

“Virtue and Plato’s Theory of Recollection”

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Plato's theory of recollection has received much attention from scholars. Some of the most controversial questions being discussed in journals include these:

- What is the relationship between the middle section of the *Meno*, which includes the explication of the theory of recollection and the slave-boy episode, and the beginning and concluding sections, which are concerned respectively with the definition of virtue and the question of whether or not virtue can be taught?
- Should recollection be regarded as a positive Platonic doctrine or as an ironic doctrine that is not meant to be taken seriously?
- If recollection is meant to be taken seriously, what interpretation should be given to it?

In this thesis, I will give an interpretation of recollection as a positive Platonic doctrine and provide a defense against its critics.

In Chapter 2, titled "Virtue and the Theory of Recollection in the *Meno*," I will show that the three sections of the *Meno* are tightly interwoven and that the slave-boy episode is not a digression dropped into the dialogue. The theory of recollection has an important bearing on the definition of virtue and the question of whether virtue can be acquired. I will show that the dialectic concerning virtue in the beginning and concluding sections shows a concern about the acquisition of knowledge.

In Chapter 3, titled “The Theory of Recollection,” I will examine recollection as it is presented in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*. One of the critics’ most crippling attacks against recollection has been that the theory, if interpreted literally, presents a logical difficulty: infinite regress. The main features of the theory of recollection, as presented in the *Meno*, seem to be that the soul has learned everything during previous incarnations and that what we call “learning” is the soul recollecting what it has learned during a previous incarnation. Because the soul, in each incarnation, recollects what it has learned during a previous incarnation, there must be an infinity of incarnations, according to the critics.

I will examine the relationship that exists between the theory of recollection as it is presented in the *Phaedo* and the theory of recollection as it is presented in the *Meno*. I will show that the theory of recollection has a relationship with the theory of the divided line that is presented in Book VI of the *Republic*. Finally, I will show that Plato does not commit himself to reincarnation in his theory of recollection and so avoids the pitfall of an infinite regress.

My next three chapters will provide concrete examples of the role that recollection plays in the Socratic dialogues. Chapter 4, titled “Recollection in the *Charmides*,” will provide an example of how recollection aids one in the acquisition of knowledge concerning *sophrosyne*, a word that cannot be exactly translated into English. Chapter 5, titled “Recollection in the *Laches*,” will provide an example of how recollection aids one in the acquisition of knowledge concerning courage. And Chapter 6, “Recollection in the *Lysis*,” provide an example of how recollection aids one in the acquisition of knowledge concerning the form of *philia*, a word that is usually translated as “friendship,” but that

had a wide variety of meanings for the Greeks. In each of the chapters devoted to discussing these dialogues, I will show the strong relationship that exists between recollection and dialectic.

Finally, in Chapter 7, titled “Conclusion,” I will show the implications of my thesis. The literary character of Socrates performs an important function in the “Socratic” dialogues by engaging the reader in recollection, and I will show that recollection is only the first step, not the final step, toward knowledge.

CHAPTER 2

VIRTUE AND THE THEORY OF RECOLLECTION IN THE *MENO*

There is a strong connection between the theory of recollection in the *Meno* and the questions about virtue that are asked in the first and concluding sections of the *Meno*. The slave-boy episode is not a digression; rather, the three sections of the *Meno* are tightly interwoven.¹ The first section asks the question “What is virtue?” The second section answers the question “How can one search for something when one doesn’t know what it is?” The final section asks the question “Can one pursue virtue as something that can be taught, or do men have it as a gift of nature or how?”

The first and third sections of the *Meno* have a connection with the problem of how we acquire knowledge; this concern with knowledge links these sections to the theory of recollection. The middle section of the *Meno*, which demonstrates the theory of recollection, makes a contradiction to the questions raised in the first and final sections.

In the first section of the *Meno*, Socrates tries to get Meno to give him an adequate definition of “virtue,” a task that Meno is unable to do. Meno asks Socrates to give him an adequate definition to serve as a guide for defining virtue. Socrates, obliging, defines “shape” for Meno:

¹ See Chapter 7, “Conclusion.”

Shape is the only thing which always accompanies color.
(*Meno* 75c)²

Meno, however, protests that this is a naïve definition, and that Socrates needs to give a better definition because now “color” needs to be defined. Socrates again obliges Meno and this time provides a definition of color that he knows Meno will like:

Color is an effluence from shapes commensurate with sight
and perceptible from it. (*Meno* 76d)

As Socrates had expected, Meno likes this definition of color much better than the definition of shape because this definition is much more high-sounding and expresses a then-current intellectual doctrine. But Socrates states with finality that the first definition is much better than the second; in fact, Socrates states that he would be satisfied if Meno could offer him a definition of virtue expressed along similar lines.

Meno doesn't give Socrates the desired definition, of course, but the alert reader knows what the desired definition would have been. Putting Socrates' definition of shape and the desired definition of virtue side by side will show that they are indeed expressed along similar lines:

Shape is the only thing which always accompanies color.

Virtue is the only thing which always accompanies knowledge.

The desired definition of virtue is not a very good definition, and no doubt Plato realized that it is a poor definition. It does fit the dramatic structure of the dialogue, however, for

² *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Princeton University Press (Bollingen Series LXXI), 1961. All references are to this edition. The *Meno* has been translated by Hugh Tredennick.

Meno is not especially intelligent and Socrates has picked his question and the desired definition to fit his pupil.

Both the first and the middle sections of the *Meno* are developed along similar lines. When Socrates offered his definition of shape to Meno, Meno objected that “if someone says that he doesn’t know what color is, but is no better off with it than he is with shape, what sort of answer have you given him?” (*Meno* 75c). If Meno had been able to think of the definition of virtue that Socrates desired, he would have made the same objection about knowledge.

As shown above, Socrates went on after Meno’s objection to his definition of shape to consider color. Similarly, after the alert reader has fixed the desired definition of virtue in his or her mind and realized that it is a poor definition, Socrates turns to the question of knowledge and whether it can be acquired, and if so, how, in the middle section.

Socrates offered Meno a definition of color that he knew Meno would like. The definition was high-sounding and expressed a then-current intellectual idea: Empedocles’ theory of effluxes.³ Similarly, when Socrates shows that it is possible to acquire knowledge, he turns to another intellectual doctrine that he knows Meno will like: the Pythagorean theory of reincarnation.

The third and final section of the *Meno* is concerned with a question that Meno asks Socrates: “Are we to pursue virtue as something that can be taught, or do men have it as a

³ Democritus and some other 5th-century B.C.E. philosophers held this view. They regarded the question of knowledge and perception as basically a matter of material process.

gift or nature or how?" (*Meno* 86d). Socrates agrees to search for the answer to Meno's question, even though virtue has not yet been defined.

In dealing with Meno's question in the third part of the *Meno*, Plato explores the implications of the definition of virtue that was sought after in the *Meno*'s first section.

From

Virtue is the only thing which always accompanies knowledge

you can derive the conditional statement

If a person has knowledge, then that person necessarily has virtue.

However, you cannot derive the conditional statement

If a person has virtue, then that person necessarily has knowledge.

Socrates' arguments in the third part of the *Meno* have been designed by Plato to show that the first conditional statement is true, but the second conditional statement is false.

The final section of the *Meno* can be divided into four sections: the first three sections contain three distinct, though related, arguments, while the fourth section contains a summary of those arguments.

The first argument (87b-89d) has been designed by Plato to provide evidence that the conditional statement

If a person has knowledge, then that person necessarily has virtue

is true. Socrates begins this argument with a hypothesis that he never retracts: if virtue is teachable, it must be knowledge. In the process of considering whether virtue is knowledge, evidence is uncovered that supports this conditional statement.

Another assumption that Socrates makes and never retracts is that virtue is something good, and since it is good, then it is also advantageous. He then shows that the goodness of non-spiritual assets, such as health, strength, good looks, and wealth depends on one's spiritual character. Non-spiritual assets can be used rightly or wrongly. If they are used rightly, they are good; if they are used wrongly, they are harmful.

Spiritual qualities such as temperance, justice, courage, quickness of mind, memory, and nobility of character can also be used rightly or wrongly. If they are used rightly, they are used with wisdom; if they are used wrongly, they are used with folly.

So, if virtue is good, and therefore, and therefore advantageous, it must be in part a kind of wisdom. Socrates summarizes the first argument by saying this:

So now we may say in general that the goodness of non-spiritual assets depends on our spiritual character, and the goodness of that on wisdom. This argument shows that the advantageous element must be wisdom, and virtue, we agree, is advantageous; so that amounts to saying that virtue, either in whole or in part, is wisdom. (*Meno* 89a)

The second argument (89a-96d) is designed to provide evidence that it is false to say the following: if a person has virtue, then that person necessarily has knowledge. Socrates begins his argument by reasserting that if virtue is to be teachable, then it must be knowledge. He then adds two premises that may be supported by an inductive argument: 1) if anything—not virtue only—is a possible subject of instruction, then there must be teachers and students of it, and its contrapositive, 2) if there are no teachers or students of a subject, then it cannot be taught,

Socrates and Meno, now joined by Anytus, inquire whether there are any teachers of virtue. Socrates states that a teacher of a subject should be a person who professes to

teach the subject and who takes pupils and charges them a fee, Of course, this description of the teachers of virtue describes the Sophists. Socrates asks Anytus whether the teachers of virtue he is searching for are the Sophists, and Anytus vehemently denies that the Sophists are teachers of virtue.

Socrates next asks Anytus who, then, are the teachers of virtue, and Anytus, although he has previously stated that it would be “sheer stupidity” (*Meno* 91a) to send a young man to learn an accomplishment from a person who does not profess to teach that subject and who does not have pupils, now suggests that “Any decent Athenian gentleman whom he happens to meet, if he follows his advice, will make him a better man than the Sophists would” (*Meno* 92e).

In the discussion that follows, Socrates shows that famous Athenian statesmen of the past, who had virtue, were unable to teach that virtue to their sons, although it is certain that they would have taught virtue to their sons if they had been capable of doing so. So, the Athenian gentlemen whom Anytus had suggested as teachers of virtue turn out not to be teachers of virtue.

The second argument has provided evidence that people who have virtue do not necessarily have knowledge. According to the argument, if the virtuous statesmen whom Anytus had pointed out had knowledge, they would have been able to teach virtue to their sons. Even among the people usually regarded as being teachers of virtue, there is disagreement about what they are actually teaching.

This argument is not necessarily sound. Quite often, a person who knows something finds out that he or she is not able to teach it. (For example, one of my students learned

logic well and became a tutor of logic, but she quickly discovered that she could not teach it. She simply could not understand why her students found difficult those things that she had learned quickly and easily. And can one teach pupils what it is like to be in love, although one knows the feeling well?) Plato approaches an issue from a variety of directions. Not every direction, including this one, works out. The above argument is based on an inductive generalization: in a number of subjects, teachers are able to pass on their knowledge to their students: therefore, in probably every subject, teachers are able to pass on their knowledge to their students.

The third argument (96d-98c) is designed to show why some people who have virtue are unable to teach it to their sons or to anyone else. These virtuous people do not have knowledge that can be taught, but they do have right opinion. Knowledge is not a *sine qua non* for virtue.

Although right opinion is just as good a guide for action as knowledge, knowledge has an advantage in that it is tied down. Right opinion has a way of slipping away from one. This has been a theme of the third section of the *Meno*: at the end of the first argument of the third section of the *Meno*, Meno says, “it (the premise ‘virtue is knowledge’) seemed all right just now” (*Meno* 89c), and Socrates replies, “Yes, but to be sound it has got to seem all right not only ‘just now’ but at this moment and in the future’ (*Meno* 89d). In other words, for a premise to be sound, it must be tied down by knowledge.

In these three arguments evidence has been provided showing that the conditional statement

If a person has knowledge, then that person necessarily has virtue is true, and that the conditional statement

If a person has virtue, then that person necessarily has knowledge is false. Socrates summarizes the results of the three arguments in this way:

If all we have said in this discussion, and the questions we have asked, have been right, virtue will be acquired neither by nature nor by teaching. Whoever has it gets it by divine dispensation without taking thought, unless he be the kind of statesman who can create another like himself. (*Meno* 100a)

In the second argument, Socrates and Meno were unable to find any teachers of virtue; however, that was an inductive argument and the possibility was left open that at a later date Socrates and Meno may find teachers of virtue, as indicated in Socrates' summary of the three arguments. For now, however, Socrates concludes that whoever has virtue gets it by divine dispensation, leaving open the possibility, of course, that there may be someone who has virtue and is able to teach it. Socrates concludes his discussion with Meno by saying:

On our present reasoning, then, whoever has virtue gets it by divine dispensation. But we shall not understand the truth of the matter until, before asking how men get virtue, we try to discover what virtue is in and by itself. (*Meno* 100b)

This examination of the first and third sections of the *Meno* has shown that there is a close connection between these sections which are concerned with virtue and the middle section which is concerned with how we acquire knowledge. Both the first and final sections of the *Meno* point out that there is a strong connection between virtue and knowledge, and although Socrates' last statement shows that the truth has not been obtained, at least some progress has been made toward obtaining truth. There is a

connection between virtue and knowledge, but we have not discovered the exact nature of that connection.

CHAPTER 3

THE THEORY OF RECOLLECTION

According to some critics, the theory of recollection seems to be somewhat abruptly inserted into the *Meno*. Socrates and Meno have been discussing how to define “virtue” in the first part of the dialogue when Meno suddenly interjects an argument that one can’t acquire knowledge one doesn’t already have:

But how will you search for something when you don’t in the least know what it is? How on earth are you going to set up something you don’t know as the object of your search? To put it another way, even if you come right up against it, how will you know that what you have found is the thing you didn’t know? (*Meno* 80d)

Socrates is prepared to meet Meno’s challenge. He restates Meno’s argument as a dilemma:

Do you realize that what you are bringing up is the trick argument that a man cannot try to discover either what he knows or what he does not know? He would not seek for what he knows, for since he knows it there is no need of the inquiry, nor what he does not know, for in that case he does not even know what he is to look for. (*Meno* 80e)

Socrates then flatly tells Meno that his argument is not a good one.

Meno, ever the discussor of intellectual puzzles, then asks Socrates to explain how his argument fails. Socrates explains the failure of Meno’s argument by telling Meno the doctrine of recollection.

Socrates tells Meno that he has heard this doctrine “from men and women who understand the truths of religion” (*Meno* 81a) and that he thinks what they said was “something true...and fine” (*Meno* 81a). He continues:

Those who tell it are priests and priestesses of the sort who make it their business to be able to account for the functions which they perform. Pindar speaks of it too, and many another of the poets who are divinely inspired. What they say is this—see whether you think they are speaking the truth. They say that the soul of man is immortal. At one time it comes to an end—that which is called death—and at another is born again, but is never finally exterminated. On these grounds a man must live all his days as righteously as possible. (*Meno* 81b)

Socrates restates this doctrine as he before restated Meno's argument against seeking for what we don't know. Socrates' restatement of the doctrine of recollection is the only place in the *Meno* which makes a connection between the doctrine of recollection and virtue:

...the soul, since it is immortal and has been born many times, and has seen all things both here and in the other world, has learned everything that is. So we need not be surprised if it can recall the knowledge of virtue or anything else, which, as we see, it has once possessed. All nature is akin, and the soul has learned everything, so that when a man has recalled a single piece of knowledge—learned it, in ordinary language—there is no reason why he should not find out all the rest, if he keeps a stout heart and does not grow weary of the search, for seeking and learning are nothing but recollection. (*Meno* 81d)

Socrates' restatement of the doctrine of recollection contains two arguments, one of which is subsidiary to the other. The first argument can be symbolized:

P₁: the soul is immortal

P₂: the soul has been born many times

P₃: the soul has seen all things both here and in the other world

C: the soul has learned everything that is

The conclusion of the argument becomes the first premise of the second argument:

- P₁: the soul has learned everything there is
- P₂: the soul can recall the knowledge of virtue of anything else it has once possessed
- P₃: all nature is akin
- P₄: seeking and learning are nothing but recollection
- C: when a man has recalled a single piece of knowledge—learned it, in ordinary language—there is no reason why he should not find out all the rest, if he keeps a stout heart and does not grow weary of the search.

Interpreted literally, these arguments seem to have a logical difficulty: they seem to imply an infinite regress. Since learning is recollection, and the soul recollects what it has seen in its previous incarnations, it follows that the soul has had an infinity of incarnations. Otherwise, in its first incarnation, the soul would not be able to learn anything because learning is recollection and the soul has no experience to recollect.

Another way to interpret the doctrine of recollection is as a theory of knowledge. Instead of being understood as literally true, it can be interpreted in a way that shows, without the aid of reincarnation, that there is a way that one can search for and find something which one doesn't already know. Socrates states:

I shouldn't like to take my oath on the whole story, but one thing I am ready to fight for as long as I can, in word and act—that is, that we shall be better, braver, and more active men if we believe it right to look for what we don't know than if we believe there is no point in looking because what we don't know we can never discover. (*Meno* 86c)

The purpose of the slave-boy episode is to show that one can search for what one doesn't know and recognize the thing that one was searching for when one finds it. It

shows the process by which one goes from having wrong opinion to a state which verges on knowledge.

During the episode the slave boy searches for something that he doesn't know and recognizes when he has found it without any prompting from Socrates. Socrates begins the episode by drawing a square, then telling the slave boy that the sides are meant to be two feet long. He asks the slave boy to tell him how long the sides of a square with double the area of the first square would be. The slave boy answers that the sides would "obviously" (*Meno* 82e) be double the length of the sides of the first square. Socrates draws the square that the slave boy has indicated, and the slave sees that this square is four times the area of the first square, not double.

Socrates then points out to Meno the process of learning that the slave boy is undergoing:

Observe, Meno, the stage he has reached on the path of recollection. At the beginning he did not know the side of the square of eight feet. Nor indeed does he know it now, but then he thought he knew it and answered boldly, as was appropriate—he felt no perplexity. Now however he does feel perplexed. Not only does he not know the answer; he doesn't even think he knows. (*Meno* 84a)

Both Meno and the slave boy have traveled this far on the path of recollection. Both thought that they knew the answer to some question, the slave boy to the question about the sides of the square with the area of eight feet, and Meno to the question of the definition of virtue. Both now know that they don't know the answer, so both are ready to seek for the answer. Recollection is both "seeking and learning," so they are now traveling on the path of recollection.

Socrates continues:

...in fact we have helped him to some extent toward finding out the right answer, for now not only is he ignorant of it but he will be quite glad to look for it. Up to now he thought he could speak well and fluently, on many occasions and before large audiences, on the subject of a square double the size of a given square, maintaining that it must have a side of double the length. (*Meno* 84c)

That passage alludes to Meno's speech earlier in the dialogue:

...I have spoken about virtue hundreds of times, held forth often on the subject before large audiences, and very well too, or so I thought. Now I can't even say what it is. (*Meno* 80b)

Neither Meno nor the slave boy would have searched for the answers to their respective questions as long as they thought they knew the answers, but now that Socrates has shown them that they don't know the answers, they are ready to search for what they don't know. The numbing process they have undergone has been good for them.

Socrates then aids the slave boy in discovering the length of the side of the square with an area of eight feet. He draws the eight-foot square, using the diagonal of the given square as the side of the eight-foot square, but he doesn't tell the slave boy that this new square is the eight-foot square. The slave boy recognizes that for himself. Neither Socrates nor Meno tells him; instead, the slave boy has a "eureka" or "aha" experience or a "recognition scene." He has been able to search for something that he didn't know. He knew when he had the answer to the question even though he didn't know the answer before he started searching for it.

Although the theory of recollection is set in different contexts in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*, the *Phaedo* sheds some light on how the slave boy was able to recognize the answer to the question.

In the *Phaedo*, the doctrine of recollection is cited as evidence that the soul is immortal. At 72e the doctrine of recollection is brought into the *Phaedo*:

Besides, Socrates, rejoined Cebes, there is that theory which you have often described to us—that what we call learning is really just recollection. If that is true, then surely what we recollect now we must have learned at some time before, which is impossible unless our souls existed somewhere before they entered this human shape. So in that way too, it seems likely that the soul is immortal. (*Phaedo* 72e)⁴

Simmius asks how the proofs of that theory went, and Cebes replies with one proof:

One very good argument, said Cebes, is that when people are asked questions, if the question is put in the right way they can give a perfectly correct answer, which they could not possibly do unless they had some knowledge and a proper grasp of the subject. And then if you confront people with a diagram or anything like that, the way in which they react is an unmistakable proof that the theory is correct. (*Phaedo* 73b)

This argument applies to the slave-boy episode in the *Meno*. Socrates uses both diagrams and carefully-put questions to draw the correct answer from the slave boy.

Socrates then joins the discussion and explains what he means by recollection:

Are we...agreed in calling it recollection when knowledge comes about in a certain way? I will explain what I mean. Suppose that a person on seeing or hearing or otherwise

⁴ This translation of the *Phaedo* is by Hugh Tredennick.

noticing one thing not only becomes conscious of that thing but also thinks of a something else which is an object of a different sort of knowledge. Are we not justified in saying that he was reminded of the object he thought of? (*Phaedo* 73c)

Socrates then asks about a number of concepts that people have and asks where they conceived those concepts:

We admit, I suppose, that there is such a thing as equality—not the equality of stick to stick and stone to stone, and so on, but something beyond all that and distinct from it—absolute equality.... Where did we get our knowledge? Was it not from the particular examples that we mentioned just now? Was it not from seeing equal sticks or stones or other equal objects that we get the notion of equality, although it is something quite distinct from them? (*Phaedo* 74b)

The equal things we see are not the same as absolute equality, although they have suggested our knowledge of absolute equality to us. So, Socrates says, this is a case of recollection, since the equal things we see suggest to us the notion of absolute equality. The same process works with unequal objects. Recollection may be caused either by similar or by dissimilar objects.

Recollection is different in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*. In the *Meno*, the soul recollects what it had learned in its previous incarnations. In the *Phaedo*, recollection occurs when objects remind us of concepts; for example, two sticks equal in length may remind us of the concept of equality, or, if a carpenter needs two boards equal in length for a piece of furniture he is building and he has instead two boards of unequal length, then the unequal boards may remind him of the concept of equality.

