

CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORICAL SOCRATES IN THE CONTEXT OF ATHENIAN HISTORY AND THE DRAMATIC DATES OF PLATO'S DIALOGUES

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The larger column on the left below provides some of the biographical information from the ancient sources with the dramatic dates of Plato's dialogues interspersed **[in boldface]** throughout. In the smaller column on the right are dates of major events and persons familiar from fifth century Athenian history. Although the dates are as precise as allowed by the facts, some are estimated and controversial (Nails 2002).

When Socrates was born in 469, a Persian invasion had been decisively repulsed at Plataea, and the Delian League that would grow into the Athenian empire had already been formed. Attica comprised 139 political districts (demes), assigned variously to the recognized ten tribes; regardless of how far from the walled urban center a deme might be, its registered members were Athenian.

469 tragedies of Aeschylus, poetry of Pindar prominent

462 democratic judicial reform of the Areopagus

Socrates' tribe was Antiochis, and his deme was Alopece (southeast of the city wall). Assuming that his stoneworker father, Sophroniscus, kept to the conventions, he carried the infant around the hearth, thereby formally admitting him into the family, five days after he was born, named him on the tenth day, presented him to his *phratry* (a regional hereditary association) and took responsibility for socializing him into the various institutions proper to an Athenian male. Literacy had become widespread among males since about 520, and there were a number of elementary schools teaching boys to read and write, along with the traditional gymnastics and music, by the 480s (Harris 1989: 55), so we can be confident that Socrates received a formal education and that Plato was not exaggerating when he described the young Socrates as eagerly acquiring the philosopher Anaxagoras' books (scrolls, to be more precise, *Phaedo* 98b).

459 Athens' long walls to the Piraeus port begun

450s Athens extends empire, introduces democratic reforms (archonship opened to third citizen class, pay for jurors instituted, citizenship restricted)

In Socrates' eighteenth year, Sophroniscus presented him to the deme to be examined and entered onto the citizens' roll, making him eligible – subject to age or class restrictions – for the many tasks of government determined by lot or required of all citizens, beginning with two years of compulsory training in the Athenian militia. Sophroniscus died soon after Socrates came of age, making him his mother's legal guardian. Socrates' mother, Phaenarete, later remarried and had a second son, Pataecles (Plato, *Euthydemus* 297e); she became a midwife sometime thereafter (Plato, *Theaetetus* 149a).

450-430 "Golden Age of Pericles": construction on the Athenian acropolis, led by Phidias, Polyclitus; tragedy dominated by Sophocles and Euripides; natural philosophy, rhetoric, and sophistry thrive in atmosphere of relative affluence and freedom

Athens was a city of numerous festivals, competitions, and celebrations, including the Panathenaea which attracted visitors to the city from throughout the Mediterranean. Like the Olympics, the Panathenaea was celebrated with special splendor at four-year intervals. **[450 *Parmenides*]** Plato depicts the nineteen-year-old Socrates in conversation with the great visiting philosophers from Elea, Parmenides and Zeno, at one of the Greater Panathenaea festivals, in late July or early August of 450.

After completing his two years of military training, Socrates was subject to being sent beyond the borders of Attica with the army, but these were years of relative peace, so he is likely to have practiced a trade, at least until he gave his mother in marriage to Chaeredemus. Only at the age of thirty was eligibility established for such responsibilities and offices as jury service, generalship, and Council (executive body for the sovereign Assembly), so Athenian men lived at home with their parents during those ten years, and – depending on their class in Athens' rigid four-class system, based on wealth and birth – they spent that period learning a trade or acquiring the skills in public speaking and persuasion that would serve them well in Athens' citizen Assembly and courts. **[433/2 Protagoras]** When Plato next writes of Socrates, he is attending Callias' "open house" where famous educators of the day (Protagoras, Prodicus, Hippias) are vying for the lucrative opportunity to teach the wealthiest and most prominent young men of the city.

- 448** Spartan invasion
- 446** defeat at Coronea, loss of Boeotia, Spartan invasion
- 446/5** Thirty Years' Peace signed with Sparta
- 442** comedy added to the Lenaeon festival
- 433** Protagoras in Athens

Athens was even then, however, sliding toward war with Sparta on a scale that would involve all of Greece over the next three decades. Two of Plato's longer dialogues are set loosely throughout the war. **[431-404 Republic, Gorgias]** Both Socrates and Alcibiades were posted that summer, 432, to Potidaea to put down a revolt, Socrates as a footsoldier (*hoplite*). After an initial battle, a long siege reduced the population to cannibalism before it surrendered (Thucydides 2.70.1). As the army made its way home, it engaged in battle near Spartolus and suffered heavy losses (Thucydides 279.1-7). Socrates distinguished himself there by saving the life and armor of the wounded Alcibiades (Plato, *Symposium* 220d-e). When the army finally returned to Athens in May of 429, nearly three years had elapsed since its deployment. Soon after his return, Socrates was accused by a comic playwright of helping Euripides to write his tragedies, a claim that was to be repeated at least twice more by other comedians on the Athenian stage. Plato illustrates Socrates' arrival and return to conversation in the *Charmides* **[429 Charmides]**, where participants (including Plato's relatives Critias and Charmides) discuss the nature of moderation.

