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Meno's "Paradox": An Analysis of the Eristic Argument

Many attempts have been made in order to analyze and/or unriddle the so-called "Meno's 'Paradox'". Among those who were more interested in the general framework of the dialogue but not particularly and solely in the "paradox" itself, Rosemary Desjardins succeeds in forming a wider glance over the whole of the dialogue¹ which inarguably requires a strenuous effort, and is able to "re-collect" answers to the main questions that are posed in the beginning of the dialogue such as "what is virtue?" and whether it can be taught or not.

When it comes to her opinion concerning the paradox, Desjardins should indeed be called right in her claim that "Meno's paradox actually strikes with a peculiarly contemporary flavor and force..."² since it is not preternatural to chance upon sophisticated reasonings, refutations, "ἐριστικοὶ λόγοι" as Plato described them, in the "problems" of contemporary epistemology, the contributors of which usually assume that those who indulge in etymology and etymological analyses are seen as wallowing in some sort of a peculiar "athleticism"³ that is frivolous, and in an attempt the result of which is often described as indigent. Etymology, however, not in its mere form as looking up words from a most trusted and highly acknowledged dictionary, but as philology, as the fundamental basis of any philosophical inquiry, often requires ample effort, intricate analyses and abysmal scrutiny through which only, one can savvy the philosophical problem while dissecting the text that is in question.

I aim to manifest in this paper using a philological approach that the two claims that come together to bring about this eristic argument by no means make a paradox. The 'eristic' feature of the argument has been emphasized quite a many

¹ Rosemary Desjardins, "Knowledge and Virtue: Paradox in Plato's 'Meno'", *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 39, No.2 (Dec. 1985), pp. 261–281.

² *Ibid.*, p. 264.

³ Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, Columbia University Press, New York 1994, p. 8.

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times⁴, but it seemingly is not conspicuous, and therefore requires further analysis in order that one can point out where the fallacy exactly rests.

In the following *philological* analysis I believe I have solved a problem, which throughout the history of philosophy, has taken much more credit than it should really have.

Many papers point out that Socrates attempts and manages to solve the difficulty regarding one's knowing some one thing by introducing the discussion concerning ἀνάμνησις and calling out for the slave boy.⁵ Nevertheless once the eristic argument is uttered, Socrates immediately presents his judgment for its quality, calling it “not sound”, and seems to be somewhat reluctant to meddle with sophistic babble. The fact that Socrates simply “changes the subject” and seems not keen on discussing further on this point is not because he regards the argument as an epistemic dilemma that is unrealizably difficult to deal with but because he thinks that it is simply not worth the effort even to try looking into it. The discussion concerning ἀνάμνησις on the other hand, which we are going to discuss in this paper right after dealing with the eristic argument, is introduced separately in the dialogue in order to shed light into how knowing comes about.

Thus, showing what is really eristic/sophistical about the argument seems like one task that needs to be fulfilled.

⁴ Among many see J. T. Bedu-Addo, “Recollection and the Argument ‘From a Hypothesis’ in Plato’s Meno, *The Journal of Hellenistic Studies*, Vol. (1984), pp. 1–14; and also Robert G. Hoerber, «Plato’s ‘Meno’» *Phronesis*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1960), pp. 78–102.

⁵ T. Bedu-Addo, *op. cit.*, p. 1, claims that “Socrates describes this paradox as a piece of eristic, but he does not dismiss it. To resolve it, he introduces the theory of recollection, ἀνάμνησις (81a–e); R. Desjardins, *op. cit.*, p. 265, argues that “Socrates’ way of cutting through dilemma is to introduce the theory of recollection”; his conception of the theory of recollection much different than that of DeJardins’, and mine being much closer to that of DeJardins’, Dale Jacquette also claims that “Socrates’ purpose in examining Meno’s slave is to demonstrate that even if knowledge cannot be acquired, the soul is in permanent possession of knowledge of Forms, and so has no need to acquire it.” (Dale Jacquette, “Socrates’ Ironic Image of Meno”, *The Personalist Forum*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Fall 1996), p. 127.)

Firstly, this argument⁶ seems to block out any possibility of an inquiry (ζητέιν). And this is why it seems to create an ἀπορία, a no way out situation. Since it comes with the claim that “one cannot search either for what one knows or what one does not know”, it seems to suggest that one is at a loss about starting an inquiry concerning some one object. However the “illusion” of the eristic argument lies exactly here, for the argument hides the area of ζητέιν (inquiry) by means of a deliberate word choice, though it is still there for the inquirer.

