

a similar source of unpopularity. Public opinion gradually became more and more hostile; and when the thirty tyrants were swept away, the fickle Athenian populace forgot that Socrates had openly condemned their tyranny, and only chose to remember that Critias, one of the most odious of the Thirty, had once been his pupil. Hence it was easy for his accusers, Meletus, Anytus and Lycon to trump up the vague and indefinite charges that he had corrupted the youth of Athens and had endeavoured to introduce new deities. Such was the vague indictment which Socrates had to meet, and the penalty for failure was death. He was now, against his will, compelled to act a public part, and either to plead guilty or not guilty to the charges which had thus publicly been made against him. But all his life he had been engaged in preaching that the pursuit of the truth was the one real object of human activity; and now that he was face to face with such an emergency, it was from the very nature of the man impossible that he should do anything but put into practice the precepts which he had been preaching. Hitherto he had been dealing with truth in an abstract form; but now it was a concrete charge which he had to face. Was it true that he had corrupted the youth of Athens, or endeavoured to introduce the worship of new deities? To both charges his own conscience unhesitatingly answered 'no'; and, as a seeker after truth in the abstract, he had no alternative but to assert in the most uncompromising manner that his life quest had not been made in vain. If the truth, and his own search after the truth meant anything, he was bound to plead 'not guilty' to both charges in the most emphatic way. Thus, and thus only, could he maintain the dignity and the actuality of his own quest.

But the methods of criminal procedure at Athens were somewhat peculiar. While the accuser could name a maximum penalty, the accused could not only plead "not guilty," but could, in case of conviction, name a lesser penalty, which even if the charges were partly proved, might satisfy the sense of justice of the Athenian "dicasts," who were judges and jury as well. It was the fact of the existence of this peculiar procedure which really forced Socrates to his death. As a student of the truth he knew that he had not only committed no crime, but had also—to the extent that he had endeavored to inspire his fellow-citizens with a passion for the truth—benefited Athens to a greater extent than any other of her citizens. This under the circumstances was the actual truth, and as the champion of the truth he was bound to assert it. And thus it was that when Anytus was pleading for his conviction and death, Socrates instead of naming a lesser penalty, boldly declared that he had done no wrong, and that so far from meriting the extreme penalty, he really deserved the highest reward which could be conferred on the Athenian citizen, namely,