





# The value of knowledge

12 November 2007

# Outline

- Why is knowledge important?
- Plato, *Meno*
- Recent answers



# Why is knowledge important?

Some first suggestions:

Knowledge helps you decide what to do

Knowledge helps you get what you want

Knowledge is power

# Why is knowledge important?

Some first suggestions:

Knowledge helps you decide what to do

Knowledge helps you get what you want

Knowledge is power

... or maybe knowledge isn't important

# Why ask why?

Why ask why knowledge is important?

If we find out that knowledge is not important, then we might as well do something other than study.

# Why ask why?

Why ask why knowledge is important?

If we find out that knowledge is not important, then we might as well do something other than study.

(Like pursue virtue, or pleasure.

And not try to solve the Gettier problem.)

# Plato (429-347 BC)



# Meno

Reading: Meno, 96e-98b

Handout

(Or follow link on course home page)

# Background

Plato (429-347 BC)

Athens, Greece

Socrates

The Academy

# Background

*Meno*

dialogue

translation

Socrates or Plato?

What is virtue? Can virtue be taught?

# Other dialogues

What is justice?

What is piety?

What is wisdom?

What is love?

# The Socratic method

What is virtue?

Proposal: virtue is ...

Questioning

Puzzlement



# Outline of 96e-98b

1. An argument
2. An objection
3. A proposal

# 1 An argument

96e

(C1) Knowledge is not necessary for good or virtuous action.

A man who knows the way to Larissa can guide others there.

A man who does not know the way to Larissa, but has a true belief about the way to Larissa, can guide others there just as well.

So, (C2) True belief is no worse than knowledge as a guide to good or virtuous action.

## 2 An objection

97c6

Objection: A knower always chooses well. Not so if you have a true belief without knowledge.

Reply: If you a have a true belief, you choose well (as long as you have the true belief).

Puzzlement: "Why on earth is knowledge so much more highly valued ... ?"

# 3 A proposal

97d2

Analogy: statues of Daedalus have little value unless they are tied

True beliefs have little value unless they are bound "with an account of why they are true".

(C3) True beliefs which are secured are knowledge

(C4) Knowledge is more valuable than true belief because knowledge is secure.

Assumption: True belief is different from knowledge.



# Question

What is wrong in this passage?