experience presuppose the universal. And though for Plato, like Kant, the universal can - and indeed, in the final analysis, must be considered apart, it cannot be discovered apart from experience (170).

Therefore, according to Allen, recollection and with it knowledge is the cooperation of information provided by the senses and universal concepts. Other adherents of 'K' hold a similar view.  

By classifying particular sensory experiences under certain concepts, adherents of 'K' will likewise argue that the process of recollection entails recollecting those concepts, which we learned in a previous life. For instance, one might think that a certain particular is beautiful or that two objects are equal to one another. Since Plato held that such concepts could not be derived from sense experience, 'K' will argue that they must have come from within the soul, that is, they come from being learned in a previous incarnation. It is therefore through the process of recollecting that we can thereby apply certain concepts, such as beauty and equality to the world of sense experience. With this in mind, recollection can be viewed as breaking down our everyday thoughts into two components: thoughts that derive from sense experience and concepts derived from within the memory of the soul (RE 17).

Basic human understanding therefore comes down as an interaction between sensory experience and conceptual thought. In this way, Scott remarks that just as Kant made intuitions and concepts the two key sources of empirical knowledge, Plato, according

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to adherents of 'K', uses sensory perceptions of particulars and our innate knowledge of concepts in order to classify everyday experiences (RE 17-18).

Scott's Interpretation

Contrary to the traditional interpretation, Scott argues that recollection does not and is not used to explain the formation of our everyday or mundane thoughts. In fact, recollection is only used to explain the formation of philosophic knowledge, that is, knowledge of the Forms. In this way recollection is used to explain the way in which particulars are deficient when compared to the Forms (RE 18).

In order to explain 'D' more clearly, Scott utilizes an analogy adapted from a story in Herodotus. In the midst of the Persian wars, a Spartan named Demaratus, decided to turn spy for the Greeks. Demaratus warned the Greeks of an immanent invasion by the Persians by sending them a wooden tablet with wax melted on top. Inscribed under the wax on the wood tablet was a message regarding the upcoming invasion. Based upon this, the blank wax surface was allowed to pass into Greek hands where eventually the wax was scraped away to reveal the message underneath (RE 18).

With this story in mind, Scott asks the reader to imagine that Demaratus had not left the wax surface blank but instead had inscribed a message upon it that the Persians could easily understand. Therefore, by way of analogy, in recollection we, similarly have two messages: One given to us by sense experience, like the surface of the wax and the other given to us by our innate knowledge of the Forms, like the message written on the wooden tablet. In this way, our sensory experience is much like the wax surface; it is unreliable and deceptive much in the same way that the mundane inscription on the wax could deceive the Persians. However, within us, is knowledge of entities whose nature is hidden and exists separate from our experiences. With this in mind, the Forms are much like the message inscribed upon the blank tablet, we must scrape away all the deceptive phenomenal experiences to reveal the true message, which lies beneath (RE 19).

Therefore, according to Scott, most people never bring knowledge of the Forms into consciousness. In fact most people will deny that such entities exist. Only the philosopher,
says Scott, can remove the deceptive messages given to us by sense experiences to reveal the true message and gain knowledge of the Forms (RE 19-20).

Scott therefore notes two important differences between ‘K’ and ‘D’. First, according to the traditional interpretation, the theory of recollection is meant to account for some of our ordinary or mundane thoughts. In other words, recollection is used to explain the formation of concepts that everyone uses. On Scott’s interpretation, on the other hand, recollection is not used to explain any of our mundane thoughts. Recollection is, however, used to explain philosophic thought, and it is for this reason that we require our innate knowledge of the Forms. For instance, in regards to recollection in the *Meno*, Scott states, “recollection] is not used to explain how the slave boy acquired the beliefs and concepts necessary to make sense of what Socrates was talking about when the examination began” (PA 351). Therefore, in opposition to the traditional interpretation, Scott argues that ordinary beliefs, that is, those beliefs that fall short of knowledge, have an entirely different origin from philosophic knowledge. Call this difference the question of origin.

A second difference involves the question of who actually recollects. On the traditional interpretation, philosophic thought is a piece of ordinary thought. Philosophers as well as non-philosophers are capable of recalling the Forms. The difference lies in the degrees in which each recollects; non-philosophers will dimly recollect the Forms, while philosophers will recollect more clearly. On the other hand, ‘D’ holds that ordinary thought is irregular when compared to philosophic thought. Based upon this, non-philosophers will only be concerned with sensory experiences and likewise will have no relation to knowledge of the Forms. On the other hand, philosophers will only be concerned with Forms while having no need for relation to knowledge of the senses. Therefore, according to the traditional interpretation, recollection is an easy process, and everyone to some degree recollects. On ‘D’, however, recollection is a difficult process in which philosophers are the only ones capable of recollecting. Call this problem, the question of difficulty (RE 20).
Why Scott believes D is in the Meno

According to Scott, an "embryonic version" of ‘D’ can be found in the *Meno* and in contrast, there is no "possibility for K" to soak in to the dialogue in any form (PA 351). Scott attempts to show that ‘D’ is inherent in the *Meno* by first examining the demonstration of the theory.

According to Scott, there are three stages to recollection in the *Meno*. Based upon these stages, a process which goes from *aporia* to the acquisition of true beliefs and finally to the attainment of knowledge, Scott argues that the demonstration is intended to show that knowledge is attainable and how this attainment of knowledge is possible. Despite this, any attainment of knowledge must first be met with some sort of stimulus or catalyst, in the case of the *Meno*, that stimulus is Socrates. Therefore, recollection is only utilized in order to explain how true beliefs can become knowledge of *a priori* truths. It is not, as ‘K’ would have it, used to explain the acquisition of beliefs and concepts (RE 36).

According to Scott, the initial presentation of the general theory at 81c5-d5 may initially be construed as favoring ‘K’. In this passage, Socrates speaks of the soul ‘seeing everything’ and ‘seeking and learning is wholly recollection’. Reading these phrases literally makes the scope of recollection extremely wide (RE 33). As Scott remarks, if we do take these phrases literally are we to include all instances of learning, that is, learning how as well as learning that? In other words, if we do take these phrases at face value then we would have to include recollection of empirical facts, such as the fact that there are three books on this table, and the discovery of individual facts, such as the fact that Socrates is a man. Based upon this, if adherents of ‘K’ do take these phrases literally it will provide them with too much. In other words, if defenders of ‘K’ do not restrict the scope of recollection, then they will have to account for recollection of empirical facts as well as individual facts. From this, it seems as if adherents of ‘K’ would have to explain too much when all that their interpretation calls for is the explanation of how conceptual thought is possible. Therefore, according to Scott, since we must put restrictions on the claims of 81c5-d5, K no longer becomes the only interpretation available, ‘D’ could just as easily
provide an adequate interpretation. Despite this, the passage, says Scott, is too indeterminate to decide either way (RE 34).

According to Scott, since the general theory of recollection is indeterminate whether we should choose between ‘K’ and ‘D’, we must look at the demonstration of the theory in order to see if it favors ‘K’ or ‘D’ (RE 34).

Scott notes three stages in the demonstration. 1) The slave boy comes to realize what he originally thought was incorrect (84a). 2) The boy moves from his awareness of ignorance to the acquisition of true beliefs (84d3-85b7). 3) Knowledge is acquired when the boy ties down his opinions by reasoning out the cause (aitias logismô) (RE 35-6). Based upon these three stages, Scott remarks that the demonstration is only used to explain the boy’s awareness of his false belief, the acquisition of true beliefs and the conversion of these true beliefs into knowledge (RE 36).

