

Philosophy plato and personal opinion

Philosophy



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Philosophy Providing Answers for Questions & Questions for Answers Kristen Riso 5250378 PHIL 1F91 Professor: Dr. Lightbody TA: David Corman Word Count: 1941 The Apology written by Plato's is an excellent piece of philosophical literature that can teach us many things. Most importantly this fine literature gives us the utmost insight into the philosophy of Socrates'. As well it teaches us the idea of asking questions and probing for answers when we don't understand so we can uncover the truth and learn rather than thinking we know and being ignorant.

The intention here is to describe the philosophy of Socrates' and use what I've learned from his ideas to present my own beliefs on what philosophy is and relate it to my personal life. The start of the essay will be devoted to deciphering the ethics and ideals of Socrates' philosophy and describing the three key components being Socratic method, irony and ethos as well as how they are engrained with Socrates' belief that, " the unexamined life is not worth living. During the second portion of the essay I will discuss my belief that philosophy is the process of consistently asking questions to gain understanding and insight to life's mysteries and challenges. Similar to Rauhut I would describe philosophy as open questions but I would conclude that definition to be incomplete. Philosophy needs constant discussion and revision, yes it does begin with a simple belief or question but the whole purpose is discussion and explanation to gain further comprehension and understanding of the subject in question.

In Plato's The Apology Socrates' uses the Socratic method as a way to prove his innocence and show the misconceptions of others. The Socratic method is a process of debate between individuals with contradictory beliefs. The

debate is used to promote critical thinking and cause the individuals to consistently prove their hypothesis. In attempts to prove their beliefs they are in turn constantly trying to disprove and eliminate the ideas of anyone opposing them.

To defend your opinion, questioning can be used to cause deep thought by the opposition about their beliefs and force them to provide supporting evidence to verify their perspective. Socrates' constantly uses this technique by forcing people to explain what they think they know and by asking the right questions he is able to show the flaws in their ideas. These questions can lead a defendant to contradict himself therefore strengthening the ideas of the opposition. "And yet, I know that my plainness of speech makes them hate me, and what is their hatred but proof that I am speaking the truth? (Plato, 24a-24b). This method creates a much greater chance for a successful and applicable hypothesis and analyzes and dissects ideas to see how they fit or contradict with other beliefs. Socratic Irony is a tool used in the Socratic method in attempts to get the opposition to expose their deficiency of understanding or an error in their rationality. The process uses very specific questions in which the person who is questioning pretends that they lack knowledge on something that they actually know.

This is displayed when Socrates' questions Meletus and causes Meletus to bring up facts which contradict his accusations against Socrates', "... if a man with whom I have to live is corrupted by me, I am very likely to be harmed by him; and yet I corrupt him, and intentionally, too – so you say," (Plato, 25e-26a). With this technique the person asking the question knows the answer all along and therefore when the opposition supplies an answer

that is incorrect or flawed they are able to clearly illustrate the mistake that is made thus proving their point without any doubt or contradiction. But either I do not corrupt them, or I corrupt them unintentionally; and on either view of the case you lie. ” (Plato, 25e-26a). This process is very effective due to the sole reason that you can make your opponent prove your point for you. The irony of this technique therefore lies in the simple fact that by pretending to display your own ignorance on a subject you can your opponents into openly presenting their own ignorance, therefore causing them to work against themselves to your advantage. Socrates’ displays the Socratic method and clearly illustrates the effectiveness of Socratic irony when he defends himself and his ethos to the court and jurors. Ethos being the Greek word for character depicts the defining ethics, principles and views of the person or group in question. When discussing the philosophical beliefs of Socrates, “... a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong – acting the part of a good man or of a bad. ” (Plato, 28b-28c) it is evident that he is ethically, academically and politically opposed to the majority of the population of Athens during his life.

Socrates’ does not fear death and therefore he would not change his opinions or who he is even when he is put on trial with a possible death sentence. He believes in honesty and cares about enriching the lives of others, “ I did not go where I would do no good to you or to myself; but where I would do the greatest good privately to every one of you, thither I went, and sought to persuade every man among you that he must look to himself, and seek virtue and wisdom before he looks at his private interests.

