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Lessons Learned About Education and Training From Select Socrates Dialogues

Tabitha M. Barsky

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

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Southern Illinois University

Lessons Learned About Education and Training

From Select Socrates Dialogues



*Honors Thesis UHON-491
Tabitha M. Barsky
Wednesday, August 04, 1999*

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Abstract

- 1 *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, "Men of genius are often dull and inert in society; as the blazing meteor, when it descends to earth, is only a stone." This thought correlates to the well quoted phrase, "Looks can be deceiving." This idea is one which applies to many disciplines. Pertaining to this essay it demonstrates to us that the stone, although old and discarded, can possibly represent something much greater than is seen. When applied to philosophy, words that are old, sitting dead on a page, may prove astounding when reexamined.*
- 2 *The Socrates dialogues by Plato, can certainly be seen by some to represent this stone of old, dead, and unused wisdom. In this thesis it will be attempted to find something special; an ideology of what good education is. As well as, what lessons can be learned from this blazing meteor, who's works have since become old. This will be done by examining excerpt's from Plato's dialogues, Meno, Ion, Gorgias, Crito, and Phaedrus, that explain a central theme, and then explaining it in terms of lessons to be learned for application to education.*

Introduction

- 3 *The foundations of education and training come from many highly advanced older civilizations, many that have since died out. From these civilizations we can learn from their laws on how business and government were conducted. From the arts of these civilizations we can understand more about their way of life and from their philosophies we can learn about their beliefs and ideas concerning many different subjects.*

- 4 From the Greeks we can learn about their ideas on justice, beauty, knowledge, and immortality. What's more, we can ascertain how the ideas of just a few men appear to have determined how the whole Hellenic empire thought. In particular, were the catalytic ideas about education, and training, that continue to be influential today. These ideas will be examined from five of the Socrates dialogues, that are about knowledge, instruction and education in order to determine the principle lessons to be learned and how these principles can be applied to today's society.
- 5 The Socratic dialogues appear to have particular relevance to education and training because of the nature in which Plato investigates pure ideas and the study of the reality of those Ideas in a systematic and applied way. Plato demonstrates, in these dialogues, that we need not understand an idea to appreciate it. This is established by the way in which Socrates investigates, with uncertainty, the fundamental principles held in high esteem by the Hellenic Empire. This is done not because he knows the meaning of what he is questioning, but because he appreciates the value of finding an answer.
- 6 Plato seems to want to convey that education is based on learning which is drawn out of a pupil, not taught to him. This education is thought to be instilled or inspired by divine inspiration. This basic principle of Platonian thought can be further applied with the idea that there are no educators only education (Jowett, 1937). For example, a central idea from the dialogues of Meno and Ion, is that information is existent in a pupil as in an orator and he can miraculously understand, discuss and relate what he already knows merely on motivation.

- 7 This inspiration is coupled in the Socrates dialogues with virtue. These two distinct qualities are greatly admired by Socrates and consequently his pupil, Plato. The linking of inspirational thought and virtue appear to stem from Socrates. Where the notion of knowledge being an aspect of virtue, appears to be an idea worked into the dialogues by Plato. The intermingling of ideas appears several times though out the dialogues (Freeman, 1956). In many circumstances it is difficult to extract the true intent of the author and that of his mentor Socrates. Knowing this, it must be acknowledged that the author of this thesis does not know the true purpose of these dialogues as intended when original discussed, and this thesis is only an attempt to make an educated guess at their real meanings.
- 8 Clearly Socrates says, Education is necessary for the survival of man. In it's staple form it is needed to gather and prepare food, to find and build shelter, and it is essential to maintain vitality. In the search for an absolutism of truth, wisdom and knowledge we are introduced to the idea of gaining education of these absolutes for merely the sake of gaining knowledge by itself. In other words, to learn of new ideas, or skills not for the basis of being paid, or to learn a trade alone, but clearly to learn for the sake of learning (Roderick, 1990).