With this in mind, Scott argues that the demonstration does not favor the interpretation ‘K’. First, if we take recollection to begin from the moment that Socrates begins asking questions, then this would not be enough to support ‘K’. This is so because we are not wont to include the boy’s miscalculations and false beliefs as instances of recollection. Even if we did count recollection as beginning from the moment Socrates started asking questions, this would not support ‘K’ because under ‘K’ recollection is used to explain the way in which we acquire concepts we use in everyday thought (RE 36). Second, ‘K’ cannot be sustained precisely because it does not deal with a host of problems associated with widening the scope of the boy’s recollection. In other words, since under ‘K’ we must count a whole slew of responses to Socrates’ questions as instances of recollection, such as the boy’s false beliefs and miscalculations, we are better off, according to Scott, by not falling into these problems. Thus, we must reject any interpretation that does not only explain how the boy answered falsely but also only explains how he recollected the correct answers (RE 38).

While Scott’s primary concern in arguing for ‘D’ over ‘K’ in the demonstration is mostly negative, his positive account of ‘D’ in the Meno finds its roots in the concluding discussion in the dialogue (86ff). According to Scott, the second part of the dialogue contains some important material on the distinction between true belief and knowledge. In other words, this distinction in the latter half of the dialogue, has not only a bearing on
recollection but also a bearing on the question of whether or not an “embryonic version” of ‘D’ can be found in the *Meno* (RE 38). While Scott provides a detailed analysis of his interpretation of the *Meno* in accord with the distinction between true belief and knowledge, I shall in what follows, for the sake of clarity, only outline the main points of Scott’s argument.

At the end of the dialogue, Socrates argues that there are two types of virtue: one is identical with knowledge and the other comes through teaching. According to Scott, virtue as knowledge in these passages is to be construed as “philosophical understanding” arrived at through the process of recollection (RE 38). Likewise, virtue based upon teaching is inferior in that it is based upon true belief that comes by ‘divine dispensation’ (RE 38). In other words, true belief is a product of hearsay or tradition and is punctuated by a lack of reflection (RE 39). Based upon this, Scott, in keeping in line with his interpretation ‘D’, finds in the latter half of the *Meno*, evidence that true belief has a completely different source than that of knowledge.

Scott’s evidence for the distinction between true belief and knowledge comes out in a few places. First, since Socrates argues that virtue can be either knowledge or true belief, the distinction between them comes about through an analogy (97ff). Like the legendary statues of Daedalus, true beliefs are like a runaway slave that need to be tied down. Like the statues of Daedalus, true beliefs are as good as knowledge as long as they stay around. Since they have a tendency to leave a person’s mind, they must be tied down by reasoning out the cause. Based upon this, since Socrates argues that if virtue as knowledge can be taught then virtue based upon opinion must have an entirely different source. This source, then, is divine dispensation (RE 41).

According to Scott, the conclusion of the dialogue tends to support ‘D’ over ‘K’. The conclusion of the dialogue does so for a number of reasons. First, the different sources of virtue as true belief and virtue as knowledge support ‘D’ because the true beliefs of non-philosophers have an origin which is completely different from the process of recollection. True beliefs are therefore instilled in people not by a process of recollection but by hearsay

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34 It is difficult to ascertain what Scott means by stating that “True belief is marked by an absence of reflection” (RE 39). I take it that Scott is making a parallel between the state of the boy’s true belief at the end of the demonstration and its subsequent convergence in to knowledge.

35 Daedalus was a mythical sculptor and craftsman whose statues are reported to come alive and run away.
or tradition. Second, the ‘ironic’ remark that true beliefs come from “divine dispensation” entails that true beliefs are like those under spells who can neither teach virtue nor think for themselves. Therefore, Socrates’ remark that virtue as true belief comes from divine dispensation supports ‘D’ precisely because it supports the reading that true beliefs have a different origin from knowledge. Based upon these two reasons, the Meno provides evidence in favor of ‘D’ on the question of origin and the question of difficulty. The dialogue supports a ‘D’ interpretation on the question of origin because knowledge comes from recollection and true belief hearsay or divine dispensation. The end of the dialogue likewise supports a ‘D’ reading on the question of difficulty because of the laborious process that one must go through to achieve knowledge, that is, recollection. As opposed to true belief which comes by hearsay or tradition, knowledge of ethical definitions are on the whole difficult and not as easy to come by as its counterpart in true belief (RE 43-47).

In summary, Scott finds evidence for the interpretation ‘D’ in the Meno in general theory, the demonstration of the theory and in the concluding passages of the dialogue. In the general theory, Scott argues that ‘K’ makes the scope of recollection too broad and therefore we must limit what counts as knowledge in recollection. In the demonstration of the theory, Scott finds evidence for ‘D’ by arguing that the boy already has the concepts necessary for understanding Socrates’ questions, K’s failure of dealing with false beliefs tends to support ‘D’, and the restriction of what the slave boy actually recollects, fails to support K’s interpretation. Finally, Scott’s positive account of ‘D’ in the Meno finds its roots in the distinction between virtue based upon true belief and virtue as knowledge. In this way, the conclusion supports the Demaratus story on the separate origins of true belief and knowledge.
CHAPTER FOUR
WHAT DOES THE SLAVE BOY RECOLLECT?

Category of Responses

Before delving into my interpretation of anamnesis in the Meno, and likewise whether or not ‘K’ or ‘D’ provide the best explanation for anamnesis, I would like first to provide a few remarks concerning my methodology. According to my interpretation, the most fruitful way of determining whether or not the Meno provides any evidence for the types of things which can be recollected, whether they are concepts, true beliefs, a priori knowledge and/or knowledge of Forms, is to examine each of the slave boy's responses to Socrates' questions. By doing so I hope to show that some of the boy's responses, most notably his false beliefs and their correction, can be construed as involving concepts and a priori knowledge.

In order to do so, I shall place each of the slave boy's responses into the following categories: Prior Knowledge, False Beliefs, Uncertainty, Aporia, Agreement, and True Beliefs. Below, I have outlined which responses fit into what I believe are the appropriate categories preceded by a brief description of these categories. In this section, I shall provide a full description of Prior Knowledge, Uncertainty, Agreement, Aporia, and False Belief. Since True belief will demand a more thorough examination, I shall examine this topic in a separate subdivision (3.2).

Prior Knowledge

The demonstration begins with Socrates asking the boy a few preliminary questions. These questions are purported to show how much the slave boy understands. While the slave boy 'brings' this knowledge into the discussion it is nowhere evident that these are meant to be recollectable (anamnêstôn) items.

At the outset of the discussion it seems clear that the boy speaks Greek (82b4-5) and that he knows that a square has four equal sides (82b8-9). Likewise, he knows or possesses
basic mathematical skills, such as, knowing that two times two equals four, etc (82d3-4, 83c2-3, 83e7). Next, the boy already seems to possess some of the requisite concepts for understanding Socrates’ questions. For instance, he already possess such concepts as bigger and smaller (82c3-4), equal and unequal (82c, 82d4-6) half and whole (82c4-7, 83c6-7), and length (82d7-e3). Based upon this, we can conclusively say that the boy already possesses and has prior knowledge of these concepts. Likewise, he also possess the requisite notions for making sense of Socrates’ questions. It follows from this, that these concepts and prior knowledge are not intended to be items of recollection.

