

Was he thinking? Was he caeleptic? In any case, twenty-four hours is a very long time to spend in motionless contemplation (whether rational or mystical), and attests Socrates' remarkable powers. The only other significant aspect of the episode is that on returning to himself Socrates offered a prayer to the sun, which was then rising, and went on his way. The literary sun of northern Greece in the late 430s is the only certain light that can be shed on the episode, but it was surely extraordinary enough to represent some kind of turning point in Socrates' life: a first beginning, the start of a new day. I want to suggest, somewhat fancifully, that the turning point had to do with Alcibiades, with whom Socrates was spending a great deal of time during the campaign – that during these twenty-four hours Socrates first perceived the political dimension of his mission, to take his boy in hand and train him as a philosopher-king, and to find others too. Socrates could see that the long-simmered world war was about to begin; he knew that it would be vital whatever the outcome, for Athens to emerge from the other side of the war with men of principle in charge, and so he decided to focus on teaching the young, and especially on training them in morality and political science. Plato portrays his first question on returning from Potidea, a concern for the attainments or promise of the young men of the city – and it is Charmides, who was to become one of his select groups of politically promising young men, to whom he is introduced. Pericles and Damon, Protagoras and Anaxagoras to help him form his policies and present them; the sophists in general often had the aim of turning out competent statesmen; Socrates wanted to play the same role, in his way, for the next generation of Athenian statesmen. It was a momentous decision, and he paid for it with his life.

A Cock for Asclepius

Xenophon preserves a tidy story. After the trial, as Socrates was being taken off to prison to await execution, he was accompanied by a few of his followers, some of whom were deeply distressed. One of them said that what he found particularly hard to bear was that Socrates had done nothing to deserve such a death. Socrates replied with a laugh: 'Would you feel better if I *did* deserve it?'

The story may be faintly amusing, but it overstates its case. Even his most devoted followers must have recognized that their mentor was sailing close to the wind. We may even wonder why condemnation had not happened earlier. Condemnation or acquittal in the Athenian legal system often depended more on whether or not the defendant was perceived or suspected of un-Athenian activities, than on whether or not he had committed the crime. And the weight of the un-Athenian activities that Socrates was either involved in or was suspected of being involved in is impressive.

He was a clever arguer and taught young men to be clever arguers; he usurped their fathers' roles in education and in general was perceived to be subversive of inherited values; he was either a sophist or indistinguishable from one; in his youth he had dabbled in atheistic science and even now his religious views were highly unconventional; he was suspected of being the leader of a weird cabal; he had irritated many prominent Athenians with his interminable, aggressive questioning; he had taught Alcibiades, the mocker of the Mysteries, the most corrupt of a corrupt generation, oligarch and possibly would-be tyrant, a pro-Spartan traitor who was widely held to be responsible for the loss of the war; he was close to others who had either mocked the Mysteries or desecrated the herms; he was close to Critias, the ideologue of the brutal Thirty, and others of that circle; his political views were elitist and smacked of the same programme of moral regeneration of Athens by 'enlightened' leaders that Critias had attempted to instigate; he was thought to be in favour of a Spartan-style constitution; he had stayed in Athens during the regime of the

Thirty; at his trial, he was defiant and openly hostile to the democratic courts and the inherited conglomerate. Iconic historical moments, such as Socrates' trial, will always be hijacked by partisan interests, but to try to make the trial depend on any single issue is a serious distortion of the facts.

Worst of all, he surrounded himself with men whom he presumably infected with these same views. Both Plato's and Xenophon's Socratic works are peopled by undesirable characters; anti-democrats outnumber the non-aligned or the pro-democrats by a considerable factor. Of the fifteen interlocutors that Plato shows conversing with Socrates whose political affiliations we know, five are democrats and the rest are villains and traitors. Socrates was known to have taught and loved Alcibiades and Charmides; he taught Critias and Euthydemus, who was Critias's beloved; another of the Thirty, Aristotle of Thoraë, was at least in the Socratic circle, as was Cleitophon, who helped to prepare the ground for the oligarchy of 411 and was on the margins of the oligarchy of 404; at least seven of those who fled into exile as a result of the scandals of 415 were close associates; Xenophon was a student, and he was banished in the 390s from Athens for his anti-democratic and pro-Spartan leanings; in general, Socrates moved in the circles of those who were or were suspected of being oligarchs, and was close to the politically suspect Pythagoreans. Socrates could have been condemned just on the strength of his unfortunate associates and students, by those dikasts who knew nothing of his political and religious views.

But Socrates had been irritating people with his questions since about 440, was known to be the teacher of arrogant young men by the end of the 430s (his first mention in an extant comic fragment), and, whether or not my speculation about a conversion moment at Poteidaea is right, seems to have been committed to a political path for at least thirty years before his trial. To judge by the references to Socrates in the comic poets, his heyday was in the 420s and 410s, and he had somewhat dropped out of the limelight for at least a decade before his trial. It was twenty-four years since Aristophanes and Ameipsias had made him the most notorious atheist and subversive intellectual in Athens. Why take the elderly philosopher to court just then, in the spring of 399 BCE?

