

The Possibility of Socratic Enquiry: Meno's Paradox Reconsidered*

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This study aimed to investigate whether there is a transformation in the Socratic method of enquiry that is associated with the transition from Plato's early dialogues to the *Meno*, and to consider the possibility of Socratic enquiry.

Much controversy persists among interpreters as to how to assess the theory of recollection in the *Meno*. For some, the introduction of a myth of recollection is simply an expedient by which Socrates tries to get Meno interested in searching for the truth. For other scholars, Socrates moves on to recollection after elenctic cross-examination has taken him as far as it can in getting him to the truth; thus, some holding this view believe that recollection is incompatible with the Socratic procedure. By attempting to show the continuity between recollection as it is stated in the *Meno* and foreshadowed in Plato's earlier dialogues, the purpose of this paper is to reject both approaches. The argument used here to support this claim is developed in three stages: 1) by tracing the possible positive results of Socrates' elenctic method; 2) by indicating how the *Meno* introduces Meno's paradox; and 3) by asserting that the elenctic method naturally relies on the presupposition of recollection.

1. Enquiry in Plato's early dialogues

While there is the impression that Socrates' elenchus (examination and refutation) is a negative or destructive procedure that does not contribute to the establishment of views, a different point of emphasis is confirmed from Socrates' own accounts. In the *Charmides*, Socrates emphasises that it should not matter which side in a dispute is refuted; one should rather pay attention to the argument itself and concentrate *on clarifying the nature of each existing thing, or on the joint enquiry*.¹

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¹ *Chrm.* 165bc (cf. esp. 165b8 'ζητῶ...μετὰ σοῦ'), 166ce (cf. esp. 166d6 'καταφανές ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων ὅπη ἔχει'). The intentions of Socrates himself about exercising the elenchus could be counterevidence to Benson's claim that the Socratic/elenctic goal is eliminating the interlocutors' false conceit of knowledge, and that the method of learning testified to in the elenctic dialogues is the method of learning from someone else who knows. Cf. Benson (1990, 130, 145; 2015, 4, 49 etc.) See also below note 3.

Nevertheless, setting ‘enquiry’ as a *goal* does not necessarily guarantee its *achievement*. Rather, as Benson argues, it is plausible that in Plato’s early dialogues what Socrates’ elenchus can accomplish and what Socrates believes it has accomplished are no more than to reveal the inconsistencies in the beliefs of his interlocutors.²

And yet, if Socrates’ own evaluation of the elenchus were such, then there would be no need for further interrogation after the uncovering of inconsistencies. However, even after witnessing Critias’ *aporia* (*Chrm.* 169cd), Socrates provides clues about how to carry on the conversation. From this point on, the dialogue evolves into an examination of hypothetical propositions.³

Socrates’ attempts to disprove the Delphic oracle in the *Apology* could be interpreted as exhibiting a more favourable aspect of the elenchus. Socrates responds to the oracle’s declaration of himself as supremely wise by initiating cross-examination with politicians, poets, and craftsmen of good reputation. These elenctic conversations lead him to the conclusion that the oracle meant that he was wise only in the sense of being uniquely cognisant of his own ignorance.⁴

There are other points in Plato’s dialogues where Socrates makes a claim for a difference between the unproductive sort of elenctic procedures and his own style of cross-examination. In the *Gorgias*, on the subject of what Socrates calls rhetorical elenchus, Socrates says to Polus:

But this kind of refutation is worth nothing towards the truth.

(*Grg.* 471e7-472a1)

This remark hints at the possibility of another, more effective sort of Socratic elenchus. In 472c, Socrates makes explicit a distinction between Polus’ form of elenchus and

² Benson (2000, 32-95).

