**Workshop Four:**

**Reading Plato’s *Apology* with OTC Alumni**

**Out of the Cave : Education, Ancient and Modern**

**Pomona College — Spring 2021**

**time started: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**workshop length: 50 mins**

**return by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Part I: General Instructions & Introductions (10 minutes)**

For this workshop, you will be organized in a Zoom Breakout Room with a group of approximately five or six students, including one or two alumni.

Please begin by introducing yourselves. You may talk about why education mattered to you \*before\* you joined Out of the Cave (and why you joined the class). Please select a volunteer timekeeper to gently keep the group on time to complete the workshop.

If you have any questions or concerns, please send a message via Zoom asking for help. I’ll join you as soon as possible.

**PART II: The Unexamined Life and its Opposite(20 minutes)**

In Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates is found guilty and his prosecutor suggests a penalty of death. Conventionally, at this point in an Athenian trial, the defendant would request ostracism as an alternate punishment. Socrates suggests instead that it would be proper for for Athens to provide him free meals for the rest of his life. Alternately, he will pay a small fine (increased to a larger amount by an ad-hoc Go Fund Me led by Plato himself). Socrates cannot, he claims, leave Athens and live a quiet life elsewhere for two reasons. First, it would be against divine will. Second, Socrates cannot see stopping now, for, he states:

ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ “The unexamined life is not worth living for a human being.” (38a5-6)

Based on your recollection of Socrates’ methods, what do you think he means by this? What, in Socrates’ view, would the opposite of this unlivable, unexamined life be? That is to say, what, according to Socrates, is an “examined” life? Please take a few moments to reflect silently, and then discuss for about 5 minutes.

Giving Socrates the benefit of the doubt here, and imagining that you agree with him -- that “the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being” – what do \*you\* think an “examined life” would look like? Please take another few moments to reflect quietly and then discuss for about 10 minutes.

**PART III. Love and Dialogue in Education (20 min)**

Socrates demonstrates in the *Apology* that he finds himself being prosecuted for actions he has taken not out of concern for himself and his personal well-being but because of his love of and concern for the collective well-being of the people of Athens. Please have one volunteer read the passage reproduced here (from *Apology* 30e – 31c) aloud:

I am far from making a defense now on my own behalf, as might be thought, but on yours, to prevent you from committing a wrongdoing by mistreating the god’s gift to you by condemning me; for if you kill me you will not easily find another like me. I was attached to this city by the god – though it seems a ridiculous thing to say – as upon a great and noble horse which was somewhat sluggish because of its size and needed to be stirred up by a kind of gadfly. It is to fulfill some such function that I believe the god has placed me in the city. I never cease to rouse each and every one of you, to persuade and reproach you all day long and everywhere I find myself in your company.

…

That I am the kind of person to be a gift of the god to the city you might realize from the fact that it does not seem like human nature for me to have neglected all my own affairs and to have tolerated this neglect now for so many years while I was always concerned with you, approaching each one of you like a father or an elder brother to persuade you to care for virtue.

To conclude this part of his argument, Socrates’ names his poverty as evidence that his behavior was an act of friendship and love rather than self-aggrandizement.

For the sake of this exercise, let’s be generous to Socrates and say that what he refers to as “rousing,” “persuading,” and “reproaching” is something we might call ***dialogue***.

Please read the three questions below and then pause to reflect quietly on your own thoughts and feelings in response. You may wish to write down these initial responses, or just sit with them. Next, please discuss your responses.

(a) Why, for Socrates, is dialogue an act of love?

(b) Do you agree that dialogue is an act of love? Why or why not?

(c) Is dialogue an important component of education? Why or why not?

(d) Is love a central part of education? Why or why not?

**After we return to the main room, we will take a break and then resume our discussion as a full seminar.**