# Metadata of the chapter that will be visualized online

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Title</th>
<th>Socrates, Wisdom and Pedagogy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Sub-Title</td>
<td>Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(This will be the copyright line in the final PDF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Name</td>
<td>Socratic, Platonic and Aristotelian Studies: Essays in Honor of Gerasimos Santas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corresponding Author</td>
<td>Family Name: Rudebusch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Particle:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Given Name: George</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suffix:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Division:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization: Northern Arizona University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Address: Flagstaff, AZ, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Abstract               | Intellectualism about human virtue is the thesis that virtue is knowledge. Virtue intellectualists may be eliminative or reductive. If eliminative, they will eliminate our conventional vocabulary of virtue words—"virtue," "piety," "courage," etc.—and speak only of knowledge or wisdom. If reductive, they will continue to use the conventional virtue words but understand each of them as denoting nothing but a kind of knowledge (as opposed to, say, a capacity of some other part of the soul than the intellect, such as the will or the appetites). Virtue intellectualists may be pluralists or monists. If pluralist, they identify the virtues with distinct kinds of knowledge. If monist, they identify all the virtues with one and the same kind of knowledge. In a number of dialogues—including the Euthyphro, Apology, Charmides, Euthydemos, Laches, Lysis, Protagoras, and Republic I—Socrates gives arguments that support Reductive Monist Intellectualism (RMI) about human virtue. |
Chapter 10
Socrates, Wisdom and Pedagogy

George Rudebusch

10.1 Introduction

Intellectualism about human virtue is the thesis that virtue is knowledge. Virtue intellectualists may be eliminative or reductive. If eliminative, they will eliminate our conventional vocabulary of virtue words—“virtue,” “piety,” “courage,” etc.—and speak only of knowledge or wisdom. If reductive, they will continue to use the conventional virtue words but understand each of them as denoting nothing but a kind of knowledge (as opposed to, say, a capacity of some other part of the soul than the intellect, such as the will or the appetites). Virtue intellectualists may be pluralists or monists. If pluralist, they identify the virtues with distinct kinds of knowledge. If monist, they identify all the virtues with one and the same kind of knowledge.¹ In a number of dialogues—including the Euthyphro, Apology, Charmides, Euthydemus, Laches, Lysis, Protagoras, and Republic I—Socrates gives arguments that support Reductive Monist Intellectualism (RMI) about human virtue. Socrates’ arguments make RMI both an attractive philosophical hypothesis in its own right and an attractive interpretation of Socrates’ own theory of piety, courage, and the other virtues. On this interpretation, expressions such as “piety,” “the knowledge how to serve the gods,” “courage,” “the knowledge what to dread and what to dare,” all refer to one and the same object, namely, the knowledge of the human good. I note that, for example, this sort of identification of piety with the whole of virtue is endorsed by Kant (at least when he sets aside non-rational religious revelation), and seems a consequence of some teachings of Hebrew prophets and Jesus.²

My aim in this chapter is not to defend such profound philosophical hypotheses about piety or courage, although I shall briefly indicate the relevant Socratic arguments below. Nor is my aim here to establish RMI as the correct interpretation of Socrates. I seek here only to disarm an influential objection to RMI as the correct interpretation of Socrates.

¹ G. Rudebusch (✉)
Norther Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ, USA

According to this objection, RMI cannot be the correct interpretation of Socrates, because in the *Laches* Socrates seems to believe that piety, courage, etc. are but parts of virtue.

PW/L To Laches, he says, “I would not have us begin with the whole... let us begin with a part [of virtue, courage]” (190c8–10).

PW/N To Nicias, he says, “You yourself said that courage was a part, and there were many other parts, all of which taken together are called virtue... In that case, do you say the same as I? I apply the term to courage, temperance, righteousness, and the like. Would you not say the same?” (198a–b).

Likewise Socrates in the *Meno* and *Euthyphro* raises the question and uses analogies in such a way that his interlocutors, at least, takes him to believe the conventional view that piety, courage, etc. are but parts of virtue.

(PW/M) When Meno says, “Justice is virtue,” Socrates asks him, “Is it virtue or a virtue?” Then Socrates explains how roundness is but a part of shape, suggesting to Meno that Socrates sees justice in the same way with respect to virtue. Meno says in reply, “You’re right, for I also say (*kai egô legô*) that justice is but one part among others of virtue” (*Meno* 73e). Socrates repeats this part/whole agreement at 78d.

(PW/E) When Euthyphro agrees that all that is holy is just, Socrates asks him, “And is all justice holy, too?” Then Socrates explains how shame is but a part of fear, suggesting by the analogy that piety is but a part of justice. Euthyphro replies that piety is but a part of virtue, “For you [Socrates] appear to speak rightly (*phainê(i) gar moi orthôs legein*)” (*Euth. 12d*).

If we take Socrates’ part/whole claims and suggestions about virtue as statements of his own moral theory, we must either abandon monism as an interpretation of Socrates’ moral theory and opt for pluralism or else give up the attempt to find a coherent Socratic moral theory.

My reply to this objection is to supplement the RMI interpretation of Socrates’ moral theory with an account of Socrates’ pedagogical technique, by showing that (Section 10.3) Socrates distinguishes three levels of attainment of wisdom; that (Section 10.4) Socrates’ life’s work is pedagogy, namely, moving people from the lowest level to the middle level of attainment of wisdom, by testing and examination; that (Section 10.5) one of Socrates’ pedagogical techniques is to test his interlocutor’s knowledge of a subject by giving him a false lead, that is, by making a misleading suggestion; that (Section 10.6) this technique is illustrated with the slave boy in the *Meno*; with the consequence that (Section 10.7) the RMI interpretation with this account of Socratic pedagogy explains as false leads Socrates’ claims to Laches and Nicias and his suggestions to Meno and Euthyphro that courage is but a part of virtue (namely, PW/L, PW/N, PW/M, and PW/E). In this way I disarm the
objection to the RMI interpretation. I begin (Section 10.2) by reviewing the case for the RMI interpretation.

10.2 Socratic Reductive Monist Intellectualism

In Book IV of the Republic there is an account of justice as a harmony of rational, semi-rational, and non-rational elements within a tripartite soul (a tripartite soul also appears in the Phaedrus and Timaeus). Book IV’s non-intellectualist account of virtue is incompatible with Book I, in which Socrates argues that justice must be, precisely, wisdom (349b–350d). Other dialogues—including the Apology, Charmides, Euthydemus, Laches, Lysis, Meno, and Protagoras—portray a character like the Socrates of Republic I who gives arguments that reduce virtue to wisdom.