I argue that it necessary to make a philological analysis of the argument, point out where the fallacy exactly rests and show the possibility of any ζητέιν. In order to do this kind of an analysis we should first introduce some types of “knowing”:

Throughout ancient Greek texts ‘knowing’ and ‘knowledge’ are used and said in many ways. There are different words used to express the verb ‘to know’ and each of them implies knowing in a different sense. Some of these different types of *knowing* are⁷:

- (1) γινώσκειν (often interchangeable with γνωρίζειν): a knowledge type that always follows a certain kind of αἴσθησις (perception). γινώσκειν means recognizing, discerning, distinguishing something, noticing, being aware of some one thing, being aware that that one thing is, among many others.
- (2) εἰδέναι: (knowing in a wider, more general sense): usually covers for the everydayness usage of the term “knowing” in situations such as when you need to express an “information” you have concerning some one thing.
- (3) ἐπίστασθαι: knowing thoroughly with reasons and principles.

Having introduced these types of knowing, from here let us go back to the text only to trace the development of the argument, and using the points that we

⁶ “[A] human being cannot search either for what he/she knows or for what he/she does not know. He/she cannot search for what he/she knows – since he /she knows it, there is no need to search – nor for what he/she does not know, for he/she does not know what to look for.” When quoting this passage, I mainly stuck to the Grube translation (Plato, *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*, trans. by G.M.A. Grube, 2nd edition, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis 2002, 80e.) but I felt the need to alter his translation of ἄνθρωπος as man to human being, and also the gender of the personal pronouns, since ἄνθρωπος cannot fairly be restricted to men only.

⁷ For a detailed analysis of different types of knowing see Saffet Babür, “Episteme in Aristotle”, *Philosophy in Yeditepe I*, Vol. I, (2002), pp. 7–20.

have introduced so far let us try to unravel what the argument screens, and in what way and by means of what it beguiles.

In the passages following 80d a new discussion in the dialogue arises with a question directed at Socrates by Meno, who seems to fall short of coming up with a solid answer to the question ‘what is virtue?’.

How are you to search for virtue, if you do not know (μὴ οἶσθα) what it is?⁸

After claiming that what Meno is trying to express is an ἐριστικός λόγος, Socrates once again in his own words utters what he thinks Meno is trying to say⁹:

...[A] human being cannot search either for what he/she knows (εἰδέναι) or for what he/she does not know (εἰδέναι). He/she cannot search for what he knows (εἰδέναι) – since he /she knows (εἰδέναι) it, there is no need to search – nor for what he/she does not know (εἰδέναι), for he/she does not know (εἰδέναι) what to look for.¹⁰ (80e)

It is worth to note here –again- that right after Socrates puts it forth, Meno asks Socrates whether he finds this argument (λόγος) beautiful (κάλος) or not, and Socrates, thinking no highly of this argument, claims that it is not beautiful.

The first sentence of the quote goes as follows: “ a human being cannot search either for what he/she knows or for what he/she does not know” (ζητεῖν ἀνθρώπων οὔτε ὃ οἶδε οὔτε ὃ μὴ οἶδε). Here the term translated as “knowing” is εἰδέναι, which implies knowing in a general, wider sense. Using εἰδέναι for both of these cases, namely when saying ‘a human being cannot search either for what he/she knows’ and ‘a human being cannot search either for what he/she does not know’ gives the impression that both of these types of knowing are said in the same sense. However, on the contrary, what we are trying to state with the term “knowing” when we say “a human being cannot search either for what he/she knows”

⁸ Plato, *op. cit.*, 80e.

⁹ Although the “paradox” is commonly attributed to Meno himself and thereby called “Meno’s Paradox”, I agree with Jon Moline who claims that “Socrates does not ‘restate’ Meno’s remark – he slyly replaces it for his own (legitimate) purposes in the dialogue.” Jon Moline, “Meno’s Paradox?”, *Phronesis*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1969), p. 154.

¹⁰ Plato, *op. cit.*, 80e.

is dramatically different in comparison to what we mean by the same word when we say: "a human being cannot search either for what he/she does not know".

Thus, here using εἰδέναι for both of these cases seems to be some sort of a skillful sophistry, a deceit. For according to what we have stated, εἰδέναι implies knowing in a wider and general sense. But in the sentences quoted above highly specific meanings are hidden behind the term εἰδέναι. The problem with using εἰδέναι is that this term not only lacks the power to emphasize these distinct and different meanings but also it veils and conceals them.

