MATHEW

Socrates Argument Paper

In ancient Greece, the sciences and arts flourished under a democracy in one of the most famous city-states, Athens. One of the most major subjects that spread throughout Athens like a wildfire was philosophy. Philosophy was mostly able to prosper due to a single teacher, Socrates. Known for his wisdom and power in government, Socrates questioned society, authority, and noble men, making them doubt their position of power. It was because of Socrates annoying behavior in society that had him end up going to court, with accusations coming from multiple people. It is known that Socrates was guilty, and eventually sentenced to death, due to his impiety and corruption of the youth. The reason that the prosecution team of Socrates’ trial was able to have a swift victory and have Socrates put to death was because of Socrates conflicting impiety towards the gods, attempts to disrupt society and democracy, and his relationship with the notorious tyrant, Critias.

According to *The Apology*, written by Socrates’ famed student Plato, Socrates was charged for being impious towards the gods. “A certain man called Chaerephon had inquired of the oracle of Delphi whether there was anyone wiser than Socrates. The oracle had answered the question in the negative, thus making it clear that Socrates was indeed the wisest of all the men in Athens.” (*The Apology)* According to Socrates, this is the reason why he questioned noble men and made them look idiotic. He was trying to see if the Oracle of Delphi was correct in stating that he was the wisest man in Athens. This seems like a logical explanation, but Socrates said so himself that he was impious towards the gods. If he was impious towards the gods, why should Socrates believe in the Oracle of Delphi if the Oracle itself was directly involved with mythology and gods? From this, it is clear that Socrates contradicts himself in stating he is impious towards the gods. Another example of Socrates being impious towards the gods was by creating new gods. “Men of Athens, I honor and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you…” (*The Apology)* According to Socrates’ own statement, he believes in this new god, since he does not believe in the gods of Greece. Who is this God? Where is this God from? It is clear that from Socrates’ own statement that he has created this new god to believe in, instead of having faith in the other gods. In creating new gods and contradicting himself with mythology, Socrates’ has only hurt himself in trial by making the statement true that he has been impious towards the gods.

The next charge Socrates’ is faced with is questioning society and democracy. Democracy was the form of government Athens established. Society was happy and healthy under democracy and there was order throughout Athens. Democracy allowed citizens to have freedom, such as freedom of speech, writing, and work. Socrates’ questioning society and people was only allowed through democracy. Without freedom of speech, how could Socrates have been able to practice his profession of philosophy without immediate consequence? Shouldn’t Socrates be enforcing democracy, the type of government allowing him to question authority, rather than try to destroy it? Through his actions, Socrates has once again contradicted himself. Aside from this one attempt to destroy democracy, Socrates has also clearly been trying to disrupt society through the youth. “Socrates also argues that students who were associated with him years ago have now reached maturity and are therefore in a position to know if they have been corrupted. If that had been the case, they would now be among his accusers. Instead, they are his most devoted friends and loyal supporters.” (*The Apology*) According to this quote, Socrates states why his students are supporting him instead of being against him. However, the fact of the matter is that these students have listened by Socrates and were influenced by him. Socrates’ students would not be against him because of the way Socrates has presented himself to them, ignoring what society has said about him. This is another way Socrates has attempted, and partially succeeded, to disrupt democracy and corrupt the youth.

The last argument that has done the most damage to Socrates reputation was his direct relationship towards Critias, one of the bloodiest tyrants to rule during the reign of the Thirty Tyrants in Athens. Socrates relationship to Critias damaged Socrates’ reputation so much, that Plato intentionally left it out of *The Apology* in an attempt to present Socrates in a better manner. Critias was one of Socrates’ students and was influenced by Socrates’ teachings. Because of this, Critias was molded into a tyrant. “When the Thirty Tyrants took power, they murdered or drove out of the city all who were of the democratic party. A few months later, the moderates who had originally supported the Thirty Tyrants began to flee…” (*An Interview with I.F Stone*) According to this quote found in an interview with an ancient Greek expert, I.F Stone. He states that all the democrats and moderates fled Athens when the Thirty Tyrants took power, but later states that Socrates remained in Athens the whole time. From this statement, it is clear that when darkness had covered Athens, and democracy died, Socrates continued to bask in his glory and success of destroying the Athenian democracy and society. Why did Socrates stay in Athens and not leave in a time of danger and evil? He stayed because he finally received what he questioned. His actions only revealed to the world how evil his intentions were and what an awful citizen of Athens he proved to be.

In conclusion, it is clear that Socrates’ had one of the worst reputations in Athens and did even crueler actions. From contradicting himself multiple times, to remaining in Athens during the reign of the Thirty Tyrants, Socrates reveals to the world that he has only done harm to others. From being impious towards the gods to creating new divinities, Socrates has proved to the ancient Greeks of his disrespect to the beliefs of thousands. From “corrupting the youth” to being presented in the biased *The Apology*, it is already known in the present time and the future of what a horrible reputation Socrates had and would have as time progressed. These major arguments and more were the reasons why the prosecution team was easily able to have Socrates put to death, and why the defense had little to no chance of getting Socrates to be proved innocent.