In the Laches and Protagoras Socrates provides a simple and compelling argument for the reduction of all goodness to wisdom: any non-wise trait which we might be tempted to identify as something good, such as confidence (Prt. 349e–350c) or endurance (La. 192b–d) will in some circumstances be foolish and bad. But neither foolish endurance nor foolish confidence is good. Hence any non-wise quality, such as confidence or endurance, is no more good than bad. And anything that is agreed to be good by the same reasoning must be wisdom. This argument justifies Socrates’ surprising identification of good luck (eutuchia, Euthd. 279d), personal beauty (kalos, Prt. 309c), and “every [good] property” (panta chrêmata, Prt. 361b) with wisdom, and it entails, pace Protagoras (Prt. 350d), that even physical strength is wisdom—if strength is something good. In the protreptic of the Euthydemus Socrates uses a similar argument to the same conclusion: any object (apart from wisdom) that we might be tempted to identify as something good, such as wealth, health, good looks, good birth, power, or honor (Euthd. 279a–b), produces no benefit without wisdom and are positively bad when led by ignorance (Euthd. 281b–d). Depending on their use, these objects are no more good than bad; hence only wisdom is good and only ignorance bad. In the Charmides Socrates again identifies, on the basis of the same sort of right-use considerations, this good wisdom as the particular “knowledge of good and bad” (tês [epistêmês] peri to agathon te kai kakon, 174c) “whose function is human benefit” (hêς ergon estin to ôphelein hêmas, 174d). In the protreptic of the Lysis he argues, again from considerations of utility, that wisdom is the only thing human beings love with desire (210a–d: we are loved only insofar as we are wise). In Republic IV (349a–354a) he gives a different sort of argument, from the structural similarity of craft knowledge to justice (dikaiosunê) and from the function of the human soul, in order to identify justice with the knowledge of human benefit (350d). The main objection to intellectualism, of course, is not its necessity to virtue but its sufficiency, for it gives no role to emotions, will, and desire in human virtue. However, in the Protagoras (352a–357e) Socrates effectively replies to this objection and shows that knowledge alone is sufficient for virtue by arguing that it is impossible for emotions to overpower knowledge of the good, and in the Meno (77b–78b) by arguing that all humans are
alike in willing and desiring what is good. These arguments identifying virtue with one type of knowledge enable us to understand Socrates’ claims in the *Apology* that “virtue produces wealth and all other goods” (*Ap.* 30b) and that “nothing can harm a good man either in life or after death” (*Ap.* 41d).5

The arguments of the preceding paragraph are evidence that Socrates is a reductive intellectualist about virtue. But they do not tell us if he is a pluralist (making piety, courage, etc. distinct parts of virtue) or a monist (for whom the different names “piety,” “courage,” etc. all refer to the very same kind of knowledge). Socrates’ refutation of Nicias indicates he is a monist. Nicias, like Socrates, is a reductive intellectualist: he says he has often heard an “excellent saying” from Socrates, that “every man is good in that in which he is wise” (*La.* 194c–d), and he agrees with Socrates that

(RI) “If a man knows all good and evil, . . . he lacks no virtue” (*La.* 198d).

Nicias is certainly a pluralist: he holds the conventional view that

(CP) Courage is but “a part of virtue” (*La.* 198a).

But Nicias runs into trouble when he tries to specify what part of the knowledge of good and evil courage is:

(CF) Courage is “knowledge of future good and evil” (*La.* 198c).

For, given CF, Socrates refutes Nicias by pointing out that knowledge is universal in time:

(UK) If a kind of knowledge knows a thing, it will know it at any time, past, present, or future (*La.* 198d).

Hence:

(CA) Courage, “instead of being only a part of virtue, will be all of virtue” (*La.* 199e).

Socrates, as shown in the previous paragraph, accepts reductive intellectualism (RI). The universality of any given kind of knowledge (UK) is undeniable. This argument therefore refutes the pluralist doctrine that courage is but a part of virtue (CP).6

The same sort of considerations of the identity conditions for any given kind of knowledge, such as Socrates provides (*Ion* 531e–532a, 537c–540e; *H. Mi.* 367c–369a; *Grg.* 449d–454a; *Rep.* I 332c–334a) lead to RMI as a general account of the virtues and as the best interpretation of Socrates.7

The above arguments, which reduce an apparent multiplicity of goods and virtues to one single thing, the knowledge of human advantage, allow us to explain
Socrates’ reaction to Protagoras’ Great Speech. Socrates is surprised that Protagoras would speak of virtue as a whole composed of parts.

You [Protagoras] say that virtue is teachable (didakton), and if I believe anyone [about this point], I believe you. But your speech surprised me... For... at many points in your speech you spoke as if justice and temperance and piety and all these things, taken together, are one thing, virtue. Please go through this point in your argument more precisely for me. Is virtue one thing and justice, temperance, and piety parts of it, or are all these words I just mentioned names of one and the same thing? (panta onomata tou autou henos ontos, Prt. 329b–d)

With this question Socrates is establishing the outlines of his public debate with Protagoras, which will last for the remainder of the dialogue. Protagoras says the answer is obvious: justice, temperance, etc. “are parts of a single thing, virtue” (329d). Socrates, as the monist intellectualist interpretation is able to explain, is surprised that a wise man would hold any part/whole thesis about virtue, indicating that his own position identifies each of these alleged parts with one and the same teachable thing, hence one type of knowledge.8

10.3 Three Levels to Wisdom

The case for the RMI interpretation is not yet established. For we have seen passages contradictory to RMI (namely, PW/L, PW/N, PW/M, and PW/E). To explain these passages I turn now from Socrates’ arguments in moral theory to the pedagogy he uses in his discussions with such pretenders to knowledge as Laches, Nicias, Meno, and Euthyphro. This pedagogy is based upon an account of attainment of wisdom.

In the Apology Socrates distinguishes three levels of attainment of wisdom. The highest level is “real wisdom” (tô(i) onti sophos, 23a), which is the property of God. The middle level is being “wisest among men” (humôn, ὀ ἄνθρωποι, sophôtatos, 23b), which is the property of anyone who, like Socrates, “knows that he does not possess real wisdom of any value” (εγνόκεν ὁτι οüδενός αξίω ατι τε(ι) αλήθεια(ι) pros sophian, 23b). The lowest level is “not being wise, but seeming wise, especially to oneself” (dokein men einai sophos...malista heautò(i), einai d’ou, 21c).

Socrates also calls this sort of wisdom intelligence (phronêsēôs, 29e), and identifies it as the perfection of the soul (tês psuchês hopós hôs beltistê, 29e), and as the human excellence which is righteousness (Rep. I 350d). Recognizing the supreme value of wisdom and accepting the oracle’s statement that such wisdom is not possessed by human beings (23a), Socrates values and recommends only one sort of activity for a person at the middle level: “Each day to make arguments, engage in dialogue, and carefully examine virtue and related topics—this is the very best thing for a human being. Indeed, a life without this activity is not worth living for a human being” (38a). Socrates, to judge from these claims in the Apology, reduces virtue and value to wisdom and distinguishes three levels of attainment of wisdom.

