

HOW SIGNIFICANT IS SOCRATES' MIDWIFERY?

Introduction:

In the opening dialogues of the *Theaetetus* Socrates refers to himself as midwife. He says, "I am the son of a midwife.... I practise the same art' [8]. It is obvious that Plato is using 'midwife' in a metaphorical sense'. The significance of this metaphor has been questioned¹. In general, often, three implications are drawn from this metaphor:

(1) Through the metaphor of the midwife Plato refers to a particular method used by Socrates in practicing and teaching philosophy which is found mostly in the *Theaetetus* and in the *Sophist*.

(2) For Plato midwifery is the method of extraction of a body of *a priori* knowledge that is in the mind of the knower.

(3) For Plato *a priori* knowledge is really *Recollection*. This is sometimes also referred to as the doctrine of *Anamnesis*.

My purpose, in this essay, is to present a cautious survey of all these three implications and show that the metaphor can only be rationally concluded to imply (1); midwifery refers to a method which is also sometimes called the dialectical method. Any attempt to extend the metaphor beyond that to (2) & (3) may lead to baseless speculation. In this paper I shall also show that although there are different uses of the word 'dialectic', as opposed to the method of the sophists (which is the 'art of persuasion'), when used in connection with the metaphor of the 'midwife' the word 'dialectic' has a very restricted sense — that of hypothesis testing.

This essay is divided into three main sections. As this essay is a search for the significance of the metaphor of 'midwife', in section 1, I shall try to counter-act those views that claim that the metaphor of

the midwife is a 'literal joke'. In the same section I shall also try to bring out why I think that the metaphor of the midwife refers to a method at all. In section 2, I shall try to bring out the exact nature of the method that is referred to by the metaphor of the midwife. In section 3, I shall consider the other implications that are sometimes drawn from the metaphor. In subsection 1 of this section I shall point out the following: In the absence of sufficient evidence, it is baseless speculation to say that the use of the metaphor of the midwife implies that for Plato there is a body of *a priori* knowledge in the mind of the knower. Further, Plato uses other metaphors both in the *Theaetetus* and in other dialogues which also imply that we cannot conclude that for Plato there is a body of *a priori* knowledge in the mind of the knower which has to be brought out by discussion in the style of Socrates. In subsection 2, I shall consider whether the metaphor implies the doctrine of *Anamnesis* at all. In the conclusion we shall consider whether or not this method, as used in the *Theaetetus*, shows that there is an unbroken continuity in Plato's thought.

1. The Question of Method

Socrates' claims in the *Theaetetus* that he has adopted his mother Phaenaret's profession -that of midwifery. Socrates says, "I am the son of a midwife... I practise the same art..." [8]. Socrates also says that while Phaenaret deals with women, he deals with young men. Further, while Phaenerte deals with the physical body of the women, Socrates deals with the *intellect* of the young men. Socrates says, "My art of midwifery is in general like theirs; the only difference is that my patients are men, not women, and my concern is not with the body but with the soul that is in travail of birth"[9]. So what Socrates does can be termed 'intellectual midwifery'. This means giving birth to viable ideas from the mind of the young men pregnant with ideas.

As I believe that the metaphor has a restricted significance, I shall begin by refuting two these. First is that of Campbell's[21], according to which the metaphor of the midwife is a 'literal joke'. To this my reply is that the metaphor does become a 'literal joke' when pushed too far. By "pushed too far" I mean that it is meant to imply the doctrine of *Anamnesis*. For, as Macdowell says, "The theory of Recollection.... is a doctrine; and one moreover which is now generally agreed to be Plaonic rather than Socratic....". But so far as the metaphor refers to a method, it is not a literal joke. Wengert[20], also questions

the significance of this metaphor. According to him, Socrates can never be an intellectual midwife as he does not have the qualifications of a midwife. I refuse to accept this. Why? In order to answer this question let us see what the qualifications of a midwife are. A midwife is a middle-aged woman, who once did give birth to children but is now past the age of child-bearing[4]. Further, the midwife cannot create the offspring but can only bring it out from the mother's womb. Also, the midwife, has other subsidiary charges, like testing a woman and declaring whether she is pregnant or not. However, the most important task of the midwife, as I see it, is to test the offspring and declare whether it is healthy or still-born. There are three significant things to be noted about a midwife.

