

Essay on the apology

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



Introduction

When reading the Platonic dialogues, the reader is faced with the fundamental question what the term Socrates would mean. Does this term 'Socrates', who is usually the main speaker of several Platonic dialogues, represent the philosophy of the teacher or of the author? There are varied answers to this question among the scholars, especially of varied traditions (Mauro, & Louis-André, 2009). In the view of the Platonic scholars and psychologists in the present day, some dialogues are Socratic because of their representation of the historical figure of the Socrates. Additionally, they argue that these dialogues represent an earlier stage in the philosophical view of Plato, which is faithful to Socrates. In this view, some the texts have been groups into Socratic and Platonic dialogues, where the latter represents the dialogues of Plato's original thinking. For example, the tripartition of the soul, the theory of transcendent forms, the political idea of the philosopher king, and mathematical education are grouped as the Platonic dialogues, which contrast the Socratic dialogues (Mauro, & Louis-André, 2009).

The issue of Socratic dialogues relates to the three Platonic topics. These topics include the Socratic problem, the dialogue form and the chronology of Plato's works. In this assignment, after reading one of the Plato's Socratic dialogues (The Apology); it will extends the work after a new sophist, which in this paper represents the modern lawyers, who holds a position to common modern psychologist joins the conversation. This analysis will first provide a summary and a reflection on the dialogues providing accurate and apt discussions of the former with its connections to the significant concepts, critical periods, and distinctive features of the same. The discussion will also

entail the elements that contributed to the issue in question as well as the controversies that it is associated to them.

The Apology – Plato

This is an account of the speech that Socrates made during his trial in Athens in 339 B. C., in which he was charged with failing to recognize the gods that were recognized by the state, corrupting the youth in Athens, as well as his invention of new deities. All these charges against Socrates were untrue, especially the accusations of corrupting the youth of Athens. Nevertheless, in the modern philosophical understanding of the word ‘apology’, Socrates speech does not represent an apology. The title of this philosophical dialogue derives the name from the Greek word “apologia” that is translated as defense in literal English meaning. Therefore, considering the translation of the word, Socrates sought to defend him and the conducts with which he was charged of them, but to apologize.

In most part of this dialogue, Socrates speaks expressing the pain that he feels in a conversational manner. He begins to explain that he lacks experience with the law courts, and that when he speaks in the manner to which he is familiar, it should not be mistaken for rudeness or unruly conduct; he explains that he will however maintain directness and honesty in his speech. Socrates defends himself that his behavior and conduct originates from the oracle at Delphi’s prophecy that claimed that he was the wisest of all men. He recognized his ignorance in most of the worldly affairs, and makes a conclusion that he must be the wisest of all men, but he knows nothing. In a bid to spread this unusual wisdom, he continues to explain that he considered it his responsibility to question the supposed wise men, and

therefore expose their ignorance and false wisdom. Such activities made him gain fame and admiration from the youth in Athens during his time.

Nevertheless, this also gained him a lot of hatred as he angered the supposed wise men with embarrassment. Therefore, Socrates reaches the conclusion that the condescension of these supposed wise men are the reasons behind his being put on trial.

In the further proceedings, Socrates begins to interrogate Meletus, the person who bore the primary responsibility of bringing him before trial. This is considered the only instance in this speech (The Apology) of the cross-examination, or elenchus that is central to several Platonic dialogues. Nevertheless, this interrogation with Meletus is considered as a poor example of this method since it occurs that Socrates is more directed and concerned with embarrassing his accuser than he is of arriving and proving the truth. In one of the famous passages of this dialogue, Socrates makes a claim that he is like a gadfly stinging a lazy horse, were the horse in this case refers to the Athenian state. Therefore, in his absence, the state could fall into deep sleep; however, through his influence in the state, even though some people might consider it irritating, he argues that he can awaken the state into productive and victorious action.

In the trial, the jury finds Socrates guilty of a crime and " Meletus asks for the penalty death" (p 39: 35d). The jury then asks Socrates to propose a penalty that he would consider deemed right for his accusations.

Surprisingly, Socrates suggests to the jury that if he were to be given what he deserved, he ought to be honored with a great meal in the Prytaneum" (p 40: 37) for the great services he rendered to the state without asking for

compensation for a very long time. He rejects exile and prison on a very serious note, but instead opts for a fine. Nevertheless, the jury rejects his suggestion and sentences Socrates to death (Plato, p 41: 37b). In reaction to the jury's sentence, Socrates again surprised them and accepted the sentence claiming that only the gods know the things that happen after death. He says that to fear death would be to assume that we are aware of the particulars of the metaphysical things of which human beings cannot possibly be aware, and so "those of us who believe death to be evil are certainly mistaken" (Plato, p 43: 40c). Even to challenge them more, Socrates argued that a person who feared death is one who has not served the god and fellow man properly during the time of his life. Additionally, he mentions that these people falsely accusing him of impiety and offering him a death sentence justify that they fear death, and have therefore the same offense that they are condemning him for it.

