

# Analyze the socrates arguments essay examples

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## **Analysis of the Argument that Socrates Uses to Dismiss Menno's Second and Third Definition of Virtue**

Socrates, being an ardent thinker he was, uses every statement that Meno says in disapproving him and refusing his answer. In each instance, he introduces something else and thinks through it together with Meno. He asks relevant questions according to what Meno gives out as a definition of virtue. In this analysis, two of the definitions that Meno gives as definitions of virtue are analyzed. This includes the second definition where Meno defines virtue as the power to rule over others. The third definition given by Meno is the power to acquire subtle things. In both cases, Meno genuinely strives to answer Socrates correctly in a bid to give a correct definition. However, the more he tries, the more he is disapproved by other statements that totally contradict what he says (Plato and Grube 62).

Meno struggles all through to remain objective as he reasoned with this great thinker. However, as the discussion and argument progresses, Meno seems to yield to what Socrates says. This is because he starts to agree with what Socrates was saying without realizing that Socrates was out to disapprove his reasoning. Socrates asks his questions tactfully with the major objective of outdoing Meno in his own game. At the end of the argument, Meno obviously losses the argument and Socrates seems to show him how he ought to think and give definitions when asked (Plato and Grube 63).

Considering the second definition, Meno defines virtue as the power to rule others as earlier seen. In this definition, Socrates reasons with Meno with an

aim of making him get the point of what he was saying. He tactfully does this by introducing the aspect of justice and moderation in the rule that one may be having over others. Meno, without clearly getting where Socrates was driving at, concurs with Socrates that one ought to rule justly and not unjustly. He also agrees that justice is still a virtue. This is the point where Socrates attacks the definition by using definitions of other words like shape and color. He annuls all that Meno gave as a definition in this second time by showing him that a type of a virtue like the one justice cannot be used to give the meaning of the word virtue. He says that a type of shape or a type of color can never be used to tell somebody what is meant by shape or color respectively. This is mainly because there are many shapes and colors that are in existence. Therefore, it will be extremely confusing if one tries to use one type of shape or color in the definition of these terms (Plato and Grube 63).

Socrates insists that Meno should not give him that a general definition while justifying it with an example, as a definition of virtue. This is because he has already proved to him using the two examples that it could not work that way. Therefore, he insists on being given one specific description of what virtue is. He wanted a definition that can fit to all examples of virtue that exists. The marvelous thing is that, at the end of this, Meno has been made to understand why and where he went wrong in his definition. He is then shown what is required (Plato and Grube 68).

The argument does not end there but still progresses until the point where Meno gives another definition of the word virtue. He says that virtue entails

the power of securing pleasurable things. However, this definition still sounds vague to Socrates. Therefore, he chooses to go on with his engagement of Menno's minds. Socrates starts by making sure that Meno has owned up all that he has said. He then starts giving some examples of the pleasurable things that should be owned as he asks Menno's suggestions too. Meno confidently suggests other examples as silver and gold. Socrates takes advantage of these two examples and plays around with them in a way to disapprove Meno once more. He says that if Meno states that owning silver and gold is virtue, then it means that the lack of it is not virtue. Meno still agrees with this and does not seem to bother to adjust what he said. Meno again agrees to the proposition by Socrates that the owning should be justly and not unjustly since this will be wickedness and not virtue (Plato and Grube 69).

This third definition and the questions that Socrates asks spark another flame in Socrates. Socrates becomes annoyed and claims that Meno was only out to play with him. This is because Meno had agreed that the example of justice together with words like moderation were all part of virtue and the definition of virtue. However, he had just used them even after they had agreed with Socrates that they should never be used in the definition of virtue. This is because the definition will not be exhaustive given the fact that there are many examples of virtue, limiting oneself to the usage of only one example will, therefore, not be magnanimous enough.

Socrates nullifies the usage of the word justice in defining virtue and says that not every action can be a virtue. He says that the statement of Meno

seems to be suggesting that every action that is done with a part of virtue is a virtue. Therefore, Socrates suggests that Meno should begin all again in giving the proper definition right from the question itself. This is because Meno seemed to have lost it all by talking about the nature of virtue and not virtue itself. Therefore, Socrates brings Meno together with his friends back to the beginning point and pauses his question again. At this point, Meno seems to have lost interest in what Socrates was asking. He then confirms the fears that he had heard about Socrates before meeting him. That Socrates was always in a perplexity state and always brought others at the same place. This statement of dissatisfaction shows that Meno was confused by all that Socrates had told him and now could not even define the term virtue (Plato and Grube 69).

### **Work cited**

Plato and Grube, George. Five Dialogues. Hackett Publishing, 2002. Print