Like other intellectuals, Socrates became a target only once he was perceived as a threat to public order. His links to the Thirty changed his status from harmless eccentric to undesirable. He had been living on

borrowed time ever since the defeat of the Thirty in 403. This is not to say that the charge of impiety was, in some Stalinist sense, just a cover for a political trial: religion and society were so intimately connected that to charge Socrates with impiety was already to accuse him of being socially undesirable. The corruption charge was also implicitly political, since everyone would immediately have thought of the 'young' – Alcibiades, Critias and the oligarchic set of the 420s and 410s. There had been dark mutterings about the influence of Socrates over these baneful characters.

The general atmosphere was not at all conducive to Socrates' acquittal. The main topic of serious conversation after the fall of the Thirty was 'How did we come to this?' All the controversial figures and events of the previous thirty years were being rehashed and mined for significance; and the arguments about where they went wrong, and how they could have let the empire slip out of their grasp, often came back to the part Alcibiades had played in their downfall, or the part he might have played in restoring the city's fortunes, had he been allowed to, or had he been a little less . . . less Alcibiades. And the people looked on Socrates differently because of his association with the Thirty. As one who had stayed in Athens during their regime, Socrates had already been offered the opportunity to leave Athens and take up residence in Eleusis. He had refused; for a figurehead, a trial was the logical next step.

THE PROSECUTION TEAM

We now have the context to speculate about the motives of Socrates' prosecutors – Meletus of Pitthus, Lycon of Thoricus and Anytus of Euonymon. There were several men called Meletus within the relevant time-frame, but we know so little about them that we cannot even be sure how many there were. It is attractive to think that the Meletus who prosecuted Socrates is the same as the Meletus who had prosecuted another high-profile case of impiety, against Andocides, a few months earlier; this would give us a consistent picture of a religious conservative with the democracy at heart. But Plato has Socrates describe his Meletus as 'young and unknown', an unsuitable description for the prosecutor of Andocides, once one of the wealthiest men in Athens and a notorious anti-democrat.

There was also a Meletus who was involved in the arrest of Leon of Salamis during the regime of the Thirty. Since Socrates refused to take part in this arrest, his posthumous defenders would have made a lot of

the involvement of one of his prosecutors; and besides, if this Meletus were our Meletus, Socrates could hardly have said that Meletus was unknown to him. But we know from Andocides' defence speech that the Meletus who prosecuted him was also the one who took part in the arrest of Leon. In that case, our Meletus, Socrates' Meletus, is left out in the cold. His father may have been a writer of tragedies, of no great distinction. His obscurity makes it plausible to think that he was little more than a front man for the other two prosecutors, Anytus and Lycon, who were far more prominent figures in Athenian public life. This is confirmed by Socrates' words after the guilty verdict: 'There cannot be the slightest doubt that if Anytus and Lycon had not stepped up to prosecute me, Meletus would have become liable to the thousand-drachma fine for not having obtained a fifth of the votes.' The weight of Lycon and Anytus tipped the scales against Socrates – and it should come as no surprise that it was political weight.

We know very little about Lycon, except that he achieved some prominence as a democratic politician in the 400s, but the most plausible conjecture for his hostility towards Socrates is that he associated him with the Thirty, who had murdered his son. Lycon (if it is the same Lycon) features in Xenophon's *Symposium*, set in 422 BCE, when he was apparently on cordial terms with Socrates. But many years had passed since then, and the death of his beloved son may have turned his mind.

The most ominous of the accusers was Anytus. His political ascent is lost to us, and he first appears at the top of the tree, as a general, in 409. Pylos, on the south-western tip of the Peloponnese, had been in Athenian hands since 425, but had just been retaken by the Spartans. Anytus was entrusted with the task of recovering this important bridgehead. Bad weather prevented him from doing so and, as they so often did with unsuccessful generals, the Athenians decided to prosecute him, but he was acquitted – thanks to bribery, apparently.

At the end of the Peloponnesian War, Anytus was initially a supporter of the Thirty, or at least of Theramenes, but when ideology became more important than friendship he fled into exile to join Thrasybulus's resistance movement, abandoning his valuable business to the rapaciousness of the Thirty. He rapidly became one of the leaders of the resistance, to be mentioned in the same breath as Thrasybulus himself. He was equally prominent after the civil war, especially as one of the architects of the attempt to reconcile democrats and oligarchs and promote social concord. In a dialogue set in 402, Plato said that the Athenian people

were choosing Anytus for the most important positions in the state. He was plausibly described as one who served the democracy well, and as a man of power in the city.

His career after 399, however, is obscure. In popular tradition, the Athenian people regretted killing Socrates and took it out on the prosecutors, with various stories giving various versions of their gruesome ends. None of these moral tales is trustworthy. In any case, we are not now concerned with what happened to the prosecutors after the trial. The point is that two prominent democrats, one of whom was a hero of the revolution against the Thirty and still an eminent democratic politician, prosecuted Socrates; Socrates was undoubtedly being tried for his association with Critias. And this is precisely what we find that Athenians themselves believed: some fifty years later, in 345 BCE, Aeschines cited the case of 'Socrates the sophist', saying that he had been executed for teaching Critias.

