The Civic Knowledge Project: Winning Words: Thinking, Speaking, and Acting Philosophically

(July 2012)

Mission:

As public education in the United States grows too reliant on rote learning, narrow subject areas, and assessment by standardized testing, young Chicago students face a dearth of classroom opportunities for considered self-expression, reasonable conversation, collaborative inquiry, and reflective self-examination.  The Civic Knowledge Project’s Winning Words philosophy afterschool program aims to counter this tendency by introducing younger students on Chicago’s South Side to the rich resources of philosophy, the humanities, and the verbal arts.  Philosophical dialogue, particularly the “Socratic method” in its various forms, is one of the premier verbal arts and a core part of “the examined life,” and it is featured in this program, along with other classical disciplines of the humanities, such as the arts of rhetoric, oratory, poetry, and dramatic reenactment.

Course Goals:

Students will engage with philosophy by learning its historical significance, analyzing philosophical texts, and practicing philosophy themselves.  Through group discussion, individual reflection, writing, and formal dialogue, students will discover and carefully consider a number of life’s important questions—for example, “What is happiness?”, “What is justice?”and “What is the ‘examined life’?”.  After the first quarter, in which the readings and discussions focus mainly on the Socratic method as presented in Plato’s early dialogues, the Winning Words teams become more self-directive and imaginative, freely exploring philosophical ideas from many different sources and epochs, though the philosophy of John Dewey, a crucial figure in the early years of the University of Chicago, is also emphasized.  Dewey’s philosophy of education, of learning by doing, has shaped many generations of educators and has influenced both the form and the content of Winning Words.  Our aim is to create an atmosphere of reasonableness and creativity, of critical but civil and cooperative inquiry, enabling younger students to wonder and search together, with guidance from their Winning Words coaches, but with a flexible set of lesson plans that will enable them to pursue the conversation wherever it leads. Philosophical conversation and reflection of this nature are, according to Dewey, a vital component of active citizenship in a democratic culture.

The first eight to ten weeks of Winning Words will culminate in a student production and performance of an original philosophical dialogue, grounded on one or more fundamental Socratic questions, such as “What is justice?” These philosophical presentations will demonstrate a basic grasp of the Socratic method, drawing on the knowledge of Socrates that the students have gained from class readings and discussions.  Dialogue and philosophical conversation can provide a much richer introduction to the verbal arts than a standard “debate” format, in part by encouraging students to appreciate the many uses of argument, the many forms of persuasive speech, the importance of the creative, questioning imagination, and the importance of cooperation and collaboration in serious philosophical inquiry.  The Socratic method will also be considered in light of Aristotle’s views on philosophy, poetry, and rhetoric and the positive, as well as negative, role rhetoric can play in the public sphere.

Preliminary Checklist

Important information for all new Winning Words coaches!

1. Visit the Civic Knowledge Project website at <http://civicknowledge.uchicago.edu/> to learn more about the CKP’s mission and programs.

2. Join the Winning Words listserv and visit the Winning Words blog at this site to access important documents and exchange ideas with other CKP instructors.  You can also visit the CKP Forum, at http://civicknowledge.forumotion.com/

3. Read the detailed administrative checklist by Bart Schultz (the Director of the Civic Knowledge Project), which is provided at the bottom of this page and also contained in your coach planner (available in the CKP office, Edelstone 133).  Be sure to read and review all of the material in your planner!  This will provide you with the crucial core material for understanding the form and content of your Winning Words sessions. See the Outline below for more information on this.

4. Become a fan of Winning Words on Facebook, and tell all of your friends to do the same: <http://www.facebook.com/CKPWW>

6. Please be sure to introduce yourself to the Principal, extended day Administrator, and participating teachers at your Winning Words school.  Provide them with all of your contact information, and try to develop a positive relationship them, staying in contact throughout the duration of the program.  You should request all necessary information about the school’s calendar, possible schedule conflicts, etc.  And you should try to get the parents of your students involved as well, encouraging them to join us for UChicago campus visits, the various performances of the Socratic dialogues, and other events.