Discussion

Meno

- 9 Of the Socratic essentials, is virtue an aspect of a mans education; can virtue be taught and is virtue a necessity required to learn? Put another way, Meno says as quoted from the dialogue named for him, "Can you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue is acquired by

teaching or by practice; or if neither by teaching nor by practice, then whether it comes to a man by nature, or in what other way (70a), (Thomas, 1980)?”

- 10 In discussing this quote, it first seem essential to define virtue. In this dialogue Socrates attempts to capture the essence of education and acquired virtues by defining in definitive terms what virtue is. This proves to be a difficult task, and results in the presentation of many examples of aspects of virtue, rather than what virtue is as a whole. It is this idea of virtue being more then the sum of its parts that Socrates wishes to emphasize.
- 11 As the dialogue continues to develop, it is agreed upon by Menon and Socrates that virtue must be good. Additionally, virtue is wisdom and/or true opinion. This is illustrated in paragraph 89a., Socrates' is speaking and concludes that virtue is wisdom, whether in whole or in part. In addition, it is agreed upon in paragraph 97b., that virtue is also right opinion since it is just as good a guide to right action as wisdom (Thomas, 1980).
- 12 On the topic of whether virtue is acquired by teaching or by practice; or whether it comes to a man by nature, or in some other way, Socrates suggests that virtue is a product of divine transpiration. This is demonstrated in Socrates' closing comments to Menon, he defines virtue as follows: “ ...Virtue is seen as coming neither by nature nor by teaching: but by divine allotment incomprehensibly to those to whom it comes - unless there were some politician so outstanding as to be able to make another man a politician. And if there were one, he might almost be said to be among the living such as Homer says of Teiresias...whom Homer says that he alone of those in Hades has his mind, the others are flittering shades (This is a passage from Odyssey, X. 494, Translated by Rouse). Then

from this our reasoning, Menon, virtue is shown as coming to us, whenever it comes, by divine dispensation.” Socrates further comments that, “We shall only know the truth about this clearly when, before inquiring in what way virtue comes to mankind, we first try to search out what virtue is in itself (67 - 68) .”

- 13 A second translation of this passage by B. Jowett (1937), is offered to give more insight as to what virtue is considered to be by Socrates: “To sum up our inquiry-the result seems to be, if we are at all right in our view, that virtue is neither natural nor acquired, but an instinct given by God to the virtuous. Nor is the instinct accompanied by reason, unless there may be supposed to be among statesmen some one who is capable of educating statesmen. And if there be such an one, he may be said to be among the living what Homer says that Tireasias was among the dead, ‘he alone has understanding; but the rest are flitting shades;’ and he and his virtue in like manner will be a reality among shadows...Then, Meno, the conclusion is that virtue comes to the virtuous by the gift of God. But we shall never know the certain truth until, before asking how virtue is given, we inquire into the actual nature of virtue (100).”
- 14 By suggesting that virtue comes from divine dispensation, Socrates is hitting on a key concept of this philosophy that is also referred to in the *Ion*. This area of concern will be discussed more in depth later in this thesis, but requires an understanding of this idea, in order to understand the argument introduced in the *Meno* dialogue.
- 15 The reference to divine dispensation of knowledge, is surrounded by the Socratic idea that a person can have all of one kind of knowledge, but if not attributed to

divine knowledge, it is not contemplated or included in the Socratic search for wisdom. But, rather referred to as true or right opinion. This is further divided in this discussion into the idea of gaining knowledge through recognition and recollection. This division of acquiring knowledge differs from that of true or right opinion, because it in turn is considered to be a product of divine dispensation.

- 16 Another primary question of this dialogue is whether education is a product of recollection? In understanding this question its' essential to define recollection and it's partner recognition. Recognition is defined in the Websters II New College Dictionary as: 1) An act of recognizing, 2) Awareness that something perceived has been perceived before. Likewise, the definition of recollection is: 1) To recall to one's mind or to have a memory (Pickett, 1995).
- 17 These two words have essentially the same meaning, but it is worth noting that they include the idea of knowing or perceiving something that has been perceived before. With *before* being the keyword to this discussion. The passages referring to the questioning of a slave boy (82 - 85), do suggest that he knows something that has been seen before. It is further argued by Meno that, the slave boy questioned in this dialogue, could not have been exposed to the demonstrated knowledge in his present capacity. With this declaration, Socrates answers by proposing that the boy always had the knowledge. That his knowledge is a fragment of the soul.