The Apology presents a bridge between literature and philosophy. In this dialogue, the assertions of particular philosophical doctrines are outweighed with the creation of the ideal philosopher's portrait. While Socrates maintains his cool as well as defends his way of life as unquestionably just, he puts his life at stake. Ever since this dialogue, The Apology has inspired several psychological thinkers in history. Literarily, the speech combines themes of Socratic irony, thought, and model of injury as well as the ethical concerns that dominated his life. The irony presented in this speech is the fact that the Delphic oracle proclaimed that Socrates is the wisest of all men while he maintains that he knows nothing! How could Socrates confess that he is

better than the less he thinks he knows? Even to the extent of reserving the right to determine the wisdom of the supposed wise men.

Modern Sophists

Some of the realities of the life in ancient Athens that the Socrates lamented the most was the issue of the prominence of the sophists of that time. They were often proud and boasted of their ability to strengthen weaker arguments (Besserman, 2006). These sophists were either paid to argue for a cause, or acted out of self interest in their arguments, and often took the sides that best served their interest; either for the paid or self generated motives. According to Socrates, sophists lacked the knowledge of the distinction between opinion and truth, and that they believed in relativity in every situation. In the modern society, lawyers, advertisers, and politicians can be compared to the ancient sophists. In most cases, the aforementioned groups of people have the major business of convincing other people to believe in their idea, notwithstanding the truth (Besserman, 2006).

In a literal meaning, an individual may conclude that lawyers are argues that are hired, just like the ancient sophists, who were paid to argue on behalf of their masters. A defense attorney has the legal obligations to argue in the best persuasive manner that best serves the interests of their clients (Besserman, 2006). On the other hand, prosecuting attorneys always oppose the former and seek to convince the jury that the accused person is guilty of the said offense. In this paper, this paper earlier gave an example of Plato's Socratic dialogues, which involve legal proceedings. Therefore, in this section, it will provide some of the developments and relations between The Apology and the modern psychologists (lawyers). During Plato's time, a

defense lawyer, who would try to convince the jury otherwise, regardless of the truth behind the accusations, would have represented him.

As time passed on and legal responsibilities diversified, several positions were created that were nonexistent in the past. According to Socrates Apology in the dialogue discussed above, he accepted and confessed the fact that he lacked knowledge and experience with the law. This was a common issue with people in the ancient time. This also led to wrong sentencing of innocent people who misrepresented facts during their trials before the jury. However, in the modern society, defense lawyers are charged with the responsibility of representing and defending the interests of their client in legal proceedings. Just like the case with ancient sophists, the present day lawyers would always defend the interests for which they are paid, regardless of the truth. For instance, a person who has committed murder might hire a defense lawyer to represent him in legal proceedings. As compared to Plato's case, a lawyer would help reduce the sentence that criminal activity bears, or even plead not guilty and succeed in the legal proceedings on behalf of the accused. Nevertheless, Plato's case would have been easier since he was wrongly accused of false offenses. This is because these lawyers have profound knowledge and sufficient experience with the law.

Conclusion

Reading Platonic dialogues are often confusing and raising several questions. Among these questions that Does this term ' Socrates', who is usually the main speaker of several Platonic dialogues, represent the philosophy of the teacher or of the author? This question has elicited several reactions from

several Platonic scholars and psychological thinkers in the present day. These varied views have brought about the distinctions between Platonic and Socratic dialogues. where the latter represents the dialogues of Plato's original thinking. For example, the tripartition of the soul, the theory of transcendent forms, the political idea of the philosopher king, and mathematical education are grouped as the Platonic dialogues, which contrast the Socratic dialogues.

The Apology presents an account of the speech that Socrates made to the jury, the audience and his accusers, when he was charged before the jury with failing to recognize the gods that were recognized by the state, corrupting the youth in Athens, as well as his invention of new deities, all of which were untrue. Despite Socrates defense against these charges, where he confessed of being the wisest of all men according to the proclamation of the Delphi oracle, he was sentence to death. Socrates however surprised them by accepting death, and instead condemning them of wrongly charging him of offenses that they often commit, which is why they offer him death that they fear the most, though they have never experienced.

In the modern times, sophists are compared to politicians, advertisers and lawyers because just as sophists, the aforementioned individuals seek to convince people to believe that what they believe is the best. These people disregard the truth for their opinion and convince people otherwise. In the example used in this paper (The Apology), it is evident that the lawyers of today resemble sophists, and they would have defended Socrates during his trial because they have sufficient knowledge and experience with the law, which Socrates lacked.

References;

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