After 403, Athenians wanted to stabilize the democracy, to prevent further oligarchic coups. This mood was so prevalent that, barring strong opposing reasons, the trial of a man such as Socrates, by these prosecutors, would inevitably be seen as politically motivated. With hindsight, we identify 404–403 as a great watershed in Athenian history, but hindsight must not blind us to the fact that Athenians at the time did not know that they had defeated the forces of tyranny and narrow oligarchy once and for all (or at least until the democracy was overwhelmed by an external power); they thought they were still fighting these internal enemies, shoring up the democracy. There had been an interval of seven years between the oligarchy of 411 and that of 404, so the relatively peaceful passage of a mere four years up to 399, or only two years since the final defeat of the oligarchs at Eleusis, would not seem to be grounds for complacency. Moreover, the Thirty had been imposed on Athens by Sparta, with the help of Persia, and neither of these two influences on Athenian events had evaporated. If it is true that Anytus was known as one of the architects of post-war concord, he had, for the sake of the democracy, to make an exception in the case of Socrates.

ANYTUS'S PROSECUTION SPEECH

There was an incredible amount of circumstantial and anecdotal evidence stacked up against Socrates. Just from this alone we could draw

up a list of things we might reasonably guess that the prosecutors might have said, but we do not have to resort entirely to guesswork, since at least some of the content of their speeches can be gleaned from three sources. The first two of these are the defence speeches written by Plato and Xenophon, since from time to time they appear to be responding to points that had been raised by the prosecution speeches; the third, and the most important, is a pamphlet published by Polycrates in 392.

Polycrates was an Athenian rhetorician, best known for writing paradoxical pieces defending famous villains or attacking famous heroes. None of his work survives, but some of it is reflected by others. His defence of the legendary Egyptian king Busiris, for instance, who had the nasty habit of slaughtering visitors to his country, met with an extended response from Isocrates. His other famous work was the *Prosecution Speech against Socrates*, which purported to be the speech Anytus had delivered at the trial. Its purpose was to advertise Polycrates' wares as an aspirant to the speech-writing profession and to express support for the democracy. It met with responses from both Xenophon and, centuries later, Libanius of Antioch (and presumably from unknown others in between).

Polycrates' pamphlet has long been sidelined as a way to reconstruct Anytus's speech, because most scholars believe that, since the end of the civil war in Athens, there had been a general amnesty that forbade reference to any crimes or alleged crimes committed before 403. Since Polycrates' pamphlet plainly contravened such an amnesty (for instance, by charging Socrates with having been Alcibiades' teacher), it seemed safe to ignore it. But we now know that there was no blanket amnesty. Socrates' prosecutors could have said pretty much anything they wanted at his trial (as they could have done even if there had been a blanket amnesty, as long as they did not refer specifically to pre-403 people and incidents; but that would have seriously weakened their case), and so there is nothing in what is recoverable of Polycrates' *Prosecution Speech against Socrates* that debars it from genuinely reflecting Anytus's actual speech. And this is what Xenophon suggests too: early in his *Recollections of Socrates*, when he refers to Polycrates' work, he attributes the arguments to 'the prosecutor' (or 'the accuser'), which looks very like a reference to Socrates' trial and to one of his three prosecutors.

The very nature of Polycrates' writing points in the same direction. Like his more illustrious predecessor Gorgias of Leontini, he was known

for writing paradoxical pieces, designed to display rhetorical skill in an unlikely cause. The name of the game was not the truth, but rhetorical display. But neither Gorgias's nor Polycrates' repertoire was restricted to paradox. If the *Prosecution Speech against Socrates* were mere entertainment, Xenophon would not have bothered to respond to it, since no one would have taken it seriously. There is a good possibility that Xenophon's 'accuser' is in fact Anytus, and so that we do know at least a little of what Socrates' prosecutors said in their speeches.

The basic tactic of a prosecution speech in the Athenian courts was to admit personal involvement, attempt to convert private to public anger by claiming to be acting in the public interest and by pointing out the defendant's criminal record and depraved, anti-democratic character, and argue that the preservation of the city depended on a guilty verdict. It is likely, then, that Anytus began with some such generalizations, before proceeding to the meat of his speech. Little of what follows is fanciful, though I have of course written it up myself; otherwise, it is based on the various later writings that seem to reflect the prosecution speeches.

Gentlemen, I will not take up much of your time. My friend Lycon, whose record on behalf of the city is known to you all, has yet to speak. Besides, you have already heard Meletus speak, and demonstrate that this man before you, Socrates of Alopece, is an out-and-out atheist, the leader of a weird cabal, and a sophist who teaches young men corrupt and subversive skills – teaches them to bypass honest citizens such as their fathers and their family friends in favour of his new-fangled, impious and immoral notions. He is no true citizen, but an acolyte of a god not recognized by the state. But I will say no more about the charge of impiety, so ably covered by my colleague, and will focus on the charge of corruption.