- 18 The dialogue becomes intertwined about here, but the essence seems to lay somewhere between the idea of the immortality of the soul and divine dispensation of knowledge. It is further suggested by Socrates that these two ideas are not separate, but concerted.
- 19 Socrates passionately suggests that knowledge is a product of truth and that truth is a product of the soul which is immortal. It is the soul that provides the ability to recollect an opinion that later becomes knowledge when questioned. The term soul is used throughout the dialogue as a noun, suggesting that it is tangible.
- 20 It seems important to note at this point in the discussion of this dialogue that the true meaning of *soul* as it is used by Socrates and consequently the author, Plato, is again unknown. Except for a few brief excerpts from the *Phadeo*, mainly 64c and again in 67d, the meaning put to the term soul is obscure.
- 21 The lesson to be learned by this dialogue thus far, is that in order to uncover the knowledge of reality, *sophia*, that is retained by the soul, whether divine or otherwise, one must inquire about it (Pittenger, 1971). Virtue is knowledge in the largest sense of the word and we must inquire within ourselves (the mortal & divine) to discover it. Therefore, by continually inquiring into what we do not know we are in turn being virtuous or maybe just acquiring aspects of virtue that are a critical part to the whole being. This might be referred to as, "*approximate knowledge*," in that although we can only approximate the essence of what virtue is, we can make the statement that, "though it refers to an approximation, it is nevertheless precisely true (Buck, 1970)."

- 22 Another, important idea of this dialogue is the question of whether the notion of, critical inquiry is a formative educational tool or not? The term *critical inquiry*, refers to the discussion of ideas. It distinguishes that there are, clear and distinct, differences between knowledge and experience.
- 23 For instance, one can be read up in experiences such as, “changing a tire,” but this reading remains only knowledge until it is applied. Critical inquiry takes the changing of a tire one step further by discussing or inquiring into the changing of the tire. Where by, improving on that knowledge that exists.
- 24 Another distinguishing factor to the use of this formative educational tool is in the difference between instruction and education. Which would therefore, dictate the style in which critical inquiry is used. Socrates points out in this dialogue on several occasions that these two delivery methods are not the same.
- 25 About the differences between instruction and education, Eugene Freeman and David Appel, demonstrate the theory behind these terms in their book, “The Wisdom and Ideas of Plato.” On page 44, they explain these ideas as follows,
“ ‘Instruction’ is derived from the Latin ‘instruere’ which means ‘to build on.’
‘Education’ is derived from the Latin ‘educare’ which means ‘to lead forth.’
Instruction then signifies the process whereby the instructor puts his own thoughts into the minds of his pupils by drill and rote methods. Education on the contrary refers to the process whereby an educator ‘leads forth’ from the mind of his pupil the thoughts that his own student has created by the activity of his own thinking. The educator then is the teacher who makes his own students think.”

- 26 In education, not only does critical inquiry appear to be a formative tool to education and learning, but would seem to be an essential element. This would apply both in the inquiry and in the learning of ideas. In this sense, critical inquiry seems to give a creative or richer edge to learning. This in it's self convey's an important lesson that, "The life which is unexamined is not worth living (Plato)."
- 27 In summary, Socrates seems to be making an attempt to distinguish knowledge in its pure form, with its applied form. In which case, experience is being measured against all other kinds of knowledge in order to judge its importance. For the most part it seems safe to say that experience as a knowledge, is weighed very heavily in Socrates eyes. Accordingly, experience continues to be crucial today in education and training.
- 28 Transitioning to the next dialogue, *Ion*, the same main ideas from the *Meno* are again discussed. There is one difference in that the ideology of virtue is not directly in question during this particular dialogue. Instead, the focus is on the question if knowledge comes from divine inspiration or from good education, training and experience combined.