Socrates continues:

Our present argument applies no more to equality than it does to absolute beauty, goodness, uprightness, holiness, and, as I maintain, all those characteristics which we designate in our discussions by the term ‘absolute’.
(*Phaedo* 75d)

In the *Phaedo*, the doctrine of recollection is combined with the theory of forms. What the soul recollects are the forms—equality, beauty, goodness, uprightness, holiness, etc. As with equality, recollection of these other ‘absolutes’ can be caused either by similar or dissimilar objects. Sometimes after reading about a particular act of injustice such as a murder or a rape, a person will say that “that’s not the way it’s supposed to be” and talk about the “way it is supposed to be.” In this case, a particular act of injustice has called forth the idea of absolute justice; the recollection of justice has been called forth by a dissimilar object.

There is a strong connection between the doctrine of recollection in the *Phaedo* and that in the *Meno*, despite the difference of the contexts in which they are presented. In the *Meno*, Socrates used diagrams to show the slave boy the result of his suggestion that to double the area of a given square one must double the length of the given square’s sides and to show the slave boy that the square which Socrates himself had drawn was double the area of the given square. By inspecting the diagrams, the slave boy sees that his suggestion was wrong and that Socrates’ square does in fact have double the area of the given square.

The slave boy sees that when his square (the one with double the length of the sides of the first square) is divided into four equal squares, each of those squares is equal to the given square, so his square has fourfold the area of the given square:

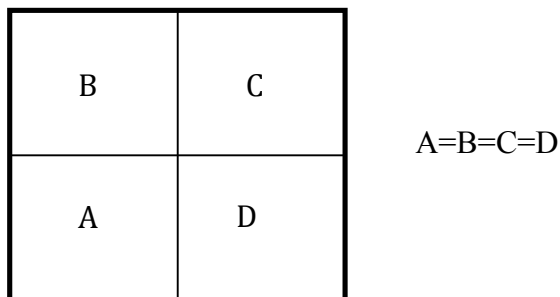


DIAGRAM I

The slave boy understands this because he has “recalled” absolute equality.

When Socrates draws the square with double the area of the given square, once again the slave boy “recalls” absolute equality. The original square is divided into four equal triangles by drawing in its two diagonals, and the slave boy recognizes that these four triangles are equal to the four triangles that lie outside the given square:

A=B
C=D
E=F
G=H

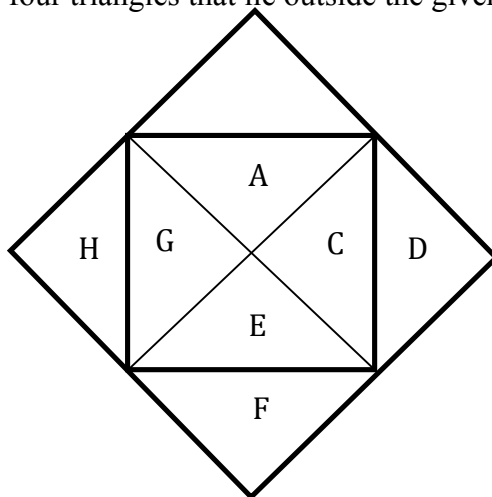


DIAGRAM II

The *Phaedo* and the theory of forms help explain how the slave boy learns in the *Meno*. Another theory which specifically mentions the assumptions of geometry will

help explain a premise and the conclusion of Socrates' restatement of the doctrine of recollection in the Meno: the premise that "all nature is akin" and the conclusion that "when a man has recalled a single piece of knowledge—learned it, in ordinary language—there is no reason why he should not find out all the rest, if he keeps a stout heart and does not grow weary of the search."

In Book VI of the Republic, from 509e to the end, Socrates recounts the theory of the divided line (see diagram below). He begins:

Represent them (the two worlds of the visible and the intelligible) then, as it were, by a line divided into two unequal sections and cut each section again in the same ratio—the section, that is, of the visible and that of the intelligible order.... (*Republic*, VI 509e)⁵

THE DIVIDED LINE

AFFECTIONS OCCURRING IN THE SOUL	OBJECTS	
Intellecion or Reason	Those things of which the person lays hold by the power of dialectic Its assumptions are not absolute beginnings by hypotheses	Intelligible Order
Understanding	Objects of geometry and the kindred arts Its assumptions are arbitrary starting points	
Belief	Animals All plants The whole class of objects	Visible

⁵ This translation of the *Republic* is by Paul Shorey.

	made by man	
Picture Thinking or Conjecture	Images: Shadows Reflections in water or on other surface	

DIAGRAM III

Socrates proposes that the invisible world be divided into two sections “as an expression of the ratio of their comparative clearness (*Republic*, VI 509e). The less clear section of the visible world consists of images: “By images I mean, first, shadows, and then reflections in water and on surfaces of dense, smooth, and bright texture, and everything of that kind....” (*Republic*, VI 510a). The more clear section of the visible world assumes “that of which this (the objects of the less clear section of the visible world) is a likeness or an image, that is, the animals about us and all plants and the whole class of objects made by man.”

The slave-boy episode of the *Meno* is concerned only with the less clear section of the intelligible world, but the premise that “all nature is related” is concerned with all sections of the divided line.

In making the division of the intelligible world, Socrates considers:

...the distinction that there is one section of it which the soul is compelled to investigate by treating as images the things imitated in the form division, and by means of assumptions from which it proceeds not up to a first principle but down to a conclusion.... (*Republic*, VI 510b)

This section is the less clear section of the intelligible world. Here Socrates says that by means of assumptions the soul can proceed in either of two directions: up to a first principle, or down to a conclusion. I shall refer to these two directions as the upward

path and the downward path. Two main points in the above passage identify what makes up the less clear section of the intelligible world.

First, the soul investigates the less clear section of the intelligible world “by treating as images the things imitated in the former division.” The former division is the division of the visible world, and the things imitated were animals, plants, all man-made objects, and others of that kind. This is what we see in geometry, mathematics, and the physical sciences. A geometer working out the hypotenuse of a right triangle he is working with is not a perfect triangle. The lines are not exactly straight, and the right angle is not precisely ninety degrees. Although the triangle the geometer has drawn on the chalkboard is a physical object (made up of chalk) and would cast an image if a mirror were held up in front of it, the geometer regards it as an image in itself—the image of a perfect right triangle.

Second, the objects in this less clear section of the intelligible world are investigated by the soul “by means of assumptions from which it proceeds not up to a first principle but down to a conclusion.” We see this in the slave-boy episode in the *Meno*. The slave boy begins with certain assumptions and ends with a conclusion. He knows what the terms ‘square’ and ‘line’ mean, and he knows that the sides of a square are equal in length. But instead of proceeding up to the first principle of equality, he takes the downward path to the conclusion that to double the area of a given square you must construct a second square using the length of the diagonal of the given square as the length of the sides of the second square. In doing this, the slave boy remains in the affection of soul corresponding to the less clear section of the intelligible world.

Concerning the more clear section of the intelligible world, Socrates says:

...there is another section in which it (the soul) advances from its assumption to a beginning or principle that transcends assumption, and in which it makes no use of the images employed by the other section, relying on the ideas only and progressing systematically through ideas.
(*Republic*, VI 510b-c)

The more clear section of the intelligible world is also investigated by the soul. Here, it again begins with assumptions, but after taking the upward path it discards its assumptions and images and relies only on ideas (forms).

In the slave-boy episode of the *Meno*, the slave boy takes the downward path that we have seen as belonging to the less clear section of the intelligible world; however, in our examination of the *Phaedo*'s theory of recollection we saw that the slave boy "recalled" the form of equality when he examined Socrates' diagrams. Instead of being concerned with a conclusion (how to construct a square with double the area of the given square), the slave boy could have taken the upward path to the idea of equality and have gone from that idea to the other ideas. The assumptions that the soul makes in investigating the sections of the intelligible world may be the same, but the path one takes after making the assumptions determines whether one ends up with a conclusion about the less clear section of the intelligible world or with the ideas of the more clear section of the intelligible world.

Socrates continues explaining the division of the intelligible world:

...you are aware that students of geometry and reckoning and such subjects first postulate the odd and the even and the various figures and three kinds of angles and other things akin to these in each branch of science, regarding them as known, and, treating them as absolute assumptions,

do not deign to render any further account of them to themselves or others, taking it for granted that they are obvious to everybody. They take their start from these, and pursuing the inquire from this point on consistently; conclude with that for the investigation of which they set out. (*Republic*, VI 510c)

This is what the slave boy did in the *Meno*. He started out with certain assumptions and after arriving at the solution to the problem he had set out to solve, he did not investigate any further.

Socrates adds:

And do you not also know that they further make use of the visible forms and talk about them, though they are not thinking of them but of those things of which they are a likeness, pursuing their inquiry for the sake of a square as such and the diagonal as such, and not for the sake of the image of it with they draw? And so in all cases. The very things which they mold and draw, which have shadows and images of themselves in water, these things they treat in their turn as only images, but what they really seek is to get sight of those realities which can be seen only by the mind. (*Republic*, VI 510d-e)

And further:

This then is the class that I described as intelligible, it is true, but with the reservation first that the soul is compelled to employ assumptions in the investigation of it, not proceeding to a first principle because of its inability to extricate itself and rise above its assumptions, and second, that it uses as images or likenesses the very objects that are themselves copied and adumbrated by the class below them, and that in comparison with these latter are esteemed as clear and held in honor. (*Republic*, VI 511a)

All this has been by way of explanation. Glaucon says that he understands that Socrates is talking “of what falls under geometry and the kindred arts” (*Republic*, VI 511b).

Socrates then proceeds to speak of the more clear section of the intelligible world:

Understand then, said I, that by the other section of the intelligible I mean that which the reason itself lays hold of by the power of dialectic, treating its assumptions not as absolute beginnings but literally as hypotheses, underpinnings, footings, and springboards so to speak, to enable it to rise to that which requires no assumption and is the starting point of all, and after attaining to that again taking hold of the first dependencies from it, so to proceed downward to the conclusion, making no use whatever of any object of sense but only of pure ideas moving through ideas and ending with ideas. (*Republic*, VI 511b-c)

By using dialectic, one can move through all that is intelligible. One begins with the same assumptions that one uses when one is searching for a conclusion, then one takes the upward path to the ideas. When one has reached the ideas, then one can take the downward path to the conclusion but without leaving the realm of ideas.

A triangle cannot be one of the objects of the more clear section of the intelligible world; however, triangles do occur in nature, and representations of triangles are used by geometers to teach their classes. One can draw a triangle on a piece of paper, then hold it up to a mirror and look at its reflection. One can look at the front of an A-frame house and see a triangle as a man-made object. Finally, one can draw a triangle as one works on a geometry problem and so regard that triangle as the image of a perfect triangle: one with perfectly straight lines, exact angles, etc. Triangles, however, are spatial and do not fit into the more clear section of the intelligible world. That is reserved for “absolutes” such as absolute justice, absolute beauty, etc.

The divided line provides a vertical arrangement of the world. Plato stressed the vertical tendencies of the divided line because he wanted men to travel up the divided

line until they reached intellection or reason: the more clear section of the intelligible world.

Glaucon then provides a restatement of what Socrates has said:

I understand, he said, not fully, for it is no slight task that you appear to have in mind, but I do understand that you mean to distinguish the aspect of reality and the intelligible, which is contemplated by the power of dialectic, as something truer and more exact than the object of the so-called arts and sciences whose assumptions are arbitrary starting points. And though it is true that those who contemplate them are compelled to use their understanding and not their senses, yet because they do not go back to the beginning in the study of them but start from assumptions you do not think they possess true intelligence about them although the things themselves are intelligibles when apprehended in conjunction with a first principle. And I think you call the mental habit of geometers and their like mind or understanding and not reason because you regard understanding as something intermediate between opinion and reason. (*Republic*, VI 511d)

Socrates replies:

Your interpretation is quite sufficient....And now, answering to these four sections, assume these four affections occurring in the soul—intellection or reason for the highest, understanding for the second, belief for third, and for the last, picture thinking or conjecture—and arrange them in a proportion, considering that they participate in clearness and precision in the same degree as their objects partake of truth and reality. (*Republic*, VI 511e)

Using the divided line, what interpretation can be given to the premise that “all nature is akin” and the conclusion that if you recall one piece of knowledge, then you can learn all the rest?

There is a little problem in relating the less clear and the more clear sections of the sensible world. If you can see one image reflected in a pool of water, then you can see other images reflected in the same water. If you can see one plant or animal, then you can see other plants and animals. It is obvious that images and the physical objects which cast images are related.

It is more difficult to relate the more clear and the less clear sections of the intelligible world. In the education of the guardians which Socrates discusses in Book VII of the *Republic*, a study of the arts and sciences which have as their objects of the less clear section of the intelligible world forms the prelude to dialectic which draws the soul to the forms. One reason the guardians study reckoning, geometry, solids, astronomy, and harmony is so they will be accustomed to the abstract reasoning that is dialectic.

These arts and sciences, however, do form a connection between the more clear section of the sensible world and the less clear section of the intelligible world. Each of these arts and sciences have or could have a practical application. Geometry, for example, could be used by a general in warfare. In this case, geometry would be used to reason downward to a conclusion—a conclusion that could be used at the level of the more clear section of the sensible world. If, however, a geometer would examine his assumptions, he could take the upward path and advance past his assumptions to reach the ideas or forms. We have seen that the slave boy could have taken the upward path to the idea of equality. In addition, a geometer could take the upward path to the idea of form of number. To Plato, 'one' was a form, as was 'two' and at least some of the other

integers, as is shown in Socrates' insistence in the *Phaedo* that 'two' does not admit 'one'.⁶

The more clear section of the intelligible world can be related to the sensible world. By understanding the idea of justice, one could make contributions at the level of the more clear section of the sensible world. Someone who understands the idea of justice can answer questions such as "Will this proposed constitutional amendment make the state more just?"

In the *Republic*, the idea of the good is the most important of the ideas. Plato never fully explains the idea of the good, but it involves proper proportions.⁷ It applies to the more clear section of the sensible world—constitutions, states, men, etc., can be 'good',

⁶ See *Phaedo*, 97 a-b and 101b-102a.

⁷ No one fully understands what Plato means by the idea of the good. He never wrote a dialogue on the idea of the good, and in the *Republic*, he only wrote about it allegorically. Until we understand what Plato meant by the idea of the good, and the other ideas, we can never fully understand either the upward or the downward paths. We are in a position of someone conversing with Socrates in one of the early dialogues: after the dialogue is over, we feel that we have learned something, but then Socrates reminds us that we have not yet understood the idea we have been investigating.

Part of the problem in understanding what Plato meant by the ideas is that Plato believed that the truth is ineffable, and so cannot be expressed in words. Plato did believe, however, that the truth could be approached through words by a number of routes, although the truth itself could never be written down. In his dialogues, and in his dialectic, Plato approaches the truth from a number of viewpoints. One of those viewpoints is that of a Pythagorean. In the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*, I believe that Plato is asking himself, if the truth were to be perceived by a Pythagorean, how would that person express himself? That is why the concept of reincarnation appears in these two dialogues: I don't believe that Plato has committed himself to the concept of reincarnation; I do believe that in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo* he was approaching the truth from the viewpoint of a Pythagorean.

i.e., if they are well balanced and have a proper proportion among their elements. It also applies to the less clear section of the intelligible world. Geometry is ‘good’ because it has a proper proportion among its axioms and principles. And reckoning has the same balance, the same proportion. A ‘good’ republic will have a proper balance of guardians, soldiers, and craftsmen. A ‘good’ man will have reason, will, and desire in proportionate amounts.

Socrates’ conclusion that “when a man has recalled a single piece of knowledge—*learned* it, in ordinary language—there is no reason why he should not find out all the rest, if he keeps a stout heart and does not grow weary of the search” follows from two premises: 1) all nature is akin, and 2) seeking and learning are nothing but recollection.

In the slave-boy episode of the *Meno*, Socrates has shown that it is possible for a person to recall (seek and learn) a piece of knowledge. The slave boy begins with ignorance and ends by recognizing the answer to a problem he has been asked to solve.

The process by which the slave boy acquired his knowledge involved two steps: 1) seeking, and 2) learning. At first the slave boy thought that he knew something that he did not know. Socrates helped the slave boy to realize his ignorance by careful questioning and by the use of diagrams. This is part of the “seeking” process. Once the slave boy realizes his ignorance, he becomes an active partner in the search for knowledge.

When the slave boy sees the diagram which Socrates draws on the ground, he ‘recalls’ the idea of absolute equality. This idea of absolute equality forms a standard by which the slave boy can measure the truth or falsity of his answers. The squares which

Socrates drew on the ground were not perfect squares, but the slave boy used absolute equality as a standard to determine when the square which he had been seeking was found. The sense in which the slave boy “recalls” absolute equality has nothing to do with his soul’s remembering what it may have learned in previous incarnations; instead, it involves the “recollection” found in the *Phaedo*. The slave boy sees some similar objects (squares), and they remind him of the idea of absolute equality, just as in the *Phaedo* the sight of two sticks nearly equal in length remind one of absolute equality. Other ideas can be recalled by the process of seeing either similar or dissimilar objects.

For Plato, what is real is eternal, unchanging, absolute, perfect, etc., and knowledge is the knowledge of what is eternal, unchanging, absolute, perfect, etc. The knowledge which one can recall is the knowledge of the two sections of the intelligible world.

If one recalls a single piece of knowledge belonging to the less clear section of the intelligible world, then one can learn all the other knowledge belonging to that section. For Plato, all the arts and sciences which have as their objects the objects of the less clear section of the intelligible world are related. In the *Republic*, while speaking about the education of the guardians, Socrates says:

...I take it that if the investigation of all these studies goes far enough to bring out their community and kinship with each other, then to busy ourselves with them contributes to our desired end....(*Republic*, VII 531d)

And, as we have seen, if one recalls a single piece of knowledge belonging to the less clear section of the intelligible world, then one can take either the upward path to the ideas of the more clear section of the intelligible world or the downward path to the conclusions of the more clear section of the sensible world.

If one recalls a single piece of knowledge about the more clear section of the intelligible world, then one can go “from idea to idea” and so learn about the other ideas and proceed to the “starting point of all.” By learning one piece of knowledge relating to the more clear section of the intelligible world, one can work one’s way downward to the conclusions of the more clear section of the sensible world and to the conclusions of the less clear section of the intelligible world.

We gain that first piece of knowledge by the use of assumptions or hypotheses, and the absolutes such as absolute equality give us a standard by which to judge the success of our hypotheses. The slave boy used a number of hypotheses in the *Meno* and he used absolute equality as a standard by which to judge their success. All our knowledge regarding the intelligible world is based on assumptions and their use until one achieves a transcendence of them.

In the less clear section of the intelligible world the arts and sciences are systems of knowledge built upon unexamined hypotheses. In the more clear section of the intelligible world these assumptions are transcended; the idea of equality and the other ideas that make up the objects of the more clear section of the intelligible world Plato called “first principles.” We are able to recognize these first principles although they are neither *a posteriori* truths nor analytic tautologies based on the structure of language. We use these first principles in applying reports of experience and in applying reason.

Plato shows that one can recognize a first principle and use it. The slave boy used the first principle of absolute equality as a standard of reality in the *Meno*. When one has recognized a first principle, one can move downward to the conclusions of the more clear

section of the sensible world. These conclusions concern ethics, law, politics, warfare, etc. One can also move downward to the conclusions of the less clear section of the intelligible world. These conclusions concern reckoning, geometry, the study of bodies in motion, etc.

In the *Phaedo*, Socrates says:

...the theory of recollection and learning derives from a hypothesis which is worthy of acceptance. The theory that our soul exists even before it enters the body surely stands or falls with the soul's possession of the ultimate standard of reality—a view which I have, to the best of my belief, fully and rightly accepted. (*Phaedo*, 92d-e)

One can gain the ultimate standard of reality by learning a single piece of knowledge and then taking the upward path to the ideas. After having reached the ideas, one can reach the idea of the good—the “starting point of all.”

The doctrine of recollection and its exposition have shown us that it is possible to seek knowledge, gain it, recognize that we have it when we have gained it, and use it after we have gained it. And, as the exposition has shown, reincarnation is not necessary to do these things; thus, Plato avoids the problem of an infinite regress. A person can do all these things without one's soul having been reincarnated. Since the premises involving the incarnations of the soul aren't needed, one can use Occam's Razor and delete them. We are left with:

P₁: all nature is akin

P₂: seeking and learning are nothing but recollection (in the sense of the 'recollection' in the *Phaedo*)

C: when a man has recalled a single piece of knowledge—*learned* it, in ordinary language—there is no reason why he should not find out all the rest, if he keeps a stout heart and does not grow weary of the search.

I have given an interpretation of Plato's doctrine of recollection in the *Meno* according to what Plato himself wrote. I have shown that the premises concerning reincarnation are not needed to explain the doctrine of recollection, and I have used Plato's dialogues to explain what the premises "all nature is akin" and "seeking and learning are nothing but recollection" means.

In the middle section of the *Meno*, with its explication of the doctrine of recollection, shows that the acquisition of knowledge is possible and that one can have knowledge of virtue; in fact, the doctrine of recollection tells us how to go about gaining that knowledge. The doctrine of recollection tells us that first principles, such as virtue do exist and that we can recognize these first principles and know that they are true. We acquire our knowledge of first principles by the use of dialectic in investigating and transcending assumptions or hypotheses. In this investigation we have a standard by which to judge the truth or falsity of our assumptions; this standard is our recollection of the first principles such as absolute equality and the other "absolutes."

If the theory of recollection is more than a curiosity in the writings of Plato, and if my interpretation of the theory of recollection is correct, then one should be able to show that Plato himself used the theory of recollection in his writings other than the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*. One should be able to show that in Plato's early dialogues on virtue that 1) the first principle of virtue is investigated by using assumptions, 2) recollection plays an important part in forming these assumptions, and 3) the recollection of first principles

plays an important part in judging these assumptions. I will examine the three early Socratic dialogues—the *Charmides*; the *Laches*, and the *Lysis*—to determine if these things are true.

