

SOCRATES: And in supposing that they will be useful only if they are true guides to us of action—there we were also right?

MENO: Yes.

SOCRATES: But when we said that a man cannot be a good guide unless he have knowledge (phrhonesis), this we were wrong.

MENO: What do you mean by the word 'right'?

SOCRATES: I will explain. If a man knew the way to Larisa, or anywhere else, and went to the place and led others thither, would he not be a right and good guide?

MENO: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And a person who had a right opinion about the way, but had never been and did not know, might be a good guide also, might he not?

MENO: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And while he has true opinion about that which the other knows, he will be just as good a guide if he thinks the truth, as he who knows the truth?

MENO: Exactly.

SOCRATES: Then true opinion is as good a guide to correct action as knowledge; and that was the point which we omitted in our speculation about the nature of virtue, when we said that knowledge only is the guide of right action; whereas there is also right opinion.

MENO: True.

SOCRATES: Then right opinion is not less useful than knowledge?

MENO: The difference, Socrates, is only that he who has knowledge will always be right; but he who has right opinion will sometimes be right, and sometimes not.

SOCRATES: What do you mean? Can he be wrong who has right opinion, so long as he has right opinion?

MENO: I admit the cogency of your argument, and therefore, Socrates, I wonder that knowledge should be preferred to right opinion—or why they should ever differ.

SOCRATES: And shall I explain this wonder to you?

MENO: Do tell me.

SOCRATES: You would not wonder if you had ever observed the images of Daedalus (Compare Euthyphro); but perhaps you have not got them in your country?

MENO: What have they to do with the question?

SOCRATES: Because they require to be fastened in order to keep them, and if they are not fastened they will play truant and run away.

MENO: Well, what of that?

SOCRATES: I mean to say that they are not very valuable possessions if they are at liberty, for they will walk off like runaway slaves; but when fastened, they are of great value, for they are really beautiful works of art. Now this is an illustration of the nature of true opinions: while they abide with us they are beautiful and fruitful, but they run away out of the human soul, and do not remain long, and therefore they are not of much value until they are fastened by the tie of the cause; and this fastening of them, friend Meno, is recollection, as you and I have agreed to call it. But when they are bound, in the first place, they have the nature of knowledge; and, in the second place, they are

abiding. And this is why knowledge is more honourable and excellent than true opinion, because fastened by a chain.

MENO: What you are saying, Socrates, seems to be very like the truth.

SOCRATES: I too speak rather in ignorance; I only conjecture. And yet that knowledge differs from true opinion is no matter of conjecture with me. There are not many things which I profess to know, but this is most certainly one of them.

MENO: Yes, Socrates; and you are quite right in saying so.

SOCRATES: And am I not also right in saying that true opinion leading the way perfects action quite as well as knowledge?

MENO: There again, Socrates, I think you are right.

SOCRATES: Then right opinion is not a whit inferior to knowledge, or less useful in action; nor is the man who has right opinion inferior to him who has knowledge?

MENO: True.

SOCRATES: And surely the good man has been acknowledged by us to be useful?

MENO: Yes.

SOCRATES: Seeing then that men become good and useful to states, not only because they have knowledge, but because they have right opinion, and that neither knowledge nor right opinion is given to man by nature or acquired by him—(do you imagine either of them to be given by nature?

MENO: Not I.)

SOCRATES: Then if they are not given by nature, neither are the good by nature good?

MENO: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: And nature being excluded, then came the question whether virtue is acquired by teaching?

MENO: Yes.

SOCRATES: If virtue was wisdom (or knowledge), then, as we thought, it was taught?

MENO: Yes.

SOCRATES: And if it was taught it was wisdom?

MENO: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And if there were teachers, it might be taught; and if there were no teachers, not?

MENO: True.

SOCRATES: But surely we acknowledged that there were no teachers of virtue?

MENO: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then we acknowledged that it was not taught, and was not wisdom?

MENO: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And yet we admitted that it was a good?

MENO: Yes.

SOCRATES: And the right guide is useful and good?

MENO: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And the only right guides are knowledge and true opinion—these are the guides of man; for things which happen by chance are not under the guidance of man: but the guides of man are true opinion and knowledge.

MENO: I think so too.

SOCRATES: But if virtue is not taught, neither is virtue knowledge.

MENO: Clearly not.

SOCRATES: Then of two good and useful things, one, which is knowledge, has been set aside, and cannot be supposed to be our guide in political life.

MENO: I think not.

SOCRATES: And therefore not by any wisdom, and not because they were wise, did Themistocles and those others of whom Anytus spoke govern states. This was the reason why they were unable to make others like themselves—because their virtue was not grounded on knowledge.

MENO: That is probably true, Socrates.

SOCRATES: But if not by knowledge, the only alternative which remains is that statesmen must have guided states by right opinion, which is in politics what divination is in religion; for diviners and also prophets say many things truly, but they know not what they say.

MENO: So I believe.

SOCRATES: And may we not, Meno, truly call those men 'divine' who, having no understanding, yet succeed in many a grand deed and word?