7. Please be sure to keep both CKP Director Schultz and Winning Words Coordinator Shayan Karbassi informed of all important developments in your Winning Words program.  Contact e-mails are: [rschultz@uchicago.edu](mailto:rschultz@uchicago.edu) , and [shayan.karbassi@gmail.com](mailto:shayan.karbassi@gmail.com)

8. Please be sure to keep a journal or diary of your work with Winning Words, keeping a record of what worked well and what did not.  Please complete a report of 3-4 pages at the end of each academic quarter that summarizes the content of your journal or diary, providing helpful feedback about the program.  And please do encourage feedback from your students, devising an evaluation form that you believe will give them the opportunity to provide the most helpful possible feedback on their Winning Words experience.

Outline of Autumn Quarter materials and lesson plans:

Each and every Winning Words coach should have a copy of 1. The Trial and Death of Socrates: Four Dialogues, Plato, trans. B. Jowett (free hard copy from CKP); 2. The Republic, Plato, trans. B. Jowett (free download here <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html> ); 3. Aristotle’s Rhetoric, trans. R. Rhys (free hard copy from CKP, free download here [http://books.google.com/books?id=r\_6bkR\_WpdQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=aristotle%27s+rhetoric&hl=en&sa=X&ei=PmH4T-OuL8\_gqAGcr-WLCQ&ved=0CDYQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=aristotle%27s%20rhetoric&f=false](https://xmail.uchicago.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=3be50769e62a4eba9dc1c7b9675d9220&URL=http%3a%2f%2fbooks.google.com%2fbooks%3fid%3dr_6bkR_WpdQC%26printsec%3dfrontcover%26dq%3daristotle%2527s%2brhetoric%26hl%3den%26sa%3dX%26ei%3dPmH4T-OuL8_gqAGcr-WLCQ%26ved%3d0CDYQ6AEwAA%23v%3donepage%26q%3daristotle%2527s%2520rhetoric%26f%3dfalse) ) ; 4. Sidgwick’s Outlines of the History of Ethics (free download here: [http://books.google.com/books/about/Outlines\_of\_the\_history\_of\_ethics\_for\_En.html?id=qvEzKIh3\_VkC](https://xmail.uchicago.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=3be50769e62a4eba9dc1c7b9675d9220&URL=http%3a%2f%2fbooks.google.com%2fbooks%2fabout%2fOutlines_of_the_history_of_ethics_for_En.html%3fid%3dqvEzKIh3_VkC) Coach planners will also include the following: Danielle Allen, “Rhetoric: A Good Thing” ;  ”Prometheus” by Lucian; Gregory Vlastos, “The Socratic Elenchus: Method is All”; Richard Kraut, “The Examined Life”; Martha Nussbaum, “Socratic Self-Examination” ; Paul Woodruff, “Plato’s Shorter Ethical Works” (free download here [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-ethics-shorter/](https://xmail.uchicago.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=3be50769e62a4eba9dc1c7b9675d9220&URL=http%3a%2f%2fplato.stanford.edu%2fentries%2fplato-ethics-shorter%2f) ) ; and M. Lipman et al, “Teaching Methodology: Value Considerations and Standards of Practice” ( this work refers to a different curriculum but contains helpful guidelines for fostering philosophical conversation in the classroom).  Also, as a general, free resource, please use the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, which is where the Woodruff article was published.  And to learn more about the exciting growth of the pre-collegiate philosophy movement, of which Winning Words is a part, please visit the websites for the Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization, at <http://plato-apa.org/> , and the Squire Family Foundation, at <http://squirefoundation.org/> .  Also, copies of John Dewey, Moral Principles in Education, are available at the CKP office.

The core themes weaving through these works will include: the meaning of ‘philosophy’, the Socratic method (or elenchus v. eristic), the good life as the examined or philosophical life, the good life as the happy life (one’s best self-interest), the nature of virtue, and the nature of rhetoric and persuasion.

Outline of a series of lesson plans/topics for Winning Words autumn quarter

Session 1: Meet Winning Words, a program in philosophy.  After student introductions, ice breakers, etc., you should ask students what philosophy means to them, whether they think of it as ‘love of wisdom’ or as something else.  Talk about how Winning Words got its name—from the character of Odysseus, as presented in Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey.  Odysseus was a different type of hero—a word hero, known for his powers of persuasion and craftiness.  Tell the story of Odysseus and the Cyclops, and compare him to Hercules and Achilles.  Ask students what a hero is, and whether a philosopher could be one.