In Chapter 4 I will write about the *Charmides*; in Chapter 5, the *Laches*; and in Chapter 6, the *Lysis*.⁸

⁸ Each of these dialogues is concerned with a virtue: the *Charmides* examines *sophrosyne*, a word which cannot be exactly translated into English, but which is usually rendered as self-control, moderation, or temperance; the *Laches*, courage; and the *Lysis*, friendship. As in most of Plato's early dialogues, great emphasis is placed on defining the terms under discussion, and although each of these dialogues ends with a confession of failure by Socrates, the reader still has a sense that something has been accomplished.

CHAPTER 4: RECOLLECTION IN THE *CHARMIDES*

In this chapter I will examine the role that recollection plays in the theme of the *Charmides*: the attempt to define *sophrosyne*. This Greek word cannot be exactly translated into English; however, it is usually rendered as self-control, moderation, or, as my translator, Jowell,⁹ renders it, temperance. As in other of Plato's dialogues, the dramatic structure of the *Charmides* is intended to engage the reader in the process of recollection.

The main speakers of the *Charmides* are Socrates, Critias, and Charmides. Critias became one of the Thirty Tyrants of Athens after the Peloponnesian War, and Charmides, an uncle of Plato, assisted Critias in the oligarchic revolution of 404.¹⁰ During the course of the *Charmides* several different definitions of *sophrosyne* are proposed, first by Charmides, then by Critias, but as usually happens, Socrates rejects each definition. Still, the reader has a sense at the end of the dialogue that something has been accomplished, that he or she is nearer to an understanding of *sophrosyne*.

The dialogue begins with two persons meeting, one of whom is the very personification of *sophrosyne*, the other of whom is not. Socrates, noted for his self-control, as seen in many episodes in Plato's dialogues, meets Chaerephon, "who always

⁹ This translation of the *Charmides* is by Benjamin Jowett.

¹⁰ This information is readily available in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, second edition, Hammond, N. G. L. and Scullard, H. H., ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970). For more information concerning the lives and careers of Critias and Charmides, see Xenophon, *Hellenica II, IV*, and *The Cambridge Ancient History, V*.

behaves like a madman” (*Charmides*, 153b). As we will see, behaving like a madman was regarded as behaving in a manner inconsistent with *sophrosyne*.

Plato expected the readers of the *Charmides* to recognize when one character was showing *sophrosyne* and when another was not. In the *Phaedo* we saw that the sight of two equal sticks could cause a person to recollect the first principle of absolute equality, and Socrates in that dialogue expressly states that the sight of two unequal as well as of two equal things can make one recollect absolute equality. So, in the *Charmides*, when Socrates does an act that has *sophrosyne*, we recollect the first principle of absolute *sophrosyne*, and when Charmides or Critias perform actions that obviously lack *sophrosyne*, or we read about the madman-like behavior of Chaerephon, we note the contrast between their behavior and Socrates’ behavior, and we still recollect the first principle of absolute *sophrosyne*.

In the dramatic episodes of the *Charmides*, Plato intentionally placed incidents that remind the reader of *sophrosyne*. Socrates is always under control and moderate in the *Charmides*, although there are times when he is in danger of losing control of his emotions and becoming immoderate, as when he catches sight of the inwards of *Charmides*’ garment:

...all the people in the palaestra crowded about us, and at that moment I caught sight of the inwards of his garment, and took the flame. Then I could no longer contain myself. I thought how well Cydias understood the nature of love, when, in speaking of a fair youth, he warns someone ‘not to bring the fawn in sight of the lion to be devoured by him,’ for I felt that I had been overcome by a sort of wild-beast appetite. (*Charmides*, 155d-e)

Socrates, as one expects, manages to keep control of himself, and begins to engage in dialectic with Charmides.

Charmides and Critias, however, are illustrative of people who lack *sophrosyne*. When Charmides tires of engaging in the search for truth with Socrates and wishes Critias to take over the discussion, he manipulates Critias by stating that Socrates has indeed refuted his definition, a definition which, as Socrates deduces, Charmides had learned from Critias. After Charmides had confessed himself beaten by Socrates,

...he laughed slyly, and looked at Critias. Critias had long been showing uneasiness, for he felt that he had a reputation to maintain with Charmides and the rest of the company. He had, however, hitherto managed to restrain himself, but now he could no longer forbear, and I am convinced of the truth of the suspicion which I entertained at the time, that it was from Critias that Charmides had heard this answer about temperance. And Charmides, who did not want to defend it himself, but to make Critias defend it, tried to stir him up. He went on pointing out that he had been refuted, at which Critias grew angry, and appeared, as I thought, inclined to quarrel with him...(Charmides, 162c-d)

In this example, neither Charmides nor Critias is showing *sophrosyne*. Charmides is showing a lack of *sophrosyne* in getting Critias angry, and Critias loses control of himself and speaks angrily to Charmides. Critias also shows that he lacks *sophrosyne* when he tries to save face in front of the crowd rather than accept the truth of Socrates' objections:

...as (Critias) had a reputation to maintain, he was ashamed to admit before the company that he could not answer my challenge or determine the question at issue, and he made an unintelligible attempt to hide his perplexity. (Charmides 169c-d)

Examples could be multiplied, but in the *Charmides*, as in other dialogues, Plato intends for the reader to engage in the act of recollection as he or she comes across incidents illustrating the virtue under discussion, or incidents in which the virtue under discussion is conspicuously lacking.

After meeting Chaerephon and talking with him and Critias about the war Athens was then engaged in, the Peloponnesian War, Socrates asks if there is anyone “remarkable for wisdom or beauty, or both” (*Charmides* 154a), and is then told about and introduced to Charmides.

In being introduced to Charmides, Socrates shows *sophrosyne* in his regard for social propriety. He asks Critias, “But why do you not call him, and show him to me? For there could be no impropriety in his talking to us before you, his guardian and cousin” (*Charmides* 155a). Critias is willing to bring Charmides over to meet Socrates with a trick: he asks Socrates to pretend to know a cure for headache. When Socrates agrees to this, it may be assumed that he is in fact practicing a deception, but on his own terms, he is not. He tells Charmides that he does have a cure for headache, which one of the physicians of the Thracian King Zalmoxis gave him, and that this cure is a “kind of leaf” that needs to be accompanied by a charm:

...all good and evil, whether in the body or in the whole man, originates...in the soul, and overflows from thence, as if from the head into the eyes. And therefore if the body and head are to be well, you must begin by curing the soul—that is the first and essential thing. And the cure of the soul, my dear youth, has to be effected by the use of certain charms, and these charms are fair words, and by them temperance is implanted in the soul, and where temperance comes and stays, there health is speedily

imparted, not only to the head, but to the whole body.
(*Charmides* 157a)

Socrates is not being deceptive when he claims that he has a cure for headache: if one acts temperately, then many causes of headache will be avoided.

By not being deceptive to Charmides, Socrates shows that he has *sophrosyne*. And, although he is tempted by Charmides' good looks, Socrates keeps control of himself and engages Charmides in dialectic concerning *sophrosyne*. This dialectic involves the use of assumptions. I will show that the assumptions made by Charmides are based in part on recollection.

As usual, Socrates begins the dialectic by asking Charmides to give a definition of the term under discussion:

I think, I said, that it would be best to approach the question this way. If temperance abides in you, you must have an opinion about her. She must give some intimation of her nature and qualities, which may enable you to form some notion of her. (*Charmides* 159a)

With this, Charmides gives Socrates the first definition of *sophrosyne* in the dialogue:

...he said that he thought temperance was doing all things orderly and quietly—for example, walking in the streets, and talking, and indeed doing everything in that way. In a way, he said, I should answer that, in my opinion, temperance is a kind of quietness. (*Charmides* 159b)

The doctrine of recollection helps explain how the characters of the *Charmides* arrive at their assumptions and their definitions. When Charmides gives as his first definition that *sophrosyne* is “doing all things orderly and quietly,” he has in mind the people he has seen exhibit *sophrosyne*. These people did not act like madmen, but were quiet and orderly. He knows that these people had *sophrosyne* because when he saw them do an

act of moderation or temperance, he recollected the first principle of absolute *sophrosyne*. This shows, also, that being able to recollect the first principle of absolute *sophrosyne* when you see that a certain act has that character is not enough. Dialectic is necessary for you to transcend your assumptions and to arrive at the truth, not just an approximation of the truth. Recollection is the raw material that dialectic works on. Charmides is approximately correct when he says that *sophrosyne* is doing all acts quietly—many acts that have *sophrosyne* are done quietly; however, Charmides (and later, Critias) still needs to engage in dialectic to find out the whole nature of *sophrosyne*.

Socrates finds fault with Charmides' first definition, as he finds fault with all the other definitions of *sophrosyne* considered in the *Charmides*, but first he draws an assumption from Charmides:

...first tell me whether you would not acknowledge temperance to be of the class of the noble and good?
(*Charmides* 159c)

Charmides does acknowledge this, and this assumption is never refuted in the dialogue, although Charmides' definitions are. This assumption which Socrates has made through recollection caused by seeing acts of *sophrosyne* and acts which obviously lack *sophrosyne*, and by abstracting the features common to the one and lacking in the other, forms a standard by which to judge the definitions offered by Charmides and Critias. If either person offers a definition of *sophrosyne* which includes an element of baseness or evil, then that definition is rejected because *sophrosyne* is of the class of the noble and good.

Socrates shows that Charmides' first definition is incomplete by calling attention to actions which have *sophrosyne* but need not be quietly done. He does not call attention to actions that are loudly done, but to actions that are quickly done; his counter examples are not strictly the opposite of Charmides' quiet actions. *Sophrosyne* can include actions which are quietly done, but since it is not their quietness which makes them *sophrosyne*, Charmides' definition is only approximately correct.

In his conclusion to his attack against Charmides' first definition, Socrates says:

...of two things one is true—either never, or very seldom, do the quiet actions in life appear to be better than the quick and energetic ones, or supposing at the best that of the nobler actions there are as many quiet as quick and vehement; still, even if we grant this, temperance will not be acting quietly any more than acting quickly and energetically, either in walking or talking or in anything else. Nor will the quiet life be more temperate than the unquiet, seeing that temperance was placed by us among the good and noble things, and the quick have been shown to be as good as the quiet. (*Charmides* 160c-d)

What Charmides says is approximately true—acts of *sophrosyne* can be done quietly, but it does not tell us what the essence of *sophrosyne* is. Socrates asks Charmides again to define *sophrosyne*, and

After a moment's pause, in which he made a real manly effort to think, he said, "My opinion is, Socrates, that temperance makes a man ashamed or modest, and that temperance is the same as modesty." (*Charmides* 160e)

Charmides here shows *sophrosyne* in that he makes "a real manly effort to think." This definition, like the first, approximates the truth. A man who has *sophrosyne* will not suffer from *hubris* or overweening pride. Again, Charmides is thinking back to examples of *sophrosyne* that he has seen and trying to determine the common link between them

that makes them acts of *sophrosyne*. Again, recollection is seen to furnish the raw material of dialectic.

In attacking this definition, Socrates makes use of the assumption which Charmides has agreed to: temperance is of the class of the good and noble. Since Homer once wrote, “Modesty is not good for the needy man” (Odyssey 17.347, quoted at *Charmides* 161a), and since Charmides agrees that Homer was right, it follows that *sophrosyne* cannot be modesty because *sophrosyne* is always of the class of the good and noble, and modesty only sometimes is. The assumption that *sophrosyne* is of the class of the good and noble forms a standard by which to judge the truth of Charmides’ definition.

Charmides swerves from Socrates’ attack by offering another definition, one which Socrates deduces that Charmides has heard from Critias:

All that, Socrates, appears to me to be true, but I should like to know what you think about another definition of temperance, which I have just remembered that I heard from someone, ‘Temperance is doing our own business.’ Please consider whether he was right who affirmed that.
(*Charmides* 161b)

Critias expressly denies that it was he who affirmed that, but his later actions show that this definition is in fact his own.

Socrates, speaking to Charmides, begins to refute this definition by showing that some actions that have *sophrosyne* involve doing someone else’s business and not one’s own. At this point, Charmides, tired of being refuted by Socrates, manipulates Critias into taking over the discussion by pointing out repeatedly that this definition has been refuted and by stating:

...I should not wonder if the man himself who used this phrase (doing our own business) could not tell you what it meant. (*Charmides* 162c)

In a fit of anger, Critias, worried about maintaining his reputation with the crowd, takes over the discussion from Charmides.

Almost immediately he quibbles with Socrates over the definition being discussed and so acts without *sophrosyne*. First he says that he accepts the definition Charmides gave to Socrates ('Temperance is doing our own business'), but when Socrates repeats his objection that craftsmen can act with *sophrosyne* while doing the business of others, Critias denies that he has accepted Charmides' definition:

Nay, said he, did I ever acknowledge that those who do the business of others are temperate? I said those who make, not those who do. (*Charmides* 163b)

Socrates has assumed doing and making are the same thing, but Critias using the manner of the Sophists, disagrees. Socrates replies:

O Critias, I said, no sooner had you opened your mouth than I pretty well understood that you would call that which is proper to a man, and that which is his own, good, and that the makings of the good you would call doings, for I am no stranger to the endless distinctions Prodicus draws about names. Please then to begin again, and be a little plainer. Do you mean that this doing or making, or whatever is the word which you would use, of good things, is temperance? (*Charmides* 163d-e)

Critias then shifts his ground, and proposes a new definition of *sophrosyne* which is, however, related to the previous definition. In his quibbling and shifting of ground Critias acts without *sophrosyne*. Critias gives as the fourth definition of *sophrosyne*:

...I mean to say that he who does evil, and not good, is not temperate, and that he is temperate who does good, and not

evil. For temperance I define in plain words to be the doing of good actions. (*Charmides* 163e)

In showing that this definition is inadequate, Socrates makes use of another assumption which he never refutes and to which Critias never objects: in doing good, a person who acts with *sophrosyne* will know that he or she is acting with *sophrosyne*. Both Critias and Socrates make the assumption that *sophrosyne* has a connection with knowledge.

When Socrates points out that a physician may do either good or evil in recommending a treatment for a patient and not know which he has done, and “yet, in doing good, as you say, he has done temperately or wisely” (*Charmides* 164c), Critias immediately withdraws from his position:

But that, Socrates, he said, is impossible, and therefore, if this is, as you imply, the necessary consequence of any of my previous admissions, I will withdraw them and will not be ashamed to acknowledge that I made a mistake, rather than admit that a man can be temperate or wise who does not know himself. For I would almost say that self-knowledge is the very essence of temperance, and in this I agree with him who dedicated the inscription ‘Know thyself’ at Delphi. (*Charmides* 164d)

Here, a connection between *sophrosyne* and knowledge is sharply made.¹¹ Neither Socrates nor Critias would agree that a person could act temperately without knowing that he is acting temperately. This is in contrast to the third section of the *Meno*, in which it is stated that a person can be virtuous if he has right opinion only, and not knowledge.

¹¹ This connection can be seen in the etymology of the word. *Sophrosyne* literally means sound thinking.

But in the *Charmides*, a strong relationship among *sophrosyne*, wisdom, and self-knowledge has been assumed, and has been used as a standard against which to judge Critias' definition. The nature of this relationship will be examined in the rest of the dialogue.

Critias continues:

Shall I tell you, Socrates, why I say all this? My object is to leave the previous discussion—in which I know not whether you or I are more right, but, at any rate, no clear result was obtained, and to raise a new one in which I will attempt to prove, if you deny it, that temperance is self-knowledge. (*Charmides* 165b)

A clear result had been obtained in the dialectic: there is a connection among *sophrosyne*, wisdom, and self-knowledge; and now Socrates and Critias settle down to explore the implications of Critias' definition of temperance as self-knowledge. Socrates begins the discussion:

I am reflecting...and discover that temperance or wisdom, if it is a species of knowledge, must be a science, and a science of something. (*Charmides* 165c)

Critias gives as his view that *sophrosyne* is “the science of a man's self” (*Charmides* 165c). Socrates attacks this view by pointing out that sciences effect good works; e.g., the science of medicine effects health, and the science of building effects houses.

Therefore, the science of a man's self ought to effect a good work. Critias objects:

That is not the true way of pursuing the inquiry, Socrates, he said, for wisdom is not like the other sciences, any more than they are like one another, but you proceed as if they are. For tell me, he said, what result is there of computation or geometry, in the same sense as a house is the result of a building, or a garment of weaving, or any other work of any of the many other arts? Can you show

me any such result of them? You cannot. (*Charmides* 165e-166a)

Geometry and computation do have a result, although it is not the same kind of result as a physical object such as a house or garment; their study accustoms the mind to the consideration of abstract matters and so leads to an ability to engage in dialectic.

Wisdom or temperance also has a result: their (its) possession leads one to a good life.

Socrates, however, says that he cannot show such a result, but that he can show that

“each of these sciences has a subject which is different from the science” (*Charmides*

166a). Critias’ definition of temperance as the science of one’s self does have a subject which is different from the science, but Critias again raises the objection that the case of wisdom or temperance is different from other cases:

You are just falling into the old error, Socrates, he said. You come asking wherein wisdom or temperance differs from the other sciences, and then you try to discover some respect in which it is like them. But it is not, for all other sciences are of something else, and not of themselves. Wisdom alone is a science of other sciences and of itself...I mean to say that wisdom is the only science which is the science of itself as well as of the other sciences. (*Charmides* 166c)

In the rest of the *Charmides* Socrates and Critias examine what the “science of itself and of the other sciences,” by which Critias means wisdom, could be, as well as examining whether it exists and what its benefits would be to the person who possesses it if it exists. Socrates examines in turn the meaning of this “science of science” as 1) the science of all sciences, 2) the science of itself, and 3) knowing the self.

After Critias has again affirmed his definition of wisdom as “the only science which is the science of itself as well as of the other sciences” (*Charmides* 166e), Socrates states:

But the science of science, I said, will also be the science of the absence of science....Then the wise or temperate man, and he only, will know himself, and be able to examine what he knows or does not know, and to see what others know and think that they know and fancy that they know when they do not. No other person will be able to do this. And this is wisdom and temperance and self-knowledge—for a man to know what he knows and what he does not know. That is your meaning? (*Charmides* 167a)

Socrates makes this statement as a way of getting Critias to clarify his beliefs. In this passage we see again the connection assumed among wisdom and temperance and self-knowledge, and we learn that these things include knowing what one knows and what one does not know. It is also stated that a person who has these qualities will know when another person actually knows something or just thinks that he knows something. After Critias agrees to this interpretation of his definition, Socrates continues:

...let us...ask, in the first place, whether it is or is not possible for a person to know that he knows what he knows and that he does not know what he does not know, and in the second place, whether, if perfectly possible, such knowledge is of any use. (*Charmides* 167b)

As we will see, Socrates will assume that *sophrosyne* or wisdom is useful, and he will use this assumption as a standard against which to judge the results of his and Critias' investigation into the meaning of wisdom, or the "science of itself and of all other sciences." First Socrates asks Critias:

Does not what you have been saying, if true, amount to this, that there must be a single science which is wholly a science of itself and of other sciences, and that the same is also the science of the absence of science? (*Charmides* 167c)

Critias agrees that this is the case, and Socrates begins his investigation of it by pointing out that there are no parallel cases of a science being a science both of itself and of other sciences, and of the absence of them. For example, there is no vision which is a science of itself and of all other visions, and of the absence of them.

This objection criticizes the part of Critias' definition that states that wisdom is the science of other sciences as well as of itself; it leaves open the possibility that wisdom is the science of itself. Socrates even admits the possibility that a science which is a science of itself and of other sciences could exist even though he has not found a parallel case to it existing.

Next, Socrates criticizes the notion that wisdom could be a science of itself. He does this by examining in what way magnitude and numbers, and hearing and sight, can bear a relation to themselves. He asks Critias:

...if we could find something which is at once greater than itself and greater than other great things, but not greater than those things in comparison of which the others are greater, then that thing would have the property of being greater and less than itself? (*Charmides* 168c)

And when Critias answers that that is the "inevitable inference," Socrates draws other examples, for instance, "...if hearing hears itself, then it must hear a voice, for there is no other way of hearing" (*Charmides* 168d). Socrates then asks Critias:

Do you remark, Critias, that in several of the examples which have been recited the notion of a relation to self is hardly credible—inadmissible, for example, in the case of magnitudes, numbers, and the like?...But in the case of hearing and sight, or in the power of self-motion, and the power of heat to burn, and so on, this relation to self will be regarded as incredible by some, but perhaps not by others. And some great man, my friend, is wanted, who will

satisfactorily determine for us whether there is nothing which has an inherent property of relation to self rather than to something else, or some things only and not others, and whether in this class of self-related things, if there is such a class, that science which is called wisdom or temperance is included. (*Charmides* 168e-169a)

In the above passage Socrates makes another inductive analogy to show that a science that is a science of itself may not exist. Since a relation to self does not exist in magnitude, numbers, and the like, and since many people would deny that a relation to self exists in the cases of hearing and sight, and the power of self-motion and the power of heat to burn, the weight of the evidence is against the possibility that there exists a science which is a science of itself. The evidence however, as Socrates points out, is not conclusive:

I am not certain whether such a science of science can possibly exist, and even if it does undoubtedly exist, I should not acknowledge it to be wisdom or temperance until I can also see whether such a science would or would not do us any good, for I have an impression that temperance is a benefit and a good. And therefore, O son of Callaeschrus, as you maintain that temperance or wisdom is a science of science and also of the absence of science, I will request you to should in the first place, as I was saying before, the possibility, and in the second place, the advantage of such a science. And then perhaps you may satisfy me that you are right in your view of temperance. (*Charmides* 169b-c)

Critias needs to make an answer to Socrates' criticism, but he is confused, and to save face in front of the crowd, he makes an "unintelligible attempt to hide his perplexity" (*Charmides* 169d). In order to continue the discussion, Socrates accepts provisionally Critias' assumption that this science which knows itself is possible, but he points out that at a later time this assumption will have to be investigated.

