The College of Wooster

The Strangest Man That Has Ever Been: Socrates' Influence on Julian and Kierkegaard

by

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Preface

The idea for this project came first from time spent volunteering at the Blegen Library of the American School in Athens while I was studying at College Year in Athens. In the process of shelf reading and various other tasks I got a sense of pieces of Classical Studies that might in some way fit together, and even though I discovered Kierkegaard had already written what I originally wanted to write, that has turned out to be not such a bad thing. I thank the staff there for taking me on as a volunteer in return for a reader's card, and allowing me to do preliminary research on both my Junior and Senior IS projects.

More specific thanks goes first of all to my advisor, Dr. Matthew McGowan. He guided me expertly through the project, even when I went in directions about which he knew little. His suggestions on all stages of the drafts were enormously helpful. I also would like to thank Dr. Ronald Hustwit of the Philosophy department who provided guidance in the early stages of my Kierkegaard research, and explained several of the more mind-boggling concepts.

Personal thanks go first to my parents, who provided suggestions about the form and content of the project and, even more importantly, emotional and financial support. Several close friends consistently gave help and advice when needed, and I appreciate them listening even when their own IS projects were calling. My boyfriend Mike also listened almost nightly to my latest insights and provided an excellent sounding board for new ideas. One person who shall remain nameless unknowingly gave me insight into how Socrates must have felt about Alcibiades.

Introduction

Socrates stands as a giant of intellectual inspiration and controversy, beginning in his own day and continuing to our own. He has inspired many, but this project will focus on the Emperor Julian and the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, who have themselves both affected our intellectual tradition in various ways and degrees despite their vast differences in time and talents. The intellectual and physical pursuit of the paragon of Socrates connects them.

We can understand Socrates' appeal to them as the first to live his life in a way that made little sense to anyone outside his immediate circle and created intense devotion among his students and followers. For them, he was a man who could be nothing but honest because he saw no need to defend his actions. At the same time, he knew that no one else would understand what he was doing, which is mainly due to his methods. Socrates was a dangerous figure for the Athenians and is still troubling to us. Nevertheless, he was always uncompromising in his moral principles, even when these vary from what others consider appropriate morality. Socrates practiced a radical unconventionality which appealed strongly to later thinkers of a certain intellectual bent, such as Julian and Kierkegaard. Both saw Socrates in that model and used it to inform their own philosophical projects. In their work, they cited Socrates to support their philosophical or ethical arguments, but the use of Socrates goes more deeply than that. For someone such as Julian or Kierkegaard, who feels out of place in his own society and at war with its values, the figure of Socrates is crucial, since he provides a venerable model for those tendencies and way of life.

I say "model" because a model is supposed to be malleable, and Socrates is certainly that. Because our knowledge of Socrates is limited to the works of other writers with their own agenda, each person creates his own vision of Socrates, whether consciously or not. For many,

this vision is not complimentary even if it is useful. It often picks up on the rhetorical annoyances of Socrates' dialectic method, or his anti-democratic feelings, or sexual orientation, or any number of depictions of Socrates. For others, Socrates elicits quite another set of impressions. But as a model, he is subject to the whims of his dressers, and without a doubt, the Socrateses of Julian and Kierkegaard are a creation of their own, so fashioned to lend credence to their own projects.

I say "Socrateses" because they used different aspects of Socrates in their work, which is not necessarily due to their misreading of him, but rather to his nebulous nature. For instance, the difference between Xenophon's Socrates and Plato's Socrates creates discernable lines that readers can choose to draw; Julian makes little distinction between these different pictures of Socrates because it is not important to his project. On the other hand, Kierkegaard insists upon a difference between the two, and for him the Platonic Socrates is more credible. These differences in interpretation of Socrates give us an important insight into how these two thinkers were using his image to shape their own philosophy. At the same time, they read him based on their own philosophical leanings, so their source criticisms reveal what they found most useful about Socrates.

Despite their different specific uses of Socrates we can spot an overall similarity in their view of Socrates as the practicing philosopher who is worth emulating. Julian's use of Socrates was probably more naïve because his philosophical ability was less developed, despite his conviction that philosophy was crucial to a good life. Julian writes of Socrates as the first Cynic, and someone worth emulating in the pursuit of living philosophically, which to Julian meant living ascetically and in line with the Delphic pronouncement to "know thyself." Julian's use of Socrates was closer chronologically and culturally to the original Socratic project. He was a

Roman emperor of a Christian empire, and yet identified more closely with classical Greece of fifth century Athens than with his own Roman culture, which put him at odds with his subjects. Kierkegaard volumes of difficult philosophy in his relatively short life, and his philosophical vision of Socrates changed markedly over the course of his work. But he used Socrates as a model for his life, even when he had trouble reconciling himself to that. Kierkegaard was a Christian who was in some ways fundamentally at odds with Greek thought, and yet saw Socrates' project as useful to his own attempts to reform the Danish Lutheran church, even when this created tension in the insular society of mid nineteenth century Copenhagen. In his own way, each was an individual of extreme strangeness, much like Socrates.

Their strangeness goes beyond the mere use of Socrates' irony for intellectual projects, which the public's similar reaction to all three of these thinkers shows. The same ridicule and satire which affected Socrates greeted Julian and Kierkegaard when they came into their last great conflict with a public who did not understand their projects. They all rebelled against the established values of their society to the point of death. Julian and Kierkegaard did not meet death at the hands of their own people, which is an important difference from the death of Socrates. Nevertheless, in so close an association with Socrates, death becomes the appropriate ending to their projects, no matter from which quarter it comes. Indeed, a destructive impulse is evident throughout their work, and it seems possible that the question is not so much how Socrates inspired them in their fervors and manias, but in how they used Socrates to justify their psychological inclinations. A complete answer is beyond the scope of this project, but it will be an important theme throughout.

The first chapter of this project will separate the different images of Socrates which each ancient author constructed, keeping in mind the disparate approaches and motivations of each

ancient writer. In the similarities and clashes of their ways of describing Socrates we can get a sense of the basic material with which later sources were working. Rather than trying to delve into the nature of the historical Socrates, I hold ultimately that Socrates is unknowable because he was so strange that no one understood the way his mind worked. Our intense desire to understand what lies behind the mask often leads us astray into believing that our own Socrates is the real one. Alcibiades and Kierkegaard, among others, have said this before in a different fashion.

The second and third chapters will examine separately Julian's and Kierkegaard's use of Socrates, necessarily abbreviated, but attempting to show their own constructions of Socrates. This encompasses not only their writings about Socrates, but also the contexts in which they received their classical educations. Both precocious but awkward youths, they found intellectual solace in the ancient Greeks and sought them out beyond what was usual in their educational contexts, which despite being more than a thousand years apart were not so very different. Other biographical similarities will be apparent, culminating in a "trial," in which they faced off against the morals and religion of their contemporaries. In their trials we can see how striving after Socrates manifested itself in their lives to the very end. They were both men of unusual personalities and intermittent melancholy who found the society of their birth an enigma. It incited them to undertake reform that ultimately failed because they could not live up to their Socratic ideal.

Chapter 1: The Socratic Problem

The Socratic Problem is this: how can we possibly know the historical Socrates when he wrote nothing? We have a Socrates whom other writers constructed, colored, and overlaid with their own ambitions and ideas. Reality is lost in the haze of Socratic myth and thus it is impossible to determine with accuracy who Socrates was and what he did. Scholars search for the "historical" Socrates, and many think they have found him, whatever form he takes, even when all these pictures of Socrates differ uncompromisingly from others. These diverging accounts of Socrates indicate that the historical Socrates remains a mystery. One could show him trite and uninteresting (as some argue Xenophon has done), or one could ascribe untold wisdom and depth to him. But because the unfiltered wisdom of Socrates is lost to us, we lack a way of checking these portraits of Socrates against reality. Despite this, these portraits form an important body of philosophical and historical knowledge, and it hardly matters whether Plato or Xenophon or Aristophanes was telling the *truth* about Socrates, because their accounts of him are all we have, and they have formed the basis for all later perceptions of Socrates. Thus, the concept of Socrates is more important than the "historical" Socrates, for all we would like to know the latter.

It is hard to get hold of the Socratic personality. This is why there is a dearth of fiction about Socrates, popular or otherwise. Socrates pursued the concrete and thus was a man destined for biography rather than historical fiction. Creating a believable fictional character for a historical personality who exists only in the fictional accounts of others is difficult, as a brief survey of Socratic fiction shows. Babette Deutsch's 1933 *The Mask of Silenus* portrays a naïve Socrates wandering through the streets of Athens in a haze of near dementia, with his loyal wife

trying to get some sense into him. On the other hand, Daniel Chavarria's 2004 literary mystery novel *The Eye of Cybele* focuses on Socrates' position in the midst of the political turmoil of fifth century Athens. I.F. Stone's 1988 work *The Trial of Socrates* is not fiction as such, but it posits a number of questionable positions for Socrates in order to prove that democracy is the best form of government, and that the execution of Socrates was one minor lapse in its good works. These positions in fiction are not unique, but are comparable to positions in scholarly works on the Socratic personality and the historic Socrates. These points of view follow from the various ancient perceptions of Socrates and indeed how people through history have viewed the committed and fervent intellectual. Our modern perceptions of Socrates are as much product of the stereotypes and idealizations of the intellectual as were the Socrateses of Julian and Kierkegaard.

This chapter will focus on the enigmatic man himself and examine the images of Socrates which have most created an impression on the minds of later thinkers. I want to give a sense of the ancient writers' emotional interest in Socrates. The depictions of his trial are particularly important for this purpose, and I examine them because they put the issues of Socrates' life and how he affected people in the stark perspective of death. The trial of Socrates is significant for a number of reasons. For the purpose of understanding later perceptions of Socrates the importance of the *Apologies* is that they are texts from which all who seek to understand Socrates begin.

In recent years, scholars have focused specifically on whether or not either *Apology* is historically accurate and therefore an indication of Socrates' thought. We have two surviving *Apologies* of Socrates, part of what V.J. Gray calls "an industry of biographical literature…sometimes purporting to be the actual defence [sic] or prosecution conducted at his

trial."[1] Scholars generally agree that the earlier of the two works is Plato's *Apology*, on which Xenophon's *Apology* draws.[2] Gabriel Danzig frames the debate between those who think Plato's Apology is an accurate representation of Socrates' speech or meant to be an intellectual biography of Socrates, both of which views Danzig suggests are "riddled with doubtful assumptions," or alternatively that there is little or nothing of the "historical" Socrates in the Apology which Plato did not invent.[3] Generally it is in the compromise between these two extremes that scholars expect to find the true nature of Socrates. A relatively new phenomenon is to read both versions of the *Apology* in historical context, with particular emphasis on political motivations. Thus they are in part a medium for the author to construct a portrait of Socrates for posterity.

The differing accounts of Socrates in Plato, Xenophon, and Aristophanes do not present a unified portrait of Socrates, and certainly all had widely varying motives for portraying him the way they did. Plato and Xenophon posit different motivations and approaches that Socrates takes in his defense—Xenophon explicitly, Plato implicitly—to respond to controversy after the trial.[4] I will not be using either *Apology* to decipher the historical Socrates or to pinpoint the author's political motivations. The interpretation of Socrates cannot be purely philosophical or purely political, since both of these approaches neglect the human element. Plato and Xenophon were writing at a certain time with certain aims which the political situation dictated, and these are worth acknowledging. Yet no true follower of Socrates would do the politically advantageous thing at the expense of the truth. Rather, both are expressing their own personal connection with

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[1] V.J. Gray, "Xenophon's Defence of Socrates: The Rhetorical Background to the Socratic Problem," *CQ*, New Series, Vol. 39, No. 1 (1989), 136.
[2] Mario Montuori, *Socrates: The Physiology of a Myth*, Translated by J.M.P. and M. Langdale, (Amsterdam : J.C. Gieben, 1981), 74.
[3] Gabriel Danzig, "Apologizing for Socrates: Plato and Xenophon on Socrates' Behavior in Court." *TAPA*. 133(2003), 282.
[4] Ibid., 318.

Socrates. Both of them are defending Socrates against public opinion; namely, the public opinion espoused in Aristophanes' depiction of Socrates. In their *Apologies* they want to address the type of people who find the jokes in the *Clouds* humorous and show them how badly they misunderstand Socrates. A reader's attitude towards Aristophanes' Socrates is a good way to find out how he feels about Socrates, and the proof of this will emerge in Julian and Kierkegaard's treatments of Socrates.

Socrates' nebulous nature is not a problem for the reader who can appreciate different perspectives on the same person. If one is, however, attempting to discern the "real" Socrates in order to justify one's own intellectual project, these discrepancies can matter a great deal. Julian did not worry overmuch about the gaps between these portraits of Socrates, but for Kierkegaard it was an issue for intense scrutiny. Which portrayal of Socrates is most attractive depends on the reader's own prejudices about Socrates. Of course, for many, Plato's Socrates is *the* Socrates whom they might wish to admire and perhaps emulate. But by ignoring Xenophon's Socrates they risk constructing an ideal Socrates whom they imagine is a real Socrates. Through careful reading of both *Apologies*, we can see where the problems arise and why Plato's Socrates is more attractive for some.

Plato's Socrates

Plato presents us in his *Apology* with a Socrates who is honest because he sees no need to defend his actions but knows that hostile Athenians who have misunderstood his project will not acquit him. He wants to leave an explanation of his project for the future, and tell the Athenians who have laughed at the *Clouds* because it expresses their own feelings how wrong they are. These are admirable qualities, but this Socrates is troubling because of his behavior and manner of speech. He is rarely rude outright, but his speech frustrates readers who look for more finesse

from Socrates. He is on trial for his life, but he neither defends himself with arguments that will get him off the charges, nor does he treat the jurors with the respect that is due to them. His speech is, on the surface, plain. In fact, he begins his defense by remarking "I almost forgot myself, since they spoke so persuasively. And yet— they have spoken no true words"[5] (17a). His own tactic will be different. He says that he is in a law court for the first time, and that he does not have the sort of rhetorical skills to which the jurors will be accustomed, only his own way of doing things. He also knows that they appreciate histrionics as part of a defense, but he is not going to do this either. He wants them to open their minds to consider the *justness* (δίκαιος) of his defense, even if it lacks rhetorical flair. (17d- 18a).

But despite his claim to speak a just defense in plain words, many from that time on have understood his defense speech as a deliberate incitement to the jurors to put him to death. Plato is apparently showing off Socrates' ironic nature, which would be willing to commit suicide to prove a philosophical point. Are his words arrogant mocking of the jurors by a brilliant man who is toeing the line of common sense, or is he proving that an ironic nature is self-destructive? We can read Plato's *Apology* in the latter way, but we can also read it as Socrates at his most earnest. In this case, his speeches make sense and need not contain conscious attempts at deception. Plato is constructing a portrait of Socrates that is meant to convince later readers of his teacher's virtue, and his personality is a large part of his virtue, even though this is not always immediately obvious. Socratic irony does not intend to deceive the reader, but to make the reader think.

For this discussion of irony I am relying on Gregory Vlastos' elucidation of what we mean by irony. He begins with Quintillian's definition of irony as that which conveys a meaning

[5] □γ□ δ□ ο□ν κα□ α□τ□ς □π□ α□τ□ν □λ□γου □μαυτο□ □πελαθ□μην, ο□τω πιθαν□ς □λεγον. κα□τοι □ληθ□ς γε □ς □πος ε□πε□ν ο□δ□ν ε□ρ□κασιν

other than what is said, and a second connotation of humorous mocking.[6] He also presents a more nebulous third possibility: sometimes people use irony to present a riddle that contains the implication that one should be able to figure it out, if one were smart enough.[7] The "intention to deceive" was important to the use of the Greek word *eironia,* and Aristophanes was the first the use it in that sense. Later Demosthenes uses it to describe people who lie to escape civic duty. Plato also uses it to describe sophists who are unlike Socrates in their outright deceit.[8] Several times the word describes Socrates. Aristotle saw Socrates as an ironist (*Nichomachean Ethics* 1127b 23-6), though not one with bad motives, rather he used dissimulation to avoid being a braggart, which is an acceptable position to take in Aristotle's view. In the *Republic*, Thrasymachus uses it when he thinks Socrates is lying about not knowing the answers to his questions in order to trick people.[9] In that case, there is no particular reason to translate the word into the English "irony" when Thrasymachus is actually accusing him of lying.[10] Vlastos asks, "[*B*]*ecause* it is so commonly used to denote sly intentionally deceptive speech throughout this period, *must* it be always so used of Socrates by Plato?"[11] He compares *eironia* to the English word "pretending" which can mean many different things along the spectrum of falsity.[12] He thinks that something rather different is going on here: before Socrates, the word *eironia* had bad connotations, but by the time of Cicero and later Quintillian, the word was much more innocent than before, and that it was Socrates himself who started the transformation.[13] Vlastos writes that Socrates' playful speech was "as innocent of intentional deceit as a child's feigning that the play chips are money…dead earnest in its playfulness… a previously unknown, unimagined type of

[6] Gregory Vlastos, *Socrates, ironist and moral philosopher*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 21.
[7] Ibid., 22.
[8] Ibid., 23.
[9] Ibid., 24.
[10] Ibid., 25.
[11] Ibid., 25.
[12] Ibid., 27.
[13] Ibid., 28-9.

personality…"[14] On the face of it, this assertion is incredible, but Plato's description of Socrates at his trial describes such a personality. Socrates uses a type of complex irony, in which he always leaves people to figure out what he is talking about: he allows them moral autonomy, rather than telling them just what to do.[15]

Vlastos believes that we see this image of Socrates in neither Aristophanes nor Xenophon, and that a useful example of complex irony is Alcibiades' confusion over Socrates' feelings in Plato's *Symposium*. Socrates is not lying to Alcibiades about his feelings; he just does not reciprocate them in the same way.[16] One might suppose that Socrates knew he was misleading his friend, and Vlastos answers this by suggesting that Socrates wanted Alcibiades to find out the truth for himself.[17] He is for himself, after all, looking for the virtue that comes with knowledge, and so lying would defeat his own purpose. Moreover, he does not always tell people the answer because sometimes he truly does not know the answer. Socrates' complex irony is a part of his personality: he says that he is wise because he knows that he does not know, and he never presumes to know what he does not for rhetorical purposes. Irony is not dissimulation, it is a distance kept for emotional or rhetorical purposes.

If we are to allow Socrates in the *Apology* this peculiar personality, his arguments must indeed have this playful element while at the same time being quite serious. The most important elements of his defense from this point of view will be his insistence on his honesty and avoidance of corruption, and his own explication of what he has been doing, rather than his offhanded defense against the specific charges. As he reminds the jury, many of the accusations against him are difficult to trace, but come from deep-seated fear and suspicion, and it is most

[14] Ibid., 29.
[15] Ibid., 44.
[16] Ibid., 41.
[17] Ibid., 42.

difficult to defend himself against the prejudices people have held from their youth (18b-e). But he insists that he is not interested in natural science or sophistry as the *Clouds* shows him to be, and no one would say that he was (19b-d). Nor does he teach people for pay, and he is suspicious of those who do. In his own view, in order to train men, one must know what it means to be a good man, something which he has never claimed to have known (19e-20b). He explains his odd actions as a result of his strange situation of having a limited human wisdom (20c-d), which is not sufficient for taking money for students.

This leads into this discussion of the famous proclamation of the Delphic oracle that no one was wiser than Socrates, which also appears with a different wording in Xenophon's *Apology*. Montuori has shown that Plato's *Apology* is almost certainly the earlier work, and furthermore, that his story of the Delphic oracle is pure fiction, though this is a controversial conclusion.[18] In this account of the trial, Socrates is somewhat ashamed to tell the story of the oracle, and says that he only does so in order to explain his reputation (20e-21a). He did not understand how he could be wiser than everyone else, so he attempted to prove the god false by discovering someone wiser (21b). What he discovered, famously, is that people who appear to be wise, such as the politicians, poets, and craftsmen, are not actually wise at all. In fact, their ability in those pursuits misleads them (22b). No one seems to have any real wisdom, so he concludes that the oracle must be saying that real wisdom belongs to the gods, and Socrates' realization of this makes him the wisest of all. He is wise in his ignorance, and furthermore, he is following the divine and thus must continue with what he is doing (23a-c).

This is a suspicious conclusion for many people. Is he serious, or is he thumbing his nose at the average Athenian who works hard as a politician, poet, craftsman, or any other task which requires brains? His attitude is humble, he excuses his speech by saying "I am ashamed to speak

[18] Montuori, 85-86; 95; 140.

this truth to you, gentlemen." (22b) He says himself that his interlocutors began to resent his questioning them to determine if they were truly wise (21b-d), even more so after Socrates' young followers begin to do the same thing. He suspects that the young men of leisure enjoy seeing their elders cut down to size, but notes that no one blames the young men for their behavior, rather they blame Socrates for giving the young men the wrong ideas (23c-e). In this particular part of his defense he recognizes outright that his seeming arrogance will make him hated (24a-b). He is making it plain that he believes honesty comes first, despite the consequences.