Session 2: More on gods, heroes, and word heroes.  Odysseus was a favorite of Athena, the goddess of wisdom and the patron god of Athens.  Review the Greek gods, the difference between a god and a hero.  Discuss story of Prometheus, the titan who created humans and gave them fire.  Use select passages from Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound, and Lucian, Prometheus, to spark group discussion.  Compare Odysseus, Athena, and Prometheus.  Invite discussion of fame and whether it is really a good thing.  What would they, the students, want to be famous for?

Session 3: Introducing Socrates, his life, his strangeness, and his method.  Socrates was a new type of word hero, one who, at least as he figures in Plato’s early Socratic dialogues, deployed elenchus, rather than eristic, philosophy rather than sophistry.  Define those terms, to be illustrated in upcoming sessions, and invite students to perform “The Gods Judge Socrates.”  See if they might be interested in adapting this skit or coming up with one of their own, featuring Socrates and the Socratic method.

Session 4: Socrates and Euthyphro.  Explain the basic argument and have the students perform select parts of the exchange between Euthryphro and Socrates.  Introduce the “Euthyphro problem” and invited discussion of how the Socratic method is illustrated by this dialogue.

Session 5: Socrates and Meletus.  Explain in more detail the trial of Socrates, the charges against him and the nature of his accusers.  Have students perform the exchange between Socrates and Meletus, and invite discussion of whether Socrates was treated fairly by the jury.  Address how the Apology is mostly not illustrative of the Socratic method, except in the exchange with Meletus.  What is the difference between giving a speech and engaging in a Socratic conversation?  Read and discuss the famous line “the unexamined life is not worth living”—ask students why Socrates would say that.  Discuss the question of whether Socrates was a hero and what he thought of fame.

Session 6: Socrates and Thrasymachus.  Use Bk 1 of Plato’s Republic to further illustrate the Socratic method and raise the question “what is justice?”  Have students play the parts of Socrates, Cephalus, and Thrasymachus, initiating the discussion of whether justice could be more than the “advantage of the stronger.”

Session 7: Plato’s Socrates.  Talk about Plato’s life and how later books of the Republic present views that were probably not held by the historical Socrates.  Read and discuss the story of the Ring of Gyges, asking students what they would do.  Try to clarify the challenge being put to the “Socrates” character—to show that the just life really is in one’s own best interest, well-understood.  Invite discussion of justice as a virtue—what character types reflect such a virtue?  Do the good life, the just life, the examined life, the happy life, and the life of realizing one’s self interest all amount to the same thing?  Use Aristotle’s poem about Plato:

Coming to the fair land of Cecropia

He piously founded an altar of holy friendship

For a man whom the wicked may not properly even praise;

He, alone or the first of mortals, showed clearly

By his own life and by the courses of his arguments

That a man becomes good and happy at the same time:

But now none can grasp this any more.

Session 8: Continue discussion of Plato’s Socrates, reading and illustrating—or getting the students to illustrate—the Allegory of the Cave.  What is the point of this Allegory, and why is it not a case of the Socratic elenchus?  Is there a difference between appearance and reality?

Session 9:  Introduce the life of Aristotle more fully—follower of Plato, tutor to Alexander the Great etc.  Review some of the previous themes by drawing on Bk 1 of the Rhetoric, the sections presenting Aristotle’s theories of happiness, the good life, health, honor, good luck.  Challenge the students to consider how Socrates might question Aristotle on these matters.

Also recommended:

Brickhouse, T.C., and Smith, N. Plato’s Socrates.

Plato, Republic. Trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve.

Shorris, Earl. Riches for the Poor: The Clemente Course in the Humanities.

Isaacs, William. “A Conversation with a Center, Not Sides.” Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together.

Lipman, M., Thinking in Education.

Taylor, C. C. W. Socrates: A Very Short Introduction.

Vlastos, Gregory. Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher.