1. She does not put the child into the mother's womb.
2. She merely brings out the child.
3. She tests the offspring to see if it is healthy or not.

Now, let us go back to Socrates. The metaphor of the midwife is found only in the *Theaetetus*. Let us see what qualifications Socrates declares that he has, in this particular dialogue. *Theaetetus*, it is generally agreed, is one of the later dialogues of Plato where we see a matured Socrates. Socrates says, "I am so far like the midwife, that I cannot myself give birth to wisdom.... I can myself bring nothing to light because there is no wisdom in me"[9]. He tests younger men to see whether they have some ideas in their mind, (i.e., whether they are spiritually pregnant or empty). Socrates responds to Theaetetus's concern over his inability to answer the question on knowledge as he did the one on mathematics by claiming that Theaetetus is not empty but pregnant. Now Socrates takes upon himself the task of eliciting the idea from the mind of Theaetetus, an idea which he, as a midwife, has not put there. Socrates tests the idea to see if it is genuine or is still-born. Socrates says, "And the highest point of my art is the power to prove by every test whether the offspring of a young man's thought is a false phantom or instinct with life and truth"[9]. So we see that Socrates performs the following functions.

1. He produces no philosophical theses himself.
2. He elicits these from the mind of others.
3. He tests theses for genuineness.

So we see that Socrates performs all the tasks of a good midwife. One important thing about the *Theaetetus* is that all the ideas produced by

Theaetetus are refuted. This has led some commentators² to conclude that Socrates' methodology is merely destructive. I refuse to accept this conclusion. I see the method as both constructive and destructive. I would say that Plato presents in a constructive light the destructive dialectics of Socrates. As Ryle puts it, "He (Socrates) can abstract ideas from his pregnant answerer and test them, if necessary, to destruction. Apparently this destruction is nearly always necessary. Here Plato seems to be sitting on the fence. He is representing Socratic dialectic as being at one and the same time eclectic and solution-hunting, as thesis-demolishing and thesis-hunting"³[23].

1.1 Midwifery as a Method

The metaphor of the midwife occurs only in the *Theaetetus*. What is significant about this sole occurrence? The significant thing is that Plato deliberately sets up the metaphor of the midwife in the *Theaetetus* in order to contrast the true philosophical method with another method. What is this other method? Plato deliberately chose as opponents to Socrates the opposite viewpoint of Protagoras, who represents the school which believes in the 'art of persuasion'. Thus, the 'other' method of teaching philosophy is *sophistry* or *rhetoric*⁴. The further proves that he has one rival method in mind — *sophistry*. The philosopher's method is the dialectical method in contrast to the sophist's method. What is the basic aim of the sophists? Their aim is not to reach truth but to win over the opponent by mere play of words. So the sophists have no particular wish to produce a healthy offspring (in this case an idea). Their only aim is to get victory irrespective of what idea they produce. In contrast to this, the dialectical method used by Socrates is used to attain truth. In this case the question of attaining the truth is taken seriously. The difference between the two approaches can be seen in their basic philosophy. For Protagoras, who is one of Socrates' opponents here, "man is the measure of all things", which can be interpreted as being individualistic. Personal victory is important for this kind of thinker. Whereas for the philosopher, the real seeker after truth, not personal combat and victory, but the attainment of real knowledge is the goal. Further, whereas, the sophists *claim to give knowledge*⁵, the philosopher-dialectician brings it out from the mind of the person she is questioning. The dialectician, after eliciting important theses from the minds of his student, tests each thesis and either accepts or refutes it. Burneyet says, "Here, then, are two

contrasting notions of education. The sophist treats his pupil as an empty receptacle to be filled from the outside with the teacher's ideas. Socrates respects the pupil's own creativity, holding that, with the right kind of assistance, the young man will produce ideas from his own mind and will be able to work out for himself whether they are true or false. Like childbirth, the process can be painful, for it hurts to be made to formulate one's own ideas and, having done so, to find out for oneself what they are worth (151a,c)"[15].

