



Philosophy 101 by Socrates: An Introduction to Philosophy via Plato's Apology

Peter Kreeft

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After teaching philosophy for forty years, Peter Kreeft finds reading the *Apology of Socrates* to be the most effective way to help beginners "fall in love" with wisdom. In this volume, Kreeft uses three Socratic dialogues to introduce students to philosophy, especially Plato's *Apology*, which Kreeft calls the "Magna Carta of philosophy."

Philosophy 101 by Socrates: An Introduction to Philosophy via Plato's Apology Details

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Pierre says

Great introduction.

This book will show what Philosophy is -- friendship with wisdom...

I just wish more of the Apology was contained in, and a little more depth...

but then.. maybe that's just the point of the book.

Travis says

It seems unjust to give any of Peter Kreeft's books less than five stars, but this was certainly a good book. This isn't so much an introduction to philosophy as it is a commentary on the Apology, Euthyphro, and Phaedo, which are, in my opinion, as good an introduction to the discipline as any primary source can possibly be.

Al Datum says

What an extraordinary little book. Here, Kreeft is in full form as the philosophy professor from Boston College. He is speaking on a subject he holds most dear, the works of Plato. He uses Plato's Apology as a platform to introduce Philosophical thought to people just beginning to consider the discipline.

He uses all the lyrical style, all the Socratic dialog, all the profound insight that he ever does in any of his books. And especially in this one we get a true sense of the love and respect he has for Plato's works.

If you're considering philosophy as a discipline, or if reading something more weighty than the Sunday paper is of interest...if you are seeking a chance to ponder the questions of existence and purpose in life, this is a great book to start with.

Kreeft is a Christian, but also a leading philosopher. And anyone interested in dipping their toe in the water of philosophical thought owes it to himself to give him a moment's time. It'll be time well spent. I promise.

Zy Marquiez says

My introduction to Peter Kreeft's work took place via his magnum opus Socratic Logic – A Logic Text Using Socratic Method, Platonic Questions, And Aristotelian Principles Edition 3.1. With that book Kreeft set the bar extremely high for his own work given the phenomenal job he did in the creation of that book. Thankfully, that type of high quality standard travels with him to this other book.

Philosophy 101 By Socrates – An Introduction To Plato’s Apology by Peter Kreeft PhD is an indispensable introduction into the realm of Philosophy.

Although notably not as long as Kreeft’s book cited initially, this book still packs a punch. The author creates what one may call a ‘user-friendly’ guide to Philosophy.

Given its length, the book can be read rather quickly. Additionally, Philosophy 101 by Socrates is distilled to serve as a jump-off point for the reader/learner to venture forth into other philosophical topics. Not only is it possible to use this book as a portable classroom, but it can be useful for homeschooling and even college classrooms.

Arguably the main strength of the Kreeft thesis is that philosophy takes no prisoners. It questions everything. Like a curious kid asking why in their nascent stage, it seeks truth – not belief – within every crevice it dares to delve into. This may be problematic for individuals that do not want their beliefs questioned.

Kreeft shows how Socrates ‘philosophy’ operates in the following passage:

“Socrates is the apostle of reason. He demands that we give logical reasons, grounds for beliefs, and follow the logical consequences of our beliefs, taken as premises or hypotheses, to their logical conclusions through a number of logically compelling steps.”[1]

Such incisiveness will undoubtedly get to the core of the issue far more often than not if employed correctly.

And yet, as Kreeft implies, philosophy isn’t an antithesis to certain disciplines, such as religion. In fact, Kreeft goes to show how faith and reason can coexist if used trenchantly:

“One of the main functions of philosophy as practiced by Socrates is a critique of religion, finding reasons for (or against) faith. These reasons often claim only probability rather than certainty; and even when they claim certainty, they may be mistaken (for man is not God and infallible); but it is surely a gain to use binocular vision, reason and faith, and to make at least somewhat clearer and/or more reasonable the ideas most people find the most important in their lives.”[2]

As an introduction to philosophy and Socrates simultaneously, one would be hard-pressed to find a better book than this. In that Kreeft does an exceptional job in showing how Philosophy and Socrates interweave, especially given how Socrates planted many of the seeds for this whole discipline with his life’s work.