I do not need to take up your time because in all likelihood you already know what kind of man Socrates is; you have seen him in the Agora, surrounded by a gaggle of effeminate, lisping young men, and a scattering of emaciated older men. He also hangs out in the gymnasia, but I doubt many of you have seen him there, because you have better things to do with your time than ogle boys' bodies. And what does he do? What show does he put on for his audience? He latches on to one of you and forces you to

submit to his questions. And these are not innocent questions. No, he does not ask you the time of day or the way to Taureas's wrestling-school. To the great amusement of his disciples, he ties you up into sophistic knots and shames you, claiming to demonstrate that none of us knows what goodness is. He cleverly gives the impression that he himself does have such knowledge, though no one has ever heard him say what it is.

He supports his slippery arguments by reference to anti-democratic poets, and by these means he claims to show that our inherited values, which have nursed our fair city to greatness, are so riddled with inconsistencies as to be worthless. He perverts the ideas of our most noble poets, making out that Hesiod claimed that one should commit crimes in order to make a living, while our forefather Homer made Odysseus out to be a thief, said that the very Trojan War was a form of theft, and encouraged the thrashing of poor people – of you, the honest citizens of Athens. Well, let me remind him of what the great Hesiod said: 'Often all the citizens of a community suffer as a result of one bad man.'

And there can be no doubt that this man has harmed our community. Our city is founded on the values handed down by our fathers – yet Socrates teaches young men to ignore their fathers as useless, as incapable of teaching virtue, and encourages them to despise the laws and traditions. He feels himself to be so far above the city's morals that he would not stoop to teach others to lie and steal, and to do these things himself. His students typically think of themselves as smarter than their uneducated fathers – and where did they get that notion from? Socrates says that clever sons should restrain their ignorant fathers, in case their ignorance leads them to harm themselves. He equates ignorance, as a form of mindlessness, with insanity, and so calls you all insane!

The only true friend, he says, and the only true parent, is one who knows what is right – right, that is, by Socrates' private standards – and can explain it to others and guide them towards it. But he says this only to make himself appear the greatest friend to his students, and so to drive a wedge between them and their families. How can anyone take the place of a father, who has given his children the gift of life? It is hardly going too far to say that this man was solely responsible for the inter-generational

conflict that so afflicted our city a few years ago. He and he alone plunged the city into the crisis from which it is only now recovering. We must make sure that he does nothing to undermine this recovery.

It is well known that he mocks, and teaches others to mock, the lottery, the basis of our democratic egalitarianism and token of our trust in the gods. As if he were a loyal citizen, he says that the lottery actually harms the city. He wants to see a few men of knowledge in charge of the city – and what would we call that, if not oligarchy? He has long been known to favour Sparta and Spartan practices, which brings us back again to the elitist pederasty that he perpetuates. He is so far from encouraging his followers to play a part in the public life of our city, that by his very example as well as his words, he gets them to prefer idleness to undertaking their civic duties.

So far I have spoken in general about his followers. Let me now be more specific. Socrates was the teacher of Alcibiades and of Critias. I scarcely need to remind you of Alcibiades' deeds. This was a man who aspired to tyranny himself, instigated the oligarchic coup twelve years ago, profaned our most sacred Mysteries and may well have desecrated the herms. This was a man who aided both the Spartans and the Persians in their military efforts against us, when he could and should have put his undeniable talents towards helping us to win the war. This was a man who was cursed and banished, as a monster of impiety, and who had scarcely been restored by you, in your lenience, to our city, when his tyrannical ambition again raised its vile head and you rightly saw fit to banish him once more. Alcibiades was responsible for almost all the terrible things our city suffered during the war.

As for Critias, the terrible events he masterminded are too recent for you to need any reminders. He wanted to turn us into a satellite of Sparta; he wanted to wipe the slate clean of democracy and start again. In pursuit of this vision, he mercilessly killed fifteen hundred citizens or loyal metics, and stole the property of many more, whom he sent into exile. All Athenians of sound hearts and minds rose up in rebellion against him. What did Socrates do? He stayed in Athens; he stood by and watched as Critias drove Athenians out of the city, stole their property and

murdered their kinsmen. And why did he stay? Because Critias was one of his pupils – as were Charmides and Aristotle, men of scarcely less evil repute. Indeed, it would probably not surprise you to learn that many of Critias's ideas were gleaned from his master.

He will tell you that he is no teacher, and so that he never taught Alcibiades and Critias. He will call on his famous poverty to witness that he has never accepted money for teaching – when it proves only his utter eccentricity. He will tell you that a teacher should not, in any case, be blamed for his students' views. He will tell you that his views are not subversive or atheistic – and in fact that there is no one in Athens more moral and upright than him, a claim that I will not even bother to address. But is it just a coincidence that Alcibiades and Critias held views that were so similar to those of their master? Did they pluck them out of thin air? Everyone believes that teachers – not teachers of facts, but teachers of opinions, as he was – are responsible for their students' opinions. If he denies this, it is just another example of his contempt for what we, the common people, believe.

