

# Plato and socrates



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This paper will discuss several of Plato's writings such as The Apology, Phaedo, Crito, etc. The paper will be in part an analysis and in part a presentation of the philosophy of Plato through his writings as well as his writings in accordance with Socrates' philosophy. The movement of Plato's thinking is revealed in The Republic as diverging slightly from Socrates.

Plato best emphasized the idea that a philosopher was a person who had ultimate knowledge on a subject, as opposed to Socrates who believed that a philosopher never outgrew the ability to learn as MacDonald (1996) states, "Socrates believed that he had achieved a level of awareness which set him apart from other members of the human species at its current stage of development, and that it was his mission in life to bring the rest up to the same level

It was the job of the philosopher to state to humanity how to find happiness, or through what means in life could humanity realize the actions to perform to become less passionate and more humane. Plato believed that philosophers were the gateway for humanity to know truth (Plato also believed that philosophy was only for an elite few) while Socrates believed philosopher was to be used by everyone so the truth could be known worldwide, as MacDonald (1996) states, " Even by the standards of his day, Socrates carried out his philosophical activities in a remarkably open way.

Unlike others, he didn't reserve his wisdom for a select school of disciples, or for those who sought him out and were willing to pay a fee. Instead, he talked in public - in the market place, outside the gymnasium, at parties, or wherever he happened to be. " Plato used similar tactics with his approach

to philosophy. Plato believed that philosophic truth was objective and obtainable.

Plato's objective philosophy required that humans were not animals because humans had the ability to reflect, and through this reflection humans obtained concepts and knowledge, instead of the baser experiences of animals who acquired their knowledge through the senses. Plato believed in divorcing the body from the soul, and thus arriving at truth. In Socrates' explanation of immortality, there remains the outlook that the body and the soul are not eternally combined; but the soul is grounded in the body through emotions, and feral states of humanity.

When the soul is released from such torpor, it then reclines back into its previous non-corporeal state to either rest, or to transform and reinvent itself in the world. The soul, according to Socrates, is that which is in us that commands and it is the body that serves. In this statement the ideas of Plato and Socrates are twined. Mortality Human nature is a nature of reason, not strictly adherent to passion or feelings. Morality then, becomes the crux of this nature. Morality is reason.

This is not to say that Plato was an ascetic; he placed passion, and feelings in his philosophy but the ethics of humanity are tied into the good of a person because reasonably, being virtuous, or good led a person to being happy (eudemonism). Anything else that a person may be presented with and made to make a choice, that choice should be rooted in virtue. Whatever else is chosen by free will should only serve to making that person virtuous. Plato was a man filled with faith in human nature.

Plato's philosophy of human nature doing evil was that a person only does evil in ignorance, for he believed everyone, just as himself wants only what is good. The source of someone doing evil is brought about by unlimited desire. Something that goes unmitigated becomes possessive of that person and they in turn want, and want, without satiation. This is when the appetitive part of the soul (the part of the soul that wants sex, food, etc. ) overtakes the rational (part seeking truth, and reason) of the soul resulting in moral weakness or akrasia.

It is not then self-interest that leads a person to happiness, and there is a definite equilibrium between the allowance of each part of the soul guided by reason, and asceticism. Plato was not a Sophist. Without the guidance of moral reason then a state of chaos would ensue entailing an everyman for himself type of attitude. Morality must then be shown as adhering to individual interests. Plato did not agree with the type of hedonism exhibited by the Sophists, who thought human nature was an extension of the animal world.

Instead, Plato states that the nature of man is reason; and in this reason exists an organized society constructed by reason. Happiness for the rational man then comes into fruition by governing their more base, animal, desires, which are irrational. This morality is extended into the realm of society because of human interaction. Therefore, if a man is to be the pinnacle of reason, and morality, and happiness, then the society that he lives and associates must then also exhibit such a moral temperance.

If then a society is blinded by hedonism, or pure desire of self, a man in that society has no hope for personal happiness because of lack of morality, reason, and thus fully succumbing to akrasia. Plato's Phaedo and Immortality The realm of the reasoning man, according to Plato in his work Phaedo, is extrapolated by Socrates, that is, a man who is within reason also must admit to the fundamental truths regarding life after death.