When we look further into the argument, we also quickly notice that the deduction has no formal order but the conclusion statement of the argument is stated first. Let us then rewrite the argument in the following order so that we can observe the reasoning more clearly:

A human being cannot search for what he/she knows

— since one knows it, there is no need to search

A human being cannot search for what he/she doesn't know,

for one does not know what to look for.

Conclusion: A human being cannot search either for what he/she knows or for what he/she does not know

The following analysis of the two premises of the argument aims to shed light to the covert meanings of knowing that are veiled by the verb εἰδέναι:

Case/Premise 1: Using of εἰδέναι instead of ἐπίστασθαι

A human being cannot search either for what he/she knows or for what he/she does not know. **He/she cannot search for what he/she knows — since he/she knows it, there is no need to search** – nor for what he/she does not know, for he/she does not know what to look for.¹¹

When we say that "a human being cannot search either for what he/she knows", here we imply knowing something with its causes and principles, knowing or

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 80e.

grasping what something really is. This is the exact point where our investigation regarding some one object comes to an end¹² and where we no longer feel it necessary to inquire about the object in question, but have landed upon a conclusion, namely the *what it is for that object to be* (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι)¹³. To form this type of a knowing is not an easy task, but once contrived it implies that the inquiry is complete.¹⁴

Case/Premise 2: Using of εἰδέναι instead of γνωρίζειν

A human being cannot search either for what he/she knows or for what he/she does not know. He/she cannot search for what he knows – since he/she knows it, there is no need to search – **nor for what he/she does not know, for he/she does not know what to look for.**¹⁵

¹² The search came to an end only because one has now grasped the αἰτίαι and ἀρχαί (reasons and principles), “[s]ince that is when we say we know each thing, when we think we know its first cause, while the causes are meant in four ways, of which one is thinghood, or what it is for something to be, ...” (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. by Joe Sachs, Green Lion Press, Santa Fe, New Mexico 2002), 983a 29) (τότε γὰρ εἰδέναι φαμὲν ἕκαστον, ὅταν τὴν πρώτην αἰτίαν οἰώμεθα γνωρίζειν, τὰ δ’ αἴτια λέγεται τετραχῶς, ὡν μίαν αἰτίαν φαμὲν εἶναι τὴν οὐσίαν καὶ τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι (Aristoteles, *Metaphysik, Griechisch–Deutsch*, Meiner Verlag, 1991), 983a 29)

¹³ One can -and justifiably so- ask how a Platonic concept can be elucidated by means of an Aristotelian one, for the conventional way of dealing with the ancient texts almost always requires and considers as “sensible” the exact opposite of this approach. However, when it comes to grasping Aristotelian texts, there comes out a necessity to take Platonic concepts as a background or a field of inquiry in order that one can trace the root meanings of the concepts which are handed down to Aristotle by no one but Plato himself for him to work on and further advance them. Furthermore, the well-crafted concepts of Aristotle offer immense help in dealing with Platonic concepts, which are used relatively looser and again with relative less coherency. A Platonic concept is almost always the “root-version” of an Aristotelian one, therefore a study of Aristotle without Plato or Plato without Aristotle, as is widely practiced, comes off as a slovenly effort. Additionally, not only they are explicable by means of one another but also they stand not as distinct and far off from each other in the things that they explain and in the manner they explain them, but quiet the contrary they are, with respect to what they do and how they philosophize, complementary.

¹⁴ One should perhaps add that the product of ἐπίστασθαι namely ἐπιστήμη by no means refers to “absolute knowledge” but on the contrary when one sees it necessary, namely when the conditions or the nature of the object in question change, this result can be reevaluated.

¹⁵ Plato, *op. cit.*, 80e.

When we say "a human being cannot search either for what he/she does not know", what we mean by knowing is more like recognizing, noticing something among all the other things, perceiving that that thing is that thing; namely what we mean with knowing, in this case is nothing but γνωρίζειν.

γνωρίζειν is one type of knowing which comprises recognizing, noticing or being aware of something, being aware that that something *is*. This "being aware" is a necessary condition for the start of each and every inquiry concerning some one object. Although necessary as a beginning, it is by itself not adequate enough to grasp the nature of the object in question. γνωρίζειν is a beginning and indeed an inescapable one, however there is a long and arduous way from γνωρίζειν (recognizing) to ἐπίστασθαι (grasping, understanding, figuring out the nature of some one thing). γνωρίζειν comes about only when it is preceded by an αἴσθησις (perception). We should recall the account Aristotle gives of αἴσθησις, which is more articulate and complex in comparison to that of Plato's which he provides us with in his dialogue titled *Theaetetus*, if we are to understand this concept clearly and its difference from any ἐπιστήμη.