Despite the fact that the demonstration provides evidence that the boy possesses knowledge prior to the recollection process, we are told nothing of the source of this knowledge. In other words, the recollection passage is silent in regards to how or the way in which the boy comes to possess concepts such as ‘bigness’, ‘half’ or ‘unequal’. In this way, we are in no position to summarize whether or not these concepts are derived from sense experience or recollection.\(^{37}\) So, even though it is evident that the boy comes into the demonstration already in possession of some knowledge, we have no evidence of the derivation of this knowledge.

**Uncertainty**

In two places within the demonstration, the boy responds with uncertainty (83d1-2) and fails to understand a Socratic question (85a4). The first, 83d1-2 entails that the boy may have had misgivings concerning his answer. The passage in question is as follows:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Soc:} & \text{ Right. But is not the eight-foot figure double the size of this one and half the size of that one?} \\
\text{Boy:} & \text{ Yes.} \\
\text{Soc:} & \text{ Won’t it be from a line bigger than this long one but smaller than that? Or not?} \\
\text{Boy:} & \text{ I think so.}
\end{align*}
\]

What conclusions can be drawn from the boy’s uncertain response? First, it seems evidently clear that this passage is not intended to be an instance of recollection. Second, the boy’s response (\textit{emoiye dokei outō}) can lead one to conclude that he is unsure of his answer. This is evident from Socrates’ remark immediately following this response that the boy should “always answer what he thinks” (83d2-3). It is the boy’s uncertainty that

\(^{36}\)This point is also made by Williams (136). He argues that the boy’s prior knowledge provides no evidence in support of ‘D.’ Likewise it provides no evidence in favor of ‘K’ (136).
prompts Socrates to remind him not to rely on him for the answers but only to rely on what he thinks the answer is. Finally, if the boy had not been uncertain in his response then Socrates would have not needed to reiterate (83d2-e2) the questions he had already asked (83c6-d1). Therefore, it is evident from this passage that the boy’s response is not intended to be an instance of recollection and that the boy’s response is intended to remind both the boy and the reader that Socrates is not teaching the boy but merely asking him questions (82e4-6).

The second response (85a4) follows from Socrates’ introduction of the diagonal of the square (84e4). With the answer to the question of “what line does an eight-foot figure come from” directly in front of the boy, Socrates asks the boy “How big is this figure?” The boy’s response, “I don’t understand” (ou manthanô) entails that despite the repeated insistence (82d6,83e8) that the figure must be “eight-feet,” the boy fails to see it. In this way it seems surprising that the boy does not understand the question. Despite Socrates essentially providing the boy with the correct answer by drawing in the diagonals of each of the four-foot squares, the boy does not understand the question. While this may seem strange to the reader, it does attribute to Plato a substantive point concerning the process of recollection. First, recollection on the whole is a difficult process. It isn’t always evident even when the answer is right in front of our face that we can easily hit upon it. Second, Plato may be alluding to the fact that despite having the answer drawn directly in front of him, the boy fails to see the answer precisely because of the fact that Plato is diminishing the role of sense experience in the process of recollection. While the role of sense experience in the process of recollection has already been covered (Section II), the boy’s lack of understanding may foster the case that Plato does not intend for the boy to rely on the diagrams and his sense experience to provide him with an answer but that he should, contrarily, rely instead on his reason alone.
Agreement

Toward the end of the demonstration (85a-b) when we view the boy finally reaching the correct answer, the boy assents or agrees with many of Socrates’ questions. For instance, at 85a Socrates asks the following question:

*Soc*: So, there’s a line here from corner to corner, cutting each of these figures in two?
*Boy*: Yes, indeed.

It is not evidently clear whether we are supposed to take this preceding passage as an instance of recollection or whether we are supposed to read this passage and others like it (85a2, 85a6) as the boy passively agreeing to whatever Socrates says. While it seems evident that we are supposed to assume that the boy does recollect the answer at 85b2-6, it does not, however, seem evident that we are supposed to take every answer in the end of the demonstration (85a-b) as an instance of recollection. Despite Socrates’ claim that he does not teach the boy but merely draws opinions from within him, these passages suggest, based upon the responses the slave boy provides, that Socrates may be instructing the boy in some way. Although this may be the case, it could just as easily be argued that what Socrates is doing, is not instructing the boy, but merely helping him remember that lines can cut from corner to corner of a given square. Based upon this, we therefore have two choices. First, either we count these passages as a violation of Socrates’ requirement that he does not teach or second, we take it that the boy is merely being helped to recollect that diagonals are lines that cut from each corner of a square. While neither of these choices are satisfactory, the first because it will be a violation of a Socratic requirement and the second because it does not seem as if there is any need for the boy to ‘recollect’ what a diagonal of a square is, a third alternative may be our best option. Instead of these prior options, we should interpret these passages (85a, 85a2, 85a6) as the boy passively agreeing to Socrates’ questions because he already knows the answer. In other words, in these passages

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37 Malcolm Brown argues that the boy’s response at 85a is impossible. Brown states, “How can the boy know that they are equal [the diagonals]? Not by means of whole number or rational number calculation (which he is capable of), for this particular problem this is logically impossible, for the slave or anyone else”(62). Although Brown is correct that the boy could not know that the diagonals are equal arithmetically, it doesn’t follow that he could not know that they are equal. For instance, if the boy knows that a square has all equal sides it follows that he could also deduce, based upon this, that two squares with the same equal area will have equal diagonals.
the boy already knows that a diagonal is such that it cuts from each corner of a given square. This is evident from the fact that Socrates has already asked this question: “And doesn’t it [a square] have these [lines] through the middle equal?” (82c3-4). Therefore, in these passages what we have is the boy passively agreeing with Socrates’ questions precisely because he already knows the answer to them. Thus, these passages should not be construed as instances of recollection based upon the boy’s prior knowledge.

**Aporia**

At 84a, after Socrates has elicited false beliefs from the boy, and the boy realizes that his previous answers were not correct, Socrates asks the following question:

But what line is it? Try to tell us exactly, and if you don’t wish to put a number to it, show us what it is instead.

Unable to provide Socrates with what he wants the boy responds:

But by Zeus, Socrates, I certainly don’t know.

The crucial point concerning the slave boy’s aporia consists in the fact that recollection does not start until after one reaches this stage. As Scott states, “Recollection begins only from the moment when we encounter perplexity in the course of a Socratic examination” (RE 33). In other words, recollection cannot begin until one is shown that their previously held beliefs were in fact false and because of this, reach an impasse when questioned further. Recollection cannot begin until after one reaches aporia precisely because otherwise, that is, if recollection began from the moment Socrates started asking questions, then we would have to include all of the false beliefs and miscalculations provided by the boy as instances of recollection (RE 33). For instance, it does not seem reasonable to include the boy’s belief that the line of an eight foot square comes from a line three feet in length (83e). Based upon this, what is needed for recollection to occur is the removal of false beliefs and in turn the replacement of them with true beliefs through the process of recollection.

While Scott’s interpretation of the boy’s aporia in the demonstration is correct, Socrates may be asking a question that is ultimately unanswerable. Again Socrates states,
“But what line is it? Try to tell us exactly and if you don’t wish to put a number to it, show us what it is instead?” (84a). As Bluck notes, “Since the desired line proves to be a diagonal...which must be .8 feet, this would indeed have been difficult for the slave” (303). While this may have been difficult or even impossible for the slave to put a number to it (*apithmein*), Socrates, while it may seem that he is being unfair, is in fact doing something worthwhile. He is removing the boy’s false belief that it is possible for him to put the answer in arithmetical terms. It is this removal of false belief that leads the boy into aporia. Even though, Socrates remarks to Meno that he and the slave boy have been numbed, Plato’s purpose in highlighting the parallel between Meno and the boy, is to show that inquiry that leads into aporia does not come to a standstill. In fact, inquiry continues through the process of recollection. While the elenctic method stops at the point of aporia because no satisfactory definition of an ethical term can be found, recollection proceeds even after one falls into aporia. In this way, Plato’s salient point in bringing the slave boy to aporia is to move beyond the elenctic method by showing that fruitful inquiry is possible through the process of recollection. Where the elenchus stops at the point of aporia, the process of recollection moves beyond aporia in order to show that where the elenchus fails, recollection will succeed.

