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I.

EUGENICS.

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The deepest instinct of every organism is self-preservation. We find, therefore, already in the very simplest forms of plant and animal life both in their structural composition and in their modes of reproduction specific provisions which have grown out of this profound instinct. Most unicellular organisms only thrive in a liquid environment; if that dries up they lose their usual shape, as well as their power of locomotion and form spores, minute spherical masses surrounded by an impenetrable membrane. In this form they can survive the unfavorable conditions of their environment for a very long time without injury, returning to the original status of their being at the first favorable opportunity. Moreover, ordinarily they reproduce themselves by simple fission, but after spore-formation the individual breaks up into many daughter individuals by multiple fission. Fission or division is, however, not the only mode of reproduction, for, if carried on through too many generations of offspring, the nuclear protoplasm would be exhausted and the species would die out. Nature has, therefore, provided a counter process, viz., conjugation or copulation. Two individuals of different parentage either temporarily unite and exchange their nuclear protoplasm, thereby rejuvenating their lives, or they completely

II.

THE DIALECTICAL METHOD OF SOCRATES.

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As applied to the Socratic method, all later definitions of the term "dialectical" must give way to the etymological sense that is given in Plato's "Republic,"¹ who defines it as "the art of developing knowledge conversationally by question and answer." Xenophon² says to the same effect that Socrates considered the dialectical process as consisting in coming together and taking common counsel to distinguish and distribute things in genera or families, so as to learn what each separate thing really was. Socrates was so infatuated with this way of discussion, and felt so incapable of living without that colloquial interchange of ideas, that some think that he made no defense at his trial and was willing to die because impending old age made conversation difficult or impossible.³ It must also be kept in mind that the Socratic method was not consciously adopted by the author, after careful investigation of its validity. He rather alighted upon it by instinct. A man's aim determines very largely his method, that is, the way to reach that end. So the Socratic method resulted from the notions the great Athenian had formed respecting the object of philosophy, and while in pursuit of this object, his peculiar method "grew on him." Schwegler⁴ is right in saying: "Of the Socratic method we must understand that, in contrast to what is now called method, it rose not in the consciousness of Socrates formally as method, and in abstraction from

¹ Plato, *Republic*, VII, 534.

² *Memor*, V, p. 56.

³ Plato, *Crito*, 74: "Thou even didst say that thou wouldst prefer death to exile." Also Cicero, *De Oratore*, I, 54.

⁴ *History of Philosophy*, p. 49.

every concrete case, but that it had spontaneously grown up with the very mode and manner of his philosophizing which aimed not at the communication of a system, but at the schooling of the individual himself into philosophical thought and life."

THE AIM OF SOCRATES.

Method and aim can never be entirely separated. Certainly not with Socrates, where the man is the method, nor in the Socratic age, where the false aim of his predecessors and contemporaries was due, to a great extent, to a defective method. His chief aim was to establish an epistemology, a valid theory of knowledge and its limits. Before him the answer as to the causes of natural phenomena were attempted without any preliminary inquiry into the human faculty of cognition. All reliance was placed on external perception. In this endeavor he encountered four questions, the first and most important of which was, *Can we know at all?* The Sophist's answer was a decided negative. They denied the credibility of the senses, the reliability of reason, the objective reality of truth, and consequently the possibility of an adequate human knowledge and certainty. Thus they undermined the very foundations of science, and made skepticism triumphant. In the words of Zeller,⁵ "The characteristic of the Sophists consisted in their allowing only a relative value to all scientific and moral principles." They called everything into question, and attacked or defended with equal readiness every opinion. Faith in the aim of human ideas or in the validity of moral laws had wholly disappeared. Natural philosophy on which the attention of thinkers had been engrossed for upwards of a century and a half had now become distasteful and, in fine, scientific inquiry had been supplanted by a merely superficial culture of thought and language and by the acquisition of such accomplishments only as were likely to serve the purposes of social life. Against this subjectivity of the Sophists, Socrates believed it to be his

