

Third Edition

---

**CLASSICS OF  
WESTERN  
PHILOSOPHY**

---

Edited by Steven M. Cahn

CLASSICS  
OF  
WESTERN PHILOSOPHY  
THIRD EDITION

Edited by  
STEVEN M. CAHN

HACKETT PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.  
INDIANAPOLIS/CAMBRIDGE

Copyright © 1977 by Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.  
All rights reserved  
Third edition 1990

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

93 94 95 96 97 98 99

Printed in the United States of America  
Cover design by Jackie Lacy  
Interior design by James N. Rogers  
For further information, please address

Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.  
P.O. Box 44937  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46244-0937

The editor and publisher are grateful to Ian Gardiner and Charles E. Hornbeck  
for their help in noting corrections that have been made in this printing.

**Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data**

Classics of Western philosophy/edited by Steven M. Cahn.—3rd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-87220-106-6: ISBN 0-87220-105-8 (pbk.)

1. Philosophy I. Cahn, Steven M.

B29.C536 1990

190—dc20

90-39023

CIP

# *Preface to the Third Edition*

This revision contains four major additions: an abridgment of Plato's *Republic* (368d–376c; 412c–521b), Chapters 1–5 of Aristotle's *Categories*, Book V of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, and Part II of Spinoza's *Ethics*. Berkeley's *Treatise* has been omitted.

Since the appearance of the previous edition, the philosophical community was saddened by the death of William H. Y. Hackett, founder of the Hackett Publishing Company. Over many years, he served as a powerful force for quality in the publishing of philosophy books. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to know him and work with him.

I also wish to express my appreciation to his beloved wife and advisor, Frances Hackett, and his able successor, Jay Hullett, for their continuing support and guidance.

STEVEN M. CAHN  
Provost and Professor  
of Philosophy  
The Graduate School  
The City University of New York

March 1990

# Preface

Here in one volume are the complete texts of nineteen philosophical masterpieces along with selections from nine others. Sixteen of the world's greatest philosophers are represented, their writings spanning more than two millennia. Crucial fields of philosophy are explored in depth: metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, political philosophy, and philosophy of religion. An introduction to each author contains biographical data, philosophical commentary, and bibliographical guides. Annotations are provided to clarify textual references.

What is the value of philosophy? Different philosophers have answered this question in different ways, but perhaps no reply is more inspirational, even to those who view it in part figuratively, than that provided by one of our century's intellectual giants, Bertrand Russell, at the close of a classic work, *The Problems of Philosophy*.

Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions, since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation; but above all because, through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good.\*

\**The Problems of Philosophy* (1912; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 161.

# Acknowledgments

I very much appreciate the assistance of my former colleagues at the University of Vermont: Robert W. Hall, Patricia W. Kitcher, Philip S. Kitcher, William E. Mann, and George Sher. They have contributed many of the introductions, thereby providing expert commentary on the writings of each philosopher. Professor Mann, who advised me on numerous editorial matters, kindly granted permission for use of his translation of Anselm's *Proslogion*. He also furnished many of the translations of Latin textual references. Professor Sher, with whom I frequently consulted, aided me in abridging Locke's *Essay*, as did Hilary Kornblith.

For suggestions regarding the contents of the book, I am also grateful to my friends of many years, John O'Connor and James Rachels. Thanks are also proffered to James N. Rogers for his editorial assistance and help in seeing the book into print, and to Patric F. O'Keeffe for his painstaking research and tasteful choice of illustrations.