Socrates then asks, if this science of science is possible, does it enable one to distinguish what he knows? Will it enable one to have wisdom or *sophrosyne*? Critias replies in the affirmative:

For he who has this science or knowledge which knows itself will become like the knowledge which he has, in the same way that he who has swiftness will be swift, and he who has beauty will be beautiful, and he who has knowledge will know. In the same way he who has that knowledge which is self-knowing will know himself. (*Charmides* 169e)

In this passage we have the identification of the “science of science” with “knowing the self” (self-knowledge). Socrates replies:

I do not doubt...that a man will know himself, when he possesses that which has self-knowledge, but what necessity is there that, having this, he should know what he knows and what he does not know? (*Charmides* 169e)

Socrates’ contention is that the science of science can only “determine that of two things one is and the other is not science or knowledge” (*Charmides* 170a). That Socrates held this belief is shown in the *Phaedo*:

The theory that our soul exists even before it enters the body surely stands or falls with the soul’s possession of the ultimate standard of reality—a view which I have, to the best of my belief, fully and rightly accepted. (*Phaedo* 92e)

The ultimate standard of reality can determine which of two things is knowledge and which is not knowledge. So, if a person has only this science of science or knowledge of knowledge,

the probability is that he will only know that he knows something, and has a certain knowledge, both in his own case and in that of others. (*Charmides* 170b)

If a person has only knowledge of knowledge, then he will not have the knowledge of health or of justice or of anything else:

...wisdom or temperance, if it is no more than a science of science and of the absence of science or knowledge, will not be able to distinguish the physician who knows what concerns his profession from one who does not know but pretends or thinks that he knows, or any other professor of anything at all. Like any other artist, the wise or temperate man will only know the man of his own trade, and no one else. (*Charmides* 171c)

Since these things are so, the great advantage of wisdom (the science of science) is gone, for one who has this wisdom will not know what is known and what is unknown to others. Socrates continues:

May we assume then, I said, that wisdom, viewed in this light as knowledge of knowledge and ignorance, has this advantage—that he who possesses such knowledge will more easily learn anything which he learns, and that everything will be clearer to him, because, in addition to the several objects of knowledge, he sees the science and this also will better enable him to test the knowledge which others have of what he knows himself, whereas the inquirer who is without this knowledge may be supposed to have a feebler and much less effective insight? Are not these, my friend, the real advantages which are to be gained from wisdom? And are we not looking and seeking after something more than is to be found in her? (*Charmides* 172b)

If a person has knowledge in this sense—of knowing what is and what is not knowledge, in addition to knowing the several objects of knowledge—then he or she will have an advantage over others, for they know the objects of knowledge without knowing what is knowledge, but a person who has knowledge in this sense knows both the objects of knowledge and what constitutes knowledge. The advantages which Socrates says that

person who has wisdom in this sense will enjoy—learning things more easily, seeing things more clearly, and testing others better about the knowledge which he has than one who does not have this knowledge—are not slight, but are far less impressive than the advantages Socrates and Critias have been investigating. This, however, is the case of a single person having wisdom in the sensible world. In his description of a “dream,” Socrates describes an ideal world in which all have this wisdom.

Hear, then, I said, my own dream—whether coming through the horn or ivory gate, I cannot tell. The dream is this. Let us suppose that wisdom is such as we are not defining, and that she has absolute sway over us. Then, each action will be done according to the arts or sciences, and no one professing to be a pilot when he is not, no physician or general or anyone else pretending to know matters of which he is ignorant, will deceive or elude us. Our health will be improved; our safety at sea, and also in battle, will be assured; our coats and shoes, and all other instruments and implements will be skillfully made, because the workmen will be good and true. Aye, and if you please, you may suppose that prophecy will be a real knowledge of the future, and will be under the control of wisdom, who will deter deceivers and set up the true prophets in their place as the revealers of the future.
(*Charmides* 173b-c)

In an ideal world in which all had wisdom, the advantages would be immense: no deceivers, everyone competent, and lots of well-done actions and well-made goods.

Socrates continues, however:

Now I quite agree that mankind, thus provided (with wisdom in the sense of knowing what is and is not knowledge, as well as knowing the objects of knowledge), would live and act according to knowledge, for wisdom would watch and prevent ignorance from intruding on us in our work. But whether by acting according to knowledge we shall act well and be happy, my dear Critias—this is a

point which we have not yet been able to determine.
(*Charmides* 173d)

Socrates doesn't deny that a life lived according to knowledge by a person who has wisdom would enable that person to live well and be happy: he merely says that that has not yet been proved. It is a suitable topic for further dialectic.

Critias tells Socrates that if one discards knowledge, then one can "hardly find the crown of happiness in anything else" (*Charmides* 173d). Socrates then asks which knowledge in particular will make men act well and be happy. The knowledge is not that which a craftsman has, Critias answers, but is instead the knowledge of good and evil.

This knowledge makes men act well and be happy. Socrates reacts:

You villain! I said. You have been carrying me around in a circle, and all this time hiding from me the fact that it is not the life according to knowledge which makes men act rightly and be happy, not even if it be the knowledge of all the sciences, but one science only, that of good and evil.
(*Charmides* 174c)

The definition of wisdom or *sophrosyne* which Socrates and Critias have been pursuing is incorrect: wisdom or *sophrosyne* is not the 'knowledge of knowledge and of ignorance' or 'the science of science'; instead, wisdom or *sophrosyne* is the knowledge of good and evil. The identification of wisdom or *sophrosyne* with the knowledge of good and evil fits in with the assumptions that Socrates has been making throughout the *Charmides*: 1) wisdom or *sophrosyne* is of the class of the noble and the good, 2) it is of advantage, and 3) it makes men act well and be happy.

Wisdom or *sophrosyne* is the knowledge of good and evil; this, in turn, is the knowledge of the idea of the good: whoever knows the idea of the good will understand

both the good and the absence of good. The idea of the good has utility at the level of the more clear section of the sensible world:

...let me ask you, Critias, whether, if you take away this science from the others, medicine will not equally give health, and shoemaking equally produce shoes, and the art of the weaver clothes—whether the art of the pilot will not equally save our lives at sea, and the art of the general in war?

Equally.

And yet, my dear Critias, none of these things will be sell or beneficially done, if the science of the good is wanting.

True. (*Charmides* 174c)

According to the doctrine of recollection, when one has recollected one piece of knowledge, then one can find out all the rest. When one has an idea, such as justice, then one can make conclusions about the more clear section of the sensible world and answer such questions as “Will this proposed constitutional amendment make the state more just?” One can also travel from idea to idea and reach the idea of the good, i.e., the knowledge of good and evil. This idea has much utility in the more clear section of the sensible world, for, if applied to all arts and sciences, they will be done well and beneficially.

As usual, Socrates ends the discussion on a note of failure:

You see, then Critias, that I was not far wrong in fearing that I was making no sound inquiry into wisdom—I was quite right in depreciating myself, for that which is admitted to be the best of all things would never have seemed to us useless, if I had been good for anything at an inquiry. But now I have been utterly defeated, and have failed to discover what that is to which the lawgiver gave this name of temperance and wisdom. (*Charmides* 175b)

and

And yet, after finding us so easy and good-natured, the inquiry is still unable to discover the truth, but mocks us to a degree, and has insolently proved the inutility of temperance or wisdom if truly described by a definition such as we have spent all this time discussion and fashioning together—which result, as far as I am concerned, is not much to be lamented. (*Charmides* 175d)

Actually, Socrates' dialectic has accomplished much. By a *reductio ad absurdum* argument, he has shown that the definition of temperance or wisdom as the 'science of science' will not hold up; instead, as he shows, the definition of temperance or wisdom as the knowledge of good and evil is much better.

A critic could point out that the definition of *sophrosyne* as the knowledge of good and evil is actually the definition of all the virtues, and not just *sophrosyne*. The *Charmides* is an early dialogue, and it seems that Plato places more emphasis on *sophrosyne* in this dialogue than he does in later dialogues. In the *Charmides*, *sophrosyne*, by its identification with wisdom, seems to be at or near the top of the virtues; in the *Republic*, justice seems to be near the top of the virtues, and at the top of the entire hierarchy is the idea of the good.

The *Charmides* ends on an ironic note: it has been concerned with *sophrosyne*, with self-control, but at the end of the dialogue, Socrates ironically gives control of himself to Charmides:

When you are determined on anything, and in the mood of violence, you are irresistible.
Do you not resist me then?
I shall not resist you then. (*Charmides* 176d)

In this explication of the *Charmides*, I have made five points:

- 1) The reader is engaged in the process of recollection when he or she reads the dramatic incidents in the *Charmides* which Plato has written to reflect *sophrosyne* or the lack of *sophrosyne*.
- 2) The characters of the dialogue remember past instances of recollection when they make their assumptions,
- 3) Recollection serves as a standard in judging assumptions,
- 4) *Sophrosyne* or wisdom is not the “science of science” which Socrates and Critias investigate in this dialogue, and
- 5) A better definition of *sophrosyne* or wisdom is that it is the knowledge of good and evil.

In the next two chapters I will examine how recollection is used in the *Laches* and the *Lysis*.

CHAPTER 5

RECOLLECTION IN THE *LACHES*

The *Laches*¹² can be considered a companion piece to the *Charmides*. Both are early Socratic dialogues concerned with defining virtue or a virtue: the *Charmides* deals specifically with *sophrosyne*, while the *Laches* deals specifically with courage. In the *Charmides* we saw Socrates conversing with two people, Critias and Charmides, who for the most part lack that quality, while in the *Laches* we will see Socrates conversing with two people, Laches and Nicias, who for the most part were regarded by the ancient Greeks as having that quality. Both dialogues use recollection in some of the same ways; however, in the *Charmides*, most of the events causing recollection occurred during the dialogue, but in the *Laches*, some of the events which are intended to cause recollection in the reader are historical events which had not occurred at the time of the setting of the dialogue, but which had occurred by the time Plato wrote the dialogue. In the *Laches*, Plato uses recollection in a way different from the uses he made of it in the *Charmides*.

As in the *Charmides*, the characters and dramatic structure of the *Laches* are important. The characters in the *Laches* are either men who are, or the sons and grandsons of men who were, important military or political leaders. Both Laches and

¹² The translation of the *Laches* I have used is by Benjamin Jowett.

Nicias, the two men who carry on a discussion with Socrates about the definition of courage, were important generals during the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.).

Laches led an expedition against Sicily in 427-426 B.C., making his headquarters at Rhegium. Although he was successful for a year, he was relieved of his command when the war began to shift in Syracuse's favor. After being acquitted for peculation in a trial at Athens, he was continued in his Sicilian command.

Socrates and Laches were together during the Athenian army's retreat from Delium (424 B.C.); in the *Symposium* Alcibiades describes how Laches and Socrates retreated together:

And then, gentlemen, you should have seen him when we were in retreat from Delium. I happened to be in the cavalry, while he was serving with the line. Our people were falling back in great disorder and he was retreating with Laches when I happened to catch sight of them. I shouted to them not to be downhearted and promised to stand by them. And this time I'd a better chance of watching Socrates than I'd had at Potidaea—you see, being mounted, I wasn't quite so frightened. And I noticed for one thing how much cooler he was than Laches, and for another how—to borrow from a line of yours, Aristophanes—he was walking with the same 'lofty strut and sideways glance' that he goes about with here in Athens. His 'sideways glance' was just as unconcerned whether he was looking at his own friends or at the enemy, and you could see from half a mile away that if you tacked *him* you'd get as good as you gave—with the result that he and Laches both got clean away. For you're generally pretty safe if that's the way you look when you're in action; it's the man whose one idea is to get away that the other fellow goes for. (*Symposium* 221a-b)¹³

¹³ This translation of the *Symposium* is by Michael Joyce.

Nicias became one of the principal leaders of Athens during the Peloponnesian War after the death of Pericles in 429 B.C. He opposed the imperialistic policies of Cleon (died 422 B.C.), and advocated peace with the Spartans on terms favorable to Athens. He was largely responsible for effecting a fifty years' alliance with Sparta in 421 B.C.: this was known as the 'Peace of Nicias"—Laches was one of the Athenians who signed this treaty with Sparta.

His most important victory occurred in 425-4 B.C., when he defeated the Corinthians and occupied the island of Cythera; however, he is best known for the role he played in Athens' ill-fated Sicilian Expedition, which was recounted by Thucydides in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*.

In 415 B.C., Nicias was appointed to command, along with the Athenian generals Alcibiades and Lamachus, a huge military expedition against the city of Syracuse in Sicily, although he had opposed the expedition and had spoken against it in the Athenian Council. From the beginning the expedition had bad luck. Alcibiades was recalled by the Athenians, who suspected him of sacrilegious activities, but instead of returning to Athens, Alcibiades defected to Sparta. Lamachus was killed in battle at Syracuse in 415 B.C. In 413 B.C. Nicias sent a letter to the Athenian Council citing kidney disease and asking to be relieved of command. Instead, the Athenians sent another general, Demosthenes, to aid Nicias.

Demosthenes attempted to invest Syracuse, but failed, and he and Nicias decided to sail back to Athens. Thucydides writes of the occurrence that happened when the Athenians were ready to sail out of the harbor:

All was at last ready, and they were on the point of leaving, when an eclipse of the moon, which was then at the full, took place. Most of the Athenians, deeply impressed by this occurrence, now urged the generals to wait; and Nicias, who was over-addicted to divination and that kind of thing, refused from that moment even to discuss the question of departure, until they had waited the twenty-seven days prescribed by the soothsayers.¹⁴

This delay was fatal, as the Syracusans were able to gather their forces to keep the Athenians from escaping. The Syracusan expedition was a disaster for Athens: the Syracusans captured both the forces under Nicias and the reinforcements under Demosthenes. Although Thucydides shows that it was Nicias' superstition that led to the capture of both Athenian armies by the Syracusans, he writes that Nicias was

a man who, of all the Greeks in my time, least deserved such a fate, for he had lived in the practice of every virtue.¹⁵

Such were the two generals with whom Socrates discusses courage in the *Laches*: Laches, than whom Socrates was braver during the retreat from Delium, and Nicias, a general who practiced every virtue, according to Thucydides, yet who was responsible in large measure for the disaster Athens suffered at Syracuse.

These events would have been known to the reader of the *Laches*. The disaster at Syracuse occurred in 413 B.C., the Peloponnesian War ended in 404 B.C., the historian Thucydides probably died about 400 B.C., Socrates died in 399 B.C., and Plato probably

¹⁴ Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, edited in translation by Sir Richard Livingstone (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), pp. 363-364.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 384-385.

began writing his dialogues after the death of Socrates. Therefore, not only would the contemporary reader of the *Laches* have known about the events at Syracuse, but would have had Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* available to read, too.

The other major characters of the *Laches*, besides Socrates, are Lysimachus and Melasias, who are the sons of famous fathers, and their sons, Aristides and Thucydides. Both sons are named after their famous grandfathers.

Thucydides, the ancestor whom the character in the dialogue is named after, was the son-in-law of the Athenian leader Cimon. A powerful public speaker, Thucydides became a political leader after the death of Cimon in c. 450 B.C., and was ostracized in 443 B.C. He was said to have been the first political leader to organize his followers into a party, and he may have been the historian Thucydides' maternal grandfather.

Aristides was a famous Athenian statesman who was known for being just. At the Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C., Aristides was *strategos* for the day, but turned over his command to the experienced general, Miltiades, and so contributed to the Athenians' victory over the Persians. He also participated in the Battle of Salamis in 480 B.C. and supported Themistocles in rebuilding the walls of Athens. According to the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*,¹⁶ Aristides' reputation for honesty went back to his contemporaries.

¹⁶ *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Second Edition, edited by N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

A number of anecdotes flourished about Aristides, presenting him as an honest and just man. Once, when citizens were voting to ostracize either Aristides or Themistocles, a poor man asked Aristides to write the name Aristides on a shard of broken pottery (used to record the votes of the ostracism on). Aristides wrote his own name down as the man had requested, then asked why the man was voting to ostracize Aristides. The man replied, "Because I'm so tired of hearing him referred to as Aristides 'the Just'." Stories such as these would have been familiar to the contemporary reader of the *Laches*.

Recollection occurs in a number of forms in the *Laches*. First, recollection can be caused by perceiving actions or things participating in the form being recalled, or it can be caused by perceiving actions or things participating in the opposite of the form being recalled. The reader of the *Laches* recalls absolute *arête* when reading of the concern that Lysimachus and Melesias have for the proper education of their sons. The reader of the *Laches* will also recall the absolute *arête* when reading of a person who is considered a friend but who does not perform the function of a friend well; for example, a friend who does not give advice when that advice is requested but, instead, says whatever he thinks his listener is interested in hearing.

Second, Plato meant for the reader of the *Laches* to be reminded of absolute *arête* when running across the names of virtuous men in the dialogue. A contemporary of Plato would be reminded by hearing the name 'Aristides' of stories that illustrate Aristides' reputation for justness and honesty. He would also be reminded of Aristides' illustrious career and of how he contributed to one of Greece's most famous victories by giving his command to Miltiades during the battle of Marathon. The reader would also be reminded

of the *arête* of Thucydides when reading the name of Thucydides, and he would be reminded of *arête* when reading the names of the generals Nicias and Laches, both of whom were powerful military leaders of Athens for years.

In these instances, recollection would be caused by reading the name of a certain person, then remembering stories of that person's career. These stories would then cause recollection in the person remembering the stories: just as seeing two equal sticks can cause a person to recollect the idea of absolute equality, so remembering the story that illustrates a person's honesty can cause the person remembering the story to recollect the idea of absolute honesty.

This kind of recollection is removed a little further than the recollection we saw in the *Charmides*. In that dialogue the reader read about a certain action that either had *sophrosyne* or lacked *sophrosyne* and so recollected the idea of absolute *sophrosyne*. In the *Laches*, the reader reads the name of a person who has *arête* (such as Aristides) or of a person who lacks *arête* when he does a certain action that the reader is aware of (such as Nicias, whose superstitiousness prevented the Athenians from leaving Syracuse when it was expedient that they do so), and then remembers the career of that person or stories about that person, and so recollects the idea of absolute equality.

This kind of recollection is mentioned in the *Phaedo*. Among the examples of recollection that Socrates gives are the following:

- 1) It is possible for a person who sees a picture of a horse or a musical instrument to be reminded of a person (who is closely associated with the horse or musical instrument), and

2) It is possible for a person who sees a picture of Simmias to be reminded of Simmias. (*Phaedo* 73e-74a)

We know from the *Republic* that a picture is an imitation of an imitation. At the most real level are the forms, a person or a horse or a musical instrument is an imitation of a form, and a picture of a person or a horse or a musical instrument is an imitation of an imitation. So, recollection need not be caused by the immediate perception of objects or an action that participates in a form, such as the sight of two equal sticks or of an action that has *sophrosyne*. Recollection can be caused by hearing the name of a person who has *arête*, then remembering the notable virtuous actions that person has.

Hearing or remembering stories of virtuous exploits engages the reader in recollection. One could move beyond the stage of recollection into the stage of dialectic by formulating abstractions of the essential characteristics of *arête*. One would do this by finding the characteristics that are common to several instances of actions which participate in *arête* and which are lacking in several instances of actions that are lacking in *arête*. Not every person who knows of the exploits of Aristides, Thucydides, Laches, and Nicias will try to formulate abstractions of the essential characteristics of *arête*, but it seems likely that a contemporary reader of the *Laches* who was familiar with Plato's concern about *arête* would attempt to do so.

Finally, recollection takes place when the reader reads about Socrates. Socrates usually has *arête* in the dialogues of Plato, and can often be regarded as a symbol of absolute *arête* or as a symbol of whatever particular virtue is being discussed in a dialogue. The *Laches* is concerned with *arête* in general and with courage in particular, and Socrates is a model both of a person who has *arête* as a philosopher and courage as a

soldier. Socrates performs excellently the function of a philosopher in the *Laches*, and his courage is well attested by Laches:

Indeed, Lysimachus, . . . I can assure you that I have seen him maintaining not only his father's, but also his country's name. He was my companion in the retreat from Delium, and I can tell you that if others had only been like him, the honor of our country would have been upheld and the great defeat would never had occurred. (*Laches* 181b)

When the reader of the *Laches* recalls Socrates' past exploits such as the retreat from Delium (see quotation from the *Symposium* above), or the time he was the President of the Athenian assembly and refused to put to the vote an illegal motion to try all the commanders at Arginusae together in one trial and his refusal to obey the Thirty Tyrants of Athens when they ordered him to bring in Leon of Salamia for execution (see the *Apology*), the reader recollects the forms of absolute courage.

The dialogue opens after the main characters have seen a man, Stesilaus, give an exhibition of fighting in armor. Lysimachus and Melesias had asked Laches and Nicias to the exhibition without explaining their motive—to ask them whether they should have their children taught the art of fighting in armor, i.e., to ask them for advice on how to educate their children.

Lysimachus is aware that some people won't give advice even when they are asked for it:

Some laugh at the very notion of consulting others, and when they are asked will not say what they think. They guess at the wishes of the person who asks them, and answer according to his, and not according to their own, opinion. (*Laches* 178b)

The reader of the *Laches* is here confronted with an action that is not virtuous, and he recalls the idea of absolute *arête* because of the unvirtuous action: failure to properly advise a friend when that advice is requested. Such an action does not fulfill the function of a friend.

The reader also recalls absolute *arête* when he or she reads of Lysimachus and Melesias performing a virtuous action; for example, both Lysimachus and Melesias are engaging in a virtuous action and are properly fulfilling the function of fathers when they seek advice from their friends about the proper way to raise their children:

...we are resolved to take the greatest care of the youths, and not, like most fathers, to let them do as they please when they are no longer children, but we mean to begin at once and do the utmost that we can for them. (*Laches* 179a)

Lysimachus and Melesias show their concern about virtue in the reasons they give for asking the two generals for their advice:

Both of us often talk to the lads about the many noble deeds which our own fathers did in war and peace—in managing the affairs of the allies, and those of the city—but neither of us has any deeds of his own which he can show. The truth is we are ashamed of this contrast being seen by them, and we blame our fathers for letting us be spoiled in the days of our youth, while they were occupied with the concerns of others. (*Laches* 179c-d)

At this point the reader of the *Laches* engages in recollection by recalling the virtuous exploits of Lysimachus' and Melesias' fathers.