A PRELIMINARY PRIMER ON SOCRATIC METHOD

Our curriculum is based in part on a certain interpretive perspective on Socrates and the Socratic method (elenchus).

1. “Socratic elenchus is a search for moral truth by question-and-answer adversary argument in which a thesis is debated only if asserted as the answerer’s own belief and is regarded as refuted only if its negation is deduced from his own beliefs.. . . First and foremost elenchus is search. The adversary procedure which is suggested (but not entailed) by the Greek word (which may be used to mean ‘refutation,’ but may also be used to mean‘testing’ or, still more broadly, ‘censure,’ ‘reproach’) is not an end in itself. If it were, Socrates’ dialectic as depicted in Plato’s earlier dialogues would be a form of eristic, which it is not, because its object is always that positive outreach for truth which is expressed by words for searching …inquiring … investigating … This is what philosophy is for Socrates.” (Vlastos, “The Socratic Elenchus: Method is All,” p. 4).

2. “Thus elenchus has a double objective: to discover how every human being ought to live and to test that single human being, who is doing the answering—to find out if he is living as one ought to live. This is a two-in-one operation. Socrates does not provide for two types of elenchus—a philosophical one, searching for turth about the good life, and a therapeutic one, searching out the answerer’s own in the hope of bringing him to the truth. There is one elenchus and it must do both jobs, though one or the other will be to the fore in different phases of it. From this point of view, too, the ‘say what you believe’ requirement makes sense. How could Socrates hope to get you to give, sooner or later, an account of your life, if he did not require you to state your personal opinion on the questions under debate?” (Vlastos,“The Socratic Elenchus: Method is All,” p. 10)

3. “Socrates walks up to a leading politician—a person who ‘seems knowing and clever to many people, and especially to himself.’ He engages him in questioning about his alleged expertise, asking him no doubt, as Socrates does so often, for a coherent, contradiction-free account of some central legal and political concepts, concepts such as equality, justice, and law. The expert proves unable to answer Socrates’ questions in a satisfactory way. Socrates professes surprise. He goes away, concluding that he is after all a little more knowing than this expert, since he at least knows how difficult the concepts are, and how much his own understanding of them stands in need of further clarification, whereas the expert lacks not only an adequate understanding of the concepts but also knowledge of his own inadequacy. Socrates concludes that he is a very useful figure for democratic government to have around—like a stinging gadfly on the back of a noble but sluggish horse…. Socrates said that the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being. In other words, this life of questioning is not just somewhat useful, it is an indispensable part of a worthwhile life for any person and any citizen.” (Martha Nussbaum, Cultivating Humanity, pp. 20-21).

**AN ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKLIST FOR THE CIVIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT-WINNING WORDS COACHES**

**BART SCHULTZ, DIRECTOR OF THE CIVIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT**

**1. PLEASE REMEMBER THAT YOU MUST GET SIGNED RELEASE FORMS FROM ALL OF THE STUDENTS WHOM YOU ARE COACHING.  YOU SHOULD COLLECT THESE FROM YOUR STUDENTS AND DELIVER THEM TO THE CKP OFFICE (EDELSTONE 133) IN A SEALED ENVELOPE ADDRESSED TO ME.  PLEASE CHECK WITH YOUR SCHOOL ABOUT WHICH FORM THEY USE AND PREFER.**

**2. PLEASE REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE REPRESENTING THE CKP AND THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO.  YOU SHOULD STRIVE TO DEVELOP POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE SCHOOLS AT WHICH YOU ARE WORKING, WHICH MEANS a. INTRODUCING YOURSELVES TO THE PRINCIPAL AND AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR, MAKING SURE THAT THEY HAVE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION AND MINE, AND b. WORKING TO DEVELOP MORE CONTACTS WITH TEACHERS AND PARENTS WHO MIGHT HELP WITH THE PROGRAM.  PLEASE ENCOURAGE ANY INTERESTED ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, OR PARENTS TO FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME DIRECTLY AT RSCHULTZ@UCHICAGO.EDU IF THEY HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS.**

