

THE UNJUST EXECUTION OF SOCRATES

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In the vortex of life, many evils have transpired. Vices such as plagues, unforeseen deaths, and corruptness. Among the tragic acts of malefic proportion was the death of the Greek philosopher, Socrates. He tried to prove and invalidate many theories through reasoning, and he was murdered for his beliefs. His execution was not justified because the charges that were brought against him were false and unfounded.

The first crime that Socrates was charged with was that of impiety. This charge was invented primarily to discredit him and make him unpopular with the citizens. The charge was that of not acknowledging the same gods that the state believed in. Throughout the book, Socrates refers numerous times to the fact that it is because of the gods that things are as they seem to be. "Do you suggest that I do not believe that the sun and moon are gods, as is the general belief of all of mankind?" (57). The fact that Socrates did not publicly speak about the gods attributed to the fact that the charge was heresy. Socrates maintains that he is not like other philosophers. He is a free-thinker, and his beliefs are those of private and intimate thoughts of Gods. Socrates also states that he is not a teacher, however he was not at all happy with the analogy, but took it as a compliment and used it in his defense. He used these accusations to his advantage by saying that he never charged

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charged anyone for believing or listening to them. The combination of these arguments should have cleared Socrates

of the charge of heresy.

The second charge brought against Socrates was that of corrupting minors. Socrates battled this charge through the use of the same arguments. The argument that he did not consider himself a teacher, the fact that he never accepted any money for talking or listening to people, and the fact that he believes in gods are what Socrates used to defend himself. By confronting the accusation that he was corrupting the minors, Socrates tried to clear himself by manipulating his arguments so that Meletus, Anytus, and Lycon (the men who brought both charges against Socrates) had to answer questions about these charges. When the questions of Socrates were placed before Meletus, his answers seemed to have proven that Socrates was innocent. However, when the verdict was announced, it demonstrated the opposite.

Upon hearing the verdict, GUILTY, it was plain to see that the Greek assembly was like every other political assembly, corrupt.

"I should never have believed that it would be such a close thing; but now it seems to me that if a mere thirty votes had gone the other way, I would have been acquitted. Even as it is, I feel that so far Meletus' part is concerned I have been acquitted; and not only that, but anyone can see that if Anytus and Lycon had not come forward to accuse me, Meletus would have actually lost a thousand drachmae for not having obtained one-fifth of the votes" (69).

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People in today's society need not look any further than their own governments (especially in the United States) to see how ancient were governments really immoral.

Once the verdict of guilty had been announced, Meletus demanded the death penalty. Socrates could have easily

persuaded the assembly that it was too harsh and taken a lesser sentence, but Socrates took the sentence of the death penalty in stride. Unlike all other executions, Socrates could not be penalized immediately due to a religious ceremony during which it is forbidden to carry out executions. Socrates' execution would not take place immediately because the ceremony ended upon the return of a ship to a distant island. He was incarcerated, and was entitled to have visitors. He permitted many of his friends to see him, and even though Socrates was urged many times to try to escape (because it could be arranged) he would not attempt it. When confronted as to why he would not do as his friends advised, he replied that it would be breaking laws and his code of ethics. Crito had this to say, "And will no one comment on the fact that an old man of your age, probably with only a short time to live, should dare to cling so greedily to life, at the price of violating the most stringent laws?" (95). At the conclusion of this, Socrates said that if he compromised his beliefs, then he would be compromising his soul. Upon that, Crito did not discuss the

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over that issue anymore. Then came the day when the boat arrived. All of Socrates' friends gathered to be with him one last time. After a long discussion, Socrates took the poison that was to end his life before it was mandatory for him to do so. His reasoning was that the inevitable can not be put off. Minutes later Socrates died, and the punishment had been carried out.

If it was not for the fact that a corrupt government existed as well as those who wish harm upon others, many of the travesties, such as the death of Socrates, could have been avoided. It is only now that people can reflect back upon what Socrates thought and admire him for the true philosopher that he was.

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