

# History of Western Philosophy

## Kookmin University

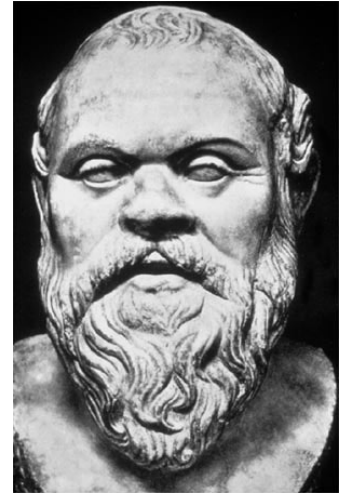
Peter Lee, Spring 2019

L04

- Socrates: Life | *Euthyphro, Apology*  
*Crito, Phaedo*

# Socrates: Introduction

- **Patron Saint** of philosophy (~469-399 BCE)
- Yet did not write anything; only argued.
- His significance to philosophy and fame rests on how he lived and died, a **martyr**.
- The hero in most of Plato's dialogues.
- Brave soldier [Peloponnesian War]; pot-bellied, very ugly.
- Like the sophists: focus on human beings, not nature.



“Know thyself.” [actually an inscription at the Temple of Apollo]

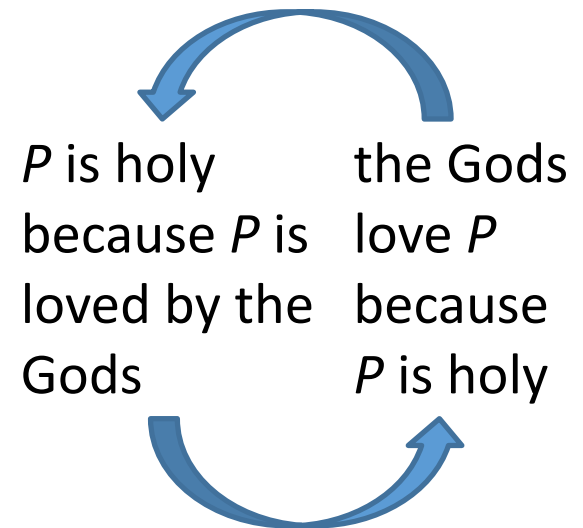
“Unexamined life is not worth living.”

# Socrates: Introduction

- Oracles of Delphi: there is no one wiser than Socrates.
- Socrates thought it can't be true: “**I know that I know nothing**”; led him to become the “**gadfly**” of Athens.
- Plato's dialogues covering trial and death of Socrates:
  - Euthyphro**: Socrates as he waits for his trial to begin.
  - Apology**: mostly a monologue by Socrates during trial.
  - Crito**: Socrates in jail waiting for his execution.
  - Phaedo**: records Socrates' last thoughts and his death.
- *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito* considered Plato's “early dialogues”; *Phaedo* considered a “middle dialogue.”

# Euthyphro

- Euthyphro is on his way to prosecute his own father, and feels it is his religious duty (piety) to do so.
- Socrates is horrified by this, engages him in a dialogue.
- Socrates says he's charged with impiety, wants Euthyphro to teach him: "What is Piety?"
- Euthyphro tries 3 x to answer:
  - 1) what he is doing for the city
  - 2) what is pleasing to the gods
  - 3) what all gods love (universal).
- **Euthyphro dilemma**: Do the gods love what is holy because it is holy? Or is it holy because they love it? [CR 28-29]



# Euthyphro

- Euthyphro's reasoning seems circular [begging the question].
- **Socratic method** involves a series of questioning that produces a state of "**Aporia**" (puzzlement or perplexity).
- Socrates: perhaps piety is a kind of justice(?) [but then ...].
- *Euthyphro* shows why some Athenians viewed Socrates as dangerous: he makes them **question** long-held beliefs, traditions, become skeptical.
- Euthyphro bolts at the end.