That is to say, in Socrates explanation of immortality, there remains the outlook that the body and the soul are not eternally combined; but the soul is grounded in the body through emotions, and feral states of humanity. When the soul is released from such torpor, it then reclines back into its previous non-corporeal state to either rest, or to transform and reinvent itself in the world. The soul, according to Socrates, is that which is in us that commands and it is the body that serves.

The soul then, according to the previous statement is created in the divine will, and since divinity cannot be defined through the corporeal, the body must be mortal, and therefore finite. The soul on the other hand is infinite. The soul is the image of divinity; in the soul there is found an unceasing existence of transformation. The reasonable man must then accept the dichotomy of the body and soul, as well as accept their harmony he must distance the idea that the body and the soul are one.

The body is mortal, and can succumb to dissolution, but according to Socrates, the soul is indissoluble. The soul then has a life of her own. Socrates questions the ideas of what humankind supposes to be immortal. God is immortal, and the diversity of heaven and hell in all fallible senses is

immortal, but the reasonable man but design for himself the idea that he too is of a strand of divinity. The soul is associated with the ideal and the invisible.

The body commands emotions, and its fate lies within those external circumstances, that is nature, but the soul, in Socrates' view is above nature. The soul is a higher self. As the introduction to Phaedo states, " The human being alone has the consciousness of truth and justice and love, which is the consciousness of God. And the soul becoming more conscious of these, becomes more conscious of her own immortality" (23). The soul hinges upon the realization that she is immortal. In that consciousness, and in that state of being, there exists God, and all that is immortal.

Therefore, Socrates is trying to define the perimeters of immortality, and the fact that a reasonable man cannot indubitably believe that the body and the soul will perish, but must in fact take credence to the soul existing at a higher level of existence, that is, at the level with God. Socrates is placing a belief system in his dialectic, and in so doing he goes into analyzing the existence of God, or the intangible being that is the divine. In Phaedo Socrates circulates his ideas around the immortality of the soul and the acceptance of this by the reasoning man on the basis of the dimension that God portrays.

By dimension, suffice it to say that God, in divine right, is perfect. It is in that perfection that man may find allusions to his reasoning, and by so doing, reason that since the soul is of God, then man himself is immortal, as Plato writes, " An evil God, or an indifferent God might have had the power but

not the will, to preserve us...But if he is perfect, he must will that all rational beings should partake of that perfection which he himself is" (23). Life after death then is a certainty on a celestial level.

Socrates is attempting to connect his theory of knowledge with that of the soul's ability to reincarnate or transform or simply exist beyond the development of the natural world. In this doctrine he attempts to bring forth the ideas of past and future states of existence. He is attempting to define eternity, which is incomprehensible to the mortal keen, but with the soul, the soul being undoubtedly of a higher fiber than that of the mundane, Socrates must conclude that the mind itself is therefore dependent on an ephemeral essence that is beyond its comprehension.

This type of thought process is one that is known as the transcendental method of interpretation. The Apology and The Cave In The Apology Plato presents Socrates explanation of immortality. The Apology presents the principles of Socrates in that philosophers should be humble and admit that they know nothing. Also, in this book Socrates is explaining why he is being persecuted and the following few paragraphs will highlight his philosophy about religion.

Socrates taught philosophy in a question answer dialogue. The dialectic art of arriving at the truth was the system Socrates used. In this regard he would arrive at the truth by questioning the belief of engaged speakers in a philosophic circle. Although this idea of philosophy may come across as non-confrontational, Socrates used this method to verbally jab at the speaker

until they themselves found fault in their philosophy, and through a system of negative or positive responses came to recognize the truth.

This type of philosophy has been likened to a cross examination present in today's court rooms, where the person under oath is asked a series of questions that are both destructive and humiliating, until they are forced to acknowledge the truth, much like the arguments around Socrates. The aim of such confrontational questioning was always about truth; Socrates believed that this was the main goal of philosophy, and philosophical discussions, and he believed that everyone involved with the account was in pursuit of this goal as well.