Steven M. Cahn

# Contents

Preface to the Third Edition ix

Preface x

Acknowledgments xi

## PLATO 1

*Meno* 4

*Euthyphro* 28

*Apology* 41

*Crito* 57

*Phaedo* 66

*Republic* (abridged) 112

## ARISTOTLE 193

*Categories* (Chs. 1–5) 195

*Physics* (Bk. II) 201

*Nicomachean Ethics* (Bks. I–II, III (1–5), V–VI,  
VII (1–10), X) 216

## EPICURUS 313

*Letter to Menoeceus* 315

*Principal Doctrines* 318

## EPICTETUS 323

*Encheiridion* 325

## AUGUSTINE 343

*Confessions* (Bk. XI) 345

## ANSELM 363

*Proslogion* 365

THOMAS AQUINAS	383	
<i>Summa Theologica</i> (Qs. 1, 2)		385
RENÉ DESCARTES	403	
<i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>		405
THOMAS HOBBS	447	
<i>Leviathan</i> (Chs. I–III, VI, XIII–XXI)		449
BARUCH SPINOZA	509	
<i>Ethics</i> (Pts. I, II)		511
GOTTFRIED LEIBNIZ	573	
<i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i>		575
<i>Monadology</i>		604
JOHN LOCKE	615	
<i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> (abridged)		617
GEORGE BERKELEY	715	
<i>Three Dialogues Between</i> <i>Hylas and Philonous</i>		717
DAVID HUME	781	
<i>An Enquiry Concerning Human</i> <i>Understanding</i>		783
<i>Dialogues Concerning Natural</i> <i>Religion</i>		870
IMMANUEL KANT	931	
<i>Prolegomena to Any Future</i> <i>Metaphysics</i>		933
<i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of</i> <i>Morals</i>		1009
JOHN STUART MILL	1061	
<i>Utilitarianism</i>		1063
<i>On Liberty</i>		1105



# PLATO

Plato (c.427–c.347 B.C.) was born of a noble and probably wealthy Athenian family. Although little is known about his early years, at a young age he undoubtedly became well acquainted with Socrates. Plato played an active role in the last years of the Peloponnesian War, and afterwards his unhappy tastes of political life, which included the execution of Socrates, led him to conclude that with his high moral standards and decided bent towards speculative thought, a career in the political arena was unsuitable. But he was by no means a man of inaction. After returning from a visit to Italy, he founded his famed Academy, which would endure for nine hundred years. His purpose seems to have been the training of future political leaders who would furnish an environment in which his own moral ideals could be implemented. During two visits to Sicily he attempted to put those ideals into practice but was stymied by the impetuous young King Dionysius. Plato died at the age of eighty, his legacy the philosophical ideas which would shape Western thought.

Although Socrates wrote nothing, we know something about his thought from what appears in the early dialogues of Plato as well as from other authors such as the Greek historian Xenophon (c.430–c.355 B.C.). Plato's use of Socrates as a principal character in the dialogues should not mislead us into thinking that Plato is always a spokesman for his great teacher. Thus, a distinction should be drawn between the historical Socrates and the Socrates of Plato's dialogues. The former served, as he put it, only as a midwife for others, helping bring to birth their views. While some of the dialogues contain elements of the historical Socrates, most reflect Plato's own thought.

The dialogues are divided by most scholars into three groups: early, middle, and late. Each of the early dialogues, including the *Euthyphro*, is an investigation of an ethical issue using the method, perhaps devised by the historical Socrates, of *elenchus*, or refutation. In this method, some individual claims to possess complete knowledge about a virtue such as courage, temperance, or piety, while Socrates professes to be in the dark on the matter. After putting a series of questions to his respondent and eliciting what seem to be promising answers, Socrates brings his partner to offer what appears to be a proper definition of the particular virtue. Then, with constant reference to homely examples such as carpentry, shoemaking, and the like, Socrates poses questions to test the truth of the initial definition. Through these questions and the resulting answers, it gradually becomes clear to all that the original definition has been refuted. The dialogue usually concludes in *aporia*; that is, with a negativity or inconclusiveness which frustrates the reader as well as the once-confident respondent.

The purpose of *elenchus* as practised by Socrates is to show that he who claims to know everything about a particular virtue knows nothing at all. Socrates developed this method in trying to find out what the Delphic Oracle meant by saying that he, Socrates, was the wisest man in Athens. After investigating others with a reputation for wisdom, Socrates concluded that the Oracle meant that he was the only person who *knew* that he knew nothing about what constituted the *aretê*, or excellence, of man.

