

Exercise #1

Do you think, Meno, that anyone, knowing that bad things are bad, nevertheless desires them? -- I certainly do.

What do you mean by desiring? Is it to secure for oneself? --What else?

Does he think that the bad things benefit him who possesses them, or does he know they harm him?

There are some who believe that the bad things benefit them, others who know that the bad things harm them.

And do you think that those who believe that bad things benefit them know that they are bad?

No, that I cannot altogether believe.

It is clear then that those who do not know things to be bad do not desire what is bad, but they desire those things that they believe to be good but that are in fact bad. It follows that those who have no knowledge of these things and believe them to be good clearly desire good things. Is that not so? --It is likely.

--Plato, *Meno* 77c4-e4

Please write 300-700 words answering the following questions based on the text above:

1. What is Plato trying to do in this passage, i.e., what thesis is he defending and why?
2. Is there an argument being advanced in the passage? If so, please indicate the premises and conclusion in a way that shows how the premises are supposed to support the conclusion.
2. What questions of interpretation arise about Plato's meaning? Are there confusing passages, or ones that could have multiple meanings? What possible interpretations seem most reasonable and why? What difference does it make if the author is interpreted in one way or another? What evidence can you provide that your interpretation is the best one?
4. What background assumptions does Plato seem to be relying on?
5. How does this passage fit into Plato's larger aims in the text as a whole?

Essays are due at the beginning of class on Session 4.

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