2. Nature of the 'Method' of Midwifery

We have said before that the reference to Socrates as a midwife occurs only in the *Theaetetus*. It occurs at the beginning of the discussion between Socrates and Theaetetus, where Socrates explicitly says that he will act like a midwife and help Theaetetus to give birth to ideas. What does this signify? This signifies that by the method of midwifery we should mean that method used throughout the *Theaetetus*. What I deem most important of all in *Theaetetus* is the method of hypothesis-testing. I hold hypothesis-testing to be the core method of the *Theaetetus* because this is the method followed by Socrates throughout in order to get a definition of knowledge. This fact is directly supported by Socrates when he says that the highest point of his art is the power to prove by every test whether the offspring of a young man's thought is a false phantom or instinct with life and truth[9].

In order to understand this method more thoroughly we have to know about the general structure of the method used in *Theaetetus*. *Theaetetus* is a search for the answer to the question 'What is knowledge?' In answering this question throughout *Theaetetus* proposes one hypothesis after another and Socrates gives each a thorough examination and then rejects it. This shows that the core of the method used in *Theaetetus* is thesis-testing or rather hypothesis-testing. And since Socrates explicitly talks about his using midwifery in *Theaetetus* my suggestion is that it is this hypothesis-testing method that is referred to by Socrates as the method of midwifery. This method involves several sub-steps. Although at first glance it seems that midwifery, as the hypothesis-testing method, is the examination and destruction of all hypotheses put forward by Theaetetus in response to Socrates' question 'What is knowledge?', however if we probed closely we shall see that the metaphor of 'midwifery' has a deeper significance. The

hypothesis-testing method really involves some deep steps and sub-steps, by which such a destruction of each hypothesis (or as Socrates calls them, Theaetetus's 'offsprings') are cancelled. The real significance of these subtle steps is that they have a distinct pattern, a pattern which connects Plato's entire methodology, used from *Phaedrus* 265A-266E, and *Phaedo* 101E and *Republic* 510B, 533C, through *Theaetetus* to its most sophisticated form in the *Sophist*. This is what I propose to show next. For this essay, this point is very important, because contrary to people who think that midwifery is a joke, this midwifery as the hypothesis-testing method becomes really a chain in a larger series of the method (henceforth P_m) which Plato hints at in his earlier dialogues, but which he finally spells out explicitly in the *Sophist* as the method of division and collection. Further, my claim is that at the centre of P_m is the search for necessary and sufficient condition or *definition* of things-like knowledge or virtue. To summarize, my claim against those who say that midwifery is a literal joke is this: Midwifery is the hypothesis testing method, but it has a greater significance also. It connects the center of P_m from the earlier dialogue say *Phaedo*[31], where P_m comes under the disguise of hypothetical method (henceforth H_m), through *Republic* as the "upward and downward" method (henceforth M_{ud}) to *Theaetetus* as the hypothesis testing or method of midwifery, and finally P_m gets its most sophisticated form in the *Sophist* as the method of collection and division (henceforth M_{dc}). It may be objected by some that this claim is too much and there is no basis for this. This is the objection that I shall refute.

Let us start by looking at the methods used in Plato's earlier dialogues starting with *Phaedo*, where Plato searches the question 'What is cause?'. Regarding his method in the *Phaedo*, Socrates clearly says, "....if anyone hung on to the hypothesis itself, you would dismiss him, and you wouldn't answer till you should have examined its consequences, to see if, in your view, they are in accord or discord with each other; and when you have to give an account of the hypothesis itself, you would give it in the same way, once again hypothesizing another hypothesis, which should seem best of those above, till you came to something adequate;...." Now what does "accord" refer here? It refers to consistent hypothesis. So we can reformulate what Socrates has said in the following way. H_m is a method where the consequences are tested for mutual consistency and mere lack of contradiction, and subsequently

finding another less objectionable hypothesis from which it is deduced. Symbolically it can be put forth in the following fashion:

If P is the consequence of the negation of Q, then Q is the consequence of the negation of P. Hence the negation of P provides at least one sufficient condition for the truth of Q. Let us see how through the hypotheses-testing method this same method is carried out.

