

Virtue: the acquiring of wealth (philosophy)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Virtue: The Acquiring of Wealth Towards the beginning of the Meno dialogue, Meno discusses one definition of virtue as “ the acquisition of gold and silver. ” In simpler terms, Meno claims that the acquisition of wealth is known as virtue because it is a good thing. Socrates brings up the argument that acquisition of wealth cannot be virtue, even though It provides good things, if it isn't accompanied by justice, moderation or piety in some form or another. This statement made by Socrates appeals to me the most because of each of the wills: Justice, Moderation and Piety.

In today's world, there are plenty of court cases in which the plaintiff(s) is trying to sue the defendant(s) for a certain amount of money. If the plaintiff wins the case, he or she would acquire that amount of money through the justice system that exists today. This example relates to the dialogue because it is an example of acquiring wealth through the accompaniment of justice. It also appeals to me because I believe our government tries to carry out justice in each and every case to the best of its ability.

Therefore, one can agree that acquiring wealth through this system of justice is a good thing or, virtue, just like Socrates had described. Let's bring it to a local example. If one of your children were to accidentally break a neighbor's window, wouldn't you certainly feel the need to refund the neighbor for the damage? Whether or not the child who broke the window or the parent of that child refunded the neighbor, justice would still be carried out and the acquisition of wealth that the neighbor would receive would be seen as good.

A problem I can see with this definition, however, relates back to our court system. In some cases, the defendant, in my true opinion, is sued for way

too much money. The plaintiff has sued them for more money than is necessary and the defendant is not deserving of having so much money taken from them. The one example I can relate to this problem is the “McDonalds coffee.” Because McDonalds has originally failed to print a written warning on their coffee cups stating that the liquid in the cup was hot, a man who spilled his coffee on himself sued the company.

McDonalds lost the case and was forced to give the man \$2, 000, 000 for “the most pain the man had experienced in his life.” I find this case to be one of many unreasonable suits. I believe that, although this man acquired such wealth by Justice, he did not acquire it in a good way (since any coffee drinker would surely know that the coffee he or she ordered would be hot) and therefore, not virtuous. Another virtuous way to acquire wealth is through moderation, as Socrates said in Meno.

Anybody who earns money through moderation today usually earns it in his or her weekly or monthly salary. I would believe this to be moderation because the person earning the money should not get more in advance nor should the person be kept from earning their deserved earnings after each paying period. Unlike most of the Meno, I can relate to this fact because I am a college student who works a part-time job and is used to acquiring money in moderation: the amount of money I am allowed to earn per hour.

Compare this way of earning money in moderation with a way that is not moderate. A bank robber who succeeds in his unjust way of earning money has acquired a huge sum of money without any form of moderation, besides the fact that the robber can only steal the maximum amount of money

contained in the vault. One can agree that a bank robber would not be a virtuous person because the way he or she acquires wealth is also not virtuous. However, there is a problem I can see with the way I argue this point of moderation.

If Bill Gates, or another very wealthy individual, donated a huge sum of money, would the charity that received this money have acquired the money without moderation? What amount of money can a person acquire in moderation and still be virtuous? Can we even set an amount? If Bill Gates, or another, died suddenly, would his friends and family who inherited his money, as set out in his will, be virtuous? I would think so, even though there is no moderation to the amount that each person inherits. In this way, there are ways to acquire money, even though there isn't any moderation, and still be virtuous.

The final way of acquiring wealth in a virtuous way that Socrates mentions, even though I'm sure there are more unstated ways, is through piety. For example, a church that establishes a mission can collect followers' money in order to fund that mission. This mission can be anything from giving to the poor, feeding people who aren't gifted with money in their lives, or building houses for those without homes. This example appeals to me because I am a growing Christian in my own community and I have gone on plenty of mission trips with my church.

On these mission trips, I have done many deeds like building houses in developing communities. In this way, the church acquires money through others' piety and it is still virtuous because the money is being spent in a

virtuous way towards the good of others. In providing good things for others, the money is spent virtuously and is therefore worthwhile by the definition of Socrates. Even collecting money in the offering basket every Sunday is a way of virtuously acquiring money because the money is going towards the improvement of the church and the church's followers.

However, there are many ways to defy Socrates' definition of money through piety. Dozens of televangelists host their religious specials on television and ask for their followers' money so that they can expand their church or pray over each person who gives them money. These reasons for acquiring wealth are less tangible for the money that has been spent versus food for the family or a new house. Some televangelists have even been known to use the money they receive from donations to better their own life rather than the church.

In this way, televangelists are acquiring wealth through piety, but in a way that is not virtuous. In short, Meno provides a definition of virtue that is incomplete. Only with Socrates' addition of acquiring wealth through justice, moderation, or piety does acquiring wealth become a virtuous act. In addition to the statement I just made, Socrates' definition of virtue through acquiring wealth has certain loopholes like the ones stated above in my body paragraphs. However, it was the definition that appealed to me most and that is why I chose to write about it in my paper.