

SOCRATES The Trial

by Sanderson Beck

(based on Plato's Euthyphro and Apology)

Characters:

Socrates

Euthyphro

The Magistrate

Court officials

Meletus

Anytus

Lycon

Jury of Five Hundred

Plato

Scene: The porch outside the building of the King Archon where the public trials are held; the year is 399 BC.

EUTHYPHRO What's new, Socrates, that you've left the Lyceum and are spending your time here in the lawcourts? Surely you're not involved in a lawsuit, as I am.

SOCRATES It's not a suit, Euthyphro, but the Athenians call it a criminal case.

EUTHYPHRO Who could have indicted you? For I don't think you would accuse anyone.

SOCRATES Of course not.

EUTHYPHRO Then who accuses you, and of what?

SOCRATES A young man named Meletus seems to know how the youth are corrupted, and he has come to the state, as a boy runs to his mother, to accuse me of corrupting them. I think he's right to be concerned about the young.

EUTHYPHRO Tell me, what does he say you do to corrupt them?

SOCRATES He says that I make new gods and that I don't believe in the old ones.

EUTHYPHRO I understand, Socrates; it's that spirit of yours. They don't like anything new. I have prophesied many things for them, but they only laugh at me and say I'm crazy.

SOCRATES If they would only laugh at me, then we could have a jolly time; but I'm afraid they're serious, and only seers like you can tell how this will end.

EUTHYPHRO Probably it won't amount to anything, Socrates, and you'll win your case as I think I'll win mine.

SOCRATES What is your case, Euthyphro?

EUTHYPHRO I'm prosecuting someone, and people think I'm insane.

SOCRATES Who is it?

EUTHYPHRO My father.

SOCRATES Your father? What are you charging?

EUTHYPHRO Murder, Socrates.

SOCRATES Heracles! You must be very advanced in wisdom if you think this is the right thing to do. Surely the one killed must be a relative.

EUTHYPHRO Why should that matter? If the act of the killer is not justified, then I would be polluted regardless if I knowingly associated with the murderer and did not proceed against him. The man killed was my hired worker who had gotten drunk and in anger he stabbed to death one of our house slaves. So my father tied him up and threw him in a ditch; then he sent a man to Athens to ask what he should do. In the mean time the murderer died of cold and hunger. Now my father is angry with me for prosecuting him, because it's unholy for a son to prosecute his father. That shows how little he knows about the divine law and holiness.

SOCRATES But before Zeus, are you certain your knowledge is so accurate, when the facts are as you say?

EUTHYPHRO It is this precise knowledge, Socrates, which distinguishes me from other people.

SOCRATES Then I should become your student, Euthyphro, and tell Meletus that on religious matters he should prosecute you for corrupting the old by teaching me and correcting your father. So tell me what you say you know so well. What is piety? What is holiness?

EUTHYPHRO It's what I'm doing now, prosecuting wrongdoers. People believe Zeus is the best and most just god; he put his father in chains for eating his children, and that father, Kronos, castrated his father.

SOCRATES Isn't this why I'm being prosecuted, Euthyphro,

because when people tell such stories, I find it difficult to accept them. Do you believe that the gods fight with each other and there were such conflicts and wars between gods?

EUTHYPHRO Not only those, Socrates, but I could tell you even more amazing things.

SOCRATES I'm not surprised; but please tell me more clearly what I asked you just now: what makes an act holy?

EUTHYPHRO What the gods love is holy, and what they hate is unholy.

SOCRATES But you just said the gods may disagree and fight. Then do some gods love what other gods hate?

EUTHYPHRO Certainly.

SOCRATES Then it seems the same things must be loved and hated by the gods.

EUTHYPHRO It seems like it.

SOCRATES Then the same things would be holy and unholy.

EUTHYPHRO I'm afraid so.

SOCRATES So in punishing your father, you may be pleasing Zeus, but not Kronos nor Uranus.

EUTHYPHRO But I think all the gods agree that whoever wrongfully kills someone should pay for it.

SOCRATES Does anyone in court admit they did wrong, and

then say they shouldn't pay for it?

EUTHYPHRO No, they don't do that.

SOCRATES Don't they argue that they haven't done wrong?

EUTHYPHRO True.

SOCRATES So please give me the proof that your father was wrong and that you are right in prosecuting him.

EUTHYPHRO That's not a small job, Socrates.

SOCRATES Maybe the judges will understand you better than I do. But I'm thinking we still don't know what holiness is, because what some gods love, others might hate. Shouldn't we correct the definition and say that what all the gods love is holy, what they all hate is unholy, and what some love and some hate is neither or both?

EUTHYPHRO What's to prevent it, Socrates?

SOCRATES Nothing for me, Euthyphro; but consider whether this definition will help you teach me what you promised.

EUTHYPHRO I'd say it is now correct.

SOCRATES Then let me ask you if what is holy is loved by the gods because it's holy, or is it holy because it's loved by the gods?

EUTHYPHRO I don't know what you mean, Socrates.

SOCRATES The one loving and the thing loved are two

different things, aren't they?

EUTHYPHRO Of course.

SOCRATES Now one doesn't carry something, because it is a carried thing, do they? Rather the thing is a carried thing, because someone is carrying it. Do you agree?

EUTHYPHRO I do.

SOCRATES So whoever loves something doesn't love it because it's loved, but it's loved because they love it.

EUTHYPHRO Necessarily.

SOCRATES Now do you say that what is holy is what is loved by the gods?

EUTHYPHRO Yes.

SOCRATES It's loved because it's holy, not holy because it's loved?

EUTHYPHRO I think so.

SOCRATES But how do we know what is holy unless we know what the gods love? Or how do we know what the gods love unless we know what is holy? So please start again and tell me what holiness is; whether it's loved by the gods or anything else, let's not argue about that. But what is holiness?

EUTHYPHRO But Socrates, I don't know how to say what I mean, for whatever I advance won't stay where we put it.