Socrates presupposes these three levels in other dialogues. Meno’s slave boy began at the lowest level, thinking he knew what he did not know, but after Socrates’
questioning, he reaches the middle level and “no longer thinks he knows what he
does not know” (hôsper ouk oiden, oud’ oietai eidenai, Meno 84b) and as a result
the boy “is in a better position concerning the thing he does not know” (beltion
echēi peri to pragma ho ouk ē(i)dei, 84b), because while at the lowest level he
would not have “attempted to seek for or to learn what he did not know but thought
he did” (epicheirēsai zētein ē manthanein touto ho ὀ(i)eto eidenai ouk eidōs, 84c).
Now at the middle level, the boy desires wisdom and in that sense has become a
philosopher.9

The Lysis draws a three-level distinction between the Good, the Neither-good-
nor-bad, and the Bad. It is only at the middle level, the Neither-good-nor-bad,
that there is desire for wisdom (philosophēin, 218a). At the highest level, just as
the good body possesses health, the good souls “whether divine or human” (eite
theoi eite anthrôpoi, 218a) possess wisdom and hence do not desire it. At the lowest
level, the bad souls are so ignorant they do not even desire wisdom (oud’ au
ekensteinous philosophēin tous houtós agnoian hōste kakous einai; kakon gar
kai amathê oudena philosophēin, 218a). What distinguishes souls at the middle level
is that, “although possessing ignorance, which is bad, they are not yet so foolish
and ignorant [as the lowest level], for [at the middle level] they understand that
they do not know what they do not know” (hoi echontes me to kakon touto, tēn
agnoian, mēpō de hup’ autou ontes agnōmones mēde amatheis, all’ eti hēgoumenoi
mē eidenai ha mē isasin, 218a–b). In the course of the Lysis, we see Socrates
help the boys, Lysis and Menexenus, ascend from the lowest level to the middle
level.

In the Protagoras, too, Socrates distinguishes three levels in his interpretation of
Simonides’ poem.10 He calls the highest level “being (not becoming) good” (ou... 
genesthai esthlon, . . . alla to emmenai, 340c). As Socrates interprets the poem, “a
god alone can have this privilege” (theos an monos tout’ exoi geras, 341e) of being
good; “to be a good man is impossible [for mortals] and superhuman” (einai andra
agathon ... adunaton kai ouk anthrôpeion, 344c). The level of becoming (not being)
good is the difficult one (agathon ... genesthai chalepon eiê, 340c, 344c), and he
describes this condition as “the middle” (ta mesa, mesos, 346d). The lowest level is
“being bad” (kakon emmenai, 344c).

Socrates in his interpretation of Simonides makes two additional points that are
consistent with the account of the three levels in the Apology, Lysis, and Meno. The
first addition is that the middle level is good in the sense that “whatever is not bad is
good” (panta toi kala, toiśi t’ aischra mē memektai, 346c), meaning that the mid-
dle ground is “accepted not blamed” (ta mesa apodechetai hōste mē psegein, 346d).
The second addition explains the first: A soul in the middle state does nothing bad
(meden kakon poiê(i), 346d). This second point, that the philosopher does nothing
bad, explains what Socrates says of himself in the Apology: “I am persuaded that
I have done nothing unjust to anyone” (pepeismenos dê egō mēdena adikein, 37b;
cf. 37a5). If philosophers do not perform their moral duties, they are not blameworthy,
since the error is due to ignorance and their ignorance, unlike the ignorance of
non-philosophers at the lowest level, cannot be due to negligence.
10 Socrates, Wisdom and Pedagogy

10.4 Pedagogy from Lowest to Middle Level

According to Socrates, then, there are three levels of attainment of wisdom. Only gods are at the highest level, possessing wisdom. Most human beings are at the lowest level, ignorant to such an extent that they don’t even desire to find wisdom. And there are some, like Socrates, at the middle level, who are aware of their ignorance and thus desire wisdom. Obviously, people at the middle level with respect to any type of knowledge—geometry, medicine, or the human good—are incapable of knowledgeable acts. As a doctor benefits bodies by making their souls healthy, so an expert at human benefit, that is, the sage or virtuous person, can benefit human beings by making their souls wise. Just as someone who wants to be but is not yet a doctor is incapable either of healing others or of making others into doctors, so likewise Socrates, who wants to be a sage, is incapable of healing the souls of others, which is precisely to make them experts at the science of human goodness. And, because this same science of human goodness is at once piety and justice, only the sage, not the one who wants to be a sage, is able to do acts of beneficence, piety and justice.

Nevertheless, at the middle level, above most people at the lower level, Socrates is capable of a pedagogy that is in a sense beneficence, service to the gods, and activity on behalf of justice, as he explains. To be at the lowest level, ignorant but seeming wise, is an error damaging enough to negate any value in (“to hide from sight”) the wisdom of any other craft (kai autôn hé plêmmeleia ekeinên tên sophian apokruptein, 22d–e) one may possess.11 Socrates attempts on a case-by-case basis to move his fellow citizens out of this lowest level into the middle level by combining “exhortation” with “demonstration” (philosophôn kai humin parakeleuomenos te kai endeiknumenos, 29d), “questioning and examining and testing” each who consents (erêsomai auton kai exetasô kai elegxô, 29e).12 This activity of Socrates, although not the true beneficence of the sage (who has the power to move people to the highest level), nonetheless is beneficence in the sense that it is as great a good as any that the Athenians have ever received (ouden pô humin meizon agathon genêsthai en të(i) polei, 30a). This very same activity of Socrates, although not true piety (which would perfect human beings in goodness by moving them to the highest level), nonetheless is piety—“Socrates’ service to God” (tên emên tô(i) theô(i) hupêresian, 30a) in obedience to what God commands (tauta gar keleuei ho theos, 30a)—in the sense that Socrates is changing us from bad to not-bad as we reach the middle level. And this same activity of Socrates, although not true justice, which would know how to make each of us just, nonetheless is in a sense justice, for it is “really acting on behalf of justice” (ton tô(i) onti machoumenon huper tou dikaiou, 32a) by taking us out of our bad condition. Socrates’ life’s work, therefore, is inexpertly done and not strictly speaking beneficent, pious, or just, but in the relaxed sense of the Protagoras—“Call everything good which is not bad!” (346a)—they are good and blameless acts, and in terms of the Apology they are good in the sense that there is nothing better, more pious, or more just that Socrates can do.
10.5 False-Lead Pedagogy

Socrates’ pedagogy, as displayed in all the Socratic dialogues, consists among other things in testing (Ap. 29e), and Nicias confirms this is his practice (La. 188a–b). Sometimes the testing is a matter of asking the other for a justification or explanation of his actions:

To test Hippocrates’ grit [apopeirômenos tou Hippokratous tês rhômês], I began examining him with a few questions. “Tell me, Hippocrates,” I said, “In your present design of going to Protagoras and paying him money as a fee for his services to yourself, to whom do you consider you are resorting, and what is it that you are to become?” (Prt. 311b)

Socrates in his discussion with Hippocrates never misleads him with a false suggestion, nor does he need to drive him to self-contradiction to take him from the lowest level (seeming to himself to know what a sophist is, 312c: “I think I know”) to the middle level (aware of his ignorance as to what a sophist is, 313c: “You appear not to know what a sophist is...—That is likely, Socrates, from what you have said”; ton de sophistên hoti pot’ estin phainê(i) agnoôn.... eoiken, ephê, ô Sôkrates, ex hôn su legeis).