# *Euthyphro*

SOCRATES: ... What is piety? ... tell me the truth. For, if any man knows, you are he.... If you had not certainly known the nature of piety and impiety, I am confident that you would never ... have charged your aged father with murder....

EUTHYPHRO: Another time, Socrates; for I am in a hurry, and must go now.

SOCRATES: Alas! my companion, will you leave me in despair? I was hoping that you would instruct me in the nature of piety and impiety; and then I might have cleared myself of Meletus and his indictment. I would have told him that I had been enlightened by Euthyphro, and had given up rash innovations and speculations, in which I indulged only through ignorance, and that now I am about to lead a better life.

# Apology

- Accusation by Meletus:
  - 1) Socrates corrupts the young
  - 2) Socrates is impious [atheist].
- Socrates begins by telling how he came to question the “wise men” of Athens and made enemies.
  - The Oracles can't be right → became Athens' gadfly: an ignorant man could also be the wisest of all men.
- Against 1), Socrates presents the **Socratic Paradox**: if true, no one does wrong intentionally; wrong-doers should be educated (*rehabilitated*), not punished.



# *Apology*

- Against 2), Socrates can't be impious because he was obeying God's calling to expose false wisdom:
- The Oracles of Delphi were God's messengers; seek those who claim knowledge, show falsehood (truth).

“If you say to me, Socrates, this time we will ... let you off, but upon one condition ... that if you are caught doing this again you shall die; -- if this was the condition on which you let me go, I should reply: Men of Athens, I honor and love you; but **I shall obey God rather than you**, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy.” [CR 21]



# Apology

- After Socrates' speech, the jury delivers their verdict. Socrates addresses the audience one last time.
- **Q:** What lies after death? He is not afraid.
- **Is death a dreamless sleep?** "Such a sleep is more blessed than most nights and days in the life of even the most fortunate mortal."
- **Is death a journey to another world?** "How splendid to be able to meet ... Hesiod and Homer!"



"... The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways – I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows." [CR 22]

# Crito

- *Crito* short dialogue, occurs while Socrates is waiting to be executed.
- Crito, a wealthy friend, bribed the guards; wants Socrates to escape.
- Crito's arguments:
  - 1) Shouldn't aid others commit murder of innocent (Socrates). Death is "easiest path," cowardice to not resist injustice, courageous to flee unjust death.
  - 2) Think of sons; can't abandon them to be orphans. A father's obligations is to nurture and educate his children. Also chides Socrates for letting things get so out of hand – trial shouldn't have taken place at all.



# *Crito*

- Socrates's response:
  - 1) We must be guided by reason; he does not fear death.
  - 2) Reputation, feeding children – these are values of thoughtless men; only one question truly matters: would it be just or unjust for Socrates to escape?
  - 3) Invokes the **Laws of Athens**, they speak to him:
    - A citizen bound to society as a child to parents.
    - **Social Contract**: he enjoyed Athens (+ her Laws) for 70 years, can't betray her (+ his own identity) now.
    - It would be unjust for him to abandon her; we must not repay evil with evil, injustice with injustice.

# *Crito*

SOCRATES: “[Laws of Athens] Listen, then, Socrates, to us who have brought you up. Think not of life and children first, and of justice afterwards, but of justice first .... Now you depart in innocence, a sufferer and not a doer of evil; a victim, not of the laws, but of men. But if you go forth, returning evil for evil ... breaking the covenants and agreements which you have made with us ... our brethren, the laws in the world below, will receive you as an enemy.”

This is the voice which I seem to hear murmuring in my ears, like the sound of the flute in the ears of the mystic ... prevents me from hearing any other. I know anything more which you will say will be in vain. Yet speak, if you have anything to say.

CRITO: I have nothing to say, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Then let me follow the intimations of the will of God.