Through *elenchus* Socrates hoped that once a person's ignorance had been demonstrated and he had been purged of the conceit of knowledge, together they could embark on a cooperative quest for the truth. However, not only did the effects of *elenchus* leave its victim numb and speechless, as in the *Meno*, and also a subject of ridicule and amusement for bystanders; they often left him angry and bitter as well. Presumably the effects of the *elenchus* were so devastating as to have the Athenians clamoring for Socrates' death on trumped-up charges.

The *Apology* and *Crito* are not so much exemplifications of *elenchus* as they are Socrates' last will and testament, his justification for the kind of life he led, and his refusal to escape the consequences of his actions by disobeying the law of Athens. Of the early dialogues, these two are probably the most faithful to the content of the historical Socrates' teaching.

The middle dialogues, including the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*, are in part Socratic since they consider many of the same questions as in the earlier dialogues, but they are Platonic in their development of the answers. The search for definitions evolves into the creation of the Theory of Forms, thereby resulting in the dualism between appearance and reality which has always plagued the history of philosophy. The Socratic concern for the care of the soul and the Socratic agnosticism concerning personal immortality is deepened and transformed, leading to the conviction that the soul is immortal and acquires knowledge only through recollection.

A middle dialogue, the *Republic*, deals with moral, aesthetic, social, and epistemological issues. To discover the nature of the justice or morality of the individual, Socrates, as the famous political analogy of Book II suggests, seeks first to reach a definition of the justice of the state and then to apply the results to the justice of the individual because the state is the individual writ large. After a preliminary account of the emergence of a rudimentary form of the ideal society, the education of its rulers, censorship, and the appropriate style and content of moral literature, at the end of book IV Socrates arrives at a final definition of the justice of the ideal state and applies the results to the definition of the justice of the individual.

Apart from a discussion of the equality of women with men and the "communism" of the rulers, Books V–VII are a justification of the rule of philosophers as the necessary condition of the ideal state. The distinction between knowledge and opinion, the broken line, the allegory of the cave, and the analogy of the sun as the offspring of the idea of the good are all concerned with establishing the distinction between the world of forms and the world of appearance. Only philosophers are qualified to rule, because they alone can have knowledge of the world of forms, including the moral and political forms. It is the philosophers' knowledge of these forms and how to implement them in society that makes possible the ideal state and the justice of its inhabitants.

In the late dialogues, the dramatic element is pushed to the rear, and Socrates becomes a silent onlooker or is even absent all together. Since these late works are

concerned with critical discussions of method and sophisticated consideration of logical and epistemological matters, Plato may have felt that Socrates, with his intense interest in practical matters confronting the individual in the mainstream of life, was an inappropriate spokesman for ideas foreign to his everyday concerns as a historical person.

One approach to Plato's thought is to consider the dialogues individually in chronological order as with Paul Shorey, *What Plato Said* (1933; rpt. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965) or A.E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work* (1926; rpt. New York: Meridian Books, 1956) and more recently W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. IV (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) which deals with the dialogues up to and including the *Republic*. A second approach deals systematically with various philosophical problems arising from the dialogues as with G.M.A. Grube, *Plato's Thought* (1935; rpt. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1984); G.C. Field, *The Philosophy of Plato* (1949; rpt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), and R.M. Hare, *Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

An interesting and significant, although controversial, approach to Plato's thought is Werner Jaeger, *Paideia*, vols. II and III (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943-44) which seeks to place Plato's thought within the context of Jaeger's interpretation of Greek thought as *Paideia* or culture. Studies of the historical Socrates and his thought include W.K.C. Guthrie, *Socrates* (1969; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); A.E. Taylor, *Socrates: The Man and His Thought* (1933; rpt. Garden City: Doubleday, 1952); and Norman Gulley, *The Philosophy of Socrates* (London: Macmillan, 1968). Treatment by contemporary philosophers of various issues in the philosophies of Socrates and Plato is to be found in Gregory Vlastos, ed., *The Philosophy of Socrates: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1971), and Gregory Vlastos, ed., *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays*, vols. I and II (Garden City: Doubleday, 1971).

