

## **“Follow the Argument” and Two Other Socratic Principles for the Christian Academic**

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“What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” So asked the early church father Tertullian, who notoriously answered, Nothing good.<sup>1</sup> What has philosophical reason to do with Christian faith? What has Socrates to do with Christ? Tertullian’s answer to the question has not been the majority position throughout Christian history, but it has a particular resonance for many people today. Thanks in large part to the perception of conflicts between science—especially evolutionary biology—and religion, many critics of Christianity,<sup>2</sup> and indeed many Christians, have posited a radical distinction between reason, argument, and evidence on the one hand and Christian faith and practice on the other.

Few Christians today are willing to embrace the austere anti-logic of Tertullian’s “I believe because it is absurd,”<sup>3</sup> preferring instead to think of faith in existential-fideistic terms. I mean by “existential-fideistic” something like the standard contemporary account that faith is a matter of “just believing,” of passionately giving assent to beliefs that in principle cannot be justified rationally. Christian beliefs might not be absurd or crazy—after all, the story goes, each person is entitled to believe whatever he or she wants—but it would be mistaken to look for reasons to ground these beliefs.

For anyone holding this view, Socrates makes a rather odd patron saint. Still worse, critics in the spirit of Tertullian might argue that Socrates’ philosophical mission was essentially anti-religious, insofar as he attacked the traditional religious mythology of his time and set up human rationality as a competing source of truth. So why would the explicitly Christian Oxford Socratic Club of C. S. Lewis’ day take Socrates as a model and namesake, and adopt a Socratic principle as its guiding light? To bring the question more close to home, one might ask further: Why would the Gonzaga Socratic Club replicate this folly?

The simple answer is that I think that Tertullian is wrong on this point and Lewis and the Oxford Socratic Club are right. Even if Socrates was not, a la Karl Rahner, an “anonymous Christian,”<sup>4</sup> he sought to guide his life by principles of rational intelligibility that are entirely in concert with a broadly Christian outlook. I intend to demonstrate this claim by explaining Socrates’ basic methodology regarding rational argumentation, that articulated by the Socratic injunction to “follow the argument wherever it leads,” and linking it to a Christian account of faith and reason. Further, I wish to extend the connection between Socratic inquiry and the Christian quest for truth by recommending two additional Socratic principles closely related to the first.

### **“Follow the Argument Wherever It Leads”**

Plato’s Socratic dialogues abound with instances of Socrates exhorting his interlocutors to pursue rational inquiry and reflection. As his conversations with people like Euthyphro, Euthydemus, Callicles, and Meno demonstrate, alternatives to rational reflection include shallow self-ignorance, pseudo-logical pyrotechnics, rhetorical bombast, and failed self-governance. To grant authority to reasoned discourse is nonetheless unattractive to many, because it is to cede mastery of oneself to an external source of governance. If I am sufficiently humble to recognize that I am not wise, and if further I should listen neither to the many, because they do not know (*Crito* 47a-

d), nor to the supposedly wise, because they know less than they think and take what knowledge they have as equivalent to all wisdom (21a-22e), to whom *should* I listen? Whom should I obey?

Socrates' view is that I should ideally find and listen to the one who knows (*Crito* 47c-d), if there is such a person. On the basis of his famous examinations of putatively wise people, after the declaration of the Delphic Oracle that "no one is wiser than Socrates," Socrates concluded that their apparent wisdom paled in contrast to the true wisdom that belongs only to the god (*Apology* 21b-23b).<sup>5</sup>

As Socrates sees it, the only remaining alternative for those who wish to pursue wisdom and knowledge is reasoned discourse, argument, critical reflection (all of the activities that, taken together, are called in ancient Greek '*logos*'). Reasoned discourse alone can reliably expose unreflective ignorance, reveal conflicting beliefs, and enable us to articulate reasons to justify our choices and actions.