Before that let us mention, very briefly, the method used in the *Republic*. Take the case in the *Republic* 510B, 511B-C, 533C[33]. It is said that the first step is to see that two propositions are consistent. The second step is to provide grounds for the hypothesis by deducing it in the same fashion from the other hypothesis "above" it which itself can be shown to have mutual consistent consequences. This procedure is complete when the hypothesis has reached "satisfaction". This is the "upward" path, which is similar to the method of collection. Zellar calls this "upward path" "The synthetic-theory" leading up to the idea of Good[16]. Against this Robinson points out that the Idea of Good cannot be the terminus of the "upward-path", as being the "summum-genus"[30]. Also, collection being a form of generalization would have to be empirical. For generalizations pick out universals out of particulars given to sense. I hold that Robinson's view is erroneous. Why? For it is erroneous to hold.

(a) The outcome of collection is to arrive at a general.

(b) The contention of picking out particulars from universals, is also erroneous. This is shown in the *Sophist.*, which I shall show subsequently. Now let us go back to the H_m , and pick up the thread from there to the *Theaetetus*.

I shall show in the following pages how H_m is used in the *Theaetetus*. Take what Socrates says in *Theaetetus*: ".....we shall prefer first to study the notions we have in our own minds and find out what they are and whether they are, when we compare them, they agree or are altogether inconsistent"⁶[14]. I shall show that the terms 'agree' or 'inconsistent' in *Theaetetus* has the same significance as 'accord with' or 'discord with' in *Phaedo*. In *Theaetetus* Socrates seeks the answer to the question, 'What is knowledge?'. And young Theaetetus comes up with different suggestions (all of which are refuted).

Theaetetus's first suggestion is that "Knowledge is perception". Socrates, like a true philosopher 'dialectically' combines

this thesis with the Protagorean thesis 'Man is the measure of everything'. Now the thesis stands as follows:

If man is the measure of everything, then what appears to me or what I perceive is true to me, and what appears to you is true to you. No one has any right to say that the other is wrong. So perception is always infallible and of what is. If the wind appears cold to me, then it is cold, for it so appears to me. The same wind may appear warm to you. Neither has any right to say that the other is wrong. If $w=c$, c =cool, r =warm, then we have the following:

- (a) The wind is cold.
- (b) The wind is warm.
- (c) The wind is both.

Now clearly, in Protagoras's own theory, we cannot accept either (a) or (b). Can we accept (c). Commonsense tells us that we cannot. But Socrates tells us that although to the general public (c) is impossible, it is still possible, according to the "secret doctrine". What is this doctrine? This doctrine can be summarized as follows:

Nothing is one thing just by itself, but always in the process of becoming. So things of which we say 'are' are really 'are not' and so on. Qualities reside neither 'in' the objects, nor 'in' the observer, but is a "twin-product" which arises as a result of interaction between the two. One consequence is that the wind is not distinct from its properties. This is a result of the use of H_m . If this seems vague to the reader, we should try to make it clear by using another example.

The application of the use of H_m in *Theaetetus* is more obvious in the case of the discussion of false judgments. Plato accepts false judgment[13] while examining Protagoras's thesis of man-measure doctrine. Now if we accept man-measure doctrine, one consequence is that it cannot have false judgment (as we cannot have false perception), and if false judgment is possible then we cannot have man-measure doctrine. By this logic Socrates was finally able to refute the man-measure doctrine.

Now carry this over to the method of the Sophist. The method used here is M_{dc} . What actually is M_{dc} ? It is really a search for definition (in this case the definition of a sophist). And a definition is nothing

other than a necessary and sufficient condition. Let us see how we get a definition out of a method of M_{dc} . Suppose I want the definition of X, now what I do is this. I first "collect" something and divide it, and as we go on, we collect when the division is done.



Now, we can collect one side of the ladder, $M+F+B+W$. And we formulate our definition of $X=WFBM$. So we see here the same search for necessary and sufficient condition. This diagram also shows why we can call this method "upward-downward" method.