- 432** revolt at Potidaea
- 431** Peloponnesian War begins
- 430** outbreak of plague
- 429** Pericles
- 427** Gorgias in Athens
- 425** Spartan peace offer refused

Socrates' active duty continued at the battle of Delium in 424, under the command of Laches. This was another defeat for the Athenian army which, while already under attack from Boeotian footsoldiers, was surprised by a troop of cavalry. Socrates' heroic behavior in the retreat is praised by Laches (*Laches* 181b) the following winter and later by Alcibiades (Plato, *Symposium* 221a). **[424 Laches]** The dialogue, on the nature of courage, shows Socrates as a friend of the famous Athenian general Nicias and makes a point of Socrates' being a favorite of the city's youths while remaining unknown to most of his fellow citizens. Any anonymity Socrates may have enjoyed came to an abrupt end at the annual Dionysian festival in the spring of 423. In the comedy category, at least two of the plays involved Socrates: one had the title of Socrates' music teacher, Connus; the other was Aristophanes' *Clouds*.

- 424** battle of Delium
- 424/3** birth of Plato
- 423** one-year truce with Sparta; Aristophanes, *Clouds*

A year later, Socrates fought at Amphipolis, another Athenian disaster following another surprise attack. Plato sets a dialogue about the etymologies of words **[422 Cratylus]** upon his return. Socrates, so far as we know, did not return to war again. Athens and Sparta entered into a treaty named for Nicias that – while never completely effective – allowed Attica to remain free of Spartan invasion and crop-burnings for several years. During the peace, Socrates is represented as carrying on with his dialectical conversations with Athenians, concentrating on the nature of

- 422** battle of Amphipolis
- 421** "Peace of Nicias" declared
- 416** subjugation of Melos

erotic love [418-416 *Phaedrus*], especially in relation to the education in rhetoric that had been especially popular in Athens since Gorgias' visit in 427. Plato's *Symposium* also focuses on erotic love, bringing together in February of 416 renowned Athenians – Socrates, the tragedian Agathon, the comedian Aristophanes, the general Alcibiades, a doctor, an orator, an unknown follower of Socrates, and Agathon's older lover – who give speeches in praise of love [416 *Symposium*]. Again education is a central theme, but so is the democracy, and so is Mystery religion. In fact, at least half the persons who celebrated Agathon's victory in the tragedy competition were implicated in acts of sacrilege – profanations of the Eleusinian Mysteries – presaged in the dialogue, that were said to have taken place in the months following the symposium but were not reported to the authorities until much later.

It was at about this time that Socrates married Xanthippe. From the fact that they named their first son Lamprocles, it has been assumed both that her father was named Lamprocles and that her dowry was enough to provide for her needs. Their second son would be named Sophroniscus for Socrates' father.

Meanwhile, Alcibiades persuaded the Assembly, over prescient objections from Nicias (Thucydides 6.9-14), that Athens should invade Sicily. Both Nicias and Alcibiades, along with Lamachus, were elected to command. When the ships had been supplied and were on the verge of sailing, almost all the city's boundary markers, called *herms*, statues of the face and phallus of the god Hermes, were mutilated in a single night. Since Hermes was the god of travel, the city feared a conspiracy against the democracy. A commission was formed to investigate not only the herm-smashing, but all crimes of irreverence (*asebeia*) that could be discovered, offering rewards for information. In a climate of near-hysteria over three months, accusations led to executions (including summary executions), exile, torture, and imprisonment affecting hundreds of people, some of whom were close to Socrates (Alcibiades, Phaedrus, Charmides, Critias, Eryximachus, and others). The actual herm-mutilators turned out to be a young men's drinking club, and some of the accusers ultimately admitted to lying; although death penalties imposed *in absentia* were rescinded, nothing could bring back the innocent dead.