³ The dialogue on ‘temperance’ is kept going by virtue of Socrates’ proposal to suppose the existence of ‘knowledge of knowledge’ (cf. *Chrm.* 169d, 172c, 175d). On these *Charmides* passages, I agree with Kahn (1996, 184), who writes ‘the complex conditional reasoning of 169A-175D bears some resemblance to the hypothetical method of the *Meno*.’ In other words, these *Charmides* passages give the impression that the method of elenchus and the hypothetical method are, in principle, compatible, if the reasoning in the *Charmides* is not exactly the same as the hypothetical method in the *Meno*. Benson argues that it is not until *Meno* 86e that Plato depicts Socrates as engaging in the search for knowledge from mutual ignorance. Cf. Benson (2015, 11n29, 98). However, the present passages in the *Charmides* (cf. also above note 1) may bear different nuances from the relationship between the elenctic method and the hypothetical method that Benson describes; however, Benson (2015, 31n31) seems aware of this point.

⁴ *Ap.* 21b8 (ἐπι ζήτησιν), 21c1 (ἐλέγξων). Cf. Nehamas (1998, 83-84).

his own; these differ as to whether they proceed or not on the basis of mutual agreement (475e-476a). The conversation proceeds as follows: Socrates and Polus disagree over whether a man can be understood to be happy who goes unpunished after having committed the worst kind of injustice (for Socrates, he cannot be happy; for Polus, he can). After elenctic discussion, the interlocutors come to an agreement:

Socrates: And hasn't it been proved that it was said truly?

Polus: Apparently.

(*Grg.* 479e)

What happened so that they could reach this agreement? Socrates' approach was straightforward: he laid out the point of dispute on the table, drawing from Polus a number of different beliefs whose incompatibility he proceeded to show.⁵ If this is all that underpins the positivity of the elenchus, then Benson is right that Socrates should be careful about the provisional nature of the conclusions arrived at by this means (as indeed he is). After Polus answers, 'Apparently', Socrates continues, 'All right. If these things are true ...', suggesting his awareness of the tentativeness of their agreement.⁶ It is open to Polus to draw back from the new conclusion, taking refuge in previous statements of his put forward in the course of their conversation. In principle, Socratic procedure allows interlocutors to draw a line under their conversation so far and to begin discussion afresh from a new starting point. This also happens when a new interlocutor breaks into a conversation to champion a position set out by a previous speaker. In this sense, the definitive establishment of truth or falsity is not something available to the Socratic elenchus. Socrates himself is conscious that every agreement or proposition he teases out of his interlocutors can only have a provisional, rather than a final or decisive, character.⁷ Despite all these points, Socrates seems to expect more of the elenchus than that it will simply serve to indicate the consistency or inconsistency of interlocutors' belief sets. The claim is clear in this pronouncement:

But if I fail to produce you yourself as a single witness agreeing on the things I'm talking about, I think I've achieved nothing worth mentioning in whatever our discussion would be about.

⁵ Vlastos (1983).

⁶ Cf. Benson (2000, 84).

⁷ Cf. *Gg.* 476d, 479c. Socratic elenchus allows the freedom to withdraw consent (cf. *Chrm.* 164d, 165ab, *Grg.* 462c4, 464a, 506a).

A ‘witness’ in this context suggests more than an exposure of the inconsistency in the interlocutor’s belief-set; it suggests a certain commitment. If the achievements that are later explicitly reported by Socrates, such as making Polus a witness on Socrates’ side (475e-476a), do not contribute in any way to determining the truth of the matter in Socrates’ mind, then the whole argument Socrates made, comparing his elenchus with Polus’ position (471e-472a, cf. 472c), collapses. In other words, Socrates finds an accomplishment in the two men’s agreement,⁸ which allows the interlocutors the opportunity to change their ideas and deepen their understanding, even while granting that each conclusion has a tentative character. Benson’s Socrates, on the other hand, may find it difficult even to ‘make Polus a witness for Socrates’.⁹

Even if Socratic enquiry is understood as positive in this sense, interpreters sometimes see Plato’s *Meno* as a critique of Socrates’ previous procedures or seen as constituting a breakthrough in terms of his method of enquiry.¹⁰ According to Vlastos, in the *Meno*, Plato discards his earlier method, elenchus, as it turns out not to bring certain knowledge. In other words, Socrates’ search for truth in the early dialogues is founded on an immense trust in the method of the elenchus, which is lost in Plato’s transitional works from the early to the middle period.¹¹

In their attempt to find in the *Meno* a turning point against the inadequacy of Socratic enquiry, both Vlastos and Benson have a negative view of elenchus.¹² However, what would Plato’s own view be?

