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Conviction of Socrates

When we fell to the Thirty, our government was the first thing to go in order for the many to be ruled by the few. It was a dark time of death, disease, and oppression. The Thirty are now gone, even if their followers are still in our midst. But more importantly the man who educated the leader of those that overthrew us, Critias, is still within our borders. He remains protected within our walls. Socrates has come to be known as a man of thought, an educator of young minds. He has influence many, but his ideals and teachings are not the seeds we want taking root in the minds of our youth. We do not want the next generation being raised to believe that the ideal state is to be ruled by guardians, or that one class is superior in government to another. Athens is a democracy where all Athenians should have the opportunity to take part in their government. We are all here today because this great democracy is fighting to regain its stability after the turmoil of war. Socrates is one pebble on the scale that would cause our government to fall to the ground.

In Socrates’ lessons, he teaches that an ideal state is to be made of three classes: guardians, auxiliaries, and producers (Ober, Norman, & Carnes). Guardians are to be the smallest class that acts as the governing body. Auxiliaries would be the warriors and protectors of the state. Finally, producers would be the largest but lowest class of the three groups meant to support all ruling decisions made by the guardians while producing all sources of commerce and trade that keep the economy afloat. Is this not similar to the form of government we so recently defeated? Socrates believes that the ideal state is meant to be ruled by the few, more specifically the few who have been educated in philosophy. This is not the mindset that we wish for our future assemblymen to adopt. After educating one tyrant to take control of our city, who is to say that Socrates will not do so again if we allow him access to students? We have no proof that he will not use his power of knowledge for personal gain. This is why Socrates must no longer have access to our sons and daughters. He is a danger to our democratic way of life.

Democracy is not the only aspect of our current lives that Socrates threatens. His philosophical ideals state that we must only take explanations that we are able to interpret through our senses (Ober et al.). This means that the wonders and gifts that the gods give to us are not wonders at all. These happenings are only coincidence according to Socrates’ discussions. This is not a belief that any Athenian should share when he is living in a great state named after the great Athena, goddess of war and wisdom. In two of our past three assemblies, we have voiced a prayer for Athena’s guidance and wisdom in our proceedings, yet we allow his philosophies to be taught. The gods have given us food, fortune, and victory and he repays their good graces by stating that he knows “nothing of the gods”(Coffin, Stacey, & Burns 93), but we allow him to make such statements.

In our last assembly, Aristarchus discussed honor and how it is an honor to participate in our government and that we should all commit to participating in as many assemblies that we are able. More specifically, he stated that “honor must stand above our greed”(Salazar). If we allow Socrates to remain behind our walls and under our protection, our honor will fall to ruins, for it is not honorable to protect one that has been the cause of so much destruction to our way of life. It is not honorable to take power from our working citizens only to give it to others that naturally possess “superior attributes of intelligence and character”(Coffin et al. 101). Socrates’ ideal state is currently an idea, but it is slowly finding followers willing to put the idea into action. It is our responsibility to preserve our way of life and exile, if not execute, any man who threatens it.

At our most recent Assembly, Rhinon asked if we do not all “strive towards the same goal of reconstruction of a great city”(Soupir) and I bring this question before you again today. Are we not one body working to achieve greatness once again? Why would we wish to adapt the views of Socrates to become a divided state of workers, protectors, and rulers? Socrates is the source of this plan for another society. This threat can no longer be protected or overlooked. Now is the time to protect our way of life from division between our people. Socrates is one man, one man that has proven his influence to many individuals. A man that has made a fool of many here today through his questioning of democracy, gods, and the nature of our fallen city’s needs. We were once great and we will be great again, but not with this man in our midst to sow doubt and uncertainty. He must leave to never return or be executed. Socrates is too dangerous to be held inside the walls of Athens where he has the resources to overthrow our recovering state once again. There may have been a place for him behind these walls years ago, before he was the teacher of Critias, but that was years ago and this is now. Socrates has taken his actions, now we must take ours.

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