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Many questions persist today concerning the circumstances surrounding Socrates' trial and execution, as well as his life and the substance of his philosophical views. How and why was Socrates brought to trial? Why did the Athenian jurors, who were after all members of the world's first democracy, find him guilty? Were the official charges against Socrates in fact trumped up? Was the real motivation behind his conviction political? Why did Socrates refuse to accept the opportunity to escape execution and instead submit to a verdict that both he and his friends thought unjust? Would we not expect Socrates, of all people, to refuse to carry out a legal injunction that he considered immoral?

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subversive and potentially threatening (e.g., for moral, religious, political or cultural reasons) have been, and ought to be, treated by their respective communities, especially when these communities pride themselves on their alleged adherence to democratic values and principles. To appreciate the contemporary relevance of Socrates' trial and execution, it is useful to compare his treatment at the hands of the Athenians with similar recent incidents, which particularly resonate with us (e.g., the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X or the controversy involving Edward Snowden).

This volume explores these and other questions connected with Socrates' trial and execution. Its topic invites an *interdisciplinary* approach, since an informed evaluation of whether the Athenians were justified in their condemnation of Socrates requires not only an examination of Socrates' alleged philosophical positions, but also an appreciation of his historical, political, and cultural milieu. To this end, this special issue collects essays from scholars working in a variety of disciplines, including classics, history, medicine, philosophy, and religious studies. The resulting interdisciplinary examination contributes valuable new insights to the existing literature surrounding Socrates' trial and execution.

Both Frances Pownall and Orestis Karavas approach their subject matter from a historical perspective. In her essay, "Socrates' Trial and Execution in Xenophon's *Hellenica*," Pownall innovatively re-examines the early parts of Xenophon's *Hellenica* and argues that Xenophon can be read as offering pointed political commentary on Socrates' trial and execution, even without explicitly mentioning these events. In particular, the narrative of Alcibiades' return to Athens is crafted to undermine the alleged hero's triumphant homecoming. Such a damning portrait of Alcibiades, argues Pownall, effectively distances Socrates from a man he was infamously associated with to his detriment. Nor does the Athenian *demos* come out unscathed, being portrayed as tyrannical and fickle. In other words, Pownall argues that Xenophon intends his audience to view this episode as a "subtextual defense of Socrates and critique of the Athenian democracy." Pownall next turns to the condemnation of the generals after the battle of Arginusae, noting that this is the only appearance of Socrates in the *Hellenica* and shows him in a heroic light. Moreover, the lengthy speech by Euryptolemus (Alcibiades' cousin), denouncing the *demos*' actions in trying the generals *en masse*, may be seen as a vindication in speech of Socrates' brave action, in that it castigates the indictment as both illegal and impious. Finally, Pownall adduces the showdown between Critias and Theramenes (2.3.15–56). Xenophon presents their confrontation as, in appearance, a trial, but in reality, "an illustration of the tyrannical behaviour of the Thirty in general and Critias in particular." All of these episodes, argues Pownall, reveal that Xenophon succeeds in subtly evoking Socrates on trial as an innocent victim of a tyrannical democracy.

In "Le procès et l'exécution de Socrate chez trois auteurs de l'époque impériale," Orestis Karavas focuses on the later reception of Socrates' trial and execution by three authors of the imperial era: Plutarch, Dio