Ion

- 29 The question of the origin of knowledge is discussed a great deal during this dialogue, one of the more important quotes on the subject is, "...for if the subject of knowledge were the same, there would be no meaning in saying that the arts were different, if they both gave the same knowledge. For example, I know that here are five

fingers, and you know the same. And if I were to ask whether you and I became acquainted with this fact by the help of the same art of arithmetic, you would acknowledge that we did...Then he who has no knowledge of a particular art will have no right judgment of the sayings and doings of that art (537-538), (Jowett, 1937).”

- 30 This particular quotation appears to convey the lesson that all knowledge is not the same. Meaning that there are many different aspects of knowledge. For example, there is the knowledge of craft, the knowledge of arithmetic, and/or the knowledge of the Arts. In addition, each of these forms of knowledge can be further broken down in to the knowledge of sculpture, drawing, rhapsody, pottery, leather making, and so forth. Once broken down into an area, the area can be divided into specific tasks, in which one can have knowledge of.
- 31 The types of knowledge spoken of here, are different from one another, in that if one has knowledge of drawing they should be able to use that knowledge for use with tasks involving the art of drawing, but not for tasks involved in the art of rhapsody. The reason for this is the knowledge needed is not the same.
- 32 Another important point to knowledge is that in order to have right judgment of the sayings and doings of that art, one must couple their knowledge with the experience of applying that knowledge. This is most often seen in the learning of a craft, in which an apprentice works with a master craftsmen in order to become proficient in the desired skill.

- 33 This principle is demonstrated in this dialogue when Ion tries to argue that he is knowledgeable as a general as well as a rhapsodists. It is here that Socrates asks why he is not acting as a General, since that is a more honorable profession, rather than rhapsodizing (a notion discussed in the Republic, Book X [605c-60-7b], where Socrates gives an argument that the Arts, Poets in particular bring out a display of emotions which are normally considered disgraceful. Therefore, the writings of Homer, Hesiod, and the whole lot are immoral, as a whole and seem to give Socrates as well as Greek philosophers in general an ulcer so to speak [Rouse, 1937]). Ion replies by saying that foreigners are not allowed to general in Athens. Socrates traps him by naming Athenian generals who are also foreigners. Once he's won the argument, that to be a general you must practice Generaling, he jokes that Ion is just trying to cheat him out of hearing Homer, rather than say he's a General. This whole discussion tries to point out that knowledge is not enough by itself, but must be accompanied by experience.
- 34 A second idea more closely related with the ideas discussed in *Meno*, is in reference to the origin of knowledge. This idea distinguishes knowledge that is acquired through experience, from knowledge that is not acquired by experience. For example, Ion states he is unable to apply his knowledge of Homer and the art of rhapsody to any other poets of the time, specifically to Hesoid, and Archilochus.
- 35 Socrates responds to Ion, by trying to convince him that his knowledge of Homer does not derive from any skill acquired from the art of rhapsody, but from another source altogether. He says the following to Ion, " ...Ion, you are one, and are possessed by Homer; and when any one repeats the words of another poet you go to sleep, and know not what to say; but when any one recites a strain of Homer you wake up in a moment,

and your soul leaps within you, and you have plenty to say; for not by art of knowledge about Homer do you say what you say, but by divine inspiration and by possession...(536), (Jowett, 1937).”

- 36 In this quote Socrates wants Ion to admit he is possessed through Homer. Socrates speculates here, that God takes the mind out of poets and uses them as his servants. In turn he thinks the same is true of the rhapsodists. Specifically, that they are chosen to relay the word of the poets, which is really the word of God(s). Ion does agree his great ability to speak of Homer is from divine dispensation rather than any art or science. Unfortunately, Socrates fails to instill his lesson in Ion that experience is necessary in order to perform the art of generaling.