⁸ Cf. Irwin (1974, 754n4; 1995, 85, 367n24).

⁹ Thus, although it can be said, as Benson claims, that the truth is not established by the elenchus, Benson goes too far in arguing that Socrates himself is making the assessment that consistency/inconsistency cannot be bridged in any way to the true/false issue. It is true that the examination of individual atomic propositions may be too far from the knowledge Socrates seeks, but the elenchus may be a valid method in a certain way insofar as ‘the truth is never refuted’, as understood by Socrates in the *Gorgias* 473b. The passage ‘the matters bound with chains of iron and adamant’ in the *Gorgias* 509a also implies that the truth has some tendency to survive the elenctic procedure.

¹⁰ See Robinson (1953, 122), who writes ‘*Meno*’s discussion of the hypothetical method seems to have value as a symbol of a valuable change in Plato’s writings. With the introduction of this method, he is passing from destructive to constructive thinking, from elenchus and refutation of other men’s views to the elaboration of positive views of his own.’ See also above note 3.

¹¹ Vlastos (1983, 32; 1988, 368-376).

¹² Vlastos’ emphasis is placed on the disconnection of the *Meno* from the early dialogues. In the *Meno* he considers the elenchus is discarded. Benson’s emphasis, on the other hand, is placed on the continuity of the early dialogues and the subsequent development after elenchus’ positive achievement (*i.e.* after aporia), as an aspect shown for the first time. Cf. Benson (2015, 92, 98).

2. The Dilemma of Knowledge and Ignorance

When Meno finally confesses that he is baffled with regard to the question of ‘what virtue is’, Socrates urges further joint enquiry, emphasising that he himself is in the same state.

Meno raises questions:

(a) But how will you search for something, Socrates, if you don’t know at all (τὸ παράπαν) what it is? (b) For setting it as what sort of thing from among those things you don’t know will you search? (c) Or even if you do come across it, how will you know that this is the thing you didn’t know?

(Men. 80d5-8)

In response, Socrates says:

I understand what sort of thing you mean to say, Meno. Do you realise how eristic the argument that you’re spinning is? It says, (a’) ‘Man cannot search either for what he knows or for what he doesn’t know. (b’) For it would be impossible for him to search for what he knows—this is because he knows it and such a person would have no need to search for it. Nor would it be possible to search for what one doesn’t know—this is because he doesn’t even know what to search for.’

(Men. 80e1-5)

By employing the second-person singular verb (‘ζητήσεις’), Meno unmistakably casts doubt on *Socrates’ enquiry*. In response, Socrates restates the doubts raised by Meno, the so-called Meno’s paradox. If the basic structure of their remarks were organised as described by the quotations above,¹³ their basic statements would be understood as follows: the difficulties with regard to enquiries are first pointed out both in Meno’s paradox and in Socrates’ reformulation ((a) and (a’), respectively), followed by the reasons for each ((b), (c), and (b’), respectively).¹⁴

¹³ Following Weiss (2001, 58), (a), (b), (c), (a’), and (b’) were inserted for ease of reference (translation is my own).

¹⁴ The reformulation by Socrates seems the good way to articulate the dilemma. This may account for many of the outward differences between Meno’s and Socrates’ remarks. The second-person singular expressions in (a), (b), and (c), directed at Socrates personally, are converted into generalised expressions in (a’) and (b’). In (a’) and (b’), the point that ‘Man cannot search for what he knows’ is inserted anew; and furthermore, the words ‘at all’ are deleted in (a’). In other words, many of these differences can be regarded as a transition in dilemmas from the coarse expressions in (a), (b), and (c) to the more refined ones in (a’) and (b’) as dilemmas.