Using Plato’s *Apology* as a jump-off point, Kreeft undertakes the task to show the reader many of the ways philosophy can be understood by using forty different descriptions of the subject. It was particularly interesting seeing the range of descriptions that Kreeft was able to come up with – some of it which might shock the reader – and how he was able to seamlessly show how apt those descriptions were to the act of philosophizing.

Subsequent to that Kreeft gives readers a cursory analysis of parts of the *Euthyphro*, as well as *Phaedo*, which are both dialogues by Plato, the latter of which details Socrates’ last days. There are various purposes for the dialogues and the commentary that follows, and these merge swiftly with the overview of philosophy that Kreeft undertook.

One of the main strengths of this book is its ability to narrow complex topics into practical – but not overly simplified – gems of information that the reader can glean. By contrast, many other philosophy books tend to

overcomplicate philosophy, which turn readers off, or to oversimplify philosophy, which ends up not showcasing the latitude that philosophy can employ when used trenchantly.

This practical primer of philosophy also helps readers realize the importance of the art of cross-examination, which Socrates is the father of. Coupled with that, and more importantly, by its very precision cross-examination employs in philosophy, Kreeft helps readers gain an understanding of the thorough depth which philosophy will go to in search for truth. This journey in search for Wisdom will percolate into all disciplines, and can only strengthen an individual's repertoire.

Drawing on all the data above, the book should be an integral component in education. What the book offers is a template for what's possible by philosophy's employment, and not having these skills/knowledge in life emblematic of a surgeon at the operating room without a scalpel.

Sources & References:

- [1] Peter Kreeft Ph.D., *Philosophy 101 By Socrates – An Introduction To Plato's Apology*, p. 104.
- [2] Ibid., p. 141.

Mitch says

This is a simple primer that might whet your appetite for philosophy and help you grow in respect for Socrates (if all you really remember about him was that he died from drinking hemlock). You should read it unless you have a better means of accomplishing these things.

Judy says

Very easy to read.

Stuart says

Philosophy 101 by Socrates is one of the first book in Dr. Peter Kreeft's "Socrates Meets" series. It was originally published by Ignatius Press, but St. Augustine's Press has republished it. For those unfamiliar with this series of books, Dr. Kreeft assumes the role of Socrates and argues against philosophers such as Kant, Freud, etc. I would argue that Philosophy 101 by Socrates is a prequel to this series and should be read before reading the rest of the series, but to each their own. There are three introductions in this book - 1. Introduction to Socrates, 2. Introduction to Philosophy, and 3. Introduction to this Book. I already knew who Socrates was, but in this first introduction, I learned that there were three great introductions to philosophy, Hortensius by Cicero, Protreptikos by Aristotle, and the Apology of Socrates by Plato. Only the latter text survives, and it is the basis for Dr. Kreeft's book.

After the introduction, the book is divided into three parts - 1. Philosophy Defended (based on the *Apology of Socrates*), 2. Philosophy Exemplified (based on *Euthyphro*), and 3. Philosophy Martyred (based on *Phaedo*). In Part One, Dr. Kreeft discusses forty things that philosophy is, i.e., ignorant, selfish,

countercultural, agnostic, etc. One doesn't often describe philosophy in these words, but Dr. Kreeft uses the *Apology of Socrates* masterfully to argue his case. In *Philosophy Exemplified*, there is about 25 pages of the *Euthyphro* included, Dr. Kreeft provides commentary throughout the text, and then presents us with questions of God and morality. He concludes this part of the book with reactions of an atheist; theist; agnostic; and religious Jew, Christian, or Muslim would have toward *Euthyphro*. In the last section, we read *Phaedo*, where Socrates dies, Dr. Kreeft explains that even if Socrates was just a figment of Plato's imagination, philosophy does not die. This is different than if we were to find out if Moses, or Muhammad, or Jesus were fake. The respective religion (Judaism, Islam, or Christianity) would cease to be.