⁵ *Socrates and the Socratic Schools*, p. 195.

mission to affirm the objective reality of truth.⁶ He justly conceived the true end of philosophy to be, not to make an ostentatious display of superior learning and ability in subtle disputes and ingenious conjectures but "to free mankind from the dominion of pernicious prejudices, to inspire them with a love of real truth and thus conduct them into the path of genuine wisdom and positive objective knowledge." When, therefore, Protagoras⁷ said: "man is the measure of all things and men differ, consequently no objective but only subjective truth is possible," Socrates answered, "True, man is the measure of all things, but descend deeper into his personality by the right method, not by a defective method, applicable to the physical world, and you will find that underneath all the transitory there is a ground of steady truth. Men differ as to what is fleeting, they agree as to what is abiding and eternal. There is a difference in the region of opinion, but substantial agreement in the region of objective truth. But in order to see this agreement we must always endeavor to penetrate into that region."

The second question in the Socratic epistemology was, *To what extent can man know?* The proper study of mankind is man, not nature, was his answer. All his predecessors philosophized more or less on nature in one form or the other. They blended together cosmogony, astronomy, geometry, physics and a kind of metaphysics. Socrates himself had studied with the natural philosopher Archelaus, as we know from the comedy of the "Clouds,"⁸ where he is represented "air-treading and speculating about the sun, and his disciples seeking things hidden under ground." But later in his life he

⁶ Apologia 23 does not contradict this statement, for there Socrates only asserts that human knowledge is limited in comparison with the Divine. ἡ ἀνθρώπινη σοφία ὀλίγου τινός ἀξία ἐστὶ καὶ οὐδένος. Comp. also Plato, *Rep.*, X., 19.

⁷ *Theæt.*, 152, states this maxim thus: χρημάτων πάντων μέτρος ἀνθρώπου εἶναι τῶν μὲν ὄντων ὡς ἐστίν, τῶν δὲ μὴ ὄντων ὡς οὐκ ἐστίν. Comp. also Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, X, 1.

⁸ *Nubes*, V, 112-115.

abandoned the study of physics altogether as leading to no certain knowledge. St. Augustine⁹ in his admirable sketch of Greek philosophy remarks: "Socrates is said to have been the first who directed the entire effort of philosophy to the correction and regulation of manners, all who went before him having expended their greatest efforts in the investigation of physical, that is, natural phenomena. For he saw that the causes of things were sought for by them, which causes he believed to be ultimately reducible to nothing else than the will of the one true and supreme God. And on this account he thought they could only be comprehended by a purified mind; and therefore that all diligence ought to be given to the purification of the life by good morals in order that the mind, delivered from the depressing weight of lusts, might raise itself upward by its native vigor to eternal things, and might, with purified understanding, contemplate that nature which is incorporeal and unchangeable light, where live the causes of all created natures."—The confusion that ruled among the different schools led him to the conviction that the gods intended these things to remain secrets and allowed the physical studies only in so far as they are necessary for practical purposes. "Do these inquirers," he asked, "think that they already know human affairs well enough that they thus begin to meddle with divine?"¹⁰ "I have not leisure for such things," he is made to say by Plato,¹¹ "and I will tell you the reason; I am not yet able, according to the Delphic inscription, to know myself; and it appears to me very ridiculous, while ignorant of myself, to inquire into what I am not concerned in." That Socrates used at times to discuss physical subjects appears, as Kuehner¹² shows from Xenophon himself, as well as from Plato's *Apology*; but he pursued a different method from that of other philosophers in such discussions.

⁹ *De Civitate Dei*, VIII, 3.

¹⁰ *Mem.*, I, 1, 11: ἐθαύμαζε δὲ εἰ μὴ φανερόν αὐτοῖς ἔστιν ὅτι ταῦτα οὐ δυνατόν ἔστιν ἀνθρώποις εὔρειν.