SOCRATES Then you are like my ancestor, Daedalus, whose

statues used to move.

EUTHYPHRO But you are the Daedalus, for you make my statements go round and round when I would rather have them stay put.

SOCRATES Then this art is against my will, for I would rather have the arguments stay firm also. But let me assist you so that you can teach me about holiness. See if you think that everything holy is just.

EUTHYPHRO I do.

SOCRATES Is everything just also holy, or is everything holy right and not everything which is right holy?

EUTHYPHRO I don't follow.

SOCRATES A poet once said he would not name the creator of all, for where there is fear there is also reverence. Now I disagree with the poet, because there may be fear sometimes without reverence, as with the fear of disease and poverty and so on. Don't you think so too?

EUTHYPHRO Certainly.

SOCRATES But wherever there is reverence there is, I think, some fear of the power revered. So reverence is a part of fear, and fear is a broader concept than reverence. Are you with me now?

EUTHYPHRO Certainly.

SOCRATES So if holiness is a part of what's right, then please instruct me what part that is.

EUTHYPHRO Holiness is the part having to do with serving the gods, and the other parts have to do with human concerns.

SOCRATES That seems fine, Euthyphro, but let me ask you about one small point. Is service caring for the benefit of those served, as in serving and caring for horses, dogs or cattle?

EUTHYPHRO Certainly.

SOCRATES Then is holiness as the art of serving the gods taking care of the gods so as to benefit them?

EUTHYPHRO No, by Zeus.

SOCRATES I didn't think you meant that. Then what kind of service is holiness? What good does it produce, as physicians bring health and farmers produce food?

EUTHYPHRO I told you before, Socrates, this is a long job. I say that praying and sacrificing to the gods is holiness and saves families and states.

SOCRATES You might have answered more directly, Euthyphro, but it's clear you're not eager to instruct me. Now are you saying holiness is praying and sacrificing?

EUTHYPHRO Yes.

SOCRATES Then is sacrificing making gifts to the gods and is praying asking for things?

EUTHYPHRO Exactly.

SOCRATES Then holiness by this definition is the science of giving and asking, and is this the service of the gods?

EUTHYPHRO Yes.

SOCRATES Then is holiness a trading between gods and humans?

EUTHYPHRO Trading, if you want to call it that.

SOCRATES I don't want to call it that, if it's not true. What advantage do the gods get by trading with us?

EUTHYPHRO Why you don't think the gods gain any advantage from us, do you?

SOCRATES What then are the gifts that we give?

EUTHYPHRO Honor and praise and gratitude.

SOCRATES Then is holiness gratitude and not advantage or what is precious to the gods?

EUTHYPHRO I think it is most precious of all.

SOCRATES Then we are back again to what the gods love. We have made another circle. But please, Euthyphro, I'm waiting for you to tell me why prosecuting your father is a holy action or why the gods would love it or find it precious. I'm sure you must know what holiness is; so please don't hide your knowledge, but tell me.

EUTHYPHRO Some other time, Socrates; I'm in a hurry now.

SOCRATES But my friend, I thought you were going to help

me on my case so that I could tell Meletus that I follow your advice on religious matters.

EUTHYPHRO I'm sorry, Socrates; it's time for me to go.

Euthyphro quickly walks away. Socrates begins to walk toward the courtroom alone. The scene dissolves.

The new scene is inside the courtroom of the Magistrate in which five hundred jurors are seated. In front on one side sit the accusers, Meletus, Anytus, and Lycon; in the center sit the court officials; and on the other side sits Socrates. The Magistrate is standing in the front at the center.

MAGISTRATE You have just heard the speeches of the prosecutors, Meletus, Anytus, and Lycon and their evidence against Socrates on the charges of corrupting the youth and impiety. Now Socrates will speak in his defense.

The Magistrate sits down. Socrates stands up and walks to the center.

SOCRATES I don't know how you Athenians have been affected by my accusers, but as for me they have spoken so persuasively that I have almost forgotten myself; yet they have not said hardly any of the truth. But of the many lies they told I was especially surprised by the one in which they said you should be on guard so that you will not be deceived by me, because I am a clever speaker. They ought to be ashamed of themselves, because this will be immediately refuted by me in fact when I show that I am not a clever speaker at all, unless they call speakers clever who speak the truth; if that's what they mean, then I would agree. But by Zeus, I'm not an

orator in their style, for they have spoken little or no truth; but you'll hear from me the whole truth, Athenians, and not embellished with carefully prepared phrases, but you'll hear words as they spontaneously occur; for I believe my plea is just, and none of you should expect anything else. For it would not be fitting for me at my age to come before you like a youth making up speeches. Now sincerely, Athenians, I make this request: if you hear me defending myself with the same words that I'm accustomed to using in the marketplace where many of you have heard me, don't be surprised, and please don't interrupt. For the fact is, even though I'm seventy years old, this is the first time I've come up before the court; so I'm completely a stranger to the speech here. Therefore as if I actually were a stranger you would excuse me for speaking in a dialect and in the manner in which I was brought up, so now I ask you this request, which I think is fair, that you disregard the manner of my speech--- for perhaps it might be worse or perhaps better--- but observe and consider only this: whether what I say is just or not; for that is the virtue of the judge, and the speaker's obligation is to say the truth.

First I must defend myself, Athenians, against the earlier false accusations against me and then against the later ones. For many accusers have come against me before you, long ago and for many years now, saying nothing true; I fear them more than those around Anytus, although these are also dangerous; but those are even more dangerous, because educating many of you from childhood, they've been persuading you and accusing me falsely, saying, "There's a certain Socrates, a wise man, who thinks about things in heaven and under the earth and who makes the weaker argument stronger." Those who spread this report are more dangerous, because the

ones hearing them, Athenians, believe that such seekers don't acknowledge the gods. Next those accusers are many and have been making accusations for a long time, and also saying them to you when you were young, at an age in which you would especially believe, accusations by default, because no one was defending. Most unreasonable is that no one knows their names, unless he happens to be a comic poet. So many persuaded you using envy and slander, and the ones who were convinced persuaded others. These are all problems, because it's not possible to call them up here and cross-examine any of them, but it's like defending against shadows and cross-examining with no one answering. So I must try to remove from you this prejudice which you have acquired over a long period of time; this I must do in a short time. I hope that I can, if it's better for you and me; I know it's difficult; I'm not deluded about that. Yet may this go as it is pleasing to God, and so obeying the law I make my defense.