Moravcsik pays special attention to the adverb ‘τὸ παράπαν’ in (a), because he believes that Meno’s paradox will be resolved if the term is removed, as in the version re-formulated by Socrates.¹⁵ Indeed, on the one hand, it seems logical to think that one cannot search for what one does not know at all, as Meno says in his objection. On the other hand, if one does not know it in a certain way, in other words, insofar as one knows it in some different way, it would be possible for one to search for it.

However, if the deletion of the expression ‘at all’ is what leads Socrates and Meno to the resumption of enquiry (80d-86c), then Socrates’ position of ignorance should be slackened accordingly. Socrates’ initial argument goes as follows:

I actually *do not* even know *at all* what virtue itself is in the first place. (71a6-7)
I am in the state of condemnation against myself for knowing *nothing at all* about virtue. (71b2-3)

This emphasis is placed in relation to the Socrates’ celebrated view: ‘if I do not know what one thing is, I cannot know what sort of thing it is’ (cf. 71b3-4).¹⁶ Socrates brings this up when he declines to address Meno’s enquiry posed by the question ‘Can virtue be taught?’ If one does not know what virtue is, one cannot have any knowledge about it, including whether it can be taught. Socrates’ view on this subject is not modified when dealing with Meno’s paradox.

I don’t know ‘what virtue is’. (80d1)
... with regard to virtue, since we don’t know either ‘what it is’ or ‘what sort of thing it is’...¹⁷ (87b2-3)

The categories¹⁸ of knowledge ‘what it is’ and ‘what sort of thing it is’, with some priority to the former,¹⁹ can be taken as Socrates’ basic stance in the early dialogues. His concern with the knowledge of ‘what it is’ stems from the following assumption: if one knows what piety is, *all* cognitions of piety will be brought into clarity and one will make a definite judgement in any individual case related to it such as ‘whether

¹⁵ Cf. Moravcsik (1971, 57).

¹⁶ Fine’s point that Plato is ‘cavalier’ about the term ‘τὸ παράπαν’ seems appropriate. Cf. Fine (1992, 221-222n29). On the stress on this term in Meno’s remarks, see also 80b4 and 80d6.

¹⁷ See also 100b6.

¹⁸ Cf. *Chrm.* 159a, and also below notes 19-21.

¹⁹ Cf. Benson (2000, 112-141).

Socrates is guilty of impiety'.²⁰ On the other hand, if one does not know what justice is, then for him, *any* issue, such as 'whether justice is a kind of virtue' or 'whether a just person is happy', will be left unclear.²¹ What Socrates is seeking is not discrete, partial, disconnected knowledge, but rather a synoptic knowledge to which the sum of a wide variety of related cognitions can be aggregated.²²

Insofar as the dilemma structure, the alternative 'knowing'/'not knowing' found in (a') and (b'), is valid, it sets up a problem that precludes appealing to the ambiguity of knowledge.²³ Socrates often and emphatically confesses his ignorance.²⁴ It is in Socrates' own model of knowledge taken strictly as described above that both Meno's paradox and Socrates' reformulation appear to raise the question of how enquiry is possible.²⁵

3. Theory of Recollection

Socrates' answer introduces a concept of recollection, which Meno does not immediately grasp. Socrates begins to illustrate it for Meno (82b2, σοι ἐπιδείξωμαι) through a demonstration. When a boy, a slave of Meno, is called before them, Socrates tells Meno the point of the illustration: 'Then pay attention to whether it appears to you that the boy recollects or that he learns from me (82b8)'.

Socrates' illustration of recollection by way of a geometrical proof can be divided into four stages:²⁶

²⁰ In *the Euthyphro*, the knowledge of 'what is piety?' is assumed to be linked to offering the cause or the judgment-standard of *all pious things*.