¹¹ Plato, *Phædr.*, 8.

¹² *Xenophontis de Socrate Commentarii*, p. 246.

The third question in the Socratic epistemology was, *What, then, can man know*, if not the external world? *Γινῶθι σεαυτὸν*—know thyself—he grew never weary to answer. Listen to that admirable dialogue in the *Memorabilia*:¹³ Socrates said, “Tell me, Euthydemus, have you ever gone to Delphia?” “Yes, twice,” replied he. “And did you observe what is written somewhere on the temple wall,¹⁴ ‘*Know Thyself*’?” “I did.” “And did you take no thought of that inscription, or did you attend to it and try to examine yourself to ascertain what sort of character you are?” “I did not, indeed, try, for I thought that I knew very well already, since I should hardly know anything else if I did not know myself.” “But whether does he seem to you to know himself who knows his own name merely, or he who having ascertained with regard to himself how he is adapted for the service of mankind, knows his own abilities?” “It appears to me, I must confess, that he who does not know his own abilities does not know himself.” “But is it not evident,” said Socrates, “that men enjoy a great number of blessings in consequence of knowing themselves, and incur a great number of evils, through being deceived in themselves?” “Be assured,” replied Euthydemus, “that I feel convinced, we must consider self-knowledge of the highest value, but as to the way in which we must begin to seek self-knowledge, I look to you for information.” This precept became to Socrates the holiest of all tests. He unceasingly compelled men to take a just measure of their own real knowledge or real ignorance. His maxim was: not physiology but psychology; not matter but mind; not cosmogony but consciousness; not stars but living men. Xenophon¹⁵ says: “Socrates incessantly discussed human affairs, investigating, What is piety? What is impiety? What is the honorable and the base? What is the just and the unjust? What is

¹³ *Xem Mem.*, IV, 2, 24.

¹⁴ It is doubtful whether this famous inscription had its origin with Thales (*Diog. Laert.*, I) or with the Delphic Pythia (Aristotle), or with Socrates (*Phædr.*, 229).

¹⁵ *Mem.*, I, 1, 12, 16; IV, 7, 6.

temperance or unsound mind? What is courage or cowardice? What is a city? What is a character fit for a citizen? What is authority over men? What is the character befitting the exercise of such authority? and other similar questions. Men who knew these matters he accounted good and honorable; men who were ignorant of them he considered slaves." The epoch-making significance of Socrates is admirably expressed by Cicero¹⁶ in his famous often quoted passage: "*Socrates primus philosophiam evocavit a coelo, et in urbibus collocavit, et in domos etiam introduxit, et coegit de vita et moribus, rebusque bonis et malis quaerere.*"

The fourth question in Socrates' epistemology was, *Are there any limits to human knowledge?* Socrates repeatedly expressed it as one of his deepest convictions that an essential part of true knowledge consisted in the consciousness of the limits of human knowledge. "The highest knowledge consists in the knowledge that man can know no more than the gods will permit him to know."¹⁷ To this conclusion he was led by the arrogance and groundless assertions of the Sophists, as well as by his own profound meditation and his deep self-knowledge. Watching carefully all that transpired within himself, he discovered a residuum of feelings and impulses which could not be explained from what he knew of his inner life. And this he regarded as a direct divine revelation which he believed he possessed in what he called his *δαίμόνιον*,¹⁸ a subject of the deepest interest, but not strictly germane to our theme.

Having discussed the definition, the nature and aim of the Socratic Method the track is clear to consider the different stages of the method.

FIRST STAGE: PURIFICATION OF THE INTELLECT.

Socrates believed that the purification of the intellect by a frank confession of ignorance was the chief condition of prog-

¹⁶ *Cic. Tusc.*, V, 4, 10.

¹⁷ *Mem.*, I, 1, 11.

