

life-long entertainment at the public expense. Such a claim coming at such a time was naturally calculated to incense the Athenian jurors. Here was a man who was being tried before them on a capital charge. Many of them, though irritated by his habit of cross-examination, were probably inclined to regard his conduct as comparatively venial, and were quite prepared to vote for a lesser penalty. But it is only human to incline to the belief that a man who is on trial for a death penalty can not be altogether guiltless; and the claim of Socrates to such a public honour must have seemed to some of them as little short of a public insult to the State. That claim indeed sealed his fate beforehand, and that the man who refused to take any reward for his teaching should at such a time have made such a claim is one of the ironies of history. And yet it is hard to see how Socrates, being what he was, could have acted differently. He certainly did not wish to throw his life away uselessly, for he strongly held that no man has a right to take his life, until it is required of him by the deity. But he equally held that the truth must be maintained at all costs, and this being so, he was practically bound to answer the charge of his accusers by a counter-charge. If they endeavored to show that he was worthy of death, he was equally bound to show, now that the matter was brought to a public issue, that the pursuit of the truth was the noblest duty in which any citizen could engage, and that that citizen who had been most conspicuous in this exalted quest, was worthy of the highest honour which the State, in its official capacity, could confer on him.

Even in this case it must be observed that he claimed nothing from the individual. As a private individual he held not only that virtue was its own reward, but that it was dishonourable to make any charge for that knowledge which he was bound in duty to endeavour to impart. But the moment that he was tried for impiety he ceased to be a private individual. From his point of view it was not so much Socrates who was on trial, as the life-long champion of the doctrines which he had constantly taught. That position he had never sought for himself, just as he had never sought any public office. But now that it was thrust upon him, he was bound to act in such a way as would make it plain to the world on which side truth and justice lay. It was not himself but his office which he thus sought to magnify, and he did it without counting the cost.

At the risk of reiteration it seems necessary to insist on this point, because it offers the only reasonable explanation for conduct which otherwise would be paradoxical. It explains what would otherwise be unexplainable. During the whole course of his life Socrates had acted with consistent humility and extraordinary moderation. He had ever expressed a deep contempt for worldly wealth or worldly honour, and he had proved the sincerity of his words by a life of such temper-