²¹ In Book I of the *Republic*, though searching for justice (336e7), Socrates is ignorant of what it is (354c1). This leads to an emphatic ignorance that he knows *nothing about justice* (354b9-c1). On this type of 'robust knowledge', detailed arguments are found in Benson (2000; 2015).

²² What kind of knowledge of 'what is X?', which is supposed to work as an explanation or ground for *all* cases or *all* properties without exception, is required? Presumably it is in the *Meno* that for the first time—through Meno's paradox—the type of Socratic knowledge presented in the early dialogues can be treated and questioned in a unified manner. 'Recollection' is a response; its potential as a superior response is shown in the fact that it is presented as a cognitive process that can seize *everything* (cf. 81cd) without being limited by time or space (cf. below note 35). If the situation in which 'recollection' is introduced is being understood in this way, there seems to be almost no need to view the elenchus and the recollection theory as alternatives, as Vlastos argues.

²³ For the equivocation on 'know', cf. *Euthydemus* 277e3-278c1, where the argumentative structure using the equivocation of learning is pointed out. It is said to be a 'play of learning' as it 'does not lead in any way to knowing how things are' (278b).

²⁴ Irwin (1977, 39).

²⁵ Some do not appreciate Meno's paradox; however, Nehamas' view that Meno's raising of the paradox of inquiry is natural and well-motivated seems pertinent. Cf. Nehamas (1985, 8).

²⁶ Following Benson (1990, 131-132).

I 82b9-e4 Socrates asks the boy to tell him the length of one side of a square that has an area twice as large as the original square, which has a side length of two feet and an area of four square feet. The boy suggests ‘twice the length’ (of one side of the original square) is the answer.

II 82e14-84a2 The length in question is the length of one side of a square that has an area of eight square feet. However, the boy responds by indicating a side of four feet, but this results in an area of 16 square feet. The boy then corrects his reply to three feet, which turns out to make an area of nine square feet. Then, the boy admits that he has no knowledge of the length required.

III 84d3-85b7 Socrates draws an additional line (a diagonal) across the original square that bisects its area, and the boy agrees that the square with the hypotenuse of the newly formed right triangle is one of the sides of the figure whose length is being sought.

IV 85c10-d1 Socrates finishes his question-and-answer session with the boy with his prescient summary on the path from true beliefs to knowledge, with which Meno agrees.

The task at hand is twofold. How is Meno’s paradox solved? Which of the stages I-IV does the process of recollection precisely correspond to?

Let us first consider the latter question. Benson asserts that sections I and II of the demonstration represent stages equivalent to the method of elenchus, and III and IV represent recollection. For Benson, the scope of the elenchus is to rid Socrates’ interlocutors of what they had mistakenly supposed to be ‘knowledge’ (I, II), and the role of recollection corresponds to the stages after elenchus, that is, the procedure of acquiring knowledge (III, IV).²⁷ In considering the process of recollection as thus restricted, Vlastos is also in line with Benson’s view.²⁸

Meanwhile, regarding the process of recollection, there are relevant passages—three times in I–IV—in which Socrates expects some positive response from Meno:

(1) Then, watch him recollect one after another, in the proper way of recollecting.

²⁷ Benson (1990).

²⁸ Vlastos (1988, 375-376).

(82e12-13)

- (2) Do you notice again, Meno, what progress he has already made in the process of recollection? (84a3-4)
- (3) But isn't it 'recollecting' to recover knowledge by himself and inside himself? (85d6-7)

Quote (1) follows after the boy's first answer, and (2) comes after his second answer. It would be reasonable to infer that the process of recollection implied by (1) with the expression 'one after another' and, especially, by (2), had already begun before stage II.