¹⁸ See *Mem.*, IV, 3, 14; also, Lasaul, *Demonion*, p. 18.

ress in the attainment of truth. By his proverbial confession of ignorance he meant to say two things, first that, while conversant with the opinions of men, he lacked "conceptual knowledge"—*begriffliches Wissen*—and, secondly, that he had no ready-made system to inculcate. Thus he was not only the founder of a sound theory of knowledge but also of an agnology, a theory of ignorance. The same weapon which he applied so mercilessly to himself, he tried also on others. He was the "great talker of Athens." He "prattled without end," as his enemies described his dialectical conversation. Early in the morning Socrates frequented the public walks, the gymnasium for bodily training and the schools where youths were receiving instruction; he was to be seen in the market place at the hour when it was most crowded. He talked with any one, young or old, rich or poor, who sought to address him, and in the hearing of all who chose to stand by. As Lewes¹⁹ says: "He gave no lectures; he only talked. He wrote no books, he argued." The language is therefore undoubtedly historical which Plato²⁰ puts into his mouth respecting the inefficiency of books. "Books cannot be interrogated, cannot answer, we can only learn from them that which we knew before." Moreover, this mode of discussion, so much in harmony with the marked sociability of the Greek character, the quick recurrence of short question and answer was needful as a stimulus to the attention, at a time when the habit of close and accurate reflection on abstract subjects had been so little cultivated.

Socrates held that to make a man willing to be taught, the only condition required was to make him conscious of his own ignorance, the want of which consciousness was the real cause of his indocility. The most of all ignorance he conceived to be when a man was ignorant of himself, fancying that he knew, what he did not really, *i. e.*, conceptually, know. His elenchus was therefore animated by the truest spirit of positive science and formed an indispensable precursor to its attain-

¹⁹ *History of Philosophy*, p. 136.

²⁰ *Phædrus*, p. 96.

ment. Hence Socrates entertained no distrust of the powers of the mind to attain unto certainty. He laid down as we now believe, an erroneous line of distinction between the knowable and the unknowable, excluding physics from the former, but respecting man and society he asserted in the strongest terms possible, that certainty of knowledge was attainable even though *he* did not as yet have it. Nay, Socrates went further and asserted that every man *ought* to know what was knowable, for ignorance here was vice, while knowledge he regarded as virtue. There are two points only concerning man and society with regard to which Socrates is really a skeptic. He denies first, that men can know that upon which they have bestowed no conscious effort, no systematic study. He denies, next, that men can practice what they do not know. Socrates felt persuaded that no man could behave as a just, temperate, courageous, pious, patriotic agent, unless he taught himself to know correctly what justice, temperance, courage, piety and patriotism really were. In this, Socrates goes to the extreme, when asserting, "If it were possible wittingly to do evil, it would be better to do so than to commit it unwittingly, for in the latter case the first condition of all right action—a knowing state of mind—would be found wanting, while in the former it would be there, the doer being only faithless to it for the moment. In his campaign against "the conceit of knowledge" without the reality, he considered himself victorious even with the negative result, "We have thus seen that we know not." And many dialogues in Plato and Xenophon close ostentatiously with the above confession, as *e. g.*, the following: The famous Sophist Hippias of Elis, on his return to Athens after an absence of some time happened to come in the way of Socrates as he was observing to some people how surprising it was that, if a man wished to have another taught to be a shoemaker or a carpenter, he was at no loss whither he should send him, while as to justice, he should not know whither to go to learn it. Hippias, hearing this remark, said, as if jesting with him, "What! are you still saying the same things Socrates,

that I heard from you so long ago?" "Yes," said Socrates, "and what is more wonderful, I am not only still saying the same things, but am saying them on the same subject; but you, perhaps, from being possessed of such variety of knowledge, never say the same things on the same subjects?" "Certainly," replied Hippias, "I do always try to say something new." "About matters of which you have certain knowledge then," said Socrates, "as, for instance, about the letters of the alphabet, if any one were to ask you how many and what letters are in the word Socrates, would you try to say sometimes one thing and sometimes another?" "About such matters," replied Hippias, "I, like you, always say the same thing; but concerning justice I think that I have certainly something to say now which neither you nor any other person can refute." "By Juno," returned Socrates, "it is a great good that you say you have discovered, and I know not how I can part with you till I have learned so important a benefit from its discoverer." "You shall not hear it," returned Hippias, "until you yourself declare what you think justice to be; for it is enough that you laugh at others, questioning and confuting everybody while you yourself are unwilling to declare your opinion on any subject."—The dialogue continues at great length and both pass with the tacit understanding that neither knows what justice really is.