Overall, I found this to be an excellent introduction to philosophy. The advanced high schooler or freshman in college would benefit greatly from reading this. The curious adult, who was sorely disappointed with his *Philosophy 101* class, like myself, would benefit from reading this book as well. I truly believe if I had this book as a reference in college, I would have done better in my introductory class, and perhaps even minored in philosophy. I can't wait to pick up another one of the books in this series.

Christopher Goins says

One would come off with the idea that Socrates is the very "incarnation" of philosophy, in the same way that Jesus is the incarnation of Yahweh the living God, after reading this book. In fact, Kreeft draws many parallels between Socrates and Jesus. The book is light on history, and only mentioned when practical. Out of all the intro to philosophy books on my bookshelf -- "Philosophy: An Introduction Through Literature" (Kleiman & Lewis); "Philosophy: An Introduction" (Flew); An Introduction to Western Philosophy (Flew); *Philosophy for Dummies* (Morris); *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective* (Geisler & Feinberg); *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Craig & Moreland) -- this one is the most compact at 149 pages. Also, others tend to be very technical and even those that aren't tend to introduce various problems of philosophy over the millennia. This book doesn't do that. It introduces Socrates. The book itself, as Kreeft states, "is an act of philosophizing."

booklady says

This is an excellent companion to get acquainted or re-acquainted with Socrates, especially his *Apology*. It had been awhile since I had read any of the Greeks so I thought this would be a good time to have a teacher-in-a-pocket so to speak and the author, Peter Kreeft, was very accommodating in that role.

I started reading his book, then read the entire *Apology*, and returned to this. It would be even more helpful to read the other two Socratic dialogues, *Euthyphro* and *Phaedo*, which Kreeft draws from to flush out his basic lesson in Philosophy. Selections of each are offered in this text so it is not essential, but might prove enlightening.

The book is entitled **Philosophy 101 by Socrates**. I would add 'and Peter Kreeft' because Kreeft adds quite a bit to draw out what Socrates has left us. Very helpful supplement.

Ibtihal Mahmood says

This was a good read, but I was constantly annoyed by the heavy Christian undertones of the text. As it turns out, the author is a "Catholic apologist," which explains a lot.

Wil Roesel says

Peter Kreeft introduces Philosophy by introducing us to the father of philosophy, Socrates. He uses the *Apology of Socrates* to give 40 descriptions of philosophy. He shows the paradox of philosophy with such terms as foolish, simplistic and conformist. Throughout the book, Kreeft's Christian perspective comes through with comparisons of Socrates and Christ, which I think give the book a unique niche but I sure will offend some.

Laurie says

This is an excellent introduction to philosophy in general, and Socratic method in particular. Kreeft is ever readable and clear. Especially interesting to a Christian is the large number of significant parallels between Socrates and Jesus. A must-read for overall literacy, if you--like me--have never taken a Philosophy course. This makes me want to do further reading.

Jan Frederik Solem says

Peter Kreeft is a brilliant teacher - always crystal clear and witty. An excellent introduction to philosophy via Socrates. I enjoyed this book!

sch says

Potential textbook for dialectic course.

Finished. Won't do for my students, at least not in this class, but it was very good for their teacher. The first and longest chapter is charming and convincing. A few of the connections Kreeft draws between Socrates and the Lord Jesus are strained, but overall the comparison is sound. The final chapter on *Phaedo* is the least developed and least satisfying. I am persuaded not to try to teach the *Apology* apart from *Euthyphro*.

Nick says

I am on page 67 and it is mostly about the explanation of philosophy and what philosophy is. It is a philosophical meaning in its own. But the definition of philosophy in Socrates words is simply the love of wisdom.