In its primary sense and in general Aristotle grasps αἴσθησις (perception) as something that comes about or realizes within a certain range. Everything that falls out of this range stands as imperceptible to the animal, and in addition to that the excess of a certain quantity of perceptible data (for example: heat or cold) could easily destroy the organ of sense. The animal, let it be human or non-human, according to this threshold it comprises, "discriminates the things perceived"¹⁶.

If we try to further expand our explanation, we can claim that according to Aristotle the thing we call αἴσθησις begins and ends within a certain range. I can only capture those objects falling within this range as long as my δύναμις of αἴσθησις allows me to. In humans and other non-human animals there are different δυναμεις of αἴσθησις that have different limits and capacities (though in whatness what we call αἴσθησις is the same in both humans and other non-human animals) in capturing the different qualities of σῶμα qua σῶμα. Aristotle further argues that this κριτική δύναμις called αἴσθησις is not found in plants, and that

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Aristotle's On the Soul*, trans. by Joe Sachs, Green Lion Press, Santa Fe, New Mexico 2004, 424a 5.

means plants lack such a capacity that comprises a threshold of hearing, sight and other basic perceptions. That means while αἴσθησις requires a κριτικὸν μεσόν, plants do not have this sort of a complex structure. Whenever a plant comes in contact with something that is warm or something that is cold, it can only be affected from the heat or the cold with its ὕλη (matter). That indicates that the plant does not work on or “embroider” the data it receives from the object that is transmitting it the heat or the cold, but it merely receives that data without processing it and does so even up to that point which the plant ceases to be.

The δύναμις related to αἴσθησις in animals however makes a distinction between things that are to be perceived and does not perceive everything that comes in front of it. This is not the case with plants because plants lack κρίνειν. A δύναμις of κρίνειν in a being indicates capableness for distinguishing, processing and judgment (in a specific sense), and it is, according to Aristotle, an activity that comprises λόγος. Because plants do not partake from κρίνειν, we cannot argue that they have a δύναμις related to distinguishing, processing, measuring or discriminating.

The following quotes from different passages from Aristotle’s work provide further insight on αἴσθησις, and also explicate its difference from νόησις (thinking):

1. ...[T]he sense is receptive of the forms of perceptible things without their material.¹⁷

Here Aristotle aims to state that in perceiving we do not take the ὕλη of the thing we are to perceive, and literally put it in our brain. That thing, as a perceivable thing, remains there for others who are yet to perceive it. We only contrive its εἶδος within ourselves.

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The following is a quote from Aristotle’s *On Perception and Perceptible Things*:

2. ...[P]erception comes about through the body in the soul.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 421a 20.

¹⁸ Aristotle, *On the Soul-Parva Naturalia-On Breath*, trans. by W.S. Hett, Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1957, 436b 9.

It has to be noted that αἴσθησις itself is not a μέγεθος (427a 27). What is a μέγεθος is the thing that has the potency to perceive, namely the animal.

3. "...[B]eing a sense, or...being perceptive...is certainly not of any size."¹⁹
4. "...[S]ense perception is a λόγος, and what is excessive undoes or destroys λόγος."²⁰

In the 2nd Book of his treatise called *On the Soul* Aristotle makes the following clear with distinctions made with regard to αἴσθησις: "sense perception when directed at its proper object is always truthful".²¹ That is, in the case of basic perceptions such as seeing, hearing, smelling, touching and tasting, if the object to be perceived is not far away, i.e. standing within a certain distance, it is not possible to speak of a false perception. We have already uttered that αἴσθησις is a κρίνειν and an activity that involves λόγος. Therefore it has to be asserted that measuring-eliminating-discriminating is necessary for every single sense perception. For instance in the perception called sight we distinguish the red thing from the yellow one; by touching, the hard one from the soft one or the hot one from the cold one.