Chrysostom, and Lucian. Plutarch refers directly to Socrates several times in his *Moralia*. In *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander*, he compares Socrates and his disciples with Alexander and his followers, concluding that Alexander had won over more adherents than had Socrates. In *On Envy and Hate*, Plutarch adduces the harsh treatment of Socrates' accusers subsequent to his execution in terms of a tragedy. But whereas his accusers remained anonymous "sycophants" in this work, both Anytos and Meletos are explicitly named in *Whether Vice Be Sufficient to Cause Unhappiness*. Finally, in *On Stoic Self-Contradiction*, Plutarch criticizes Chrysippus' theory regarding divine providence by citing Socrates, along with other philosophers, as a good man who suffered an ignominious death. Although Socrates is a favourite of Dio Chrysostom, Dio refers to his condemnation only three times. In Discourse 47, *His Efforts to Beautify Prusa*, Dio identifies himself with Socrates in order to portray himself as loyal to his fatherland, despite certain of his fellow citizens' opposition. But Dio's most sustained reference to Socrates' trial and execution is Discourse 43, *A Political Address*, where he again likens himself to Socrates, in that he must defend himself against false accusations. Dio's final reference occurs in Discourse 66, *On Reputation*, which examines the inconstancy of those who condemn people whom they had formerly praised. Like Dio, Lucian mentions Socrates several times. In *Demonax*, Lucian compares Demonax with Socrates because he similarly aroused admiration from some and antipathy from others. And, like Socrates, he was condemned on two charges of atheism. Socrates is again mentioned in *Zeus Catechized*, in which Cyniscos interrogates Zeus regarding the role of gods in the lives of mortals. After citing a series of bad men rewarded, Cyniscos turns to a group of good men punished, foremost among whom is Socrates. He appears once more in *Slander*, unjustly slandered as irreligious and a traitor. And in *The Double Indictment*, Zeus claims that Socrates was executed because the Athenians were as yet unfamiliar with Socrates' brand of philosophy, and so inclined more toward Anytos and Meletos. The *topos* of the false accusation against Socrates appears once more in *The Runaways*, where Zeus recounts Peregrinos' encounter with Philosophy personified. But whereas *Philosophia* is in tears as she recounts her plight, Socrates remained equanimous throughout.

In his essay, "Greek Piety and the Charge against Socrates," Steven Muir lends us his expertise in religious studies and fills in important background on how properly to interpret the impiety charge that was levelled against Socrates by the Athenians. Muir cautions us to resist adopting an anachronistic stance concerning religion that emphasizes internal individualistic devotion—as is prevalent, for example, in the Protestant Christian tradition—over group-based ritualistic practices. In ancient times, Muir argues, religion was understood to be action-oriented and group-situated, based on precisely the patron-client relationship Socrates is shown to challenge and ridicule in Plato's *Euthyphro*. Since ancient religious practices were also inseparably intertwined with institutions of power, Muir suggests that

religion in the ancient world was used to legitimize authority figures both within the family and within the state. Given this picture, it is easy to see how Socrates' derogatory attitude to mainstream religious practices could have easily gotten him into trouble with his contemporaries, who might have felt threatened and undermined by his attacks.

The interplay between Socrates' peculiar brand of questioning and political authority is also at issue and examined from a philosophical point of view in Santiago Ramos' essay, "The *Hippias Major* and Political Power." In determining whether Socrates' death may be attributed to his engagement with political power, Ramos looks at the clash between politics and philosophy through the lens of tragedy. Noting that the *Hippias Major* concludes with a dramatic prophecy of Socrates' state-decreed death, Ramos examines the preceding discussion of "the beautiful" to determine how such a seemingly innocuous topic could so infuriate Hippias as to lead him to obliquely threaten Socrates. After examining both Hippias' definitions of "the beautiful" and Socrates' challenging responses, Ramos next discusses how Socrates' opinions influence his treatment of Hippias and how Hippias responds to this critique. More broadly, Ramos steps back from the dialogue to look at how Hippias and Socrates were both executed by state decree. So while Hippias' prophecy ultimately comes true, he himself remains unaware of his own tragic fate, one that his own brand of sophistry and political machinations cannot assuage, unlike the consolatory philosophy of Socrates. Finally, building upon Alisdair MacIntyre's definition of tragedy, Ramos argues that both Hippias and Socrates are protagonists in their own tragedies, since both manifest particular tragic flaws. Hippias' tragic flaw is that, by rejecting Socrates' philosophical approach to beauty, he remains mired in his solipsistic ways, and ultimately pays the price with his own life. Socrates' tragic flaw, ironically, is that by embracing a philosophical approach to beauty, he necessarily fails to defend himself from the state, just as Hippias obliquely hints.