We find an echo of this method in *Phaedrus* 265A-266E. Here Plato directly refers to the method of "division and collection" method[32]. Plato here says, that he referred the to procedure where we can disperse with plurality under the single form seeing it all together. He talks about the "reverse" of this method. By this reverse we are enabled to divide into forms, following the objective circulation.

Now, my suggestion is that it is this method P_m , that in the earlier method appears as H_m or upward-downward method or later as the hypothesis-testing method, or the M_{dc} method. So, the true significance of hypothesis-testing method can be appreciated if we put it in the context of the larger chain of P_m .

3. Platonic Knowledge: A priori or Anamnesis?

3.1 Knowledge as A priori

Socrates says, ".....the many admirable truth they bring to birth have been discovered by themselves from within". From this commentators have sometimes drawn the conclusion that for Plato one implication of the metaphor of midwifery is that there is a body of *a priori* knowledge in the mind of the knower. I refuse to accept this thesis. Why? Because the above citation, which is taken as a basis to draw the above conclusion, directly clashes with another citation from which a contradictory conclusion can be drawn. This citation is, "....I have no sort of wisdom, nor has any discovery ever been born to me as the child of my soul"[9]. Why does this contradict the above thesis? Because, if everyone possessed a set of *a priori* knowledge, then Socrates would have it too, but as this citation shows he does not⁷. My contention is that the most we can infer from the former citation, without being speculative is, as Burneyet says, that Socrates respects the pupils' own creativity. He helps them to develop their creativity. Like childbirth, the process can be painful, for it hurts to be made to formulate one's own ideas and, having done so, to find out for oneself what they are worth (151a, c)[15]. This also supports what Shorey says about Platonic knowledge, "....Plato reserves the term knowledge, intelligence, pure reason, for the man who co-ordinates his opinions, unifies them by systematic reference to higher principles, ideals, and "ideas", and who can defend them against fair argument against all comers"[24].

Further there are two other metaphors used in *Theaetetus* which also contradict the above thesis. The first is the metaphor of the aviary. Socrates compares the mind with an aviary, which is empty at birth, and is subsequently filled with birds. Had there been a *a priori* knowledge this aviary would have been already filled, and there would have been no need to fill it.

Further, Plato also uses the imagery of a wax tablet. There is something in each of us like a wax block prepared to receive impressions. The quality and duration of the impression depends on the nature of the block. So long as this impression remains we say that a man has memory and knowledge[12]. If knowledge was already inherent in the mind of the knower, then what is the point in bringing in impressions?

Further, Gulley says the elements in our consciousness is got there by sensible experience. This means that the source of our knowledge is experience. However this experience, as Gulley puts it, is a different kind of experience. What does he mean by "a different kind of experience"? Gulley says, "....it is the only mode of *apprehension*⁸ which can properly be called knowledge at all, and is thus superior to other modes of apprehension." [27]. What does Gulley mean by "apprehension" here? And why does Gulley say this? My best guess for the basis of this statement is to go back to *Timaeus* where the Demiurge takes the souls into the chariot, and carries them to the star to "show" them the universe. We can substitute "apprehension" for "show" here. Of course this might be reading more than what Gulley thought, but this seems to me to be the most reasonable answer.

Further it is said that for Plato knowledge if elicited from the mind of the knower, is really Recollection. This view is held by Cornford [2] and rejected by Macdowell. I support Macdowell on this point. Let us see in the next section what are my reasons for doing so.

3.2 Midwifery and Recollection

Cornford in his *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* supports the view that the metaphor of midwifery implies the doctrine of Recollection. Cornford says that this portion of Plato's dialogue is in agreement with *Meno* where he brings in the theory that learning is the recovery of latent knowledge inherent in the soul which is immortal. Cornford says, "The probable inference is that *Anamnesis* was a theory which squared the profession and practice of Socrates with Plato's discovery of the separately existing Forms and his conversation from Socratic antagonism to a belief in immortality" [1]. Another supporter of the theory that the metaphor of the midwife really implies the theory of recollection is Leon Robin in his book *Platon*⁹. He gives the following example. Socrates ends his refutation of the thesis that knowledge is perception by urging that there is something which the soul "herself by herself" sees without any help of the senses [11]. Further, he also says that this theory is supported by such statement as, "....things whose being is considered, one in comparison with another, by the mind, when it reflects within itself upon the past and the present with an eye to the future" [10]. Further, let us consider the comparison of the soul with the aviary. Socrates says, "When we are babies we must

suppose this receptacle empty, and take the birds to stand for pieces of knowledge. Whenever a person acquires any piece of knowledge and shuts it up in his enclosure, we must say he has learnt or discovered the thing of which this is the knowledge....”.