Along with the rest of the Three Thousand, he was offered the chance to retire to Eleusis, with no further retaliation for his wickedness. He did not have the common decency to take up the offer and avoid this trial; since he chose to stay and to appear in court, he deserves the death penalty. If you do not kill this man, you connive at the moral malaise that has gripped our fair city and which we are now doing our best to combat, and you will fail to deter future oligarchic revolutions, masterminded by this man himself or yet others of his circle. Look, even now he counts among his followers at least one relative of Critias, young Plato. It is up to you to protect our youth, the future of the city, by condemning this man to death.

Something like this is what Anytus seems to have said. Since he was focusing on the corruption aspect of the charge, he naturally emphasized how Socrates widened the gap between fathers and sons. Accustomed as we are nowadays to trying to bring up our children to be independent, their own men and women, Anytus might seem to be over-emphasizing a relatively trivial issue, but it was the single most important aspect of the charges against Socrates. It was not just

that he was impious and irreligious, but that he taught young men to be so too. Mogens Hansen was only slightly overstating the case when he said:

Socrates was not charged with being an atheist, but with being a missionary . . . A trial of a person who had his own views about the gods was rare, and a trial of a person who criticized the democratic institutions is unique. The presumption is that Socrates was not put on trial for having such views, but rather for having propagated them to his followers every day, year in, year out.

The generation gap seemed to threaten the very future of the city, since the continuity of the city was assumed to depend on the perpetuation of the values on which the fathers' generation had been reared, and of course simply on the sons' willingness to take up the reins of democratic government, which Socrates appeared to undermine. So it was up to Anytus, the driving force behind the prosecution, to address the corruption charge, and so also the majority of the explicit or implicit comments in our sources for Socrates' trial are concerned to rebut the idea that he misled the youth of Athens. Plato simply denied that Socrates was a teacher, a transmitter of information, and spent much of his life as a writer perpetuating an image of a Socrates who disappears so thoroughly behind a mask of irony and questioning that it is all but impossible to attribute views to him. At the most, Plato says, certain young men imitated Socrates' method of questioning.

Xenophon's tack was different. His Socrates is a fully fledged teacher, full of wise advice for all and sundry, and not slow to admit that he is an educational expert. In *The Education of Cyrus*, an idealized, fictional (and often tedious) account of the upbringing of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Persian empire, Xenophon tells a transparent fable. Tigranes, the son of the king of Armenia, was very fond of 'a certain sophist'. Cyrus had observed this, and one day asked Tigranes what had happened to this man. He was astonished to hear that the king had put the man to death, and asked why. 'According to my father, he was corrupting me,' replied the prince, and went on: 'But you know, Cyrus, that teacher of mine was such a paragon of virtue that even when he was just about to die, he called me over and said: "Don't be angry with your father for putting me to death, Tigranes. It's not malevolence, just ignorance, and I for one am sure that no one ever *intends* to make ignorant errors." ' The Armenian king happened to overhear Cyrus's question to

his son, and explained that he had killed the teacher 'because it seemed to me that, under his influence, my son was looking up to him more than me'.

The moral is as plain as Xenophon meant it to be, and has long been recognized. The wise teacher, identifiable as Socrates by his voicing a core Socratic belief (that no one does wrong on purpose), was killed because he made Alcibiades, or the *jeunesse dorée* of Athens in general, prefer him to the state, represented in the story by the Armenian king. His condemnation was a direct response to the social crisis.

A SCAPEGOAT

Socrates was taken to court as a figurehead – precisely as Plato suggested by identifying as his most potent enemies the 'old accusers', who had made Socrates a figurehead. He was punished for the inter-generational conflict, which was caused by social factors rather than by individuals, and certainly not by a single individual; he was punished as a morally subversive teacher, when there were others who could equally have had this odd charge pinned on them; he was punished as a critic of democracy, when he was far from alone; even Critias and Alcibiades were products of the time rather than of his teaching. Socrates was put to death because the Athenians wanted to purge themselves of undesirable trends, not just of an undesirable individual.

At the end of the war, the Athenians could look back on a record of moral uncertainty, which had led them to episodes of ruthless brutality. They also knew that from time to time they had behaved with the utmost stupidity – in their treatment of the Arginusae generals, for instance, or in turning down respectable peace offers from Sparta. But over and above these human faults, there was the divine. In a society so thoroughly permeated and cemented by religious sentiment, catastrophe could only be seen as a sign of the gods' displeasure. Athens had just lost a war; the gods were clearly not on the city's side.

Since the gods were motivated by reciprocity, the removal of their goodwill towards the city proved that the Athenians had let them down somehow, and deserved to be punished. In other words, there was a vein of impiety in the city, which the gods were punishing. The easiest way to deal with such a trend was to make it particular, to attribute it to a single individual. This mental leap was facilitated by

the Greek concept of pollution, which was seen as a kind of pernicious vapour that could spread from even a single individual and infect an entire community. Punishing a murderer was as much a religious as a legal obligation, since his miasma had to be prevented from spreading. Even animals and inanimate objects that had 'caused' a human death could be 'tried' and, once found guilty, killed or banished beyond the city's borders.