His defense rests on explaining the way in which he understands his divine mission and his attendant strange behavior, rather than trying to defend himself against the actual charges. He dismisses Meletus' actual charges, since he knows perfectly well that they come out of nothing but a history of misunderstandings (willful or otherwise) of his work. His cross-examination provides a chance for Plato to give a posthumous defense of Socrates, by pointing out, for instance, that he is unlike Anaxagoras. If this *Apology* were an actual defense for Socrates he would have to show what he was doing and explain how that is different from things of which he is being accused. But we all know what happens in the end, and so Plato is not under the compulsion to show Socrates with any expectation of acquittal, or even desire for anything other than the most extreme punishment, that is, execution. To stop because death faces him would be shameful. A Greek hero would not quit because things are dangerous, and further more fearing death because it must be evil is another pretense to wisdom, and another truth that only the gods can know (28a-29b).

Thus Socrates has no intention to stop behaving the way he does, and furthermore has no reason to defend himself because his behavior is not wrong. In fact, he is "a gift of the god," sent

to disturb the sleeping public to make them pursue virtue, which is his way of participating in the democracy (30e-31a). He could not have lasted long seeing all the injustice in the democracy, but he can try to change the Athenians one by one, which will in turn make the whole society better (30d-e). The proof for this is that while his life had not been public in the normal sense, and anyone can see that he has not been living for his own pleasure, but rather he lived what he believed was his divine calling (31a-c). He gets no reward for this, nor does he have any pupils, only associates who are ready to defend him. He has given none of them bad advice, nor pretended to knowledge that he does not have (33c-34b). This is not a particularly strong defense of himself, since it relies on the story of a divine mission, and does not include the standard histrionics and parade of children. He omits the latter for several reasons, which again point to his incorruptibility. First, he does not do the things the usual way, which the jurors already know, and second, it is unseemly and pathetic (34e-35b). Most importantly, it is wrong, since the jury is supposed to consider the facts and dispense justice, not favors (35c-d). Plato's point may be that Socrates had only the purest motives and got good results for those who were willing to put up with his unusual way of doing things, something which Xenophon illustrates more effectively.

This defense of Socrates' posthumous character ends, as we know, in conviction. He gives some apparently ludicrous suggestions for a penalty, such as meals at the public expense for life (36c-e). This would be appropriate for a god-sent reformer, but he understands that they will find this a comical suggestion. He wants to leave them without the traditional penalty of exile, since people will find his dialectic annoying no matter where he goes (37d-e). This does not leave them only with the option of a death sentence. A fine would be acceptable since money is not important to him, though for that very reason he does not have very much to offer, and has to rely on his loyal associates (38a-b). But as we know, he was sentenced to death.

Thus Socrates speaking posthumously through Plato points out that this is ridiculous, since he would die soon anyway, and now they have made themselves look bad (38c). He understands that they convicted him because he refused to indulge in histrionics in an effort to win acquittal, but he could not live with himself had he done that (38d-e). It is far harder to escape wickedness than death in these situations, and he knows that any rate he escaped from wickedness (39a-b). In his last remarks, he plays his trump card in the argument. No one can say of what death consists, but he suspects that it is good, especially since his divine sign never indicated anything else. Thus, he actually has it much better than they do, since they are going to have to live in a society that killed Socrates (39c-42a). Plato makes the point here that the entire society is to blame, and thus ends his defense of Socrates.

In conclusion, if one assumes beforehand that even when Socrates speaks the truth the average Athenian will think him boastful, then Plato's best posthumous defense of him would be to show that he is in fact speaking the truth humbly. We do not know what actually happened at the trial. Socrates may have in fact acted reprehensibly, but for Plato he was not a reprehensible person. Regardless of Plato's motives in composing this defense, he does not abuse the memory of Socrates either by making him too harsh or too obsequious. We can see the effectiveness of this approach by examining Xenophon's discussion of the same event.

Xenophon's Socrates

The primary accusation against Xenophon is that he fails to understand the depth of Socrates or Socratic irony. Yet this assumes that Plato is a reliable narrator of the Socratic personality, by no means a safe assumption. In both *Apologies*, Plato and Xenophon have much the same goal, though on the surface their works appear very different. Gabriel Danzig points out

that Plato's *Apology* is "polemic in the guise of historical fiction," whereas Xenophon wrote his polemic against the Athenians openly.[19] This defense of Socrates is even less satisfying than Plato's *Apology*, since Socrates is not even being subtly ironic, but outwardly hostile and provocative towards the jury. This wildly different portrait of Socrates is not due solely to the intercession of a narrator in Xenophon's account. Danzig points out that Xenophon's narrator is not necessarily trustworthy, but he must be accurately representing public reaction at the time of the trial, since that would be a matter of public knowledge.[20] This tactic makes it obvious that we are not getting Socrates firsthand; Plato's version gives no more insight into Socrates' motivations, though we appear to have more direct access. In fact, the use of a narrator in Xenophon's *Apology* gives his treatment of the trial more verisimilitude. He was not there himself, and by naming his informant, a certain Hermogenes, son of Hipponicus we know through whose biases we are hearing about the trial.

However, whether or not his description of the trial is true is beside the point. In writing this work, Xenophon is replying to one of the main points of controversy after the trial, which is the manner in which Socrates spoke. Danzig suggests that both Plato and Xenophon are attempting to defend Socrates' failure to win acquittal due to a poor defense filled with boastful speeches.[21] Xenophon tells us that this is his intention in writing about the trial of Socrates. "Others… have written about this and all have captured his boastful manner of speaking, which proves that he did in fact speak this way." (1)[22] He wanted to show why Socrates' manner of speech was appropriate under the circumstances, which Gray points out was a way of "applying

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[19] Danzig, 291.
[20] Ibid., 286.
[21] Ibid., 287; 294.
[22] All references to Xenophon's *Apology* are translated by Joel A. Martinez, from Brickhouse and Smith, *The trial and execution of Socrates : sources and controversies*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)
γεγρ□φασι μ□ν ο□ν περ□ το□του κα□ □λλοι κα□ π□ντες □τυχον τ□ς μεγαληγορ□ας α□το□: □ κα□ δ□λον □τι τ□ □ντι ο□τως □ρρ□θη □π□ Σωκρ□τους.

rhetorical theory to the Socratic controversy."[23] Hermogenes explains what happened before the trial when he tried to persuade Socrates to work on a defense for himself, but Socrates said that he had never done anything wrong, and this was his best defense (3). Hermogenes responded reasonably by pointing out that juries had been misled into putting innocent people to death before, to which Socrates replied that his *daimonion* opposed all efforts to think about his defense (4). He has lived a good life and if he did not die soon, old age would take him eventually, so it is better to end things now while people still have good memories of him (5-9). Thus because he is resolved to die, it makes perfect sense for him (from the point of view of Hermogenes) to speak the truth boastfully. Xenophon defends Socrates' "failure" through boastful speech as being due to his wanting to die. Thus his defense speech is a success, and any other view of Socrates would clash with Xenophon's view of Socrates.[24]

Let us briefly examine how Xenophon describes the trial through Hermogenes. Socrates reminds the jurors that everyone, including Meletus, has seen him sacrificing to the gods (11). A god speaks to him, and Socrates says that he is actually *more* pious than the average man because he recognizes and calls his omens divine. He has no reason to suppose that the voice he hears is not divine, since it never spoke falsely (12-13). The jurors complain about this, and Socrates annoys them further by saying that "…when Chairephon asked in Delphi about me, Apollo answered that there is no man more free, more just, or more temperate than I." (14) Socrates adds that the god did not honor him as he did Lycurgus, whom he compared to a god, but only said that he was better than all other men (14-15). As mentioned above, the story of the oracle is either pure invention or chronologically inaccurate. Assuming that is correct, Xenophon's *Apology* is a response to Plato's *Apology* giving his own interpretation of Plato's own

[23] Gray, 138.
[24] Danzig, 317.

fictionalized account of the trial. It is clearly quite a different interpretation, since in this Socrates is not the least ashamed of the oracle and even adds to the version of Plato. Xenophon is trying to put Socrates' behavior in the best possible light, which in this case means that he must be hyper-conceited in order for Xenophon to justify what happened in Plato's account of the trial.

His boastful speech continues as Socrates illustrates why the god was right about him and how he therefore could not have corrupted the youth. He points out that he really is free from many temptations, such as money and bodily pleasures, and he really is wise, since he has always sought new knowledge (16). He is popular; others who strive for virtue seek him out and never ask him for payment, but rather seek to give him gifts (17). His temperance is evident; he was fine during the privations of the siege and makes himself happy through wisdom rather than material goods (18). Given all these well known virtues, it would have been impossible for him to corrupt the young. Meletus says that Socrates has gotten young men to listen to him rather than their parents, but Socrates points out that it is normal for people to take the advice of experts above that of their parents (20), and he considers that he has acted to further their educations.

Xenophon breaks off the narrative here, explaining that he does not want to report everything that happened, but rather to show that while Socrates wanted to prove that he was not impious or unjust, he did not particularly want to avoid death or propose a lesser penalty since that would be tantamount to admitting guilt. Furthermore, he would still die in exile of old age, which he was trying to avoid (22-3). Socrates' closing remarks to the jurors state that some people had lied to convict him, and so he warns these men to beware of their own impiety and injustice and to contrast that with his innocence (24). No one was able to prove definitively the charges against him, yet he will not worry about dying unjustly, since shame only falls upon those who kill unjustly (26). Xenophon concludes by saying that Socrates induced the jury to kill

him so that he could die well and happily—he never avoided a good, even if it was scary or unpredictable. Therefore, no one exemplified virtue more than Socrates (32-4). This treatment of the trial is based on Plato's account, which Xenophon attempts to interpret in light of his own views of Socrates. Thus, it is not a good picture of Xenophon's view of Socrates. This defense ignores the human element of Xenophon's relationship with Socrates, as Montuori says, "it can only be understood psychologically and historically as a contribution by Xenophon to the defence [sic] of the Master whilst the anti-Socratic controversy revived by Polycrates' accusation was still thriving and raging."[25]

According to Vlastos, Xenophon was a litterateur rather than a philosopher.[26] He wrote his own defense of Socrates in the *Memorabilia* (or *Recollections of Socrates*), which shows the Socratic method and the personality of Socrates from Xenophon's unphilosophical perspective. This is a different approach to Socrates, and deserves consideration on its own merits and demerits rather than in comparison to Plato's philosophical works which use Socrates as a mouthpiece for Plato's own views.[27] Because Xenophon was not a philosopher, he could better appreciate the practical application of Socratic ethics. Yet the controversies which the trial stirred up were still issues of contention for the Athenians, and so Xenophon must address them as he did in the *Apology*, which was composed prior to the *Memorabilia*.[28] But in this context he can address these issues directly, since he is not attempting to answer for Socrates' behavior at the trial, rather he is describing all the reasons why Socrates was innocent of the charges and therefore should not have been executed. His defense of Socrates here often runs parallel to the *Apology*, but the entire work is written in the first person, with Xenophon frequently interjecting

[25] Montuori, 77.
[26] Vlastos, 99.
[27] Vlastos, 46-9 gives careful consideration to all the inconsistencies of Socrates resulting from Plato's use of him to describe Platonic vs. Socratic philosophy.
[28] Montuori, 76.

his own opinion and relating anecdotes about Socrates in order to show what sort of person Socrates was. The boasting about Socrates is not a problem for the reader in this context because these are Xenophon's own sentiments.

He addresses first the charge of impiety, then the charge of corrupting the youth, and then shows in the last part of the book that Socrates was a good person and friend who guided by example. In this way he hopes to provide a proper defense of the name of Socrates. Xenophon's editorial perspective is that Socrates always gives sound advice to his companions, and in fact that is an argument in Socrates' defense in both *Apologies* in addition to the *Memorabilia*. Xenophon himself deeply respects Socrates' ability to interact with people in order to advise them, either at their own request or because he saw a problem that needed to be fixed. Leo Strauss suggests that the very title of the work (which is *Apomnemonemata* in Greek, "Recollections" in English) indicates Xenophon's attitude towards Socrates, since in it he ignores all the other great men he knew in his life to concentrate solely on Socrates, suggesting that this was his most important interaction he had in his life.[29] Whatever one's opinion of Xenophon's motivations for writing about Socrates or the quality of his results, it is hard to deny that Socrates is a crucial figure for him.

I want now to describe Xenophon's personal defense of Socrates. First he gives evidence for Socrates' piety in order to show that Socrates gave the gods their due and was interested more in human affairs than in trying to usurp the gods. The primary evidence is Socrates' visibility around Athens. He clearly sacrificed at home and at the public altars and consulted prophets (1.1.2). In answer to the Athenians who objected to Socrates' *daimonion*, Xenophon points out that it was no different than divination, since people believe that the gods provided information in that way (1.1.3). Socrates' personality also made it unlikely that he would lie

[29] Leo Strauss, *Xenophon's Socrates*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 3.

about hearing a divine voice. He would not lie so that he would "not appear to be either a simpleton or boaster,"[30] and for similar reasons would never have foretold things that he did not think were correct. Socrates' *daimonion* gave good and clear advice, and no one regretted the advice that Socrates gave them (1.1.4). If the information from the god was ever unclear, he always told people to get a second opinion, allowing them to double check the correct action with another divinity (1.1.5-6). Xenophon also dismisses those who claim Socrates pursued natural science. Since he was always visible walking around the agora and gymnasia throughout the entire day and anyone could talk to him, anyone could find out if he was behaving impiously. But no one ever saw him doing this or talking about subjects that might suggest impiety such as natural science (1.1.10-11). In Xenophon's opinion Socrates did not have much respect for people who learned about natural science, and he doubted whether they did it because they knew about human matters or because they were trying to know divine matters. Also because none of them could reach any agreement about natural laws, he wondered if they could actually know the truth, or what they expected to do with such knowledge, since they surely would not be able to control the elements (1.1.12-15). Socrates, by contrast, always looked into human matters, knowledge of which can have a very definite effect on human conduct (1.1.16). Additionally, Socrates was more pious than the average Athenian because he believed that the gods knew everything, even though most people thought that the gods had limited knowledge (1.1.19).and we will see that Xenophon was particularly interested in Socrates' practical ethics.

He continues his defense to show why Socrates did not and could not corrupt the young. Again, this evidence consists of Socrates' visible and well-known behavior. He expressed satisfaction with what he had, was continent with respect to sex and food and had physical stamina (1.2.1). With all these virtues and no vices, it would not have been possible in

[30] μ□τ□ □λ□θιον μ□τ□ □λαζ□να φα□νεσθαι

Xenophon's mind for Socrates to corrupt the young, but only to assist them to get rid of their faults through guiding by example (1.2.2-3). For Socrates, taking pay for his instruction would be a form of enslavement, since in that way he would be forced to converse with the people who were paying him, when all he really wanted was to make his companions virtuous (1.2.6-8). While some say that Socrates incited in the young contempt for the establishment to the point of violence, Xenophon feels that they would be much less likely to use violence since they would be able to persuade their opponents by appeal to reason (1.2.9-11). An immediate objection to this opinion might be that Critias and Alcibiades were companions of Socrates, but learned violence and arrogance rather than virtue (1.2.12). Xenophon has no intention of defending their behavior, rather he explains the nature of their companionship with Socrates so as to cast the best possible light on Socrates (1.2.13). Critias and Alciabiades sought out Socrates' teaching to learn how to prove their superiority over others. They did not seek the life of Socrates, and Xenophon supposes that Socrates may not have realized this (1.2.14-17). They behaved well enough with Socrates, and it was only afterwards that their bad qualities appeared. Xenophon insists that no one can blame this on Socrates, since anyone without training and practice can lose any art, including virtue, contrary to what philosophers suggest (1.2.18-19). Since it was only after Alcibiades and Critias left Socrates that they stopped behaving virtuously, Xenophon suggests that Socrates was a good influence on their practice of virtue. No one ought to blame Socrates for the unvirtuous behavior which occurred later on (1.2.24-6). Xenophon concludes that Critias and Alcibiades were intent on mischief making and were only using Socrates for their own gain. After they decided they had all they wanted from him, they did not see him again because they neither cared about him nor wanted to hear their errors refuted (1.2.47). Xenophon concludes that Socrates deserved honor rather than calumny from the city (1.3.60).

Insofar as modern interest in Socrates tends to focus on the works of Plato, Xenophon's writings are often relegated to the position of convenient works against which to check Platonic versus Socratic philosophy. Yet one of the problems with Plato's use of Socrates is that we do not see his practical ethical side except by report. Xenophon has less interest in the philosophical background of Socrates' ethics and a great deal more interest in how they are practically applied, and so he gives many illustrations of Socrates acting the part of the advisor. This Socrates may strike us as an advice columnist, but that likeness does not have to be demeaning to Socrates. Xenophon relates one story that is a good example of Socrates the advisor.

His friend Aristarchus was glum, because he was attempting to support fourteen female relatives to whom he had given shelter during the war. Finding that his resources were not sufficient for this, both he and the women were beginning to resent each other. Socrates engages him in dialectic which introduces the idea that it is better even for free people to be busy and useful, as this makes them strong and cheerful. This leads him eventually to suggest that he ask his relatives to help out by doing something useful around the house. If the women have this sense of purpose, they will be happier and all the members of the household will act better towards each other. He obtains wool so that they may spin, and finds that their mood immediately improves, just as Socrates had predicted. Only one problem remains. Aristarchus complains to Socrates that the women now blame him for being idle himself. Socrates' answer to him is to remind the women that he is their guardian, in the manner of a sheep dog, who gives them the security which allows them to work (2.7.2-12). In this case, the dialogue broke down Aristarchus' preconceived notions about what it is proper for a person to do, and allowed him to understand Socrates' suggestion.

Socrates does not only deal with problems which people are facing, he also gives advice to help people who are seeking to do good things, but perhaps going about it in the wrong way or in need of encouragement. In Book 3 of the *Memorabilia* he deals with Glaucon (son of Ariston and brother of Plato), who at the age of twenty is already attempting to make speeches in the assembly, much to the distress of his friends and family, since Glaucon was quite inexperienced and ignorant. Xenophon says that Socrates was the only person who was able to convince Glaucon of his folly (3.6.1). This, again, is because his dialectical method is able to convince Glaucon that he has a lot left to learn about ruling. He tells Glaucon never to pretend he has knowledge on matters of which he is ignorant, but goes on to tell him that if he works hard and learns the political art, then he might do very well at it (3.6.16-18). Socrates' advice in the *Memorabilia* is similar to the Platonic Socrates in urging people not to pretend to knowledge which they do not have. But it is couched in language different from the Platonic Socrates. The Xenophonic Socrates goes one step further in giving advice in order to put an end to the perplexity of his interlocutor. Through the medium of dialectic he convinces people who would not otherwise listen to good advice, since they help come to the conclusion. Put in this way, people would be unlikely to regret the help they gained from Socrates.

Xenophon provides a different view of Socrates than Plato. Kierkegaard dismissed this as unimportant if not actually detrimental to understanding Socrates. Yet it is important, since in his *Apology* Xenophon construes the Platonic Socrates in a way which makes sense to him, and then in the *Memorabilia* delivers a true defense and a constructive view of Socrates. Since all who study Socrates must create their own Socrates in an attempt to come to terms with this highly enigmatic man, each individual tends to dismiss another's view if it does not mesh with his or her own view. While some can draw from Xenophon where convenient in order to create an

image of the historical Socrates, others prefer to drop his view entirely since they find it clashes too much with the Platonic Socrates. Yet it is hard to say that any ancient source got Socrates right or wrong, just as it is hard to choose any of the myriad of contemporary individual opinions on Socrates as being the most accurate reconstruction of his work or personality.

Aristophanes' Socrates

Not everyone treats Socrates with the care Plato and Xenophon do. Aristophanes springs to mind as someone who knew Socrates personally and yet had no problem making his outlandish ideas and appearance into a joke. He leaves aside the question of his inner mysteries and the value of his philosophy. In the *Clouds* (produced in 423), the leader of the Cloud chorus addresses Socrates as:

> Priest of subtlest hogwash,
> tell us what your heart desires.
> You alone we listen to, of
> all the scientists today…
> You we like because you swagger
> all over town, and roll your eyes,
> barefoot, suffering every kind of
> woe, and proud on our account. [31] (358-363)

Socrates' entire character in the *Clouds* is that of the conscious dissembler whom no one can respect, even if, like Strepsiades, he uses him for his own purposes. We must keep in mind, however, that this depiction of Socrates is not necessarily false or overwrought, but may accurately describe Socrates at an earlier period of his life. Neo-humanists and Romantics considered Aristophanes as a source, but determined that his portrait of Socrates was too grotesque to be reliable.[32] We do not tend to consider this Socrates, since he is not useful for

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[31] Translation by Jeffrey Henderson
σ□ τε λεπτοτ□των λ□ρων □ερε□, φρ□ζε πρ□ς □μ□ς □ τι χρ□ζεις:
ο□ γ□ρ □ν □λλ□ γ□ □πακο□σαιμεν τ□ν ν□ν μετεωροσοφιστ□ν
… σο□ δ□, □τι βρενθ□ει τ□ □ν τα□σιν □δο□ς κα□ τ□φθαλμ□ παραβ□λλεις,
κ□νυπ□δητος κακ□ π□λλ□ □ν□χει κ□φ□ □μ□ν σεμνοπροσωπε□ς.
[32] Montuori, 98.

understanding Platonic philosophy, yet as Wolf points out in Montuori's summary, we do not know anything about Socrates before Plato and Xenophon, and so there is no reason to reject Aristophanes' version of Socrates.[33] This is a man whom comedy and philosophy alike show as unkempt and temperate, and this must have been a man with whom Athenians would have been familiar. In addition, it would it have not been strange to identify him with the Spartans.[34] Socrates the natural scientist, if he existed, could not have practiced his science after 423 BCE, when such study was banned in Athens, and in event the Socrates we know has rejected his past entirely.[35] Thus the *Clouds* is making a joke about Socrates that at the time would have been funny to those who knew about Socrates' past, and probably would have been funny to everyone else for poking fun at the intellectual.