Now let's take it from the beginning, the accusation from which the prejudice came, which Meletus has believed in bringing this charge. Thus just as the charge was read, let me repeat what the slander says: "Socrates wrongs and meddles by seeking things under the earth and in the heavens and by making the weaker argument stronger and by teaching others these things." Such is what it is, for you saw this yourselves in Aristophanes' comedy with a certain Socrates claiming to walk on air and babbling much nonsense. Now I don't say this to dishonor such knowledge, if anyone does know these things; and may I never have to flee Meletus on those charges! But the fact is, Athenians, I have nothing to do with these things. I offer as witnesses most of you out there, and I ask you to testify to each other, many of you who have heard me discussing, if ever

any of you heard me discussing these things.

But there is nothing to any of that; and if anyone heard that I attempt to teach people and make money from it, neither is that true. Although that does seem fine to me, if someone can teach people the way Gorgias and Prodicus and Hippias do. For they go to the young in each city who are free to associate with them and pay them. Also I happen to know a man, Callias, who has spent more money on sophists than all others. So I asked him whom he could hire to teach his sons, who would make them fine and good in virtue, and he told me Evenus teaches for five minae. And I blessed Evenus, if he truly has this art; for I myself would be proud and conceited if I had this skill; but I don't, Athenians.

So some of you perhaps might wonder, "But Socrates, what's the matter with you? Where have these slanders against you come from? For you must have done something unusual to gain this reputation and start these rumors. Therefore tell us so that we won't judge hastily." Those who would say this seem right to me, and I'll try to show you what gave me this reputation. So listen, and maybe to some I'll seem to be playing; but understand: I'll tell you the whole truth. For Athenians, I've acquired this reputation because of a kind of wisdom. What kind of wisdom? Just a human wisdom. Athenians, don't interrupt if I seem to be boasting; for the testimony I give is not mine, but that of someone trustworthy as to my wisdom. I offer to you as a witness the god at Delphi.

The crowd of jurors murmurs in shock and disbelief. Socrates raises his voice a little and goes on in order to calm them down.

SOCRATES I'm sure you know my friend Chaerephon; he fled with the exile and returned with you. You know he was impetuous in whatever he did. Once he went to Delphi and dared to ask the oracle--- now please, I ask again that you not interrupt--- for he asked if anyone was wiser than I. The Pythian priestess answered that no one was wiser. He's died since then, but his brother can testify.

Now consider why I'm saying these things; I wish to tell you how the slander arose against me. When I heard this, I thought to myself, "Whatever is the god saying, and what is the riddle? For I'm not aware of having any wisdom, great or small; so what could it mean declaring me to be the wisest? For surely it doesn't lie, not a divine oracle." And for a long time I was uncertain what it meant; then very reluctantly I began to search as follows. I went to someone who seems to be wise, because then I could refute the divination and show the oracle that this person is wiser than I. So I examined this man, for I won't speak his name; but he was a politician, and I had this experience: discussing with him he seemed to be wise to many people and especially to himself, but he didn't seem so to me; and then I tried to show him that he thought he was wise, but was not. So as a result I was hated by him and by many present; going away I said to myself, "I'm wiser than he is; for probably neither of us knows anything good, but he thinks he knows something but doesn't, while even though I don't know anything either, I don't think that I do. Therefore I went away a little wiser in this respect, that I don't think that I know what I don't know." Then I went to another who seemed wiser than he, but to me it seemed to turn out the same way; and there I was hated by that one and by many others.

After this I went to one after another, perceiving that I was hated, and grieving and fearful; yet I thought I should make the divine most important. So considering what I thought the oracle meant, I had to go to all who thought they knew. And by the dog, to tell you the truth, Athenians, I found that the ones most esteemed seemed to me to be almost the most deficient, but others less esteemed seemed more reasonable. I describe to you my wandering as some Heraclean labors so that the oracle could be proven irrefutable. After the politicians I went to the poets, so that I could show myself I knew less than they. Taking up their best poems I asked them what they mean, also so that I might learn something from them. I'm ashamed to tell you the truth, but it must be said. For most of those present could speak better than they on their very own compositions. So with the poets I soon became aware that they wrote not by wisdom but by inspiration, like the seers and diviners who also say fine things, but they don't understand what they're saying; it appeared to me the poets had the same experience. Also I observed that because of their poetry they too thought they knew other things, which they didn't. Thus I went away from them also in the same way, thinking I surpassed them as well as the politicians.

Finally I went to the artisans. Again I was aware I didn't know anything myself, but I knew I might find them knowing many fine things. And in this I was not deceived, for they did know what I didn't, and in this they were wiser than I. However, the workers have the same fault as the poets; because of performing a skill well they too claimed to be wise in other important matters, and this false note obscured their knowledge. So I asked myself for the sake of the oracle, whether I should choose to be as I am, having neither their wisdom nor their ignorance, or to have both of what they have.

I answered myself and the oracle that I am better off as I am. From this examination, Athenians, arose against me many harsh enmities from which came the slanders and this reputation of being considered wise. For those present think I'm wise when I refute others; But in reality the truth is that God is wise; the oracle is saying, "Human wisdom is worth little." Using my name as an example, it appears to be saying, "The wisest of you humans is the one, like Socrates, who is aware that his wisdom is worth nothing." So I'm still even now going around searching and inquiring of citizens and strangers who seem wise; and when they don't seem so to me, I help the god by pointing out that they're not wise. Because of this occupation I have no time for myself to attend to business in the city nor at home, and I am in poverty because of serving the god.