The statement made by Lysimachus about his and Melesias' reasons for asking Laches and Nicias for advice about how to raise their children shows that an important part of the education of the sons of Lysimachus and Melesias was hearing about the

virtuous exploits of their grandfathers. When the two children heard about their grandfathers' exploits, they would recall the form of absolute *arête* because those exploits partake of the form of *arête*. The reader of the *Laches* who was a contemporary of Plato would also be aware of the exploits of Aristides and Thuoydides, and would also recollect the form of absolute *arête* when recalling those exploits.

Laches and Nicias agree to give advice concerning the education of the young to Lysimachus and Melesias, but Laches, with the consent of Nicias, asks the two fathers to also listen to the advice of Socrates. Well regarded by both Laches and Nicias, Socrates is also known and respected by the sons of Lysimachus and Melesias.

To begin the discussion concerning the education of the young, Lysimachus asks Socrates these questions:

...what say you of the matter of which we were about to speak—the art of fighting in armor? Is that a practice in which the lads may be advantageously instructed? (*Laches* 181c)

Socrates does agree to advise Lysimachus and Melesias, but asks that Laches and Nicias give their opinions before he gives his. Nicias speaks first and gives as his opinion that youths can advantageously learn the art of fighting in armor because the art:

- 1) improves the bodily health,
- 2) is of use in actual battle, whether oone needs to fight singly, when the ranks are broken, or when one needs to attach an opponent when one is in flight,
- 3) inclines the student to learn other lessons, such as the proper placement of an army and the complete art of the general, and
- 4) makes one more daring and resolute on the field.

When Laches' opinion is asked, he brings up an important objection to Nicias' recommendation: Where can one find a competent instructor? The Spartans had the best army in ancient Greece, but the men who give exhibitions of fighting in armor avoid Sparta, although it would be reasonable that the Spartans would have the greatest interest in their skills, if, indeed, they have any skills. Also, Laches has seen Stesilaus, the man who gave the exhibition they had just seen; make a fool of himself in actual battle.

Lysimachus asks Socrates to be the tie-breaker between Laches and Nicias, since the two generals disagree on whether the art of fighting in armor should be taught to the young. Lysimachus intends that Melesias and he be guided by the rule of the majority in deciding which education they will give their sons.

Socrates quickly engages Lysimachus in dialectic, pointing out that one should not follow the advice of the majority but rather should follow the advice of an expert in the matter under discussion. He also points out that there is a prior question which has not yet been discussed. Learning the art of fighting in armor is meant to be a means to an end, and that end—how to instill *arête* into the youths—will determine which means will be used to reach it.

Both Laches and Nicias agree to engage in dialectic with Socrates. Nicias has engaged in dialectic with Socrates many times before, for he says to Laches:

...you seem not to be aware that anyone who is close to Socrates and enters into conversation with him is liable to be drawn into an argument, and whatever subject he may start, he will be continually carried round and round by him, until at least he finds that he has to give an account both of his present and past life, and when he is once entangled, Socrates will not let him go until he has

completely and thoroughly sifted him. Now I am used to his ways, and I know that he will certainly do as I say, and also that I myself shall be the sufferer, for I am fond of his conversation, Lysimachus. And I think that there is no harm in being reminded of any wrong thing which we are, or have been, doing; he who does not fly from reproof will be sure to take more heed of his afterlife. (*Laches* 188a-b)¹⁷

Nicias points out that Socrates will thoroughly sift his life; as we will see, Plato will also sift Nicias' life, including Nicias' life at Syracuse.

Laches, who has never engaged in dialectic with Socrates before, tells Socrates his attitude toward discourse:

...when I hear a man discoursing of virtue, or of any sort of wisdom, who is a true man and worthy of his theme, I am delighted beyond measure, and I compare the man and his words, and note the harmony and correspondence of them...But a man whose actions do not agree with his words is an annoyance to me, and the more he speaks the more I hate him, and then I seem to be a hater of discourse. (*Laches* 188d)

Laches knows Socrates' actions because the two men were together in the retreat from Delium. Because Laches does not make any protest against Socrates' words, we may assume that Laches notes a harmony and correspondence between Socrates' words and actions. Laches does begin to hate Nicias, as we will see, for he does not think Nicias' words and actions harmonize. As we will see, Nicias' words in this dialogue and actions at the end of the Syracusan expedition do not, in fact, harmonize.

¹⁷ Here Nicias shows courage by entering on the battlefield of dialectic with Socrates.

Lysimachus and Melesias are concerned with “in what way the gift of virtue may be imparted to their sons for the improvement of their minds” (*Laches* 190b) and he brings up the question: What is virtue?

Socrates sets the limit of his dialectic with Nicias and Laches:

I would not have us begin, my friend, with inquiring about the whole of virtue, for that may be more than we can accomplish. Let us first consider whether we have a sufficient knowledge of a part; the inquiry will probably be made easier for us. . . . Then, Laches, suppose that we first set about determining the nature of courage, and in the second place proceed to inquire how the young men may attain this quality by the help of studies and pursuits. (*Laches* 190d)

Socrates and Laches then set about defining “courage.”

Laches gives as his first definition: “He is a man of courage who does not run away, but remains at his post and fights the enemy” (*Laches* 190e). Laches’ first definition of courage is a true statement about courage, but it is inadequate as a definition of courage. It merely gives an example of courage without saying what courage is. There is no attempt to formulate the essential characteristics of courage. Socrates points out that Laches has spoken of courage of the heavy-armed soldier, but Socrates meant to ask

. . . about the courage of cavalry and every other type of soldier—and not only who are courageous in war, but who are courageous in perils by sea, and who, in disease, or in poverty, or again in politics, are courageous, and not only who are courageous against pain or fear, but mighty to contend against desires and pleasures, either fixed in their rank or turning upon their enemy. (*Laches* 191d-e)

Laches' second definition, "...courage is a sort of endurance of the soul" (*Laches* 192c), is much better than his first definition because it is more universal in nature, picking out "steadfastness" as an essential characteristic of courage.

Socrates, as usual, criticizes the new definition. Similar to what we have seen in the *Charmides*, Socrates states that the virtue under discussion is a noble quality. Laches realizes that this statement is true because he has seen many instances of courage and has recollected absolute courage.

Socrates uses the nobility of courage to criticize Laches' definition of courage as a sort of endurance. An endurance can be a wise endurance, or it can be a foolish endurance; however, as Laches agrees, only the wise endurance is noble: a foolish endurance is not noble. Under Socrates' prodding, Laches changes his definition slightly: "...only the wise endurance is courage" (*Laches* 192e)

Socrates then gives several examples to show that a wise endurance is not necessarily courage; for example, a man "who allows endurance in spending his money, knowing that by spending wisely he will get more in the end" (*Laches* 192e). Socrates also shows that a man with a foolish endurance (in comparison with another man's endurance) will be the more courageous; for example, a man is an army against a force much stronger than his own. So, in some circumstances, it appears that a foolish endurance can be courageous, although Laches and Socrates have concluded that courage is a very noble thing. Since a foolish endurance is not noble, Laches' definition is faulty.

Several of Socrates' examples showing that a wise endurance is not necessarily courageous use the word 'wise' in a special sense: having the kind of knowledge that

belongs to a skill. For example, a physician shows wise endurance in refusing to allow a sick man to eat or drink when he believes that eating and drinking would be harmful to his patient. The physician has the knowledge that belongs to the skill of healing patients. But it is possible that if the word 'wise' is understood in the sense of 'knowing good and evil', then Laches' definition would hold up much better again Socrates' examination. Laches, however, does not recognize that there are different kinds of knowledge.

Socrates has not proved that endurance is not an essential characteristic of courage, and he has not proved that wise endurance is not an essential characteristic of courage. The example of a man who has wise endurance is not enough to characterize courage. Wise endurance may be one of the essential characteristics of courage; however, there are other characteristics of courage that are essential. Laches' definition of courage is incomplete because it leaves out these other characteristics.

When Laches agrees that a man with a foolish endurance (in comparison with another man's endurance) will be the more courageous (as when a man fights against an army much stronger than his own force), he does not make a distinction between courage and foolhardiness. If one army is very much weaker than another army, it may be foolhardy to meet the stronger army in open battle. In such a case, the weaker army would not be courageous in enduring, merely foolhardy. In another instance, such as when the Lacedamonians held off the Persians at Thermopylae, the much weaker force of Lacedamonians showed courage in fighting against the Persians. In this case, however, the Lacedamonians knew that the Persians had to be stopped, at least for a few days, or all Greece would fall to the Persians and their friends and family become enslaved. In

determining whether the endurance a weak force shows in resisting a strong force be courageous or foolhardy, the end which the weak force wishes to accomplish must be considered. In the case of the Lacedamonians resisting the Persians at Thermopylae, their endurance was both wise and courageous.

Laches does make a connection between courage and endurance, however, and willingly turns his part of the dialectic over to Nicias, who then engages in dialectic with Socrates. Socrates had been willing to continue his discussion with Laches and was willing to admit the principle of endurance to a certain extent. He tells Laches:

...we too must endure and persevere in the inquiry, and then courage will not laugh at our faint-heartedness in searching for courage, which after all may frequently be endurance. (*Laches* 194a)

Laches answers Socrates:

I am ready to go on, Socrates, and yet I am unused to investigations of this sort. But the spirit of controversy has been aroused in me by what has been said, and I am really grieved at being thus unable to express my meaning. For I fancy that I do know the nature of courage, but, somehow or other, she has slipped away from me, and I cannot get hold of her and tell her nature. (*Laches* 194b)

In being willing to accept the principle of endurance to a certain extent, and in stating that courage may frequently be endurance, Socrates indicates that Laches' definition is in part true, although further dialectic is necessary to determine how close to the truth Laches' definition comes.

Laches willingly lets Nicias take over his part in the dialectic. This is in contrast to the scene in the *Charmides* in which Charmides taunts Critias and manipulates him into

taking over his part in the dialectic. Here Laches confesses his bewilderment openly, and asks Nicias to take over for him.

Although Laches has made a good start toward defining courage (even if he doesn't realize it), Nicias ignores the association of courage with endurance and repeats something he has heard Socrates say:

Every man is good in that in which he is wise, bad in that in which he is unwise. (*Laches* 194d)

Nicias means by this that courage is a sort of wisdom and should be defined as such.

Nicias' first definition of courage makes use of this idea of courage as a kind of knowledge:

Courage is the knowledge of that which inspires fear or confidence in war, or in anything. (*Laches* 195a)

With this definition Nicias asserts that knowledge is an essential characteristic of courage, but he ignores Laches' assertion that endurance is an essential characteristic of courage. Nicias' association of courage with knowledge is, of course, an assertion that Socrates agrees with, although he engages Nicias in dialectic to determine the nature of that relationship more clearly.

Up to this point Laches has been polite to Nicias, but now he becomes impatient with him. Laches believes that Nicias is being foolish when he equates knowledge with courage, and he abuses Nicias verbally although Socrates asks that he instruct Nicias, not abuse him. Laches says:

Why, surely courage is one thing, and wisdom another....(Nicias) is so silly (*Laches* 195a)

and Nicias responds:

...having been proved to be talking nonsense himself,
Laches wants to prove that I have been doing the same.
(*Laches* 195b)

Neither Laches nor Nicias keep their sense of balance or proportion. There is some truth in Nicias' association of courage and knowledge, although Laches does not see it, just as there is some truth in Laches' association of courage and endurance, although Nicias did not see it. Only Socrates, the image of *arête*, the only one of the three men participating in the dialogue to perform well the function of a philosopher, keeps his sense of balance and proportion. The proper way to engage in dialectic, which Socrates follows, is to pursue the truth, and not worry about whose argument is proven incorrect.

Laches brings up an important point against Nicias' association of knowledge and courage: if courage is a sort of knowledge, then who will have this knowledge? Nicias denies that a physician would have the knowledge that is courage—the knowledge of fear and hope. Neither would a soothsayer. In saying this, Nicias is making a distinction between two kinds of knowledge: the physician has one kind of knowledge, the knowledge corresponding to a skill, while the courageous man has a different kind of knowledge, the knowledge of fear and hope.

Laches does not understand the distinction between kinds of knowledge that Nicias is making, and protests:

My opinion is that he does not like honestly to admit that he is talking nonsense, but that he shuffles up and down in order to conceal the difficulty into which he has gotten himself...Why should a man deck himself out in vain words at a meeting of friends like this? (*Laches* 196b)

Socrates again shows his *arête* as a philosopher and a teacher as he plays a role of a moderator in calming Laches so that the dialectic may continue:

I quite agree with you, Laches, that he should not. But perhaps Nicias is serious, and not merely talking for the sake of talking. Let us ask him just to explain what he means, and if he has reason on his side we will agree with him; if not, we will instruct him. (*Laches* 196c)

After calming Laches, Socrates turns back to questioning Nicias.

If courage is the knowledge of the grounds of hope and fear, then, Socrates says, animals cannot be regarded as courageous:

...Nicias, not even the sow of Crommyon would be called by you courageous. And this I say not as a joke, but because I think that he who assents to your doctrine cannot allow that any wild beast is courageous, unless he admits that a lion, or a leopard, or perhaps a boar, has such a degree of wisdom that he knows things which but a few human beings ever know by reason of their difficulty. He who takes your view of courage must affirm that a lion is not naturally more disposed to courage than a stag, nor a bull than a monkey. (*Laches* 196e)

What Socrates says is true: if courage is a kind of knowledge, then animals, even fierce animals like the sow of Crommyon which Theseus slew after it killed many men, cannot be courageous.

Laches again interrupts the dialogue, showing his rashness:

Capital, Socrates. Upon my word, that is truly good. And I hope, Nicias, that you will tell us whether you really mean that those animals which we all admit to be courageous are in fact wiser than mankind, or whether you will have the boldness, in the face of universal opinion, to deny their courage. (*Laches* 197a)

Nicias ably defends himself against Socrates' and Laches' objection by saying that animals cannot be courageous because they are devoid of understanding, and so are fearless rather than courageous, and that many men are like this. Laches responds:

Behold, Socrates, how admirably, as he thinks, he dresses himself out in words, while seeking to deprive of the honor of courage those whom all the world knows to be courageous. (*Laches* 197c)

Laches' attitude here shows that he is very much concerned with seeing Nicias refuted, although Nicias has been arguing well. Instead of simply following the argument, Laches shows his dissatisfaction with Nicias' words by verbally abusing him.

Nicias tries to placate Laches:

Not you, Laches, so do not be alarmed. I am quite willing to say, and also of Lamachus and many other Athenians, that you are wise, being courageous. (*Laches* 197c)

In his attempt to placate Laches, Nicias says he and Lamachus, one of the three Athenian generals chosen to lead the Sicilian expedition, are wise because they are courageous.

Socrates, still being the peace maker, tries to make Laches refrain from abusing Nicias:

...I think that Nicias deserves that we should see what he has in view when he so defines courage. (*Laches* 197e)

With Laches temporarily under control, Socrates begins to draw out the implications of Nicias' argument.

First, Nicias confirms that courage is but one part of *arête*, and second, he agrees with Socrates and Laches that

...the terrible and the hopeful are the things which do and do not create fear, and fear is not of the present nor of the past, but is of future and expected evil. (*Laches* 198b)

So:

The terrible things...are the evils which are future, and the hopeful are the good or not evil things which are future. (*Laches* 198c)

Nicias also agrees to a third point: “There is not one knowledge or science of the past, another of the present, a third of what may and will be best in the future, but that of all three there is one science only.” (*Laches* 198d)

Socrates then gives several examples to illustrate this last point:

...there is one science of medicine which is concerned with the superintendence of health equally in all times, present, past, and future, and one science of husbandry in like manner, which is concerned with the productions of the earth in all times. As to the military art, you yourselves will be my witnesses that it makes excellent provision for the future as well as the present, and that the general claims to be the master and not the servant of the soothsayer, because he knows better what is happening or is likely to happen in war, and accordingly the law places the soothsayer under the general, and not the general under the soothsayer. (*Laches* 199a)

Nicias agrees with Socrates that this is so—and suddenly the reader is sharply reminded of Nicias’ actions during the end of the Sicilian expedition. Nicias did not know what was likely to happen if he and his men did not set sail for Athens. He placed himself under the soothsayer and, without knowledge, endures in staying before the walls of Syracuse—a foolish action.

The reader’s being reminded of Nicias’ failure as a general at the end of the Sicilian expedition has been set up by Laches’ discussion of discourse, the reader’s knowledge

that Laches once led a military campaign in Sicily, and Nicias' mention of Lamachus in the dialogue. When Nicias mentions Lamachus, the contemporary reader of the dialogue is reminded of the Sicilian expedition because Lamachus, along with Nicias and Alcibiades, was one of the leaders of the expedition. When Laches discusses discourse, he says that he hates the man whose words do not agree with his actions. Nicias has just said that the general should be placed ahead of the soothsayer when it comes to matters of warfare, yet at the end of the Sicilian expedition, Nicias placed a soothsayer ahead of himself, although he was a general, with disastrous results. Nicias' words in the dialectic do not in fact agree with his actions at Syracuse.

With the sharp remembrance of Nicias' actions at the end of the Sicilian expedition and the remembrance of the disaster that befell Athens, the reader recollects the idea of absolute *arête*. Nicias' actions did not have *arête* and lacked harmony. The reader of the *Laches*, remembering the disaster, would probably wonder what would have happened if a different person had been in charge of the expedition. The Sicilian expedition could perhaps have succeeded. In the same way most commentators are agreed that Athens had all the resources it needed to win the Peloponnesian War. But when Pericles, a leader who had *arête* died, Athens fell into the hands of men who lacked *arête*.

Dialectic and recollection go hand in hand. In this case, recollection has shown that Nicias did not have *arête* as a leader of the Sicilian expedition when he placed the

soothsayer ahead of himself.¹⁸ Dialectic shows what essential characteristic of *arête*

Nicias lacks.

Once Nicias has agreed to these three points (see page 77), he is forced to admit that his definition includes only the third part (the future) of courage:

P₁: The same science has understanding of the same things, whether future, present, or past.

P₂: Courage is a knowledge of the fearful and the hopeful.

P₃: The fearful and the hopeful are future goods and future evils.

P₄: The same science has to do with the same things in the future or at any time.

C: Premise #2 must be incorrect. "...courage is a science which is concerned not only with the fearful and hopeful, for they are future only. Courage, like other sciences, is concerned not only with good and evil of the future, but of the present and past, and of any time." (*Laches* 199c)

Since Socrates wants to know the whole nature of courage;

...according to your view—that is, according to your present view—courage is not only the knowledge of the hopeful and fearful, but seems to include nearly every good and evil without reference to time....But then, my dear man, if a man knew all good and evil, and how they are and have been produced, would he not be perfect, and wanting in no virtue, whether justice or temperance or holiness? He alone would be competent to distinguish between what is to

¹⁸ I do not deny that the Athenians regarded Nicias as a person who had *arête*; indeed, as I show, Thucydides gives evidence that Nicias was widely regarded as a person with great *arête*. I do, however, believe that this action of Nicias, which led to the devastation of the two Athenian armies at Syracuse, was regarded by the Greeks as an unvirtuous action. Nicias did not here fulfill his function as a general.

be feared and what is not, whether it be supernatural or natural, and would take the proper precautions to secure that all shall be well, for he would know how to deal aright both with gods and with men. (*Laches*199c-e)

Nicias has failed to identify courage, for courage is but a part of virtue, but his dialectic with Socrates has resulted in the identification of virtue with the knowledge of good and evil. Nicias has not been entirely incorrect in identifying knowledge with courage. Indeed, the two are related; however, knowledge by itself is not the sole essential characteristic of courage.

Earlier, in Laches' dialectic with Socrates, we had seen that endurance is an essential characteristic of courage; now, in Nicias' dialectic with Socrates, we see that knowledge is another essential characteristic of courage. So, although Laches and Nicias have each failed in defining courage, together they have succeeded in identifying two essential characteristics of courage.

We have seen that Nicias lacked *arête* as the leader of the Sicilian expedition. With the identification of *arête* as the knowledge of good and evil, we can see what Nicias lacked. Nicias was unable to distinguish between what was good for the men under his control and what was evil for them. Because of his superstitiousness, he felt that remaining in Syracuse for thrice nine days would be good for his men, but the delay led to the deaths of his men and the destruction of the Athenian empire.

In the *Laches* we have seen how recollection and dialectic work together. Recollection lets us know that Nicias lacked *arête* as the leader of the Sicilian expedition; dialectic lets us know what essential characteristic of *arête* he lacked.

Nicias and Laches do not recognize what has been accomplished, for they immediately begin to argue when Laches seizes on Nicias' failure to define virtue:

And yet, friend Nicias, I imagined that you would have made the discovery, when you were so contemptuous of the answer which I made to Socrates. (*Laches* 200a)

Nicias hotly replies:

I perceive, Laches, that you think nothing of having displayed your ignorance of the nature of courage, but you look only to see whether I have not made a similar display. And if we are both equally ignorant of the things which a man with any self-respect should know, that, I suppose, will be of no consequence. You certainly appear to me very like the rest of the world, looking at your neighbor and not at yourself. (*Laches* 200b)

Socrates, as may be expected, remains calm.

The dialogue ends with Socrates, as usual, confessing his ignorance of the nature of courage, but yet, his advice having been requested, he agrees to visit Lysimachus and Melesias the next morning to discuss the education of their children. In doing so, Socrates shows that he has *arête* as a friend (since he performs the function of a friend), as well as having *arête* as a philosopher.

In this explication of the *Laches*, I have shown:

- 1) Recollection takes place early in the dialogue when Lysimachus and Melesias attempt to learn what kind of education they should give to their children. In doing so, they are acting with *arête*.
- 2) Recollection takes place when the reader reads the name of a virtuous man. A contemporary reader of the *Laches* who reads the name of Aristides would be reminded of stories which illustrate Aristides' honesty, and so would be reminded of absolute honesty. A person reading the names of Thucydides, Laches, and

Nicias would also be reminded of virtuous acts which they had performed and so be reminded of absolute *arête*.