The method which Socrates used so effectively in these cross-questionings was the famous "Socratic Irony," which may be defined as an ignorance purposely affected to provoke or confound an antagonist and to lead him to the same conclusion that Socrates had reached in respect to himself, namely: I know not the concept of things and without such knowledge no real knowledge is possible, but only opinion and seeming. Schleiermacher²¹ ingeniously remarks that "the irony of Socrates is nothing else than the coexistence in him of the *Idea of Knowledge*, with the absence of positive acquirement." It is, therefore, a mistake to represent this irony to be merely

²¹ *Philosophische Werke*, III, 4, 9.

a trick of conversation by which to lure others on the ice in order to laugh at their fall. On the contrary, it is an earnest endeavor of Socrates, thinking himself without conceptual knowledge but prompted by a strong impulse for it, to learn from others what they know in this line. Of course in the attempt to discover real, *i. e.*, conceptual knowledge by a critical analysis of their notions, their supposed knowledge very often vanished into nothing. But this was not the end Socrates sought. Timon, the Satyrist, and Zeno, the Epicurean, are therefore wrong in describing Socrates "as a buffoon whose sole object was to turn everything into ridicule, especially men of eminence." On the contrary, it was intended to act as a stirring and propulsive force. There was a great difference between the irony peculiar to Socrates and what is usually called irony, the kind peculiar to the Athenians.

This cross-questioning Socrates regarded as a religious duty. He refers to it in the most solemn hour of his life at his trial.²² A great admirer of Socrates, Cherephon, had put the question to the Pythian priestess at Delphi whether any other man was wiser than Socrates. The reply was that no other man was wiser. Socrates affirms that he was greatly perplexed on hearing this declaration from so infallible an authority, being conscious that he possessed no wisdom on any subject. After much meditation he resolved to test the oracle by measuring the wisdom of others with his own. He conversed with politicians, poets, orators, craftsmen and others. "The result which I acquired," says Socrates, "was, that I was a wiser man than they, for neither they nor I knew anything of what was truly good or honorable. The great difference between us was that they fancied that they knew something, while I was fully conscious of my own ignorance; I was thus wiser than they inasmuch as I was exempt from that capital error of conceit. Thus the oracle was proved to be right. Fulfilling the mission imposed upon me I have thus established the veracity of the god who meant to pronounce that human wisdom was of little

²² Plato, *Apologia*, 96.

reach or worth. My service to the god has not only constrained me to live in constant poverty and neglect of political estimation but has brought upon me a host of bitter enemies in those whom I have examined and exposed. Nevertheless it would be monstrous if I from fear of death were to disobey the oracle and desert the post which the god has assigned to me, cross-questioning both myself and others. And should you even now offer to acquit me on condition of my renouncing this duty, I should tell you that I will obey the god rather than you, and that I will persist until my dying day in cross-questioning you. If I tell you that silence on my part would be disobedience to the god you will think me unjust and not believe; but so it is."

SECOND STAGE: "INTELLECTUAL PREGNANCY."

