

Sample essay on socrates

[Psychology](#), [Personality](#)



The aim of this essay is to present you with a portrait of Socrates, the philosopher and teacher of Plato and other philosophers in Ancient Greece in the 4th century B. C. The portrait will be drawn upon the reflections formed by some literary pieces which provide readers with details of Socrates' personality. The literary pieces which will be used are the ' Republic' and ' Menon' by Plato, the monologue the ' Apology', the painting ' The Death of Socrates' by Jacques-Louis David and the written piece of Nietzsche Friedrich ' The problem of Socrates'.

This portrait is rich in terms of consisting of conflicts and opposite ideas as far as the ambiguous personality of Socrates is concerned. It is common knowledge that each personality which has turned out to be a kind of lighthouse in humans' historical evolution and holds a significant position always generating lots of heated debates and discussions, is seen under different aspects on behalf of writers, painters and other representatives of Art. This essay will present you with each aspect of Socrates as portrayed by each one of the above persons, his student, the philosopher Plato, the painter David and the philosopher Nietzsche. Reflections and thoughts based on these aspects of Socrates' personality characteristics are to be drawn in an effort to decode the mystery lying in his personality which has troubled people and has received multiple interpretations.

Plato appears to have held great admiration for Socrates and his two innovative philosophical approaches. Socrates is the first philosopher to have highlighted the importance of the truth lying in the inner self of each individual. He trusted that knowledge was a divine gift lying in the darker side of one's soul. But the truth never came out unless each individual

decided to look into the deeper levels of the soul and shed light on every concept and idea which remained in the dark since no one had sought for it before. Socrates believed in the importance of humans' responsibility. The idea of the ideal state presented in the Republic which taught people on what the best, the ideal system of a state's organization ought to be and focused on the importance of knowledge which is not easy to be conquered and demands internal struggle on behalf of individuals to get free from the inhibitions and fears and ignorance with which they have been imposed by the visible external mistaken world, reveals a great part of Socrates' political and self-knowledge theory. Socrates believed that he only knows one thing, and that is that he does not know anything. In other words Socrates believed that knowledge is relatively seen by people according to their personal interest thus resulting in people having the wrong or unethical knowledge which leads to the corruption of societies and people's personalities. In the Republic there is the piece describing the people imprisoned in the cave. This is the widely acknowledged Platonic myth of the cave which is based on this theory and belief of Socrates about knowledge. People are imprisoned in the deep side of the cave where no light exists. But they can see if they begin searching for truth a glimmer of light at the entrance of the cave. And in order to see the light of the real ideas and truth existing in the ideal state they need to struggle for their self-knowledge journey. ' Menon' is another dialogue in which Socrates is asked to answer the question on what ' virtue' is. The definition of ' virtue' is not given since the dialogue ends at the common ' aporia' of Socrates. How can one give a definition on something if he has not ' seen' it?

Socrates proved to have a very special and differentiated attitude towards definitions of ideas and beliefs. He claimed that he would listen to his internal voice of his soul asking him to look into the real meaning of the ideas and ethics. And he spent all his life talking with his students trying to awaken their spirit so as to motivate them to look themselves for the truth aiming at getting to know themselves better and be restless minds who are not sleepy do not fall into believing everything that is served.

The painting on the other hand is the depiction of the last moments of Socrates after his apology to court. Since Socrates looked for the meaning of virtue and ethics and aimed at making people think, he was considered to be a rebellious spirit within the borders of the well-established state which wished for citizens without real questioning on how well authorities would perform the preservice and maintenance of ethical values. Therefore since he denied changing his lifestyle and teaching he was sentenced to death. In the Apology Socrates actually portrays his belief in what ethical principles demand for states and people to do. He does not compromise and he stands by his beliefs. This the reason why he is admirable. The painting by David portrays the last moments of Socrates in jail where he is proposed by his students to escape. But Socrates denies any kind of escape. Escaping would be like denying and rejecting his whole life's beliefs. The painting is an extraordinary piece of art since it has all the vividness of the dialogue performed in the walls of the jail. The audience feels that they are there in the 4th century B. C. in Ancient Greece and they see the magnitude of Socrates' soul. But their grief and anger that he is about to die and accept the unjustifiable decision of the state is also great.

This is the point on which Nietzsche comes and gives another idea of Socrates since he seems to object to the way Socrates reacted in prison. According to Nietzsche Socrates ought to escape and keep on teaching people. He should not surrender to a decision which was so unethical and wrong. He should have showed his strength by showing that he will not obey to a decision which was wrong. The complex and not easily understood feelings of Nietzsche to Socrates are obvious through the characterizations he uses in his work 'The problem of Socrates'. Socrates is characterized decadent and ugly, wandering around the streets of Ancient Athens. Could that be so that Socrates' appearance is criticized? Or is it another way of Nietzsche to approach Socrates' philosophy and express his ambiguous feelings as far as this philosophy is concerned? It could be argued that Socrates is characterized ugly and decadent since life on earth is sick. And why that may be? Because according to Socrates' philosophy the real world is beyond what is visible on earth. Probably the only way to get over of human life's sickness is to rationally use an equally sick method. And this method is death. Socrates chooses to die because he has no other way to find his real world of his abstract principles. He chooses to die and he chooses to neglect himself and let himself be ugly and dirty as a way to fight in himself and make his own war fighting his visible self in an effort to try and have the victory over this war. Socrates has to fight against all instincts and inferior desires in order to be able at one point to see the ideal world of his abstract ideas.

Probably this is the point which Nietzsche mainly wants to focus on. He wants to emphasize on the fact that fighting against the enjoyment and joy

of his life is probably the only way that Socrates can prove how rational and real his own theory of the ideal world is.

Conclusion

No matter the interpretations of Socrates there is one undeniable conclusion as far as his personality is concerned. Socrates was a lighthouse which gave the lights to the widening of philosophy and generations to come. Therefore each interpretation of his faults and merits as a human are acceptable since they are to be seen as the motivations in order for healthy, beneficial in the field of knowledge dialogues to be performed.