Socrates' ideas, no matter what form they took, were not acceptable to the majority of non-intellectual Athenians, and Plato's *Apology* holds that the play is a symptom of old prejudices against Socrates that existed long before his trial (19b-d). Socrates, who is a "natural scientist", introduces the natural phenomenon of clouds as a divine source of inspiration to the sophists, with whom he is identified. Consider this passage:

> Strepsiades
> Right. I thought that they were only
> lots of dew and steam and gas.
>
> Socrates
> Didn't know that they sustain and
> feed a host of specialists,
> sayers of sooth, quack doctors, hairy
> idlers with onyx signet-rings,
> writers of chorus-bending screeches,
> phony meteorologists,
> doing nothing useful, living

[33] Ibid., 99.
[34] Ibid., 180-181.
[35] Ibid,, 166.

only to sing about the Clouds? (330-334)[36]

Here Socrates identifies himself with the sophists, and goes further to characterize the sophists as deceitful and useless. No one reports that Socrates really was either of these things (at least at the end of his life), and this makes this representation humorous, yet at the same time extremely painful to those who can appreciate in what ways Socrates is truthful and useful. Yet as an obvious joke, it should not incite people to put a man to death, which suggests that some people on the other extreme miss the joke and want to believe that this is what Socrates really was. Socrates himself got the joke. It is said that he stood up at the performance of the *Clouds* so that everyone would know that he was the object of parody. He knew that he was not a sophist, and he knew that Aristophanes knew this too. Like all satirists, Aristophanes understood his subject completely, and he gives us a Socrates who is in cahoots with a band of goddesses who can bend shape and meaning at will. Plato mentions the play as being an effect of misunderstandings of Socrates: Aristophanes could write it because it built on pre-existing conceptions that only lacked a form. Socrates' ideas and methods, whatever they were, must have been impenetrable to the average Athenian. Understandably they would identify the enigmatic Socrates with the equally enigmatic sophists, not supposing there was any difference. Vase painting, as well as comedy, ridiculed sophists and those identified with sophists. A vase from c. 440 BCE shows the satirical portrait of the intellectual, which Paul Zanker describes as a

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[36] Translation by Jeffery Henderson.
Στρεψι□δης
μ□ Δ□□ □λλ□ □μ□χλην κα□ δρ□σον α□τ□ς □γο□μην κα□ καπν□ν ε□ναι.

Σωκρ□της
ο□ γ□ρ μ□ Δ□□ ο□σθ□ □τι□ πλε□στους α□ται β□σκουσι σοφιστ□ς,
Θουριομ□ντεις □ατροτ□χνας σφραγιδονυχαργοκομ□τας,
κυκλ□ων τε χορ□ν □σματοκ□μπτας □νδρας μετεωροφ□νακας,
ο□δ□ν δρ□ντας β□σκους□ □ργο□ς, □τι τα□τας μουσοποιο□σιν.

"naked, emaciated little man with an enormous head….The creature's bare skull, swelling out in all directions, seems about to burst with all the profound thoughts churning inside it."[37] This, and another figure like it, are examples of the pictorial satire that follows intellectuals and depicts them as bizarrely formed and unlovable members of society. Aristophanes wrote his satire, but the message is the same.

The reaction of the reader to Aristophanes' Socrates is a good way to discern that reader's own ideas about Socrates. If one has a hostile view and does not understand what Socrates is doing, this will seem quite an accurate portrait. On the other hand if one is devoted to Socrates, this will be anathema. For example, Julian found the comedic representation of Socrates wicked. This does not mean that he did not understand the joke, but he did not think it was humorous, rather he thought it was dangerous. In fact, precisely this—the danger of comedic representation—led the young Kierkegaard to believe this is what made Aristophanes' presentation of the negative Socrates apt.

The strangeness of Socrates

Perhaps the difficulty does not only lie with conflicting reports about Socrates, but with the man himself. Returning to Plato's *Symposium*, we find that Alcibiades has a definite opinion on Socrates. It rests on his assumption that Socrates is unknowable even to one of his closest companions and that Socrates' ignorance is only an act. Like one of the Silenes he looks plain enough on the outside, but inside "teems with temperance,"[38] (216d) and thus is indifferent to the beauty or wealth of others. Alcibiades thinks that Socrates "is sly and dishonest and spends his

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[37] Paul Zanker, *The mask of Socrates: the image of the intellectual in antiquity*, translated by Alan Shapiro, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 33.

[38] Translations and references for the *Symposium* are from *The Dialogues of Plato Volume Two: The Symposium*, translated by R.E. Allen, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).
ο□εσθε γ□μει...σωφροσ□νης

whole life playing with people,"[39] but because inside he is so glorious, none of this matters (216e). Alcibiades famously compares Socrates to the statues of Silenus that conceal golden gods, and also the satyr Marsyas (215b). Like Marsyas, he charms people, but with words rather than music (215c-e). Alcibiades loves and hates to hear him, because Socrates is the only person who makes him feel ashamed of himself. Sometimes he thinks that he would like Socrates to die, but knows that he could not live without him, and is aware that many others feel the same way (216a-c).

Alcibiades shaped this interpretation of Socrates through a series of unsuccessful attempts to seduce him. For his final attempt, he kept Socrates at his house late at night after dinner in order to confess how he feels, though his approach is unflattering. He tells Socrates that he ought to sleep with him in order to make him better (218c-d). Socrates' reply to this makes perfect sense under those uncomfortable circumstances. He says that if such a thing were possible, then he would indeed be a wonderful thing for Alcibiades, who would be getting something truly good in exchange for nothing much (218d-e). But Socrates insists that he is not anything special, nor would an exchange of wisdom for sex be possible (219a).

This leads Alcibiades to conclude that Socrates is unparalleled. He is comparable to others in some ways, but no one could compare to his strangeness, except possibly for a satyr or some similar creature, which is why he chose the figure of Marsyas as a point of comparison (221c-d). His arguments are equally strange, since they seem ridiculous and simple on the outside, but are complex and brilliant on the inside (221e-222b). Alcibiades flatters himself throughout because he has come closer than anyone else to the inner truth of Socrates that lies beyond anyone's grasp.

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[39] ε□ρωνευ□μενος δ□ κα□ πα□ζων π□ντα τ□ν β□ον πρ□ς το□ς □νθρ□πους διατελε□

Is he on to something with this? While Socrates was indeed strange, he was not unknowable in the sense that Alcibiades meant. Socrates tells him to "give it more thought… lest it escape your notice that I am nothing."[40] (219a) Alcibiades interpreted this as ironic speech, and tries sleeping close to Socrates after this, but still could not seduce him. This made him admire Socrates all the more, but also frustrated him, since apparently nothing would move Socrates (219b-e). He admits that Socrates was well-known for his continence in his military days, but this too made others imagine Socrates was looking down on them (220a-221b).

A story from Xenophon's *Memorabilia* will illustrate Socrates' continence. Socrates tells his companions that it is not wise to have sex with the beautiful. He reminds Xenophon and Critoboulos (who has kissed Alcibiades) that getting involved with someone young and attractive will only lead to an addiction to love with that person (1.2.11). He advises Xenophon to avoid the beautiful, and Critoboulos to go away until he has gotten over his infatuation with Alcibiades. In fact, he thought that no one should make a habit of having sex with those to whom he was attracted (1.2.12-13). He understood that being too attached to any relationship creates a problem for at least one of the parties, especially when based on attraction. The attraction in the case of Socrates is that he appears to other people, especially those who have fallen in love with him, to conceal something unknowably special—one might call it divine—which they earnestly desire to comprehend. In response to these people (and Alcibiades in particular) Socrates continually insists that he conceals nothing of whatever limited wisdom he possesses, but they refuse to believe this.

Vlastos suggests that Socrates treats Alcibiades coldly because he wants him to learn that he did not reciprocate his feelings in the same way. The problem with this suggestion is that what we see of Alcibiades' behavior in the end of the *Symposium* suggests that he never learned a

[40] □λλ□, □ μακ□ριε, □μεινον σκ□πει, μ□ σε λανθ□νω ο□δ□ν □ν

lesson (222c-223b). Perhaps Socrates was really trying to show Alcibiades that he did not conceal any special wisdom, a lesson which is hard to teach. Imagine someone in love with someone else, whom he does not know particularly well, though he thinks he does. He may interpret his lust towards the other person as a desire to know the other person's deepest mysteries without the prosaic difficulties of a practical relationship (something clearly impossible between Alcibiades and Socrates). A prisoner of lust might imagine that a sexual relationship would reveal his beloved's mysteries. If the beloved was not interested, he might reasonably insist that he had no inner mystery, and that the other person was fooling himself. No one in the position of loving without reciprocation wants to hear from the object of his love that his love is completely misguided. This involves a bitter rejection, and certainly would lead to the sort of shame that Alcibiades feels in the presence of Socrates. Of course, consummation of such a relationship might be the best way of showing the lover that the loved conceals no golden secret mysteries, but this is normally undesired by at least one party in the relationship, and probably both.

Because Alcibiades could not bear to part with Socrates (whose beauty was internal rather than external) the distance that Socrates maintains between them increases Alcibiades' passion.[41] In cases such as these, love gets caught in a cycle: the lover insists on the inner beauty of his beloved, who in turn insists there is no such thing, which further convinces the lover of his beloved's inner beauty. This situation usually leads to hurt feelings on both sides, as the tone of Socrates and Alcibiades conversation indicates has happened in this case.

Alcibiades is unwilling to believe that Socrates is telling the truth, and few since have been willing to believe Socrates either. Perhaps all admirers of Socrates find themselves in Alcibiades' position. No one can know how Socrates viewed himself, since he never wrote

[41] This idea illustrates irony in Kierkegaard's *Concept of Irony*.

anything. At the same time, it is not hard to read the works of Plato and Xenophon as a heartfelt ode to a beloved. This does not entail a sexual attraction by any means, but reveals deep confusion about the motivations of the beloved. The reams of modern work on Socrates show that we are still very concerned with trying to prove that Socrates had something very special which is lost to us forever.

Another view of Socrates

Plato and Xenophon wrote descriptions of Socrates which respond to the popular perception of Socrates which are represented by Aristophanes' comedy of 423. They did not find the Aristophanic joke about Socrates humorous; the evil that it had represented was too fresh in their minds. But it is possible to appreciate the point of the joke even if it does not strike the reader as humorous. In this view, while Socrates is compelling, he is not unknowable. This does not entail a hostile view, but a skeptical one, and one willing to write about Socrates in a way that makes his possible defects clear. Aristotle is an example of someone who respects Socrates more than Aristophanes does, but also avoids reading too much into his personality. Socratic modesty, which some interpreted as Socratic irony because it contained a touch of humor, appeared to Aristotle in this way:

> Self-depreciators, who understate their own merits, seem of a more refined character, for we feel that the motive underlying this form of insincerity is not gain but dislike of ostentation. These also mostly disown qualities held in high esteem, as Socrates used to do. Those who disclaim merely trifling or obvious distinctions are called affected humbugs, and are decidedly contemptible; and sometimes such mock humility seems to be really boastfulness, like the dress of the Spartans, for extreme negligence in dress, as well as excessive attention to it, has a touch of ostentation. But a moderate use of self-depreciation in matters not too commonplace and obvious has a not ungraceful air. (1127b14-16)[42]

[42] Translated by H. Rackham from Aristotle in 23 Volumes, Vol. 19, (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1934).
ο□ δ□ ε□ρωνες □π□ τ□ □λαττον λ□γοντες χαρι□στεροι μ□ν τ□ □θη φα□νονται: ο□ γ□ρ κ□ρδους □νεκα δοκο□σι λ□γειν, □λλ□ φε□γοντες τ□ □γκηρ□ν: μ□λιστα δ□ κα□ ο□τοι τ□ □νδοξα □παρνο□νται, ο□ον κα□ Σωκρ□της □πο□ει. ο□ δ□ τ□ μικρ□ κα□ φανερ□ [προσποιο□μενοι] βαυκοπανο□ργοι λ□γονται κα□ ε□καταφρονητ□τερο□ ε□σιν: κα□ □ν□οτε □λαζονε□α φα□νεται, ο□ον □ τ□ν Λακ□νων □σθ□ς: κα□ γ□ρ

He is in the position of knowing all about Socrates before his beatification was complete, and thus may be more able to write about Socrates impartially. He never knew Socrates personally, but would have known many of his contemporaries, and so would be in a good position to know something about the "historical" Socrates. For instance, he separates the philosophy of Plato and Socrates in his writings.[43] Both Xenophon and Aristotle portray a Socrates who searches for practical ethics and morals, rather than metaphysical or natural ideas as Plato and Aristophanes. Aristotle does not accuse Socrates of studying natural science, or even metaphysics, rather he praises him for not having delved into the universals that would lead to metaphysics. Vlastos puts it provocatively: "Socrates, in Aristotle's view of him, had never entered the metaphysical forest where Plato was to get lost."[44]

Aristotle may have understood Socrates in a similar way to modern scholars, who in attempting to discover the historical Socrates pay attention to the political situation of late fifth century Athens. Montuori thinks that anyone who studies Socrates only through philosophy and not through history or social conditions makes a mistake and will never get an idea of Socrates the man with his unpopular political associations.[45] This happened when Socrates was placed in the Hegelian system as the beginning of a new era in thought.[46] Not only did his personality disappear in this new situation, but this made the entire history of Greek philosophy overly schematic. Scholars ignored, for example, the other trials of philosophers such as Anaxagoras, which occurred at roughly the same time, even though these clearly are symptomatic of philosophical ideas to have a real effect on people.[47] We do not study philosophy in terms of its

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□ □περβολ□ κα□ □ λ□αν □λλειψις □λαζονικ□ν. ο□ δ□ μετρ□ως χρ□μενοι τ□ ε□ρωνε□□ κα□ περ□ τ□ μ□ λ□αν □μποδ□ν κα□ φανερ□ ε□ρωνευ□μενοι χαρ□εντες φα□νονται.
[43] Brickhouse and Smith 2002, 115.
[44] Vlastos, 93-4.
[45] Montuori, 147.
[46] Ibid., 148-9.
[47] Ibid., 151.

connection with the life and times of the philosopher, but "this has ended by admitting only the logical-gnostic meaning of some fundamental concepts of Greek thought and discarded the rich semantic content."[48] Greek philosophy is not separable in this way, it always had political context and overlap, and none of the pre-Socratic or the Socratic philosophies apparently was compatible with Athenian democracy, since Athens killed or drove off all its philosophers and thinkers, such as Pythagoras, Xenophon and Anaxagoras. Montuori puts it, "[T]he truth is that… form the very moment philosophy entered Attica the history of Greek philosophy becomes identified with the history of proceedings against freedom of thought".[49] The public did not like the intellectuals and aristocrats (who were one and the same thing in Socratic philosophy) who represented the old court of Pericles which had been dangerously Medized.[50]

Where exactly Socrates falls in all this is not clear. While he certainly had misgivings about democracy, Plato for one wanted to show that over all else, Socrates was loyal to the laws of the state in the *Crito*. Depending on how one reads the sources, Socrates can emerge as a wily oligarch or a naïve simpleton. Since we can construe the evidence either way, he probably fell somewhere in the middle. No one knows, or is likely to know, and this is why the historical Socrates is so unimportant for understanding Socrates. We have seen that the corpus of Socratic literature forms the actual corpus of Socrates, which means that without a great deal of study it is hard to determine anything about the historical Socrates, and even then, each person approaching Socrates has a slightly different vision of him.

But all the characterizations of Socrates, as we have seen, show him as extremely unconventional. This is where the human element in studying him enters. He is the archetype for modernity of the scorned intellectual, and thus a touchstone for all who fear persecution for their

[48] Ibid., 152.
[49] Ibid., 158-160.
[50] Ibid., 170-175.

learning or their unconventional thinking. That there is a lack of any certainty about his personality means that he can and does appear almost anywhere in the Western intellectual tradition in many guises. In the next two chapters we will examine two more intellectuals— Julian and Kierkegaard— who were both steeped in the legacy of Socrates' Athens and his work. Both used the legacy of the Socratic problem to construct their own personal Socrateses on which to model themselves. They believed they understood Socrates because he embodied the same mysteries which they themselves contained.

Chapter 2: The Emperor Julian and Socrates

Socrates' strangeness, whether intentional or not, has inspired later followers of his, such as the Emperor Julian (sometimes known as the Apostate). On the face of it, Julian accepted his position as ruler of the Roman empire, but he escaped from stress and difficulties through philosophy and his ascetic lifestyle. These were the central tenets of his life, developed on the one hand through Neoplatontism and on the other through the Cynic tradition that looked back to Socrates as the first philosopher. Julian became anachronistic not because he looked back to classical Athens and the Socratic tradition to live his life, but because he tried to bring the Olympian gods back to an empire that had been Christian for fifty years. This eccentricity of his, which he felt entirely justified in doing based on his beliefs and position of authority met with reactions similar to those the Athenians had towards Socrates. Julian believed he was right in his beliefs, and he used his own vision of Socrates and the classical tradition to help his arguments and justify his own radically unconventional life.

A study of Julian's emotional life is possible since Julian's own prolific writings survive in addition to several other contemporary or nearly contemporary sources who knew him personally. The orations of Libanius on Julian and the history of Ammianus Marcellinus (both of which are mostly posthumous) are the most important contemporary sources. Libanius was pro-Julian to the point of writing polemic, but Ammianus is reasonably unbiased. Other important sources are the New Year panegyric of Claudius Mamertinus, and later poems against Julian by John Chrysotom and Ephrem the Syrian. Zosimus is a sixth century author who draws mainly on Ammianus Marcellinus. He summarizes the scholarship on Julian in a convenient way: "Julian's deeds…have been described by historians and poets in weighty volumes, although none of the

writers does justice to all his achievements. Anyone who wishes to understand all these can read his own speeches and letters, from which appreciation of his deeds…may be gained."(3.2.4)[1]

One of the most attractive aspects of studying Julian is that there are so many sources from antiquity, which is in turn responsible for producing scholarly work on him. The past thirty years have seen three major scholarly studies of Julian in English, namely (in chronological order); *Julian the Apostate* by Glen Bowersock, *Julian: An Intellectual Biography* by Polymina Athanassiadi, and *Julian's Gods: Religious Thought and Action in the Life of Julian the Apostate* by Rowland Smith. These all have their strengths and weaknesses, and have a different take on what motivated Julian. In addition to the ancient sources mentioned above, they all draw on the 1930 biography by J. Bidez, which has not been translated into English.

Yet the scholarly is only one aspect of his reception. The interest in Julian in medieval and modern historical fiction, of both a literary and a popular nature is palpable. Julian appeared in medieval romances, a play by Ibsen, a nineteenth century Russian novel, and he still evoked enough interest in the 1920s for Constantine Cavafy to write a series of poems about Julian's apostasy. Gore Vidal wrote a novel about him as recently as the 1960s. This fiction, unlike that about Socrates, takes advantage of Julian's own dramatic presentation of his personality. Julian remains fascinating to modern thinkers because he left us with an account of his understanding of his motivations and struggle with his convictions that contrasted so markedly from his society. This is testament to the strength of his personality to fascinate readers. In the attempt to discover what motivated Julian's religious and philosophical fervor, we are able to draw on his own writings, as well as the first hand impressions of others. Julian wrote quickly; he often brags about writing orations in a day or two. Like many mediocre philosophers, Julian communicates

[1] Zosimus, *The New Histories*, trans. by Ronald T. Ridley, (Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1982) 50.

his philosophical ideas in naïve bursts of expression, which make them particularly good for discovering what was at the front of his mind. We know quite a bit about his early life and background, and this can shed light on his later religious and philosophical passions, which due to his early death never were subject to mature reflection.

Scholars disagree about what degree Julian's religious and philosophical ideas affected his leadership. Bowersock, for instance, tends to ascribe them little real importance to Julian's decisions, whereas Athanassiadi thinks they were crucial to his life, and that his Hellenism is the foundation of his entire existence. That is a generalization of their work,[2] but these define the extremes of Julianic scholarship. A compromise might be that his upbringing and nature compelled him to pagan ideals, which he attempted to put into practice. At any rate, his personality is more interesting than this his philosophy. Despite his efforts, he is not responsible for any major shifts in philosophic or religious thought. His philosophy was not original, nor did his attempts at religious reformation work. Julian is compelling because he was unusual for his times, but he was not unique in his strangeness. In Socrates, he had an excellent role model for his radical unconventionality. In his writing and behavior, we can see a conscious adoption of a philosophic life modeled on the Socratic tradition.

This chapter will focus on three of his works in particular: *To the Uneducated Cynics, Letter to Themistius* and *Misopogon*. Julian's own words will illuminate his perception of his life and influences on his life. The areas of his life, which we will examine in this chapter, fall into several categories. First, we can see in his upbringing and education an overt pagan influence, perpetuated by his own desire. Next, we can see how he brought his interest in Athens into his

[2] Rowland Smith, *Julian's Gods: Religion and Philosophy in the Thought and Action of Julian the Apostate*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 12.

life, making it his own. Ultimately, this contributed to Julian's downfall with his subjects, since he could not reconcile his unconventional beliefs with the reality of his time.