Socrates also describes himself as tested when he meets someone with radically different (and presumably false) views, as when he meets Callicles in the Gorgias (basanizousin, 486d; same verb at 487a and 487e) and must try to produce that person as a witness for the truth of his own view (as he promised to do with Polus at 474a).

The sort of test that I need for my reply in defense of the RMI interpretation of Socrates occurs when one person makes a suggestion that is false but seems true to the ignorant. Socrates describes the following cases of such testing:

- Meletus looks like he is “making a test” (diapeirômenô(i)) in his indictment of Socrates “to see if Socrates, the ‘wise man,’ will recognize the contradiction in his jest” (Ap. 27a; see also apopeirômenos, 27e).
- Prodicus is testing (apopeirasthai) Protagoras (Prt. 341d) when Prodicus falsely says that Simonides meant “bad,” not “difficult,” by “hard,” “in order to see if Protagoras can defend his statement.”
- Protagoras was likely to have been testing (apopeirômenos) Socrates when Protagoras [falsely] said that virtue had parts (Prt. 349c).

There is good reason for Socrates to use this false-lead test in his pedagogy. In the first place, although he himself does not believe that any but God know what virtue is (Ap. 23a), he can determine if his interlocutors take themselves to be knowledgeable by falsely claiming or suggesting that his interlocutors have such knowledge. If his interlocutors pretend to knowledge, an additional false lead accepted by them will make it possible for Socrates to drive them into contradiction. I can think of no better way than this procedure, repeated as often as necessary, to help those of us at the lowest level recognize our own ignorance. And it is sound pedagogy for Socrates to refrain from eliciting positive doctrines from his interlocutors until they are at the middle level, by a principle of priority: interlocutors at the lowest level of attainment
of wisdom need to reach the middle level much more than they need a few more premises and conclusions conjoined to their conceit of wisdom!  

In what follows, I show that Socrates recycles four pedagogical steps with interlocutors at the lowest level of attainment of wisdom:

1. **(Question)** Socrates asks the question.
2. **(False lead)** If necessary, he prompts the interlocutor with a suggestion that is false, but seems true to those who are ignorant.
3. **(Accepted)** The interlocutor (unless he needed no prompting) accepts Socrates’ suggestion.
4. **(Refutation)** Socrates attempts to refute the interlocutor’s answer.

If Socrates succeeds in refuting the interlocutor, he repeats his original question and the process is repeated, as often as necessary, until the interlocutor either breaks off the discussion or admits his ignorance.

### 10.6 Slave-Boy Illustration

I begin with the slave-boy discussion in the *Meno* to illustrate Socrates’ use of these four steps. I do not, in using this passage, make any claims about early vs. middle dialogues or about whether the Socrates who argues for RMI also argues for a theory of recollection. My thesis only requires that the slave-boy discussion, at least until the boy reaches the middle level of attainment of wisdom, is an apt illustration of how Socrates may test his interlocutors in the RMI dialogues. The subject, geometry, is something both Socrates and his readers know, so that it makes a clear illustration for this sort of Socratic test: no one will suggest that Socrates himself favors one of the false leads on the grounds of its seeming truth. The boy, Socrates points out, begins at the lowest level of attainment of knowledge about the square, “thinking he knows when he does not know” (82e). We find the expected steps of the testing process:

- **(Question)** Given a square of area 4, “Try to tell me how long each side of the square of area 8 will be” (82de).
- **(False lead)** “The side of this square is 2 feet. What will be the side of the twice-as-big square?” (82e). Socrates’ suggestion to look to the *side* of the square of area 4, rather than its *diagonal*, is misleading, as is his suggestion that the length of that square’s side, 2, is relevant to the twice-as-big-area problem.
- **(Accepted)** “Obviously, Socrates, twice as big” (82e).
- **(Refutation)** Socrates questions the boy step-by-step (*ephexês*) until the boy retracts his answer (82e–83c).
- **(Question)** Socrates repeats the original question (82c).
- **(False lead)** Socrates points out that doubling the side of the 4-foot square produces a 16-foot square, that the desired 8-foot square is double the 4-foot square.
but half the 16-foot square, and that the 8-foot square will have a side bigger than 2, but smaller than 4 (83c–d). Socrates misleads by continuing to direct the boy’s attention to the sides of the squares of area 4 and of 16, and by suggesting that some simple relationship between those sides is relevant to the solution.

• (Accepted) The boy seems influenced by Socrates’ suggestion, saying that the 8-foot square will have a side of 3 feet (83e).

• (Refutation) Socrates again cross-examines until the boy retracts his answer (83e).

• (Question) Socrates again repeats his original question (83e).

At this point, the boy describes himself as ignorant in strong terms: “By God, Socrates, I do not know” (alla ma ton Dia, ὁ Sôkrates, egôge ouk oída, 84a). He has reached the middle level, knowing his own ignorance and “happy to look” (zêtêsien an hèdeôs, 84b) for knowledge (84a–c). Socrates thereupon questions the boy further, demonstrating that the square of area 4 has a side equal to the diagonal of the square of area 2 (84d–85b), leaving the boy in a “dreamlike” state (86d). Socrates says that “if the same questions were put to him on many occasions and in different ways [by someone who knows geometry], in the end he would have as much knowledge as anyone on the subject” (85c–d). We should not expect this eliciting of positive doctrine to occur with Laches, Nicias, Meno, or Euthyphro, since none of these ever reach the middle level. The subject in the Laches, Meno, and Euthyphro is virtue, which, unfortunately, is not as well known as geometry, so that I cannot assume a consensus among us interpreters on the subject. However, if we accept the hypothesis that RMI is true, at least by Socrates’ lights, we find parallels between these three dialogues and the slave-boy passage of the Meno.

10.7 Application to Laches, Meno, and Euthyphro

Consider the Laches, where Socrates tests both Laches and Nicias. The Laches begins with Nicias (at 180a), Laches (at 180b), and Socrates (181d) consenting to help some old friends by advising them about the proper way to raise their children. Unfortunately, Nicias and Laches disagree in their advice, and Socrates is called upon to cast the deciding vote. Instead of voting, Socrates begins to cross-examine the party. Nicias, who knows Socrates best, tells the party of his familiarity with Socrates’ techniques and predicts that Socrates “will not let them go until he tests (basanisê(i)) them well” (188a). All agree that the question is “how virtue may come to the souls of their children and make them better” (tin an tropon tois huesin autôn aretê paragenomenê tais psuchais ameinous polêseie, 190b). Thus Socrates elicits agreement that “we need to know what virtue is” (oun hèmin touto g´ huparchein dei, to eidenai hoti pot’ estin aretê, 190b)—“because, I suppose, if we did not thoroughly know what virtue actually is” (ei gar pou méd’ aretên eideimen to parapan hoti pote tuganchai hon, 190b) we could not be advisers about the best way to
acquire it. After Laches agrees to this, Socrates makes the assertion, “Therefore we claim to know what virtue is” (phamen ara... eidenai auto hoti estin, 190c).