The passing away of the illusions of false knowledge led to a mental quickening, which Plato, in his exuberant fancy, calls "intellectual pregnancy." This was the middle state in the ascent to the hill of truth, the state of *φιλοσοφία*, a love of wisdom. The three stages are described thus:²³ "No god philosophizes, or desires to become wise, for they are so. And if there is any other being who is wise, neither does he philosophize. Nor do the ignorant philosophize, for they do not desire to become wise. On this very account ignorance is in a hard case, in that a person, being neither beautiful nor good, nor wise, still appears to himself to be all-sufficient. Hence, he who fancies himself to be not wanting, does not desire that of which he fancies he is not in want. Who then, are they who philosophize if they are neither the wise nor the ignorant? This is clear even to a child, that they are those between both of these, the lovers. For of the things most beautiful is wisdom. Now love is conversant with the beautiful, consequently love is necessarily attached to wisdom. A lover of wisdom, a *φιλόσοφος*, is between the wise and the ignorant.

²³ Plato, *Symposium*, 510.

THIRD STAGE: MENTAL MAIEUTICS.

It is with such parturient minds as these that Socrates busied himself. Having created in them an uneasy longing after truth he regarded it as his special vocation and skill to aid them in that mental parturition whereby they were to be relieved. "In this I imitate my mother," he says.²⁴ "She no longer bears children herself, but being a midwife she helps others to bring their births into the world. In like manner I perform the office of a midwife to my friends. I put questions to them until the hidden fruit of their understanding comes to light. But at the same time I scrutinize narrowly the offspring which they bring forth; and if it prove distorted or unpromising I cast it away with the rigor of a Lycurgean nurse, whatever might be the reluctance of the mother-mind to part with its new born."

We must not overlook that the method of Socrates resulted from the notions he had formed respecting the nature of the soul. Socrates thought that little mental improvement could be produced by expositions directly communicated, or by matter lodged in the memory. It was necessary in his opinion, that mind should work upon mind, by short question and answer in order to generate new thoughts and powers. This he thought the only effectual way of propagating the philosophic spirit. Instead, therefore, of commencing with lofty speculations, often unintelligible for most of those whom one wishes to instruct, we should in the opinion of Socrates take hold of men's minds as they are, with their ideas and even their prejudices, in order to gradually raise them to the knowledge of truth. He was persuaded that the soul contained the germs of the truth, but enveloped and even smothered by vain opinions engendered by what is fleeting and seeming. He began therefore by setting the soul free from this envelope in order to give scope for the development of these innate germs. We should, he thought, go in among these false notions, put them in opposition to each other and thus make

²⁴ *Theæt.*, 150, *μαιεύσθαι με ὁ θεὸς ἀναγκάξω γεννᾶν δὲ ἀπεκώλυσεν.*

them destroy one another. Hence the subtle disputations to which Socrates did not disdain to descend. It is in the dialogue "Meno," where Socrates unfolds this remarkable hypothesis of eternal preëxistence, boundless past experience and omniscience of the mind. All knowledge is reminiscence. When truth is presented to us we recognize it as an old friend after a long absence. We know it by reason of its conformity to our antecedent, pre-natal experience; the mind has become omniscient by having seen, heard and learned everything, both on earth and in hades, but such knowledge exists as a confused and unavoidable mass, having been buried and forgotten on the commencement of its actual life. By suitable interrogations a teacher may recall to the memory of his pupils many facts and judgments which have been hitherto forgotten. In modern terminology we would speak of these observations as the doctrine of innate ideas.

FOURTH STAGE: VALID DEFINITIONS.

In all his questioning Socrates did not deny that he was after the essence of things and the finding of the "concepts." "To search out the What of everything was the unceasing care of Socrates," says Xenophon. With this fundamental theory that true knowledge must be based on correct conceptions, however simple it may appear to us, an entire change in the intellectual process was demanded. In previous philosophy thought had been directed immediately to the object as such, things were regarded as being what they appeared to be to the senses; or if contradictory experience forbade this it clung to those appearances which made the strongest impression on the observer, declaring these to constitute the essence and thence draw further conclusions. In the Socratic philosophy thought was directed immediately to the conception, and to the object only mediately, through the conception. In so much as all scientific thought is inseparably connected Socrates attached importance to even trivial subjects as not unworthy of careful investigation regarding the connection between the

thought and the thing, because even these were connected with all truth by means of whatever truth or certainty they contained.