Thus, the salient point of the boy’s aporia at 84a is twofold. First, to highlight the fact that what was once held to be correct is in fact false. Second, to show that where the elenctic method has failed, by not being able to move beyond aporia, recollection can make inquiry beyond aporia possible.

**False Belief**

At the outset of the demonstration, with the question “which line will produce a square double the size of a four-foot square?” already having been proposed, the slave boy produces two wrong answers. First, the slave boy assuredly responds that double the size of a four-foot square will come from a line twice as much (82e2). The boy states “It is clear, Socrates that it will be double.” Like Meno’s first definition of excellence, the boy thinks the answer is clear. After the boy assuredly responds that the line will be double in length, Socrates provides a commentary on the state of the boy’s knowledge. “And now this boy

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38 Notice the way in which Meno thinks that providing a definition of excellence is easy. “But it is not difficult Socrates, to say.” (71e1).
thinks that he knows what sort [of line] will make a figure of eight feet.” Since Socrates and Meno agree that the boy thinks he knows but in fact does not, Socrates proceeds to remove the boy’s false conceit. He does so by showing the boy that double the line will not produce a square of eight feet but one which has an area of sixteen feet (83a-c4). After removing the boy’s false belief, Socrates again asks which line will produce a square whose area is eight feet (83c4-5).

The slave boy’s second answer is that the line must be three feet in length (83e1). This is so because since the original square’s line was two feet and length and a line of four feet in length produces a square with an area of sixteen feet, the boy thinks that the answer must lie somewhere in the middle, that is, that the line must be three feet. Similar to the refutation of the boy’s first answer, Socrates again shows the boy that the answer he has provided will not produce the desired result. Instead a line of three feet will produce a square whose area is nine feet (83e1-12). It is at this point, unable to provide another answer that the boy reaches aporia (84a2).

So, the boy produces two false answers at the outset of the demonstration. These false answers are then removed until the boy cannot proceed. Yet, since this is the case, what is the purpose of false belief not only within the demonstration but also within recollection? Does the boy recollect these false beliefs? Or are false beliefs merely a precursor to the recollection of true beliefs?

In the course of the demonstration Plato tells us very little in regard to the role of false belief in the process of recollection. What he does tell us, immediately following the boy’s first false answer, is that the boy thinks he knows the answer when in fact he does not (82e5-7). Yet, the role of false belief in the demonstration is much more than the conceit of thinking one knows when one does not. The boy’s false beliefs arises from making a false inference. For instance, in stating that double the line of a four foot square will produce a figure of eight square feet, the boy assumes that since the desired area is eight feet and the original square is four feet, then the line that produces a figure of eight feet must also be twice the size. Likewise, in the boy’s second false answer he assumes that if the line cannot be two feet nor four feet then the desired line must lie somewhere in between, that is, it must be three feet. In these two cases we can view the limits of the knowledge that the boy already possesses. Earlier I argued that the boy already has
rudimentary knowledge of mathematics, that is, he is able to multiply and do basic addition. But in providing false answers we view the limits of this knowledge. In other words, the point of false beliefs at the beginning of the demonstration is to highlight the fact that any previous knowledge that one has, whatever its origin, will not aid in the process of recollection. For example, utilizing his rudimentary knowledge of mathematics will not aid the boy in discovering which line will produce a square whose area is eight feet. What is needed is the removal of the false conceit that arithmetic will do the trick and in its place instilling beliefs that only a geometrical solution will suffice.

So, in this way, false beliefs pave the way for the introduction of new beliefs. By removing what was once believed to be true and showing that it was in fact false, the boy is able to, in a sense, clear his head so that new beliefs may be stirred up. Here there is a benefit in removing false beliefs. By Socrates showing to the boy that he does not know and therefore bringing him to aporia, the boy is able to proceed with the investigation. Now this is not to say that false beliefs are recollected or that we have any innate knowledge of false assertions. While having false beliefs are a part of the process of recollection, this in no way entails that recollection is responsible for the boy having false beliefs. The determination of the boy’s false beliefs arises from a false conceit that the knowledge he has will be sufficient to solve the problem of doubling the square.

In conclusion, if the above assertions are correct, then false beliefs in the demonstration serve as an important component in the process of recollection. First, as a necessary step in order to pave the way for the introduction of new beliefs. Second, false beliefs in the demonstration are characterized as false inference, that is, believing that the knowledge that one already has will suffice to solve a given problem. Finally, false beliefs do not arise from recollection but are merely a component of the process.

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39 According to Williams, recollection is responsible for the boy’s false belief. But this assertion is a misreading of the text. Plato never says that false belief arises from recollection, he does, however, state that the boy is ‘recollecting in order’ (82e12) and that after reaching aporia he has reached a certain ‘stage in recollecting’ (84a2-3). What this means is not that false beliefs arise from recollection but that false beliefs are an essential component in the acquisition of knowledge.
True Belief

The assertion that belief and knowledge are different kinds of things is one of the few things that Socrates claims to know (98b4-5). The difference between true belief and knowledge, says Socrates, is that true beliefs are like the statues of Daedalus, they are good and useful so long as they stay around. True beliefs are useless unless one ties them down by reasoning out the explanation (aitias logismos). This is according to Socrates, is recollection (97e1-98a8).

So, according to what Socrates says towards the end of the dialogue, recollection is nothing other than tying down true beliefs by reasoning out the explanation. But if this is all that recollection is, a tying down of true beliefs, then it could be argued that recollection never occurs in the Meno. This is so because in the demonstration, the slave boy never proceeds to this final stage of recollection, that is, he never ties down those true beliefs that have been stirred in him as if in a dream (85c). Yet, despite this, Socrates in the course of the demonstration speaks as if the slave boy is in fact recollecting. For instance, Socrates states the following: “Then watch him recollecting in order as one has to recollect”(82e) and “Again, do you see, Meno, what point he’s reached in recollection?”(84a). Likewise, immediately after the demonstration has ended, Socrates relates what the demonstration was purported to show. Socrates states that the boy’s beliefs have been stirred as if in a “dream”, that it will not be through teaching but by being questioned that he will “recover knowledge from within himself for himself” and “recovering knowledge which is within one for oneself is recollecting”(85d-e)