Two recent studies of the *Republic* are Nicholas White, *A Companion to Plato's Republic* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1979) and Julia Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981).

R.W.H.

# MENO

70 MENO: Can you tell me, Socrates, can virtue<sup>1</sup> be taught? Or is it not teachable but the result of practice, or is it neither of these, but men possess it by nature or in some other way?

b SOCRATES: Before now, Meno, Thessalians had a high reputation among the Greeks and were admired for their horsemanship and their wealth, but now, it seems to me, they are also admired for their wisdom, not least the fellow citizens of your friend Aristippus of Larissa. The responsibility for this reputation of yours lies with Gorgias,<sup>2</sup> for when he came to your city he found that the leading Aleuadae, your lover Aristippus among them, loved him for his wisdom, and so did the leading Thessalians. He accustomed you to give a bold and grand answer to any question c you may be asked, as experts are likely to do, as he himself was ready to answer any Greek who wished to question him, and every question was answered. But here in 71 Athens, my dear Meno, the opposite is the case, as if there were a dearth of wisdom, and wisdom seems to have departed hence to go to you. If then you want to ask one of us that sort of question, everyone will laugh and say: "Good stranger, you must think me happy indeed if you think I know whether virtue can be taught or how it comes to be; I am so far from knowing whether virtue can be taught or not that I do not even have any knowledge of what virtue itself is."

b I myself, Meno, am as poor as my fellow citizens in this matter, and I blame myself for my complete ignorance about virtue. If I do not know what something is, how could I know what qualities it possesses? Or do you think that someone who does not know at all who Meno is could know whether he is good-looking or rich or well-born, or the opposite of these? Do you think that is possible?

c M: I do not; but, Socrates, do you really not know what virtue is? Are we to report this to the folk back home about you?

S: Not only that, my friend, but also that, as I believe, I have never yet met anyone else who did know.

M: How so? Did you not meet Gorgias when he was here?

Reprinted from Plato's *Meno*, translated by G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1976), by permission of the publisher. The translation follows Burnet's Oxford text. The only liberty taken is where the answers to Socrates' questions are very brief, merely indicating assent or the like. In such instances "he said," the so-frequent repetition of which reads awkwardly in English, has been replaced by a dash, to indicate a change of speaker.

1. [The Greek word is *aretê*. It can refer to specific virtues such as moderation, courage, et cetera, but it is also used for *the* virtue or conglomeration of virtues that makes a man virtuous or good. In this dialogue it is mostly used in this more general sense. Socrates himself at times (e.g., 93b ff.) uses "good" as equivalent to virtuous—G.M.A.G.]

2. [Gorgias was perhaps the most famous of the earlier generation of Sophists, those traveling teachers who arose in the late fifth century to fill the need for higher education. They all taught rhetoric, or the art of speaking, but as Meno tells us, Gorgias concentrated on this more than the others and made fewer general claims for his teaching (95c). He visited Athens in 427 B.C., and his rhetorical devices gave him an immediate success. Plato named one of his dialogues after him. Fairly substantive fragments of his writings are extant.]

S: I did.

M: Did you then not think that he knew?

S: I do not altogether remember, Meno, so that I cannot tell you now what I thought then. Perhaps he does know; you know what he used to say, so you remind me of what he said. You tell me yourself, if you are willing, for surely you share his views. — I do.

S: Let us leave Gorgias out of it, since he is not here. But Meno, by the gods, what do you yourself say that virtue is? Speak and do not begrudge us, so that I may have spoken a most unfortunate untruth when I said that I had never met any one who knew, if you and Gorgias are shown to know.

