Response 3 Week 4

Plato’s Apology is a version of the speech Socrates gave at his trial. The speech is Socrates attempt at defending himself by using honesty and knowledge. It should be of no surprise to anyone that Socrates states he has little experience in the courts, and knowledge of the common practices of the courts. In his speech Socrates attempts to answer the charges brought against him. He does so in a natural, improvised and conversational style. This is of no surprise, as he does not value the use of rhetoric that was common at the time in the courts. However, it is interesting to not that while he does not use a prepared speech, he does make a carefully constructed argument. In his speech he makes reference to the fact that he is not corrupting youth, but helping the youth to gain knowledge.

Therefore, what he does is in benefit to the youth. He serves a purpose, and he argues that were he doing them harm, or corrupting them, he would not be the only corrupter in their lives. He states that “happy indeed would the condition of youth if they had only one corrupter only, and all the rest of the world were their improvers.” If there are numerous people, and events in the lives of youth that can corrupt, then Socrates himself couldn’t be responsible for all corruption. He, of course argues that he is not corrupting them at all.

Personally, I find the speech interesting given the discussion we have had in class the last two weeks. There is a lot to think about here. He is required to make this speech at his trial. He doesn’t use the common prepared or written speech to defend himself in court. He does attempt to defend himself by way of knowledge and truth.

Is Scorates, in his speech, using rhetoric? Is it not rhetoric because he improvises his speech, and thus avoids any of the “tricks” he associates with rhetoric?