My interpretation, according to which Socrates for pedagogical reasons sometimes makes false leads to test his interlocutors’ pretenses to wisdom, can explain his claim to know at 190c: he is testing Laches and Nicias, as Nicias predicted and as the illustrative dialogue with the slave boy in the *Meno* would lead us to expect, with just the sort of test that Socrates has described others as making. The only alternative I can see to my false-lead interpretation is to give up on the project of a coherent account of Socratic moral theory, not only between the *Laches* and the *Apology*, but within the *Laches* itself, for even in that dialogue Socrates makes his characteristic denial of knowledge of virtue, already at 186c and also at the conclusion of the dialogue.

We find the same steps of the testing process, with Laches beginning at the lowest level: “Yes [we know what virtue is]” (190c); “It is easy to say what courage is” (190e).

• *(False lead)* “I would not have us begin with the whole, . . . let us begin with a part [of virtue, courage]” (190d) = PW/L.19
• *(Accepted)* Laches says, “Yes, certainly” (190d).
• *(Question)* What is courage? (190e).
• Laches needs no prompting from Socrates, and begins by giving a specific instance instead of a general definition of courage.
• *(Refutation)* Socrates gets Laches to see that Laches has not answered the “What is courage?” question by saying “Courage is staying at one’s post” (190e–191e).
• *(Question)* Again, “what is that common quality which is called courage?” (192b).
• Laches again takes no prompting: “Courage is endurance of soul” (192b).
• *(Refutation)* Socrates gets Laches to revise his definition to “Courage is wise endurance of soul” (192d), which he goes on to refute (192e–193e).

At this point in the dialogue, Laches has contradicted himself, but he blames the aporia in the discussion upon something other than his own ignorance: “I am unused to this sort of inquiry. . . . I am really grieved at being unable to express my meaning, for I think I do know (noein men gar emoi ge dokô) the nature of courage” (194a–b). If we expect Socrates to be engaged in the pedagogy of moving Laches and Nicias from the lowest to the middle level of attainment of goodness and wisdom, we may interpret his claim (PW/L) that courage is but a part of virtue to be a test for them and to cast no doubt on the hypothesis that Socrates’ moral theory is RMI.

Socrates next turns to Nicias, and we find the same steps of the testing process:

• *(Question)* “Tell us, Nicias, what you think about courage” (194c).
• *(False lead)* Laches proceeds to question Nicias until Socrates takes over, and Socrates begins with a false lead: “You yourself said that courage was a part, and there were many other parts, all of which taken together are called virtue. . . . In that case, do you say the same as I? In addition to courage, I call temperance,
righteousness, and the like virtue. Would you not say the same?” (198a–b) = PW/N.\(^{20}\)

- (Accepted) “Certainly” (198a, b).
- (Refutation) 198a–199e. (See Section 10.2 above for discussion.)

Socrates does not get a chance to repeat his question to Nicias, for Laches interrupts with abusive remarks. Nicias in reply quits the testing process: “Enough has been said on the subject” (200b). Again, if we expect Socrates to be engaged in the pedagogy of moving Laches from the lowest to the middle level of attainment of goodness and wisdom, his claim (PW/N) that courage is but a part of virtue casts no doubt on the hypothesis that Socrates’ moral theory is RMI.

Consider next Meno, who also begins at the lowest level of attainment of wisdom, taking himself to know what virtue is: “It is easy to say what virtue is” (71e). Again we find the false-lead testing process.

- (Question) “What is virtue?” (71d).
- Meno needs no prompting from Socrates, and begins by giving a specific in–stance instead of a general definition of virtue (71e–77b).
- (False lead) When Meno says “justice is virtue,” Socrates asks him, “Is it virtue or a virtue?” Then Socrates gives a roundness/shape analogy, suggesting that the justice/virtue relation is like roundness/shape (73e, repeated at 78d) = PW/M.
- (Accepted) Meno in saying justice is one among many other virtues takes himself to be agreeing with Socrates (73e).
- (Refutation) Socrates gets Meno to see that Meno has not answered the “What is virtue?” question by saying virtue is justice, temperance, etc. (74a–77a).
- (Question) Socrates repeats his question (77a).
- Meno needs no prompting; he says virtue is “desiring fine things and being able to get them” (77b).
- (Refutation) Socrates shows all are alike in desiring the good, so revises definition to “power to get good things” (77b–78b).
- (False lead) Socrates suggests that good things include health and wealth (78c).\(^{21}\)

I call this a false lead because Socrates is well aware that health and wealth are not goods, since without use they are no good at all and misused are bad (Euthyd. 280d–281e).

- (Accepted) Meno agrees and adds, “high and prestigious office in the state” (78c).
- (Refutation) Socrates cross-examines until Meno retracts his answer (78d–79d).
- (Question) Socrates repeats his original question again (79e).

Meno, unable to answer, blames the aporia in the discussion upon something other than his own ignorance: “Socrates, you are exercising magic and witchcraft upon me and positively laying me under your spell until I am a mass of helplessness” (80a).\(^{22}\) He has not reached the middle level, nor should we expect Socrates to have been developing positive doctrines with his claims either (PW/M) that virtue contains parts or that good things include health and wealth. Notice that Meno, like Laches, does not get as close to RMI as Nicias, who was a reductive intellectualist.
Accordingly, Socrates, although ready in case Meno reached intellectualism in the discussion, does not get to use his false suggestion that virtue has parts. I suppose that had Meno (or Laches) managed eventually to define virtue as wisdom, Socrates would have used the suggestion that virtue has parts to refute him.

Consider, finally, Euthyphro, who also begins at the lowest level, thinking himself wise about the nature of piety (4e–5a, 5c). Again we find the predictable pedagogical pattern:

1. (Question) “What is piety?” (4c).
2. Euthyphro needs no prompting but gives specific instances instead of a general definition of piety (4d–6e).
3. (Refutation) Socrates gets Euthyphro to see that he has not answered the ‘What is piety?’ question by giving instances of piety (6d–e).
4. (Question) “Teach me what the form [of piety] is!” (6e).
5. Euthyphro again needs no prompting: “Piety is what is pleasing to the gods” (6e–7a).
6. (Refutation) Socrates gets Euthyphro to revise his definition to “Piety is what is pleasing to all the gods” (7b–8a), then gets him to agree that even the revised definition fails (9c–11a).
7. (Question) “Begin again: say what the holy is” (11b).