But since it was impossible to guarantee that all sources of pollution had been dealt with, once a year, in the month of Thargelion (the eleventh month of the Athenian calendar, roughly equivalent to our May), two people, one representing the men of the community and wearing a necklace of black figs, the other representing the women and wearing green figs, were driven out of the city. Much remains obscure about this ritual, known as the Thargelia (the month was named after it). Both the scapegoats were paupers or criminals, and once they were outside the city walls, they were flogged. The festival lasted for two days, with the expulsion on the 6th of the month, and then feasting and enjoying the good things the expulsion had made possible on the following day.

The usual Greek words for 'scapegoat' (the English word derives from the ancient Judaic practice of using a goat rather than a human) were *katharma* ('scouring') or *pharmakos*, which is closely related to *pharmakon*, meaning 'medicine' or 'remedy': the scapegoat carried away the city's ills (somehow symbolized in Athens by dried figs) and cured it. In fact, the ritual probably started as an attempt to prevent or cure disease; hence it was sacred to Apollo, the god of disease. The flogging, and the symbolic death of expulsion from the community, diluted the ancient practice of actually killing the scapegoat. Voluntary scapegoats were far more propitious than unwilling ones, and there would always be criminals available who preferred a ritual flogging and expulsion to whatever fate the courts had decreed for them.

There are issues here that were still vital for Socrates' contemporaries in Athens, not just because the annual ritual was still carried out, but also because all Athenians were constantly being reminded of the importance of self-sacrifice for the good of the city. The Parthenon, the temple of Athena on the Acropolis, was completed in 438, and its sculptures by 434. On the interpretation of the frieze that I prefer, the story it told was one of the main Athenian foundation myths, the

legend of King Erechtheus and his daughters. Faced with a barbarian invasion, Apollo told the king that he would have to sacrifice one of his three daughters to save the city, and in order to spare him the impossible choice, all three chose to die.

We are faced with a number of strange coincidences, on which it might be hazardous to construct much of an edifice. But Apollo was not only the god of the Thargelia and of the legendary king's daughters' self-sacrifice; he was also Socrates' god, the one who had prompted his mission in Plato's story, the one whose moral maxims (such as 'know yourself') Socrates felt himself to be perpetuating and, as the god of divination, the one who was probably the source of his little voice. Perhaps most astonishingly, 6 Thargelion, the first day of the scapegoat festival, was Socrates' birthday – or so the tradition had it. But even if this is a fabrication or a guess, it suggests that someone made a connection between Socrates and the Thargelia.

I like to think that Socrates, the devotee of Apollo, accepted his death, as a voluntary scapegoat. He had failed to see his vision for Athens become a reality, and no doubt if he were still free he would think that the continuation of his mission was the best chance Athens had for regeneration. But that was in the past. If, even in a temporary fit of post-war zeal, the Athenians thought it would take the death of a troublesome thinker to heal the rifts in the city and to create the concord that all politicians appeared to be committed to, and that he himself had worked for in his own way, so be it. Rather than escape, as he easily could, he let himself be killed.

Socrates' last words, uttered to his old friend Crito from his deathbed in prison as the poison took hold of his body, were: 'Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius. Please make sure you pay the debt.' Asclepius was the healing god, whose worship had been introduced into Athens less than thirty years previously. These famous and mysterious words have attracted numerous interpretations. I would like to add one more. Playing on the close link between *pharmakos* and *pharmakon*, 'scapegoat' and 'cure', Socrates saw himself as healing the city's ills by his voluntary death. A thanks offering to the god of healing was due.

Glossary

- Agora:** a combination of central city square, marketplace and administrative centre.
- Archon:** literally, 'leader'. The term was used to describe various high officials of Athenian government at different points of its history. In the classical period, there were nine annually selected archons: the Eponymous Archon (who gave his name to the year), the King Archon, the Polemarch (war-leader), and six *thesmothetai* (originally responsible for law and order).
- Deme:** Cleisthenes' reforms in 508 included the assignment of all Athenian citizens, and their future descendants, to one of 139 demes ('villages', 'parishes'), for constitutional and identificatory purposes. The registration of eighteen-year-olds in their ancestral deme constituted their entry into Athenian citizenship. A deme, then, was an Athenian citizen's ancestral parish, whether or not he still lived there, and was used for personal identification: Socrates Sophroniscou [son of Sophroniscus], of [the deme] Alopece.
- Dēmos:** the common people. For a democrat, the word meant every citizen irrespective of wealth and other social markers; for a member of the elite, it meant everyone except other members of the elite, i.e. 'the masses'.
- Dikast:** a member of an Athenian jury, which combined the functions of judge and jury.
- Ephor:** literally, 'overseer'. The name of a high official in Sparta – and, temporarily, in Athens in 404.
- Helot:** an agricultural serf in Laconia and Messenia, which had been conquered by Sparta.
- Hetaireia:** a club or association of like-minded men, usually aristocrats; formed originally for social reasons, but capable of becoming politicized.
- Hoplite:** a heavy-armed footsoldier, armed, typically, with a helmet, a corselet with a short protective skirt, bronze greaves for the shins, and above all a large, round, concave shield, about 90 cm in diameter,