M: It is not hard to tell you, Socrates. First, if you want the virtue of a man, it is easy to say that a man's virtue consists of being able to manage public affairs and in so doing to benefit his friends and harm his enemies and to be careful that no harm comes to himself; if you want the virtue of a woman, it is not difficult to describe: she must manage the home well, preserve its possessions, and be submissive to her husband; the virtue of a child, whether male or female, is different again, and so is that of an elderly man, if you want that, or if you want that of a free man or a slave. And there are very many other virtues, so that one is not at a loss to say what virtue is. There is virtue for every action and every age, for every task of ours and every one of us—and Socrates, the same is true for wickedness.

S: I seem to be in great luck, Meno; while I am looking for one virtue, I have found you to have a whole swarm of them. But, Meno, to follow up the image of swarms, if I were asking you what is the nature of bees, and you said that they are of all kinds, what would you answer if I asked you: "Do you mean that they are many and varied and different from one another in so far as they are bees? Or are they no different in that regard, but in some other respect, in their beauty, for example, or their size or in some other such way?" Tell me, what would you answer if thus questioned?

M: I would say that they do not differ from one another in being bees.

S: If I went on to say: "Tell me, what is this very thing, Meno, in which they are all the same and do not differ from one another?" Would you be able to tell me?

M: I would.

S: The same is true in the case of the virtues. Even if they are many and various, all of them have one and the same form<sup>3</sup> which makes them virtues, and it is right to look to this when one is asked to make clear what virtue is. Or do you not understand what I mean?

M: I think I understand, but I certainly do not grasp the meaning of the question as fully as I want to.

S: I am asking, whether you think it is only in the case of virtue that there is one for man, another for woman and so on, or is the same true in the case of health and size and strength? Do you think that there is one health for man and another

3. [The Greek term is *eidos*, which Plato was to use for his separately existing eternal Forms. Its common meaning is stature or appearance. Socrates felt that if we apply the same name or epithet to a number of different things or actions, they must surely have a common characteristic to justify the use of the same term. A definition is then a description of this "form" or appearance, which it presents to the mind's eye. In the earlier dialogues however, as here, this form is not thought of as having a separate existence, but as immanent.]

e for woman? Or, if it is health, does it have the same form everywhere, whether in man or in anything else whatever?

M: The health of a man seems to me the same as that of a woman.

S: And so with size and strength? If a woman is strong, that strength will be the same and have the same form, for by "the same" I mean that strength is no different as far as being strength, whether in a man or a woman. Or do you think there is a difference?

M: I do not think so.

73 S: And will there be any difference in the case of virtue, as far as being virtue is concerned, whether it be in a child or an old man, in a woman or in a man?

M: I think, Socrates, that somehow this is no longer like those other cases.

S: How so? Did you not say that the virtue of a man consists of managing the city well,<sup>4</sup> and that of a woman of managing the household? — I did.

S: Is it possible to manage a city well, or a household, or anything else, while not managing it moderately and justly? — Certainly not.

b S: Then if they manage justly and moderately, they must do so with justice and moderation? — Necessarily.

S: So both the man and the woman, if they are to be good, need the same things, justice and moderation. — So it seems.

S: What about a child and an old man? Can they possibly be good if they are intemperate and unjust? — Certainly not.

S: But if they are moderate and just? — Yes.

c S: So all men are good in the same way, for they become good by acquiring the same qualities. — It seems so.

S: And they would not be good in the same way if they did not have the same virtue. — They certainly would not be.

S: Since then the virtue of all is the same, try to tell me and to remember what Gorgias, and you with him, said that that same thing is.

d M: What else but to be able to rule over men, if you are seeking one description to fit them all.

S: That is indeed what I am seeking, but Meno, is virtue the same in the case of a child or a slave, namely, for them to be able to rule over a master, and do you think that he who rules is still a slave? — I do not think so at all, Socrates.