Socrates affirms his commitment to reasoned discourse on numerous occasions. For example, Plato's *Crito* finds Socrates in prison after his conviction by his fellow Athenians on charges of disbelieving in the civic gods of Athens and corrupting the youth. Socrates' friend Crito urges that Socrates embrace an escape plan that Crito and other friends have worked out. Socrates' answer is a critical statement of his view of the value of reason:

not only now but at all times I am the kind of man who listens only to the argument that on reflection seems best to me (*Crito* 46b)<sup>6</sup>

Socrates in this passage affirms deference to the authority of rational inquiry. There are several important features of this *logos* to which Socrates declares his deference. First, inquiry is *reflective*. It is not enough to consider an argument superficially and adopt whatever conclusion seems at first glance strongest. Second, inquiry has a *personal* element: the true inquirer must value rational reflection and must determine for himself what conclusion and supporting reasons are best supported by the argument. Third, rational reflection is not an episodic activity, it is a *way of life* or quality of one's character. It is not enough to resort to reflection to convince others of the truth of your beliefs, or to employ reflection when it seems to have a reasonable likelihood of leading you toward conclusions you wish to affirm anyway. Even more important, Socrates' view requires that one not abandon reflection when it challenges one's beliefs, or when one seems to have argued to mistaken conclusions.<sup>7</sup>

Hence the oft-cited Socratic principle of inquiry, that we must follow the argument wherever it leads. Socrates states this principle in the *Republic* with a metaphorical illustration: "we must follow the argument wherever, like a wind, it may lead us" (*Republic* 394d).<sup>8</sup> If we value reasoning and regard it as a legitimate source for truth, we should—and must—follow the path of our reflections no matter where they lead. Even if argument leads us to truths that are unexpected, unpleasant, or shocking, casting our lot with justified beliefs rather than ungrounded opinion means that we must trust the argument to lead us toward what is true.

In another example, at the close of a series of difficult arguments on the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo*, Socrates comments to his friends:

"if you analyze [our first hypotheses] adequately, you will, I think, follow the argument as far as a man can and if the conclusion is clear, you will look no further." (*Phaedo* 107b)<sup>9</sup>

Socrates' key idea is that while human powers of reasoning are limited, they give us sufficient resources to resolve questions about matters of importance to us. Even in cases in which a decisive determination of the truth is impossible, reasoned discourse provides us with the tools to find a justifiable conclusion, one on which we can stake our lives.

So the principle to defer to rational argument as the arbiter of truth is clearly a Socratic principle. Is the goal of following the argument wherever it leads in any sense Christian? Many Christians and at least some critics of Christianity would demur. A standard objection is that heroes of faith obediently follow God despite what rational reflection might tell them to do. In what many would regard as the paradigmatic case, Abraham is regarded as the father of faith because he was willing obediently to go wherever God called him, without prior conditions or rational explanations, and was further willing to sacrifice his son at God's command despite good reasons not to do so (see Genesis 12:1-4; 22:1-19).<sup>10</sup> This interpretation is often defended by appeal to the "roll call of faith" in the Letter to the Hebrews, which contrasts what we can see with hope and the eyes of faith to what is humanly visible (see Hebrews 11:1-3). So, it would seem, rational inquiry is a potential barrier to spiritual vision, a possible temptation that we limit our vision to what is apparent now to merely human reason rather than the unseen reality that can be apprehended only via God's grace.

Despite the plausibility of this account, I have a number of reasons for thinking that the Socratic principle properly links reason and faith and hence is binding on a Christian. In the first place, Christianity, along with the other theistic religions, begins with the assumptions that the universe is ordered and that a key capacity of human beings is the ability to know the truth. The idea in the Hebrew creation account that God speaks the universe into existence (Genesis 1:1-3) is the basis for the notion that the universe is intelligible (e.g., Proverbs 3:19-20) and in Christian thought is interpreted in terms of the intelligible Word who is the agent of divine creation and the principle of order that maintains it in existence (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17).<sup>11</sup> The implication of this is that the world reveals God's nature, and consequently that human beings have the opportunity and obligation to inquire into and understand what can be so known (Romans 1:17-18). The Socratic ideal of thoughtful reflection grounded in personal commitment to inquiry that is pursued as a way of life is entirely at home in the Christian context.