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- 182 *ignored by . . . commentators*: for instance, the most influential paper on Socrates' attitude towards the Athenian democracy – Vlastos, 'The Historical Socrates and Athenian Democracy' – fails to mention even once that Socrates chose to stay in Athens during the rule of the Thirty.
- 182 *Leon of Salamis*: Plato, *Apology* 32c–d; see also Xenophon, *Recollections of Socrates* 4.4.3. The only difference is that in Plato Socrates refused because of the immorality of the arrest, while Xenophon stresses its illegality.
- 183 *widely reputed*: e.g. Aristophanes, *Birds* 1281–2: 'Everyone was mad about Sparta in those days – growing their hair long, starving themselves, never washing, Socratizing.'
- 184 "'On another occasion . . . taking part in it?': Xenophon, *Recollections of Socrates* 1.6.15; see also especially 2.1 and 3.1–7. Socrates is less pessimistic than Plato: Socrates wanted to remodel society, but Plato thought one would have to start again from scratch (*Republic* 501a).
- 185 *now ready for moral regeneration*: Xenophon, *Recollections of Socrates* 3.5.5.
- 187 *In Aeschines of Sphettus's version*: fr. 9 Dittmar (= Giannantoni VI A51). The loss of Aeschines' Socratic writings is especially regrettable; some of the fragments of his *Alcibiades* are translated in G. C. Field, *Plato and His Contemporaries*, 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 1948), 146–52, or in Trevor Saunders (ed.), *Plato: Early Socratic Dialogues* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 377–9.
- 187 *Xenophon adds . . . Socrates' guidance*: *Recollections of Socrates* 1.2.24–5, 39.
- 188 *Aeschines . . . included the poignant rider*: fr. 11c Dittmar (= Giannantoni VI A53).
- 188 *Charmides, Euthydemus . . . and Critobulus*: Xenophon, *Recollections of Socrates* 2.6 (Critobulus), 3.7 (Charmides), 4.2–3, 5 (Euthydemus); 3.1–6 are also relevant.
- 188 *Xenophon . . . as king or tyrant*: Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus (Anabasis)* 5.6.15–18, 6.4.1–7, 6.4.14, 6.6.4, 7.1.21.
- 188 *the dialogue Theages*: on which see Mark Joyal, *The Platonic Theages* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000). We happen to know, from Plato, that Theages was expected to make his mark as an Athenian politician, but suffered from some illness that, fortunately, turned him to philosophy instead (*Republic* 496b–c) but, unfortunately, killed him young (*Apology* 34a).
- 188 "'What do you imagine . . . stop him succeeding?': Plato, *Republic* 494c–e; the whole brilliant passage 487b–502c should be read.
- 189 *a few pages earlier*: Plato, *Republic* 491e.
- 190 *Was he cataleptic?:* mystic: Bussanich (above, n. to p. 44); thinking: most commentators; catalepsy: Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1946), 109 – and note that in Russell's day catalepsy was usually taken to be a symptom of mental illness. In any case, they are all interpreting the remarks of Plato at *Symposium* 220c–d.
- 190 *his first question*: Plato, *Charmides* 153d.

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- 191 *a tidy story*: Xenophon, *Apology* 28.
- 192 *at least seven of those who fled into exile*: see the list in Nails, *People of Plato*, 18, which includes Phaedrus, Eryximachus, Acumenus, Axiochus, Charmides, Critias and Alcibiades. See Nails also for brief essays on the people I listed in this paragraph as Socrates' unfortunate associates: the evidence is their occurrence, especially as Socratic interlocutors, in either or both of Plato's and Xenophon's works.
- 192 *his first mention in an extant comic fragment*: see above, note to p. 10.
- 193 *'young and unknown'*: *Euthyphro* 2b.
- 194 *from Andocides' defence speech*: 1.94 (*On the Mysteries*).
- 194 *'There cannot be the slightest doubt . . . fifth of the votes'*: Plato, *Apology* 36a–b.
- 194 *bribery, apparently*: see ps.-Aristotle, *The Athenian Constitution* 27.5.
- 194 *mentioned in the same breath*: Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.3.42–4.
- 194 *Plato said . . . important positions in the state*: *Meno* 90b; see also Xenophon, *Apology* 29.
- 195 *He was plausibly described*: Andocides 1.150 (*On the Mysteries*); Isocrates 18.23 (*Against Callimachus*).
- 195 *various stories giving various versions*: Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History* 14.37.7, has both Meletus and Anytus executed by the Athenians without trial; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 2.43, has only Meletus put to death, with Anytus banished – only to be banished again as soon as he arrived at the city where he had chosen to see out his exile. Further references in Chroust, *Socrates, Man and Myth*, n. 1184.
- 195 *'Socrates the sophist'*: Aeschines 1.173 (*Against Timarchus*).
- 196 *response from Isocrates*: Isocrates 11 (*Busiris*).
- 197 *later writings that seem to reflect the prosecution speeches*: Xenophon, *Recollections of Socrates* 1.1 and 1.2 are both expressly defences of Socrates against the charges of, respectively, irreligion and corrupting young men; 1.2.9–61 responds to 'the accuser'. Libanius's *Apology of Socrates* contains a few passages that are useful in this regard. Other incidentally relevant passages are Isocrates, *Busiris* 5; Plato, *Meno* 90b–95a (the conversation with Anytus); and several places in both Plato's and Xenophon's versions of Socrates' defence speeches which seem to respond to the prosecution speeches – e.g. Plato, *Apology* 24d–28a and Xenophon, *Apology* 19–21 (the dialogues with Meletus); Plato, *Apology* 33a on Socrates' denial that he was a teacher; Plato, *Apology* 29c and 33a on Anytus calling for the death penalty. The scholar who has done the most to reconstruct Polycrates' pamphlet is Chroust, in *Socrates, Man and Myth*.
- 198 *'Often all the citizens of a community suffer as a result of one bad man'*: Hesiod, *Works and Days* 240.
- 201 *'Sokrates was not charged . . . year in, year out'*: Hansen, 'The Trial of Sokrates', 160–1.