Let us see why we do not agree with this. Firstly, regarding the theory of Recollection, Macdowell says, “The theory of Recollection.... is a doctrine; and one moreover which is now generally agreed to be Platonic rather than Socratic....”. Further, suppose midwifery is tied up to the theory of Forms and Recollection, then all “instances” claimed by Theaetetus to be knowledge, would have been correct. For knowledge is *always correct*. However, here we find that it is not the case, for in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates rejects all the “offsprings” that he elicits from the mind of Theaetetus. Also, one important aspect of Socrates’ midwifery is that Socrates does not produce any philosophical thesis himself, but only elicits such thesis from the minds of young men. It is not clear how this would fit in with the doctrine of Recollection.

To Robin’s argument we can point out the following objections. First, Robin *reads* in the theory some of the lines in the *Theaetetus*. There is nothing directly cited into in either of the texts asserted by Robin about Recollection. Moreover the theory itself assumes varied forms in *Meno* from which no definite conclusion can be drawn. Further Robin’s citation of the aviary in 197E has nothing positive to apply to the theory of Recollection. As R. Robinson points out that contrary to what Socrates says, the aviary is empty at birth; but the aviary should have been full, if the theory of Recollection is to be true. Contrary to this, for Plato, “....until we are grown up and have had training we are unable to catch in our hands the birds that we have in our cages....”[25]. Further, the comparison of the soul with a waxen tablet is contrary to the doctrine of Recollection, although Socrates does not specifically point out that the tablet is empty at birth. But to draw the conclusion that the soul is filled from the previous birth is to indulge in too much baseless speculation. Also, in the *Meno* Plato talks about the *anamnesis* in the connection of the knowledge of Forms. How does this knowledge at all get into the soul? There is no direct answer to this in the doctrine of this dialogue. Norman Gulley says, “Anamnesis proper thus affords merely ‘isolated data’, lacking all orientation....”[26].

One further point may be brought out in this connection. According to some commentators the method of division and collection can be tied up to the doctrine of recollection[29]. How? By saying that division and collection is really *re-cognition* of the similarity and dissimilarity amongst forms. Now, if we say that the hypothesis-testing method we have spoken of is a part of a larger chain of method- P_m then it follows that the method of hypothesis-testing implies the doctrine of recollection. My point against this view is that we cannot conclude that the hypothesis-testing method, at least in the *Theaetetus*, is any evidence for the theory of recollection. Why? Because there is no general consensus among commentators as to whether Plato still holds the theory of recollection in his later dialogues[34]. Also some writers maintain that there is a radical distinction between recollection, as a technique in the earlier dialogues to come to know forms, and the later 'technique of relation' or 'specification' which supersedes recollection[34]. In the face of lack of general consensus, we are in no position to draw a conclusion.

4. Conclusion

As the title of this essay suggests, my aim is to deal with the question 'How significant is Socrates's Midwifery?'. I believe that through this essay I have shown one thing clearly, that the metaphor of the midwifery is not entirely vacuous, nor is it a 'literal joke'. However, we should be careful not to read too much into the metaphor. The standard implications have been subject to critical scrutiny and I have shown that the metaphor, as it stands, warrants us to draw only one of the implications with reasonable grounds. To go beyond that is to indulge in baseless speculation.