MENO: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Then we shall also be right in calling divine those whom we were just now speaking of as diviners and prophets, including the whole tribe of poets. Yes, and statesmen above all may be said to be divine and illumined, being inspired and possessed of God, in which condition they say many grand things, not knowing what they say.

MENO: Yes.

SOCRATES: And the women too, Meno, call good men divine—do they not? and the Spartans, when they praise a good man, say 'that he is a divine man.'

MENO: And I think, Socrates, that they are right; although very likely our friend Anytus may take offence at the word.

SOCRATES: I do not care; as for Anytus, there will be another opportunity of talking with him. To sum up our enquiry—the result seems to be, if we are at all right in our view, that virtue is neither natural nor acquired, but an instinct given by God to the virtuous. Nor is the instinct accompanied by reason, unless there may be supposed to be among statesmen some one who is capable of educating statesmen. And if there be such an one, he may be said to be among the living what Homer says that Tiresias was among the dead, 'he alone has understanding; but the rest are flitting shades'; and he and his virtue in like manner will be a reality among shadows.

MENO: That is excellent, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Then, Meno, the conclusion is that virtue comes to the virtuous by the gift of God. But we shall never know the certain truth until, before asking how virtue is given, we enquire into the actual nature of virtue. I fear that I must go away, but do you, now that you are persuaded yourself, persuade our friend Anytus. And do not let him be so exasperated; if you can conciliate him, you will have done good service to the Athenian people.

**The end**

**EUTHYDEMUS**  
**BY**  
**PLATO**  
**TRANSLATED BY**  
**BENJAMIN**  
**JOWETT**



## **INTRODUCTION.**

The Euthydemus, though apt to be regarded by us only as an elaborate jest, has also a very serious purpose. It may fairly claim to be the oldest treatise on logic; for that science originates in the misunderstandings which necessarily accompany the first efforts of speculation. Several of the fallacies which are satirized in it reappear in the Sophistici Elenchi of Aristotle and are retained at the end of our manuals of logic. But if the order of history were followed, they should be placed not at the end but at the beginning of them; for they belong to the age in which the human mind was first making the attempt to distinguish thought from sense, and to separate the universal from the particular or individual. How to put together words or ideas, how to escape ambiguities in the meaning of terms or in the structure of propositions, how to resist the fixed impression of an 'eternal being' or 'perpetual flux,' how to distinguish between words and things—these were problems not easy of solution in the infancy of philosophy. They presented the same kind of difficulty to the half-educated man which spelling or arithmetic do to the mind of a child. It was long before the new world of ideas which had been sought after with such passionate yearning was set in order and made ready for use. To us the fallacies which arise in the pre-Socratic philosophy are trivial and obsolete because we are no longer liable to fall into the errors which are expressed by them. The intellectual world has become better assured to us, and we are less likely to be imposed upon by illusions of words.

The logic of Aristotle is for the most part latent in the dialogues of Plato. The nature of definition is explained not by rules but by examples in the Charmides, Lysis, Laches, Protagoras, Meno, Euthyphro, Theaetetus, Gorgias, Republic; the nature of division is likewise illustrated by examples in the Sophist and Statesman; a scheme of categories is found in the Philebus; the true doctrine of contradiction is taught, and the fallacy of arguing in a circle is exposed in the Republic; the nature of synthesis and analysis is graphically described in the Phaedrus; the nature of words is analysed in the Cratylus; the form of the syllogism is indicated in the genealogical trees of the Sophist and

Statesman; a true doctrine of predication and an analysis of the sentence are given in the Sophist; the different meanings of one and being are worked out in the Parmenides. Here we have most of the important elements of logic, not yet systematized or reduced to an art or science, but scattered up and down as they would naturally occur in ordinary discourse. They are of little or no use or significance to us; but because we have grown out of the need of them we should not therefore despise them. They are still interesting and instructive for the light which they shed on the history of the human mind.

There are indeed many old fallacies which linger among us, and new ones are constantly springing up. But they are not of the kind to which ancient logic can be usefully applied. The weapons of common sense, not the analytics of Aristotle, are needed for their overthrow. Nor is the use of the Aristotelian logic any longer natural to us. We no longer put arguments into the form of syllogisms like the schoolmen; the simple use of language has been, happily, restored to us. Neither do we discuss the nature of the proposition, nor extract hidden truths from the copula, nor dispute any longer about nominalism and realism. We do not confuse the form with the matter of knowledge, or invent laws of thought, or imagine that any single science furnishes a principle of reasoning to all the rest. Neither do we require categories or heads of argument to be invented for our use. Those who have no knowledge of logic, like some of our great physical philosophers, seem to be quite as good reasoners as those who have. Most of the ancient puzzles have been settled on the basis of usage and common sense; there is no need to reopen them. No science should raise problems or invent forms of thought which add nothing to knowledge and are of no use in assisting the acquisition of it. This seems to be the natural limit of logic and metaphysics; if they give us a more comprehensive or a more definite view of the different spheres of knowledge they are to be studied; if not, not. The better part of ancient logic appears hardly in our own day to have a separate existence; it is absorbed in two other sciences: (1) rhetoric, if indeed this ancient art be not also fading away into literary criticism; (2) the science of