

## A Real Argument: Meno 98d–e

Σ Ω. Ἐπειδὴ δὲ γε οὐ φύσις, ἐσχεπόμην  
 πὸ μὲν τῆς τοιαύτης, εἰ διδασκτὸν ἔστι. Μ Ε Ν. Ναί.  
 Σ Ω. Οὐκοῦν διδασκτὸν ἔδουξεν εἶναι, εἰ φρο-  
 νησις ἢ ἀρετή; Μ Ε Ν. Ναί. Σ Ω. Καὶ εἴ γε  
 διδασκτὸν εἶναι, φρονησις αὐτῆς; Μ Ε. Πάνυ γε.  
 Σ Ω. Καὶ εἰ μὲν γε διδάσκαλοι εἶεν, διδασκτὸν  
 αὐτῆς; μὴ ὄντων ὅ, ὅ διδασκτὸν; Μ Ε. Οὕτως.  
 Σ Ω. Ἀλλὰ μὲν ὁμολογήκαμεν μὴ εἶναι αὐ-  
 τῆς διδασκάλους. Μ Ε. Ἐστὶ ταῦτα. Σ Ω Κ.  
 ὁμολογήκαμεν ἄρα μήτε διδασκτὸν αὐτῆς  
 μήτε φρονησις εἶναι; Μ Ε. Πάνυ γε. Σ Ω Κ.

From *Platonis Opera*, Stephanus edition 1578,  
 vol. 2, p. 98d–e. URL:  
<https://archive.org/details/platonisoperaqua02plat>

*Socrates*: And since goodness is not a natural endowment, the next thing we considered was whether it is teachable.<sup>1</sup>

*Meno*: Yes.

*Socrates*: And did we not decide that excellence [or virtue] is teachable if it is knowledge?

*Meno*: Yes.

*Socrates*: And also if it were teachable, it would be knowledge?

*Meno*: Yes.

*Socrates*: And also if there were teachers of it [virtue], it would be teachable, but not if there were not?

*Meno*: That is right.

*Socrates*: But have we not agreed that there are no teachers of it [virtue]?

*Meno*: That is so.

*Socrates*: Have we not therefore agreed that excellence [or virtue] is not teachable and is not knowledge either?

*Meno*: Yes.

*Tasks*.

- (1) Identify the conclusion.
- (2) Identify the premises.
- (3) Devise an interpretation or lexicon for the three propositions that form the argument.
- (4) Formalise the propositions.
- (5) Check the validity of Socrates's argument with *either* a truth table, a tree, or by natural deduction.
- (6) Have another look at the argument: identify the phrases and nuances that PL cannot capture.

<sup>1</sup> Transl. by R. Waterfield (slightly adapted), *Meno and Other Dialogues*, Oxford University Press, 2005 (pp. 140–1).