S: It is not likely, my good man. Consider this further point: you say that virtue is to be able to rule. Shall we not add to this *justly and not unjustly*?

M: I think so, Socrates, for justice is virtue.

e S: Is it virtue, Meno, or a virtue? — What do you mean?

S: As with anything else. For example, if you wish, take roundness, about

4. [When discussing goodness or morality, social and political virtues would be more immediately present to the Greek mind than they are to ours. In both Plato and Aristotle a good man is above all a good citizen, whereas the modern mind thinks of goodness mainly in more individual terms, such as sobriety or sexual morals. An extreme example of this occurred in a contemporary judge's summation to the jury in the case of a woman of loose sexual behaviour who was accused of murdering her husband. He actually said: "This is a case of murder, not of morals. The morals of the accused have nothing to do with it."]

which I would say that it is a shape, but not simply that it is shape. I would not so speak of it because there are other shapes.

M: You are quite right. So I too say that not only justice is a virtue but there are many other virtues.

S: What are they? Tell me, as I could mention other shapes to you if you bade me do so, so do you mention other virtues. 74

M: I think courage is a virtue, and moderation, wisdom, and munificence, and very many others.

S: We are having the same trouble again, Meno, though in another way; we have found many virtues while looking for one, but we cannot find the one which covers all the others.

M: I cannot yet find, Socrates, what you are looking for, one virtue for them all, as in the other cases. b

S: That is likely, but I am eager, if I can, that we should make progress, for you understand that the same applies to everything. If someone asked you what I mentioned just now: "What is shape, Meno?" and you told him that it was roundness, and if then he said to you what I did: "Is roundness shape or a shape?" you would surely tell him that it is a shape? — I certainly would.

S: That would be because there are other shapes? — Yes. c

S: And if he asked you further what they were, you would tell him? — I would.

S: So too, if he asked you what colour is, and you said it is white, and your questioner interrupted you "Is white colour or a colour?" you would say that it is a colour, because there are also other colours? — I would.

S: And if he bade you mention other colours, you would mention others that are no less colours than white is? — Yes.

S: Then if he pursued the argument as I did and said: "We always arrive at the many; do not talk to me in that way, but since you call all these many by one name, and say that no one of them is not a shape even though they are opposites, tell me what this is which applies as much to the round as to the straight and which you call shape, as you say the round is as much a shape as the straight." Do you not say that? — I do. e

S: When you speak like that, do you assert that the round is no more round than it is straight, and that the straight is no more straight than it is round?

M: Certainly not, Socrates.

S: Yet you say that the round is no more a shape than the straight is, nor the one more than the other. — That is true.

S: What then is this to which the name shape applies? Try to tell me. If then you answered the man who was questioning about shape or colour: "I do not understand what you want, my man, nor what you mean," he would probably wonder and say: "You do not understand that I am seeking that which is the same in all these cases?" Would you still have nothing to say, Meno, if one asked you: "What is this which applies to the round and the straight and the other things which you call shapes and which is the same in them all?" Try to say, that you may practise for your answer about virtue. 75

M: No, Socrates, but you tell me. b

S: Do you want me to do you this favour?

M: I certainly do.

S: And you will then be willing to tell me about virtue?

M: I will.

S: We must certainly press on. The subject is worth it.

M: It surely is.

S: Come then, let us try to tell you what shape is. See whether you will accept that it is this: Let us say that shape is that which alone of existing things always follows colour. Is that satisfactory to you, or do you look for it in some other way? I should be satisfied if you defined virtue in this way.

M: But that is foolish, Socrates.

S: How do you mean?

M: That shape, you say, always follows colour. Well then, if someone were to say that he did not know what colour is, but that he had the same difficulty as he had about shape, what do you think your answer would be?