Julian's Socrates

Julian found solace in Classical Greece from a world of upheaval, which is due in part to his education and upbringing. Thus it is worth examining how Julian got into his unlikely position and developed an interest in philosophy. His education revolved around Classical Athens, and his writings reveal his dependence on his Atticism, not only for his identity as an educated elite member of Roman society, but also as his system for his personal view of himself and his world view. This was not uncommon, even for a Roman emperor, as Zanker notes, "[T]he classicizing aspect of Roman civilization became one of the important cornerstones of the uniform culture that permeated the whole empire."[3] Yet Julian took his association with Classical Athens so much to heart that he was willing to attempt a re-imagination, if not a rebirth, of pagan religion in an empire that had been Christian for a generation.

Julian's position was due to events that began shortly before his birth in 331. Diocletian's Tetrarchic system fell apart after his abdication in 305 and death the following year. After this, a series of uncertain successions culminated in Constantine, who had embraced Christianity in 312, and who seized control of the western empire in 313. He became sole ruler of the empire in 324, bringing Christianity to the entire empire. He allowed pagan cults to continue and acted tactfully toward the pagan majority, but he made it clear that it was not a true religion, and his policies encouraged conversion.[4] With his patronage, Christianity grew stronger, and with no disasters to call its efficacy into question, it made pagan religion unnecessary, though paganism

[3] Zanker, 210.
[4] Robin Lane Fox, (*Pagans and Christians*, New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 666-8.

by no means disappeared in his reign.[5] Yet he managed to integrate Christianity with Roman law, thus ensuring its survival.

Constantine died in 337, and his three sons (all Christians) ruled the halves of the empire between them. Constantius II ruled the eastern part of the empire, and most likely it was he who ordered the executions in September of 337 of Julian's father and eight other relatives, which eliminated all the rivals to Constantine's sons.[6] Julian and his half brother Gallus were very young (Julian was only six), and so were not considered serious rivals at the time. After the death of his entire family (his mother had died when he was born), he was sent to live with his maternal grandmother.[7] Julian describes his tutor at this time, a Scythian eunuch named Mardonius, who had originally been hired as tutor to his mother to teach her Homer and Hesiod (352 A-B). Julian pointed out that since he was not in line for the throne at this time his education was appropriate for a well-born child (354a-b). This was in the context of an ironic joke, but he makes a good point. Mardonius must have been a Christian, but he taught Julian the traditional Greek *paideia*, which was still a crucial part of Christian education, something Julian realized later on when he forbad Christian teachers to teach the *paideia*. Mardonius exerted an incredible influence on the young Julian and set him on a straight path to virtue based in the ancient texts (354b).

This first exposure to the classics provided an important outlet in the next stage of Julian's life. In 342, Julian and Gallus were sent into exile in Cappodicia at Macellum, which lasted throughout Julian's entire adolescence, from the age of twelve to eighteen.[8] "How shall I

[5] Ibid., 669.
[6] Glen Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 23.
[7] Ibid., 23.
[8] Ibid., 25.

describe the six years we spent there?" Julian writes in the Letter to the Athenians (271b-c).[9] He describes it as a lonely life, without any of his old friends or companions of his own age, "so that we lived shut off from every liberal study (παντ□ς μεν μαθ□ματος σπουδα□ου) and free intercourse (π□σης δ□ □λευθ□ρας □ντε□ξεως)." (271c) Yet he found his salvation from the dullness of imprisonment in philosophy, and he attributes his brother's poor character to not being able to transcend the brutal environment in which he lived (271d). We know during this time that Julian had access to the library of George, later bishop of Alexandria, which Julian later describes as "very large and complete and contained philosophers of every school and many historians." (411c)

Did this isolation have much affect on his future life and beliefs? P. Athanassiadi sees from Julian's writings about this time that "the one thing that really depressed him was the lack of intellectual stimulation… and by the imposition on him of studies and practices fundamentally alien in spirit to these which he had become familiar in his reading of Homer."[10] This meant that Julian turned inward in his isolations and sought out absolutes, which his perfectionist nature compelled him to do.[11] But R. Smith warns us not to read too much into Julian's description of his education at this time. Julian overemphasizes his lack of education, and it was not "unusual for a person of this status to be taught privately."[12] Julian probably did not read much Plato at this time, nor would he have been able to deviate from his closely guarded Christian faith, of which the "fiercely Arian" George probably took charge.[13] In six years of adolescence, however, it is entirely possible that a particular course of reading combined with few peers can create a

[9] "π□ς □ν εντα□θα φρ□σαιμι περ□ τ□ν □ξ □νιαυτ□ν…" All references to Julian are from *Works*, trans. by Wilmer Cave Wright, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980) Wright.
[10] Polymina Athanassiadi, *Julian: an intellectual biography*. (London: Routledge, 1992), 22.
[11] Ibid., 22.
[12] Smith, 25.
[13] Ibid., 25-26.

passionate devotion to an idea. His influences and emotions are not available to us more fully, but a period of forced isolation would reasonably make someone feel oppressed and eager to rebel against authority, which in Julian's case was Constantius, and Christianity.

He got his chance to do so when in 348 Julian and Gallus left Macellum for Constantinople. Gallus went to court, and Julian went to continue his education. Libanius reports that he did well in school here, and behaved himself perfectly.[14] Here he studied with the pagan Niocles and the Christian Hecebolius.[15] Niocles was "a man of exemplary morality" who taught him Homer; Hecebolius taught him rhetoric.[16] Athanassiadi suggests that Julian's later attempts to re-create the Athenian city-states were due to this combination of teachers, who convinced him of the deep link between Athenian politics and rhetoric.[17] Whether either of them had any influence on Julian's later philosophic ideas is difficult to say, and Smith points to Themistius as a much more likely candidate for influencing Julian at this time, since Julian later writes of studying Plato with him.[18]

He remained in Constantinople for a year before Constantius sent him to Nicomedia, which Libanius attributes to Constantius wanting to keep Julian out of the way of the imperial capital. Julian had sworn to his tutors that he would not attend the lectures of Libanius in Nicomedia, but he still bought copies of his works, and actually paid someone to make copies of each day's lecture.[19] It was in Nicomedia that Julian first learned of Neoplatonism, and where Athanassiadi thinks he found "his salvation… Hellenism, that affluent and mysterious current."[20] It may not have saved him from anything other than giving him an outlet for his interest in

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[14] Lib. *Or*. 18.11-12.
[15] Athanassiadi, 28.
[16] Ibid., 27-28.
[17] Ibid., 29.
[18] Smith, 27.
[19] Lib. *Or*. 18, 13-14.
[20] Athanassiadi, 31.

philosophy and in the classical past. Yet he remained devoted to these ideas for the rest of his short life, though he found it practicable to conceal his paganism until his accession as emperor in 361, though likely other pagan intellectuals would have known of his conversion.[21]

Julian continued his studies of Neoplatonism when in about 351 he set off to Pergamum to study with Aedesius, a Neoplatonist, whom Iamblichus had taught.[22] Another pupil of Aedesius warned Julian away from the theurgist Maximus of Ephesus, but Julian went to visit Maximus in that same year, and Libanius says that this is when Julian converted to Neoplatonic paganism.[23] Zanker describes this as an "amalgamation of Platonic, Pythagorean, and mystical elements" which combined to become "a sacred teaching."[24] Allowing for the context of Christianity this created "hierarchical structures within the philosophical school, different from that of Christianity." Furthermore, this created a distinction between the learned philosopher and men who had reached a state of divine transcendence and therefore were above reproach. Zanker illustrates this concept by reference to a mosaic, which shows Socrates and six other ancient sages. "It is only Socrates, elevated like Christ by his central position, who is named by a large inscription."[25] Maximus was one such man who was above reproach. Julian found Maximus enormously influential. While in Athens he sought out yet another theurgist, Priscus, but both Priscus and Maximus remained with him until his death.[26]

Julian was happy studying in Athens. He claimed that he had no political ambitions, but he could not escape his duty. In 355 Constantius removed Gallus as Caesar and sent Julian to Gaul to deal with barbarian invasions there, even though his actions in the east had created

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[21] Bowersock 1978, 30.
[22] Ibid., 28.
[23] Bowersock 1978, 29; Libanius 12.34.
[24] Zanker, 308-9.
[25] Ibid., 309.
[26] Bowersock 1978, 29-30.

suspicions of his motives which Constantius' wife Eusebia helped allay.[27] Apparently the Celts were able to deal with his eccentricities, and he proved a popular ruler, despite Julian's later complaints about Constantius' treatment of him. Bowersock does not believe Julian's protestations of Constantius denying him any real power at this time, since Julian undertook a successful campaign on his own, which he apparently tried to conceal.[28] Apparently, the bookish and lonely youth coped well with this new power. Bowersock attributes his ability to his study of the works of Julius Caesar and other educational works, and his readiness for an active life.[29] Athanassiadi, however, connects this with Julian's inner philosophical ideals, themselves derived from the Platonic idea of governance as a difficult but necessary task, and "it was in this Platonic sense of mission that Julian faced his role as Caesar."[30] We can see that Julian thought about his role as philosophical ruler a great deal (he outlines his position, as we shall see, in the *Letter to Themistius*), but his military abilities cannot be wholly connected to his intellectual life. His military endeavors in Gaul might have been the testing ground for applications of philosophical ideals to government (he also attempted certain social reforms[31]), but it more likely was not until 362 in Antioch that Julian put them into practical application.

While scholars disagree on what importance Julian's education had on his later actions as emperor, we must assume that his education in his youth provided a basis for his ideas as an adult. Since he died at such a young age, it is unclear how his ideas would have developed had they mellowed with age. On the other hand, his ideas were fervent enough to put him a situation that ended his life. Thus in his writings which he composed over several years while he was emperor he reveals a reliance on the figures of Classical Athens to justify his actions at the time.

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[27] Ibid., 31-33.
[28] Ibid., 36-7.
[29] Ibid., 36.
[30] Athanassiadi, 57.
[31] Ibid., 59-60.

Socrates is one of the more influential figures for Julian and appears some thirty times in his extant writings, held up as a model in two works in particular, *Against the Uneducated Cynics* and the *Letter to Themistius*. While Julian writes about Diogenes the Cynic as much, he always recognizes that Diogenes owes everything to Socrates, who perpetually appears as the paramount of wisdom and virtue. He constructed his ideal Socrates in connection with his Neoplatonic ideas, which manifests itself in his writing, particularly when he writes about the way he has chosen to live his life.

His sources were the same as ours, and so he had no more insight into the historical Socrates than we do. He acknowledges this, but it does not trouble him. Plato is his primary source, and Julian makes little distinction between Plato and Socrates. Despite this, he acknowledges that we cannot know Socrates' ideas but through Plato. In his lament *To Sallust*, he calls upon Socrates to defend his grief at the loss of a fellow worker. "I think even Socrates, that great herald and teacher of virtue, will agree; so far at least as I may judge from the evidence on which we rely for our knowledge of him, I mean the words of Plato." (243a) It is enough to show that Julian was not naïve in his acceptance of the Socratic legend. Julian was of course conversant with all the writers of that time and alludes to all our sources for Socrates, if not in the overt manner in which he refers to Plato. Paraphrases of Xenophon's words appear throughout his writings. He does not try to reconcile the Xenophonic Socrates with the Platonic Socrates; they exist as the same person in his writing. Julian has constructed his own Socrates, and so he will use what pieces of the Socratic sources best fit his argument.

Julian alludes to Aristophanes in his writing as well, yet another reference to culture of classical Athens. In the *Misopogon,* he jokes to the Antiochenes that they may know of the intellectuals of Classical Athens "when they are ridiculed in Comedy—I mean Plato and

Socrates, Aristotle and Theophrastus." (353b) This reference is part of a larger criticism of the Antiochenes, since he draws a parallel between their treatment of him and Aristophanes' treatment of Socrates. The message is in both cases that the unfeeling masses may despise the intellectual, but it reflects poorly on their character, a message which Julian emphasizes ironically throughout the work.

Thus his portrait of Socrates draws on all the sources from antiquity, and it is in his existence in the deeds of later philosophers as well as his existence in writing that he is most powerful. He points out that Diogenes' deeds are just as worthwhile a model as the writings of "□ δαιμ□νιε Πλ□των" (188d) about Socrates. He misquotes Plato's words to show this, "For… there are no writings by Plato nor ever will be, and what now pass current as his are the work of Socrates, the ever fair and young."(189b)[32] His point is reminds us of another prejudice on behalf of Plato Julian had due to his Neoplatonic beliefs. Socrates is the first philosopher, and his beliefs come to us through the work of Plato. The actions of Socrates are linked with the words of Plato, which does not deny the importance of the action of those who emulate the Socrates whom they find in Plato. Julian was properly Socratic in the sense that he believed deeply that the good in philosophy was in its ethical application, a view that he expounds in *To the Uneducated Cynics*.

Smith criticizes the oration as a whole, calling it "derivative in its arguments, and confused and rambling in its overall exposition."[33] Yet it is typical of Julian's work: effusive and serious, but with a detached humor—a sort of bitter irony—that is striking. Julian may not have been a brilliant or original Neoplatonist, but he tried to apply what of a philosophy he could to

[32] The actual passage from Pl. *Ep.* 2.314c reads: ο□ γ□ρ □στιν τ□ γραφ□ντα μ□ ο□κ □κπεσε□ν. δι□ τα□τα ο□δ□ν π□ποτ□ □γ□ περ□ το□των γ□γραφα, ο□δ□ □στιν σ□γγραμμα Πλ□τωνος ο□δ□ν ο□δ□ □σται, τ□ δ□ ν□ν λεγ□μενα Σωκρ□τους □στ□ν καλο□ κα□ ν□ου γεγον□τος. □ρρωσο κα□ πε□θου, κα□ τ□ν □πιστολ□ν τα□την ν□ν πρ□τον πολλ□κις □ναγνο□ς κατ□καυσον.
[33] Smith, 78.

his idea of what a good ruler should be. Despite the apparent naïveté of his ideas, precisely because he was the Roman emperor they had far-reaching results.

Julian characterizes Socrates as "τ□ν μ□γαν τ□ς αρετ□ς κ□ρυκα κα□ διδ□σκαλον" ("the great herald and teacher of virtue") (243b), which we might contrast with Socrates' assertion in the *Apology* "□γ□ δ□ διδ□σκαλος μ□ν ο□δεν□ς π□ποτ□ □γεν□μην." ("I have been teacher to no one") (33a) Julian of course saw Socrates not in the sense of a teacher for pay, but as someone who guides by his example, which Socrates actually did according to everyone who wrote about him. Because Socrates was the first philosopher in Cynicism as well every other school of philosophy according to Julian, one must respect his example if one wants to live philosophically. Thus, Julian in his oration *To the Uneducated Cynics* criticizes Cynics who do not understand or respect the founders of that school. He finds it extremely frustrating that people who claim to be Cynics think Diogenes was foolish and his deeds not worth emulating (for instance, in the eating of raw octopus), "So far indeed is he advanced in wisdom that he knows for certain that death is an evil. Yet even the wise Socrates thought he did not know, yes and after him Diogenes." (180d-182c) He intends the oration to illustrate the proper philosophic life, which begins in self-knowledge and growth through emulation of the founders of the school.

All branches of philosophy are all seeking self-knowledge, writes Julian, but as travelers to Athens can reach their destination by many paths, seekers after self-knowledge can reach that aim by many philosophical methods. Some are lost along the way, but all have the same destination, and if one examines the men who have reached the highest standing "all their doctrines agree." (184c-185a). He surmises further that we seek knowledge in order to come closer to the divine, "For what we are sometimes, God is always." (185b). The examples of virtue of, for instance, Socrates, lie at the center of true Cynic philosophy rather than the writings

about it. Julian draws a comparison between true Cynic philosophy and the inner precinct of a city; the frivolous writings about it are like the edge of the city where all the expelled amusements lie. A man would be despicable if he left without entering the city at all and worse if he stayed in the lower city rather than entering the inner city "□δε□ν τ□ν Σωκρ□τη" ("to behold Socrates himself.") (186d-187a)

He continues the parallel by citing Alcibiades' description of Socrates from Plato's *Symposium* and comparing true Cynicism with the gods inside the statues, suggesting that while jesting has a place in philosophy; it conceals the true meaning of the philosophy from those who do not seriously seek the truth (187a-b). He thinks that Cynicism is close to a universal primitive religion, and that the precepts of Apollo at Delphi to Γν□θι σαυτ□ν ("Know Thyself") and Παραχ□ραξον τ□ ν□μισμα ("Falsify the common currency") underlie all philosophy—certainly all the philosophy in Classical Athens (188a-c). The Stoics (who modified the Cynical lifestyle to make it more palatable to the mainstream) thought that one should follow the Delphic precept "Know Thyself" since "a man who does not know himself will certainly not know what it is becoming for him to do…"(186a). Thus, the figure of Socrates is crucial since he is a model for men to seek the self-knowledge that will raise them up. Smith points out that Julian is not saying anything other than standard rhetoric, and it was a cliché by the fourth century CE to tie philosophy to cite "Know Thyself."[34] But if Julian was not wholly original in his rhetorical method, he was fervent in his actions. We will see that Kierkegaard too starts with "Know Thyself" as the beginning to philosophy (though without the asceticism which Cynicism entailed), and it is not surprising that ethical philosophers would hold this as a central tenet.

Cynics themselves divided philosophy into theoretical and practical philosophy, and

[34] Smith, 66.

Julian points out that while "Socrates and many others also… devoted themselves to speculation…it was solely for practical ends." They wanted to understand the rightful use of the body and soul, and assigned self-rule to the soul and subjection to the body (190a-b). This led to the asceticism of Diogenes, who despised the needs of his body. Julian insists this was not foolishness or ostentation, but due to his intention to serve God, and therefore similar to Socrates' odd behavior (191a). Behavior that appears odd to the uninformed has a purpose, as he says to the skeptical, "And indeed what, will you say, is this towards eating octopus? I will tell you." (191c). Diogenes thought meat should be taken raw, since it is a kind of hubris to think that eating raw meat is disgusting when that is the way God made it. He thus sought to rid himself of weak emotions by getting over his nausea and indigestion that occurred when he ate raw meat, which he believed to be more beneficial than cooked meat (192a-193b). His actions were not based on conventional wisdom or the advice of others, but rather an internal striving that seeks happiness and health in living with nature rather than paying attention to the opinions of the many. Julian thinks that no one should be a slave to opinion or to the bodily organs, but should only do what reason suggests (193d-196d). This is not a defense of Diogenes alone; rather Julian's actions show that he fervently believed that one should live one's beliefs no matter what the consequences. He related a story from his time in Gaul to the Antiochenes, which contrasted their heavy eating with his privations of his ascetic life in Gaul, which was the cause of the only time he ever vomited. Once, when he was in Lutetia (Paris) it was bitter cold. Despite this, he had only a few hot coals for heat, and the steam from these made him sick to his stomach (340d-342a). Apparently, the Gauls did not find his behavior as appalling as the Antiochenes later did, but Julian understood that the majority of people found what he did strange.

He knew that the average person thinks poorly of the odd behavior of philosophers. Thus no one could effectively lead a philosophic life unless he learned to control himself before meeting public opinion (197b-198b). Zanker points out that the public image of the philosopher was in fact of the Cynic, and often they were despised due to their "parasitic nature, their outrageous appearance, and their arrogance and pushiness."[35] Thus Julian believed that one who wants to be a Cynic must cross-examine *himself* before he ever goes near public opinion, and must overcome his own nature before he can venture out. Julian insisted that no one should simply adopt the dress and manners of the Cynics without knowing the meaning behind them, nor should he complain about privations. This is not simply to avoid the censure of the public, but also to ensure that one truly believes in and is committed to the philosophical way of life. If one is committed and understands why he does certain things, then he will live a philosophical life without a concern for privations (201a-b). Julian himself concedes that Diogenes did unseemly things in public, but he did these things in the open because he wanted to remind people of wrong things they were doing. Julian objects to the so-called Cynics of his own day who were unseemly without nobility of character (202a-d). In Julian's eyes, unconventional behavior is acceptable when it is the right thing to do, but being unconventional for no reason is another sort of indulgence for a weak character.

Julian tried to live a philosophic life, and expected others to do so as well as much as they could. If the study of philosophy leads to self-knowledge and self-improvement it would follow that he would expect others to follow the same course. The man who lives a philosophic life should not be a source of pity, rather he should be someone to emulate. Julian chides the uneducated Cynic, "But if you had the least habit of reading books as I do, though I am a statesman and engrossed in public affairs, you would know how much Alexander is said to have

[35] Zanker, 199-200.

admired Diogenes' greatness of soul." (203b) But this also points to the essential divide between Julian and the truly philosophic life. As the Roman emperor he had more at stake in his manner of life than his own soul, and the tension between those two sides of his life would be the cause of the majority of the trouble in his life.

Julian the Socratic: or Socrates vs. Alexander

Julian had enough responsibility for ruling in Gaul so that he was able to gain military support to form a civil war against Constantius. But when Constantius died in December 361 it cleared the way for Julian to be emperor without a war. He could also admit his paganism publicly, which allowed him to legislate according to his moral principles. Julian knew that the task of ruling was difficult, since it required wisdom and leadership. A tension exists in Julian's work between the idea of Socrates and the idea of Alexander, which is, as above, the tension between his desire to live philosophically and his desire to be a leader. Throughout his works he demonstrates how the philosopher can be an effective leader, which is how he attempts to satisfy this tension within himself.