# Phaedo

- Socrates's last conversation with his friends; records last words and death.
- *Phaedo* generally seen as seminal text for Plato's ideas on death & the soul.
- Socrates: a philosopher has no fear of death because his soul (mind) will be free to acquire pure knowledge.
  - Flesh is like a prison for the soul;
  - "All of philosophy is training for death."
- **Four proofs of immortality**: 1) argument from the opposites; 2) knowledge as recollection; 3) argument from indissolubility; 4) the lyre argument.



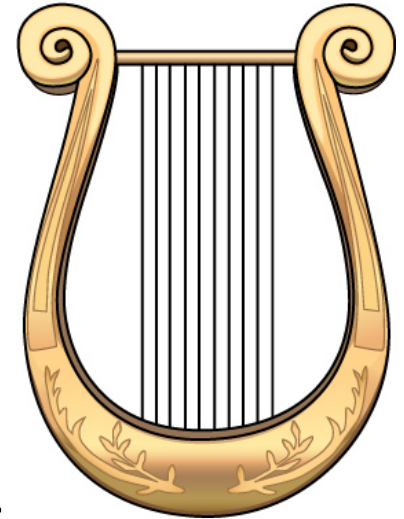
# Phaedo

1. **Argument from the opposites**: If two things are opposites, they come into being from the other.
  - If one goes to sleep, he must have been awake; if one awakes, must have been sleeping.
  - Opposites generate opposites: as life generates death, death must generate life as well.
2. **Knowledge as recollection**: Certain truths are eternal (theory of form). This also means souls existed before body (flesh vs. spirit). [cf. *Meno*]
3. **Argument from indissolubility**: Soul divine, immortal, rational; so it is uniform, indissoluble, unchangeable.
  - Soul comprehends Forms; so it must be divine.

# Phaedo

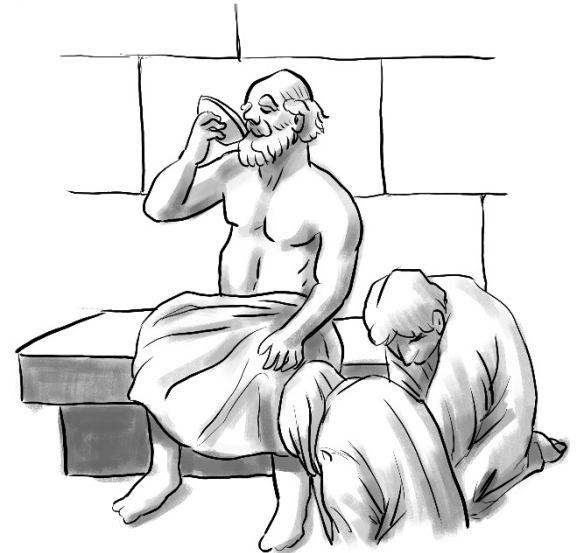
## 4. The Lyre argument

- Simmias skeptical of the immortality of the soul: human body may be like a **lyre** that is in tune and soul, like the “tunefulness” (harmony) of the lyre.
- When the lyre breaks, harmony vanishes.
- Socrates’ refutation: Soul is different from harmony.
  - 1) Soul precedes the body. [pre-existence of the soul]
  - 2) No soul can be more or less a soul. [indissolubility]
  - 3) Soul is the Form (essence) of life, cannot admit its opposite, death; so, immortal. [contingent vs. necessary]



# Phaedo

- Socrates says goodbye to wife and sons, and calmly drinks the cup of poison (hemlock). Dies soon after.
- **Q:** Are there different versions of Socrates in *Apology* and *Phaedo*?



**Early:** mainly defense of Socrates, eg. *Euthyphro*, *Apology*.

**Middle:** more assertive of Plato's own ideas (Theory of Forms), eg. *Phaedo*, *The Republic*.

**Late:** Plato may be questioning his earlier ideas; Socrates not as prominent, eg. *Laws*, *Parmenides*.

- **Q:** How reliable is Plato's Socrates?