S: A true one, surely, and if my questioner was one of those clever and disputatious debaters, I would say to him: "I have given my answer; if it is wrong, it is your job to refute it." Then, if they are friends as you and I are, and want to discuss with each other, they must answer in a manner more gentle and more proper to discussion. By this I mean that the answers must not only be true, but in terms admittedly known to the questioner. I too will try to speak in these terms. Do you call something "the end?" I mean such a thing as a limit or boundary, for all those are, I say, the same thing. Prodicus<sup>5</sup> might disagree with us, but you surely call something "finished" or "completed"—that is what I want to express, nothing elaborate.

M: I do, and I think I understand what you mean.

S: Further, you call something a plane, and something else a solid, as in geometry?

M: I do.

S: From this you may understand what I mean by shape, for I say this of every shape, that a shape is that which limits a solid; in a word, a shape is the limit of a solid.

M: And what do you say colour is, Socrates?

S: You are outrageous, Meno. You bother an old man to answer questions, but you yourself are not willing to recall and to tell me what Gorgias says that virtue is.

M: After you have answered this, Socrates, I will tell you.

S: Even someone who was blindfolded would know from your conversation that you are handsome and still have lovers.

M: Why so?

S: Because you are forever giving orders in a discussion, as spoiled people do,

5. [Prodicus was a well-known Sophist who was especially keen on the exact meaning of words, and he was fond of making the proper distinctions between words of similar but not identical meanings. We see him in action in the *Protagoras* of Plato (especially 337a-c) where he appears with two other distinguished Sophists, Protagoras and Hippias. His insistence on the proper definition of words would naturally endear him to Socrates who, in Plato, always treats him with more sympathy than he does the other Sophists. The point here is that Prodicus would object to "end," "limit," and "boundary" being treated as "all the same thing."]



who behave like tyrants as long as they are young. And perhaps you have recognized that I am at a disadvantage with handsome people, so I will do you the favour of an answer.

M: By all means do me that favour.

S: Do you want me to answer after the manner of Gorgias, which you would most easily follow?

M: Of course I want that.

S: Do you both say there are effluvia of things as Empedocles<sup>6</sup> does? — Certainly.

S: And that there are channels through which the effluvia make their way? — Definitely.

S: And some effluvia fit some of the channels, while others are too small or too big? — That is so.

S: And there is something which you call sight? — There is.

S: From this, “comprehend what I state,” as Pindar said, for colour is an effluvium from a shape which fits the sight and is perceived.

M: That seems to me to be an excellent answer, Socrates.

S: Perhaps it was given in the manner to which you are accustomed. At the same time I think that you can deduce from this answer what sound is, and smell, and many such things. — Quite so.

S: It is a theatrical answer<sup>7</sup> so it pleases you, Meno, more than that about shape. — It does.

S: It is not better, son of Alexidemus, but I am convinced that the other is, and I think you would agree, if you did not have to go away before the mysteries as you told me yesterday, but could remain and be initiated.

M: I would stay, Socrates, if you could tell me many things like these.

S: I shall certainly not be lacking in eagerness to tell you such things, both for your sake and my own, but I may not be able to tell you many. Come now, you too try to fulfill your promise to me and tell me the nature of virtue as a whole and stop making many out of one, as jokers say whenever someone breaks something, but allow virtue to remain whole and sound, and tell me what it is, for I have given you examples.

M: I think, Socrates, that virtue is, as the poet says, “to find joy in beautiful things and have power.” So I say that virtue is to desire beautiful things and have the power to acquire them.

S: Do you mean that the man who desires beautiful things desires good things? — Most certainly.

S: Do you assume that there are people who desire bad things, and others who desire good things? Do you not think, my good man, that all men desire good things?

6. [Empedocles (c.493–433 B.C.) of Acragas in Sicily was a famous physical philosopher. For him there were four eternal elements (earth, water, air, and fire), the intermingling and separation of which produced the physical phenomena. The reference here is to his theories of sense perception.]

7. [Theatrical because it brings in the philosophical theories of Empedocles and a quotation from Pindar, instead of being in simple terms such as Socrates’ definition of shape.]