In 426b 15 and cont. Aristotle asks the following: what tells us that the thing that is hot and the one that is hard are different? Our δύναμις called αἴσθησις falls short when trying to provide us with an answer to this question. The answer to this question should be formed next to or come after an αἴσθησις, as something in addition to it. Individual sense perceptions cannot come up with such distinctions, for here "something common is being said at a single time" regarding the object of both perceptions. Therefore arriving upon such distinction is not something that can be achieved solely with the δύναμις called αἴσθησις, but it is something that can be contrived with what we call νόησις (thinking). According to Aristotle, from the δυναμεις of the soul, αἴσθησις and φρονεῖν are not the same, as some philosophers (as for instance Empedocles) have stated. In addition to that, thinking is not "something bodily like perceiving".²²

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Aristotle's On the Soul*, *op. cit.*, 424a 28.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 426b 8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 427b 12.

²² *Ibid.*, 427a 29.

While there is sense perception in all animals, thinking through (φρωνέν) is present only in some of them (427b 7). Whereas νόησις (thinking) is distinguished from αἴσθησις in the following aspects:

...[I]n thinking there is what is right and what is not right, right thinking being understanding and knowing and true opinion, and the opposites of these not being right; ...sense perception when directed at its proper objects is always truthful.²³

In 418a 7 and cont. Aristotle elaborates in what senses αἰσθητόν (that which is perceived) may be used:

<i>AISTHETON</i>		
<i>kat' auto</i>		<i>kata symbebekos</i>
<i>idion</i>	<i>koinon</i>	
Sight	Motion	While saying “the white thing is the son of Diares”, the white thing’s being the son of Diares is incidental.
Hearing	Rest	
Touch	Number	
Taste	Shape	
Smell	Size	
(κύριως ἐστὶν αἰσθητά, πρὸς ἃ ἡ οὐσία πέφυκεν ἐκάστης αἰθήσεως)		

Among the different types of αἰσθήσεις, κοινή αἴσθησις is one key concept for any comprehension of γνωρίζειν. κοινή αἴσθησις (general perception) as distinct from the other basic five perceptions, implies our grasp and awareness of one object’s being in motion or being at rest; its being “one” or a many of them being “many”; or one object having this or that shape; or being this or that size.

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With regard to γνωρίζειν, when a person recognizes (γνωρίζει), it occurs to him/her that this certain object is, and that it is standing within his recognition scope. But considering the *whatness* of this object that is newly recognized, an obscurity still takes place.

²³ *Ibid.*, 427b 7–13.

“Not knowing what to look for”, however, is a state of not recognizing, a being unaware of the presence of a particular object. Nevertheless it is very much possible for a person to notice something, take it as his/her object and then start an inquiry concerning its nature.

Thus, in the above analysis we have successfully laid out that it is an ill choice to use the term *ειδέναι* in both of the cases that are presented in the eristic argument, for the specific meanings and their implications are being veiled by it.

We had however claimed before that the argument creates the illusion that there isn't any possibility of *ζητείν*. After having analyzed the argument philologically we can now rewrite and relook at it:

- (a) A human being cannot search either for what he/she knows (*ἐπίστασθαι*) or for what he/she does not know (*γιννώσκειν*). He/she cannot search for what he/she knows (*ἐπίστασθαι*) — since he/she knows (*ἐπίστασθαι*) it, there is no need to search — nor for what he/she does not know (*γιννώσκειν*), for he/she does not know (*γιννώσκειν*) what to look for. (80e)
- (a') A human being cannot search for what he/she knows (*ἐπίστασθαι*) —since he/she knows it, there is no need to search (T)
A human being cannot search for what he/she does know (*γνωρίζειν*), for he/she does not know what to look for. (T)


Conclusion: A human being cannot search either for what he/she knows (*ἐπίστασθαι*) or for what he/she does not know (*γνωρίζειν*) (T)

The argument now seems to contain two true premises and a true conclusion derived most healthily out of these. Besides, there is no trace of any paradox.

Furthermore, having analyzed the argument in this way it is necessary to state that it is very much possible for a man or a woman to search for (1) what he/she does not know (*οὐκ ἐπίσταται*) and (2) also for what he/she knows (*γνωρίζει*)²⁴. Therefore one is not at a loss about starting with an inquiry about something.

²⁴ One recognizes something, one perceives/is aware that that thing is, then the inquiry concerning that object starts.