Like Socrates, the Christian begins with the humility of knowing that human inquiry is limited to partial and fleeting glimpses of the completeness of truth (Isaiah 55:8-9). Just as Socrates unflatteringly compares the poverty of human wisdom to genuine divine wisdom (*Apology* 23a-b), so St. Paul unflatteringly compares the weakness of merely human wisdom to the power of wisdom enlightened by God's spirit (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:10). But even though the gospel is not articulated in "subtle arguments" (1 Corinthians 2:4), the objective of the proclamation of the gospel is conviction—recognition of the truth of what is said. Thus, in a sense at least, the invitation to salvation is itself an invitation to reasoned discourse:

"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD .  
 "Though your sins are like scarlet,  
 they shall be as white as snow;  
 though they are red as crimson,  
 they shall be like wool." (Isaiah 1:18)

What implications does this Socratic-Christian model of rational inquiry have for the existential-fideistic view of Christian faith, the idea that belief is something like a passionate commitment to what cannot in principle be known or rationally justified? The Socratic account

as well as the Christian view helpfully captures the relationship between evidence and belief. Beliefs, whether of the mundane or religious variety, are not the sorts of things that are conjured out of epistemic thin air by vigorous willing. I can no more make myself believe by untethered choice that God exists (or does not exist) than I can make myself believe that there is a 5-ton pink and purple polka-dotted elephant suspended from the ceiling above me at this very moment. (If you are wondering why *you* can’t see this elephant, I should add that the elephant is invisible under normal circumstances.) Belief in such a curiously situated pachyderm would follow only on relevant *evidence*: sounds of heavy breathing, the restless twitching of a trunk, the unmistakable smell of peanut breath wafting through the room. Surely one can *imagine* such an elephant, but the absence of relevant evidence vitiates any claims that one *believes* in the existence of the elephant. Beliefs then are the causal product of evidence, not of voluntary choice.<sup>12</sup> Quite rightly, Socrates’ method allows adoption of beliefs only on the basis of evidence, and not merely any evidence, but critically considered evidence.

Numerous examples from throughout the Christian tradition show that beliefs are not simply produced by ungrounded volition, but are the result of some evidentiary process. For example, the people present at the “contest of the gods” between Yahweh and Baal (1 Kings 18:17-40) are not simply invited to select a favored deity; they instead are called to witness a showdown in which Yahweh offers as evidence for belief a demonstration of his power. The people declare their allegiance to God only after Elijah’s altar and offering are consumed by divine fire. In the Gospels, Jesus offers what John the Evangelist calls “signs”—demonstrations of psychological insight, authoritative teaching, and power over nature and supernatural forces—to provide grounds for belief in him (e.g., John 2:11, 22, 23). The earliest sermons of the church were narrative accounts of Israel’s history and Christ’s mission that appealed to the explanatory coherence of prophecy and the power of Christ’s resurrection as evidence for the truth of Christian claims. St. Paul’s speech to the philosophers on the Areopagus is an attempt to mesh theological claims familiar to the Stoic and Epicurean audience with the evidentiary confirmation of Christ’s resurrection.

Centuries of developments in Christian theology have been based on following out the best available arguments concerning God’s nature and agency. Centuries of Christian evangelism and apologetics have been based on the injunction to “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15, NIV). The hope of the Christian believer is not based on volitional vigor or an a-rational leap, but is the sort of thing for which the believer can and should give a reasoned account.