Reconciling ‘recollection’ at the end of the dialogue with ‘recollection’ within the demonstration will be the task of this section. Likewise, I shall argue that the distinction between true belief and knowledge at the end of the dialogue is consistent with what Socrates says in the course of the demonstration. With this, I shall also argue that the Meno does not, contrary to Scott, place true belief and knowledge on separate origins. True beliefs and knowledge arise from the same source, that is, through recollection. However, before arguing in this way, I shall first outline the true beliefs attained by the boy in the course of the demonstration. The purpose of this will be to show that in the course of the demonstration Plato held true belief and knowledge to be of a similar origin.
As stated earlier, recollection only occurs after one has passed through *aporia*. Based upon this, any response offered by the slave boy which might indicate the acquisition of true beliefs must occur after he falls into *aporia*. As far as I have been able to gather, ‘recollection’ or the acquiring of true beliefs occurs only at 85a2, 85b3, and 85b10. The first of these instances, 85a2, shows the boy ‘recollecting’ that the diagonals of equal squares come out equal. Socrates asks the boy, “And these four lines come to be equal, and surround this figure?” [see figure 4, pg. 16]. The boy responds, “yes they come to be [equal]”. But how could the boy have known this? In other words, how does the boy know that each of the diagonals are equal to each other? He knows this, not by merely assenting to what Socrates says, “these four lines come to be equal,”, but by deducing the consequences of previous questions. That is, he knows that each of the diagonals is equal to one another by relying on the answers to previous questions. For instance, he already knows that a square has four sides, that each side of the original square is two feet in length, that the area of the whole square is four feet, and that double the line of a four foot square does not produce one that is eight feet but one that is quadruple in size. Therefore based upon all of these considerations, the boy forms a true belief that squares with equal areas will have diagonals equal to one another. To put it another way, if one has four squares all with the same area then it follows that the diagonals of each square will be equal. So, the boy comes to form a true belief by deducing the consequences of Socrates’ questions. This is what recollection in the demonstration is; deducing the consequences of questions posed in order to form a true belief concerning a given proposition. This is evident from Socrates repeated insistence that he does not teach but merely offers questions (82b6,82e4, 84d). Through this repeated questioning Socrates is able to ‘draw out’ the boy’s ‘own opinions’. Likewise, at 85b3 and 85b10 we can again view the slave boy ‘recollecting’ by deducing the consequences of Socrates’ prodding. At 85b3 Socrates asks the following question: “What line does it come from?” and at 85b10 he reiterates this question: “So if this line is named diagonal then it would be from the diagonal, as you say, Meno’s boy, that would come a figure double the size?”. Again, how could he know this,

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40 Why have I chosen these responses as instances of recollection? The reason is this: first, all of the other responses which occur after *aporia* fit into other categories and second, these three responses are the only ones whose truth value is not determined by Socrates. In other words, it is up to the slave boy to accept or reject the truth value of these propositions.

41 By ‘know’ I merely mean the way in which the boy realizes that a certain proposition is true.
that is, how does he know that double the size of a four foot square will come from the diagonal of that square? He knows this by deducing a series of previous questions in order to arrive at the solution to the geometrical problem. In other words, he already knows that a square can be quadrupled in size, that each of the four-foot squares has an equal diagonal cutting from corner to corner, and that half of each of the four foot squares times four will produce a square of eight feet. Based upon these previous answers to Socrates’ questions, the boy is able to form a true belief concerning which line will produce a square whose area is eight feet. As stated earlier, he arrives at the answer to the problem of doubling the square by relying on answers to previous questions. Therefore, by utilizing these answers the slave boy is able to deduce the answer to the problem.

At the very least the formation of true beliefs within the demonstration occurs as a consequence of Socrates’ repeated questioning.\(^{43}\) Therefore, in the course of the demonstration, true beliefs are formed by a method of deduction, that is, ‘recollection’ occurs in the demonstration, at the very least, as a merely a rough deduction due to Socrates’ repeated prodding. In other words, true beliefs are ‘stirred up’ or brought to awareness through a series of questions through which one is able to form a true belief concerning a given subject.

Yet, if true beliefs are formed in this way, then whence comes knowledge? That is, what does the demonstration tell us concerning the acquisition of knowledge or the conversion of the boy’s true beliefs into knowledge? The closest Plato comes to telling us how the boy achieves knowledge, or comes to convert his true beliefs into knowledge is that “But if someone questions him in the same way many times and in many ways, you know that in the end he will come to have exact knowledge of these no less than anyone (85c9-d1).

At the end of the demonstration all that Plato tells us is that the boy will have knowledge by being questioned many times and in many ways. Yet, it is not clear what this would entail. Does the boy have to go through the recollection process with Socrates all over again before he can be considered to have knowledge? How long will this take? Can he run through the recollection process on his own or does he at this stage need Socrates to redraw out the true beliefs that are within him? The end of the demonstration is entirely

\(^{42}\) I say at the very least, because all that the demonstration shows is that the boy forms true beliefs, it does not show that he had these beliefs in a previous life.
unclear on the conversion of true beliefs into knowledge. Likewise, it is not evidently clear whether recollection is merely the awareness that one has true beliefs or whether recollection is the conversion of these true beliefs into knowledge. Since this part of the *Meno* is especially unclear, we must look toward the latter half of the dialogue in order to determine not only the way in which true beliefs become knowledge but also what recollection is.

Toward the end of the dialogue Plato provides us with minimal cues concerning not only the difference between true beliefs and knowledge but also the way in which true beliefs become knowledge. At this final juncture, Plato tells us that true beliefs are no worse a guide than knowledge, true belief is no less beneficial than knowledge, someone with knowledge would be successful all the time while someone with true belief would be successful only sometimes, true beliefs need to be tied down, knowledge is more valuable than true belief because it is permanent, and knowledge and true beliefs are different kinds of things.

So, at the end of the dialogue Plato tells us that the difference between true belief and knowledge is purely a practical difference. Both true belief and knowledge are equally capable of providing guidance (97b), and that one is no less beneficial than the other (97c4). But whereas true belief guides rightly some of the time, knowledge does so all of the time (97c5-7). Therefore, the difference between true belief and knowledge is the level of success of each; true beliefs lack permanence and are fleeting while knowledge is permanent and stable.

Yet even though Plato tells us there is a difference between true belief and knowledge, does he also tell us that true belief and knowledge have separate origins? In other words, does Plato tell us, as Scott contends, that knowledge is arrived at through recollection and true belief through ‘divine dispensation’? At 99b Plato tells us that it is not through knowledge that men guide their cities but that they do so through true belief. Likewise, since it is through true belief that men guide their cities they are no different than soothsayers or seers. This is so because like soothsayers, the men who guide their cities “say many true things without knowing what they are saying” (99c). In this regard, Socrates states the following:
So, Meno, these men deserved to be called divine, when they have many great successes in that which they do and say, not having thought?(99c7-9)

So at the end of the dialogue Socrates equates true beliefs with providing the correct account, that is, having a true belief without adequate knowledge that the belief is in fact true. In other words, true belief is characterized as being true but only in the sense that the belief happens to be true. It is not the case that any true belief provided by statesmen or soothsayers or poets is necessarily true. Any belief that they have merely happens to be true by mere chance. Likewise, true beliefs are characterized as guiding correctly or with great success but they lack thought and knowledge (99c7-8). True beliefs are also characterized as the inability to provide beliefs that are ‘one’s own’ (85c).

So, at the end of the dialogue Socrates tells us that true beliefs are a facet of ‘divine dispensation’. True beliefs held by statesman and poets are similar to the beliefs held by seers and soothsayers. Both seers and statesman say many things that are true, but do so without thought and knowledge. Hence, true beliefs at the end of the dialogue are treated as something whose truth value derives from inspiration. Therefore, Plato sets true beliefs as having their origin in ‘divine dispensation.’ This is so because as far as virtue is concerned since it is neither teachable nor comes by nature, any beliefs concerning virtue must derive from “divine dispensation without thought”.