**3. PLEASE BE PROACTIVE ABOUT GETTING THE SCHOOL’S CALENDAR AND FINDING OUT WHEN THERE WILL BE NO AFTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES BECAUSE OF HOLIDAYS, TEACHER CONFERENCES, ETC.  THESE SHOULD BE READILY AVAILABLE FROM THE MAIN OFFICE.**

**4. PLEASE BE SURE TO KEEP THE SCHOOL INFORMED OF YOUR SCHEDULES AS WELL; THEY SHOULD NEVER BE PUT IN THE POSITION OF EXPECTING YOU ON A DAY WHEN YOU WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE.**

**5. PLEASE TAKE EVERY PRECAUTION WHEN TRANSPORTING STUDENTS FOR PURPOSES OF TOURNAMENTS, FIELD TRIPS, THEATRICAL PRESENTATIONS ETC.  EACH SCHOOL SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST ONE RESPONSIBLE ADULT AVAILABLE TO HELP SUPERVISE THE STUDENTS DURING SUCH ACTIVITIES.  THIS MEANS HELPING THE STUDENTS WHEN THEY MEET TO GET ON THE BUS, TRAVELING WITH THEM TO THE EVENT, AND HELPING THEM GET BACK ON THE BUS AND RETURN HOME SAFELY.  ALL PARTICIPATING STUDENTS WILL NEED TO HAVE A RELEASE FORM ON FILE!**

**6. PLEASE BE PROACTIVE ABOUT SHARING IMPORTANT INFORMATION WITH YOUR FELLOW WINNING WORDS COACHES.  THE WEBSITE, FORUM, AND BLOG ARE THERE TO BE USED!**

**AND REMEMBER:**

**7. Please visit the Civic Knowledge Project website at** [**http://civicknowledge.uchicago.edu/**](http://civicknowledge.uchicago.edu/) **to learn more about the CKP’s mission and programs.  And please join the Winning Words listserv and visit the Winning Words blog regularly (this site) to access important documents and exchange ideas with other CKP instructors.  You can also visit the CKP Forum, at http://civicknowledge.forumotion.com/  , and become a fan of Winning Words on Facebook, telling all of your friends to do the same:** [**http://www.facebook.com/CKPWW**](http://www.facebook.com/CKPWW)

**8. Be sure to read and review all of the material in your planner!  This will provide you with the crucial core material for understanding the form and content of your Winning Words sessions. See the Outline for more information on this.**

**9. Please be sure to keep both CKP Director Schultz and Winning Words Coordinator Shayan Karbassi informed of all important developments in your Winning Words program.  Contact e-mails are:** [**rschultz@uchicago.edu**](mailto:rschultz@uchicago.edu) **, and** [**shayan.karbassi@gmail.com**](mailto:shayan.karbassi@gmail.com) **It is possible that, on some occasions, philosophical discussion with students might suggest troubling personal issues. Should you become concerned with the health or well-being of a student, please contact Director Schultz and the following immediately:**

**1. On-Site Guidance Counselor. Many of the after school locations will have a psychologist on staff.  This trained professional would be the one of the best resources to consult. 2. The participating Principal, administrator, or teacher at your site.**

**10. Please be sure to keep a journal or diary of your work with Winning Words, keeping a record of what worked well and what did not.  Please complete a report of 3-4 pages at the end of each academic quarter that summarizes the content of your journal or diary, providing helpful feedback about the program.  And please do encourage feedback from your students, devising an evaluation form that you believe will give them the opportunity to provide the most helpful possible feedback on their Winning Words experience.**

**11. MOST IMPORTANTLY OF ALL, PLEASE REMEMBER THAT WORKING WITH THESE STUDENTS IS A BIG RESPONSIBILITY.  OUR AIM IS TO PROVIDE THEM WITH AN INSPIRING AND ENGAGING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE THAT WILL HELP EMPOWER THEM AS THEY WORK TO OVERCOME THE DISADVANTAGES FACING THEIR SCHOOLS.  YOU SHOULD DO EVERYTHING YOU CAN TO LEARN THEIR NAMES AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE AND SEEK FEEDBACK FROM THEM ABOUT HOW TO MAKE THE PROGRAM MORE EFFECTIVE.  OUR BEST RECRUITMENT TOOL IS SIMPLY THE POSITIVE EXPERIENCE THAT THE STUDENTS HAVE IN THE PROGRAM.**