Julian first mentioned this difficulty in 356-7, when he composed two panegyrics for Constantius and an oration in honor of Eusebia. They were early works, written before Julian could elaborate on his pagan beliefs, but he peppers his rhetoric with references to figures from ancient Greece. One of these works, *The Heroic Deeds of Constantius* shows Julian's earliest contrast between Socrates and Alexander. The work is wholly false, since it praises someone whom Julian later admitted he despised all along. This was a political necessity at the time, and Julian was reacting to the deposition of Gallus the previous year.[36] The ironic criticism of Constantius is that he not as good as Socrates, who in turn is better than the Greek heroes, and

[36] A good discussion of this is in Florin Curta, "Attticism, Homer, Neoplatonism, and Furstenspiegel: Julian's Second Panegyric on Constantius." *Greek, Roman & Byzantine Studies*. 36: 2 (1995), 209.

that Socrates' model is the proper course of life for a leader. For instance, he points out that while on the one hand slander made Odysseus and others furious, "Socrates, I think, and a few others who emulated him, men who were truly fortunate and happy, was it given to put off the last garment that man discards—the love of glory." (96b-c). Love of glory is the base of a hatred of calumny, and Julian suggests that Constantius always met slander with restraint, an admirable quality in a leader. Though he suggests that Constantius aligns with Socrates in this way, he makes it clear in his later *Letter to the Athenians* that Constantius was not actually like this at all, though he only hints at this in *The Heroic Deeds of Constantius*. Julian writes that his method of praising Constantius is rather different from the normal way, since the people who praise him simply take Constantius' own opinions and color them, which Constantius receives as full praise. Julian disagrees with this method, and believes that Constantius does not know the proper way to praise someone. (78d) Socrates had the right idea about praise, and this is who Julian wants to follow in is work. "For I have observed that Socrates the Athenian did not praise that sort of thing, nor would he admit that they are happy and fortunate who are masters of a great territory and many nations." (79a) Socrates did not praise kings or generals, unless they were virtuous, temperate, wise, or just (which are all qualities ascribed to Socrates) (79b). Therefore, since Constantius does not live a Socratic life, he is worse than the heroes of ancient Greece, including Alexander. Thus, we can see Julian beginning to compare the problem of living a Socratic life while ruling, something at which he thinks Constantius failed.

He approaches the same problem as it applies to himself directly in his *Letter to Themistius*, most likely composed immediately after his accession as emperor in Constantinople. It is apparently in response to an earlier letter from Themistius, which accused Julian of wanting to avoid the toil of leadership. Themistius tells him that he should attempt to rival the

philosopher kings of antiquity rather than live an isolated philosophical life (253a-c). Julian responds that he used to think he had to rival Alexander or Marcus Aurelius. Yet he knew that he could not equal either of them, thus he preferred the Attic life of leisure. Julian asks if a man who is unsuited for public life should seek it out. He cites Xenophon, pointing out that Socrates tried to discourage people without talent from seeking public life. Julian refers to the story of Socrates dissuading Glaucon from politics, though in using it rhetorically he ignores the following story of Charmides in which Socrates has a nearly opposite conversation. (255c). Julian concludes from this that if a man knows he has no talent, then he should avoid public life. He asserts that he does not prefer Athens out of laziness, as Themistius accuses him, but suggests he is merely following the calling for which he is more suited.

Julian claims that he fears the responsibility of the ruling life because there are so many opportunities to do wrong, just as if he were a moderately good athlete whom Themistius tells will now have to compete in the Olympic Games and represent his country (263a-b). Even if he did have talent it would guarantee nothing, since fortune is more important to successful ruling than virtue and wise policy (255c-d). "Happiness that depends on fortune is rarely secure,"[37] and Julian reminds Themistius of that the only happy man would be one with nothing to lose from the whims of fortune, which is not the case of the ruler (256c-d). Bad fortune is only part of the problem, since it is not as difficult to solve the problems with which it presents the ruler. Showing oneself capable of handling good fortune is much harder.

For instance, Alexander was given the good fortune to conquer Asia, but then became just the like the autocrats he had conquered. Julian gives many other examples, "It would be an endless business to enumerate all who have fallen victims to their wealth and victories and luxury." (257a-c) For a ruler to be truly successful, he must be divine his actions except insofar

[37] □κιστα δ□ φιλε□ τ□ς ε□δαιμον□ας □ βεβαι□της τ□ τ□χ□ πιστε□ειν

as he has to protect his body (258d-259 a). Given all this, it is not surprising that someone might want to avoid the life of ruling, without necessarily preferring inaction. Julian says that he has not even preferred "τ□ Σωκρ□τους δωμ□τιον" to a life of toil and action, though this statement is questionable given his claim about Socrates' actual power (259b). Throughout the *Letter to Themistius*, he compares Alexander and Socrates, or the philosophic life for which Socrates stands. In this dichotomy Alexander is the successful ruler who is at the same time a failure in some fundamental way. On the other hand, Socrates does not ever rule, and yet does a great deal. Julian's tone throughout is in his characteristic humorous and self-deprecating style, but when he says that he does not fear the ruling life, it does not mean that he particularly desires it. Themistius cited Aristotle to argue for his approval of the active life, Aristotle (according to Julian's summary) "defines happiness as virtuous activity."[38] But Julian thinks this description can fit lawmakers and political philosophers, and in general, all people who use their minds and reason (263c-d). Socrates' life is evidence for this claim. He governed no one, but that did not mean he had no authority and accomplished nothing; rather Julian thinks he achieved incredible things. "To him I ascribe the wisdom of Plato, the generalship of Xenophon, the fortitude of Antisthenes, the Eritianan and Megarian philosophers, Cebes, Simmias, Phaedo, and a host of others; not to mention the offshoots derived from the same source."

He contrasts this spectacular achievement to those of Alexander. No one ever grew wiser or more temperate by when Alexander conquered him. Even if one did grow richer, this only made one worse in character. On the other hand, "all who now find their salvation in philosophy owe it to Socrates."[39] (264d). This is what Aristotle meant by virtuous activity, since Julian says that Aristotle was more proud of his work on the gods than he was of tutoring Alexander, since

[38] τ□ν ευδαιμον□αν □ν τ□ πρ□πειν ε□ τιθ□μενον
[39] □σοι δ□ σ□ζονται ν□ν □κ φιλοσοφ□ας δι□ τ□ν Σωκρ□τη σωζ□νται

the success of the latter was due mostly to good fortune, and the success of the former is due to being nearly divine oneself (265a-b). Clearly, for Julian the model of Socrates was the clear winner against Alexander, no matter what public opinion held.

Julian sets up a dichotomy between Alexander and Socrates, and he chooses Socrates, who he insists will be an appropriate model. He cannot avoid ruling, nor, he emphasizes, does he want to avoid his responsibilities. The philosophic life can actually assist in ruling, since philosopher ought to back up their words with their deeds. Thus, they can do good for people and certainly not live an empty life of words (266b). Furthermore, he does not want to give the deeds of philosophy an even worse name than they already have (266c-d), which he might do if he fails to improve anyone through his philosophical ruling. In the end, it is up to the god.[40] (267b)

The *Letter to Themistius* shows that he thought that one in his position ought to rule philosophically and ought to be a Socrates, rather than an Alexander. The tension between these two figures for him lies in that he was personally rather more like Alexander than Socrates in his political position, even if he wanted to be Socrates. This, in some ways, sets him up for failure, since he could not reconcile these two disparate role models. Julian wrote this before he had had much of a chance to make the sort of laws that would force people to live the sort of life he found acceptable, though he had begun a process of reform as soon as he arrived in Constantinople.[41] Yet he would find that an autocrat is unable to engage the people he rules in dialectic in order to bring them to virtue. Julian never mentions the trial of Socrates in this letter since he is not interested in the failures of a philosophical program, but in its effect on public life and morals. The philosopher, whether ruler or otherwise, has the capability to do great things, and Julian wants that to be the memorable part of his reign. He also emphasizes his unsuitability

[40] □λλ□ τ□ θε□ τ□ π□ν επιτρ□πειν
[41] Bowersock 1978, 71-77.

for his role, and shunts responsibility to τ□χη and θε□ς. This does not constitute cowardice; rather it indicates that Julian saw his place in the world and feared for his ability to rule philosophically. But he was ready to make the attempt, whatever the consequences.

Julian's Trial

Julian began his attempt to rule philosophically and so reform a wayward people when he moved his capital to Antioch in 361. The move was in preparation for a campaign against Persia, which he had carefully planned in order to punish them for atrocities. He may have also because he dreamed of battles and action, as Ammianus tells us.[42] Bowersock suggests that Julian may have dreamed of transforming Antioch into a new center of Hellenism, which his actions there do indicate.[43] In any event, part of Julian's task in Antioch was to reform the city according to the principles which he felt were best for them. The Antiochenes at first received him with delight, and Julian spent the winter there hearing law cases.[44] Yet Julian's actions in Antioch soon changed the mind of the majority of the Antiochenes. They discovered that his unusual way of life and deep convictions caused him to make decisions that were either untenable or anachronistic. He made decisions that aligned with his own personal view of Hellenistic culture and religion, which for him meant asceticism and philosophical striving. As we have seen, Julian created an eclectic version of Greek culture, and it included elements of Socratic thought to which the Antiochenes reacted in a manner similar to the Athenians who found Socrates strange enough to put to death.

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[42] All references to Ammianus Marcellinus are translated by John C. Rolfe. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935-39) Amm. Marc. 12.1-2.
[43] Bowersock 1978 95-96
[44] Amm. Marc. 22.4.14.

The trouble between Julian and the Antiochenes began early on. The gaudy delights of Antioch did not interest someone of Julian's austerity and religious fervor.[45] He attempted a series of reforms, which annoyed the Antiochenes even more. Two of Julian's actions stand out as most annoying to the Antiochenes, though their annoyance must stem from more deeply rooted causes, as we shall see. First, his war against Persia was unpopular. The people whom Ammianus calls Julian's detractors did not want a war with Persia, since they believed it would be ruinous. They also believed that Julian was too full of himself after his recent successes in Gaul and his accession to the emperorship.[46] Julian planned his campaign carefully, and one of the preparations he made was to offer many sacrifices. The Antiochenes found this excessive, especially after his men became unruly with all these indulgences of meat and wine. They complained about the poor behavior of the men and the extra expenditure this entailed. Julian was right in suggesting that overindulgence led to a lack of virtue, but he could not force his own men to behave more decorously.[47]

Second, Julian attempted to solve economic troubles in Antioch by fixing prices, a move that the senate said was not possible, but this did not deter Julian.[48] Julian himself explains the problem in the following way. The Antiochenes had complained about high prices, which Julian saw it was due to price gouging. To combat this he set and published fair prices. Julian says that the problem occurred when he also imported grain and supplied them with his own personal grain at a very cheap price, but rich men bought it and sold it at a very high price (369a-370a). He lowered taxes while maintaining public subscriptions, ruled fairly, and done them no injury (365b-367a). No one liked these measures, even though Julian thought he was being more than

[45] Amm. Marc. 22.10.1.
[46] Amm. Marc. 22.12.3.
[47] Amm. Marc. 22.12.6-7.
[48] Amm. Marc. 22.14.1-2.

fair. He claims that the shopkeepers, for instance, hate that he does not allow them to sell items for what he sees as outrageously high prices (350a), and everyone is annoyed that in his efforts to alleviate famine, he provides them only grain, and no meat or fish, citing Plato for justification (350b-c). But Julian was new to economic reforms, and surely Plato was a problematic model for such reforms.

Another, probably more galling aspect of Julian's reforms, which he had begun immediately upon his accession, were his attempts to restore paganism. He ordered the temples opened and the cults restored.[49] He also made plans to restore the Jewish temple at Jerusalem, though the stalling workers complained that balls of fire burst from the foundations and so made work impossible.[50] His attempts to do this were in a large part due to his attitudes toward Christianity, which he outlines in *Against the Galileans.* As did most pagans, he objected to Christians not performing sacrifices, which perhaps Julian meant to make possible by restoring the Jewish altar for sacrifice.[51] He wanted them either to be properly Jewish or to return to Hellenism.[52]

By far his most extreme measure was to outlaw Christians from teaching literature, rhetoric, or philosophy, a law that Ammianus calls *inclemens* ("inhumane.")[53] Smith suggests that while Julian must have known how extreme this was, he did it in an attempt to make his own ideology dominant. Grounding in *paideia* was essential to participation in public life, and so this measure simply forced Christian parents to allow pagans to teach their children.[54] Why would Julian do something that even someone like Ammianus, who generally approved of his reign,

[49] Amm. Marc. 22.5.2
[50] Amm. Marc. 23.1.2-3.
[51] Smith, 204.
[52] Jay Bregman, "The Classical Influence on Julian the Apostate." From *Polis and polemos: essays on politics, war, and history in Ancient Greece, in honor of Donald Kagan*. Edited by Charles D. Hamilton and Peter Krentz, (Claremont, Calif.: Regina Books, 1997), 350.
[53] Amm. Marc., 22.10.7.
[54] Smith, 214.

reviled? This may be the next radical move of a "reactionary" after previous failures to encourage paganism through financial measures. In any case, it shows Julian's deep understanding of how important Greek culture was to Christianity. He hated Christianity, which may stem from people abandoning the old ways that were everything to him. Bregman summarizes Julian's attitude towards the Christians as being "the only group that presented a direct threat to the stability of the world order."[55]

That world order was the Hellenism that had been all-important to Julian since his youth studying Homer with Mardonius. The existence of Hellenism in the east was a product of Alexander's conquests, and thus it is incredible that it still existed as a cultural force so much later. Bowersock explains that we must note the difference between Hellenism and Hellenization in order to understand this. The latter is an easily forgotten cultural overlay, whereas the former is an actual culture that took over in the east.[56] After Justinian closed the philosophical schools in Athens, paganism remained in the east as late as 542 in Asia Minor, where a vigorous community was still drawing on the Greek gods.[57] "Greek was the language and culture of transmission and communication" which fostered a sense of unity among the disparate people of the east.[58] This basis of Greek culture proved problematic for the eastern empire. "Hellenism" began to mean "paganism" in the time of Constantine,[59] and this changing attitude affected Greek-speaking Christians reliant on Greek culture. Pierre Chuvin explains that when "Hellene" is used to mean "pagan," it has negative connotations beyond not being Christian—pagans were not Romans and so not "legitimate heirs of the empire."[60] But for Julian, this intertwining of

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[55] Bregman, 350.
[56] G. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), xi.
[57] Ibid., 2.
[58] Ibid., 5.
[59] Ibid., 11.
[60] P. Chuvin, *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans*, trans. by B.A. Archer, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 7.

Hellenism and paganism was not a problem; rather, since he looked back to Classical Greece as the source of culture and religion, Hellenism was the only valid way of life. Julian wanted to bring back the old religion, but what he was creating was a strange kind of Neoplatonic religion based on his conception of Hellenism.[61] Yet Hellenism was also a vital part of the Christianity of the east, and Gregory of Nazianius for one knew this well: in teaching his nephew "he knew that the literature, rhetoric, and philosophy of the Greeks were integral to the thought and structure of Christian discourse."[62] S. Rubenson points out that education was no small part of this; early bishops realized Christian truth had to be defended against the rigorous standards of Greek philosophy.[63] Kierkegaard was doing this himself in his *Philosophical Fragments*. He concludes, however, that Christians recognized this problem and gradually transformed the Greek *paideia* to "transform the pagan tradition."[64] Julian's edict may have been in an effort to stop this trend, but Christian and Greek tradition were so intermingled in the east that it was impossible for Christianity to exist without Hellenism.

The Antiochenes responded to Julian with bitter insults. Of course, it is common for protestors to express reactions against the ideas and actions of a public figure by satirizing his or her appearance, even though often that has nothing to do with his or her actions. Yet in this case, attacks against Julian's appearance coincide with criticisms of his actions. The title of the oration *Misopogon* means "beard hater," and Ammianus says that Julian "was ridiculed as a Cercops, as a dwarf, spreading narrow shoulders and displaying a billy-goat's beard… taking mighty

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[61] V. Limberis, "'Religion' as the Cipher for Identity: The Cases of Emperor Julian, Libanius, and Gregory Nazianus." *Harvard Theological Review*. 93: 4 (2000), 378.
[62] Bowersock 1990, 12.
[63] S. Rubenson, "Philosophy and Simplicity: the Problem of Classical Education in Early Christian Biography" from *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, edited by Hagg and Rousseau (Berkeley: University of California, 2000), 111.
[64] Rubenson, 136.

strides."[65] Calling him ugly was a way of calling him a philosopher. Zanker notes that the trial of Apuleius asserted that philosophers could not be good looking.[66] Julian pretends to criticize his own appearance by calling himself ugly to begin with, which he made worse with the philosopher's beard (338b-c). But such facile and childish satire hides a deeper objection towards the unconventional lifestyle that Julian's appearance represented. His disheveled and long hair, his hairy chest, and his hands black with ink all are marks of a man who has ignored his bodily needs other than the most basic hygiene as he has turned both inward in his philosophic quest and outward to serve his subjects. Julian knows that the Antiochenes are really objecting to his lifestyle. He says that they must his find his roughness terribly shocking, since not only is his body unkempt, he dislikes the normal pleasures of the theater and horse races (339b). This distaste for normal pleasures extends to more basic functions such as food and sleep, all of which makes him uninterested in putting up with "a luxurious city like yours."(340b-c) The Celts, with whom he had lived for several years as the Caesar in the west, could accept or at least put up with his odd behavior, but he believes that the Antiochenes cannot because they are hedonistic and have no respect for the laws (342a-b). Libanius, too, thought the fault lay with the Antiochenes, who had offended the emperor's virtue and near divine status of asceticism (Or. 16.17-18).

Julian's reaction to the satires shows up in the *Misopogon*. Like Plato's *Apology,* it contains a similar sense (and in fact, outright statement) of the futility of the defense of right actions against people who willfully misunderstand his unconventionality. He explains that he needs to write poetry to relieve his feelings, but his inability to accuse people by name and his lack of musical talent restrict him. Julian writes of his literary attempts, "[F]or I think it is always

[65] Amm. Marc. 22.14.3
[66] Zanker, 234.

the case that inferior musicians, though they annoy their audiences, give very great pleasure to themselves." (337a-b) Clearly, he is being ironically self-deprecating, which is a common rhetorical move, yet owes something to the Platonic Socrates. In order to overcome his restrictions, he writes in prose and addresses the work against himself, mockingly arguing for the viewpoint of the Antiochenes (338a). Julian scorns the Antiochenes for their dissipated lives. In one satire, the Antiochenes satirize Julian by saying he should make ropes from his beard. He belittles them in return; he would only do that if they had the strength the pull them and not damage their tender hands. They live "soft and delicate" lives, have "effeminate dispositions," and do not show their manliness, unlike Julian (338d-339a). His appearance represented what he saw as his basic superiority to them, namely his ability to live a good life without regard for public opinion. Julian suggests that they equate temperate behavior and laws with slavery, and thus thinks they have a basic misunderstanding about how one ought to live. They think that he should just call himself their master but let them be free since he is so free about the names of things but so strict about actions (344b). They do not see that one's actions are so vitally important to the formation and maintenance of a good character, and this is why they satirize his unconventional, but virtuous behavior.

Libanius, a native of Antioch, remained a fast friend to Julian by writing invectives against the Antiochenes. He reiterates many of Julian's points in his sixteenth oration. He warns the Antiochenes that the satires were inappropriate even if they were meant as part of the ridicule of one's superiors that was traditional for Saturnalia. Julian himself says that their excuses are not valid. They claimed that there were not many perpetrators, or that they were troublemakers, or not citizens. If those excuses were true, then Libanius thinks it even more reason that each Antiochene should have considered himself personally responsible for defending the emperor

(*Or*. 16.31-4). Julian says that they are equally at fault no matter whether they composed or just listened to slanderous satire (364a). He reacts in the opposite manner as Socrates did to Aristophanes' slanderous satire, and here his actions break off from his ideal model. Julian, in addition to writing the *Misopogon*, strengthened religious strictures because he saw the satires as evidence that the Antiochenes had no respect for the gods (361a-c). He blamed the Antiochenes for a fire at the temple of Apollo at Daphne, which Ammianus reports happened on October 22, 362 though there was no evidence they were responsible, and it was possible that unattended votive candles started the fire. In retaliation, Julian ordered the main church of Antioch closed.[67] If they did not change on their own, he would make them change. Libanius tells us that Julian thought the city ought to be destroyed, and reminds the Antiochenes that an emperor has many ways of destroying a city: not only by fire and sword, but also by taking away its status and making it into a backwater hamlet (*Or*. 16.13-14). He suggests to them that their only hope is a complete change of attitude, which means a change in actions and a change in religious beliefs, but he does not think that they will change (*Or*. 16.45-9).