" (Plato, 36c-36d). Socrates' is said to be very wise and yet he always claims to have no knowledge. I am better off than he is for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows; I nether know nor think that I know. " (Plato, 21d-21e). This brings forth the idea of ignorance and how false overconfidence combined with some knowledge can lead to less wisdom than no knowledge at all. When Socrates interacts with the Artisans he finds that they have knowledge about life that he does not know and thought that they would be wiser than him. He later found that they overshadowed their wisdom with the idea that they knew more than they actually did. ... Therefore I asked myself on behalf of the oracle, whether I would like to be as I was, neither having their knowledge nor their ignorance, or like them in both; and I made answer to myself and to the oracle that I was better off as I was. " (Plato, 22d-22e). The idea presented by the oracle portrays the concept that men who are not overconfident and believe that they know nothing would therefore ask questions and be the most willing to learn thus giving them the advantage to become wiser and not miss out on opportunities that life presents.

This implies that Socrates' is not in fact the wisest man but that anyone who is open to new ideas and asks questions in attempts to understand is wiser than anyone who believes that they are more knowledgeable than the rest and are thus ignorant to knowledge. I would say that knowledge is a very broad term that encompasses a great deal of different skills that can be absorbed through either experience oreducationand can be either practically or theoretically applied. In philosophy the study of knowledge is known as epistemology.

Philosophers in this area try to define knowledge and gain understanding of how it is obtained as well as connecting it to our own beliefs through explanation and rationalization. I would say that Rauhut's claim that philosophy is the study of open questions does have some validity but it only covers part of what I would describe as philosophy. Philosophy needs to have verbal debate between many individuals to ensure that thought provoking questions are asked to probe at the brains of people causing them to really think and have to support their theories with valid evidence and reasoning.

It is not just about answering what something is but also why and how it happens. I would say that everyone uses philosophy in their everyday life, whenever we analyze something and ask others and ourselves questions we are philosophizing by forcing ourselves to search for answers that are unknown to us. Philosophy thrives on logical rational thinking and being able to verbally justify and clarify your ideas while enlightening others.

A personal experience in my life, which I would directly relate to philosophy, would be the time that my best friend and I watched Inception. The movie was extremely thought provoking and had a particularly interesting concept. After the movie was finished my friend and myself were immediately diving into a conversation about perception and reality. The idea of dreams is very philosophical in my own opinion, which is why the discussion that this movie instigated was perfect.

Originally we conversed about the idea of whether or not he was still in the dream and to back up our ideas we provided evidence. Information such as the fact that at the end of the movie the spinning top started to wobble

which never happened in the dream world would provide support to the idea that he had managed to escape from the dream world and make it back to his family. On the other hand looking at the fact that his children still looked the same and were in the backyard in the same position reinforced the idea that he was still in the dream world.

By asking questions and seeking answers we were being philosophical and therefore gaining knowledge and understanding by asking how and why and providing rational reasoning for our explanations. This then lead us into a discussion about dreams and reality and how we can determine the truth. It made us ask questions such as, how do we know what is real? This brought up the possibility of us being in a dream world and the idea that maybe only one of us was real and the other person was a figment of imagination created by the mind of the real person to create questions and drive for deeper thinking and increasing intellect.

I would conclude that discussion as being an enlightening and philosophical experience in my life due to the nature of its content as well as the thought provoking questions asked. In my mind that is philosophy and to put it elegantly, “ I think therefore I am” (Rene Descartes, 1596-1650). Philosophy is all about thought; one must think to create idea and to make connections between anything. The mind must be constantly analyzing the world and asking question to obtain knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

If you close your mind you give yourself up to ignorance and choose to live in a world and false beliefs and misconceptions unaware and the beautiful depth of philosophy. The idea that ignorance is bliss I would have to disagree

with in a philosophical sense due to the fact that analyzing and questioning the aspects of our world to further your comprehension of anything that interests you has got to be one of the most important and enriching aspects of life, as we know it.

If we did not ask questions and search for answers we would never grow and advance. Questioning is the key to understanding and that is a tremendous factor in expanding, developing and progressing the world as we know it. Philosophy is the study of open questions such as what, why and how as well as the process of gaining answers through rational thought, deliberation and verification. References The Apology by Plato