In order to be human, not only the idea of reflection upon life is necessary but it emphasizes the use of the Socratic method in that reflection and in the course of finding the truth, questions are paired with such reflection. At this level, questioning and reflection are the apex of what it means to be human. Socrates however had some varying views on philosophy that opposed some of what Plato believed. Socrates was a skeptic, as was Plato, and as can be exemplified in the cave metaphor, but Socrates also believed that a person can be convicted of their own beliefs even if they cannot find their pathway of truth.

Plato, in contrast, believed that philosophers were the delegates who maintained what was and was not truth, and led the way to such truth for the common man. It is not then self-interest that leads a person to happiness, and there is a definite equilibrium between the allowance of each part of the soul guided by reason, and asceticism. Plato was not a Sophist.



Without the guidance of moral reason then a state of chaos would ensue entailing an everyman for himself type of attitude. It is a bitter debate on whether or not Socrates was a Sophist, he himself vehemently denied it but some of his philosophies correlated with Sophist thinking (i. . the issues of ethics, and living a good life, each Sophist preoccupations). Plato's Crito, The Trial, Death of Socrates Plato is a firm believer in man not adhering to the masses opinion but staying true to one singular person, a person of wisdom, and as Plato states through Socrates, " And he ought to live and train, and eat and drink in the way which seems good to his single master who has understanding, rather than according to the opinion of all other men put together? " Plato's basic rhetoric involves the golden rule of do unto others as you would have done unto you.

There must then remain the basic principles of morality in society for society to maintain it's virtuous code of ethics. Socrates gives many examples of when a man is injured then he in turn must not injure, for here is the principle of a moral society, and the society in which Plato was integral. Socrates is continually requesting of Crito whether or not it is right to do evil. For, Socrates states, that doing evil in return damages not only the man, but also the society in which the man presides.

It is therefore unjust to do evil, for committing evil is the same as injuring man, and by extension, the State. Though the difference of partnership and dominator society is both prevalent in Plato's Crito the difference can also be subjective. So, subjectively speaking there is a definite sense of the dominator society in Socrates adherence to their death sentence for him. Though Socrates' philosophy dictates that the State has to maintain control

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in order for morality to support society, Plato's partnership with the State is deceived by the phallic nature of human's innate aptitude for error.

If the State is made up of individuals, and in Plato's own writings, man is presumable good, or at least strives to be good, the objective reader must not misinterpret this to mean that man will always be good. In the absolute of this believe there can exist no room for fluctuation, and it is within the nature of humanity to be inconsistent, fallible, and wrong. Therefore, Socrates is misguided in the State, for the State is within reason imperfect for its members are human. The State, according to Socrates is holier than father and mother for they beget father and mother and all generations.

It is because of the State that humanity exists, but it is also with the State that human nature is best exemplified as dichotomized. The State and humanity are both good and bad, capable of very evil and wicked deeds as well as adhering to moral laws. Plato is optimistic with Socrates, or Socrates was a very gullible man who professed to the rightness involved with the State because he was a man who liked control and not chaos. With an objective mind, there must exist both sides of the spectrum, both control and chaos so that society can function.

The dominator societies were about autocratic power and partnership societies were about shared responsibility. Socrates placed his faith in not the masses but the one 'man' that was full of wisdom; that is, the State, Plato writes, Are we to say that we are never intentionally to do wrong, or that in one way we ought and in another way we ought not to do wrong, or is

doing wrong always evil and dishonorable, as I was just now saying, and as has been already acknowledged by us?

Are all our former admissions which were made within a few days to be thrown away? And have we, at our age, been earnestly discoursing with one another all our life long only to discover that we are no better than children? Or are we to rest assured, in spite of the opinion of the many, and in spite of consequences whether better or worse, of the truth of what was then said, that injustice is always an evil and dishonor to him who acts unjustly? Shall we affirm that?

Crito says yes, injustice is evil, and those who oppose the dictation of the State are acting with dishonor. Socrates forgets in his delusions of morality that the State is not always guided by such moral virtue, and that in its compromise of this, becomes evil. In current worldviews, there is a definite dissatisfaction in the governing of certain states, such as mass genocide, child crimes, etc, and if a person is to believe fully in Socrates and Plato's philosophy the State is just in such action.