

Plato's Dialogue's Meno and Phaedo

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Part 1: Arguments from the Text

The two Plato's dialogues, Meno and Phaedo, are best remembered in the philosophical context for their interluding roles in explaining Socrates' arguments about the immortality of the soul. Revolving around the Theory of Recollection (ToR) and the Theory of Forms (ToF), Socrates uses the two ideologies as a basis to form a convincing claim on the immortality of the soul, claiming that our births possess theoretical knowledge (Plato, 2002, p. 59). In the Meno dialogue, Socrates takes Meno through a mathematical problem with the aid of recognizing the concept of virtue. After recognizing that Meno had no idea what virtue was, he uses both mathematical and moral knowledge to claim that knowledge is innated within our souls rather than acquired through sensory development. He comes to this conclusion following data from certain wise priests and priestesses and a hypothesis supporting virtue as teachable knowledge.

However, despite releasing a convincing claim from the Theory of Recollection, Socrates identifies a weakness in his argument, which ultimately leads to an alternative hypothesis (Plato, 2002, p. 59). This flipside alternative, which serves as the cloak objection, challenges his original argument by claiming that virtue is a right opinion granted by God. This argument weakens the Theory of Recollection by suggesting that knowledge is merely gained through recollection processes but from preexisting evidence that is not teachable.

In the Phaedo dialogue, Socrates offers a description of the immortal soul through his hours of drama and death in the jail at Athens. When Socrates was embarking on Elis, one of his intimates, Phaedo, stopped at Phlius to report to a group of Pythagoreans who had been exiled from Italy. The Pythagoreans held a strong belief in the immortality of the soul and its reincarnation in human or animal form. Consequently, they were strongly concerned with

maintaining the purity of their souls by avoiding all forms of body contamination. In Socrates' Theory of Forms, he incorporates these themes to expound his discussion on the immortality of the soul (p. 93). Basing his arguments on the Theory of Forms, Socrates associates the affinity of human intellects with eternal forms of beauty, justice, and other normal notions (p. 94). Nearing the end of the dialogue, Phaedo introduces the myth of the fate of the soul after death. This post-form of the body supports the eternal and indestructible form of the soul, which is also unchangeable.

Part 2: Argumentative Component

The two Socrates' dialogues present compelling philosophical inquiries about the immortality of the soul. Evaluating the success of these dialogues from various perspectives, it is critical to consider the dialogues' coherency, philosophical reasoning, and persuasiveness of the arguments as imperative in contributing to the general readers' understanding of the concepts. In the first dialogue, although the text does not explain what brings Meno to Athens, the dialogue presents an extensive discussion about nature's virtues. The commentary follows a series of questions and mathematical reasoning to understand what a virtue is and whether it can be caught. He references arguments from priests and priestesses and incorporates both mathematical theory and his moral knowledge to defend his stance on the immortality of the soul. Nearing the end of the dialogue, Socrates succeeds in exposing the limitations of Meno's understanding by applying the Socratic method of inquiry to persuade Meno's understanding and critical thinking.

In the second dialogue, Socrates argues for the immortality of the soul because it is a source of life that is independent of other forms of body development. His arguments on the theory of recollection are valid and mark his success in exploring metaphysical questions.

However, due to mixed conclusions, Socrates' description of his philosophical interests in the

Apology does not comport well with the dialogue. From the Theory of Recollection, I find myself objecting to his arguments under a veil of skepticism and uncertainty. While Socrates' philosophy argues that the ability of the soul to recollect eternal truths implies its natural and immortal form, I find myself questioning this premise regarding the notion of innate knowledge and that human understanding of abstract ideas necessitates the existence of a preexisting soul. Further, I feel like there are certain gaps in Socrates' reasoning about the escalation of eternal truths and asserting them in the immortal soul. Thus, while the effectiveness of Socrates' arguments may vary depending on individual philosophical perceptions and ideologies, I feel like further philosophical debates and inquiries are needed to challenge the nature of the soul and its purported immortality.

In his argument that the soul not only predates but also postdates the body, Socrates explains his reasoning using the Theory of Forms. He argues that since the soul possesses abstract ideas such as beauty and justice, it is valid that it exists before birth. While these concepts are not only acquired through sensory processes, they are deemed to preexist in a world where their form remains eternal even after death. He argues that the soul cannot be destroyed even when it is separated from the body because its knowledge is permanently eternal.

Overall, it is critical to conclude that the success of Socrates' philosophical arguments in the two dialogues lie in their position to challenge conventional beliefs and stipulate philosophical inquiry. Despite failing to provide descriptive responses to the questions posed in the first dialogue, his philosophical method of inquiry plays an instrumental role in enhancing readers' ambition to explore truth and knowledge from a philosophical perspective.

Reference

Cooper, J. M. (2002). *Plato: Five dialogues: euthyphro, apology, crito, meno, phaedo*. Hackett Publishing.

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