Also the youth accompanying me, who have leisure because their parents are wealthy, enjoy hearing people examined, and they often imitate me and examine others; then, I think, they find many people who think they know something, but know little. So then those examined by them become angry at me, instead of at themselves, and they say, "This is that damned Socrates who corrupts the youth." When someone asks them what I do and teach, they don't know what to say, but in order not to seem confused, they say what's handy against all philosophers, "the things heavenly and below the earth" and "not believing in gods" and "making the weaker argument stronger." For the truth, I think, which they don't want to say, is that it's being made clear that they don't know what they're claiming to know. So many of them being ambitious and stubborn and speaking violently against me both now and before have filled your ears with violent slanders. From these Meletus has attacked me for the poets, Anytus on behalf of the

artisans and politicians, and Lycon on behalf of the orators. Therefore, like I said at first, I'd be surprised if I could remove so great a prejudice from you in so short a time. I've told you the truth, Athenians, without concealing anything or holding anything back. I realize that I'm making myself hated by doing this, and this is an indication that I am telling the truth. For this is the prejudice against me and its causes. If you investigate it now or later, you'll find it so.

So, that's enough defense on the earlier accusers; but against Meletus, who says he's good and patriotic, and the later ones, I'll try to defend myself next. Once more then, let's take up their affidavit. It says that Socrates wrongs by corrupting the youth and by not believing in the gods the state believes in, but in other new gods; that's the accusation. Now let's examine each one of the accusations. He says I do wrong by corrupting the youth. But I, Athenians, say that Meletus does wrong, because he frivolously indicts people, claiming to be serious in what he's never cared about. That this is so I'll try to make clear to you.

Tell me, Meletus, don't you consider it important how the youth are to be most improved?

MELETUS I do.

SOCRATES Come then, tell them who makes them better, for clearly you know, since you care. For you've found out who corrupts them, as you said, and you bring me before this court and accuse me; now inform us who makes them better.

Meletus does not want to answer.

SOCRATES (Cont'd.) Meletus, why are you silent and say nothing? Doesn't this seem to you shameful and a sufficient indication of what I say, that you don't care at all? But speak, good sir, who makes them better?

MELETUS The laws.

SOCRATES But that's not what I asked, sir, but what person, who knows the laws.

MELETUS These here, Socrates, the judges.

SOCRATES What are you saying, Meletus? Can they educate the youth and make them better?

MELETUS Certainly.

SOCRATES Which ones, all? Or some of them and not others?

MELETUS All of them.

SOCRATES Well said, by Hera, and you speak of many helpers. Do these listeners here make them better or not?

MELETUS They do.

SOCRATES And what about the senators?

MELETUS Also the senators.

SOCRATES Do the members of the assembly corrupt the youth, or do they make them better also?

MELETUS They do also.

SOCRATES So all Athenians, apparently, make them good, except me, but I alone corrupt them. Is that what you mean?

MELETUS I mean it very seriously.

SOCRATES You condemn me to great misfortune. But answer me: is this also so regarding horses? Does everyone make them better, but only one worse? Or is it the opposite of this, one or a few horse-trainers make them better; but do most people if they use horses injure them? Isn't this so, Meletus, with horses and other animals? Surely it is, whether you and Anytus say yes or no. For what a great blessing it would be for the youth if one alone corrupts them, while others help them. But Meletus, you show well enough your carelessness, that you never considered the youth at all, nor have you cared about what you charge me with. Now tell us, in the name of Zeus, Meletus, which is better, to live among good citizens or bad? Answer, my friend; for I'm not asking anything hard. Don't the bad work some evil to those near them, but the good do some good?

MELETUS Certainly.

SOCRATES Does anyone wish to be harmed by associates rather than helped? Answer, good sir; for the law requires you to. Is there anyone who wishes to be harmed?

MELETUS Of course not.

SOCRATES Then do you bring me here into court for corrupting the youth and making them worse intentionally

or unintentionally?

MELETUS I say intentionally.

SOCRATES Meletus, are you wiser at your age than I am at mine, that you have recognized that the bad work some evil always to those near them, and the good some good; while I am ignorant of this, that if I make my associates bad, I'm likely to receive something bad from them, so that I do this evil intentionally, as you say? I'm not convinced by you, Meletus, and I don't think anyone else is either; for either I don't corrupt, or if I do, then unintentionally, so that either way you're lying. But if I corrupt unintentionally, the law does not charge one for involuntary errors, but one should be privately taught and admonished. For if I learn, I'll stop what I do unintentionally; but you avoided me and would not teach me, but charged me here where the law brings those needing punishment, not learning. But now, Athenians, it's clear what I said, that Meletus never cared about these things. Now tell us how it is I corrupt the youth, Meletus? Or is it evident from the written indictment, is it by teaching them not to believe in the gods which the state believes in, but in new divinities? Don't you say this?

MELETUS Yes, I definitely say that.

SOCRATES Well then, before these very gods, Meletus, please explain both to me and these men; for I can't understand whether you mean that I teach them to believe there are gods, and I myself believe there are gods, and I'm not a complete atheist and wrong in that way, but that I believe in different gods than the state. Do you accuse me of believing in different gods or in no gods at all, and teaching that to others?

MELETUS I mean the latter, that you don't believe in the gods at all.

SOCRATES You surprise me, Meletus; why do you say this? Then don't I believe the sun and moon are gods, like other people do?

MELETUS No, by Zeus, he doesn't, judges, since he says the sun is a stone, and the moon earth.

SOCRATES Do you think you're accusing Anaxagoras, dear Meletus, and do you think they're so ignorant as not to know that the books of Anaxagoras are full of these ideas? Do you think the young learn these things from me, which they could buy for a drachma at the theatre, while they laugh at Socrates if he claims they are his, especially since they are so absurd. But before Zeus, do you think I don't believe in any god?