This is an un-Socratic response, to say the least. When Julian counters insubordination with force it suggests that he was not able to rule philosophically, as he had predicted might be the case. The *Misopogon* is his way of admitting defeat, unlike Socrates' speech that admitted no defeat. His bitter rhetoric attempts to salve his wounded pride, but unlike Socrates, who would not accept exile as an option, he chooses to exile himself. He ends the *Misopogon* with a promise that he plans to go and live some place that will appreciate him, since he will never please the hedonistic Antiochenes with his quiet and sober ways (364b-d). Furthermore, he will appoint a vicious governor (360c-d). Julian's true state of mind in this defeat is difficult to discern through his bitter self-mocking. He says that he should have known since the beginning that this would

[67] Amm. Marc. 22.13-3

never work, but he blames his failure on the essential wickedness of the Antiochenes rather than his own quite radical way of life. Could he really have expected that he could have reformed an entire city?

Athanassiadi sees a more insidious force at work in Julian's actions, namely a gradually deepening identification with the worst excesses of Alexander. She argues that in Antioch his nature first showed itself as authoritarian "which was to evolve in inverse proportion to his loss of self-confidence, and alongside his increasing obsession with the conquest of Persia."[68] His temperament, which had always erred on the side of bitter irony and irascibility, became increasingly so, as we read in his oration to the Antiochenes, the *Misopogon*. I would argue that this does not mean that he began to *identify* himself with Alexander rather than Socrates. Certainly he made ambitious plans to invade Persia, but this was not unreasonable, and does not indicate in itself an attempt to be a new Alexander. I believe that his actions in Antioch are based on his Socratic identification, and his failure was that he could not live up to his idea of the Socratic.

It is true that in his temperament he was more like Alexander than Socrates. Like Kierkegaard, he let his irritable nature get the better of him, even though he knew himself that was un-Socratic. That the Antiochenes' attitude towards him made him so angry shows his essential difference from Socrates. Socrates' attitude to the Athenians was patient and persistent, and even at the end of his life he comes across as explanatory rather than accusatory. But Julian's nature made it so he could not take this attitude even when he knew it was better.

His position as emperor is another similarity between Julian and Alexander. Perhaps Julian thought he could shortcut a path to virtue through legislation. Unlike Socrates, he could make the laws that would compel people to be virtuous. Yet Socrates knew that the compulsion

[68] Athanassiadi, 197.

to virtue must come from within, and requires time and work. A man, no matter how well he means, cannot simply overlay an anachronistic and inappropriate value system on a city, which is why Socrates had avoided public office. Julian's bitter tone in this work stems from his realization that his idealism was misplaced, and that he cannot easily reform either the economy or mores of an unwilling city. It is, in fact, the living proof of the power that Julian suggested a Socrates has and an Alexander lacks. The tension between Alexander and Socrates created an explosive situation for Julian. He did not want to be Alexander in Antioch, rather he wanted to be Socrates, even though that was unpractical for his situation and temperament.

Julian's trial continued even after his premature death during the Persian campaign right up to today. Claudius Mamertinus wrote in his oration to Julian:

> It may be, revered Emperor, that your acts of justice, moderation and kindliness are a source of profound astonishment to some; they are not so to me, for I know that, absolved and free as you are from all human vices, you are consumed only by the desire for immortality, to direct all your works and thoughts in such a way as to leave and everlasting memorial for posterity and to submit yourself first and foremost to those judges who in centuries to come with give a verdict on your deeds without prejudice or favor. (31.1)[69]

He is right that later judges have found it desirable to think about Julian, but perhaps he is not right that those judges would be unbiased. People approach Julian's strangeness in as many different ways as they do Socrates' strangeness. Julian was not perfect, but we have full disclosure of his faults from antiquity, something we do not have for Socrates, and so we can get a sense of the clash that occurs between the philosopher and the people he is trying to bring to virtue. Yet even when we are dealing with undisputed historical fact in the case of Julian, the truly philosophic life creates a personality that no one without access to the thinker's inner life. Julian has given us a glimpse into what drove him in his life, and that glimpse is compelling

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[69] From *The Emperor Julian: panegyric and polemic: Claudius Mamertinus, John Chrysostom, Ephrem the Syrian*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989).

enough that we seek to know more, just as Alcibiades sought to know more after thinking he had a glimpse into Socrates' inner life.

Chapter 3: Søren Kierkegaard and Socrates

Studying Kierkegaard is akin to studying Socrates, for in both cases it is hard to say where fiction ends and truth begins. With Socrates the difficulty exists because our knowledge of him comes via the biased and uncertain or uncorroborated texts of other writers, and we cannot say definitively how much his own personality contributed to varying perceptions of him. We have many more eyewitness accounts of Kierkegaard, but he was keenly aware of the position of studies of Socrates, and he wanted to be just as strange, if not stranger than his model. He constructed his own obscure identity through a tangled web of writings that obscure events and feelings, and often lie outright. He succeeded in creating a fascinating persona and an even more fascinating series of works, which in their number suggest the ravings of a madman. But Kierkegaard was not a madman, nor was he naïve: he knew what he was trying to accomplish. He wanted to make his life an enigma for the future, just as Socrates' life had been. He writes in his journal that "[A]fter my death no one will find among my papers a single explanation as to what really filled my life… no one will find the words which explain everything."[1] But even this is uncertain, since Kierkegaard consciously falsified and edited his journals.[2] This tendency of his has frustrated certain knowledge of Kierkegaard's motivations and inner life, but as Henning Fenger points out, Kierkegaard had the right to assemble his papers and represent his personal life in whatever way he saw fit, and we have an equal right not to trust his arrangement of the matter.[3] His intellectual work is not more certain since his philosophical works were all written under various pseudonyms, which were "the favorite literary game of the day," even though

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[1] *The Journals of Kierkegaard*, translated by Alexander Dru, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), 85. (Hereafter abbreviated Journals).
[2] Henning Fenger, *Kierkegaard, the myths and their origins : studies in the Kierkegaardian papers and letters*, translated by George C. Schoolfield, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 1.
[3] Ibid., xiii.

everyone knew (and was intended to know) who wrote them.[4] Additionally, this literary device allowed him to have various positions throughout his life without acknowledging any one of them as being particular to Søren Kierkegaard. To study this man is to play his own game by his own rules, and many have been willing to take the challenge.

Of course we are closer in time to the objective truth of Kierkegaard's existence than to that of Socrates, but this hardly helps to illuminate his projection of his life. He was born in 1813 and died in 1855. His physical appearance was certainly odd, though the cause for this and his exact appearance are unknown, since he never had a photograph taken. His health was also never very good, though the exact cause of his invalidism and early death is unknown.[5] His childhood may have been unhappy, though this could be a later fiction, and he was certainly a very talented classical philologist. He became engaged to Regine Olsen in 1839 and broke off the engagement a year later. He took his degree in 1841, some 11 years after he entered the University of Copenhagen, an extended period of study which can be explained by the death of a good portion of his family in that time, as well as his own disinclination to study. After taking his degree he spent the rest of his life turning out copious volumes of literary philosophy and carefully constructing an identity for himself.

While the manner in which he regarded Socrates and Classical Athens changed a great deal over the course of his life, they are omnipresent in his life and work. For Kierkegaard, how Socrates appeared in his work must also have some bearing on his life. He wrote near the end of his life that it infuriated him when Pascal's asceticism was omitted from discussions in which his ideas were used. "Everywhere it is the same; everywhere that infamous and disgusting cannibalism whereby… men eat the ideas, opinions, expressions and moods of the dead—but as

[4] Ibid., 3-4.
[5] Ibid., 66-7.

for their lives and characters; no thank you, they will have none of that."[6] As with Julian, the figure of Socrates pervaded his work and life, and we can track a definite progression in his thought concerning Socrates. Unlike Julian's use of Socrates, Kierkegaard's conception of him has been enormously influential in our own modern use of Socrates, even though Kierkegaard's Socrates is nearly as elusive as Socrates of old.

Kierkegaard's interest in Socrates may be related to the melancholy that permeated his life. His childhood was steeped in his father's melancholia, and his own inner life provided him enough struggle to permeate his writings even when they were entirely fictional. His escape from those feelings came through his philosophy, which he felt must have a deeper meaning than only to create a philosophical system which affected nothing concrete. Numerous scholars in many different fields have attempted to discern Kierkegaard's medical and psychiatric problems, Fenger puts it that "Few geniuses have had the life they led in their youth as thoroughly combed over as has Kierkegaard."[7] Despite all the attention, the fact remains that his own melancholy fascinated Kierkegaard, and there is no indication of clinical depression. For this same reason the suppositions of manic-depression also seem wrong, and the closest anyone has come with a posthumous diagnosis is *folie-á-deux* brought on by the clinical depression of his father.[8] Of the numerous theories regarding his probable psychiatric issues, the most important for our purpose is his tendency towards martyrism. Fenger suggests that it "had a therapeutic effect; it freed Kierkegaard from a tremendous inner pressure and as it were diverted his attention from the private theater of his soul."[9] What is most crucial to draw from this assessment is the effect it had on his philosophical vision of *the* intellectual martyr Socrates. This is evident from an stage

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[6] Journals, 213.
[7] Fenger, 62.
[8] Joakim Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard: a biography*, translated by Bruce H. Kirmmse, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 438-9.
[9] Fenger, 70.

in his career before he had completed his thesis. In a journal entry from 1835 he wrote that "the thing is to find *the idea for which I can live and die*" in order to proceed in his philosophical work.[10] No one could have put it more clearly that, like Socrates, he saw philosophy as a serious business and not a mere intellectual game.

Kierkegaard's Socrates

Many people have written about Kierkegaard's use of Socrates—Kierkegaard not the least of them. Kierkegaard used the image of Socrates in his personal life, and that use tended to coincide with his philosophical use of Socrates. Swenson lays out "five Socratic features of Kierkegaard's thought," which are an interest in ethical problems, focus on the concrete, a practical use of the intellect, use of maieutic and dialectic methods, and a polemical and angry attitude to the contemporary society.[11] In an echo of Julian's insistence on "Know thyself" as being the basis for all philosophy he wrote,

> One must know oneself before knowing anything else. It is only after a man has thus understood himself inwardly… that life acquires peace and significance; only then is he rid of that tiresome, ill-omened fellow-traveler, the irony of life, which shows itself in the sphere of understanding, bidding true understanding begin with ignorance (Socrates) like God creating the world out of nothing.[12]

The entire corpus of Kierkegaard's work on Socrates is beyond the scope of this project. Nevertheless, this chapter will examine Kierkegaard's construction of himself as a Socratic figure through his first philosophical use of Socrates in the *Concept of Irony*, and then his later change in opinion of Socrates in the *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. In short, Kierkegaard's view of Socrates changed along with his philosophy and perhaps even his way of life and mental state.

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[10] Journals, 44.
[11] David Swenson, *Something about Kierkegaard,* (Minneapolis, Augsburg publishing house, 1941), 40.
[12] Journals, 46.

This chapter will also offer a comparison of Kierkegaard's use of Socrates with Julian's. Both use their own conception of Socrates as a sort of literary figure in their philosophy, which has a practical application. They both attempted Socratic missions: Julian against the hedonists of Antioch, Kierkegaard against the modern Dane and his lackluster state church. At the same time a certain fundamental difference is evident. For Julian Socrates is the Master. He is the first of a line of thinkers that leads to the Neoplatonist theurgists of his own day.[13] For Kierkegaard, however, Christ is the Master for eternity. Socrates could never supplant him, despite Kierkegaard's almost manic identification with the latter. In short, his relationship with him is uneasy; it changes with Kierkegaard's place in his own life and ideas. Both Julian and Kierkegaard worked with the figures of Socrates and Christ, but both necessarily placed one above the other. Kierkegaard emphasized, as did Julian, the Socratic aspects of his personality, and so even though he obscured his inner life, we can trace the progression of his philosophic and personal use of Socrates, who is omnipresent in Kierkegaard's projection of himself.

An oft-quoted passage from Kierkegaard's journal just after the publication of *Either/Or* defines the evolution of his image of himself as a Socratic figure:

> There was once a young man, as fortunately gifted as an Alcibiades. He went astray in the world. In his need he looked around him for a Socrates, but among his contemporaries he found none. Then he prayed the gods to change him into one. And behold! He who had been so proud of being an Alcibiades was so shamed and humbled by the grace of the gods that at the very moment of receiving that of which he might have felt proud, he felt himself to be less than all others.[14]

Who was this young man as gifted as Alcibiades? As a schoolboy, he showed intellectual promise, yet he was a difficult child. He also showed a great affinity for Classics. A schoolmate

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[13] This is comparable to the conception of Ali as the first *imam* in Shi'ite Islam, who passes the light of God from master to disciple throughout the generations. It is even possible that the idea of the Neoplatonist master to disciple relationship is the origin of this Islamic belief, since the Islamic philosophers who studied Plato and Aristotle adapted some of their ideas to Islam.

[14] Journals, 84.

of his later recalled that when he was examined on the Battle of Salamis and asked if he had been there, he answered, "Yes, I was there in spirit, Herre Professor!" To this, "the strict headmaster smiled, stroked him on the chin and exclaimed: 'You will be a source of joy and honor to me.'"[15] He could be serious in his scholarship, and another schoolmate recalls that Kierkegaard took copious notes in his Horace and Cicero texts and "his Plato must also bear the marks of his reading and thoughts."[16] His school report shows great accomplishments in Latin, Greek and Hebrew,[17] so much so that the headmaster of his school asked him to be a Latin tutor and correct the compositions of the most advanced class, as well as teaching students in the second form.[18] He wrote of Kierkegaard, "As far as I can judge, he has an unusual command of the Latin language, both orally and written."[19]

His interest in Classics and in the figure of Socrates in particular became solidified in his dissertation *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates*, which was published in September 1841, in which he establishes the basis and power of Socratic irony. This he contrasts with romantic irony, which he sees as a dangerous return to the earlier Socratic irony, since it "negates all of existence and not just prevailing customs, as in the Greek case."[20] Reactions to this work by professors at the university were nearly universally in agreement: while it showed great intellectual ability, it was not well-organized or scholarly and too verbose.[21] Part of the difficulty with this work is that it owes a great deal to Hegel while at the same time trying to refute Hegel. The radical characterization of Socratic irony is due partly to Kierkegaard's

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[15] Bruce Kirmmse, *Encounters with Kierkegaard: a life as seen by his contemporaries*, edited by Bruce H. Kirmmse; translated by Bruce H. Kirmmse and Virginia R. Laursen, (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1996), 11-12.
[16] Ibid., 9.
[17] Ibid., 15.
[18] Ibid., 28.
[19] Ibid., 29.
[20] Paul Harrison, *The disenchantment of reason: the problem of Socrates in modernity*, (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994), 100.
[21] Kirmmse, 29-32.

attempt to address his objections to Hegelian philosophy and modern romanticism. Harrison argues that "these sources give rise to a reading of Socrates as an aesthetic figure who deploys irony as a way of dismantling inherited thought."[22]

Kierkegaard's style adds to the confusing nature of the work. He even acknowledges that is not written in the normal scholarly fashion, by which he means that he fails to state his thesis for each section so as to preserve a "contemplative" style, which he does not explain until the end of his first chapter.[23] A contemporary reader noticed how much Kierkegaard's own personality came through into the work, writing in a letter in 1842, "That you must have an answer to your letter is self-evident, as Søren Kierkegaard says more than twenty times in his monster of a book on Socrates, or rather, on Søren Kierkegaard."[24] Nevertheless, since this is his dissertation he had to make certain definite propositions about Socrates under his own name, and so it is the safest place to begin with Kierkegaard's early understanding of Socrates.

The work is divided into several parts, the first of which aims to make a view of Socrates possible insofar as our sources for Socrates "have not reproduced him but interpreted him."[25] But of course their interpretation is interpreted through Kierkegaard. It is of utmost importance to understand how Kierkegaard viewed all the sources, since it shows what aspects of Socrates he wanted to see. Because Kierkegaard is primarily interested in Socratic irony, he always interpolates irony into his discussion of the historical sources, and so he never completely agrees with any of them.[26] Kierkegaard's understanding of Socrates at this juncture of his writing was as an essentially negative being due to his destructive irony. This could take a pernicious form as a

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[22] Harrison, 69.
[23] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 6. (Hereafter abbreviated *CI*), 156.
[24] Krimmse, 58.
[25] *CI*, 155.
[26] Harrison, 85.

journal entry from the first day of 1838 reads: "irony is an abnormal growth; like the abnormally enlarged liver of the Strassbourg goose, it ends by killing the individual."[27] Harrison suggests that Socratic irony at this stage in Kierkegaard's understanding is the progenitor of deconstruction, and the negativity of irony is Socrates' "hermeneutical key."[28] This Socrates is steeped in irony so that he will not be a Hegelian Socrates, and therefore denies the Hegelian system.[29]

Kierkegaard illustrates the power of Socrates' irony with Alcibiades' painful passion for Socrates. His love is especially passionate because of Socrates' irony: he believes that he occasionally sees glimpses of Socrates' real wisdom, even though Socrates continually insists that he has no knowledge. "Irony is the negative in love; it is love's incitement."[30] In effect, irony destroys anything that it creates while creating it, which gives it the destructive and negative force which it and Socrates has in this work. Kierkegaard realizes that this interpretation of the Socratic personality creates difficulties in representation offered by the three ancient authors he examines. In his view Plato erred by trying to give Socrates the Hegelian Idea, and Xenophon erred by giving Socrates the merely useful. Aristophanes, by contrast, views Socrates in terms of his emptiness, and therefore presents him as "ascetic scantiness in a self-immersion that never brings up anything from the depths…"[31]

His second thesis largely dismisses Xenophon. "[T]he Xenophontic Socrates stops with an emphasis on the useful; he never goes beyond the empirical, never arrives at the idea.[32]" For Kierkegaard, Xenophon is clearly insufficient for the task of understanding Socrates, since he

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[27] Journals, 58.
[28] Harrison, 84.
[29] Ibid., 82.
[30] *CI*, 51.
[31] Ibid., 153.
[32] Ibid., 14-19.

portrays him as trivial.[33] Xenophon was attempting to show that it was an injustice for Socrates to die, but in showing this he makes him so innocent that it makes it so the Athenians must have been out of their minds to put so harmless a man to death.[34] The series of vignettes he uses to portray Socrates do not adequately reproduce any sense of the situation so crucial to the Socratic method,[35] and because of this we lose sight of "the divine woof with which Socrates interlaced the web of existence."[36] Harrison says that Kierkegaard saw none of the silences in Xenophon which characterize irony, and showed none of the falsely naïve behavior which he believed was Socratic.[37] In short, Kierkegaard does not see any sophistication or recognition of Socratic irony in Xenophon, merely a picture of a harmless old sophist who liked to spout platitudes. Whether or not this reading is fair to Xenophon, and whether or not it is the "historical" Socrates, it lacks the artistry of Plato, upon which Kierkegaard insists.

His third thesis reads: "If a comparison is made between Xenophon and Plato, one will find that the first takes too much from Socrates, the second raised him too high; neither of them finds the truth."[38] Despite this, Plato's use of Socrates is more palatable to Kierkegaard. He finds the "rhythm of the dialogue" in Plato's works wonderful as a way of expressing the Socratic personality and method.[39] Plato sees the divine in Socrates, and Plato feels bound to Socrates.[40]

He regards certain of the dialogues as Socratic and others as Platonic. His separation between the two types of dialogues uses the standard chronological separation, and cites specifically the *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Apology*, and Book 1 of the *Republic* as particularly relevant to the nature of Socrates. This was standard scholarly opinion at the time, and he has

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[33] Ibid., 13.
[34] Ibid., 15-16.
[35] Ibid., 16-17.
[36] Ibid., 18.
[37] Harrison, 85.
[38] *CI*, 6.
[39] Ibid., 28.
[40] Ibid., 29-30.

tried to check this by comparison to the rest of the Plato's work. In doing so, he found two types of irony, one which is a stimulus to thought, and one which begins and ends in itself. Likewise, there is a kind of dialectic that keeps the question alive, and a kind of dialectic which seeks to make an abstract question concrete.[41] Kierkegaard stresses the difference between the dialogical (Socratic) and constructive (Platonic) dialogues. Irony is tireless in the former and unnecessary in the latter since they are objective and methodological.[42] Platonic philosophy masquerading as Socratic dialogue lacks the conversation that was so crucial to Socrates' philosophy. He explains how he understands dialogue: "in my opinion the method consists not in the dialectical in the form of the question as such, but in the dialectical sustained by irony, springing from irony, and returning to irony."[43] Socrates' ironic questioning empties out apparent content from the presuppositions of his interlocutors, but at the same time we must ourselves presuppose another overarching irony in this tactic, since Socrates knows that he knows nothing. Yet at the same time, he constructs his questions with great intelligence and foresight in order to pull down all knowledge into ignorance—through irony, he generalizes his Socratic ignorance.[44]

Aristophanes' approach is a good contrast to Plato's, since a comic treatment can explain a personality more fully.[45] His motivations for describing Socrates are unimportant, but Kierkegaard says that in order to be comic his portrayal need not be either strictly true or absurdly false. Kierkegaard suggests that Aristophanes' Socrates is the historical Socrates, but in the form of an ideal representation. This means that he would put a recognizable character on the stage and then mold that character into an ideal example for the sake of art. Socrates, Kierkegaard admits, was in himself a comic figure, "[t]hat Socrates in actual life presented many

[41] Ibid., 120-121.
[42] Ibid., 53.
[43] Ibid., 55.
[44] Ibid., 37-40.
[45] Ibid., 128.

comic sides, that he, to put it bluntly once and for all, was to a certain degree eccentric, cannot be denied…"[46] Yet these comical elements alone would not have satisfied an Aristophanes. If irony is central to Socrates' personality, then that makes him comic, due to irony's comic nature.[47] The aimless dialectic in the *Clouds* makes this readily apparent. It never seizes upon anything real; it, like the clouds themselves, is essentially empty.[48] Assuming Socrates is also essentially an ironic figure, he works well in this comic setting, "for as soon as irony is related to a conclusion, it manifests itself as comic."[49]

Kierkegaard defines three elements which are most important to Aristophanes' presentation of Socrates. First, the play shows that Socrates is *not* a sophist, since sophists are a classification (like a species). This is a difficult point, since Aristophanes apparently *does* depict Socrates as one of the sophists who represent the new order which wants to replace the old Greek culture.[50] But because Socrates took the position of the sophists to its completion, in a sense he was the greatest sophist, which sets him apart. In his isolation he is an ironist, which is not a classification of a type of person, but rather a personality type which enjoys himself by taking his findings about the world back into himself. This hints at Socrates' future with Kierkegaard, but at this point the world does not much affect the ironist, though even if his enjoyment is abstract and empty, it still allows him to be "proud and self-contained."[51]

Secondly, Socratic dialectic has to be construed as being in service to the intellect, rather than for the contemptible reasons presented in the play. Aristophanes is right to say that Socratic irony represents destructive principles, but it is not right to suggest that he corrupted anyone[52].