Nehamas, on the other hand, indicates the possibility of the following reading of the text (2):

(2)* Do you notice again, Meno, what point on the track *to* reminiscence he has now reached?²⁹ (The original text is the same as (2), Ἐννοεῖς αὖ, ὃ Μένων, οὗ ἐστιν ἤδη βαδίζων ὅδε τοῦ ἀναμνήσκεσθαι;)

The alternative (2)* makes it possible to place stages I and II outside the process of recollection, and (3) may also be interpreted as considering recollection to be limited.³⁰ This is because (3) states that recovering knowledge is recollection, suggesting that recollection should exclude I and II because they produce false claims. Furthermore, even after stage III, Socrates refuses to grant the boy access to knowledge. This is not done until stage IV, when he promises future acquisition of knowledge. Is the recollection that was meant to be displayed 'one after another' limited in this way? Is Socrates' 'illustration' similarly postponed, despite the early notification (82b2)?

Interpretation (2)* seems implausible. If the process of recollection does not appear in stages I or II, then how could Meno 'notice' how far the boy has progressed to the upcoming 'recollection' after these two stages alone? In that case, Meno would not be able to have a sense of distance from the 'recollection' that has yet to appear, let alone measure the distance to it, even twice ('αὖ', [2]). Having disavowed his knowledge at the end of stage II, the boy could be headed for further wrong answers,

²⁹ Nehamas (1985, 21). 'what point...' including emphasis in the translation of (2)* is Nehamas' translation.

³⁰ Cf. Benson (1990, 139-140), Nehamas (1985, 21-22).

or this could result in the abandonment of dialogue, without reaching the correct answer.

Rather, the emphasis of the recollection seems to be the following, as was confirmed earlier in the introduction to the demonstration, and as Socrates himself repeatedly reminds us after the end of stage I:

Do you see, Meno, I am teaching him nothing, but rather asking him everything?

(*Men.* 82e4-5, cf. 84c11-d2, 85d3-4)

Socrates does not compel the boy to acknowledge each incorrect or correct response; rather, he leaves it up to the boy's discretion. Then, the process of retrieving knowledge may not be limited to recovering the correct answer. The process through which the boy comes to recognise incorrect answers as such in stages I and II does not appear to be unrelated to the process of recollection, if, as we have already seen, the knowledge that Socrates seeks is knowledge that is somewhat systematic or comprehensive and illuminates every detail of particular cognitions. This is because incorrect answers should likewise be acknowledged as such insofar as they are in competition with true beliefs.

What then is the solution to Meno's paradox? Throughout the demonstration in which the solution is to be presented, the following two required conditions are noteworthy: the ability to speak Greek³¹ (82b) and the so-called 'say what you believe' constraint (83d).³² As these conditions suggest, what is needed in Socratic enquiry is a procedure of teasing out what one believes through questions and answers. In other words, even if ignorance is emphasised in Socrates' model of knowledge, the enquiry by means of beliefs attributed to the interlocutors seems rather strongly encouraged.³³ Socrates, together with Meno, reviews the geometrical demonstration as follows: there was no single belief among those the boy gave in reply that wasn't his own (85b), and he had various beliefs inherent in him despite his lack of knowledge (85c).

All these suggest nothing that presses for a change in direction of the Socratic method, but instead simply that recollection can be seen as a strong backup

³¹ Cf. *Chrm.* 159a

³² Cf. Vlastos (1983, 35; 1988, 366n14).

³³ Fine (1992, 206). As far as the driving force behind Socratic enquiry is concerned, the present paper is in line with her view. Fine's monograph (2014, cf. esp. ch. 4) further elaborates the various issues raised by Meno's paradox. However, Fine's point that the key to understanding Plato's *Meno* lies in the distinction between knowledge and true belief has not changed.

assumption that keeps the Socratic method working as an effective enquiry procedure. Meno took advantage of Socrates' position of emphatic ignorance to call Socrates' enquiry into question, but what seems to have been made explicit in Socrates' answer is the existing process of his enquiry, which proceeds by a series of mutual agreements and confirmations based on the interlocutors' beliefs. The process of stage IV, the process leading to knowledge acquisition, as somewhat predictively shown to Meno is as follows:

And now for him these beliefs have only just been stirred up like a dream. But if someone goes on to question him about these same things on many occasions and in many ways (εἰ δὲ αὐτόν τις ἀνερήσεται πολλάκις τὰ αὐτὰ ταῦτα καὶ πολλαχῆ), you know that he will eventually have knowledge about them as precise as anyone's.