A curious and intriguing dichotomy emerges when we juxtapose Travis Butler's essay, "Socrates as Doctor: The Place of Care in His Diagnosis and Remedy," with Osamu Muramoto's essay, "Solving the Socratic Problem—A Contribution from Medicine": the former offers a philosophical interpretation of Socrates *as doctor*, while the latter approaches Socrates *as a patient* on medical grounds. According to Butler, Socrates—in his role *as doctor*—diagnoses the Athenians as suffering from a particular kind of ethical sickness—namely a lack of knowledge concerning what to care for, that is, a kind of ignorance concerning the objective order of importance and value. The dramatic and no doubt off-putting remedy Socrates prescribes to his fellow citizens as a cure for their disease is to recognize the worthlessness of their current lives and to replace them with lives that are founded on a radically different set of cares and values. Instead of assigning preferential value to their bodies, wealth, honour, and other external goods, Butler argues, Socrates demands of the Athenians that they instead live their lives in pursuit of virtue and truth, the best possible state of their souls and their

city. Given the wholesale reorientation entailed by Socrates' proposed remedy, Butler's interpretation nicely brings out how Socrates' fate could have ultimately been sealed by the prevalence of mistaken values and distorted characters among his accusers and the jurors presiding over his verdict.

In his essay, "Solving the Socratic Problem—A Contribution from Medicine," Osamu Muramoto switches places: he assigns himself the role of doctor and Socrates that of patient. Drawing on his own first-hand experience in diagnosing patients, Muramoto argues that a reasonable case can be made, based on textual evidence from Socrates' contemporaries (especially Plato and Xenophon, and to a lesser extent, Aristophanes), that Socrates may have suffered from a disease now known as "temporal lobe epilepsy." After responding to potential objections to the methodology of retrospective diagnosis, Muramoto points to specific episodes and peculiar behaviour ascribed to Socrates in the written record, particularly Socrates' so-called *daimonion*, his predilection to stand still for long periods of time, and his failure to recall even very recent events in which he himself participated, such as a speech he had just delivered. Such episodes, Muramoto argues, are consistent with the proposed diagnosis that Socrates suffered from temporal lobe epilepsy starting in early childhood and continuing throughout his adult life. Various of the personality traits attributed to Socrates, Muramoto notes, are commonly associated with individuals who suffer from this neurological disorder, such as hyposexuality, hyperreligiosity, hypermorality, and hypergraphia (or, in Socrates' case, hyperverbosity). Although Muramoto wants to leave it to scholars to draw further interpretive conclusions from this proposed diagnosis, he does suggest that, insofar as the charge of impiety is connected to Socrates' *daimonion*, the Athenians may have wrongly accused him of inventing new divinities, if Socrates' first-person experience can in fact be traced to a well-known neurological symptom. A similar attitude may be warranted with respect to some of the other strange and notorious behaviour attributed to Socrates, which may have ruffled his contemporaries' feathers.

After seeing Socrates represented both in philosophical terms as doctor and in medical terms as patient, we find John Harris applying the methods of comparative philology to shed light on Plato's well-known simile in which Socrates is pictured as a *gadfly* targeting the *horse* representing the Athenians. In his essay, "Flies, Wasps, and Gadflies: The Role of Insect Similes in Homer, Aristophanes, and Plato," Harris argues that the gadfly simile has epic and comic precedents that Plato deliberately evokes to highlight this insect's pejorative and positive connotations. Homer's *Iliad* contains four fly similes and two wasp similes. While three of the fly similes evoke pastoral scenes, they also contain latent martial qualities. The fourth fly simile describes how Athena instills in Menelaus the persistent daring of a fly. This last is remarkable for highlighting its tenacious audacity in protecting what it loves in the face of significant odds, and for presenting the scene from the fly's perspective. Both of these features are adopted and adapted by Plato in his gadfly simile. Homer handles his two wasp similes similarly. As with the

last of his fly similes, the wasp similes underscore the ferocity of wasps when attacked, their tenacity in persisting against all odds, and their concern for their offspring. Harris next turns to Aristophanes' *Wasps* and argues that, granted their waspish irascibility, a lesser-known feature is also brought to the fore: their role as defenders of their homeland against Persian invaders. But defence of their homeland does not stop there; they are also prepared to attack any they believe are not pulling their weight within the city. Harris argues that, just as Homer and Aristophanes use insect similes, which normally carry negative connotations, to bring out hitherto unsuspected laudable features, Plato uses his gadfly simile for similar purposes. By thus elevating the disgusting gadfly and abasing the noble horse, Plato evokes both epic and comic precedent in likening Socrates to a gadfly. In short, Plato uses this lowly insect for lofty ends.

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