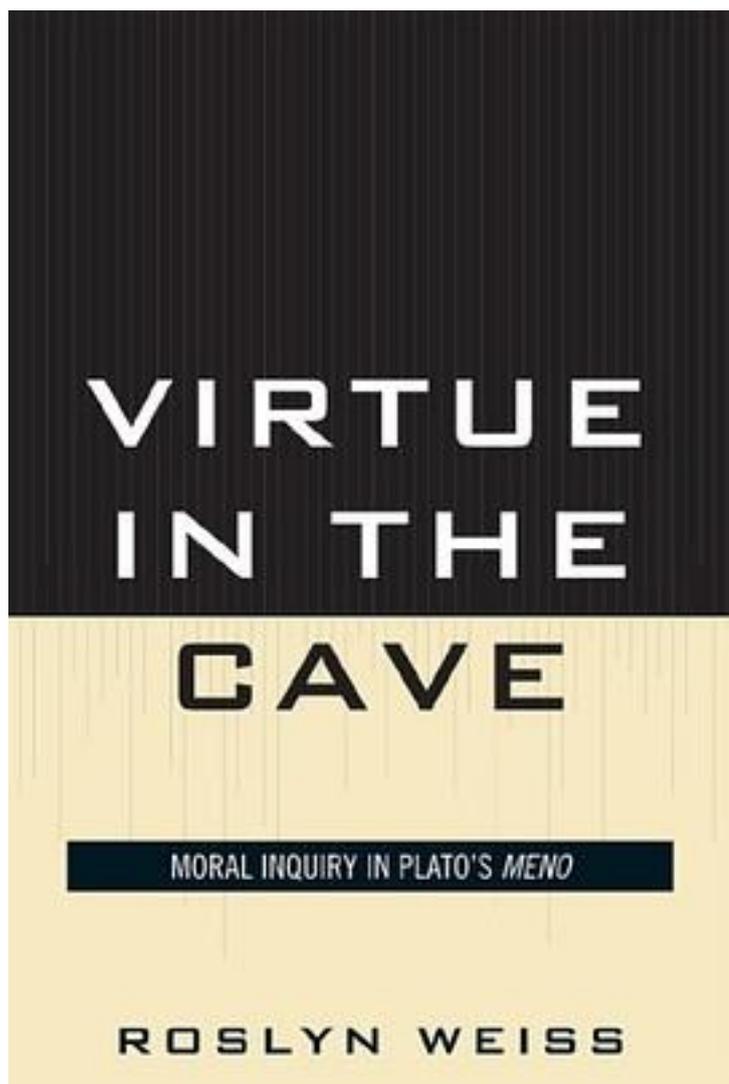


Virtue in the Cave



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Virtue in the Cave is a study of Plato's Meno. Taking the dialogue's central theme to be the question of what virtue is, this book explores the limits of moral inquiry. It argues that, unlike mathematical problems that can be resolved definitively, and unlike technical enterprises whose success can be objectively assessed, moral matters can be only tentatively settled by reasoned argument—at least in the material world to which we all are confined. Whereas Meno is not satisfied with an inquiry whose final result falls short of knowledge, Socrates sees value in joint moral investigation that culminates in true opinion. This study attends closely to the literary aspects of the dialogue and to its rhetorical nuances, raising doubts about Socrates' allegiance to the metaphysical doctrines—transmigration of souls and the theory of recollection—that he himself introduces. It suggests that Socrates tailors these notions specifically to Meno, in order to encourage him to pursue doggedly the inquiry into virtue, an inquiry he is all too prepared to abandon when the going gets rough.

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