**And Example of a Winning Words production:**

THE GODS Judge SOCRATES

University of Chicago Laboratory School

***Narrator:*** Mt Olympus, 399 BC.  The king of the gods, Zeus, has called the other Olympian gods together for a Council Meeting.  Assembled with Zeus, the Lord of the Skies and the Thunderbolt, are 1. Athena, goddess of wisdom, strategy, and heroism, and patron goddess of Athens, 2. Apollo, the god of music, healing, plague, prophecies, poetry, and archery, whose oracle is at Delphi, 3. Ares, the god of war, bloodlust, violence, manly courage, and civil order, 4. Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, whose gift of Helen to Paris of Troy caused the Trojan War, 5. Poseidon, Ruler of the Seas, the Earthshaker, 6. Hermes, the messenger of the gods, and 7. Hera, Zeus’s wife, the Queen of the gods and protector of hearth and family.  The other gods and goddesses had schedule conflicts.

**Zeus**: It has come to my attention that there are some strange things going on in your city Athena.  Who is this man Socrates, and why is he being put on trial?

**Athena**: Dread Majesty, son of Cronos, this man, Socrates, is very strange.  His followers call him a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, because he devotes his life to seeking the truth about how mortals can best live their lives.  Although his followers love him, he has annoyed many important people by questioning them about such things as virtue, piety, courage, justice, love, and friendship.  His enemies have charged him with impiety and corrupting young people.

**Zeus**: Impiety?!  We gods cannot stand for that!  Is this true?

**Apollo**: Lord Zeus, a word of explanation here.  A friend of this man Socrates visited my oracle at Delphi.  He asked the oracle whether anyone was wiser than Socrates, and the oracle told him that no one was.  But when this was reported to Socrates, he was puzzled; he never claimed to have any special expertise at all.  So, he went looking for someone wiser than himself.

**Zeus**: Hence the questioning?

**Athena and Apollo**: Right!

**Zeus**: Ares, Aphrodite, what do you make of this Socrates?

**Ares**: I like this troublemaker!  He is stirring up conflict, violence, bloodlust (at least for his own blood).  Who knows?  Maybe these mortals will start going to war over this philosophy thing!  We had better alert Hades about this!

**Aphrodite**: Hold on Ares.  I am not sure that I trust this man at all.  Why, he seems to think that physical beauty is just not that important!  He claims that the beauty of mortals lies within them, whatever that means.  Whoever heard of a beautiful liver?  And anyway, this Socrates only loves ideas!  Ares, if the mortals had followed him, we would not have had the Trojan War!

**Ares**: Terrible man!  Still, my manly courage side has to admire him—did you hear what he just told the Athenian jury?  They found him guilty and asked him what a fit punishment would be.  And he told them that he should be treated to free meals at City Hall, just like the athletes who return victorious from the Olympic games!

**Athena**: That sounds VERY ARROGANT!  My poor City has to put up with that?  I am not sure that I understand this mortal’s so-called wisdom!

**Zeus**: That gives me an idea, dear daughter.  Let us summon one of your favorite mortals of all, Odysseus, the great hero of the Trojan War, whose soul now dwells on the Isles of the Blessed.  He was always the cleverest of mortals, a man of Winning Words.  Let us hear his verdict on this Socrates, and on whether we gods need worry about these new philosophical developments.

Odysseus is summoned, and Zeus provides him with a backgrounder on the situation.  Odysseus is then invited to address the assembled gods and goddesses on the subject of Socrates.

**Odysseus**: Great gods, again you favor me.  My great protector, Athena, my wisdom is nothing compared to the wisdom of the gods.  How can I serve you?  How can my mortal experience, nothing to the gods, shed any light on this case?

**Athena**: Well, you can see why he has always been my favorite.

**Zeus**: Odysseus, favorite of the gods, that is what we want of you—the perspective of a mere mortal.

**Odysseus**: Zeus, Lord of the Skies, I will speak.  I believe that this man Socrates is pious, and if he is condemned, I hope his soul will join me on the Isles of the Blessed.