At this point, Euthyphro is unable to answer. But he does not reach the middle level of coming to see his own ignorance. Instead, he blames Socrates for his own failure to answer: “Socrates, I’m not able to tell you what I have in mind... you are the Daedalus [making the assertions move out of place]” (11b–d).23 Accordingly, our model of Socratic pedagogy predicts Socrates will not start to derive positive theorems about piety, but rather will keep giving him false leads until Euthyphro reaches the middle level. This is exactly what we find, if we assume the RMI interpretation to be correct:

1. (False lead) When Euthyphro agrees that all that is holy is just, Socrates asks him, “And is all justice holy, too?” Then Socrates gives the fear/shame analogy, suggesting that justice is to piety as fear is to shame (12d) = PW/E.
2. (Accepted) Euthyphro takes himself to be agreeing with Socrates’ own view: “That is my opinion; I think that you, Socrates, are clearly right” (12d).
3. (Refutation) Socrates attempts but does not complete a refutation (12e–14b).

Socrates is frustrated by Euthyphro’s answer to his question, “What is the greatest result that the gods produce when they employ human beings in their service?” (as his remarks at 14b–c show). Euthyphro has a tendency to assimilate piety with justice: his star instance of piety is “opposing [= “prosecuting”] unjust people (tô(i) adikounti... epexienai, 5d). And Euthyphro’s assimilation must have been natural for Greeks, for Socrates relied upon it in his argument identifying piety and justice at Prt. 330a–331b. Given this tendency, Socrates might well have expected Euthyphro to have answered the question how we serve the gods by saying, “We serve the gods...
not by acts of shipbuilding, winning victory in war, or growing food, but by acts of justice.” This answer would have enabled Socrates to go on to reach a contradiction with his earlier false suggestion that piety is but a part of justice. Euthyphro, frustratingly, does not get the point. Socrates, indefatigable, tries again:

- (Question) “Once more, how do you define the holy?” (14c).
- Euthyphro needed no prompting to suggest a new answer before the question was even asked, “[Piety is] knowing . . . how to pray and sacrifice” (14b).
- (False lead) “And to give properly to the gods is to give them those things which they happen to need to receive from us?” (14e: I call this suggestive question a false lead because they agreed just earlier, 13c, that the gods can gain no benefits from us).
- (Accepted) “True, Socrates” (14e).
- (Refutation) Piety becomes a business transaction, in which humans provide advantage to the gods, which Euthyphro recognizes is untenable: “What!—Socrates, do you suppose that the gods gain anything by what they get from us?”

Socrates can now raise again the question—“What, then, are the gifts we give to the gods?”—to which we might expect a Greek such as Euthyphro to answer, “Our proper gift to the gods consists of our human acts of justice to each other.” This answer would allow Socrates to use his earlier false lead, that piety is but a part of justice, to try to refute Euthyphro and bring him to the middle level. Euthyphro does not find this answer, and leads himself into a different refutation (15b–c). And so Socrates begins another cycle of the testing process with the question: “So we must go back again, and start from the beginning to find out what the holy is” (15c). Euthyphro here breaks off the conversation and hurries off (15d–e), never admitting his ignorance or reaching the middle level, despite Socrates’ best efforts. Once again, Socrates’ suggestion (PW/E) that piety is part of justice casts no doubt on the RMI interpretation, just as his suggestion that the gods need our gifts need not conflict with other passages, in the Euthyphro itself, where Socrates indicates that the gods are perfect (6a–c, 13c).

10.8 Conclusion

On my account, there are dialogues that show us a Socrates engaged in the pedagogy of helping move others from the lowest to the middle level of goodness or wisdom. Those at the lowest level seem to know, though they are ignorant. Socrates describes himself as testing such people. He is aware of the sort of test where one suggests a false lead to see if the other will recognize its falsity, and we see him using just such false leads in his cross-examination of the slave boy. We find false leads—that Socrates, like most people, knows what virtue is, that health and wealth are good things, that the gods need things—in his discussions with Laches, Nicias, Meno,
and Euthyphro, whether or not we accept the RMI interpretation. If we suppose that Socrates held the RMI view of virtue, then among the false leads is the suggestion or claim that piety is but a part of virtue. Those claims and suggestions (namely, PW/L, PW/N, PW/M, PW/E) cast no doubt upon the interpretation that Socrates was a reductive monist intellectualist about virtue. I have therefore disarmed any objections to the RMI interpretation based upon those passages.

Let me consider one final objection. My argument, that Socrates makes claims and suggestions that are by his own lights false, is self-defeating as a defense of the RMI interpretation. For the only reasonable conclusion, if my pedagogical account is correct, is complete skepticism about the views of the Socrates of these dialogues, since no aporetic dialogue can contain any statement that counts as evidence for Socrates’ views.

In reply, I readily admit that no statement taken in isolation from these dialogues can serve as evidence. What saves me from exegetical skepticism are not isolated statements but lines of argument, as sketched in Section 10.2, that lead to RMI. By contrast, in none of these dialogues is there even one argument driving us towards a part/whole account of virtue. Our task, then, to avoid skepticism about Socrates’ moral theory, is to examine his arguments to see if they are as laughable as they at first seem or if, when closely examined, they prove to be compelling. The consequence of this approach is that the knowledge how to interpret Socratic texts is the very same as the knowledge of the truth about such things as piety.24

Notes

1. Santas (1964) defended the philosophical viability of Socratic intellectualism. His paper was the seed from which has grown a flower of philosophically astute scholarship on Socratic intellectualism. The flower has two branches: Vlastos (1972) interpreted Socrates as a reductive pluralist intellectualist about virtue; Penner (1973) a reductive monist intellectualist, starting the scholarly conversation in letters to which this paper contributes.

2. In Religion Within the Limits of Unassisted Reason, Kant writes:

   Religion is the recognition of all our duties as divine commands. . . . In a universal religion there are no special duties towards God. . . . If anyone finds such a duty in the reverence due to God, he does not reflect that this is no particular act of religion, but a religious temper accompanying all our acts of duty without distraction.

   Among Hebrew prophets, Isaiah 1:11–17 says God wants justice, not ritual offerings, likewise Micah 6:6–8 and Psalm 50 (citations from Irwin 1989, p. 77 n. 16). Jesus summarizes the Ten Commandments as but two: love God and love others (Luke 10:27), and in the Parable of the Last Judgment makes clear that we love God by loving others (Matthew 25:32–46), which allows him to reduce divine commandments to only one Great Command, to love others (John 15:12, 17).