Phaedrus

- 37 Slightly different from the ideas presented in the last dialogue, is *Phaedrus*. This dialogue is much longer than the previous and the discussion significantly more unencumbered than the rest. Useful to this thesis are the ideas relating to the arts.
- 38 The lessons learned from this dialogue and its connection with education and training are mainly focused on the actual performance of an art. Mainly, the use of the devices associated with a specific craft from within an art. This is illustrated with the quote, “O most ingenious Theuth, The parent or inventor of an art is not always the best judge of the utility or in-utility of his own inventions to the users of them (275), (Jowett, 1937).”

- 39 This roughly translates to, the craftsman knows better what tools are good and useful to him than the person who invented them. Thus, the craftsman is better qualified to judge the use of a device. Therefore, a new device can only be justly measured when it is judged by the users of it, rather than the inventor.
- 40 This is expanded upon in the following quote from the same passage, “ You who are the father of letters, from a paternal love of you own children have been led to attribute to them a quality which they cannot have; for this discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners’ souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves.”
- 41 From this excerpt we can see that the tool in question is the alphabet. Here letters are being judged by their user (Thamus), who sees them as friends to forgetfulness rather than creating wisdom, as was thought by their inventor, Theuth. Theuth, believed letters were for better memory and for the wit. He considered his invention of the alphabet to be a useful learning tool.
- 42 Socrates argues the use of letters puts less use on a person's mind. He agrees with Thamus, that using letters creates forgetfulness. It seems that the concern here is that people will write things down so not to forget them, but as a result they will become slaves to their pen and paper.
- 43 A second concern here for Socrates and the like, is that letters are, “...an aid not to memory, but to reminiscence, and you give your disciples not truth, but only the semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things and will have



learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without reality (Jowett, 1937). In this passage the discussion focuses on the concept of learning being of the utmost importance to education. Like an item of clothing education is something that accompanies us everywhere, and therefore it must be worn with respect.

44 Another idea that emerges from this dialogue is the question of if there is an instance when a tool can be used improperly, and what significance's accrues from it's improper use. This relates specifically to how the art of writing should be used. The primary question here is if words that are written should be done for the purpose of conveying a truth or used merely for folly. This is consider in the following passage, where Socrates says, " I cannot help feeling, Phaedrus, that writing is unfortunately like painting; for the creations of the painter have the attitude of life, and yet if you ask them a question they preserve a solemn silence. And the same maybe said of speeches. You would imagine that they had intelligence, but if you want to know anything and put a question to one of them, the speaker always gives one unvarying answer. And when they have been once written down they are tumbled about anywhere among those who may or may not understand them, and know not to whom they should reply, to whom not: and, if they are maltreated or abused, they have no parent to protect them; and they cannot protect or defend themselves (275)."

45 Socrates goes on further to say that although there is potential for words to be defenseless, there is a far greater written word and that is word that speaks of incontestable trues. He explains his meaning by posing the question of how a

husbandman would act, “ Would a husbandman, who is a man of sense take the seeds, which he values and which he wishes to bear fruit, and in sober seriousness plant them during the heat of the summer, in some garden of Adonis, that he may rejoice when he sees them in eight days appearing in beauty? At least he would do so, if at all, only for the sake of amusement and pastime. But when he is in earnest he sows in fitting soil, and practices husbandry, and is satisfied if in eight months the seeds which he has sown arrive at perfection (276)?”

46 The lessons to be learned in these passages, are that the use of words sowed in the heat of summer; are not created in seriousness. If done this way they will not be good works and bad works are for play. Also, important here is if a writer can not define the truth in spoken works, how can he possibly bestow truth through the written words. Especially, since written words can not defend themselves against ridicule. Whence, the one who sows the words must have respect for those same words, if they are to flourish.

47 The last idea of interest to this dialogue deals with whether the writers intent, when writing these words, has any bearing on their use. For example, the impact of words on the philosopher/poet verses the law giver should be different. The reason for this is that to the lover of wisdom, words must be worked to perfection as they try to examine and/or convey a truth. This truth if done seriously will be understood by many people, of different cities, and different times. Poets and philosopher’s works are written both to explain and to preserve this explanation. Where as Law’s are written for the present with room for change in the future.