- 3) In the dialectic courage has been shown to have at least two major characteristics: endurance and knowledge.
- 4) A connection has been made, in the dialectic, between *arête* and the knowledge of good and evil.
- 5) Recollection and dialectic are related, as when recollection shows that Nicias lacked *arête* at the end of the Sicilian expedition and dialectic shows what essential characteristics of *arête* Nicias lacked; and
- 6) Recollection occurs when the reader notes the actions of Socrates. Socrates has *arête* as a soldier (as shown by his actions during the retreat from Delium), as a friend (as shown by his agreeing to give advice to Lysimachus and Melesias when he is asked), and as a philosopher (as shown by his skill in dialectic and his handling of the angry Laches).

In the next chapter I will examine recollection in the *Lysis*.

CHAPTER 6

RECOLLECTION IN THE *LYSIS*

In the *Lysis* Plato tries to answer the question, “What is a friend?” and in his attempt to do so examines a third virtue: *philia*, which is usually translated as “friendship.” The Greek word *philia*, however, has a much broader meaning than the English word “friendship” as can be seen by the relationships in the *Lysis* which are called relationships of *philia*. These relationships include that of Hippothales for Lysis, which is marked by sexual desire, for Hippothales is in love with Lysis. Another relationship of *philia* is that between Lysis and Menexenus, which is a kind of relationship we mean by the twentieth century English word “friendship.” Another relationship called by the name *philia* is that between Socrates and the youths, Hippothales, Lysis, and Menexenus. This relationship is an example of Platonic love. Other relationships of *philia* in the dialogue are the love Lysis’ parents have for him and the relationship between a competent person and the citizens of Athens.

The three major types of relationships that exhibit *philia* are first, sexual love, exemplified by Hippothales’ love for Lysis; second, *philia* between young men who are equals and who enjoy each other’s company, exemplified by the relationships between Hippothales and Ctesippus and between Lysis and Menexenus; and third, Platonic love, exemplified by Socrates’ relationship with the youths Hippothales, Lysis, and Menexenus. Although each of these kinds of relationships are relationships of *philia*, not

all of them involve relationships between friends. The kind of *philia* that involves a relationship between friends I will call “virtuous *philia*”: this type of *philia* has a form, just as courage has a form and *arête* has a form. Of the three major types of relationships in the *Lysis*, that between Hippothales and Lysis is not a relationship of virtuous *philia*, i.e., it does not participate in the form of *philia*; the relationships between Hippothales and Ctesippus and between Lysis and Menexenus do participate in the form of *philia* to some extent, but the relationship that Socrates has with the youths in the dialogue is a model of virtuous *philia*. In the dialogue, Hippothales and Ctesippus are friends; Lysis and Menexenus are friends; Hippothales and Socrates are friends; and Socrates, Lysis, and Menexenus are friends; however, Hippothales and Lysis are not friends.

These three types of relationships represent a progression toward the form of *philia*, i.e., toward virtuous *philia*. Hippothales’ love for Lysis is called by the name of *philia*, but it does not participate in the form of *philia*. The relationship between Lysis and Menexenus participates in the form of *philia*, but, as we will see, it is not an example of perfect *philia*: Lysis and Menexenus are not perfect friends. The relationship which Socrates has for the youths in the dialogue—Hippothales, Lysis, and Menexenus—does participate fully in the form of *philia* and is a model of the form of *philia*.

In the *Lysis*, Plato examines the very broad meaning given to the word *philia* by the ancient Greeks as part of his attempt to determine the answer to the question, “Who is a friend?” Not all the relationships which the ancient Greeks called by the name of *philia* actually participate in the form of *philia*. In this explication of the *Lysis*, I will show that recollection plays an important part in identifying who is a friend in the *Lysis*. The

characters in the *Lysis* have relationships among themselves which are meant to cause recollection of virtuous *philia* in the reader, who either notices similarities to virtuous *philia*, as in the case of Lysis and Menexenus, or dissimilarities, as in the case of Hippothales and Lysis. Recollection is also used to determine some of the essential characteristics of virtuous *philia*. Recollection does this by identifying certain relationships as relationships that participate in the form of *philia*, then by forming a partnership with dialectic to isolate certain characteristics which are common to these relationships.

The *Lysis* shows that Plato believes that recollection can take place even when there is no exact word that describes a certain form: the word *philia* is used by the Greeks to describe relationships that do not participate in the form of *philia*, i.e., that are not examples of virtuous *philia*. As long as there is a form, recollection can take place whether there is a word that describes that form or not. The *Lysis* differs from the *Charmides* and the *Laches*: in these dialogues, the form of courage or of *sophrosyne* is described by a single word, but in the *Lysis*, *philia* is used to describe many kinds of relationships, not all of which participate in the form of *philia*. Because Plato believes that recollection can take place in the case of *philia*, it shows that he does not believe that a word describes just one certain action or object. The *Lysis* also shows the interdependence of recollection and dialectic: the two must work together if the essential characteristics of *philia* are to be discovered.

The dialogue begins with Socrates falling in with a group of young men as he is walking from the Academy to the Lyceum. As he is walking past a palaestra,

Hippothales notices him and invites him inside to pass the time in conversation with a group of young men. At this point recollection in the form of *philia* occurs in the reader. Hippothales' action is the action of a friend, and the reader recollects virtuous *philia*. The reader can go further and construct a hypothesis based on this action and the remembered actions of other friends that one essential characteristic of a friend is enjoying time spent in the other person's company.

The palaestra into which Hippothales invites Socrates is a public place where athletes could go to train and older men went to converse. On the day Hippothales invites Socrates into the palaestra, the older men and youths were allowed to mingle because the *Hermaea*, a public festival, is being celebrated. Usually the two groups were kept apart. By inviting Socrates into the palaestra for conversation, Hippothales shows that he is Socrates' friend. By accepting Hippothales' invitation for conversation, Socrates shows that he is Hippothales' friend. Socrates asks Hippothales:

I should like first to be informed...who is your prime beauty? (*Lysis* 204b)¹⁹

When Hippothales blushes, Socrates says:

Hippothales, son of Hieronymus, there is no longer any need for you to tell me whether you are in love or not, since I am sure you are not only in love, but pretty far gone in it too by this time. For though in most matters I am a poor useless creature, yet by some means or other I have received from heaven the gift of being able to detect at a glance both a lover and a beloved. (*Lysis* 204c)

¹⁹ The *Lysis* has been translated by J. Wright.

Socrates' actions here make the reader recollect the idea of virtuous *philia*. Socrates shows that he has virtuous *philia* for Hippothales because he willingly passes time with him. This is one of Socrates' characteristic traits: he is always ready to talk with people and either lets them listen to, or engages them in, dialectic. This passage also establishes Socrates as an expert in the area of love because he has a faculty for detecting who is a lover and who is beloved.

Ctesippus breaks in and tells Socrates that the name of Hippothales' beloved is Lysis, and describes how Hippothales talks and sings about Lysis:

...he has deafened our ears for us, and filled them full of Lysis, Nay, if he be but a little tipsy when he talks of him, we can easily fancy, on waking, even the next morning, that we are still hearing the name of Lysis. But his constant talk about him, bad as it is, is not the worst—nothing like so bad as when he begins to deluge us with his poems and speeches and, worse and worse, to sing a song on his darling in a portentous voice, which we are compelled to listen to with patience. (*Lysis* 204d-e)

Recollection also occurs when one reads of the relationship between Ctesippus and Hippothales, as well as the relationship between Socrates and Hippothales. In both cases, one is reminded of the form of *philia* because the people in the relationships enjoy each other's company. This is an essential characteristic of *philia*; however, it is not the only characteristic of *philia*. Also, being willing to spend time with another person is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient condition, for *philia*, as we will see.

When Socrates learns whom Hippothales loves—Lysis, the eldest son of Democrates of Aexone—he congratulates Hippothales:

Well done, Hippothales...A noble, and in every way a brilliant choice is this which you have made. But come

now; go on about him with me, just as you do with your friends here, that I may know what language a lover ought to hold in regard to his favorite, either to his face or before others. (*Lysis* 205a)

Socrates is here asking Hippothales how he talks to his loved one so that he (Socrates) may learn how one ought to talk to or about loved ones. Of course, Socrates already knows how one ought to talk about or to loved ones, and he will shortly begin to give a lesson to Hippothales in this subject.

Ctesippus again answers for Hippothales:

...stories that all the city rings with, about Democrates, and Lysis, the boys' grandfather, and all his ancestors—their wealth, their breeds of horses, their victories at the Pythian, Isthmian, Nemean with four steeds and single—all these he works into poem and speech, aye, and stories too, still further out of date than these. (*Lysis* 205c)

The portrait of Hippothales that emerges from the *Lysis* is that of a person so smitten with love that he has lost his reason and sense of proportion. Hippothales is so much in love that he spends all his time talking or singing about Lysis, even though his companions are tired of hearing it.

After hearing Ctesippus' words, Socrates immediately criticizes Hippothales:

You ridiculous Hippothales, before you have gained the victory, you compose and sing a hymn of praise of yourself...in every way...these songs have reference to you. If you succeed in winning such a youth as you describe, all that you have said and sung will resound to your honor, and be in fact your hymn of triumph, as if you had gained a victory in obtaining such a favorite. But if he escape your grasp, then the higher the eulogium you have passed on to him, the greater will be the blessings which you will seem to have missed, and the greater consequently the ridicule you will incur. All connoisseurs, therefore, in matters of love, are careful of praising their favorites before

they have won them, from their doubts as to the result of the affair. (*Lysis* 205d-e)

Then Socrates adds:

Moreover, your beauties, when lauded and made much of, become engorged with pride and arrogance. (*Lysis* 205d-e)

Although Hippothales has *philia* for Lysis, this kind of *philia* is not virtuous *philia*. The *philia* that Hippothales has for Lysis does not have a form: Hippothales has desire for Lysis, not virtuous *philia*. This is shown in part by the result of Hippothales' actions: he praises Lysis overmuch and so runs the risk of harming Lysis. Hippothales does not perform the function of a person who has virtuous *philia*: a friend should not harm the person to whom he is a friend, but Hippothales' actions can harm Lysis.

Hippothales wishes to spend time in Lysis' presence, but Hippothales desires Lysis: he does not have virtuous *philia* for him. This shows that wishing to spend time with another person is not a sufficient condition for virtuous *philia*: wishing to spend time with another person can also mean that one is overcome with desire.

Hippothales replies:

...it is on this very account, Socrates, that I put myself in your hands, and beg you to give me any advice you may have to bestow, as to the course of conduct or conversation that a lover ought to adopt in order to render himself agreeable to the object of his affection. (*Lysis* 206c)

Socrates agrees to this request:

That were no such easy matter, I replied, but if you would bring me to speak with Lysis, perhaps I could give you a specimen of what you ought to say to him, in place of the speeches and songs which you are in the habit of treating him with, according to your friends. (*Lysis* 206c)

This is exactly what Socrates does: gives Hippothales a specimen of how he should speak to Lysis. He does this by engaging Lysis in dialectic. We have already seen that Socrates is an expert who can distinguish who is a lover and who is the beloved. Now we see that Socrates is an expert in how to speak of or about a loved one.

So far, recollection has occurred when one reads of the relationships between Hippothales and Socrates, and between Hippothales and Ctesippus. In these cases there is a relationship of *philia* in part because the persons are willing to spend time in each other's company. We have seen, however, that in the relationship of Hippothales and Lysis, Hippothales is willing to spend time in Lysis' company, but that Hippothales has desire, not virtuous *philia* for Lysis. We know that Hippothales' *philia* for Lysis is uncontrolled desire because of the portrait of Hippothales that emerges from Ctesippus' speeches and Socrates' comments about the way Hippothales talks and sings about Lysis. A virtuous person would not harm his friend, and a virtuous person would manage to be a friend and not have uncontrolled desire for his friend. Recollection does occur in relation to Hippothales' *philia* for Lysis, but it is an example of how recollection can occur when one sees a dissimilar object. A person who sees Hippothales' kind of unvirtuous *philia* can be reminded of virtuous *philia*.

Socrates, accompanied by Ctesippus, enters the palaestra. After Menexenus sits down by his friend Ctesippus, Lysis joins Socrates' group. Hippothales, however, hides himself from Lysis:

There came up, moreover, the rest of our party, among them Hippothales, who, seeing them form into a good-sized group, screened himself behind them in a position where he did not think he could be seen by Lysis—so fearful was he

of giving him offense. And thus placed near him, he listened to our conversation. (*Lysis* 207b)

Hippothales is not acting in a rational manner. He loves Lysis, and in the military metaphor Socrates used earlier, wishes to “conquer” him, but he is so fearful of giving Lysis distress by his presence that he hides himself. Hippothales’ desire causes him to lose his sense of balance. His desire does not participate in *arête* or in the form of *philia*.

Socrates’ conversation with Lysis and Menexenus reveals another kind of relationship that was called *philia* by the ancient Greeks: that between two youths who enjoy each other’s company. This kind of relationship is not sexual in nature. Lysis and Menexenus do things together, and they engage in competition with each other: they dispute between themselves as to who is the elder, the better, and the more beautiful person. They are equals. This kind of *philia* is in contrast to the kind of *philia* Hippothales has for Lysis. Lysis and Menexenus are equals, but Hippothales wishes to “conquer” Lysis.

In a way, Lysis and Menexenus wish to “conquer” each other as they dispute between themselves as to who is the elder, the better, the more beautiful person. But this kind of conquering is for the most part healthy competition, except for when Lysis wishes Socrates to engage Menexenus in dialectic so that Socrates “may put him down” (*Lysis* 211c). Healthy competition does not interfere with, and may be an integral part of, the *philia* that has a form. For Socrates, competition in discussion (dialectic) is an integral part of friendship: when Socrates demonstrates to Hippothales how to talk to a loved one, he talks philosophy to the loved one. The “conquering” that Hippothales wishes, however, does not participate in virtuous *philia*.

Socrates also makes a glancing reference to the *philia* which is referred to in the proverbs of the ancient Greeks:

I will not ask you, I added, which is the wealthier, for you are friends, are you not?
Oh dear, yes! They both cried.
And friends, they tell us, share and share alike; so in this respect, at any rate, there will be no difference between you.... (*Lysis* 207c)

The *philia* referred to in the Greek proverb mentioned above is meant to apply to the kind of relationship Lysis and Menexenus have, not to the kind of *philia* Hippothales has for Lysis. It applies to *philia* between equals.

Just as Socrates is about to inquire which of the two friends excel in justice and which in wisdom (*Lysis* 207d), Menexenus has to leave the discussion, and Socrates begins to question Lysis. In this discussion, the kind of *philia* that Lysis' parents have for him is examined.

Socrates begins this part of the dialectic by getting Lysis' agreement to three assumptions:

- 1) Lysis' parents love him very dearly;
- 2) Lysis' parents want him to be as happy as possible;
- 3) A man is not happy if he is a slave, and may not do anything he wants.

Next, Socrates draws from Lysis the things that he is not permitted to do: race his father's chariot, whip his mules, rule himself (he has a governor), and touch his mother's comb or shuttle. In many of these cases a slave is permitted to do these things, but Lysis' parents forbid him to do them. So, Lysis is not permitted to do anything he wants.

The reason for this, Lysis says, is that he “is not old enough yet” (*Lysis* 209a), but, as Socrates points out, there are many things which Lysis is able to do to which age does not apply: read, write, and play musical instruments. Therefore, there must be a reason why Lysis is permitted to do some things but not others.

Lysis then says:

I suppose it is, Socrates, because I understand the one, and don't understand the other. (*Lysis* 209c)

Socrates agrees with this, and points out that if one knows something, then other people will give one freedom to do that thing: the neighbor will hand over his house to you to manage if he is convinced that you know how to manage his house better than he, the Athenians will let you manage their affairs when they are convinced you are wise enough, and the Great King of Persia will let you manage the cooking in his palace or let you heal his son's eyes if those are your areas of knowledge.

Socrates then sums up his argument:

You see then, said I, how the case stands, dear Lysis. All matters of which we have a good idea will be put into our hands by all people, whether Greeks or barbarians, men or women. (*Lysis* 210b)

And:

If, therefore, you acquire knowledge, my son, all men will be friendly to you, all men will be attached to you, for you will be useful and good. If not, you will have no friend in anyone, not even in your mother or father, or any of your own family. (*Lysis* 210d)

The specific kind of *philia* that Socrates examines in this part of the dialectic (*Lysis* 207d-210e) is the *philia* that parents have for their children. From the dialectic, however,

Socrates draws conclusions about the relationships of *philia* that people or states have for those who are knowledgeable. We have seen that a willingness to spend time in another person's company is a necessary condition for *philia*. This *philia* is not the *philia* that Hippothales has for Lysis.

Socrates then "humbles" Lysis with this argument:

P₁: A person cannot have a great idea of himself in those matters of which he has yet no idea.

P₂: Lysis is without ideas (since he still requires an instructor).

C: Therefore, Lysis cannot have a great idea of himself.

This argument states that Lysis does not have knowledge in those areas in which he still requires an instructor. Since this is so, he does not receive *philia* from his parents or from the Athenian people in those areas in which he does not have knowledge.

We know, however, that Lysis does receive *philia* from Menexenus, although Lysis does not have this knowledge. Knowledge, however, as Socrates uses it in his argument, means a kind of craft or skill, i.e., *techne*. We see this in the examples referring to cooking or managing mules or spinning or weaving. *Techne* is not one of the conditions necessary for virtuous *philia*. Lysis receives *philia* from Menexenus although he does not have *techne*.

At this point in the dialogue the reader is sharply reminded of Hippothales' presence, for Socrates thinks to himself:

On receiving this reply from Lysis (Lysis agrees that he cannot have a great idea of himself), I turned my eyes on Hippothales, and was on the point of making a great blunder. For it came into my head to say, This is the way,

Hippothales, that you should talk to your favorite, humbling and checking, instead of puffing him up and pampering him, as you now do. However, on seeing him writing with agitation at the turn that our conversation was taking, I recollected that though standing so near, he didn't wish to be seen by Lysis. So I recovered myself in time, and forbore to address him. (*Lysis* 210e)

In this passage Socrates has done what he said he would do: he has given Hippothales an example of how he should talk to his loved one. This example shows that the proper way of talking to a loved one is to talk philosophy with him, to engage him in dialectic.

Socrates has succeeded in pointing out to Lysis that he lacks knowledge, for if Lysis had knowledge, he would receive *philia* from his parents in those things which they do not give him *philia* now. Lysis would also receive *philia* from the citizens of Athens if he had knowledge. Socrates has been acting as a friend should. He has been engaging Lysis in dialectic, and in doing so, he has been helping Lysis by helping him realize that he lacks knowledge.

The passage in which Socrates almost speaks to Hippothales also gives evidence that the *philia* felt by Hippothales for Lysis cannot be a form. A form is something that is unifying, that has proportionality, but the *philia* or desire felt by Hippothales is something that unravels. Hippothales desires Lysis, yet he is even afraid to be seen by him. He attends to the dialectic which Socrates and Lysis have been having, but becomes uneasy when the dialectic shows that Lysis lacks knowledge.

A number of things have been accomplished in this section of the dialectic. First, in the kind of *philia* shown by Lysis' parents to him in allowing or not allowing him to do certain things, a relationship between *philia* and *techne* has been shown. Lysis' parents

give him freedom to do those things which he is competent to do; he does not have freedom to engage in those things in which he is incompetent. The same relationship has been asserted to exist in the *philia* which the citizens of Athens or the Great King of Persia show to competent persons.

We should not take this to mean that *techne* is all that is necessary to have relationships of *philia* with either a government or another person. Neither Lysis nor Menexenus have *techne* in anything but the accomplishments of a typical Athenian youth, such as reading, writing, and playing musical instruments, yet both have *philia* for each other. Lysis' parents still have *philia* for him although he does not have *techne* in any significant sense. And the brilliant Alcibiades possessed much *techne*, yet became a traitor to Athens during the Peloponnesian War, and therefore ultimately lost the *philia* of the Athenian people.

Second, in contrast to the *philia* enjoyed by competent persons, the *philia* of Hippothales has no discernible relationship to knowledge or to virtuous *philia*. Lysis has no *techne*, yet Hippothales has desire for him. Although Hippothales has desire for Lysis, he actually hides from Lysis, even when he is in Lysis' presence.

Third, Socrates has provided Hippothales with a model of how he should talk to his loved one. Instead of puffing him up with praise, one should make the loved one aware of his lack of knowledge. If one shows the loved one that the loved one does not have knowledge, then the loved one may take steps to acquire knowledge, and so one has helped him or her. So, the *philia* manifested by Lysis' parents and by Socrates has a relationship to knowledge; however, the *philia* manifested by Hippothales does not.

Menexenus now returns to the group and Lysis asks Socrates to tell Menexenus what he has just told Lysis. If Lysis wanted Socrates to tell Menexenus these things so Menexenus would be improved by having been engaged in dialectic, then Lysis would be acting with virtuous *philia*; however, Lysis asks Socrates to engage Menexenus in dialectic so “that you may put him down” (*Lysis* 211c).

The kind of relationship that Lysis has with Menexenus includes competition with him. The two dispute over who is the elder and who is the better. Now Lysis, having been shown by Socrates to know little, wants Socrates to show Menexenus that he is without knowledge too. Although Socrates does point out Lysis’ lack of knowledge to him, Socrates actually improves Lysis: Socrates’ action is virtuous. But when Lysis wants Socrates to put Menexenus down by showing him his faults, Lysis does not do so because Menexenus would be improved by being engaged in dialectic with Socrates; rather, Lysis makes the request because of his competitiveness with Menexenus. In this action, Lysis is not being a friend. The reader is reminded of virtuous *philia* by Lysis’ action because that action lacks virtuous *philia*.

Socrates does agree to engage Menexenus in dialectic, and in prefacing his dialectic with Menexenus, tells his views on friendship:

From my earliest childhood I have had a particular fancy; everybody has. One longs for horses, another for dogs, a third for money, a fourth for office. For my part, I look on these matters with equanimity, but on the acquisition of friends, with all a lover’s passion, and I would choose to obtain a good friend rather than the best quail or cock in the world; I should prefer one to both horse and dog—nay, I fully believe, that I would far sooner acquire a friend and companion than all the gold of Darius, aye, or than Darius himself. So fond am I of friendship. (*Lysis* 212a)

Socrates says here that he has had a particular fancy from his earliest childhood, and that everybody has a particular fancy. The examples of these fancies that Socrates mentions are fancies for:

- 1) material things: horses, dogs, money, cocks:
- 2) political power: office; and
- 3) friends and companions.

