**Ethics in 4th Century Greece and Modern Politics**

1. **In this paper I will analyze the ethics and moral virtues of Greek and Athenian statesmen during the fourth century:**
2. Virtue and the punishments received.
3. Compare ancient with modern
4. **According to Plato’s theory of ethics,** ethics is the highest level of morality and is essential to a person’s wellbeing. Personals virtues provide the skills necessary to attain a level of morality and the highest level of morality would bring happiness.
5. Plato’s student:. Aristotle’s ethics were based on virtue. His argument was that a person develops virtue by having acceptable character traits.
6. A person that exhibits acceptable behavior was an ethical individual. To maintain good ethics and ethical behavior, virtue needed to be nurtured so that it became stable. Good morals and virtues are made manifest in a person’s behavior.
7. **In the 4th century if you were an orator, statesman or politician, you were expected to exhibit good moral behavior.**
8. When a person who was a public speaker did not adhere to acceptable ethical and virtuous behavior he was punished with imprisonment.
9. In comparison, modern politicians who violate the ancient rules of acceptable political conduct and exhibit unethical behavior go unpunished. Politicians with good ethics who display moral virtue in their actions which are recognizable by their behaviors.

**Ancient orators, statemen and politicians included:**

1. **Andocides**: He was imprisoned on suspicion of taking part in the mutilation/vandalism of a statute called Herms. In Greek religion, Hermes was revered god and the statue destroyed was a sacred stone object connected with a popular cult religion of Herm. This statue was in the marketplace and people would worship the statue. While imprisoned, he became an informer and gave the names of the others involved in the vandalism and they were tried and condemned to death.
2. The crime was vandalism/mutilation of a revered statue called Herm. It was a bearded head of Hermes and had an erect phallus and was a worshiped cult object. (Encyclopedia Britannica). The mutilation of this statue took place on the on the eve of the Sicilian Expedition in 415 BC and led to the expedition’s commander Alcibiades to be indicted and the Athenians believed it also led to the failure of the expedition itself.” Androcide’s conduct was considered unethical behavior and punishable by death.
3. He was also imprisoned for impiety. Impiety is associated with lack of reverence for something considered sacred whether in word or deed.
4. politicians today are not imprisoned for impetuous offenses.

1. **Alcibiades**. A politician known for his unscrupulous behavior was involved in the vandalism/mutilation of the Herm and was blamed for the people’s sufferings so he fled in exile to a castle he had built in Cherosenesus.
2. When Socrates was sent to prison for corrupting youth, the unscrupulous Alcibiades who had been a student of Socrates was used as an example of how Socrates was corrupting the youth with his teachings.
3. Alcibiades did have a redeeming quality. While in exile, from his castle he could see the approaching Spartan army that would destroy Athens and tried to warn the Athenians but because of his prior unethical behavior he was held in contempt, they ignored him and told him to go back to his castle. Despites his scrupulous and unethical behavior, when the Spartans became to cruel and imposed hardships and the Athenians were suffering under Spartan rule; they longed for Alcibiades to return. That this politician and orator was desired by the Athenians concerned the Spartans, so they sent men to kill him
4. **Demosthenes** was a statesman and orator and considered the greatest orator of all time. He was imprisoned and exiled when he was accused of taking 20 talents deposited in Athens by Harpalus. Although the facts in this case were not very clear he was still imprisoned and fined two and a half times the amount involved. It was customary to be fined ten times the amount taken but because it was possible that he did not intend to steal the money, his fine was reduced. Nevertheless, he was sent to prison because stealing money is unethical behavior punishable by law. This man who had been a leader of people, a statesman and orator ended his life by escaping from prison and becoming a refugee. He died when he committed suicide by drinking poison.
5. **Today in modern politics we have several examples of politicians that lacked good ethics and moral values.**
6. **During the Roosevelt administration** there were several politicians that committed crimes and their lack of ethical behavior resulted in prison terms that are comical when compared to the punishments endured by ancient politicians and orators. **Joseph Ralph Burton** (November 16, 1852 – February 27, 1923) was a lawyer and United States Senator from the state of Kansas was convicted of corruption and appealed to the Supreme Court which sustained the initial verdict of a six-month prison term for accepting a $2,000.00 bribe. $2,000.00 is the equivalent of about $40,000.00 of cash today.
7. **During the Harding administration, Albert Fall**, a Republican, who was Secretary of the Interior bribed by Harry F. Sinclair for control of the Teapot Dome federal oil reserves in Wyoming. He was the first U.S. cabinet member to ever be convicted; he served two years in prison (1922 Albert Jenn Albert Jennings Fountain murder caseings Fountain murder case, Fall represented the men on trial, and they were acquitted. During the trial there was evidence presented that Fall was involved in the murders. He was never indicted.
8. Today, we have an entire party of Republicans that ignores the unethical behavior of the president of the United States. As an orator and politician, he is offensive to people of color, immigrants, and woman. He encourages racism and invites other countries to get involved in our political system. His non-profit corporation was closed because it spent charitable funds on personal items purchased for his own use. Trump was fined two million dollars and ordered to close the non-profit and his acts were not tried as a crime because under current law a president cannot be charged with a crime while in office.
9. There is a myriad of politicians who have committed crimes due to a lack of moral values and unethical behaviors. However, there are still some politicians that have not succumbed to the new authoritarianism in our government. Men like Mitt Romney who still exhibit good ethical and moral values.
10. **Mitt Romney** in hisspeech during the impeachment where he notified congress of his intention to vote to convict President Trump of abuse of power. Romney’s speech exemplifies ethical and moral virtue which are synonymous with the ethical and moral virtues that were valued during the 14th century. During the impeachment trial of President Trump Mitt Romney stated the following,

*“The historic meaning of the words “high crimes and misdemeanors,” the writings of the founders and my own reasoned judgment convince me that a president can indeed commit acts against the public trust that are so egregious that while they’re not statutory crimes, they would demand removal from office. But my promise before God to apply impartial justice required that I put my personal feelings and political biases aside. Were I to ignore the evidence that has been presented and disregard what I believe my oath and the Constitution demands of me for the sake of a partisan end, it would, I fear, expose my character to history’s rebuke and the censure of my own conscience. I’m aware that there are people in my party and in my state, who will strenuously disapprove of my decision, and in some quarters, I will be vehemently denounced.” (Romney).*

1. **According to Plato and Aristotle**, the decision that Mitt Romney made is the highest form of virtue and moral character. Knowing he would be ostracized for his decision by his own party, he made an ethical choice to do what he deemed as correct given the circumstances of the impeachment. Trump was acquitted of all charges by the Republican Senate majority.
2. In answer to the question of punishments rendered for unethical behaviors of ancient orators, statesmen and politicians in comparison with today’s modern politicians. The punishments received by ancient orators, statesmen and politicians were much more severe and unethical behaviors has become more acceptable. The punishments for crimes are less severe or non-existent today. Actions that were unethical and lacking in moral virtue were formerly a cause for severe punishment and imprisonment. The same actions today are now acceptable, and lack of ethics and moral virtues is todays political atmosphere are acceptable behaviors by many people in society and in political institution of the United States.