

The God and the Gadfly: A Reading of Plato's Apology

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Vortrag und Diskussion

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Topic

In the Apology, Socrates presents himself as "a gift of the god" and as "a gadfly" to Athens. In the standard reading of the work, these two descriptions tend to be treated as though the connection between them were purely contingent. This implies that Socrates' project of enquiry can be separated out from the Delphic oracle's reply to Chairephon -- even though Socrates himself describes his project as investigating the meaning of Apollo's words. In other words, the standard reading tends to forget the god. (You could call this the secularization of Socrates.) I shall argue that if we forget the god we lose the gadfly. If we lose the gadfly we lose the work the gadfly performs: philosophy. Where does this leave philosophy? (And what would remembering the god mean?)

This reading of the Apology is part of a larger work-in-progress concerning the nature of philosophy and the relationship between, on the one hand, Wittgenstein's thought (early and late) on the divine and, on the other hand, the figure of Socrates in Plato's dialogues.

Biography and selected works

Brian Klug (B.A. and M.A. in Philosophy, University of London, and Ph.D. in Social Thought, University of Chicago) is Senior Research Fellow in Philosophy at St. Benet's Hall, Oxford; member of the faculty of philosophy at the University of Oxford; Honorary Fellow of the Parkes Institute for the Study of Jewish/non-Jewish Relations, University of Southampton; and Fellow of the College of Arts & Sciences, Saint Xavier University, Chicago.

His books include *Words of Fire: Selected Essays of Ahad Ha'am* (2015), *Being Jewish and Doing Justice: Bringing Argument to Life* (2011) and *Ethics, Value and Reality: Selected Essays of Aurel Kolnai* (co-edited with Francis Dunlop, 1977). Recent chapters in books include: 'Wittgenstein and the Divine: Can Nonsense Make Sense?' (in *Spielarten diskursiver Repräsentierung des Absoluten* (forthcoming)), 'Speaking of God: Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Language of Religious Experience' (in *Religious Experience Revisited: Expressing the Inexpressible?* (2016)), 'Moses: The Significant Other' (in *Dynamics of Difference: Christianity and Alterity*, 2015). He is an Associate Editor of the journal *Patterns of Prejudice*.