

PLATO'S EARLIER EPISTEMOLOGY:
AN OVERVIEW BASED ON THE DIALOGUE *MENO*

The Seminar will examine Plato's earlier views on various topics of epistemological interest, such as the question of definition, the paradox of learning, the doctrine of recollection, the method of hypothesis, the distinction between knowledge and (true) belief etc. The analysis will proceed by following the argument in Plato's *Meno*, a dialogue of considerable interest as marking a transition in the author's development from an early 'Socratic' and essentially aporetic phase, where merely negative results may be reached, to a more positive and constructive way of doing philosophy, where one may aspire to the attainment of cognitive certainty. At this stage the author seems not to have developed yet his full-blown theory of transcendent Ideas, but to posit some of the basic problems which this theory was meant to address. In this way the reader may gain some insight into the philosophical issues underlying Plato's ideas, and thus to understand more fully the motivation of his philosophical enterprise as a whole.

I would be advisable for those attending the seminar to have a preliminary acquaintance with the development of the argument in the dialogue, which may be obtained by reading any of the easily available good English translations of the dialogue, such as those in J. Cooper, *Plato: Complete Works*, or W.C.K. Guthrie, *Plato: Protagoras and Meno* in the Penguin Classics series.