MELETUS No, by Zeus, none, not in the least.

SOCRATES You're unbelievable, Meletus, even to yourself; for I think you're being very insolent and reckless. Did you write this indictment as a riddle, thinking, "I'll test whether the wise Socrates will understand my game and contradictory meaning, or will I deceive him and the other listeners?" For what he just said contradicts the indictment, as if he were saying, Socrates is wrong not believing in gods and believing in gods. Surely this is some kind of a joke. Now let me ask Meletus in my usual way, and remember not to interrupt my argument, people. Does anyone believe in human things, Meletus, without believing there are people? Please let him answer, and don't interrupt. Or does anyone believe in the business of horsemen, but not in horses?

Meletus is silent.

SOCRATES (Cont'd.) They do not, sir; if you don't want to answer, I'll say it for you. But at least answer this: does anyone believe there are divine things but not believe in divinities?

MELETUS No.

SOCRATES Thanks for answering reluctantly under compulsion. Now you say I both believe in and teach new divinities, and you swore this in your indictment. But if I believe in divinities, whether old or new, surely I must also believe in the divine. Isn't this so?

Pause.

SOCRATES (Cont'd.) It is; for I assume you agree, since you don't answer. But aren't divinities either gods or children of gods? Do you say yes or no?

MELETUS Certainly.

SOCRATES Then if I believe in divinities, as you say, if divinities are gods, and this is the riddle, you're saying I don't believe in gods but believe in gods, since I believe in divinities. Or if divinities are bastard children from nymphs, who would think children of gods exist but not gods? It would be just as absurd to think there are children of horses and asses, namely mules, but not think there are horses and asses. But surely, Meletus, you're testing us with this charge, or else you doubt you could blame me with a real crime. For you can't convince anyone even of small intelligence that it's possible to believe in gods and divinities and

at the same time not believe in the divine nor gods.
There is no way.

So, Athenians, I'm not wrong on Meletus' charge, and I think that little defense is enough. As I said before, the great hatred from many against me, is what will convict me, if I'm convicted, not Meletus nor Anytus, but this prejudice and envy, which has convicted many good men and will again; there isn't much chance of it stopping with me. Now perhaps someone might say, "Then aren't you ashamed, Socrates, of doing something from which you're now in danger of being executed?" To this I would make a just argument, "You don't speak well, sir, if you think a person, even of little merit, should consider danger of death, rather than looking only at whether one's actions are right or wrong and good or bad works. For by your argument the heroes at Troy would be mean, especially Achilles who so despised danger compared to disgrace when his divine mother spoke to his eagerness to kill Hector, saying, 'Son, if you avenge the death of your friend Patroclus, and kill Hector, you yourself are fated to die.' But he made little of death and danger, but feared much more a cowardly life. 'May I die at once,' he said, 'after giving justice to the wrongdoer, so that I may not remain here laughed at and a burden on the land by the curved ships.' Do you think he thought of death and danger?" Wherever one stations oneself, believing it is best, one must stay there, as it seems to me, without considering anything before disgrace.

When the commanders whom you chose stationed me both at Potidaea and Amphipolis and also Delium, I stayed there like anyone else, in danger of death, but I would have done a terrible thing to leave. Now being stationed by the god, as I understood it, I must love wisdom and

examine myself and others, and it would be terrible, Athenians, if I were to leave the station at this point out of fear of death or for any other business. Then truly someone might justly bring me into court, because I don't believe in the gods, disobeying the oracle and afraid of death and thinking myself wise when I am not. For to be afraid of death, men, is nothing else but thinking oneself wise when one is not; for it is thinking one knows what one does not know. For no one knows whether death is the greatest good, but it's feared as if one knows it's the greatest evil. And isn't this ignorance most reprehensible? But I differ from most people on this point in that, even if I were to say I'm wiser, it would be in this, that not knowing about Hades, I don't think I know. But to wrong and disobey the best, human and divine, I know that that is evil and shameful. Thus before the evils which I know are evil, I'll never fear nor flee what I don't know, since it may turn out to be good. So if you acquit me now, unconvinced by Anytus, who said either I shouldn't have been brought here, or, since I was, it is necessary to execute me, and who told you that if I were acquitted your sons will be corrupted by what I teach--- if you should say to me, "Socrates, we're not convinced by Anytus, but acquit you, though on this condition that you no longer discuss nor philosophize in this way; and if you're caught doing so again, you shall die." Then I'd say to you, "Athenians, I respect and love you, but I shall obey the god rather than you, and while I'm able to breathe, I'll not stop philosophizing and urging you and demonstrating whenever I happen to meet you, saying as I do, 'Best of people, as an Athenian in the greatest city famous for wisdom and power, aren't you ashamed to care about money, which is so important to you, and reputation and honor, but you don't care and think about intelligence and truth and the soul, how they may be

best?' And if any of you objects and says you do care, I'll not let you go nor go away myself until I question and examine and test you, and if it seems to me that you don't have virtue, but only appear to, I'll reproach you for making what is most worthy of importance less so and for making the worst things most important. I'll do this for both the young and the old, whenever I happen to meet them, to strangers and citizens, but especially citizens, since you're more nearly related to me. For know well that God commands this, and I don't think any greater good has come to the city than my service to the god. For I go around doing nothing else but persuading you both young and old not to care about the body nor money more seriously than the soul and her virtue, saying, 'Virtue does not come from money, but from virtue comes money and every good thing for people both individually and collectively.' So, Athenians, either be convinced by Anytus or not, and acquit me or don't acquit me, but I will not do anything else, not even if I have to die many times." Please don't interrupt, Athenians, but listen, for I think you'll surely benefit by listening. For I intend to tell you some other things at which you'll perhaps cry out, but please don't. For be aware, if you kill me, I being what I say, you'll not do greater harm to me than to yourselves; for neither Meletus nor Anytus can harm me, since I don't think it is the divine will for a better person to be harmed by a worse. They might kill though or banish or disenfranchise, and they might think somehow this is a great evil; but I don't think so; rather a much greater evil is what they're doing now, attempting to put someone to death unjustly. So, not just on my own behalf do I defend myself, as some may think, but on your behalf, Athenians, so that you may not make a mistake concerning the gift of God by condemning me. For if you kill me, you'll not easily find another, to say it in a