But what does the preceding analysis of true beliefs as characterized at the end of the Meno have to do with recollection as presented in the general theory and the demonstration of the theory? In other words, does Plato’s stating that ‘true beliefs’ concerning virtue are derived by ‘divine dispensation’ have any bearing on true beliefs as characterized in the demonstration and directly after it? First, I argued that true beliefs as presented in the demonstration are formed as a special species of Socrates’ prodding. True beliefs are formed or have their origin by deducing the consequences of Socrates’ questions. Yet, at the end of the dialogue Socrates tells us that true beliefs are formed or have their origin by way of ‘divine dispensation.’ Second, remember that it is Scott’s contention that knowledge is arrived at through recollection and true beliefs are arrived at or have their origin in ‘divine dispensation’ or tradition and hearsay. Although Scott is correct that knowledge is derived through a process of recollection, so are true beliefs, despite what is said at the end of the dialogue. In other words, despite the fact that Socrates states that true
beliefs at the end of the dialogue have their origin in ‘divine dispensation’, he also contrarily states that true beliefs are formed by a process of recollection. Notice what is said at the end of the demonstration. Plato has Socrates repeatedly state that the boy has beliefs. “But he certainly had these beliefs in him” (85c5), the boy “has true beliefs in him about the very thing he doesn’t know?” (85c8-9) and in various places speaks as if the boy ‘now has’ beliefs (85d10), (85e6), (86a8-9).

So, we are left with a difficulty: what is said at the end of the dialogue concerning the nature of true beliefs is at odds with what is said in the demonstration. One way around this difficulty is to consider the nature of recollectable items (*anamnêston*). The ironic remark that true beliefs derive from ‘divine dispensation’ is an indication that the beliefs held by statesmen, seers and poets are not the kind of beliefs that could be converted into knowledge. Remember that the demonstration tells us that true beliefs will eventually be converted into knowledge by a process of rehearsal (85d). Likewise, later on (98a) we are told that true beliefs need to be ‘tied down’ by an *aitias logismos* or a reasoning out of the cause. But ‘true beliefs’ characterized as deriving from ‘divine dispensation’ are devoid of knowledge. In fact Plato discounts ‘true beliefs’ as even being capable of a conversion into knowledge (99b). So, if one of the crucial requirements for a piece of knowledge to become an item of recollection is that one must first have a true belief concerning a subject, a true belief which must be capable of a conversion into knowledge by an *aitias logismos*, then any belief in which it is not possible to convert into knowledge does not fall under the rubric of recollection. In other words, it is not an item of or for recollection. In this way, we need not concern ourselves if Plato tells us that ‘true beliefs’ derive from ‘divine dispensation.’ We need not because any belief derived from divine dispensation is ruled out as an item of recollection.

So, does true belief have a different origin than knowledge? The answer to this question is ‘yes’, if we are concerned with true beliefs derived from ‘divine dispensation’ and ‘no’ if we are concerning ourselves with true beliefs and the role they play in the process of recollection. But if my analysis is correct, then any beliefs which are not items

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43 Williams makes a similar point; “So even if Scott is right that knowledge of that road [to Larissa] is formed differently from true opinion, it does not follow that knowledge of recollectables has an entirely different origin from true opinion concerning recollectables” (135). While I agreed that Williams is correct in stating this, I disagree with him concerning whether recollection is also responsible for false beliefs (136). See section 3.3 of this essay.
of recollection, that is, beliefs which cannot be converted into knowledge, should have no bearing on any analysis of recollection. This is so because recollection is concerned with the way in which we convert true beliefs into knowledge. Recollection is a process that will allow us to search for a piece of knowledge through which we have no starting point. If there are ‘true beliefs’ which do not fall under the process of recollection, then any need to remove these beliefs in order to reveal knowledge which is hidden or lies beneath is unnecessary. In other words, since it is Scott’s contention that recollection is a process whereby we scrape away beliefs that are derived from hearsay, tradition, or divine dispensation, these beliefs, since they do not fall under, are not a part of the process of recollection or are not recollectable items, then there is no need for their removal. Thus, any beliefs which arise from an origin other than recollection need not concern an analysis of recollection.

In conclusion, I have argued that true beliefs in the demonstration arise as a special product of Socrates’ prodding. True beliefs are formed by deducing the consequences of Socrates’ questions. Since this is the case, true beliefs which occur within the recollection process have the same origin as knowledge, that is, they are formed through the process of recollection. So the formation of true beliefs in the demonstration provides us with a good indication that the acquisition and formation of true beliefs is a necessary step in recollection. For if the boy had not first formed true beliefs concerning ‘what line will produce a square double the size of a four-foot square’ then not only could he never have attained knowledge but also would never have been able to recollect.
In *Plato’s Theory of Ideas*, Ross relates a view that most commentators have generally accepted. “What is absent from the *Meno* is perhaps more striking than what is present in it; no attempt is made to connect the Ideas with the doctrine of anamnesis” (18). Likewise, Nehamas remarks that the Theory of Forms does not appear in the *Meno* (221). While most commentators have accepted the view that the *Meno* makes no reference to the Forms, contrary to Cherniss and Guthrie, a more recent attempt has been made to connect the *Meno* with the Theory of Forms. In “Sense Experience and Recollection in Plato’s *Meno*” Bedu-Addo states:

Plato was consciously aware of the importance of sense-experience in the process of recollection, and that at the time of writing the *Meno*, he had already formulated his metaphysical theory of Forms (230).

Bedu-Addo provides three reasons why Plato had already formulated his Theory of Forms at the time of writing the *Meno*. First, since the boy does not know what a square is, it is the purpose of recollection to stir up true beliefs of what a square is like (230). Second, Plato’s choice of doubling the square rather than the easier problem of quadrupling indicates that he already had a formulation of the Theory of Forms (244). Third, because the boy does not know what the ‘square itself’ is and only has true opinions of what a square is like, the boy must reason out the cause (*aitias logismos*), that is, it must end with the mind’s complete recollection of the ‘square itself’ (247).

First, Bedu-Addo argues that since the boy does not know what a square is like, it is the purpose of recollection to stir up true beliefs of what a square is like. While I have already argued that the boy does know what a square is (Section II and III), I shall make the further claim that Bedu-Addo is mistaken in arguing that the purpose of recollection is to stir up true beliefs of what a square is like. While it is the case that the demonstration is purported to show that Socrates is stirring up true beliefs within the boy, the true beliefs that are
surprised are not as Bedu-Addo claims about the square but concern the solution to the problem of doubling the square.

The claim that Plato, in writing the demonstration, wanted the boy to recollect what ‘a square is’ rests on a faulty interpretation of the text.\(^4^5\) First, as stated earlier (Section I), the purpose of the demonstration is to show to Meno that inquiring is possible and based upon this, Socrates utilizes the slave boy as a means to show that one can inquire into that which one does not know. In so utilizing the boy, Socrates demonstrates that the boy will recollect that “double the line of a four-foot square will come from the diagonal of that square.” It is not, as Bedu-Addo argues, the purpose of recollection to ‘stir up’ true beliefs of what a square is like. In fact the question that Socrates initially puts in the form of a “What is F” question is: “What line will produce double the line of a four-foot square?”(82e). The question Socrates poses to the boy is not: “What is squareness?” or “What is a square?”. Even if Socrates had put this latter question to the boy, it does not follow that he is asking the boy a question of the sort: “What is F-ness?” or similarly “What is squareness?”. The project of the demonstration is wholly epistemological. The demonstration’s purpose is to show that epistemological inquiry is possible. It is not however the demonstration’s purpose to show that any type of metaphysical entity exists or that metaphysics is possible.

Bedu-Addo’s second argument that Plato had already formulated his metaphysical theory of Forms is based upon Plato’s choosing the problem of doubling the square rather than the much simpler problem of quadrupling the square. Brown states:

> Plato could as easily have made his point, if the point is to stir in him a recollection of eternally true knowledge, by means of a simpler problem: how to quadruple a given square (77, his italics).