3. Calef (1995, p. 9 n. 30), defending the RMI interpretation, grants that Socrates in his cross-examination at PW/E may allow Euthyphro to “flounder” but denies that Socrates misleads. He does not discuss PW/L, PW/N, or PW/M. McPherran (1985, p. 286), critical of the RMI interpretation, thinks that if Socrates misleads, he is blameworthy for sophism and “trickery.” He does not consider the possibility of pedagogical value in false leads.
4. Rickless (1998, p. 359) gives the following additional objection to the RMI interpretation: RMI makes Socrates’ position in the _Protagoras_ incoherent, because Socrates argues that

(1) courage is identical to wisdom (i.e., knowledge)

and that

(2) courage is identical to knowledge of what is to be feared and dared.

I reply that (1) and (2) are incoherent only if we restate (1) as

(1’) courage is identical to wisdom per se (that is, to the genus wisdom or perhaps the sum of all kinds of wisdom and not one species of wisdom only),

but there is no reason why RMI cannot restate (i) in the consistent form of

(1”) courage is identical to wisdom of a kind.

This restatement of (1) as (1”), which Rickless himself accepts (ibid., p. 362), disarms his objection.

Woodruff (1976) attempts to reconcile the seeming contradiction between the statements that courage is only a part but also all of virtue. Woodruff distinguishes courage in essence (courage-itself) from courage in accident (courage-in-ingots, as it were, on the model of the distinction between the substance gold, which is all one, and gold-in-ingots, which has as many parts as there are ingots). According to this distinction, some things can be true of courage-in- ingots that are not true of courage-itself. For example, it may be that the predicate knowledge only of future goods and evils is true of courage-in-ingots but false of courage-itself. However, as it seems to me, Woodruff’s distinction cannot escape Socrates’ argument. To see why, let us accept Woodruff’s distinction and make Woodruff’s assumption that when Socrates speaks of courage as a part of virtue, he is speaking of courage-in-ingots, not courage itself.

Accordingly, courage-in-ingots is a part of virtue. Moreover, as Socrates and Nicias agree, this very courage-in-ingots will be nothing but the knowledge or science of future goods and evils. And it is undeniable, as Socrates and Laches rightly agree, that there is no distinction between the science that knows future goods and evils and the science that knows goods and evils past, present, and future (La. 198d, 199a). Thus in whatever sense courage-in-ingots is the science of future goods and evils, it is precisely also the knowledge of all goods and evils, past, present, and future. It follows that courage-in-ingots is the whole of virtue, which contradicts Woodruff’s interpretation.

5. Rudebusch (1999, pp. 108–13) defends the inference from virtue being knowledge of living well to a good man being invulnerable.

6. I follow Santas (1969, pp. 197–202), who defends Socrates’ argument against the pluralist doctrine that courage is but a part of virtue. Rickless (1998, pp. 361–2) and McPherran (2000, p. 313) interpret Socrates as a pluralist holding versions of RI, CP, and CF. Since Socrates rightly uses UK to refute just such pluralism, I take it that his argument refutes as well these two pluralist interpretations.

7. Rickless (1998, p. 362), following Ferejohn (1984, p. 384), tries to distinguish temperance from justice on the grounds that temperance is the knowledge of what is good and bad for oneself while justice is the knowledge of what is good and bad for others. But the very same knowledge knows both—for example, it would be absurd to claim, Ion-like, to know how to heal not all human bodies, but only one particular human body! Again, the same authors, on the same pages, try to distinguish piety as a mere part of justice on the grounds that piety is knowledge of what is good and bad for the gods. But they must face a dilemma: if the gods are specifically the same as human beings with respect to their good and bad, then piety is precisely justice, while if the gods specifically differ from human beings, then piety will no more be a part of justice than the knowledge of horse training. Indeed horse training will be more like justice than piety, since horses, like human beings, have imperfections to remedy; the gods have no such imperfections and consequently their good and bad must be generically different from horse and human good and bad.

8. It is a mistake, therefore, to interpret Socrates in the _Protagoras_ to hold that courage, piety, etc. are mere parts of virtue in the way a lump of gold has parts, as do e.g., Vlastos (1973, p. 230), McPherran (2000, p. 313), and Woodruff (1976, p. 102). Socrates is undeniably surprised at
any account that makes “justice and temperance and piety and all these things, taken together, one thing, virtue”—whether the account is in terms of parts of a face or parts of a lump of gold makes no difference to him. Protagoras chooses the parts-of-face version, and accordingly Socrates’ arguments are directed against that version. Had Protagoras chosen the parts-of-lump analogy, Socrates could have used arguments from the identity conditions of knowledge to refute him, as shown above, note 7.

9. The Theaetetus mentions additional advantages of the middle level in comparison to the lowest level. Thanks to Socrates’ “examination” (exetasia, 210c), any future investigations we make will be “better” (bellownon, 210c), and even if we never escape our ignorance, our knowledge of it will make us “more civilized and easier for our companions to bear” (heto... barus tois sunousi kai hemeroterous, 210c).

10. The point that in this passage Socrates is comically outdoing the sophist at sophistry may be true; it does not follow that the doctrines Socrates attributes there to Simonides are not Socrates’ own.

11. At Euthydemus 281b–e Socrates explains why ignorance at the skill of human goodness will negate the advantages of other skills: a fool will get no benefit from doing many things; on the contrary, if a fool does less he will make fewer mistakes and be less wretched.

Brickhouse and Smith (1994, p. 17) mention an additional disadvantage to the lowest level: Socrates’ method of cross-examining others brings to light contradictions in the beliefs of those at the lowest level. “If one’s beliefs about how it is best for one to live are inconsistent, one cannot... follow all of one’s... inclinations; in such a condition, one will be doomed, at least to some degree, to a life of frustration and inner conflict.”

12. See Brickhouse and Smith (1994) and Benson (2000) for accounts of Socratic cross-examination.

13. I agree with the point, made for example by Brickhouse and Smith (1994, p. 15), that “Socrates does not always accept the truth of the premises he uses.” They prove the point by referring (1) to instances where Socrates uses reductio ad absurdum (“indirect proof”) and (2) to Socrates’ use in the Euthyphro (6b–8b) of Euthyphro’s belief, which Socrates does not share, that the gods quarrel and disagree. I go beyond this point in my account of pedagogical testing.

14. Hugh Benson in correspondence has described my account of false-lead pedagogy as a version of his non-constructivist account of the elenchus (see Benson 2000, pp. 35–36), adding to non-constructivism the “presumption that we can tell ahead of time—presumably in light of a comprehensive interpretation of the dialogues—which of the beliefs of the interlocutors Socrates thinks are false.” Benson’s non-constructivist thesis (p. 35) is that “Socrates neither can nor does conclude as a result of an individual elenctic episode the falsehood of the apparent refutand.” As Benson notes (p. 35 n. 14), “the only [account] that is directly at odds with [his] is the account according to which Socrates concludes as a result of an individual elenctic episode that the apparent refutand is false and he is justified in doing so”—he is “no longer sure that anyone ever wanted to recommend such an account.”