ludicrous way, attached to the city by the god, like on a lazy horse that needs arousing by a gadfly; so the god seems to have fastened me to the city to arouse and persuade and reproach you, and I don't stop all day settling down all over. Thus another like me will not easily come to you; and if you believe me, you'll spare me. Yet perhaps you might possibly be offended, like the sleeping who are awakened, and believing Anytus, you might strike and kill me; then the rest of your lives you may continue sleeping, unless the god caring for you should send you another. That I am such a gift by the god to the city, you may understand from this: for it's not human to have neglected all my own affairs and enduring this neglect of family for years, but always attending to each one of you, coming privately like a father or older brother, and persuading you to care about virtue. Now if I enjoyed this or received pay for urging you, it might make some sense, but you can see that even these accusers, even though all their accusations are shameless, have not been so shameless as to produce a witness that I ever required or requested pay from anyone. I think I present an adequate witness, my poverty.

Then perhaps it may seem absurd that I go around privately advising and meddling, but don't publicly dare give advice in your assembly. The reason for this, which you've heard me say often is that a divine and spiritual voice comes to me, which Meletus also ridiculed in the indictment. This voice began coming to me in childhood, and when it comes it always turns me away from what I'm intending to do, but never leads me on; this is what opposes my practicing politics. And I think it opposes quite well, for if I had taken up the practice of politics, you know, Athenians, I'd have perished long ago and would not have benefited you nor myself. Don't

be offended by the truth I'm saying; for the fact is no one whatsoever is safe either in honestly opposing you or the assembly or in preventing injustices and state illegalities; but it's necessary in really fighting for justice, if one wants to be safe for even a short time, to do so privately rather than publicly.

I'll present for you important evidence of this, not words, but what you value, actions. Listen to what has happened to me, so you may know that I won't yield to anyone against justice from fear of death, but I'd rather perish. Athenians, I never held any state office but senator; that was when my Antiochis tribe presided and you wanted to try ten generals together, illegally, as everyone admitted later, who hadn't buried those slain in the naval battle. At that time I alone of those presiding opposed doing anything contrary to law and voted against it, and the speakers were ready to indict and arrest me, and you were demanding it and shouting, but with law and justice I thought I must run the risk rather than follow you in not considering justice out of fear of imprisonment or death. This was when the state was still democratic; but when it became an oligarchy, the Thirty in turn sending for me among five in the rotunda ordered us to bring Leon from Salamis to be executed. They often ordered many people in this way wishing to implicate as many as possible in their guilt; however, again not by word but by action I demonstrated that I don't care about death, if it's not too crude to say, not at all, but all my care was to do nothing unjust nor unholy. For that government did not intimidate me, as powerful as it was, into doing something unjust, but when I left the rotunda, I went quietly home, while the other four went to Salamis and got Leon. And perhaps I might have died for this, if that government had not been soon overthrown; many will

be witnesses of this for you.

So do you think I'd still be alive, if I'd done public business and aided what was just, making this most important, as one should? Far from it, Athenians; neither could anyone else. But all during my life, whatever I did in public, appeared the same also in private; I never gave in to anything contrary to justice, not even to those the slanderers call my students. I never became anyone's teacher; but if someone wants to hear me talking, whether young or old, I've never objected. Nor do I converse for receiving money, and to rich and poor alike I offer my inquiry; if someone wants to answer they may hear what I say, and whether they become good or not, I should not rightly bear the blame, since I never promised anything nor gave instruction; but if anyone says they ever learned or heard something from me in private which all the others did not hear, be aware that they're not telling the truth.

Why then do some like spending so much time with me? You heard it, Athenians; I told you the whole truth, that they like hearing the examination of those who think they are wise but are not; for this is not unamusing. But as I said, I've been directed to do this by God and from oracles and from dreams and in every way the divine has ever directed anyone to do anything. This, Athenians, is both true and easily tested. For if I have corrupted the young, certainly some of those grown older, if they're aware that I ever advised them badly, now they should stand up to accuse me and be avenged; or if they're not willing to, then let their families; let them remember if they suffered any evil from me. Surely many of them are present here whom I see, first Crito here who is of my age and district and is the father of

Critobulus there; then there's Lysanias, father of Aeschines there; also here is Antiphon, father of Epigenes; here now are brothers who were involved in this, Nicostratus, brother of Theodotus, who has died, so that he at least could not dissuade him, and Paralus, whose brother was Theages; Adeimantus whose brother Plato is here, and Aeantodorus whose brother Apollodorus is present. I could mention many others, some very fitting for Meletus to produce as witnesses in his argument; if he forgot then, let him call them now. I yield; let him speak if he has anything to offer.

Pause. Meletus and Anytus do not respond.

SOCRATES (Cont'd.) But you'll find it's the complete opposite of this; all are ready to help me who corrupts their families, according to what Meletus and Anytus say. Though the corrupted may have a reason for helping, the uncorrupted, already older, their relatives, why would they help me other than for justice, unless they're aware that Meletus is lying, while I'm telling the truth?