Bedu-Addo argues that Brown’s position “makes it possible for one who does not know (\textit{gignôskei}) what the square is to know (\textit{eidevai}) that the square of the length twice that of

\(^4^4\) Surprisingly, Bedu-Addo is not the only commentator to argue that the slave boy recollects the square itself. Findlay in \textit{Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines} (1974) states “Socrates does not here say that all this knowledge rests on a deep understanding of being square as such, of having such and such a length, of standing in such and such a ratio to another length, of being a diagonal distance, etc., but it is plain that he does postulate such an understanding, since he certainly does not think that the particular square in the diagram, even if it were a perfect instance of being a square, which it is not, is sufficient to establish these conclusions (125).” Yet, like Bedu-Addo’s claim I find no evidence in the demonstration or elsewhere in the \textit{Meno}, that Plato postulates that the boy should recollect the square itself.
the side of a given square is quadruple the size of a given square” (245). Based upon this, Bedu-Addo argues that at the time of writing the *Meno* Plato viewed knowledge as involving a “direct acquaintance” with the Forms and thus choosing the easier problem of quadrupling the square would not entail that one could achieve acquaintance with the Forms (246). This is so, Bedu-Addo argues, precisely because of the fact that the problem of quadrupling the square can be adequately expressed in words while the problem of doubling the square cannot be. Based upon this, Plato’s choice of doubling the square rather than quadrupling it entails a “matter of personal experience” through recollection of the *ousia* of a thing. Similarly, Plato is making a substantive point that like Meno’s failure to express the *ousia* of virtue, the slave boy is unable to express the *ousia* or reality of the solution to the problem of doubling the square (246). Therefore, Plato’s choice of doubling the square rather quadrupling it makes the salient point that one cannot express the true reality of either virtue or the solution to the problem of doubling the solution. With this in mind, what is needed then to determine the *ousia* of a thing is direct personal acquaintance with the Forms.

But how does Plato’s choice of doubling the square rather than quadrupling it, make recollection reminiscence of Forms? Is it the mere difficulty of the problem of doubling the square that makes it suitable for comprehension of Forms? Or is it merely the inexpressible nature of the solution that makes the choice of doubling the square appropriate for knowledge of Forms? First, it should be conceded that the problem of doubling the square is a much more difficult problem than that of quadrupling it. This is so because, as Bedu-Addo and Brown state, the solution to the problem of doubling the square cannot be expressed in mathematical terms. Furthermore, solving the problem of doubling the square involves more geometrical knowledge, something Plato would have wanted the slave boy to be capable recollecting. Yet, despite this, how does the mere difficulty of doubling the square lead to apprehension or direct acquaintance to Forms? Remember that it is Bedu-Addo’s claim that since the side of the doubled square cannot be expressed in mathematical terminology, then what is needed is a direct acquaintance with the Forms. Yet, what Form could one have a direct personal acquaintance with? In other words, if the correct solution to the side of a doubled square is inexpressible in mathematical terms, what Form could we predicate of a side whose value is the .8? How is it that the slave boy or anyone else for
that matter have direct acquaintance with either the ousia of \( \omega \) or the Form of \( \omega \)? If one is to have a direct acquaintance with \( \omega \) then we are left with the absurd consequence that anything which is inexplicable or ineffable in either mathematical terms or in other ways has a Form. Yet, neither does Plato make any such claim in the *Meno* nor does the demonstration of the theory lead to the assertion that there are Forms of any mathematical terms which are ineffable. Thus, merely because the solution to the problem of doubling the square cannot be expressed in mathematical terms, it does not follow that because of this Plato is arguing that one must have direct acquaintance with the Forms. For if this were Plato’s position we would be led into the consequence that there are Forms for mathematical entities such as the \( \omega \) or \( \pi \) or any other terms which cannot be expressed mathematically.

Second, merely because the solution to the problem of doubling the square is inexpressible in mathematical terms this does not mean that it is not expressible in geometrical terms. And this is exactly what happens in the demonstration. When the slave boy ‘recollects’ the answer to the geometrical problem, he does not say that the solution is the \( \omega \) but states that double the square of a square with an area of four-feet comes from the diagonal of a four-foot square. While he does not express the solution in arithmetical terms he is capable of expressing the solution nonetheless. In other words, the answer to the ‘What is X?’ question in the demonstration is expressed by the boy stating “this one”, that is, by saying that the double of a four-foot square comes from the diagonal of that square.

Thus, merely because the solution to the geometrical problem is not expressible in arithmetical terms does not mean that it is not expressible, that anyone is incapable of knowing the solution to problem merely because it is inexpressible in mathematical terms. So, any reliance on the knowledge of the Forms in order to apprehend the answer to the geometrical problem is wholly unnecessary.

The final argument offered by Bedu-Addo, that Plato already had his theory of Forms at the time of writing the *Meno*, states that because the boy does not know what the ‘square itself’ is and only has true opinions of what a square is like, the boy must reason out the cause (*aitias logismos*), that is, it must end with the mind’s complete recollection of the ‘square itself’(247). According to Bedu-Addo, the *aitias logismos* is the end of recollection, that is, it is the limit of a particular dialectical enquiry (247). In other words,
the aitias logismos is similar to the “upward path” as set out in both the Phaedo and the Republic. Like the “upward path” the aitias logismos is any “proposition that is adequate in the sense that it cannot itself be established by a ‘higher’ hypothesis within the limits of a particular dialectical inquiry. It is at the end of this ‘upward path’ that complete recollection is possible” (247). So, it is through the aitias logismos or “upward path” that one comes to know or recollects completely the Forms or in the case of the slave boy the “square itself”. This so because as Bedu-Addo argues neither the “square itself” nor the Forms can be established by a “higher hypothesis” (247). Thus, since the boy does not know what a square is and only has true beliefs of what a square is like, then what is needed is a tying down of these true beliefs by ‘reasoning out the cause’ which will culminate in the complete recollection of the Forms.

Despite already having argued that Bedu-Addo is mistaken in his claim that the boy does not know what a square is and only has true opinions of what a square is like, is Bedu-Addo correct in his assessment of the aitias logismos? Does Plato, in using the terminology aitias logismos, mean for his readers to assume that recollection culminates in the mind’s acquaintance with the Forms? In order to determine if Bedu-Addo is correct in his assessment of the aitias logismos and its relation to the “upward path”, it may be within our interest to examine the passage in which Plato uses this terminology.

At 98a, Socrates, describing the difference between true opinions and knowledge, provides the following characterization of true beliefs:

For true opinions, as long a they would remain for a time, are useful and good and everything they do is good; but they are not willing to remain for a long time, but they run away from a man’s soul, so that they are not worth much, until someone ties them down by reasoning out the cause (aitias logismos) (97e7-98a4).

In this passage Socrates is outlining the fundamental difference between true beliefs and knowledge. Unlike knowledge, true beliefs have a tendency to ‘run away’ and refuse to stay put. So, in order to make true beliefs hang around, one must tie down true beliefs by reasoning out the cause. But how does one tie down true beliefs by ‘reasoning out the cause’? According to Bedu-Addo, one ties down true beliefs by direct apprehension of the Forms, that is, by utilizing the aitias logismos one can convert true opinions into knowledge of the Forms. Yet how this tying down of true beliefs by reasoning out the cause functions is left completely unexplained by Bedu-Addo. But it is also left completely unexplained by
Plato as well. Plato does not give us any indication how one can tie down true beliefs by reasoning out the cause. He merely states that one can do so, that once one has reasoned out the cause, true beliefs become ‘items of knowledge’ and ‘permanent’. Yet, despite Plato’s lack of explanation concerning *aitias logismos*, Plato in utilizing the *aitias logismos* may have been merely restating what he said toward the end of the demonstration concerning the conversion of true beliefs into knowledge.