I don’t mean to suggest that Christian belief is a philosophical system, but it certainly is an ordered body of truth claims. That it is more than merely a set of truth claims—for example, that it is a way of life—is dependent upon the truth of its basic propositions. St. Paul famously declares that “if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith” (1 Corinthians 15:14, NIV). The dependence of Christian life and practice upon truths about God, truths about human beings, truths about the demands of Christian life, means that pursuit of the truth is an essential part of Christian commitment. So the Christian’s call to follow Christ is at the same time a call to follow truth, and therefore “to follow the argument wherever it leads.”

Commitment to “follow the argument wherever it leads” does expose the Christian to a potential danger. If reasoned discourse is taken as an authority, one cannot predict in advance what the conclusions will be. In response to the observation that the Oxford Socratic Club was founded by Christians for their own partisan purposes, C. S. Lewis notes: “We never claimed to be impartial. But argument is. It has a life of its own. No man can tell where it will go. We

expose ourselves, and the weakest of our party, to your fire no less than you are exposed to ours."<sup>13</sup> So long as the argument is pursued reflectively and thoroughly, however, this potential danger is without substance for the Christian. If the argument takes one toward the truth, it can never be a threat. If fidelity to Christian life depends on adherence to the truth, no truth will take one outside of Christianity. And if, to consider the hypothetical, pursuit of truth revealed the untruth of Christianity, Christianity would not merit obedience.

The writer of Hebrews explains the nature of faith by noting that "without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:6, NIV). The belief that God exists is meaningless and empty—"in vain"—if God in reality does not exist. If God does exist the Christian needs the best possible understanding of God's reality and what is required to please him. Reasoned discourse, *logos*, following the argument wherever it leads, is, in the light of God's grace and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the best way to pursue what this means.

### **"Investigate the Argument for Yourself and for Others" (Charmides 166c-d)**

Socrates' statement of his devotion to reasoned discourse in the *Crito* notes that he defers to the argument that seems best *to him* (46b). Given Socrates' recognition of his own ignorance, however, trusting himself as a personal judge of truth seems rather risky. Such a move would be risky but for two features of Socrates' philosophical method. First, as we have noted, Socrates' pursuit of truth is under the mastery of *logos*. While he is personally engaged in the quest for truth, that quest is conducted under the authority of reasoned discourse, and under the demand that his beliefs be justified by relevant evidence. Secondly, Socrates is kept honest in this pursuit by his participation in argument with others. In many cases, his interlocutors are less than fully willing partners in inquiry (e.g., Euthyphro in the eponymous dialogue and Callicles in the *Gorgias*), and in other cases, the interlocutors are less than fully able to successfully conduct the conversation (his friend Crito in the dialogue of that name), but Socrates still thinks that having conversational partners is a critical part of pursuing the truth.<sup>14</sup>

The link between submission to argument and cooperation with others in the pursuit of truth is powerfully made by Socrates in a comment in the *Charmides*, a discussion of the virtue of temperance:

How can you think that I would have any reason to refute you decisively other than the one which motivates my own search; fearing lest I might carelessly suppose that I know something that I do not know. For my part, I now say that this is what I do: I examine the argument primarily for my own sake, and no doubt likewise for the sake of my other close friends. Or would you not say that things as they truly are should become manifest as a common good of virtually all humankind? (166c-d, my translation)

Much of Socrates' statement here is already familiar: humility in recognizing the limits of one's knowledge, pursuit of the truth, devotion to argument. What is novel in this passage is what Socrates has to say about the role others play in one's rational inquiry. First and most basic, reasoned discourse is *cooperative*: while the very idea of discourse or conversation normally presupposes discussion with others, Socrates here makes clear that the model interlocutors are friends with whom one shares basic objectives. While one's motivation for pursuing the truth is always to find the argument that on reflection seems to one the best (*Crito* 46b), one can take

that as an objective to be shared with others. Friendly interlocutors can help one pursue the truth by exposing one's logical blind spots and by suggesting fresh insights.

