

Socrates's wisdom



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Socrates' Wisdom Plato's the Apology is one of the seminal texts of ancient Greek philosophy. The text contains Socrates appeal to the Greek council that is trying him for a number of accusations. The story Socrates tells in the Apology about Chaerephons visit to the oracle constitutes a defense against the earlier accusations made against him. In considering the ways it functions to do so, it's clear there are a number of examples. This essay considers how Socrates' story functions as a defense. There are a number of accusations that have been made against Socrates. In these regards, the main charges made against him are that he " inquires into things below the earth and in the sky" (19b). In these regards, Socrates is indicated to give physical or scientific descriptions for things that are generally understood to be established through the works of the gods. As a response to these accusations Socrates indicates that he is innocent and goes about establishing his innocence through a number of rhetorical stories and speeches. One of the first such rhetorical strategies Socrates implements is through his story regarding Chaerephon and the oracle. Socrates had earlier been accused of teaching the Athenian youth that elements in the world had physical explanations despite their generally being attributed to the gods. In response to these accusations, Socrates indicates that he is innocent as such knowledge is the domain of the Sophists. Instead, Socrates relays a story about his friend Chaerephon who goes to visit the Delphi Oracle. When he entered the Oracle he asked it if there was anyone alive more wise than Socrates. The oracle responded that there wasn't. Upon learning of this information Socrates became confused, as he did not believe that he was particularly wise. Subsequently, Socrates went around asking and questioning people he had previously thought wise. Socrates' investigations

led him to conclude that the individuals he questioned, including poets, craftsmen, and politicians, actually did not have any wisdom. Rather than leading Socrates to determine that he was truly the wisest individual, this discovery led him to decide that he actually knew nothing. Socrates determined that the wisest men understand that they truly know nothing. Socrates relays this story as a defense against the earlier accusations levied against him, as he indicates that in reality he is not questioning the nature of the gods. Instead, in accord with his earlier described quests, Socrates claims that he is merely questioning individuals who claim they have knowledge. Through his process of questioning individuals he has gained a number of young admirers. Ultimately, Socrates is innocent of the charges against him because he has not taught anything, but only questioned the information other people have proclaimed. In conclusion, this essay has examined Plato's Apology. It has demonstrated that Socrates relays the story of Chaerephons at the oracle to demonstrate his innocence from accusations that have been levied against him. This story reveals that rather than being guilty of teaching false information, Socrates simply questions the information that other people claim they contain. References Plato. Apology. [http://www. perseus. tufts. edu/hopper/text? doc= plat.+apol.+21a](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=plat.+apol.+21a)