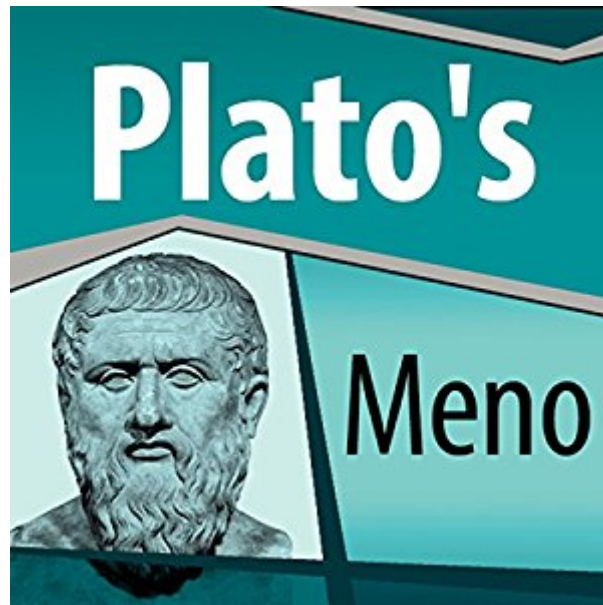


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Plato's Meno



Synopsis

A dialogue between Socrates and Meno probes the subject of ethics. Can goodness be taught? If it can, then we should be able to find teachers capable of instructing others about what is good and bad, right and wrong, or just and unjust. Socrates and Meno are unable to identify teachers of ethics, and we are left wondering how such knowledge could be acquired. To answer that puzzle, Socrates questions one of Meno's servants in an attempt to show that we know fundamental ideas by recollecting them. © Agora Publications

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Customer Reviews

MENO: And how will you enquire, Socrates, into that which you do not know? |SOCRATES: The soul, then, as being immortal, and having been born again many times, and having seen all things that exist, whether in this world or in the world below, has knowledge of them all. When Meno's interest in philosophy begins to falter, Socrates tells a fable to boost his spirits. What else can cure a soul that believes truth is not possible, if not a fable that says it is? If Meno really believes finding truth is impossible, there's no way to refute him. Only minds that believe finding truth is possible listen to arguments. A mind that isn't listening is impervious to refutations of its views. But perhaps Meno can be approached from another angle, reasons Socrates. Perhaps Meno enjoys listening to stories, and perhaps by this route, Socrates can surreptitiously implant a fervor for the truth. Hume wants us to burn all books with no reasoning about quantity and fact, presumably including the books that inspired him to become a philosopher. But quantity and fact have no rejoinder for Meno. They offer no way to persuade us that finding truth is possible. Once all the books are burned,

there's no way to recover errant souls like Meno who have given up philosophizing. Nietzsche is more modest. He tells us God is dead. But he doesn't tell us not to read the books composed under His influence. Nietzsche wants us to learn Socrates' fervor for philosophy. And he wants us to learn how irrational the methods Socrates used to inspire that fervor were. We must learn these methods for two reasons: (1) so we can use these methods on our students, and (2) so we can stop using them on ourselves when we no longer need them.

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