

REACTION #3

What is wise? Knowing more than others? Being an expert at a skilled craft? In ancient Athens, the Oracle at Delphi pronounced the most wise. According to Socrates, when the essence of wisdom is knowing, and moreover, that we can never know everything, he is wise only because he admits he knows that he knows nothing. Socrates states that all evil comes from ignorance. In epistemological terms, theories of knowing also include being able to recall information, and “knowing where to look” for unknown information (such as being able to effectively use a database).

In the Apology Socrates is critiqued at trial based in alleged treason against gods and the state. He is found guilty and condemned to death. In the Crito he is offered escape to another Greek city-state by Crito. Notwithstanding, Socrates leads Crito to realize his sole ambition is virtue, and thus absolute obedience to the law and the judgment of his peers. Socrates states that there is justice and virtue in the law and obedience to the law, which according to Aristotle is “reason without passion”, and otherwise evil is done. To Socrates, to escape is to incite passion against virtue; passion against reason.

I found interesting that Socrates calls disobedience to the state and the gods the equivalent of disobedience to one’s parents. In the Apology Socrates states the defense that all elements of society play a fundamental role in raising a child, to include service to the gods, state, and in Crito the child’s parents. This is also expressed by the maxim “it takes a village to raise a child”, and in this state of lifelong becoming we constantly evolve and strive to be better in accord with multi-faceted societal expectations. The public sphere of the law is a societal expectation. The law is imposed upon us in all areas of our life. In Western Civilization, this education enables us to coexist with an eclectic, diverse and inclusive political and social modernity. Habermas calls this the influence of the public and private spheres of life in the public-private overlap. The highest order of good for Socrates, virtue¹, lies in the law and obedience thereto.

¹ Reason is a virtue