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[46] Ibid., 129.
[47] Ibid., 130-131.
[48] Ibid., 150.
[49] Ibid., 145.
[50] Ibid., 137-138.
[51] Ibid., 147-148.
[52] Ibid., 149.

Thirdly, Socrates' physical position suspended in a basket is analogous to his intellectual position of irony which undercuts the system. "The ironist… is lighter than the world, but on the other hand he still belongs to the world."[53]

Since Kierkegaard views Socrates as an essentially destructive ironist at this stage of his philosophy, Aristophanes aligns most with his conception of the true Socrates. This relates to Kierkegaard's ambivalence towards his own ideal Socrates. He has created a Socrates who is piercing and dangerous to society, and yet ultimately an empty and rather comic figure. He can reform society in the sense that knocking down a city and rebuilding it can reform a city. His complete inwardness in contrast to the sophists is a kind of freedom in which there are no absolute realities or truths.[54] This radical inwardness is reminiscent of Julian's conception of Socrates as the progenitor of a philosophy which ultimately looked inwards and rejected the norms of society. Both Julian and Kierkegaard took their philosophy to heart as a means for real political reform, even if the ultimate outcome of their philosophical yearnings was unclear. For both these young men Socrates presented a model for someone who uses irony in order to question and even break down established values, something which they felt called to do. Julian did not refine his vision of Socrates much beyond this, but Kierkegaard continued on his search for the nature of Socrates and the Socratic program and tried to align his vision of Socrates with what seemed actually possible to accomplish in the world.

In the *Philosophical Fragments* we find another stage in Kierkegaard's conception of Socrates, written under the pseudonym Johannes Climacus. This was published in 1844, three tumultuous years after his dissertation, during which time he spent a year in Berlin. There he worked on *Either/Or*, which was published in 1843, along with *Fear and Trembling*. These

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[53] *Ibid.*, 152.
[54] Roy Martinez, *Kierkegaard and the art of irony*, (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2001), 39.

works gained him fame in Denmark, and marked him out as an emerging religious philosopher, whose philosophical project was more mature than ever. By far the most important event of those years was the end of his engagement to Regine Olsen. This was his first instance of self-martyrdom, and was fuel for his lifelong anguish. He wanted to reject what he saw as the purely aesthetic life he had lived as a student and begin to live his consciously philosophical life. A wife was out of the question for such a project, similarly to Julian's situation.

He also had to account for his life as a Christian, something which Julian certainly did not do. In the *Philosophical Fragments* he wants to attempt a reconciliation of the Greek and Christian worldviews, and to do this he wants to "submit the Christian teaching to Socratic dialectic."[55] In an opening reminiscent of ancient rhetoric, he asks that no one think this work is of world importance, he is merely Diogenes rolling his tub around in the midst of a war.[56] The focus of the work revolves around the following: "Can a historical point of departure be given for an eternal consciousness; how can such a point of departure be of more than historical interest; can an eternal happiness be built on historical knowledge?"[57] These questions arise from the Meno paradox, which Socrates answers by saying that we already have the truth and must recollect it. Kierkegaard points out that Socrates was consistent in applying this principle in his own life. Socrates knew that drawing out another's knowledge was his divine mission, even if it struck others as eccentric, since it was the "highest relation a human being can have to another."[58] By knowing ourselves, we come to know God, and so Socrates went into the marketplace and discussed the ethical. He did not choose to consort only with brilliant minds, since he realized that the moment and the teacher are not crucial, but merely an occasion. "He…

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[55] Harrison, 102.
[56] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, edited and translated with introduction and notes by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985) 6. (Hereafter abbreviated *PF*).
[57] Ibid., 1.
[58] Ibid., 10.

had the courage and self-collectedness to be merely an occasion even for the most stupid person."[59]

In that view of learning the truth can only be historically interesting, since the teacher does not give the truth to us. Kierkegaard (or Climacus) admits to a poetic interest, which comes from an enthusiasm for Socrates which "an illusion, indeed a muddiness of mind in which earthly distinction ferments almost grossly."[60] The enthusiasm for the teacher should not obscure the fact that the eternal truth is within us, and the temporal unimportant. Socrates himself understood this more clearly than anyone (perhaps ever, Kierkegaard implies). "The person who understands Socrates best understands specifically that he owes Socrates nothing, which is what Socrates prefers, and to be able to prefer this is beautiful."[61]

The eternal truth must have a different character in the Christian view of learning. The moment of learning must be so unforgettable that it is not, and could not be just an occasion. No one could forget it for a moment in time or eternity "because the eternal, previously nonexistent, comes into existence in that moment."[62] If the moment of learning is going to be more than an occasion, then a learner cannot already posses the truth. He must be in a state of untruth, and in this situation a teacher must provide both the truth and the condition for understanding the truth. This is impossible for a temporal teacher such as Socrates to do, since it means transforming the student, something only the god can do.[63] God who created the student must have also made him capable of understanding the truth. Yet if the moment of learning is to be significant the condition for understanding must have been lost due to the student's own fault, which is how

[59] Ibid. 11.
[60] Ibid., 12.
[61] Ibid., 61.
[62] Ibid., 13.
[63] Ibid., 13-15.

Kierkegaard defines sin, a kind of bondage.[64] Thus the teacher who could give the learned the condition for understanding along with the truth can be called savior, deliverer, and reconciler, and would break him out of all his self-inflicted troubles.[65] The learner who receives this truth becomes a new person, which Kierkegaard calls *conversion*, since he has turned around from untruth to truth, and in this transition the learner is also reborn, since he passes from a state of "not to be" to "to be". Finally, *repentance* is the sorrow at knowing that the untruth was the learner's own fault.[66] This is how Kierkegaard separates Christ and Socrates. Since the truth by which we come closer to God in the Socratic worldview is within us, any moment will do for dialectic self-redemption. Yet in the Christian worldview the only way to truth is *through* God. Here we meet with what is called the Absolute Paradox: how could God be in history and have walked among men, but still be God? Kierkegaard has no answer other than that Christians must take a leap of faith in order to receive the truth.

We see a very different Socrates in this view three years after the Socrates of *Concept of Irony*. That Socrates was the embodiment of complete negativity, and while such a dangerous figure is attractive, he lacks the force which this later conception of Socrates had in his understanding. This later Socrates' wisdom is in his knowing that he is not special in his abilities. But in being able to command the highest relationship possible between people, he can create a special intellectual force on earth in his own temporal span. Kierkegaard insists that a divine eternal truth cannot take the same form, since it cannot be restrained by the temporal. In effect, many Socrateses can and should exist since each generation needs its reformer. God, on the other hand, exists only once—so faith is the only way to his eternal truth. Kierkegaard is setting up a way for himself to have the role of Socrates without any pretensions at usurping the role of God.

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[64] Ibid., 15.
[65] Ibid., 17.
[66] Ibid., 18-19.

For him, humans can replicate the behavior of Socrates and achieve the same effect, something impossible with the figure of Christ the teacher. It is only through him that humans learn the eternal truth.[67] The Christian teaching and Greek dialectic can co-exist for Kierkegaard, albeit in a tenuous balance. The Socratic figure lies in the balance, and reminds humanity of their essential ignorance. This ignorance cannot be alleviated except by seeking God's truth through the leap of faith.

Martinez points out that Kierkegaard regarded Socrates as the first existentialist precisely because he knows that human ideas and values are fallible and that we must search for the meaning in life.[68] Many argue that Kierkegaard's turn to the religious by the leap of faith denies him the title of existentialist. Yet he preserves the element of the existing philosopher by retaining and acknowledging the figure of Socrates. He allows for the search for meaning to be a human task, and in fact requires a search for meaning, even if the only meaning in the end must be a love of God in order to receive his eternal truth. Kierkegaard felt that he was particularly suited to the work of a search for meaning. In 1845 (a year after *Philosophical Fragments*) he writes, "There is a bird called the stormy-petrel, and that is what I am, when in a generation storms begin to gather, individuals of my type appear."[69] But his philosophical vision of Socrates yet lacked strength to take on any meaningful project of reform.

Over the next two years he worked on various projects and continued to meet with the public's mixed reaction to his work. In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, published in February 1846, Kierkegaard refined his vision of Socrates even more. The whole work drips with anti-Hegelian irony, which sentiments are echoed in his journal entries. Kierkegaard finally found his own Socratic mission in an attempt to reform the lackluster Danish church, which he

[67] Harrison, 106.
[68] Martinez, 46.
[69] Journals, 95.

saw as a symptom of problem with all modern Christianity. In the book Kierkegaard wants to challenge thinkers who approach Christianity as a historical phenomenon. "[I]f Christianity is essentially subjectivity, it is a mistake if the observer is objective."[70] First he wants to establish that a problem exists, which he sees in the modern tendency to argue from a whole system. The speculative thinker ought to presuppose nothing except Christianity. But if he were to question that, then it would be seen as an eccentricity. This Kierkegaard sees as a major problem facing Christianity, one which a step away from objective thinking might solve. After all, he points out, the speculative thinker might be so objective as to talk about the task of speculation, but to have speculation we must presuppose a thinker, and thus the speculative thinker ought to be able to speak subjectively, even if he is unwilling.[71]

Kierkegaard makes a Platonic move in the next section of the book, called "Possible and Actual Theses by Lessing," in which he uses the German thinker Lessing as an authority for his own ideas. As the title implies, only some of the theses are attributable to Lessing. The first thesis is "The Subjective existing thinker is aware of the dialectic of communication."[72] An objective thinker is merely interested in the object of thought, whereas the subjective thinker is interested in thought and assimilating it into himself. Because the subjective thinker is interested in his own thoughts and process of thinking, he has a kind of inwardness. By focusing on the process rather than the results, the subjective thinker constantly brings the universal into himself, and by doing so he becomes increasingly isolated. Here Socrates makes his entrance in yet another guise for Kierkegaard's purposes, this time as the inward and subjective thinker. In this role, his irony is crucial, since the subjective thinker's ideas cannot be communicated directly,

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[70] Kierkegaard, *Concluding unscientific postscript to Philosophical fragments*, edited and translated with introduction and notes by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 53. (Hereafter abbreviated *CUP*).
[71] Ibid., 51-52.
[72] Ibid., 72.

for someone like Socrates the process of communication must happen differently, "at most he was capable of artistically, maieutically helping another person negatively to the same view."[73] Harrison argues that Kierkegaard's reading of inwardness into Socrates takes a particularly Lutheran concept and putting it on Socrates. Lutherans should have an inner life that is more important than the worldly life. "He is profoundly aware of the decline of Lutheranism to a purely secular ethic."[74] He further argues that Kierkegaard needs the concept of inwardness for himself and his theology, and so he reads this into Socrates' philosophy, whether or not it actually applies.[75] Keeping this in mind, we can proceed to how Socrates' subjectivity and inwardness worked.

The second thesis attributable to (but not actually of) Lessing states that the subjective thinker in his existence "is just as negative as positive, has just as much of the comic as he essentially has of pathos, and is continually in a process of becoming, that is, striving."[76] Kierkegaard's understanding of the first element, negativity, assumes that the reader will not understand what he means instinctively, and thus he employs ceaseless irony to explain it. What he means is an existential crisis in which "the illusiveness of existence, when I grasp it, isolates me."[77] Yet if, like Socrates, one is content with being human, one will want to avoid direct communication. "As is well known, Socrates was a loafer who cared for neither world history nor astronomy," and in caring about humans and human matters he was considered quite eccentric. His irony took the form of madness when he wanted to emphasize the negative and therefore maintain contact with his ideas.[78] Even though it looked strange, "Socrates perhaps kept

[73] Ibid., 80.
[74] Harrison, 112.
[75] Ibid., 113.
[76] *CUP*., 80.
[77] Ibid., 83.
[78] Ibid., 83.

a little tryst with his idea, with ignorance" which would be a necessity for him to maintain contact with the infinite. In keeping aware of the universal he "…keeps open the wound of negativity."[79] Here we may pause for a moment to ask whether it was Socrates or Kierkegaard who was so insistent on maintaining that contact with the universal. For Kierkegaard recognizes that this sort of subjective thinker never gets "positive, cozy joy from life."[80] Kierkegaard apparently recycles this characterization of Socrates to characterize himself in his journal some three years later in 1849. "What makes me unpopular is not so much the difficulty of my works as my own personal life…" He did not have worldly success or talk about the same sorts of things which other people did, just had been the ancient perception of Socrates in Kierkegaard's conception of him. "Now in my opinion that is what is great about me, if indeed there is greatness. But it costs me many a struggle and great efforts, for I too am flesh and blood—and yet that is exactly why I am misunderstood and ill-treated."[81]

The life of one who constantly keeps his mind on the universal appears in Kierkegaard's journal from around this time, in which he writes that he feels that he cannot talk to anyone about what his actual problems, and so his conversations are a constant deceit.[82] The deceit appears partly in humor, another aspect of an existing subjective thinker. "The pathos that is not safeguarded by the comic is an illusion; the comic that is not safeguarded by pathos is immaturity."[83] Clearly, Socrates himself makes remarks that sound humorous and are meant to be humorous, but at the same time are quite serious. Kierkegaard is not a stranger to this practice, though his own humor often is too pointed to be actually funny.

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[79] Ibid., 84-5.
[80] Ibid., 85.
[81] Journals, 171.
[82] Ibid., 112.
[83] *CUP*, 87.

Deceit appeared in more mundane areas of his life as well. He lived well beyond his financial means and consistently had to borrow money from his brother. By 1847 he had spent almost all of his large inheritance and needed to sell his childhood home.[84] He claimed that all the money went to his writing for publishing expenses, which was only partly true. Rather it went for his aesthetic pleasures such as furnishings and food. Someone who had only been a child when Kierkegaard was working observed much later that by peering through Kierkegaard's windows "one could get a… sense of a series of beautifully furnished rooms in which the strange thinker walked to and fro."[85] He said himself that his extravagant living helped him to be productive and he had no interest in being an ascetic.[86] Yet he liked to draw a parallel between his earnings and those of Socrates, and he felt guilty about his earnings when in his career when he was making money from book sales.[87] He did not draw attention to his financial success. He writes in regard to the success of *Either/Or* (his only book which went into a second printing in his lifetime), "If people insist on calling my crumbs of wisdom sophistry I should just like to draw their attention to the fact that it lacks at least one of the characteristics, according to the definitions of both Plato and Aristotle: that one earns money with it."[88]

Kierkegaard, as a result of this attitude, embraced the continual striving that the subjective thinker lives. The subjective thinker lives this life because his life is not aimed towards any result, but unfolds through his striving to bring the universal into himself. This way of living is curiously identified with youth. Most people, according to Kierkegaard in his journal several years after *CUP*, believe life is about a continuous process of understanding, but never reach the stage "after which the point becomes to understand, more and more that there is

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[84] Garff, 506-7.
[85] Kirmmse, 98.
[86] Garff, 517-9.
[87] Ibid., 514-5.
[88] Journals, 85.

something cannot be understood. That is Socratic ignorance, and that is what the philosophy of our times requires as a corrective." This type of Socratic ignorance, which Kierkegaard wishes to temper with Christian spirit, is maturity that makes one childlike. It is akin to his definition of conversion as rebirth in the *Philosophical Fragments*, "The man who is mature in that sense is naïve, simple, and he marvels, but he is all that essentially humorously, and yet not in such a way that it is humor."[89] This lifestyle, which is so focused on being human and what it means to be a human, is completely opposed to an objective thinker who, Kierkegaard suggests, attempts by his work not to be a person.[90] This work set down in uncharacteristically clear language exactly what was at stake in his battle for Christianity. The figure of Socrates became his representative in thought.

For both Julian and Kierkegaard, philosophy was at the heart of their existence, but that existence had also a practical application in the world. As Socraticists, they believed that their world would benefit by their submitting it to dialectic and an examination of what they held as true and unwavering principles. The Socrates of the *CUP* gives more power to the Socrates of *Fragments* by allowing his temporal span to have some power for reformation through his constant draw on the universal in the search for the essence of human existence. Kierkegaard wanted to evoke a Socrates who would guide him in his life. This Socrates may not have been the "historical" Socrates, but it did not have to be. As with Julian, the philosophical conception of Socrates correlated with his conception of his ethical life, and as with Julian that Socrates was someone who stood at odds with society. Kierkegaard asked in his journal in 1846 just after the publication of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, "Why did Socrates compare himself to a gad-fly?" He gives this answer:

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[89] Ibid., 172-173.
[90] *CUP*, 93.

> Because he only wished to have ethical significance. He did not wish to be admired as a genius standing apart from others and… make the lives of others easy, because they could then say, 'it is all very fine for him, he is a genius.'...He bit hard into the individual man, continually forcing him and irritating him with this 'universal'…If a man has ethical power people like to make him into a genius, simply to be rid of him; because his life expresses a demand.[91]

Kierkegaard was ready to pursue his own Socratic mission. Though he knew that people had not changed since the time of Socrates, he was willing to be the gadfly and take the consequences, no matter how Socratic they turned out to be.

Kierkegaard's Trial

"Socrates, in my opinion, is and remains the only reformer I know." (1847)

In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* Kierkegaard made his opinion of Hegel and the speculative thinker plain, and indicated the direction in which he intended to turn his life's work. He meant to reform the masses whose minds had been turned by Hegel and Protestantism into bland objective thinkers who, like the Athenians and Antiochenes before them, were not willing to take the sort of intellectual risks their interlocutor asked of them. "'The masses': that is really the aim of my polemic, and I learnt that from Socrates. I wish to make people aware, so that they don't dissipate their lives."[92]

But events around the time of the publication of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* forced his hand and shaped the course of the rest of his life for him. In January of 1846 the *Corsair*, a weekly journal of politics and public opinion published a nasty piece of satire about Kierkegaard.[93] This was to be the first of many satirical pieces which appeared throughout the

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[91] Journals, 97-8.
[92] Ibid., 118
[93] Garff, 396.

first part of 1846. The caricatures had power because they were so simple.[94] They went for his most obvious and least defensible spots, such as his uneven trouser legs.[95] This situation evokes parallels between the satirical treatment of Socrates and Julian, but it began somewhat differently. Those satires were a symptom of the mistrust of the intellectual, whereas these criticisms of Kierkegaard were the public airing of a private grievance between the editors of the *Corsair* and Kierkegaard based on longstanding envy. The effect, it seems, was also much more devastating: they caused Kierkegaard to become a walking caricature. People began to see his oddities, both physical and mental, which they had previously overlooked.[96] He wrote in disgust, "Even the butcher's boy almost thinks himself justified in being offensive to me at the behest of the *Corsair*."[97] The result for Kierkegaard's plan for the practical application of his philosophy was disastrous, and he criticized the small society of Copenhagen and their petty vulgarities in his journal. He actually suggested that the attack might be a government plot.[98] He had found their Christianity revolting; now he decided that it came from their personalities. He found a ready parallel, however, which suggests a new turning in his thought:

> It is, after all, possible that in spite of my insignificance before God, in personal humiliation at what I personally have committed, I may be the "gift of God" to my people. God knows they have treated me scurvily enough, like children abusing a beautiful present.[99]

For Kierkegaard, Socrates' fervent inner life is an appropriate model for Christianity because he did not worry about developing a proof for his beliefs, but lived them. "[H]is like is his proof, and only with his martyr's death is the proof complete.—That, you see, is spirit; it is a little awkward for those who repeat him… and those who chase after results, and for cowardly,

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[94] While cartoons may seem an unlikely medium to cause disasters, recent events caused by cartoons in Denmark have shown that it is entirely possible for a cartoon to incite rage in its satirical object.
[95] Garff, 407.
[96] Ibid., 406.
[97] Journals, 103.
[98] Garff, 411.
[99] Journals, 105.

effeminate natures."[100] To be a true Christian, one must live one's beliefs as did Socrates, and not wait for the historical proof of an eternal fact. This is a risk, but Kierkegaard holds that there can be no faith without risk. Unspiritual people refuse to take the risk, and that unwillingness has killed Christianity.[101]

He began to see the unspiritual population of Copenhagen as analogous to the boorish Athenians who had taken the Aristophanic Socrates at face value. They did not appreciate his subtleties and were missing the joke. He blamed "the masses" for the evils of modernity, and said it was the masses themselves who wanted to get rid of the individual. For instance, he thought that "[t]he railway mania is in every sense a second Babel."[102] These "masses" of bland Danes seemed to him not to have an individual among them, nor did they appreciate the individual, so swept up were they by the cult of objectivity.