Well, that's about all I have to say in my defense. Some of you may be irritated when you recall yours, if even in the contested trial of a lesser case you asked and begged the judges with many tears, bringing up your children in order to arouse pity, and other relatives and many friends; but I will do none of this, even though I seem to be in the ultimate danger. Perhaps the more self-willed may hold this against me, and upset about this might cast their vote in anger. Now if this applies to you, though I don't claim that, I think it would be reasonable for me to say to them, "I too, men, have relatives, and as in Homer, I'm not 'born of oak nor of stone,' but from humans, and I have three sons,

one a youth and two children; but nevertheless I'll not bring any of them up here in order to beg you to acquit me." Why shouldn't I do so? Not out of self-will, Athenians, nor out of disrespect for you, and whether I'm confident in facing death or not is another matter, but I think for me and you and the whole state it's not good for me to do any of those things at my age and with my reputation; whether it's true or false, nevertheless it's believed that Socrates is somehow different from most people. So if those of you who are thought different whether in wisdom or courage or any other virtue, did this it would be disgraceful; I've often seen some of these on trial, who are thought to be someone special, acting strangely, as though they were thinking they would suffer something terrible if they died, as if they would be immortal if you didn't kill them. It seems to me they wrap the state in shame, so that even a stranger might think that Athenians excelling in virtue and preferred in government and other honors are no different than women. For this, Athenians, should not be done by such men; and if we do it, you should not permit it, but make it clear that you'll more likely condemn those who bring in these pitiful dramas and make the city appear ridiculous than those who keep quiet.

But apart from the appearance, Athenians, it doesn't seem right to me to implore the judge nor to beg for acquittal, but to teach and persuade. For judges are not appointed to grant favors, but to decide the justice of these things; and they take an oath not to favor such appeals, but to judge according to the laws. Therefore we should not become accustomed to this nor you get into the habit of perjuring yourselves; for neither of us would be acting piously. So don't require me, Athenians, to do such things, which I find are neither good nor

just nor holy, especially by Zeus, since impiety is the charge. For clearly, if I could persuade you and by pleading get you to break your oaths, I would be teaching you not to consider the gods, and in my very defense I would be accusing myself of not believing in the gods. But this is far from so; for I do believe in them, more than my accusers, Athenians, and I commit to you and to God to decide my case however it will be best for me and for you.

Socrates walks back to his seat and sits down. The Magistrate stands up.

MAGISTRATE Now each of the five hundred and one jurors will vote by secret ballot either to condemn or to acquit Socrates.

The scene dissolves to show the passing of time. As the new scene emerges, the Magistrate is reading the resulting tally.

MAGISTRATE (Cont'd) The final vote has been counted and the tally is: to condemn, two hundred eighty-one; to acquit, two hundred twenty. Socrates has been convicted by a majority. Now the prosecutors will propose a penalty, and then Socrates may propose an alternative for consideration and vote by the jurors. What must he suffer for the offense?

The scene dissolves again and then emerges with Socrates beginning his speech.

SOCRATES I'm not upset by the vote you cast against me; many things contributed to it, and it's not unexpected, but I am surprised by the number of votes on each side. I didn't think it would be by so little, but by more; if

thirty votes were changed, I'd have been acquitted.

So the prosecutor proposes my death. Well, what alternative shall I propose, Athenians? Shouldn't it be what is deserved? Then what? What do I deserve to suffer or pay, because having learned in life I didn't keep quiet and didn't care about what most people do, money-making and property and the military and public speaking and offices and associations and political factions that occur in the state, but believing myself to be too sensible to be involved in these and be safe, I didn't go into those things which would not have helped either you or me, but I went, as I said, to each individual where the greatest good could be done, trying to persuade you not to care for anything before you care about yourself so as to be best, nor of the state's interests before the state itself, and to care about others in the same way. Then what does one like me deserve to suffer? Some good, Athenians, if truly according to deserving; and the good should be something appropriate for me. Then what is fitting for a poor man who benefits you, in need of leisure so that he can advise you? There is nothing, Athenians, so fitting as providing food for such a man in the president's hall, much more than if any of you won the Olympics. For he makes you feel happy, but I to be so; and he doesn't need support, but I do. Thus if it must be proposed by what I justly deserve, I propose this, food in the president's hall.

Perhaps by saying this I seem to you self-willed, as with the pity and the pleading. But it's not so, Athenians, but rather I'm convinced I never willingly wronged any person, but I didn't convince you of this; for we've conversed with each other for a short time; yet I believe, if you had a law, as others do, not to

judge about death in only one day, but in several, you would be convinced; it's not easy to be freed of great prejudices quickly. Really convinced that I never wronged anyone I certainly won't wrong myself and say I deserve bad, and propose any such thing for myself. What should I fear? What Meletus proposes for me, which I admit not knowing whether it's good or bad? Instead should I choose what I do know is bad, and propose that? imprisonment? Why should I live in prison, a slave to the officers? Or a fine, and to be imprisoned until I can pay? but for me that means the same as what I just said; for I don't have money from which I can pay. But then shall I propose exile? Maybe you will propose this for me. However, I would have to be very attached to life, if I'm so irrational as not to be able to reason that if you my fellow citizens can't bear my arguments, and they are too heavy and envy-arousing for you, so that now you're seeking to be relieved from them, but then would others bear the same easily? Far from it, Athenians. So a fine life that would be for me to go off at my age changing cities and driven out from one to another! For you know that wherever I go, the young will listen to my talking, as they do here; even if I drive them away, persuading the older ones, they'll drive me out; and if I don't drive them away, their fathers and relatives will for their sakes.

Perhaps then someone might say, "But Socrates, can't you go away from us and keep quiet?" It's really hardest for some of you to believe this. For if I say that this is disobeying the god and because of this I'm unable to keep quiet, you'll not believe me, as if I were jesting; and if I say it's also the greatest good for humanity to discuss virtue daily, examining myself and others, the unexamined life not being livable for a person--- saying this you would believe me even less. Thus it is as I

say, but persuading you is not easy. Besides, I'm not used to deserving anything bad. If I had money, I'd propose paying as much as I could; for that would be no harm; but now I have none, unless you wish to propose what I'm able to pay. Perhaps I could pay you a mina of silver; so I propose that.

