

Socrates and his philosophy

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It must have been weird living in Ancient Athens and encountering Socrates on the way. It would be especially weird if for instance the person caught Socrates's attention and Socrates began quizzing him of all sorts of questions about the truth. Anyone who does not know Socrates will think the guy is demented at best, at worst, should the person happen to have a sword with him and got annoyed with Socrates's inquiry, Socrates could have easily suffered a much gruesome death. The quest for knowledge is admirable indeed. Socrates arguably died a martyr's death for it.

According to him, " an unexamined life is not worth living" (Palmer 2005). This statement is his own; it was the epitome of his beliefs and he managed to impart it to billions of world population dating back to his time. The author of this paper agree with his statement, however, with qualifications. Man is naturally curious. That is why he has learned to cope with his environment, learning to carve useful tools out of stones in order to survive the base and harsh nature of his surroundings. His curiosity has led him to a more civilized form of living; finding ways to domesticate animals and to grow crops that he could eat.

It is man's very curiosity that led him to seek education, to listen to Socrates and to answer his inquiries. In Plato's Apology, Socrates professed that he was oracled to be the wisest of all (Siegel 2005). Hence, he sought out those with reputation for greatness (politicians, poets, craftsmen) if they could be wiser than Socrates and upon interviewing them (in his infamous Socratic approach), he reached one conclusion: they know no wisdom because they claim to know something when they really do not and Socrates is indeed the wisest. Man are just... man and they have weaknesses.

Those people whom Socrates interviewed, such famed figures of Athens at the time, whom Socrates sought wisdom from proved to be arrogant because they professed to be the wisest but it turns out their knowledge is limited. Socrates, for his part is as plagued with arrogance as the men he has interviewed. The simple fact of testing the oracle for truth is testament of arrogance. His methodologies leave a lot of room to be desired. Taking off on a quest to determine whether someone out there is smarter than you is downright offensive for the other men.

It is even more offensive to entertain someone and be professed by that someone as “ knowing of nothing”. Who is Socrates to conclude that he is wisest because he professes to know nothing and who is he to determine what is actually something? The infamous Socratic approach is Socrates’s gift. He is a master orator, imparting logic is something he is good at, just like poets are good at writing odes to nature and to beauty, just like politicians have given us the gift of democracy, just like craftsmen have given us architecture to utilize.

Though the author of this paper agrees with Socrates that truth is something to be sought, nobody knows what the truth is. Is it something that is definite? Does it change in time? How does one know when it achieved? Would there be physical signs? The quest for truth may just be a choice, not something that one has a natural inclination to. It will come down to priorities and option. Is the quest for truth better than what is here and now? Is the quest for truth more important than surviving the current demands of culture and society?

Is the quest for truth the demands of culture and society itself? Again, man is a curious human being, he will examine life for the heck of it. Socrates did so, in his own way that eventually led to his own peril. In Plato's Apology, Socrates claimed that no man wishes the detriment of other men; one does not wish harm to others (Spiegel 2005). Perhaps, it would have better served Socrates had he exercised respect together with his beliefs. He did not seem to respect the others with genius that is not logic and as such, they all turned against him leading to his death.