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- 201 *Plato simply denied that Socrates was a teacher*: *Apology* 19d–20c, 33a–b, and in general his regular disavowal of knowledge (and even *need* for a teacher: *Laches* 201a). These features are not to be found in Xenophon's Socrates.
- 201 *young men imitated Socrates' method*: Plato, *Apology* 23c, 33c, 37d.
- 201 *not slow to admit*: Xenophon, *Apology* 20.
- 201 *a transparent fable*: Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus* 3.1.14, 38–40.
- 202 *long been recognized*: see the reference to Jean Brodeau's 1555 commentary on *The Education of Cyrus* by Gera, 'Xenophon's Socrateses', 39, n. 18.
- 202 *'old accusers'*: Plato, *Apology* 18a ff.
- 203 *Much remains obscure about this ritual*: see Parker, *Polytheism and Society*, 481–3 for the most important texts, and for discussion Parker, *Miasma*, ch. 9, and Bremmer, 'Scapegoat Rituals'.
- 203 *the ancient Judaic practice*: Leviticus 16: 20–2.
- 203 *the interpretation of the frieze that I prefer*: Joan Breton Connelly, 'Parthenon and Parthenoi: A Mythological Interpretation of the Parthenon Frieze', *American Journal of Archaeology* 100 (1996), 53–80.
- 204 *he was also Socrates' god*: see C. D. C. Reeve, 'Socrates the Apollonian?', in the Smith and Woodruff collection *Reason and Religion in Socratic Philosophy*.
- 204 *felt himself to be perpetuating*: Plato, *Alcibiades* 124a, *Charmides* 164e–165a; Xenophon, *Recollections of Socrates* 3.9.6, 4.2.24.
- 204 *Socrates' birthday*: Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 2.44, on the authority of Apollodorus of Athens, a chronographer of the second century BCE.
- 204 *the best chance Athens had for regeneration*: see Plato, *Apology* 30a, 31a, 36c–d.
- 204 *Socrates' last words*: Plato, *Phaedo* 118a.
- 204 *numerous interpretations*: the most recent paper on the subject known to me (Peterson, 'An Authentically Socratic Conclusion') helpfully lists no fewer than twenty-one. The most widely accepted is the attractive idea that Socrates has been 'cured' from the sickness of life.

Bibliography

In this book, I have attempted to pull together in a single volume a large number of strands of ancient Athenian society, history, politics, personalities and culture. My reading has been equivalently wide and varied, and has consisted of more articles and chapters than of books. This is by way of apology to lay readers for the absence of some elements of this bibliography, and for its extent: no one can claim to have read exhaustively in this period of ancient Athenian history, but I have read, or read or dipped into countless books and articles in the course of my research. Many of the works I have read disagree with one another, but in order to make the material in this book accessible to as wide a readership as possible, and in order to keep the book short, I have omitted most of the caveats scholars normally include. This means that I have included in this bibliography more, and more scholarly works than is usual in a popular history book, so that anyone wishing to pursue the controversies I have glossed over, and to see how different reconstructions might be possible, has sufficient material to begin with. What follows, then, should be regarded as what I consider to be the best, in terms of some combination of relevance, clarity, importance, controversy and readability (up to the middle of the book when research on this book effectively ended). I have focused on English-language material, and marked with an asterisk those secondary works which seem to me to be both reasonably accessible and of considerable importance to the topics covered in this book. The primary texts are of course all of fundamental importance.

HISTORY

The most important ancient texts are Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, which is best read in the edition of Robert Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), with the revised version of Richard Crawley's 1874 translation; Xenophon, *Hellenica* (translated as *A History of My Times* by Rex Warner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973)) and pseudo-Aristotle, *The Athenian Constitution*, translated by E. V. Rieu (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984). The relevant parts of Diodorus Sicily's *Library of History* (books 12 to 14, available

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