Secondly, pursuit of truth with others involves *conflict* or logical rivalry. An important tool in Socrates' search for truth is *elenchos*, or the technique of cross-examination. Reasoned discourse with others in something like a competition, in which one's ideas are pitted against the ideas and arguments of others. The argument provides a neutral arena within which these ideas can be examined, but the conflict between interlocutors in genuine inquiry is real. Competition is in this case a good thing, however, for weak or poorly justified ideas are exposed, unclear claims are clarified, and strong claims are shown to be capable of withstanding sustained criticism.

Finally, the search for an discovery of truth is a *common good* that we should promote for all. The truth about the world, myself, and how to live is not a limited good; it can be freely shared without loss. The fact that all interlocutors in rational discourse stand to gain from it increases the likelihood that they will cooperate seriously and that they will vigorously compete in determining what position is best supported by available evidence.

The Socratic model of cooperative rational inquiry has many clear affinities with the Christian search for truth. The notion of cooperation and interdependence is embedded in the Pauline image of the church as an organic body (Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-26). This image makes clear that fellow believers should not only help one another seek the truth, but should aid one another in all aspects of life. This life of the Christian body is a *koinonia*, a common life, in which all goods are ideally held in common. Certainly that would include the commonality of the good of truth, and would therefore enjoin all members to encourage one another in their pursuit of it.

Indeed, the Christian notion that the body is made up of different members with different strengths and weaknesses (1 Corinthians 12:27-30) adds an important dimension to the Socratic idea of cooperative rational inquiry. Insofar as different members have different experiences, abilities, and personalities, they will bring different insights and perspectives to the inquiry. So long as they share in common the basic assumptions and objectives of the Christian life, their differences will serve to enhance the conversation.

Strikingly, even the idea of conflict or rivalry in pursuing the truth is present in the Christian notion of cooperation. Conflict has a way of bringing out what is best: "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 12:17). This point makes sense of a passage in St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians that is otherwise difficult to understand. He notes, in the context of a discussion of the importance of unity in the church, that: "dissensions are necessary if only to prove which of your members are sound" (1 Corinthians 11:19, NEB). Of course, genuine divisions—which involve divergent views on central claims of belief or practice—are a bad state of affairs, because the ultimate objective is unity in mind and purpose (1 Corinthians 1:10). But disputes concerning the truth of a given matter can be productive insofar as they require that we seek the account that is the most reasonable.

### **"Stay at Your Post, Stand Firm" (*Apology* 28d-29b)**

The third Socratic principle worth consideration for the Christian academic is explicitly religious in character:

wherever a man has taken a position that he believes to be best, or has been placed by his commander, there he must I think remain and face danger, without a thought for death or anything else, rather than disgrace. It would have been a

dreadful way to behave, gentlemen of the jury, if, at Potidaea, Amphipolis and Delium, I had, at the risk of death, like anyone else, remained at my post where those you had elected to command had ordered me, and then, when the god ordered me, as I thought and believed, to live the life of a philosopher, to examine myself and others, I had abandoned my post for fear of death or anything else. . . . I do know, however, that it is wicked and shameful to do wrong, to disobey one's superior, be he god or man. (*Apology* 28d-29b)<sup>15</sup>

Having inquired into the best course of action, and having established by reflection and argumentation the best path, one should maintain that path with confident persistence. The principle of persistence is one that has to be balanced with those we have discussed thus far. Socrates made clear that argumentative humility requires that one always be prepared for the possibility that one's position is mistaken, but that one has a commensurate responsibility to investigate important matters so thoroughly that one justifiably have a high degree of confidence that one is right. Socrates remarks at one point that he is open to the possibility that he is mistaken, but asserts confidently that until arguments throwing over his established views become available, he will maintain his views with "iron and adamant" (*Gorgias* 508e). To serve the god, and to be driven by that service to submission to the *logos*, means that Socrates believes that he has an obligation to stand firm on beliefs that he has established with sustained reflection and critical inquiry.