PLATO Socrates, say thirty minae, for Crito, Critobulus, Apollodorus and I will help.

SOCRATES Plato here bids me propose thirty minae, with Crito, Critobulus, and Apollodorus as security. So I propose that, and those trustworthy men will be security for your silver.

The scene dissolves. As the new scene emerges, the Magistrate is announcing the vote.

MAGISTRATE The final count of the votes is as follows: For punishment by death: three hundred sixty; for punishment by a fine: one hundred forty-one. Socrates is condemned to death by poisoning and is committed to prison until execution. While we're working here, you may speak, Socrates.

Socrates steps forward and speaks to the jury, while the officials behind him are taking care of their business.

SOCRATES For not much time, Athenians, have you gained a name and blame by those wishing to revile the city saying, "You killed Socrates, a wise man!" for they'll say I'm really wise, even if I'm not. But if you had waited a short time, it would have occurred for you by itself; for you see my age is far along in life and near death. Now I don't say this to all of you, but to those who voted for my death. To those let me say something

else also, perhaps you think I'm convicted for lack of arguments which would have convinced you if I thought I needed to do and say anything in order to be acquitted. Far from it. Yet I was convicted by a lack, but not of arguments, but of impudence and shamelessness and unwillingness to say what you would have liked to hear, by wailing and moaning and other unworthy things, which you are in the habit of hearing from others. But I didn't think it was necessary because of danger to do anything unfree, nor do I regret the defense made, but I much prefer to die after making this defense than to live after the other kind; for neither in justice nor in war should I or anyone contrive how to escape death by every means. For truly in battles often one could escape dying by abandoning weapons and turning in supplication; and there are many other contrivances to escape death, if one has the audacity to do and say anything. However, it's not hard to escape death, men, but it's much harder to escape cowardice; for it runs faster than death. Now since I'm slow and old, I'm caught by the slower, but my accusers, since they are clever and quick, are caught by the faster, the bad. Now I go away sentenced by you to death, and they convicted by truth of evil and injustice. I abide by the penalty, even as they do. Perhaps it had to be this way, and I think it's fair.

Now I want to prophesy to you who voted against me. For when they're about to die, people often prophesy. I tell you, men who are killing me, punishment will come to you immediately after my death harder by Zeus than your killing of me; for you did this thinking you'd be relieved of giving an account of your life, but the result will be quite to the contrary for you. Now more will examine you, whom before I restrained, though you didn't realize it; and they'll be harder since they're younger, and you'll be more irritated. For if you think

killing people will prevent someone from reproaching you for not searching correctly, you don't reason correctly. For this relief is not very effective nor good, but it's best and easiest not to suppress others, but to prepare yourself to be as good as you can. So prophesying to you who voted against, I say goodbye.

But to those voting for I'd like to talk about what has occurred while the officials are busy and before I go to where I must die. And stay with me, men, for so long; nothing prevents us from talking as long as we can; for to you who are friends I want to make clear what is the meaning of what has now happened to me. For to me, judges--- for calling you judges is correct--- a wonderful thing has occurred. For the usual prophecy, the divinity, which before came to me very frequently, even about small things, was always opposing, if I intended to do something incorrect; but now has come upon me, as you yourselves see, what some might think and believe is the extreme evil, but when I left home the sign of the god didn't oppose, nor did it when I came up here to court, nor ever in my speech when I was about to say something; yet in other speeches it often checked me in the middle; but now concerning this event it has never opposed neither in any action nor in speech. What then do I think is the reason? I'll tell you; for this is probably good for me, and we who think death is evil don't understand it. A great proof of this has come to me; for surely the usual sign would have opposed me, unless what I intended to do was good.

Let's also consider the following: how much hope there is that death is good. For death is one of two things: either the dead have no being nor perception nor anything, or as is said a change of being occurs and the soul transmigrates from here to another place. If it is

no perception, but a sleep without dreams, then death would be a wonderful gain. For I think if one had to pick out that night in which one slept without seeing any dream, and compare that night to other nights and days, and had to say how many days and nights were spent more pleasantly than that night, I think not only a private person but even a king would find those nights few compared to others. So if death is such, I say it is a gain; for then all of time thus appears to be one night. But if death is to leave here for another place, and what is said is true that all the dead are there, what greater good could there be, judges? For if one arriving in Hades, having left those claiming to be judges, will find the true judges, who judge there, Minos and Rhadamanthus and Aeacus and Triptolemus and other heroes who were just in their lives, would the departure then be poor? What would any of you give to associate with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer? So I'm willing to die many times if this is true; since to me this life there would be wonderful, when I might meet Palamedes and Ajax or other ancients who died on account of unjust judgments. Comparing my experiences with theirs, I think, would not be unpleasant. It would be great to examine those there, like I do here, to discover who is wise and who thinks they are, but aren't. How much would one give, judges, to examine those who led the army against Troy or Odysseus or Sisyphus, or countless others, both men and women I could name? To talk with those there would be infinite happiness! At any event certainly they don't kill there for this; For besides they're happier there than here, and they're already immortal for the rest of time, if what is said is true. But you too, judges, must be hopeful facing death, and consider this one truth: there is no evil for a good person, neither in living nor dying, and one's affairs are not neglected by the gods;

nor are mine occurring now automatically, but this is clear to me, that it's better for me to die now and be released from troubles. Because of this also the sign never turned me away, and I'm not at all angry at my condemners and accusers. Yet this was not why they accused and condemned me, but thinking to harm; in this they deserve blame. However, I ask this of them: when my sons grow up, punish them, men, by bothering them as I bothered you, if they care about money or anything more than virtue, or if they seem to be something they are not, reproach them as I have reproached you, because they don't care about what they should, and think they're something when they're worth nothing. And if you do these things, both my sons and I will have experienced justice from you, But now it's already time to go away, I to die, and you to live; but which of us goes to a better situation is unclear to all except to God.

The scene dissolves.