**All the gods**: Whaaaaat?  Is he that good?

**Odysseus**: Peace, Immortal Ones.  I mean no offense.  I only affirm what I just said—the wisdom of mortals counts for little.  Surely you agree?

**All the gods**:  OBVIOUSLY!

**Odysseus**: And surely the piety you so rightly demand of mortals requires that we recognize how limited our wisdom is?

**All the gods**: Yes, of course.

**Odysseus**: Then Socrates must be a very pious man, for he claims that he knows nothing, and that the wisdom of mortals counts for little.

**Zeus**: Athena, daughter dearest, why would your City condemn Socrates for such noble thoughts?

**Athena**: Father, I will see that they come to regret it!

**Ares**: Hooray!  Would you like to help with a few more wars?

**Odysseus**: Thank you, Immortal Ones, I trust the will of the gods will carry me back to the Isles of the Blessed, where I shall await the arrival of this strange man Socrates.  I have some questions to ask him!

**Zeus**: I bow my head to that.  This has made me very thirsty—someone get me something to drink!  Apollo, get me some nectar!

**Apollo**: But you quit drinking nectar.

**Zeus**:  Well, get me something else to drink!

**Apollo**:  Lemonade, Lord Zeus?

**Zeus**:  Lemonade?!  No, water!

**Poseidon**: Here Sire, have some water—I have plenty.

**Zeus**: (tales a sip)  Pleeeeeck!  That tastes terrible!  You gave me sea water!

**Poseidon**: Of course Sir, I am the Lord of the Sea.  You can develop a taste for it.

**Zeus**: I just want that taste out of my mouth!  Give me some food!

**Poseidon**: Food Sire?  Here, try this fresh sea….

**Zeus**: Not you, where’s Hera?

**Hera**: What would you like Dread Majesty?

**Zeus**: Ambrosia!

**Hera**: We only have the fat free kind.  Remember your New Year’s Resolution?

**Hermes**: Perhaps I can help Lord Zeus!  Would you like some tasty snakes?  I always have some with me!  I could even cook them up for you, with Hephaestus’ help.

**Hephaestus**: That sounds more like a job for Hades.

**Socrates**: By the dog!  Perhaps I can help you, Lord Zeus.

**Zeus**: Who are you?!  And no dogs, or mortals, are allowed on Mt. Olympus without special permission.  We do not even let Hades bring Cerberus along.

**Socrates**: I am the soul of Socrates, the philosopher condemned to death by Athens.  I was on my way to the Isles of the Blessed when I ran into the great hero Odysseus, who told me how to get here.  I could not resist the opportunity to learn from gods, since you are surely much wiser than I am.  And I happen to have with me a doggy bag from my last feast—I only like very plain and simple food, and not much of it.  I used to say that whereas my fellow citizens lived to eat, I ate to live.

**Zeus**:  Doggy bag?  Are you offering the King of the Gods some kind of dog chow?  That does not sound very wise to me!

**Hera**: No, Dear, I think the weird mortal means he has some of that mortal food that is always being tossed into the sacrificial fires for us.

**Hermes**: Lord Zeus, do you want the snakes or not?

**Zeus**: Not, though I might regret this choice after tasting this Socratic bag lunch.  What is this?

**Socrates**: A roast beef sandwich and individual serving of red wine.  Odysseus thought you would like it.

**Zeus**: Hera, can eat this?  I do not want to end up with a bellyache like my father Cronus.

**Hera**: Remember, Dear, your father’s digestive problems were rather special, the result of eating his children, plus a large rock.

**Zeus**:  Well, here goes.  You there, the soul of the mortal Socrates, entertain me while I dine.  Do you know any good jokes?

**Socrates**: No, but people used to take pleasure in my questioning important individuals claiming to be wise.  Here, let me show you my method.  Aphrodite, you are the goddess of beauty.  Surely you can tell us what beauty really is …

***Narrator***: And so the Gods and Socrates spent their remaining days discussing the meanings of important life concepts like beauty, justice and wisdom. Mount Olympus was finally calm—the temperaments of the strong-willed Gods were finally peaceful.