Crito

- 48 Throughout this dialogue the ideas of ethical obligation and the obedience of the laws, are discussed in great detail. There is an obvious attempt to answer questions such as, should an unjust law be obeyed? As well as, what or who determines when a law is immoral and unfounded. Lastly and most importantly is whether one should do what he admits to be right, or betray that right (Jowett, 1937).
- 49 This dialogue finds Socrates in prison waiting to be executed. It begins as Socrates awakes to see Criton sitting near him. Criton has come to try and persuade Socrates to escape to Thessaly, to live with friends of his. This is the subject of the first quote taken from this dialogue. Here, Socrates, explains to Criton why he doesn't wish to escape, "Then, my friend, we must not regard what the many say to us: but what he, the one man who has understanding of just and unjust, will say, and what the truth will say. And therefore you begin in error when you advise that we should regard the opinion of the many about just and unjust, good and evil, honorable and dishonorable. 'Well, some one will say, 'but the many can kill us.' ... And that is true: but still I find with surprise that the old argument is unshaken as ever. And I should like to know whether I may say the same of another proposition--that no life, but a good life, is to be chiefly valued? ...a good life is equivalent to a just and honorable one (48), (Jowett, 1937)."
- 50 This passage clearly shows that Socrates does not believe escaping from prison is an honorable or just alternative to death. He also seems to be saying that the opinion of the masses is not to be listened to; especially, if the person strongly disagree with the beliefs of the crowd when they recommend a deed that is unjust or dishonorable.

Foremost, Socrates conveys that a person must do the honest and just thing of fulfilling his obligations and/or agreements. Another example is offered to stress this point, when Socrates says to Crito, "Ought a man to do what he admits to be right, or ought he to betray the right?" Clearly, this question is used to establishing an argument for doing what one believes is just.

- 51 Socrates, takes this question further by discussing the conditions of acting justly or unjustly, when he says, "Are we to say that we are never intentionally to do wrong, or that in one way we ought and in another we ought not to do wrong, or is doing wrong always evil and dishonorable ...or in spite of the opinion of the many, and in spite of consequences whether better or worse, shall we insist on the truth of what was then said, that injustice is always an evil and dishonor to him who acts unjustly?...And what of doing evil in return for evil...For doing evil to another is the same as injuring him? ...Then we ought not to retaliate or render evil for evil to any one, whatever evil we may have suffered from him ...Tell me, then, whether you agree with and assent to my first principle, that neither injury nor retaliation nor warding to my first principle, that neither injury nor retaliation nor warding off evil by evil is ever right (49), (Jowett, 1937)."
- 52 By the clause, acting unjustly, it is assumed that this also pertains to disobeying. It is suggested here that, Socrates, considers disobeying his sentence of death by escaping to be dishonorable. In addition, he appears to believe escaping is the least desirable choice. Consequently, there is the notion that upholding the truth is an honorable act, no matter what the personal cost. "Socrates, doomed to die under trumped up charges, still believed that it was his duty as a citizen to respect Athenian law. He

refused to set aside or trample on the law even at the cost of his life (Freeman, 1956).”

- 53 A central theme of this dialogue, and also the principle lesson, is that the act of upholding the truth is the just and honorable thing and should always be chosen. This principle is attested to by Socrates many times and he confirms his belief of it to Crito when he say’s, “...the old argument is unshaken as ever (Jowett, 1937).” Yet, this principle is easily argued. Certainly, we all have heard the phrase, “An eye for an eye,” this is in direct conflict with what Socrates believes to be a principle truth. Clearly, the taking of an eye for an eye, is an evil, a retaliation to an unjust act. Which brings us to the classic counter argument, that *two wrongs don’t make a right*.
- 54 In essence what these ideas speak about are standards. These standards in today’s society are considered to be idealist, rather than realistic. There are overtones in *Crito*, that suggest these ideals were passé even then. The question of whether to follow the crowd and leave these ideals behind, or to hang on for the sake of honor and justice, is a difficult one. In this dialogue, Socrates, chooses to follow the decision of the state. Here he uphold what he believes is honorable and just, by obeying the terms of his sentence.
- 55 If Socrates is guilty of the crime he is accused of, then his being punished would probably be excepted even today. However, if his sentence were unmoral or unjustified in anyway, this punishment would clearly be consider wrong on the part of the state. This poses an important question of whether or not an unjust or unethical law should be obeyed. Socrates, argues that if a person lives in a state all of his life and never