Admonishments to "stand firm" are a commonplace in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures (see, e.g., Exodus 14:13; Psalm 40:2; Matthew 10:22; Luke 21:19; 1 Corinthians 16:13). This firmness of purpose is closely linked to effectiveness in maintaining and communicating the faith:

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel (Philippians 1:27, NIV)

Once reasoned discourse produces conviction and confident belief, it becomes an obligation to maintain that belief, and other beliefs and actions that flow from it, in the face of opposition. Humility demands that one always be open to the possibility that one needs to revise one's views in the face of reasonable counterevidence, but there is no reason to continually review the basics (see Hebrews 5:12-14).

Standing firm is critically important because to overturn a belief that has been established on the best available argument is to succumb to a temptation to take the easy way and abandon one's calling and obligation to serve God. This is not to recommend intransigent ignorance or resistance to the best argument, for the assumption is that "following the argument wherever it leads" requires prior consideration of the best reasons for any matter.

We have noted that some take the account of Abraham's willingness to leave Ur as evidence of "blind" faith. So he could be taken as someone who stands firm against the best argument, because he recognizes that reasoned reflection will not help him understand God's wishes for him. It is important to consider, however, that we do not know the grounds on which Abraham based his willingness to follow Yahweh to "a place I will show you." In concert with many clear examples of belief issuing from relevant evidence, it is reasonable to speculate that Abraham had some relationship with God before. It is quite possible, and quite reasonable, to

regard the heroism of Abraham’s faith to consist not in his readiness to follow the bizarre unspecified traveling plans and irrational rituals of an unknown deity, but in the obedient trust that he maintained in God in the face of ignorance about his future welfare or his deep love for Isaac. Abraham illustrates not so much a battle between faith and reason as a battle between the reasonable trust that Abraham had in God based on his prior experience and the reasons that he could adduce in favor of not trusting God: that he did not understand where God wanted him to go or for what purpose, that he saw good reasons (in both human terms and in the light of God’s prior promises) for refusing to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. His task therefore was to stand firm on previously established beliefs, and avoid displacing them despite the apparent extremity of his current circumstances.

### **Socrates and Christ, Athens and Jerusalem, Reason and Faith**

There are a number of Socratic principles that a Christian, and in particular a Christian academic, might take as regulative. “Never do wrong in response to wrong” (*Crito* 49c); “We cannot believe that God lies” (*Apology* 21b); “One must care for the soul above all else” (*Crito* 47d-48a). The fact that Socrates was a pagan who lived in ignorance of God’s revelation to the Jews and before the coming of God incarnate in Christ does not alter the fact that his philosophical pursuit of truth is exemplary for a Christian. The principles of vigorously and persistently following the argument wherever it leads, of cooperatively pursuing the truth, and of standing firm on well-established beliefs are reasonable obligations for the Christian scholar. The Christian should maintain confidence that inquiry such as that Socrates pursued will bring him closer to the one Who is truth itself (John 14:6).

One final observation about Socrates and the employment of Socratic principles in Christian reflection. In his discussion of the origins of the Oxford Socratic Club, C. S. Lewis noted that some who object to the notion of reasoned faith

may protest that intellectual discussion can neither build Christianity nor destroy it. They may feel that religion is too sacred to be thus bandied to and fro in public debate, too sacred to be talked of—almost, perhaps, too sacred for anything to be done with it at all. Clearly, the Christian members of the Socratic think differently. They know that intellectual assent is not faith, but they do not believe that religion is ‘only what a man does with his solitude.’ Or, if it is, then they care nothing for ‘religion’ and all for Christianity. Christianity. . . . tells of God descending into the coarse publicity of history and there enacting what can—and must—be talked about.” (“Founding,” 128)

In our day, scruples about the potential impiety of making Christian belief the topic of public debate are not the problem. Instead, the controversy is rooted in the conviction of some that Christian beliefs have no reasons, and cannot be defended by appeal to reasoned discourse. If it is true that Christian beliefs are, like all other beliefs, the product of evidence and reflection, then they are open to the sort of critical engagement proposed by the Gonzaga Socratic Club. That is what we intend to continue doing in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> *De praescriptione haereticorum* vii.