In saying that he prefers to acquire a friend and companion instead of anything else, Socrates mentions that he would prefer to acquire a friend and companion rather than acquire Darius himself. “Acquire” here may mean “acquire as a slave;” if so, Darius would fall into the category of material things that people desire.

Each of the three categories which Socrates mentions is something that a person can feel *philia* for: a person can have *philia* for a dog, for money, for public office, for a companion. The *philia* that has a form can only be applied in the third category.

Socrates then continues:

...On seeing, therefore, you and Lysis, I am lost in wonder, while I count you most happy, at your being able, at your years, to acquire this treasure with such readiness and ease—in that you, Menexenus, have gained so early and true a friend in Lysis, and he the same in you—while I, on the contrary, am so far from making the acquisition, that I do not even know how one man becomes a friend of another, but wish on this very point to appeal to you as a connoisseur. (*Lysis* 212a)

In this passage, Socrates makes clear what we already know: both Menexenus and Lysis are friends. The two youths are friends to each other. This is in contrast to the

relationship between Hippothales and Lysis, in which Hippothales is the friend of Lysis, but Lysis is not the friend of Hippothales.

Socrates begins his dialectic with Menexenus by asking:

Answer me this. As soon as one man loves another, which of the two becomes the friend—the lover of the loved, or the loved of the lover? Or does it make no difference?
(*Lysis* 212b)

Menexenus' immediate answer to this question is, "None in the world that I can see" (*Lysis* 212b). As we will see, there is much truth in this answer. For now, let us note that there are three possibilities set forth as candidates to describe the situation when one man loves another:

- 1) The lover is a friend of the loved;
- 2) The loved is a friend of the lover; and
- 3) Both are friends of the other.

Socrates' first objection to Menexenus' answer is that it is possible for the loved one to not love or even hate the lover:

Is it not possible for one who loves not to be loved in return by the object of his love?Is it not possible for him even to be hated—treatment, if I mistake not, which lovers frequently fancy they receive at the hands of their favorites? Though they love their darlings as dearly as possible, they often imagine that they are not loved in return, often that they are even hated. (*Lysis* 212c)

This describes the relationship between Hippothales and Lysis. Hippothales loves Lysis, but Lysis does not return his love; in fact, Hippothales is so afraid of giving offense to Lysis by his presence that he hides from Lysis when he is near him.

Let us assume two people: Person A and Person B. The relationship of Person A to Person B is that Person A loves Person B, but Person B hates Person A. In addition, let us give Person A all the attributes of a friend: Person A wishes to spend time in the company of Person B, Person A wishes to be useful to Person B, Person A does not wish to harm Person B, etc. Whatever are the attributes of a friend, Person A has them.

Now let us examine the first of three possibilities that could describe this relationship: the lover is a friend of the loved. This is true because Person A (the lover) has all the attributes of a friend: he acts like a friend to Person B and he is a friend to Person B. All the things that a friend wishes to do as regards the person he is a friend to, Person A wishes to do in regard to Person B. Of course, Person B would deny that Person A is a friend of his: Person B does not wish to do with Person A all the things that a friend wishes to do with the person he is a friend to. I will call the interpretation of the statement form “X is a friend of Y” as “X behaves as if Y were his friend” as the “behavioral” interpretation.

Now let us examine the second of the three possibilities: the loved is a friend of the lover. This is true because Person A, who loved Person B although Person B hates Person A, would say of Person B: “Yes, Person B is a friend of mine. All the things you wish to do with your friend, I wish to do with Person B.” Once again, Person B would deny that Person A was a friend of his. Person B would say, “Person A is not a friend of mine; in fact, I hate him.” I will call the interpretation of the statement form “X is a friend of Y” as “X regards Y as his friend” as the “attitudinal” interpretation.

So, as Menexenus said, it makes no difference whether you say that the lover is a friend of the loved or that the loved is a friend of the lover when one man loves another. Both statements are true: which statement you make depends on whether you use the statement “X is a friend of Y” in its behavioral or attitudinal interpretation. The two statements involve a “flip-flop effect.” When the statement form “X is a friend of Y” is interpreted in its behavioral sense, Person A is a friend and Person B is not a friend; interpreted in its attitudinal sense, Person B is a friend and Person A is not a friend.

After pointing out that the loved one may not love, and in fact may even hate, the lover, Socrates asks Menexenus:

Which of the two, then, is the friend of the other—the lover of the loved, whether or not he is loved in return, and even if he be hated, or the loved of the lover? Or is neither the friend of the other, unless both love each other? (*Lysis* 212c)

Using Person A and Person B as examples again, if we interpret the statement, “the lover is a friend of the loved,” as meaning the loved (Person B) regards the lover (Person A) as his friend (the attitudinal interpretation), then the loved is not a friend of the lover because Person B does not regard Person A as a friend. If we interpret the statement, “the loved is a friend of the lover,” as meaning “the loved (Person B) behaves as if the lover (Person A) were his friend” (the behavior interpretation), then the loved is not a friend of the lover because Person B does not behave as if Person A were his friend. If, however, two people, Person C and Person D, love each other, then the statements “the lover is a friend of the loved” and “the loved is a friend of the lover” would be true in

both attitudinal and behavioral senses because each would regard the other as a friend and each would behave as if the other were a friend.

Socrates then says:

...(now it appears) that unless both love, neither are friends....This being the case then, the lover is not a friend to anything that does not love him in return. (*Lysis* 212d)

Socrates' statement that "the lover is not a friend to anything that does not love him in return" is true when the statement "the lover is a friend of the loved" is interpreted in the attitudinal sense.

Socrates continues:

People, then, are not friends to horses, unless their horses love them in return, nor friends to quails or to dogs, nor again, to wine or to gymnastics, unless their love be returned—nor friends to wisdom, unless wisdom loves them in return. But in each of these cases, the individual loves the object, but is not a friend to it, and the poet is wrong who says,

Happy the man is, to whom he's a friend, has children, and
horses
Mettlesome, dogs of the chase, guest in a faraway land.
(*Lysis* 212e)

In these instances the loved is something other than a human being. Socrates says that a human being can love, but not be a friend to, horses, quails, dogs, gymnastics, and wisdom, unless the human being's love is returned. None of these things can return love, so Socrates' statement that human beings are not friends to these things is true because these things neither regard human beings as their friends nor behave as if human beings were their friends. Menexenus objects, however, and rightly, because a human being can be a friend to these things by behaving as a friend to them and by regarding himself as a

friend to them. One can behave as a friend to wisdom, for example, by spending time in its pursuit, and one can regard oneself as a friend to wisdom by calling oneself a philosopher.

Socrates continues:

The lover, then, it appears, Menexenus, is a friend to the object of his love, whether the object love, or even hate him. Just as to quite young children, who are either not yet old enough to love, or who are old enough to feel hatred when punished by father or mother, their parents, all the time even that they are being hated, are friends in the very highest degree. (*Lysis* 213a)

What Socrates says here is true, if the statement form “X (the parents) is (are) a friend(s) to Y (the punished child)” is being interpreted in its behavioral sense: the parents perform all the functions of a friend in regard to their child.

Next, Socrates says:

By this reasoning, then, it is not the object of love that is the friend, but the lover. . . . And so, not the object of hatred that is the enemy, but the hater. . . . It frequently happens, then, that people are enemies to those who love them, and friends to those who hate them—that is, are enemies to their friends, and friends to their enemies—if it be true that the lover is the friend, but not the loved. (*Lysis* 213 a-b)

Once again, we will use Person A (the lover) and Person B (the loved one who hates the lover) to explicate this passage. Here, Person A is the friend, and Person B is the enemy. It is true that a person can be a friend to his enemy if we use “friend” in its behavioral sense. Person A fulfills the functions of a friend (acts as if he were a friend) in regard to Person B, who acts as if he were an enemy to Person A; so, Person A is a friend to his enemy, Person B. It is true that a person can be an enemy to his friend if we use “friend”

in its attitudinal sense. Person A regards Person B as his friend although Person B regards Person A as an enemy; so, Person A is an enemy to his friend, Person B.

Socrates continues:

But surely, my dear friend, it were grossly unreasonable, nay, rather, I think altogether impossible, for a man to be a friend to his enemy, and an enemy to his friend. . . . Well, then, if this be impossible, it must be the object of the love that is the friend to the lover. . . . And so, again, the object of the hatred that is the enemy to the hater. . . . But if this be true, we cannot help arriving at the same conclusion as we did in the former case—namely, that it often happens that a man is not a friend, but even an enemy to a friend, as often, that is, as he is not loved, but even hated by the man whom he loves—and often again, that he is not an enemy, but even a friend to an enemy, as often, in fact, as he is not hated, but even loved by the man whom he hates. (*Lysis* 213 a-b)

Using Person A and Person B again, and remembering that Person A loves Person B but that Person B hates Person A, we can show that what Socrates says is true. Using the attitudinal definition of “friend,” Person B is a friend of (regarded as a friend by) Person A, but Person A is an enemy of (regarded as an enemy by) Person B. Using the behavioral definition of “friend,” Person A is a friend of (behaves as a friend to) Person B, but Person B is an enemy to (behaves as an enemy to) Person A.

Socrates then asks:

Is it possible, Menexenus, said I, that from first to last we have been conducting the search improperly? (*Lysis* 213d)

Distinguishing the two different interpretations of “friend” would have helped the discussion.

Next, Socrates and Lysis consider three possibilities for *philia* relationships:

- 1) like things are friends to each other;
- 2) unlike things are friends to each other; and
- 3) things which are neither good nor evil are friends to the good.

These possibilities are used to try to answer the question, “What is a friend?”

Socrates says:

Let us proceed, however, on this line of inquiry no longer—for I look upon it as a very difficult sort of road—but let us go back again to that point at which we turned aside, and follow in the steps of the poets. For poets, I conceive, are as good as fathers and guides to us in matters of wisdom. (*Lysis* 214a)

If the poets are “as good as fathers and guides to us in matters of wisdom,” then the poets are friends to us. Socrates continues:

Well, the poets, if I mistake not, put forward no slight claims for those who happen to be friends, but tell us that it is God himself who makes them friends, by leading them to one another. They express, if I remember right, their opinion thus: ‘Like men, I trow, to like, God ever leads,’ and makes them known....And also with the writings of those learned sages which tell the same story—namely, that like must of necessity be ever friendly with like. And these are they, if I mistake not, who talk and write on nature and the universe. (*Lysis* 214 a-b)

There are two kinds of poets written about in this passage. The first poet is Homer, the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, while the second kind are those who write about “nature and the universe.”

The passage “Like men, I trow, to like, God ever leads,” is quoted from the seventeenth book of Homer’s *Odyssey*. In this chapter, Odysseus has return home to Ithaca and met his son, Telemachos, and a faithful servant, Eumaios the swineherd.

Odysseus is disguised as a beggar because his house at Ithaca has been taken over in his absence by a group of men who are trying to marry Penelope, Odysseus' wife, and who are contemptuous of Telemachos and are using up all Odysseus' substance, slaughtering cattle and animals for huge banquets. As Odysseus and Eumaios are walking to Odysseus' house, they meet one of Odysseus' unfaithful servants, Melanthios, the goatherd, who says:

Here's a procession! Rags in the rear, and tatters in the van! It's always like to like, as the proverb says. Where did you pick up this dirty pig, you dirty pig-man? This beggar, this nuisance, this spoil-sport? He'll stand and rub shoulders on many a door-post, begging for scraps—he's not the sort that goes begging for my lord's guest-gifts...I'll tell you one thing, and that you'll find true. If he pays a visit to Odysseus' house, he'll find a shower of footstools flying about his ears and barking his ribs! He will be pelted out of the place!" As he spoke, the fool landed him a kick on the hip: but Odysseus stood firm as a rock, and it did not move him an inch. He thought for a moment that he would kill the man with a blow of his staff, or lift him by the waist and dash his head on the ground.²⁰

This allusion by Plato to Homer is ironic: the swineherd says of Eumaios and Odysseus that like is attracted to like, but Odysseus is not a beggar: he is a king who has been disguised as a beggar. So, in the sense in which Melanthios uses the word 'like', Odysseus and Eumaios are not 'like' at all; however, the two men are 'like' in the sense that they are good men.

²⁰ Homer. *The Odyssey*. Translated by W. H. D. Rouse. New York: The New American Library, Inc. (A Mentor Classic), 1937, p. 195.

The allusion to the *Odyssey* does serve an important purpose, for the theme of the *Odyssey* is friendship, especially that friendship that ought to exist between a host and a guest. Odysseus travels to many lands on his journey back to Ithaca, and each time he lands on a new shore he asks, “What kind of men live here?” In other words, will they be civilized men who know how to treat guests, or will they be savages who don’t? In his travels, Odysseus meets both kinds of men: good men, like the Phaiacians who helped him return to Ithaca, and bad men like the Cyclops who try to kill him.

The second kind of poets alluded to are those poets who write on “nature and the universe.” The first philosophers of ancient Greece were cosmological thinkers who were concerned with finding what one material the cosmos was made of. Thales believed that everything in the universe was made of water, which had different forms (liquid, solid, gas). According to Anaximander, the *apeiron* (the indefinite and infinite) was the source of all things. Anaximenes thought that everything was made of air. Heraclitus believed that everything was made of fire. In these theories, if anything in the cosmos is attracted to anything else in the cosmos, it is a case of like being attracted to like, for everything in the universe is made of one thing.

Of the two kinds of poets alluded to, Homer is the poet who writes specifically of human beings and their relationships. However, the cosmological poet-philosophers, in writing of everything, also write of human beings and their relationships.

Socrates says that these poets may be right in half of what they say. However, they can’t be right in all that they say because

...the nearer wicked men come to each other, and the more they see of each other, the greater enemies they become.

For they injure each other. And it is impossible, I take it,
for men to be friends, if they injure and are injured in turn.
(*Lysis* 214c)

In this passage we can see an assumption of Socrates: it is impossible for men to be friends if they injure and are injured in turn. With this assumption we have another essential characteristic of virtuous *philia*: a relationship of virtuous *philia* is a relationship in which the participants do not injure each other in turn.

It is impossible for a relationship of virtuous *philia* to exist if the participants to the relationship injure each other and are injured in turn. One example of this is any relationship between bad men. Another example is a relationship in which one participant is overwhelmed with desire for the second participant, but the second participant does not return his love. Hippothales and Lysis do not have a relationship of virtuous *philia* because they injure and are injured in turn. Hippothales injures Lysis by puffing him up with his words, and Lysis injures Hippothales by ignoring him.

It is possible for relationships of virtuous *philia* to exist if only one loves—as long as the person who loves is not overcome by desire. If the person who loves exhibits the characteristics of a person who is a friend—wishing to spend time with the other person, refraining from harming the other person, etc.—then the relationship will be one of virtuous *philia*. We see this in the relationship between a parent and child; although the parent may punish the child, the parent does so in order to teach the child. Socrates says:

By this, it would appear, that half of their assertion cannot be true, if we suppose them to mean that wicked men are like one another.

...

But they mean to say, I imagine, that the good are like and friendly with the good....

...
 When, therefore, my friend, our authors assert that like is friendly with like, they mean, I imagine, though obscurely enough, that the good man is a friend to the good man only, but that the bad man never engages in a true friendship either with a good or a bad man. (*Lysis* 214d-e)

In this passage we see another essential characteristic (necessary condition) of virtuous *philia*: a friend is harmonious. For two people to have a relationship of virtuous *philia* both participants must be harmonious. In the case of a parent who has just punished his or her child, a relationship of virtuous *philia* still exists but it is one-sided: the parent is a friend to the child (“friend” is used in its behavioral sense).

Socrates says that he is troubled by something in their argument, and sums up his objection in this sentence:

Like men are friendly with like men, in so far as they are like, and such a man is useful to such a man. (*Lysis* 214e)

There are two simple sentences in this compound sentence: the first says that “like men are friendly with like men, insofar as they are like.” This is not what has been shown in the dialectic; instead, the dialectic showed that “men are friendly with men, insofar as they are harmonious.” The second simple sentence gives us another essential characteristic of virtuous *philia*: friends are useful to each other.

Socrates continues:

Or rather, let us put it in this way. Is there any good or harm that a like thing can do to a like thing, which it cannot also do to itself? Is there any that can be done to it, which cannot also be done to it by itself? And if not, how can such things be held I regard by each other, when they have no means of assisting one another? Can this possibly be?

...

And if a thing be not held in regard, can it be a friend?
(*Lysis* 215a)

We are not committed to the idea that “like men are friendly with like men, in so far as they are like”; instead, the argument has shown that “men are friendly with each other, in so far as they are harmonious.” Since “like” and “harmonious” are not the same thing, Socrates’ objection does not hold here, and we have another necessary condition for being a friend: a friend hold the person he is a friend to in regard (in the behavioral sense of “friend”), and a friend is something held in regard (in the attitudinal sense of “friend”).

Socrates next says:

But, you will say, the like man is not a friend to the like man, but the good will be a friend to the good, in so far as he is good, not in so far as he is like.

...

And I should rejoin, will not the good man, in so far as he is good, be found to be sufficient for himself?

...

And if sufficient, he will want nothing so far as his sufficiency goes.

...

And if he does not want anything he won’t feel regard for anything either.

...

And what he does not feel regard for, he cannot love.

...

And if he does not love, he won’t be a friend.

...

How then, I wonder, will the good be ever friends at all with the good, when neither in absence do they feel regret for each other, being sufficient for themselves apart, nor when present together have they any need of one another? Is there any possible way by which such people can be brought to care for one another?

...

And if they do not care for each other, they cannot possibly be friends. (*Lysis* 215a-c)

The same objection holds here that applied when the assertion was made that “like men are friendly with like men, insofar as they are like”; instead of asserting that “the good will be a friend to the good, insofar as he is good,” it could have been asserted that “the good will be a friend to the good, insofar as he is harmonious.”

In this section of the dialectic, we see several more necessary conditions for being friends:

- 1) Friends are useful;
- 2) Friends are held in regard;
- 3) Friends love (not in the sense of uncontrolled desire) each other; and
- 4) Friends care for each other.

There is a sense in which the statement “the good will be friendly to the good, insofar as he is good.” In this sense, the statement should read as “a good man is friendly to the form of the good, in so far as he participates in the form of the good.” In this sense, Socrates’ objections about being self-sufficient do not apply to the good man. If the good man is self-sufficient because of his friendship with the form of the good, then his self-sufficiency comes from his friendship. The minute that man is no longer friendly to the good, that man loses his self-sufficiency. So, the good is useful to the man (because without it, he is no longer self-sufficient), the man holds the good in regard, the man loves the good, and the man cares for the good, because without the good the man is no longer self-sufficient. In this sense, “the good is a friend to the good insofar as he is good.”

The next part of the dialectic examines whether unlike things are friends to one another. Socrates says:

Once upon a time...I heard a statement which has just flashed across my mind. It was that nothing is so hostile to like as like, none so hostile to the good as the good....And so, (Socrates' informant adds), by a universal and infallible law the nearer any two things resemble one another, the fuller do they become of envy, strife, and hatred—and the greater the dissimilarity, the greater the friendship. (*Lysis* 216d)

Socrates' informant gives several examples of his meaning, and as in the dialectic concerning like being attracted to like in the previous section, these examples fall into two groups: the first involving examples of relationships between people:

...the poor are obliged to make themselves friends of the rich, and the weak of the strong, for the sake of their assistance; the sick man also must be friendly with the physician, and, in short, everyone who is without knowledge must feel regard and affection for those who possess it. (*Lysis* 216d)

The second set of examples comes from the cosmological philosophers:

...everything...craves for its contrary, and not for its like—the dry craves for moisture, the cold for heat, the bitter for sweetness, the sharp for bluntness, the empty to be filled, to full to be emptied. And everything else follows the same rule. (*Lysis* 215e)

This idea of contraries was an important one in ancient Greek science. Henry M.

Leicester, in his *Historical Background of Chemistry*, writes:

...in the Ionian school there was a continuous progression and development of the idea of a primal matter organized into contraries, especially heat and cold, but also stressing moisture and dryness. These are exemplified in the ideas of fire and water, with the related concepts of air and earth. Other factors are also involved, but from the standpoint of

later developments of thought these ideas are the most important. The interaction of these principles leads to rarefaction and condensation, to a constant state of movement and change.²¹

For example,

To (Anaximander) the origin of all things was the *apeiron*, the indefinite and infinite. This undifferentiated mass gave birth to worlds which appeared and disappeared as bubbles in the *apeiron*. These worlds, though emerging from the *apeiron*, were themselves composed of heat and cold.²²

There is a sense in which both concepts—like is attracted to like, and contrary is attracted to contrary—are true. Heat can be attracted to cold, according to the Greek mind, and also according to modern science (if you open a window in a heated house on a cold day, the heat will rush outdoors, and the cold will rush indoors). But according to some of the Greek cosmologists, these two contrary characteristics, although they are contrary, have the same origin. In Anaximander's theory, the *apeiron* is the origin of both heat and cold. So in one sense the contraries of heat and cold seek each other because that are contraries; however, in another sense, heat and cold are like because they have the same origin. Heat and cold are aspects of the same thing.

To support his claim that contrary is attracted to contrary,

...(Socrates') informant adduced the authority of Hesiod, telling me that, according to him, 'Potter ever jars the potter, bard with bard, and poor with poor.' (*Lysis* 215d)

²¹ Leicester, Henry M. *The Historical Background of Chemistry*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956, p. 21.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

This quotation comes from Hesiod's *Words and Days*. In Richmond Lattimore's translation, the passage, and its context, is

It was never true that there was only one kind
of strife. There have always
been two on earth. There is one
you could like when you understand her.
The other is hateful. The two Strifes
Have separate natures.
There is one Strife who builds up evil war,
and slaughter.
She is harsh; no man loves her, but under compulsion
and by will of the immortals men
promote this rough Strife.
But the other one was born
the elder daughter of black Night.
The son of Kronos, who sits on high and
Dwells in the bright air,
set her in the roots of the earth and among men;
she is far kinder.
She pushes the shiftless man to work,
for all his laziness.
A man looks at his neighbor, who is rich:
then he too
wants work; for the rich man presses on with
his plowing and planting
and the ordering of his state.
So the neighbor envies the neighbor
who presses on toward wealth. Such Strife
is a good friend to mortals.
The potter is potter's enemy, and
Craftsman is craftsman's
rival; tramp is jealous of tramp,
and singer of singer.²³

²³ Hesiod. *The Works and Days. Theogony. The Shields of Herakles* Translated by Richmond Lattimore. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1959, p. 19-21.

