

## Exploration #2 — Essay: “The Apology of [You]”

*“Perhaps then someone might say, ‘Aren’t you ashamed, Socrates, that you engaged in the kind of practice that now places you at risk of dying?’ In reply to this I would justly say, ‘You do not speak well, Sir, if you think a man who is worth anything should take the risk of living or dying into account, rather than looking only to this: whether when he acts he acts justly or unjustly, and does the deeds of a good man or a bad one.’”*

— Socrates, *Apology* (28a)

### *Assignment*

Your task for this “Exploration” is to compose your own miniature version of Plato’s *Apology of Socrates* – “The Apology of [You]”. Specifically, I’d like you to **write a defence speech, where you defend one of your life decisions against the charges of some imagined accusers**. It is up to you to determine which of your life decisions you wish to defend, what the charges against it should be, and how to defend your life decision against this charge.

For your “life decision”, **pick a particular choice you have made about how to live your life that (a) you value and think is right, but that (b) others think is wrong and not valuable**. (Maybe you’re pursuing a major that your family doesn’t agree with; or perhaps you’re dating someone that your friends don’t approve of; or maybe you have a hobby or obsession that most other people just don’t “get”.) The key here is to select an actual choice you have made about something of importance to you, which people you care about disagree with. (“People you care about” being either family, friends, or your community more broadly.)

### *Requirements & Structure*

Your defence speech should include the following three sections (providing it with an “I say – They say – I say in response” format):

- (1) **An explanation of your life decision:** Begin by summarizing your life decision. Explain the context in which you made the decision, why the choice is of importance to you, and why you think it was right. Also include an indication of who your “accusers” are and why you are moved to justify your life decision to them. This section should be **at least 100 words**.
- (2) **A presentation of the charges against your life decision:** Summarize your accusers’ best reasons for why your life decision is wrong. Be sure to be generous and charitable in your presentation of their opinions, giving the best and most plausible version of the charges against you. Further, opt for depth rather than breadth: focus on and develop just one or two reasons, rather than listing out several. This section should be **at least 200 words**.

(3) **A defence of your life decision against these charges:** Lastly, respond to your accusers' charges and explain why, despite what they've said, you nevertheless stand by your life decision. Refute your accusers' criticisms as best you can, making it absolutely clear where you think their reasoning goes wrong. Conclude by explaining how your life decision is grounded in solid values and a commitment to consistent thinking, thereby demonstrating how it reflects a "way of life". This section should be **at least 200 words**.

Your defence should be written in paragraph form, with each of the above sections occupying its own paragraph.

Write your defence speech in the style of Plato's *Apology*, as if you have been brought to trial for your life decision and must now defend it before a jury of your peers. Though it will not affect your grade, I encourage you to get into the fictional aspect of this assignment and flex your creative muscles here!