finds disagreement with it's law or decisions, then it is unethical of that person to suddenly find fault in the states decision just because it is not in their favor.

- 56 Rather than to try and disprove this theory or even to agree with it, it seems better to just consider whether obeying the law is something that is considered an honorable thing to do. In general it seems that it is. Therefore, obeying even an unjust law would still be an honorable act. The result then is that honorable acts are desirable and they are something to be upheld, even admired. The principles spoken of here suggest that these are not ideas that should be discarded like yesterdays news, but rather admired and upheld as absolute trues.

Gorgias

- 57 Arriving at the last dialogue, *Gorgias*, focuses on examining the art of rhetoric. The scene is at the house of Callicles; Socrates, Gorgias, Chaeraphon and Polus are also present. Socrates has come to hear Gorgias speak, but unfortunately he is to late. Nevertheless, Gorgias agrees to answer any question put to him.
- 58 From here on, Socrates, begins to ask questions about the nature of Gorgias's skill. The response is that Gorgias practices the art of rhetoric and he calls himself a rhetorician. Socrates, is not satisfied by this answer and begins to interrogate Gorgias, and his friend Polus, as to what distinguishes rhetoric from all the other arts. These questions are first answered by Polus, but are not found acceptable. This leads Gorgias to respond as follows, "Because, Socrates, the knowledge of the other arts has only to do with some sort of external action, as of the hand; but there is no such action of the hand in rhetoric

which works and takes effect only through the medium of discourse. And therefore I am justified in saying that rhetoric treats of discourse (450), (Jowett, 1937).”

59 The response that rhetoric treats discourse does not suffice Socrates, and he continues to inquire into the nature of the art. With this Socrates begins to ask questions based on certain truths about the art. An example of this is offered from the bottom of passage 451, “And now let us have from you, Gorgias, the truth about rhetoric; which you would admit (would you not?) to be one of those arts which act always and fulfill all their ends through the medium of words?” Gorgias responds by answering, “True.”

60 After establishing that rhetoric is an art which deals exclusively with words, the focus of Socrates questions shift to how those words are used. It appears that the art of rhetoric centers on the skill of persuading others. Having the skill of persuasion is said, by Gorgias, to be the same as having a power over others. With this power a rhetorician or an orator, (these two professions have already been established to incorporate the same skills), has the ability to persuade the multitudes by influencing their beliefs.

61 This idea of influencing the beliefs of others, leads us to our first quote of particular interest. Spoken by, Socrates, he asks this question of Gorgias, “Shall we then assume two sorts of persuasion, one which is the source of belief without knowledge, as the other is of knowledge...Then rhetoric, as would appear, is the artificer of a persuasion which creates belief about the just and unjust, but gives no instruction about them? (455), (Jowett, 1937)”

62 Notable here, is the reference to rhetoric as producing a belief without any knowledge. It appears that what a rhetorician does is to appeal to the emotions of the crowd, jury, or whatever group of people he is speaking to. In this way he is able to influence their beliefs long enough to elicit what he wants from them. In which case, the rhetorician fools his audience by causing them to think they know something to be true, when in fact they have not learned the truth, they have only gained the belief that they know the truth. However, having the crowd believe they know the truth is powerful enough to create, in them, a confidence for the orator. This confidence allows the orator to get his proposals adopted, regardless of whether or not he has any skill in the art he is representing.

