

## Review of Bachelor Thesis

**Title:** Meno's Paradox and Anamnesis  
**Author:** Vladislav Odinokov  
**Supervisor:** Mgr. Stanislav Synek, Ph.D.

In the presented bachelor thesis, Vladislav Odinokov focuses on a paradox discussed in Plato's dialogue *Meno* about the very possibility of (successful) inquiry: we cannot inquire neither into what we do not know, neither into what we know. According to usual interpretation, Socrates solves this paradox by introducing the "theory of recollection" and distinguishing opinion from knowledge. Odinokov uses several modern commentators to show that the purpose of this theory in the dialogue is not so straightforward and discusses possible reasons why Socrates introduces it.

The author has worked hard and did his best to follow supervisor's advice in the given time. The formal level of the text is satisfactory, there are just some minor issues (typos, punctuation).

The core of the thesis lies in comparison of two interpretations of why Socrates introduces the theory of recollection and what solution it provides in response to Meno's paradox (p. 2). After short synopsis of *Meno* (pp. 2–4) the author mentions several arguments against the usual reading that sees the theory of recollection introduced in the myth presented by Socrates as an answer to Meno's questions (pp. 4–6). Then he explains shortly several problems discussed by some commentators (principle of priority of definition, foreknowledge principle, problem of discovery). Then he moves on to Meno's paradox (pp. 11–13) and explains differences between questions raised by Meno and paradoxes formulated by Socrates (p. 14). Then he slowly draws on what I see as the core question of the thesis and what D. Scott calls a *problem of discovery*: how can we know that what we have found is the true answer? Or – if we accept the distinction between belief (*doxa*) and knowledge (*epistémē*) – how can we escape the circle of beliefs (p. 17)?

In his conclusion, Vladislav summarizes clearly his findings and explains why he favors Scott's interpretation over Fine's. In this short, yet meaningful part, the reader finally gets a clear overview of what has been rather arduously explored in previous chapters. Here the author proves that he has eventually found a way through the maze.

I see the main problem of the thesis in lack of clarity and coherent structure: until the conclusion, there is no clear link to follow, the author seems to be lost in details of discussions in secondary literature. The reader is thus confronted with several partial details without having much clue about why these matter and what is the point of such discussions. It is caused perhaps by lack of time to think thoroughly Plato's works themselves first: without it, relying on secondary interpretations might be very precarious. Some incoherences in the text are probably omitted remnants of older versions of manuscript (e.g. the first sentence in *Knowledge which the boy has*, p. 23), others by hasty writing (first paragraph in *Problem of discovery*, p. 9).

Some obscurities are probably caused by author's effort to summarize commentators' views concisely. He is, however, either brief too much, or perhaps he has troubles to hit the core of the discussions. As a result, it is almost impossible to recover some views and arguments of both interpreters discussed (D. Scott, G. Fine): see for example the last paragraph of interpretation of D. Scott on p. 19, or summary of Fine's interpretation on pp. 23–24 that works with distinction between *innate* and *prenatal* that is very doubtful, or not well explained.

In short, the author doesn't ponder the primary text of Plato sufficiently, relies too much on secondary sources instead and gets lost in details of two advanced interpretations. The strong point of the thesis is author's genuine struggle to tackle complicated philosophical issues and delve into

vast ocean of modern interpretations of Plato. The topic, however, didn't have enough time to settle, and Vladislav entangled himself in a thicket of detailed secondary readings. This is partly resolved in conclusion, which saves the day. The outcome perhaps doesn't help reader to understand the dialogue better, but can help to see some previously unnoticed problems and questions – which is probably the goal of philosophy as such.

**Summary** Despite the fragmentary and unpolished nature of most of the submitted thesis, I recommend it for defence and suggest mark good (3), for the author has proven genuine interest in the topic and was able to bring scattered pieces together and form meaningful conclusion.

Mgr. Stanislav Synek, Ph.D.