"[T]he ancients understood the problem better, understood that the masses are a dangerous power."[103] The vicious cartoons of him in the *Corsair* and later satires (such as a play produced in 1846-7, which people at the time called Aristophanean[104]) served both to make him appear ridiculous to the Danes, and them ridiculous to him. While this upset him, he could see it in the light of Socratic martyrdom. He wrote in his journal that he wanted the masses to attack him, so that he could make them aware that Denmark was suffering a punishment, due to its inanity and could "only be saved by a tyrant or a few martyrs."[105] If he could convince them to put him to death, then they would be even more aware, which would be a complete victory.[106]

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[100] Ibid., 184.
[101] Ibid., 186.
[102] Ibid., 191.
[103] Ibid., 124.
[104] Garff, 412-2.
[105] Journals, 137.
[106] Ibid., 118.

Kierkegaard saw his forced isolation from his society as the mark of his intellectual situation. “In order really to be a great genius a man must be the exception… Perhaps his dementia has nothing whatsoever to do with his real genius, but it is the pain by which he is nailed out in his isolation—and he must be isolated if he is to be great, and so man can freely isolate himself, he must be compelled if it is to be a serious matter.”[107] He was now beginning to put his theory of irony masquerading as madness from the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* into practice: “I am the ultimate phase of the poetic temper on the way to becoming a sort of reformer on the small scale.”[108]

The bland Danish Christianity was the target for his Socratic irony disguised as madness, which came to a head in 1854. It seemed clear to him that this was his calling in his isolation due to ridicule. “I cannot myself scorn a task which has been so clearly imposed upon me.”[109] Kierkegaard saw Bishop Mynster and his successor Martensen as essential figures for his work, since they represented for him the corrupt establishment of Danish society. He wanted to defend what he understood as the established order of Christianity rather than the established order which Mynster represented.[110] For Kierkegaard, Christianity was for the poor and unhappy rather than the placid wealthy bishops, but he claimed that the press had ruined any chance of speaking to them directly, since the public now thought he was a madman.[111] Even though Kierkegaard knew that was whom he wanted to attack, the political situation dictated caution, and his own sense of the dramatic needed the right scene and timing. As early as late 1846 a book appeared

[107] Journals, 198.
[108] Ibid., 129.
[109] Ibid., 115.
[110] Ibid., 208-9.
[111] Ibid., 206.

which Kierkegaard called "blundering," since he feared it cited his work in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* in calling for the dismissal of Martensen.[112]

Mynster had been present throughout Kierkegaard's life—he had known his father long before, and Kierkegaard often spoke with him, though over time he grew more hostile. Kierkegaard had considered becoming a pastor in 1847, but a seemingly cordial interview made him feel that Mynster would like nothing better than to stick him in out in the country where he could not work his dialectic. "[I]t is evident that he looks upon me as a suspicious and dangerous person."[113] Kierkegaard saw his Christianity and Mynster's as diametrically opposed, since Mynster dispensed Christianity as only *part* of life rather than the absolute of life. He would go to any extreme to stop this falsity, as he wrote in 1848, "…I shall die in the belief… that my life… will help men to become aware of God." Garff suggests that besides Kierkegaard's ideological issues with Mynster, he was personally upset that Mynster's autobiography did not mention Kierkegaard's family at all, despite a long association, but did talk about Martensen at great length.[114]

Kierkegaard's campaign against Mynster did not begin until after his death in early 1854. Martensen delivered a eulogy for Mynster, in which he said that he had been a witness of the truth. This gave Kierkegaard a means to his end, and he began working on a protest immediately after its publication in February 1854, but he wanted to wait until the moment was right (and to avoid a probable suit for libel) for publication.[115] The dramatist in him wanted the attack to be a surprise and the Socratist in him wanted it to seem the result of madness, which he thought

[112] Garff, 425.
[113] Journals, 115.
[114] Garff, 731.
[115] Ibid., 727-729.

would be the most effective way of making his point.[116] The protest to Martensen's eulogy appeared some ten months later and finally said in public what Kierkegaard had privately felt for a number of years. It accused Mynster of not living in a way compatible with knowing Christian truth. Garff quotes the article: "Bishop Mynster's preaching of Christianity tones down, covers up, suppresses, and omits some of the most decisively Christian tenets."[117] He went further to accuse Martensen's motives for saying such things were concerned solely with his own career, and that Martensen was "playing at Christianity."[118]

The public reacted immediately with the anticipated accusations of insanity. Martensen's rebuttal said that Kierkegaard was using a narrow definition of the phrase "witness of the truth," which does not have to imply the suffering of a the Greek word witness or "martyr" and pointed out that false prophets and fanatics had suffered without any access to the truth.[119] But just as the *Corsair* attacks were based on more than uneven trousers and effusive prose, Martensen knew that Kierkegaard's attack now went more deeply than a theological debate. He wrote in his autobiography thirty years after the events: "If this event is to be understood historically… I assume that it may be explained, in part, by the fanatical notion that Kierkegaard had formed about a high mission to which he had been called, and, in part, by simple, personal animosity, not to mention hatred."[120] To Bernhard Ingeman his method of attack seemed suspiciously reminiscent of a party opposed to Socrates.[121] "…As far as Søren Sophist is concerned, I have never believed that the truth was in him; with his brilliant dialectics, he has always seemed to me

[116] Ibid., 734.
[117] Ibid., 732.
[118] Ibid., 733.
[119] Kirmmse, 201-2.
[120] Ibid., 201. It is worth noting that despite Martensen's undeniable self-righteousness, he was right in some ways about Kierkegaard's personality. Kierkegaard replied to this rebuttal by calling him "a glob of snot".(Garff 741).
[121] Garff points out that Ingeman was a particularly bland member of the Danish ecclesiastical establishment (745).

to be a sleight-of-hand artist who plays hocus-pocus with the truth and with Christianity, letting it appear and disappear under his shells."[122]

Kierkegaard continued his polemic, which by the following spring of 1855 had become directed against the entire Danish clerical system.[123] After publishing twenty-two articles in the journal *Fæderlandet*, he started his own journal, *The Moment*. This whole period of his work was in some ways a break with his earlier principles which despised the press speaking to the masses.[124] But this was the most practical medium for his program; the public press is not unlike the agora of Athens. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard's angry tone in these essays diverges too much from the Socratic course, and seems hypocritical (a common accusation) in one whom the public press had treated poorly.

Kierkegaard's attacks ended when he became too ill to work. He entered the hospital on October 2, 1855 and died on November 11, at the age of 43. The cause was an infection of the spinal cord, which may have been related to Kierkegaard's lifelong health problems. While his death was not by the Athenian hemlock after which he had been striving, Meïer Aron Goldschmidt (one of the editors of the *Corsair*) observed that Kierkegaard's death was timed appropriately for his program. "The most dangerous part of his actions against the clergy and the official Church is now only just beginning, because his fate undeniably has something of the martyr about it: the sincerity of his passion helped hasten the course of his illness and bring about his death."[125] A certain amount of protest at the funeral suggested that Kierkegaard's actions had denied him the right to a Christian burial, with which Kierkegaard himself might have agreed. Hans Christian Andersen (who had himself borne the brunt of Kierkegaard's ire

[122] Kirmmse, 101.
[123] Garff, 749.
[124] Ibid., 752-754.
[125] Kirmmse, 130.

many years before) summarizes the scene of the funeral, "Ladies in red and blue hats were coming and going; item: a dog with a muzzle."[126] Socrates has no such ironic description of the mundane facts of burial, and surely he was right not to seek exile from Athens and thus escape this trite end. Kierkegaard himself deserves the last word on this score:

> There is one thought which has been in my soul and occupied it from my earliest years, inexplicably deeply rooted, a thought which has to do with Socrates as a model, the man to whom I have been inexplicably related from my earliest years, long before I really began to read Plato… how is it that all those who… served the truth have always comes out of it badly in this life, *as long as they lived*, and as soon as they are dead they are deified?"[127]

The answer he gave is that men can only relate to the ideas of truth and the good through the imagination, and the dead only live in the imagination. Socrates lived in death for Kierkegaard and Julian, and they live in death for us.

Conclusion

Mary-Jane Rubenstein describes the three disparate positions that Kierkegaard held on Socrates throughout his work,

> [i]n *Irony*, Socrates knows nothing and therefore falls *short* of the speculative. In *Fragments*, Socrates knows everything from eternity and therefore marks the *inception* of the speculative. In the *Postscript*, Socratic uncertainty, falling between the categories of knowing and not-knowing, might be sufficiently elusive to *resist* the speculative.[128]

Kierkegaard himself went from a reliance on speculation to, in the end, the opposite tenet that the highest achievement is to live so subjectively that one is able to be objective to one's subjectivity. This sounds like a contradiction, but he means that he is willing objectively to face the consequences of his subjective actions.[129] To know nothing makes one essentially powerless,

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[126] Ibid., 136.
[127] Journals, 229-230.
[128] Mary-Jane Rubenstein, "Kierkegaard's Socrates: A Venture in Evolutionary Theory," *Modern Theology*, 17:4 (Oct 2001), 443.
[129] Journals, 248.

and unable to put true philosophical change into effect. To know everything in a temporal body is useless to effect ongoing change beyond one's own circle and a few generations hence. But to be uncertain and know some things and not know others is to be human, and in that last stage of viewing Socrates, Kierkegaard acknowledged that human beings are capable of changing the world only insofar as they can live their beliefs.

Kierkegaard's application of his interpretation of the Socratic personality and mission can seem misguided in retrospect. He thought that his mission was necessary to save Christianity in Denmark from the plebian and pedestrian. He thought that his approach amounted to Socratic dialectic. Yet like Julian, he gave in to personal attacks and furious rhetoric. He began to see Socrates as a subjective thinker, isolated from his society due to his "dementia" which drove other people away, but that describes Kierkegaard himself much better than it does Socrates. Socrates was supposed to be Kierkegaard's model, but in the end he shaped his model to fit himself.

Conclusion

Socrates has been at the center of this project, and yet *he* has not been in it at all. Rather, Plato, Xenophon, Aristophanes, Aristotle, Julian, Kierkegaard, and those who have written about them have provided the actual content. Socrates represents something to each of these people. He does not stand for anything as simple as reason over tyranny, or a method, or anything else we can name rationally. Yet Kierkegaard and Julian's irrational dependence on images of Socrates tells us as much about them as the ways in which they expressed themselves logically. In this last section, I want to compare their uses of and approaches to Socrates to work towards a generalization of the Socratizing personality. Such a generalization will only be a hazy beginning rather than attempt a strict definition of someone who relies on images of Socrates. Rather, I want to get at what about Socrates appeals to a certain type of personality, and what that personality might be like. Thus this generalization will rest not only on the biographical and mental similarities between Julian and Kierkegaard, but on their depiction and embracing of Socrates.

What has emerged from this study is a portrait of a man who is, to quote Alcibiades, very strange. Even Socrates' admirers admitted that Socrates was unique to this world, and perhaps rather ill suited to it. No one correct view of Socrates exists and each person must construct his or her own version of the Socratic legend whether good or bad. His extreme unconventionality is compelling for certain people, since it reflects some aspect of their own lives. As the archetype for the Western world of the despised intellectual, he appeals to thinkers such as Julian and Kierkegaard because they were unconventional thinkers, who wanted to live philosophic lives.

They felt that their frustration with the world in which they lived and assuaged that frustration through ethical and practical philosophy.

The biographical similarities between Julian and Kierkegaard lie mainly in their unhappy childhoods and difficult adolescences. Both lost at least one parent at an early age, and each struggled with a difficult relationship with authority, his father in Kierkegaard's case, and Constantius, who was *in loco parentis* for Julian. Julian suffered by never knowing his mother and the subsequent execution of most of his family. Kierkegaard's health problems and small size opened him up for taunting by his schoolmates, and he lost almost his entire large family while still young. Psychological research tells us that people who experience rejection and conflict in their childhood can develop an avoidant personality, which causes them to avoid normal human relationships due to a fear of rejection.[1] A true diagnosis is impossible and ideally should not affect their philosophy; however, the biographical facts of their life did affect the way in which their philosophy developed because they wanted to apply their philosophy practically.

Without taking the psychological aspect of this too far, I want to look at how they both dealt with their feelings of isolation from the world in which they were born. First of all, they each lived in a world which emphasized an education in Classical Greece, and they both took to this study with a fervor that they and others remembered even years later. Memories of Julian's exile at Macellum and Kierkegaard's school days all recognize a strong interest in antiquity made all the stronger by isolation, whether physical or emotional. They learned to express themselves through the world of Classical Greece. Who better to provide an outlet for their feelings than Socrates? Yet this reliance on Socrates may have proved treacherous when they wanted to face their world carrying the banner of Socrates. That seems to be an overstatement of the case, but consider what "Socrates" means to them. It did not mean "a man who lived and died

[1] Barlow and Durand, *Abnormal Psychology*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002), 411.

a philosopher in Athens;" rather it meant "a man who died for philosophy in Athens." Their isolation actually increased when they found their own people no more interested in preserving the stinging gadfly than the Athenians had been.

In their approach to philosophy both Julian and Kierkegaard began with the Delphic precept "know thyself." The sentiment behind this precept is that the philosopher must bear judgment against his life and ideas and integrate that judgment back into his life and philosophy. The primacy of this idea for them connects with their philosophical moves towards isolation, though it is more overt in the work of Kierkegaard, who by near the end of his life insisted that the best sort of thinker must necessarily be isolated. Again, it is the way in which they lived that indicates the strength of their philosophical commitment to seeking to understand what is best for them and applying to their lives. Whether or not they seem misguided to us, they took what they were doing seriously.

For Julian this was a natural extension of the Cynicism which was already a prevalent philosophical school in the Roman empire. He took it more seriously than did many of his contemporary Cynics because he identified with its roots in Socrates and Diogenes. The result was a life lived according to the philosophical ideas he had judged best for himself, which included extreme asceticism. This was appropriate for him, since as emperor he had to be a soldier and set an example for soldiers. He expressed his masculinity through his toughness and endurance, and criticized others for their effeminacy if they did not deny themselves all pleasure. His masculinity did not include sexual virility; like Kierkegaard he remained chaste throughout his life, never remarrying after the premature death of his first wife. Their apathy towards a sexual relationship stems from different events in their lives, but probably would not have been a high priority in any event for men so interested in themselves.

Julian believed that his way of life was best not only for himself, but for everyone. But when he tried to force this same way of thinking and lifestyle on others for whom it was not appropriate, such as the Antiochenes, they attacked him with cruel satires and civil disobedience. Julian attempted a Socratic mission because, like Socrates, he wanted to bring others to virtue. Socrates knew that if he had attempted to bring others to virtue through participation in government, it would end in failure and death. Thus he chose to engage individual Athenians in dialectic so that they would be able to reach a conclusion about the most proper behavior for themselves. This still ended his life, but much later than it would have. Julian perhaps thought he could circumvent those difficulties because he was emperor. Yet he discovered that even an autocrat cannot force people to live their lives in a better way if they do not want to, or if they disagree with him on what is best.

Kierkegaard's expression of his personal philosophic truth differed from Julian's mainly in that he did not think asceticism was right for him. He appreciated its importance for both Socrates and the early Christians, but knew that he would not flourish if he denied himself all comforts. Nor was the life of an ascetic appropriate in any way to bourgeois nineteenth century Copenhagen if he wanted to have a chance of being taken seriously. The wandering and perhaps mendicant philosopher had long vanished, and Kierkegaard's best chance to reach the people was through the written word. Earlier in his career he was ambivalent at best to the public press, and perhaps his later reliance on it for his Socratic mission was inherently flawed, even if it was the only viable method.

While Kierkegaard did not give up physical comforts, he took no emotional comforts. He used the persecutions in his life, whether imagined ones like his botched engagement to Regine Olsen, or real ones life the satires of the *Corsair* to fuel his writing. His insistence on being a

martyr found justification in the figure of Socrates. Kierkegaard, unlike Julian, had Jesus Christ as another model for the martyr. Yet in his philosophy he separates the role of Christ from the role of Socrates. Socrates, and those like him, can only bring truth only to his own generation. Thus Kierkegaard intended his sacrifice to educate his own people, and he planned it carefully so that his mission would be explosive and unavoidable. He also had devoted so many years of study to Socrates that his mission could be consciously Socratic. For instance, it looks intentional that his most vicious attacks against the establishment nearly coincided with his own death, and probably exacerbated it. The majority of people in Copenhagen did not take him seriously, but like Julian his actions were outlandish enough that he was a topic of wonder in his own day and for many generations following.

Thus the main point of similarity between Julian and Kierkegaard rests in their insistence on attempting civil reform through philosophy. Their exact approaches differed due to their vast differences in station and chronology. Clearly a Roman emperor's approach to civil reform will have to be different from a private citizen some fifteen hundred years later. What is strikingly similar between their approaches, however, is that they both were grounded in Socrates. Socrates' image had power over them, and they embraced it wholeheartedly.

To provide perspective on this conclusion, let us turn to another philosopher whose use of Socrates is notable, Friedrich Nietzsche. He is most comparable to Kierkegaard. He was born just a few years before Kierkegaard's death, and grew up with largely the same education. He also had the same intensity as Julian and Kierkegaard. Unlike them, however, he ultimately quarreled with Socrates and did not think that the Classical past could ever fix the problems in modernity.[2] Like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche was well-versed in classical philology, and again this was a means to an end. At his inaugural lecture as a young professor he said that philology

[2] Werner Dannhauser, *Nietzsche's View of Socrates*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 13.

should be the handmaiden to philosophy.[3] Ultimately his opinion of Socrates was ambiguous, Werner Dannhauser says, "Provisionally, it can be said that for Nietzsche the Socratic life is somehow both a great temptation and something to be rejected."[4] Nietzsche, like Kierkegaard and Julian, wanted to change the opinions of his day, but he did not see a way to do this through philosophy. They believed that subsuming themselves in philosophy would accomplish their ends, but Nietzsche "must finally reject traditional philosophy as a delusion that becomes impossible to maintain once it is recognized as a delusion."[5] Dannhauser suggests that the problem with Nietzsche's critique of Plato and Socrates is that he depicts them as the first philosophers who set all the evils of modern philosophy in motion. But by doing this he ignores all the ways they differed from modern philosophers, and so he manages to miss the point of Socrates.[6]

This is just the briefest summary of Nietzsche's use of Socrates, which is as extensive as Julian or Kierkegaard's, but it shows that it is possible to have an intense but ultimately ambivalent relationship to Socrates. Nietzsche sees Socrates' wisdom, but he does not wish to use it to reform his society. Whether his approach is more effective is beyond the scope of this project, but that he must grapple with his position on Socrates as reformer shows that he is aware of that possibility.

Whether or not Socrates is an effective model for a reformer surely depends on one's conception of Socrates. If Socrates represents all that is good, then his teachings could do nothing but bring good to those who are willing to take them seriously. Yet this is a problem for the latter day would-be Socratic. No one could live up to the idealization of Socrates which

[3] Ibid., 43.
[4] Ibid., 20.
[5] Ibid., 272.
[6] Ibid., 272.

clearly existed in the writings of Plato and Xenophon, not to mention the divine status he receives in Neoplatonic thought. Because we do not know Socrates' true nature or method, which was at its most basic human level incomprehensible even to his contemporaries, we have no way to tell if someone is successfully replicating Socrates' work. Both Julian and Kierkegaard thought they were doing so. Yet when someone works from an ideal model, he is apt to make mistakes in the execution of his plan, especially when the model fails to mesh with reality.

This does not mean to imply that Socrates' nature, whatever it was, failed to effect any real change. He has always been a crucial figure to thought, philosophical and otherwise. He inspired Julian and Kierkegaard in their missions. But if people want to die for an idea, they can justify it to themselves and the world in nearly any way. Something about Julian and Kierkegaard made Socrates a particularly good model for their purposes. The common element I see between them is the fervor which infiltrated all aspects of their lives until they were consumed by it. That sort of fervor is difficult to understand and scares most people. Perhaps Julian and Kierkegaard were able to see this aspect of themselves reflected in Socrates. We may see many ways in which they differed from Socrates. For one thing, Socrates made it to seventy, while neither Julian nor Kierkegaard made it to forty-five. Julian and Kierkegaard's application of their interpretation of the Socratic personality and mission can seem misguided in retrospect. Was the Danish church so plebian and pedestrian that it needed an attack of Socratic dialectic? Were the Antiochenes' love of the theater and warm baths such an important moral question? The question leads to another: what does deserve an attack of Socratic dialectic? Without intending to make an argument for moral relativism, perhaps whatever mission drives one to question everything needs a look to Socratic dialectic. No one can truly understand how Socrates did what he did, and so we cannot fault those who try for their possible misinterpretation of

Socrates and hence failure to complete Socratic missions. Rather, the image of Socrates entices and guides those whose fervor calls for their entire life to be devoted to bringing themselves and those around them to virtue.

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