(*Men.* 85c9-d1)

The procedures required in the text above do not necessarily suggest a divergence from Socrates' method in the elenctic dialogues.

That is because the love for the people, Callicles, existing in your soul, is putting up resistance against me. But if we closely examine these same things on many occasions and in a better way (εἰς πολλὰκις βέλτιον ταῦτα ταῦτα διασκοπώμεθα), you'll be persuaded.

(*Grg.* 513cd)

Even if the boy reaches the correct answer, it is insufficient unless he pursues the same things on many occasions and in many ways. Vlastos has Plato abandon the method of elenchus, which does not dispel tentativeness and seemingly makes little progress towards the truth. Instead, Vlastos sees a new phase in the indication of the 'diagonal' in the *Meno*.³⁴ However, the geometrical lesson tells us that further examination after the 'diagonal' has been reached is necessary, suggesting that there is a long road ahead to knowledge acquisition.

The object of recollection is not limited to geometry, at least not to the exclusion of the search for virtue.³⁵ If this were the case, one of Plato's answers to the question

³⁴ Vlastos (1988, 375-376).

³⁵ Recollection holds true for all sciences, including geometry (85e), and in many areas, including virtue (81c). The arbitrariness of the object is evident in such expressions as 'there is nothing that the soul

of the possibility of enquiry would be that the whole process of Meno's questions and answers—including the process in the first half of the *Meno*, which led to aporia, and with it Meno's many failures—is founded on the theory of recollection.³⁶ Such an interpretation would be made possible by taking the geometrical demonstration process as follows: if, by virtue of a synoptic body of Socratic knowledge, and thus by virtue of a systematic belief-set required by the process of the enquiry, the recognition of any false answer involves true beliefs, then for the boy, any stage of the demonstration, whether before or after the 'diagonal' is drawn, is nothing more than the process of repeatedly examining the same questions from multiple angles (stage IV) by mustering his many true beliefs (ἀληθεῖς δόξαι, cf. 85c).³⁷

The entire process of the elenctic method is supported by recollection, and such an assumption is appropriate to Socrates, who bridges consistency/inconsistency to truth/falsity. Especially after Vlastos' Socratic studies, there was a trend that Plato's *Meno* was interpreted as a critique of Socrates or was seen as a new phase in terms of the method of enquiry.³⁸ In contrast, this study suggests that the recollection theory complements the Socratic method of enquiry rather than implying an essential change.

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has not learned' (81c), and 'has learned everything' (81d), because the soul has seen 'everything, whether of this world or of the land of Hades' (81c).

³⁶ See Ohkusa (2008, esp. 47-53) for signs of recollection in Plato's early dialogues.

³⁷ Fine (2014, 128, esp. n58) claims that it's important to emphasise that enquiry is a process, and that stage IV is the same method as the preceding stage, on which point the present study agrees. That the whole procedure of the geometrical demonstration in the *Meno*, including the boy's answering using false beliefs, is a process of recollection is explicitly argued by Schwab (2020), Ohkusa (2009), and the present study.

³⁸ After Benson (1990; 2000), Benson went on to research the hypothetical method as a post-elenctic method, which culminated in Benson (2015). However, there is no clear indication that the method of hypothesis is applied within the geometrical demonstration, as Benson (2015, 91) implies. In contrast, the present paper focuses on the scrutiny of the geometrical parts. Although the discussion of the hypothetical method is beyond the scope of this paper, it infers that the elenctic method and the hypothetical method are not necessarily either-or choices. That is, Benson seems to treat Socratic elenchus almost exclusively as a method of learning from those who know, whereas this study supposes that Socratic elenchus can be carried out from mutual ignorance of both interlocutors. See above note 3.

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