There are two kinds of strife, one constructive and the other destructive, and Plato seems to be saying that there are two kinds of *philia*. The first kind, which is the

After reading this passage we can see that Socrates' informant quoted Hesiod out of context. First, there are two Strifes, one of which is hateful and leads to war, the other of which is healthy competition. When Hesiod writes of the Strife between potter and potter, and between craftsman and craftsman, he is referring to the helpful Strife which is Healthy Competition. This Strife is helpful because it leads to full cellars and cupboards; the *Works and Days* is a dialectic poem whose theme is "Work hard, so you won't have to beg for bread."

We see both kinds of Strife represented in the characters of the *Lysis*. Much of the time, Lysis and Menexenus engage in healthy competition as to who is the wiser, the more virtuous, etc., only occasionally going beyond the bounds of healthy competition to the point where one wants to "take down" the other. The kind of Strife which is represented by Hippothales' desire for Lysis, however, is of the warring kind, as shown by Hippothales' wish to "conquer" Lysis.

One major theme of the *Works and Days* is friendship: the poem is addressed to the narrator's brother, Perseis, who need not ever have existed. In the poem we learn that the relationship between the narrator and Perseis is strained. Their father died and left his farm to the sons, but Perseis bribed the local magistrates so he could get the greater share

form of absolute *philia* or what I have called virtuous *philia*, is constructive. The second kind, which is *eros*, is marked by a desire to possess (as Hippothales desires to possess or "conquer" Lysis) and can be destructive.

of the farm. Apparently, Perseis wasted his inheritance, for he has come begging to the narrator. The *Works and Days* gives advice to Perseis so he won't have to beg again.

The lack of friendship also plays a role in the myth of the Age of Iron which Hesiod recounts later in the *Works and Days*:

And I wish that I were not any part
of the fifth generation
of men, but had died before it came,
or been born afterward.
For here now is the age of iron. Never by daytime
will there be an end to hard work and pain,
nor in the night
to weariness, when the gods will send anxieties
to trouble us.
Yet here also there shall be some good things
mixed with the evils.
But Zeus will destroy this generation of morals
also,
in the time when children, as they are born,
grow gray on the temples,
when the father no longer agrees with the children,
nor children with their father,
when guest is no longer at one with host,
nor companion to companion,
when your brother is no longer your friend,
as he was in the old days.²⁴

In this passage we see a reference to the theme which forms the basis of the *Odyssey*: guest-friendship.

Socrates and Lysis then continue their dialectic about *philia*, this time using the assumption that “nothing is so friendly to a thing as its contrary” (*Lysis* 216a). But if they do, says Socrates,

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

...will there not spring upon us suddenly and uncouthly and exultingly those universal-knowledge men, the masters of dispute, and ask us, whether there is anything in the world so contrary to enmity as friendship? (*Lysis* 216b)

These “universal-knowledge” men will ask: Is friendship a friend to enmity, or enmity to friendship? and Is justice a friend to injustice, temperance a friend to intemperance, good to evil? *Lysis* says that these things cannot be friends to each other, and Socrates concludes:

It follows then, I think, that neither like is friendly with like, nor contrary with contrary. (*Lysis* 216b)

Whether justice is a friend or an enemy to injustice, or temperance a friend or an enemy to intemperance depends on the web of meaning that is given to the words “justice,” “injustice,” “friend,” “enemy,” etc. We have seen that in the section of the dialectic in which is discussed whether a man can be a friend to his enemy or an enemy to his friend. Because this web of meaning changes, one cannot say with certainty that justice is a friend to injustice or that justice is an enemy to injustice unless one makes the web of meaning clear. Statements like “a man cannot be a friend to his enemy” are like the statues of Daedalus: when you think you have one, it gets up in the night and runs away, so you are without a statue of Daedalus again.

In this section of the dialectic Socrates has shown that neither likeness nor contrariness are essential characteristics of virtuous *philia*. In some cases, like is friendly to like, and in other cases, contrary is friendly to contrary. The essential characteristic of *philia* must lie in something else. Also, in some cases, contrary is clearly not friendly to contrary.

Socrates moves on to consider another possibility: things which are neither good nor evil are friends to the good. In doing this, he makes two assumptions:

I am inclined though to think that, in the words of the old proverb, the beautiful is friendly....Now I am of this opinion, because the good, I assert, is beautiful. (*Lysis* 216d)

These two assumptions form the two premises of a hypothetical syllogism:

P₁: The good is beautiful.

P₂: The beautiful is friendly.

C: The good is friendly.

In this final section of the dialectic, Plato will show that people become friends on account of the good, i.e., people become friends on account of the good life.

Socrates now states that he recognizes three classes, of which one is friendly to the good:

I conceive I recognize three distinct classes, good, evil, and thirdly, that which is neither good nor evil....Now that good is friendly with good, or evil with evil, or good with evil, we are hindered by our previous arguments from believing. It remains then that, if there be anything friendly with anything, that which is neither good nor evil must be friendly either with the good or with that which resembles itself. For nothing, I am sure, can be friendly with evil. (*Lysis* 216e)

Socrates' hypothesis is that that which is neither good nor evil is friendly with the good.

For example, Socrates says a sick person desires medical assistance, which is a good.

The sickness, however, is an evil. Socrates points out that the sick person's body is neither good nor evil, because although sickness resides in the body, the sickness is not identical with the body. The relation of the body and sickness is like the relation between

white dye and yellow hair. When the hair is dyed, it appears white but is in reality still yellow. So, Socrates concludes, the body, which is neither good nor evil, desires medical assistance, which is a good, on account of sickness which is an evil. So, we are friends with something on account of evil.

Socrates concludes:

On the same ground then we may further assert that those who are already wise are no longer friends to wisdom, be they gods, or be then men, nor again, are those friends to wisdom who are so possessed of foolishness to be evil, for no ignorant and foolish man is a friend to wisdom. There remains then those who possess indeed this evil, the evil of foolishness, but who are not, as yet, in consequence of it, foolish or ignorant, but still understand that they do not know the things they do not know. And thus, you see, it is those who are neither good nor evil, as yet, that are friends to wisdom, but those who are evil are not friends, nor again are the good. For that contrary is not friendly with contrary, nor like with like, was made apparent in the former part of our discourse. (*Lysis* 218b)

Of course, Socrates has not shown that like cannot be friendly to like or that contrary cannot be friendly to contrary; we have seen examples showing that these are possible.

It appears that at last Socrates has found what he has been looking for:

Now then, Lysis and Menexenus, I continued, we have, as it appears, discovered, beyond a dispute, what it is that is friendly, and not friendly. Whether in respect of the soul, or of the body, or of anything else whatsoever, that, we pronounce, which is neither evil nor good is friendly with good on account of the presence of evil. (*Lysis* 218c)

But

For myself, I was rejoicing, with all a hunter's delight, at just grasping the prey I had been so long in chase of, when presently there came into my mind, from what quarter I cannot tell, the strangest sort of suspicion. It was that the

conclusions to which we had arrived were not true, and, sorely discomfited, I cried, Alackaday, Lysis, alack, Menexenus, we have, I fear me, but dreamed our treasure. (*Lysis* 218c)

So, the possibility that that which is neither good nor evil is friendly with the good is rejected, too, for if a person is a friend, then he is a friend to someone, and he is a friend on account of something. For example, a man is a friend to the medical art for the sake of health; therefore, he is also a friend to health, and he is a friend to health for the sake of something to which he is also a friend, and a friend on account of something. This leads to infinite regress.

This infinite regress could be avoided if a person could be a friend to the good. Before, Socrates looked at and rejected the idea that that which is neither good nor evil could be a friend to the good because insofar as a person is good, he or she is self-sufficient. But no human being is entirely good, so no human being is entirely self-sufficient.

Socrates then asks:

...is it not necessary that we advance at once to a beginning, which will not again refer us to friend upon friend, but arrive at that to which we are in the first instance of friends, and for the sake of which we say we are friends to all the rest? (*Lysis* 219d)

As an example of his meaning, Socrates points out that we value gold and silver not for themselves but on account of that

for the sake of which gold, and all other subsidiaries, are procured....And does not the same reasoning hold with regard to friendship? When we say we are friendly to things for the sake of a thing to which we are friendly, do we not clearly use the term with regard to them which belongs to

another? And do we not appear to be in reality friendly only with that in which all these so-called friendships terminate? (*Lysis* 220a-b)

Socrates then points out that they have said that a person is friendly to the good on account of evil (a person who is afflicted with the evil of sickness desires the good of medicine), so if there was no evil, there would be no friends to the good. But Socrates goes on to state that if evil did not exist, those desires which are neither good nor evil would still exist, and if a person desires something, then he has *philia* for that thing.

The next theory Socrates mentions is that desire is the cause of friendship. One feels desire for what one lacks, and one lacks what is taken from one. So if two people are friendly to each other, they belong to each other by a tie of nature, and

...if one man, my children, is desirous and enamored of another, he can never have conceived his desire, or love, or friendship, without in some way belonging to the object of his love, either by his soul, or in some quality of his soul, or in disposition, or in form....It cannot possibly be then, but that a true and genuine lover is loved in return by the object of his love....To this conclusion Lysis and Menexenus nodded a sort of reluctant assent, while Hippothales in his rapture kept changing from color to color. (*Lysis* 222a-b)

This conclusion of Socrates is not true in the case of Hippothales who loves Lysis, but whose love is not returned.

Continuing the dialectic, Menexenus and Lysis agree that “there is a difference between that which belongs and that which is like” (*Lysis* 222c). This does not lead to acceptable consequences:

It appears than, said I, that we have fallen again into positions, with regard to friendship, which we previously rejected. For, according to our present admission, the unjust will be no less friendly to the evil, than the good to

the good....And again, said I, if we assert that what is good and what belongs to us are one and the same, will it not result that none are friendly to the good but the good? And this, too, I think, is a position in which we imagined that we proved ourselves wrong. (*Lysis* 222d)

Here the dialectic is stopped as the attendants of Menexenus and Lysis come to take them away. Socrates and the dialogue by calling out:

Well, Lysis and Menexenus, we have made ourselves rather ridiculous today, I, an old man, and you children. For our hearers here will carry away the report that though we conceive ourselves to be friends with each other—you see I class myself with you—we have not as yet been able to discover what we mean by a friend. (*Lysis* 223a)

Although Socrates ends the *Lysis* with his usual confession of failure, several things have been accomplished in answering the question of “What is a friend?”

First, by the use of recollection we have seen that several relationships in the *Lysis* are relationships between friends, and we have seen that one relationship—that between Hippothales and Lysis—is not a relationship between friends.

Recollections occurs when Hippothales first hails Socrates and when the reader learns of the relationship between Lysis and Menexenus. These instances of *philia* are harmonious and are instances of people performing the function of a friend well.

Hippothales and Socrates each benefit from being with the other: Hippothales benefits because he has a chance to learn what is a friend and how to properly fulfill the function of a friend, and Socrates benefits because he enjoys having a person to converse with.

Menexenus and Lysis benefit from their association together because each enjoys the other’s company—the same hold true of Hippothales and Ctesippus, although Ctesippus may object that Hippothales speaks and sings too much of Lysis. In these instance, the

part of *philia* represented participates in the form of *philia* and the reader recollects that form by seeing actions that participate in that form. So, when Hippothales invites Socrates to join him and his friends in discussion, and when we read about Menexenus and Lysis sharing things and doing things together, we are reminded of the part of *philia* that participates in the form of absolute friendship.

In the middle section of the *Lysis*, when we see Hippothales hiding from Lysis even though he loves him, we are also reminded of the form of absolute friendship, but for a different reason. When the reader is reminded of absolute friendship by Plato's descriptions of Hippothales' actions regarding Lysis, it is because he sees something which is dissimilar to absolute friendship. The *philia* which Hippothales has for Lysis does not participate in the form of absolute friendship. Just as two unequal sticks can make one recollect the form of absolute equality, reading about the kind of unharmonious *philia* which Hippothales has for *Lysis* can remind one of harmonious absolute friendship. Hippothales' sexual desire for Lysis keeps each of them from receiving any benefit from associating with the other. Lysis is embarrassed by Hippothales' show of love, and Hippothales hides from Lysis so as not to give him offense. Hippothales also does an action which can potentially harm Lysis: by always praising him, he runs the risk of puffing Lysis up with pride.

In the conclusion of the *Lysis*, Socrates calls himself a friend along with Menexenus and Lysis. And, in fact, he is a friend to not only the two young men but also to Hippothales, and the reader is reminded of absolute friendship by reading about Socrates' actions in the *Lysis*. Socrates enjoys being in the company of young men and shares

conversation with them. He benefits from being with them because he has someone to engage in dialectic and the young men benefit because they have a chance to learn something from the dialectic. Also, in contrast to Hippothales, Socrates does not harm anyone in the dialogue. His engaging in dialectic with Lysis and Menexenus does these young men, and Hippothales, good, for Socrates helps steer them toward the truth by his example and by showing them that they do not know what absolute friendship is.

Anyone who associates with Socrates has the potential to benefit by that association.

Socrates is a model of a friend. In the *Lysis*, several characteristics of a friend have been identified and Socrates has these characteristics. A friend is someone you can spend time with: Socrates, as he says in the dialogue, is always ready to make a new friend, and he is always willing to engage someone in dialectic. A friend is someone who is useful: Socrates is useful to the people he engages in dialectic because those people have the opportunity to learn from the dialectic. And a friend does not harm the people he is friends with: Socrates does not harm the people he converses with because he does not puff them up with pride.

In each of the three early dialogues I have explicated, the character of Socrates serves as a model of a person having whatever characteristic is being discussed. In the *Charmides*, absolute *sophrosyne* is discussed, and Socrates serves as a model of a person with absolute *sophrosyne*. He stands as a model of temperance between the often intemperate figures of Critias and Charmides. In the *Laches*, absolute courage is discussed, and again Socrates serves as a model of a person with absolute courage. His exemplary performance in the retreat from Delium is referred to at the beginning of the

dialogue, and he is praised for his courage by the characters in the dialogue. And, as we have seen, he serves as a model of a person with the *philia* that is a form.

Also, in all the dialogues I have explicated, the character of Socrates is shown to have *arête*: as a man, as a soldier, as a friend, as a philosopher. The character of Socrates performs well the functions of whatever occupation he undertakes.

As such, Socrates, in these early dialogues, is a symbol of an ideal human being: one who fully participates in the forms of moral conduct—*arête*, *sophrosyne*, absolute courage, absolute friendship. Because of this participation in these forms, the character of Socrates serves as an impetus to recollection. As an example of an ideal human being with *arête*, he causes recollection in the reader. The character of Socrates is

we may fairly say, of all those whom we knew in our time,
the bravest and also the wisest and most upright man.
(*Phaedo* 118a)

As a symbol and literary character in Plato's dialogues, Socrates plays an important role in causing the reader to engage in recollection.

The *Lysis* is a particularly important dialogue in that it shows the limitations of recollection. The subject under discussion in the *Lysis* is, "What is a friend?" and this subject is investigated by inquiring into the nature of the form of *philia*, the form of absolute friendship. *Philia* has a very broad meaning in Greek, and recollection cannot investigate all its meaning, although dialectic can. Recollection can be used to investigate the particular portion of the meaning of *philia* that is a form (absolute friendship), but it cannot be used to determine the other meanings of *philia*, other than that they are not virtuous *philia*.

In this chapter I have shown that:

- 1) recollection plays a part in recognizing that several relationships in the *Lysis* are relationships of virtuous *philia*;
- 2) recollection plays a part in recognizing that the relationship between Hippothales and Lysis is not a relationship of virtuous *philia*;
- 3) there are several essential characteristics of *philia*:
 - a) enjoyment of the other person's company,
 - b) usefulness, and,
 - c) refraining from harming the other person;
- 4) Socrates is a model of a person who is a friend, who participates in the form of absolute friendship; and
- 5) special attention has been paid to the relativity of the meanings that are given to words like "friend" and to positions such as "like things are friendly to each other" and "contrary things are friendly to each other."

In the next chapter, the conclusion of my thesis, I will defend Plato's doctrine of recollection against some common criticisms, and I will show the relationship that exists between the slave-boy episode and the other sections of the *Meno*. I will also show recollection is meant by Plato to be only the first step, not the final step, toward knowledge.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I will provide a defense of the theory of recollection, and I will show that the *Meno* has a unified structure: The slave-boy episode is not a digression dropped into the middle of the *Meno*.

In the second chapter, “Virtue and the Theory of Recollection in the *Meno*,” I showed that the first and third sections of the *Meno* share a common concern with virtue and knowledge. In the first section of the *Meno*, Socrates tries to draw out of Meno an adequate definition of virtue. He fails, but in the process of trying he gives Meno a sample of the kind of definition he want: “Shape is the only thing which always accompanies color.” The alert reader knows that the definition hat Socrates would like to draw out of *Meno* is “Virtue is the only thing which always accompanies knowledge.” I also showed in this chapter that the third section of the *Meno* is concerned with drawing out the implications of this implied definition. From “Virtue is the only thing which always accompanies knowledge,” you can derive the conditional statement “If one has knowledge, then one has virtue”; however, you cannot derive the conditional statement “If one has virtue, then one has knowledge.” The second chapter shows that the first and third sections of the *Meno* are related to each other by their common concern with virtue and knowledge.

In the third chapter, “The Theory of Recollection,” I examined the second section of the *Meno*, which is commonly called the “slave-boy episode,” and I drew out the

implications of the theory of recollection by comparing its presentation in the *Meno* with its presentation in the *Phaedo*. In both dialogues, the doctrine of recollection was presented as making use of Pythagorean notions, including reincarnation. I symbolized the argument that presented recollection in the *Meno*, and I explained the meaning of each premise by making use of both the *Phaedo* and the theory of the divided line that is presented in Book VI of the *Republic*. I concluded that the conclusion of the argument for the theory of recollection follows from only two premises and that Plato had not committed himself to reincarnation in his argument:

P1: All nature is akin.

P2: Seeking and learning are nothing but recollection.

C: When a man has recalled a single piece of knowledge—learned it, in ordinary language—there is no reason why he should not find out all the rest, if he keeps a stout heart and does not grow weary of the search.

Because Plato does not commit himself to reincarnation in his theory of recollection, he does not commit the errors that many critics have assigned to him: that the theory of recollection involves an infinite regress because what the soul has learned, it has always learned in a previous incarnation, and that Plato never explains how the soul ever actually learns anything.

The theory of recollection was introduced into the *Meno* because Socrates wished to prove that it is possible to seek something without knowing in advance what you are seeking, whether it is a square with double the area of a given square or the form of virtue. Plato showed that such a search for a square with double the area of a given square is possible, and he showed that the slave boy was able to recognize the square he had

been searching for although Socrates did not tell him how the square had been found. The recognition of this square as the one that had double the area of the first square did not depend on empirical evidence, but rather on the slave boy's recognition that certain areas of the second square were equal in area to certain areas of the first square. The slave boy "recollected" the form of equality when he discovered the square he had been looking for. Since Socrates in the *Meno* states that "we need not be surprised if it [the soul] can recall the knowledge of virtue or of anything else which, as we see, it once possessed" (*Meno* 81d), we have found our connection between the slave-boy episode and the other two sections of the *Meno*. All three sections of the *Meno* are concerned with showing the nature of the relationship between virtue and knowledge, and the slave-boy episode, in particular, concludes that one should strive to acquire the knowledge of virtue.

In these dialogues recollection plays a role primarily in Plato's use of character to illustrate the theme of his dialogues: In the *Charmides*, the two major characters (other than Socrates, who is a major character in each of the dialogues I have examined in this thesis) are conspicuous in their lack of *sophrosyne*; in the *Laches*, the two major characters are two generals who, as military men, are closely connected with the idea of courage; and in the *Lysis*, the two major characters are two friends, although there is a third character who is in love with one of the two friends.

Recollection in the Socratic dialogues that I have examined occurs primarily when the reader reads about one of the characters of a dialogue doing an act that participates in, or is noticeably lacking in, the virtue that is under discussion. But recollection can also occur in other ways: One can remember the virtuous character (personality) of a person

talked about in one of the dialogues and so can recollect the idea of virtue, or one can remember a particularly unvirtuous action committed by one of the character in one of the dialogues and so once again recollect the idea of virtue.

In each of the Socratic dialogues I have examined, Socrates himself is a model of whatever virtue is being discussed. In the *Charmides*, which is concerned with *sophrosyne*, Socrates is a model of a person who has *sophrosyne*; in the *Laches*, which is concerned with courage, Socrates is a model of a person who has courage; and in the *Lysis*, which is concerned with *philia*, Socrates is a model of a person who has the *philia* that is a form. Socrates has *arête* as a philosopher, a human being, a soldier, and a friend. This suggests that the function of Socrates in Plato's early dialogues is to cause recollection of *arête* or of a single virtue in the reader.

Recollection is a kind of intuition, an intuition that is caused by seeing or reading about actions that participate or obviously lack participation in a form. Plato writes, "Seeking and learning are nothing but recollection": however, the early dialogues demonstrate that recollection can be profitable by guided by a teacher who engages the student in dialectic. In other words, intuition alone is not sufficient for knowledge. To acquire knowledge, one must engage in dialectic. Many people recognize when certain actions have *arête* and other actions lack *arête*, but they don't know the form of *arête*.

In this thesis, I have examined the *Meno* and provide an interpretation of it as an organized whole. I have also defended Plato's theory of recollection against the charge that it implies an infinite regress by showing that Plato's argument for recollection does

not commit him to reincarnation. I have also shown the role that recollection plays in the *Charmides*, *Laches*, and *Lysis*.

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