Further, we can draw one more conclusion from the fact that in the *Theaetetus* the core method is hypothesis-testing. This conclusion is that there seems to be a continuity in Plato's thought with respect to the method used, which we proposed to call P_m ¹⁰. *Theaetetus*, it is generally agreed, is a later dialogue of Plato. The method used here is similar to the destructive method used by Socrates in the earlier dialogues. It is used in the *Phaedrus* from 265E to 266B. Gulley says, "The first formal exposition of the method of collection and division is found in the *Phaedrus*"[29]. P_m is used in the *Phaedo* under the apparent inspiration of the H_m . P_m in the *Theaetetus* is used under the metaphor of midwifery. However, P_m is used explicitly and in sophisticated form

in the *Sophist* where Plato calls it the method of Division and Collection. Does this mean that there is a continuity in Plato's thought in so far as the method of teaching in general and of teaching philosophy in particular is concerned? An interesting historical note from Cherniss may be pointed out here. Cherniss says, ".... in the gymnasium of the Academia he saw a group of lads distinguishing and defining the kinds of animals and plants. In silence they were bending over a gourd. Suddenly and without straightening up one said: "It's a round vegetable; another: "It's a grass".... they went on drawing their distinction.... the parody testifies at most to the notoriety of the method of division and classification practised by members of the Academy"[28]. Does this mean that Plato, through his dialogue, is depicting method for teaching?¹¹ Although no conclusive answer can be given to this, the merit of the method cannot be denied. In this context we can conclude with a quotation from Sayre, "Plato emerges... as the author of the first explicit and practicable method of philosophical analysis"[19].

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NOTES

1. See Gulley [26] and Cornford[1].
2. Nature of the 'method' of Midwifery.
3. Parenthesis mine.
4. As Plato points out in the *Sophist*, the sophist 'hunts' young wealthy men as students, to teach them philosophy.
5. Of course their it is only a claim. For they can give something which gives the impression of knowledge. They can never give knowledge which involves truth.
6. Italics mine.
7. Provided that Socrates is being serious here.
8. Italic mine. I did this italics to emphasise that by sensible experience is meant what Gulley calls "apprehension", which I shall clarify subsequently.
9. I have taken this from Gulley's book. See *Gulley*[29].
10. See above.
11. The method which he followed in his Academy to teach his pupils.

Reference

- [1] *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, translated with a commentary by F.M. Cornford, The Liberal Arts Press, New York, 1959.
- [2] *ibid.*
- [3] *ibid.*, p. 24.
- [4] *ibid.*, p. 24.
- [5] *ibid.*, p. 27.
- [6] *ibid.*, p. 25.
- [7] *ibid.*, p. 26.
- [8] *ibid.*, p. 24.
- [9] *ibid.*, p. 26.
- [10] *ibid.*, p. 107.
- [11] *ibid.*, p. 185.
- [12] *ibid.*
- [13] *ibid.*, p. 187.
- [14] *ibid.*, p. 42.
- [15] 'Socratic Midwifery, Platonic Inspiration', by M. F. Burneyet, from *Bulletin* no. 24, published by the Institute of Classical Studies, University of London, 1977.
- [16] *Plato's Analytic Method*, K.M. Sayre, University of Chicago Press, 1969.
- [17] *ibid.*, p. 218.
- [18] *ibid.*, p. 237.
- [19] *ibid.*, p. 238.
- [20] 'The Paradox of the Midwife', by R.G. Wengert, published in *History of Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Jan 1988.
- [21] Campbell
- [22] Campbell
- [23] *Plato's Progress*, by G. Ryle, Cambridge University Press, 1966.
- [24] *The Unity of Plato's Thought*, by Paul Shorey, The University of Chicago Press, 1960.
- [25] *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, by Richard Robinson, Oxford, 1953.
- [26] 'Plato's Theory of Recollection', by Norman Gulley, *Classical Quarterly*, n.s.4 (1954).
- [27] *ibid.*, p. 196.
- [28] *The Riddle of the Early Academy*, by H.F. Cherniss, New York, Russell & Russell, 1962.
- [29] *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, by Norman Gulley, Methuen and Co. London, 1962.
- [30] *Plato's Earlier Dialectics*, by Oxford Clarendon Press, 1975.
- [31] *Phaedo*, by Plato, translated with notes, by David Gallop, 1975.
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