At 85d Socrates tells Meno the boy’s state of knowledge at the end of the demonstration.

> And now these opinions have been stirred in him just as in a dream. But if someone questions him in the same way many times and in many ways, you know that in the end he will come to have exact knowledge of these no less than anyone (85c9-d).

If we consider this passage (85d) in conjunction with what Socrates says at 98a, it could be argued that by using the words *aitias logismos* Plato is merely reiterating what he had Socrates say at the end of the demonstration. That is, the *aitias logismos* is nothing other than being questioned in many ways and many times about the same subject. In other words, if one only has true beliefs concerning a particular subject, then one can convert these true beliefs into knowledge by rehearsing them over and over again. In this way, the *aitias logismos* may merely refer to what Plato had already stated at the end of the demonstration: true belief becomes knowledge when a particular subject or problem is rehearsed over and over again in one’s mind. The ‘finding reasons’ or reasoning out the cause’ merely entails that one rehearse a given subject in order to know that subject with absolute certainty. Klein makes a similar point by stating “This binding consists in finding reasons for them in one’s own thinking” (247). If this interpretation is correct, then the *aitias logismos* has nothing to do with knowledge of the Forms. It does not because if the *aitias logismos* merely entails a rehearsing over and over again of a subject that one only has true beliefs about, then knowledge of Forms becomes completely irrelevant for this practice. The reason for this is that the knowledge of Forms will not aid in the conversion of true beliefs because all that is necessary is that one consider and find reasons or question and rehearse the true beliefs that one has. It is not the case that one need to have any acquaintance with Forms to complete this procedure. Likewise, it is not clear that this ‘rehearsing’ ever comes to an end. In other words, being questioned many times and in
many ways may never come to an end, that is, it may never reach the end of the ‘upward path’, i.e., Forms.

In conclusion, I have argued that the three arguments offered by Bedu-Addo is support of the claim that Plato already had his metaphysical Theory of Forms at the time of writing the Meno is mistaken. First, because there is no need for the boy to recollect the ‘square itself’. This is the case because the boy already knows what a square is at the outset of the demonstration. Likewise, Socrates never poses any questions of the sort “What is a square” or “What is squareness?.” Second, the mere difficulty of the problem of doubling the square does not entail that Plato means for his readers to view the difficulty as a postulation of Forms. Merely because the solution to the geometrical problem is ineffable in arithmetical terms does not mean that it is not possible to define the solution in geometrical terms and this is precisely what the slave boy does in the demonstration. Third, the aitias logismos of 98a is not equivalent with the “upward path” of the Phaedo and the Republic. The reason for this is that the notion of aitias logismos is left inexplicit by Plato. Likewise, even if we were to consider what Plato means by the aitias logismos, as a rehearsal of true beliefs, it does not follow that this rehearsal will culminate in the knowledge of Forms.
CONCLUSION

In a previous section I have outlined each of the slave boy’s responses to Socrates questions in order to determine what the slave boy recollects. Despite this, we are still left to consider how we are to interpret recollection in the *Meno*. As stated earlier, Scott outlines two competing views of recollection in the *Meno*. ‘K’, which states that Plato is advancing a thesis which is intended to show how conceptual thought is possible and that human understanding is the product of the information given to us by sense experience and innate universal notions. And ‘D’, advanced by Scott, argues that the purpose of recollection is to scrape away all the deceptive notions given to us by sense experience in order to reveal what lies beneath. But do either of these interpretations accord with what we have considered within the demonstration? In other words, do either of these interpretations fit with what we now know concerning the theory of recollection as presented in the demonstration?

Under the analysis I have provided of not only the general theory of recollection and the demonstration, recollection in the *Meno* boils down to the following:

1. Recollection is relegated only to those propositions or concepts which can be known *a priori* (section II).
2. Recollection occurs only after false beliefs concerning a given subject are removed (section 3.3).
3. Recollection occurs only after one has reached *aporia* (section 3.1 D).
4. True beliefs are formed by deducing the consequences of an interlocutors questions, i.e. by utilizing the answers to former questions as a foundation for the answers to latter questions (section 3.2).
5. True beliefs and knowledge have a similar origin, that is, in order for knowledge to be possible one must first recollect true beliefs concerning a given subject (section 3.2).
6. Recollection is not concerned with the formation of everyday or mundane concepts (section 3.1 A). The boy already possesses the requisite concepts for understanding Socrates’ question.
7. No allusion to forms is made in the *Meno*. The objects of recollection, as presented in the demonstration, are only relegated to necessary *a priori* truths.

So, with all of these considerations in mind, we can revise the Demaratus story to give us a complete picture of recollection in the *Meno*. Remember that under the Demaratus story the message provided to us by sense experience is deceptive, that is, it leads us into assuming that the knowledge gained by experience is the correct account. Likewise, since sense experience is deceptive, it must be scraped away in order to reveal the knowledge which is underneath. But the Demaratus story does not provide us with a complete picture of what is happening in the *Meno*. First, nowhere in the dialogue does Plato tell us that the sensible world or sense experience is deceptive and should not be trusted. All that Plato tells us is that we should not rely on sense experience in the process of recollection. This is evident throughout the course of the demonstration because any reliance on diagrams will not aid us in the process of recollection. Even though, Plato plays down the importance of sense experience in the course of the demonstration and shows that it is unnecessary, he never tells us that sensory experience is unreliable or deceptive. What Plato does show us is that in the process of recollection, as characterized in the demonstration, need not be founded upon or have any reliance on sense experience. The demonstration does however show us that in order for recollection to proceed one must rid oneself of false belief. But this false belief is not derived from any deceptive notions of sense experience. It is merely derived from a false conceit that one thinks one knows when one does not.

Likewise, whereas the Demaratus story supports a two-world theory wherein true beliefs are derived from hearsay, tradition, or ‘divine dispensation’ and knowledge is derive from recollection, there is no indication in the demonstration or elsewhere in the *Meno* that true beliefs about recollectables is of a separate origin from knowledge of recollectables. In fact true beliefs are formed within the demonstration as a precursor for their conversion into knowledge. Despite the fact that some true beliefs are formed by ‘divine dispensation’, some true beliefs are formed within the process of recollection and have no need to be scraped away in order to reveal a hidden piece of knowledge. What is needed however is that true beliefs concerning a given subject are ‘stirred up’ in order that they may be ‘tied down’ by explanatory reasoning.

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45 The only recourse for the thesis that Plato may have felt that the sensible world is deceptive or unreliable is at 100a when he quotes Homer. “He alone [of those in Hades] had life and mind; the rest were shadows.” We could easily read this quote as Plato holding that the sensible world is like ‘shadows’ or deceptive, but to do so would be reading a full blown version of Plato’s metaphysics of the *Republic* back into the *Meno*. 

54
Thus, recollection in the *Meno* is not concerned with the way in which we come to arrive at or acquire everyday or mundane concepts and true beliefs. Likewise, recollection in the *Meno* is also not concerned with the removal of a deceptive, untrusting, sensible world in order to reveal the true nature of reality, i.e., the Forms. Recollection is, however, a positive program through which one can acquire knowledge without any specification of its object or starting point. As an answer to Meno’s Paradox, recollection provides Plato with the apparatus for the discovery of definitions. In this way, Plato moves beyond the restrictions of the Socratic method in order to provide a full account of the way in which we can gain knowledge of ethical definitions.
REFERENCES


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