How can we tell which beliefs Socrates will think are false? In answer to this question, I have two points to make. First, according to the RMI interpretation (evidence for which is surveyed in Section 10.2 of this chapter), Socrates will think any non-monist account or non-intellectual account of virtue is false (eliminative accounts of the virtues disagree with Socrates’ reductive account only in terminology). Socrates would of course also recognize that the majority of people, then as now, are inclined to assent to non-monist and non-intellectual accounts of virtue. Second, according to the three-levels-of-wisdom pedagogical assumption I attribute to Socrates on the basis of Sections 10.3, 10.4, and 10.5 of this chapter—which I intend to be far less controversial than the RMI interpretation!—Socrates will be quick to test people to see if they assent to statements that they possess knowledge of human virtue.

My account here is also in agreement with Brickhouse and Smith (1994), who argue that Socratic conversation has a constructive function in two senses: first, “Socrates’ contributions to the conversation do betray his own beliefs” (p. 65), second, “to the extent that he has generated inductive evidence through previous elenctic examinations for the necessity of his own
view for a coherent life, Socrates can claim to have established a general truth applicable to all" (p. 19). As Benson and Brickhouse and Smith all recognize, their non-constructivist and constructivist theses are mutually compatible (Brickhouse and Smith 1994, p. 12 n. 18; Benson 2000, p. 35 n. 14).

15. As I recollect, Terry Penner pointed out the false leads Socrates suggests to the slave boy in a seminar in the late seventies. Penner’s point was that Socrates’ leading questions discourage the boy from acting as a sycophant, as one might expect from an enslaved person. For, if it is the case that the boy’s answers at 82e2–3 (“Twice the length”) and 83e2 (“Three feet”) are at attempts by sycophancy, those answers fail to flatter Socrates, since the boy must retract both answers.

I endorse Penner’s point about Socrates asking questions that discourage sycophancy. My point is that there is an additional purpose to Socrates’ suggestions. His suggestion will only be taken to a false conclusion by a person who is both ignorant and is ignorant of his own ignorance. Precisely for this reason his false leads do not make Socrates a liar, that is, one who deliberately tries to mislead, but rather an expert at testing for ignorance in others by asking leading questions. (My thanks to Betty Belfiore for discussion on this point.)

16. “Before conversing with Socrates, the interlocutor may have felt no particular need to mend his ways. But the aporia that results from Socratic questioning gives the interlocutor an important reason to pursue the examined life: the recognition that one is seriously confused about how best to live” (Brickhouse and Smith 1994, p. 17).

17. I endorse Benson (2000, p. 259), who distinguishes four stages in Socrates’ conversation with the slave boy. First, “Socrates asks and explains the question.” Second, “Socrates refutes the slave boy’s initial answers... [until] the slave boy responds that he does not know.” Third, “Socrates leads the slave boy... to... belief.” Fourth (this stage is described but not illustrated by Socrates), “the slave boy would be led from true belief to knowledge.” And Benson on the same page makes the point that is essential to my thesis: “it is not until the third stage of the slave-boy conversation that the substantive theory” is elicited.

18. Again (see n. 15 above) I do not claim that Socrates tells a lie when he tests Laches in this manner. Socrates points out to Laches that implicit in the act of advising is a claim to know (190b7–c2). Laches agrees that there is such an implication in the act of advising and does not express any reservations about the advising he has done or proposes to do (190c3). From this fact Socrates infers (“therefore”) what must follow from Laches’ agreement in dramatic context: “[Since we are going to be advisors,] therefore we say that we know what virtue is.—Of course we say so” (190c4–5). Socrates’ statement of group knowledge (“we”) is not a lie about his own state of conscious ignorance but the first premise in what will be a reductio ad absurdum. (Again I thank Betty Belfiore and Gail Fine for making this clear to me.)

My false-lead hypothesis explains another statement of Socrates, where he suggests that Nicias and Laches must be wise:

If Nicias or Laches has discovered or learned it, I would not be surprised; for they are wealthier than I am, and may therefore have learned of others, and they are older too, so that they have had more time to make the discovery. They do seem able to educate a man, for unless they had been confident in their own knowledge, they would never have spoken thus unhesitatingly of the pursuits which are advantageous or hurtful to a young man. (186c5–d3)

It is uncharitable to take this speech to be mean-spirited sarcasm. On the contrary, it is evidence of aristocratic good manners, which are governed by the general principle of charity, in this particular case requiring Socrates to assume the best of others and hence to interpret their knowledge claims in the best possible light. Moreover, although his suggesting there is a likelihood of wisdom in his companions is well-mannered, the suggestion also serves as a test, giving his companions an opportunity to accept or reject the suggestion of their wisdom.

19. Again Socrates is not telling a lie here. He hedges his words: to inquire into the whole of virtue is “perhaps more work” (pleon... isôs ergon, 190c9) than to inquire into a part. It is
10 Socrates, Wisdom and Pedagogy

more accurate to describe him here as opening a door, so to speak, to see if his conversation
partner will walk through it: a test.

20. Again Socrates does not tell a lie, since he himself does call courage, temperance, righ-
teousness and the like each virtue. It is more accurate to describe him as putting before his
conversation partner a test.

21. Again Socrates does not lie but tests: “And don’t you call such things as health and wealth
goods?” (78c5–6).

22. Meno, in not recognizing his own ignorance, does not reach the slave boy’s level of self-
understanding. This difference between Meno and the slave boy is unnoticed by Benson (2000,
p. 259), who states that “Socrates understands these first two stages of the conversation to be an
exact parallel to the main conversation with Meno. . . . By the end of the [stage where Socrates
has refuted his initial answers] the slave boy has reached the precise point Meno had reached.”

23. Brickhouse and Smith (1994, p. 22) seem to confuse the arrival of Euthyphro at aporia with his
attainment of the middle level. For they take the fact that “Euthyphro has been fully reduced to
aporia by Euthyphro 11b6” to entail that Socrates has no further work to do to bring Euthyphro
to the middle level, and hence that any subsequent examination of definitions is part of the
“positive” process of moving from the middle level to the highest level, a process which we
ought to expect to be free of false leads: “[After 11b6] Socrates continues his search for the
definition of piety by contributing one of what certainly appears to be his own views . . . that
piety is a part of justice.”

24. As it seems to me, Santas’s work is a paradigm of this identity of interpretation and philosophy.
I thank participants in the 2001 Arizona Plato Colloquium, especially my commentator Joel
Martinez, for helpful discussion and comments, and also Betty Belfiore for correcting many
errors in correspondence in 2005.

Bibliography

University Press.


Ferejohn, M. 1984. “Socratic Virtue as the Parts of Itself.” Philosophy and Phenomenological


38:299–328.


Press.


Santas, G. 1969. “Socrates at Work on Virtue and Knowledge in Plato’s Laches.” Review of

Paul.


## Chapter 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q. No.</th>
<th>Query</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AQ1</td>
<td>Please check the author affiliation for correctness. And also provide e-mail id for “George Rudebusch.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQ2</td>
<td>“Vlastos 1973” is not listed in bibliography list. Please provide.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>