INDUCTION AS THE ESSENCE OF THE SOCRATIC METHOD.

The term in modern philosophy for the Socratic method is induction. By induction Socrates reached "conceptual knowledge." That is, he advanced from facts to abstractions, from the particular to the universal, from the known to cases hitherto unobserved or unexamined. "To Socrates we may unquestionably assign two novelties, inductive discourses and the definitions of general terms," writes his great pupil Aristotle. But this process of induction Socrates did not reduce within clearly-defined lines. All that he has clearly expressed is the general postulate that everything must be reduced to its concept and that true knowledge belongs only to the concept. Further details about the mode and manner of this induction and its strict logical forms were not yet molded into a theory. The method was applied by him rather as the result of individual skill.

By this entire process Socrates brought people to see, as Plato puts it, the one in the many and the many in the one. Assuredly we may echo Grote's statement, that it requires at the present day some mental effort to see anything important in the invention of notions so familiar as those of genus, definition, the individual things as comprehended in a genus—what each thing is, and to what genus it belongs, etc. Nevertheless four centuries before Christ these terms denoted mental processes which few, if any but Socrates, had a distinct recognition of, in the form of analytical consciousness. The novelty was very distasteful to those who were not seduced by it. Men resent being forced to rigor of speech and thought; they call you "pedantic" if you insist on their using terms with definite meaning; they prefer the loose flowing language of indefinite associations which picks up in its course a variety of heterogenous meanings; and are irritated at any speaker who points out to them the inaccuracy of their phrases.

The following dialogue may serve to illustrate the different stages of the Socratic method. Meno.—Can you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue is teachable? Socrates.—I am ashamed to say that I do not even know what virtue is, and when I do not know what a thing is, how can I know anything about its attributes? M.—But is it really true, Socrates, that you do not know what virtue is? S.—Yes, and more than this I have never met with any one who did know. Meno proceeds to answer that there are many virtues: the virtue of a man—competence to transact the business of the city. The virtue of a woman—to administer the house well. The virtue of a child, of an old man, a slave, etc. Socrates rejects this answer. I asked for the virtue and you mention a host of virtues. In answer to my question you ought to declare what all the single virtues have in common, through the communion of which they are virtues. Meno tries again, and answers, “it is to be competent, to exercise command over men.” Socrates is not satisfied with this answer and rejoins: “but that will not suit for the virtue of a child or a slave.” M.—Very true. I say too, that there are other virtues, namely, courage, moderation, wisdom, etc. S.—But my good man, we are thus still in the same predicament. In looking for one virtue, we have found many; but we cannot find that one form which runs through them all. Meno in his bewilderment exclaims: “Your conversation Socrates, produces the effect of a shock of a torpedo. You stun and confound me. I have often discoursed copiously—and as I thought effectively—upon virtue, but now you have shown that I do not even know what virtue is.” Socrates replies: “If I throw you into perplexity it is only because I am myself in the like perplexity and ignorance. I do not know what virtue is any more than you and I shall be glad to continue the search after it if you will assist me.”

This dialogue illustrates admirably the various stages of the Socratic method. First, he knows not what virtue is; secondly, he examines Meno and finds that he also knows not the con-

cept of virtue, and affirms that he never found one who knew it; thirdly, he creates doubt and perplexity in the mind of Meno, accompanied by an intense desire to arrive at certainty; fourthly, Socrates assists his interlocutor in bringing to daylight what was slumbering in his mind. The whole process is inductive in that it proceeds from propositions best known to truths less known and culminates in the definition of the essence of the thing under consideration, the forming of a concept. The concept of virtue, indeed, was not found; but, what was more important to Socrates, the "concept of the concept" was found. From henceforth Meno knew what a real definition must look like.