63 Furthermore, the rhetorician is able to elicit any position he wishes because he is a master of speech. This notion is confirmed by Gorgias, when he says, "And I say that if a rhetorician and a physician were to go to any city, and had there to argue in the Ecclesia or any other assembly as to which of them should be elected state-physician, the physician would have no chance; but he who could speak would be chosen if he wished...Such is the nature and power of rhetoric! And yet, Socrates, rhetoric should be used like any other competitive art, not against everybody, the rhetorician ought not to abuse his strength any more than a pugilist or pancratiast or other master of fence; because he has powers which are more than a match either for friend or enemy, he ought not therefore to strike, stab, or slay his friends (456), (Jowett, 1937)." The utility in this excerpt is clearly a question of ethics. Its foundation lies in the idea that it is not ethical to use a skill for a purpose other than what it was intended for. In addition, the better a body is at employing this skill, the more unethical it is to purposely use it to deceive people.

- 64 In digesting the ideas spoken of thus far, there appears to be certain advantages to practicing the art of rhetoric/oration. Additionally, having the skills of oration is said, to give power to the person who is a master of this art. This is done through the power of speech, which allows the rhetorician to persuade others to believe in his abilities. Power is looked upon by Callicles and Socrates as something that is evil by nature.
- 65 The notion of power being evil is discussed in great length towards the end of this dialogue. A sample of this is taken from the beginning of passage 526, where Socrates gives a length response to Callicles, who has suggested that Socrates become a servant of the state (521). Socrates response with, "The very bad men come from the class of those who have power. And yet in that very class there may arise good men, and worthy of all admiration they are, for where there is great power to do wrong, to live and to die justly is a hard thing, and greatly to be praised, and few there are who attain to this (Jowett, 1937)."
- 66 From this quote, one would be led to believe that Socrates thinks the rhetorician who can attain this power and not abuse it, should be honored. It is questionable here if he is speaking in general, or about one of the men listening. Also, he could be said, to have mastered the art of rhetoric. Yet, he uses his skill in a way that brings humility to the art.
- 67 Lessons of importance in this dialogue concern the questions made both in reference to instilling belief without knowledge and to using a skill for less than honorable purposes. One would hope that an art that focuses on discourse, would also have an interest in enlightening the masses to which it reaches. Unfortunately, history has shown that many

great speakers, (an extreme example is Adolph Hitler, a less threaten one is Bill Clinton), have other than honorable intentions. For this reason, it seems of the utmost importance that individuals using this forum, be instructed on it use, and its limitations. The misuse of this ability to persuade other can cause a tremendous amount of harm. As a result it seem appropriate to teach not a belief of conviction to do good, but the knowledge of what is good, and what is ethical. Additionally, this must be begun early with decency and high moral standards.

Conclusion

68 The basis of this thesis was to find an ideology of what good education is, by examining excerpt's from Plato's dialogues, *Meno*, *Ion*, *Gorgias*, *Crito*, and *Phaedrus*. This has been done by explaining this ideology in terms of lessons learned for application to education. The remains of this thesis will be dedicated to summarizing the lessons learned from each of the dialogues:

1. Meno ~ There are clear and distinct differences between knowledge and experience. Experience is a necessary factor in learning.
2. Ion ~ The subject of knowledge is different depending on the art in question.
 - ~ In order to have right judgment of the sayings and doings of an art, one must couple their knowledge with the experience of applying the knowledge.
 - ~ There is no substitute for experience.

3. **Phaedrus** ~ A device can only be justly measured when it is judged by the users of it, rather than the inventor.
- ~ Education should be something that is highly respected for it's usefulness.
 - ~ Before writing words down, the author must be able to define the truth of these word as they are spoken.
 - ~ Written words should not replace the spoken word, but should be used to preserve an absolute truth.
4. **Crito** ~ Honorable acts are to be both desired and admired.
- ~ A man should do what he admits to be right.
5. **Gorgias** ~ There are two types of persuasion. the one that creates knowledge by learning and the one that only creates a belief without knowledge.
- ~ It is not ethical to use a skill for a purpose other that what it was intended for if it deceives people, no matter how good a person is at the skill.

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