The following table indicates the domain of the eristic argument and the domain of any possible ζητεῖν (inquiry):

	ζητεῖν	ζητεῖν	
	αἰσθησις → γνωρίζειν		→ ἐπίστασθαι
Before αἰσθησις & γνωρίζειν no ζητεῖν (inquiry) as the argument points out. 	Perceive, recognize, choose one object to conduct your investigation	This is where a certain type of ζητεῖν (inquiry) comes about	Where the inquiry concerning some one object comes to an end and reaches a stability: <i>epistemi</i> ; to stand firm upon some place. ²⁵ No ζητεῖν as the argument suggests.
	What the “eristic” argument points out and is right about pointing at		

Another chapter in this inquiry requires that we investigate into what Plato is trying to state by introducing the εἰκων of ἀνάμνησις. For as we have stated in the beginning of this paper many scholars point out to ἀνάμνησις as the solution Plato offers for the eristic problem regarding knowing at 8od.

When we follow the text we see that in passages following 81c Socrates introduces the argument which suggests that learning is recollection (ἀνάμνησις).

...[F]or searching and learning are, as a whole, recollection.²⁶

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In order to show that learning is recollection, Socrates asks Meno to fetch one of the slaves that work for him, and with proper questioning Socrates makes the slave almost solve a geometrical problem. Meanwhile Socrates asks Meno to observe this questioning in order to find out whether Socrates is teaching the slave something that he didn't know beforehand. For he claims the following: 'I shall do nothing more than ask questions, and not teach him.'²⁷

²⁵ See Greek-English Lexicon by H. G. Liddell, Harper&Brothers Publishers, New York 1853.

²⁶ τὸ γὰρ ζητεῖν ἄρα καὶ τὸ μανθάνειν ἀνάμνησις ὅλον ἐστίν. (Translation: Plato, *op. cit.*, 81d.)

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 84c.

Socrates, in explaining how he shall question the slave, asserts that he is only going to ask for the opinions (δόξαι) in him (84d). The slave then obviously has some opinions in him, which he held prior to or will end up forming upon Socrates' questioning him. However we know that the intention Socrates had when calling out for this slave boy instead of someone else was to invite someone into the discussion who had no prior knowledge or training in geometry, and thus he called for the slave boy. However when approaching this issue, we should also always keep in mind that according to Plato "...neither ἐπιστήμη nor ἀληθῆς δόξα come to men by nature but are acquired."²⁸ Therefore the answer to the question whether the slave boy ended up having the opinions he had about the geometrical puzzle directed at him by Socrates, or already had opinions concerning geometrical objects, and calculations regarding them, becomes apparent. The boy, having no prior knowledge or training in geometry, came near Socrates neither with a geometrical ἐπιστήμη nor with an ἀληθῆς δόξα but with one δύναμις which enabled him to form opinions (δόξαι) when Socrates tried the dialectical way of questioning on him.

Furthermore even when it comes to topics one is fairly knowledgeable about, unlike the slave boy in the example who has no knowledge at all regarding the subject of the discussion, we might assume that in each person there are usually some 'raw' opinions, which can be thought as some basic 'convictions' regarding some one object which imply that that object *is* or *might be* this way or the other. These raw opinions stay the way they are, unless the person, who has them, is questioned. Forming these opinions, on the other hand, start right after we perceive or discern a particular object, and determine it as distinct from all the other objects around it. Only after this γινώσκειν we can obtain some opinions regarding the nature of this object. However, these opinions are things Plato held as "shameful" and "ugly" only because it is not possible to work on a solid ground using them because they lack λόγος, which plainly means that the argumentation process behind them is frail.

Therefore what Plato is trying to explain by using recollection is by no means that we have *by nature* ἐπιστήμη nor δόξα but only that we have such a nature that is capable of contriving them, and that we do not have ἐπιστήμη or δόξα by nature but only have them δυνάμει.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 98d.

In passages following 86c we see Socrates persisting vigorously that ‘one should seek to find out what one does not know’²⁹. With this remark that Socrates makes, we are also reminded of the ἐριστικὸς λόγος that is uttered in 80e.

What we have conducted so far is not a mere etymological analysis but a philo-logical one³⁰ and this analysis of the eristic argument makes the following clear:

- (a) The argument Socrates introduces at 80e is by no means a paradox.
- (b) There is no ἀπορία awaiting that person who wants to conduct an investigation concerning some one thing.
- (c) The eristic feature of the argument is due to the wide meaning of the term εἰδέναι that is used in this very argument exactly to create the illusion of a paradox.

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²⁹ *Ibid.*, 86c.

³⁰ “If philology means the passion for knowledge of what has been expressed, then what we are doing is philology.” (Martin Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, trans. by R. D. Metcalf and M. B. Tanzer, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis 2009, pp. 23–24.)

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