<sup>2</sup> I focus in this paper on the Christian debate about the value of rational inquiry, but it is worth noting that some critics of Christianity seek to discount Christian belief by driving a wedge between religious beliefs and truth claims. Perhaps the most prominent recent example of this approach is "Non-Overlapping Magisteria" or NOMA principle advocated by the late neo-Darwinist Stephen Jay Gould in his book *Rocks of Ages* (New York: Ballantine, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> The famous slogan of Tertullian is adapted from his comment that we should believe the truth of the incarnation because it is absurd. See *De carne Christi* v.

<sup>4</sup> Karl Rahner, Paul Imhof, Hubert Biallowons, *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews 1965-1982* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), see, e.g., 135.

<sup>5</sup> Socrates often speaks deferentially of the traditional Olympian pantheon (e.g., his acknowledgement of the authority of the Delphic Oracle at *Apology* 20e-21b), but in his direct comments on religious matters he tends to refer to divinity in the singular and also to claim that anthropomorphic beings of mixed moral character are not truly divine (*Apology* 31e; *Euthyphro* 6a).

<sup>6</sup> Plato, *Crito*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, in Plato, *Five Dialogues* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981).

<sup>7</sup> See the discussion of "misology" or hatred of reasoned argument in *Phaedo* 89d-91c.

<sup>8</sup> Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1974); Reeve's revision of Grube's translation (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992) renders the passage: "whatever direction the argument blows us, that's where we must go." In his short article on the origins of the Oxford Socratic Club, C. S. Lewis observes that "Socrates had exhorted men to 'follow the argument wherever it led them,'" but he does not cite the source of this remark ("The Founding of the Oxford Socratic Club," *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1970], 126). Further, a number of popular discussions of Socratic method make reference to a Socratic principle to "follow the argument wherever it leads." To the best of my knowledge, Socrates' comment in *Republic* 394d is the source for the Socratic aphorism. A similar statement of method is articulated by Socrates at *Euthyphro* 14a, though that principle is ambiguous about whether the inquirer must follow the argument or the interlocutor. Curiously, the exact phrase, "I have to follow where the argument leads," is found in the Platonic dialogues, but it is spoken not by Socrates but by the young Theaetetus in his conversation with the Eleatic Stranger (*Sophist* 224e, see "Plato, Cratylus, Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman," Perseus Digital Library, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0172:div1=Soph.:section=224e>; trans. from Harold N. Fowler, *Plato in Twelve Volumes* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd.).

<sup>9</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1977).

<sup>10</sup> Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* is often cited as the authoritative source of the view that reason and reflective thought are at war with faithful obedience, and indeed are temptations that potentially entice one away from faith. I have my doubts that Kierkegaard means to offer a contrast between rationalizing disobedience of God's command and a-rational obedience, but fuller defense of this claim will have to await another occasion.

<sup>11</sup> The Christian notion that the universe is ordered and intelligible played a critical role in the birth and development of modern natural science, according to John Polkinghorne.

<sup>12</sup> I ignore here the possibility that one's beliefs are hallucinations. In that case we will grant intelligible causal production of the beliefs, but that causal account will have nothing to do with the content of the beliefs themselves or references to really existing conditions.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis, "Founding," 128.

<sup>14</sup> The two most common metaphors for doing philosophy are dialogue, which Socrates champions, and meditation, which is most frequently associated with Descartes. While there are certain advantages to meditation, the weaknesses it faces as a strategy of inquiry—most notably, that its success depends upon the strengths of one person alone—raises serious questions about its likelihood of achieving the best possible results.

<sup>15</sup> In a variation of this metaphor, Clinias notes in Plato's *Laws* that we ought to seek to follow closely in the steps of the god (*Laws* 716b)