As the Sicilian invasion foundered, Nicias, in sole command while gravely ill with kidney disease, sent a letter to the Athenians saying the army was under siege and should be called back or reinforced; he asked to be relieved of his command (Thucydides 7.11-15). He was not relieved, but reinforcements were sent – too few, too late. The war in Sicily ended in complete and humiliating defeat. Spring brought a new attack on Socrates by Aristophanes (*Birds*, lines 1280-3, 1553-5). Plato sets a dialogue between Socrates and a rhapsode before the news of the defeat reached Athens [413 *Ion*], while the city – short of military leaders – was trying to attract foreign generals to help with the war.

The next few years were chaotic in Athens as the empire shrank from revolts, and former allies refused to pay extortion/tribute any longer. The treasury was spent, and the citizenry demoralized. The democracy was overthrown in a revolution of “the Four Hundred” followed by a government of “the Five Thousand.” What was left of the army, however, was loyal to the democracy and persuaded Alcibiades to return and command them. Under his leadership, Athens began scoring victories, and morale improved. Democracy was restored, peace offers from Sparta were

415 preparations to invade Sicily; herm mutilations; fleet embarks; commission receives evidence

414 Alcibiades recalled for trial, defects to Sparta; siege of Syracuse; Lamachus

414 (winter) Sparta reenters the war, following Alcibiades' advice, takes and fortifies the deme of Decelea, encouraging Athenian slaves to escape

413 reinforcements arrive in Sicily; army annihilated, some enslaved; Nicias

412 subject-allies revolt against Athens

411 oligarchic revolution; Alcibiades returns to command

again rebuffed, and Athens established a commission to rewrite all the existing laws. **410** restoration of democracy; peace with Sparta refused; legal reforms begun

A wrestling school, newly erected, is the setting for Socrates to examine the nature of friendship with a group of adolescents [**409 Lysis**] who were agemates of Plato and his older brothers. One of the *Lysis* characters, Ctesippus, was present again two years later for a display by two sophists (former generals) [**407 Euthydemus**]. **407** Alcibiades in Athens; battle of Notium lost, Alcibiades dismissed

Athens was meanwhile pursuing the war with Sparta by sea. Athens won the sea battle of Arginusae, but at such cost that the city never recovered: in barest outline, what happened was this. Two of Athens' board of ten generals were under siege at Mytilene, so the other eight commanded the battle. With thousands dead and damage to the fleet, two captains were sent to collect the casualties; a storm prevented their doing so, while the generals hastened to give relief at Mytilene. When news of the battle hit Athens, there was outrage at the failure to save the wounded and collect the corpses for burial. The board of ten generals was charged, but two fled (and two were still in Mytilene), so six returned to Athens for trial in October of 406 (Lang 1990). By luck of the lottery, Socrates was serving on the Prytanes, the presiding committee of Council (Plato, *Apology* 32b; Xenophon, *Hellenica* 1.7.15) when the trial took place, not in a court before a jury but before the whole Assembly. **406** battle of Arginusae; trial and execution of the generals; Euripides; Sophocles

The generals were being tried for a capital crime in one day – a flaw in the Athenian legal code that Socrates would later criticize (Plato, *Apology* 37a-b) – but, even worse, they were being tried as a group, in direct violation of the Athenian law of Cannonus requiring each defendant in a capital crime to receive a separate trial. Some in the Assembly opposed the illegality, but the opposition so incensed the majority that it overwhelmingly approved a motion to subject the opposition to the same vote as would decide the fate of the generals. At that point, several of the fifty members of the Prytanes refused to put the question, so the generals' accusers roused the crowd to greater anger. Socrates alone among the Prytanes was left standing for the law and the generals; his refusal to allow the vote had the effect of allowing one last, eloquent speech from the floor that proposed a preliminary vote to decide between sentencing the group and permitting separate trials (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 1.7.16-33). The Assembly approved separate trials, but a parliamentary maneuver invalidated the vote. When the Assembly voted again, it was to decide the lives of the generals up or down. All were condemned, though the Athenians were soon to regret executing their remaining military leaders.

The following spring, Aristophanes again attacked Socrates, this time declaring that it was no longer fashionable to associate with Socrates who, with his “hairsplitting twaddle,” ignored the craft of the tragedians (*Frogs*, lines 1491-99). **405** battle of Aegospotami; siege of Athens

The next naval battle, Aegospotami, was cataclysmic and was followed by the Spartan siege of Athens. The Athenians, recalling their own treatment of the Melians, expected to be slaughtered when the siege inevitably ended, but nothing of the sort occurred. When the Spartans entered Athens, they required that the defensive long walls be demolished, and they directed that the Athenians elect a government that would reinstitute the city's ancestral constitution to prevent the excesses of the **404** legal reforms begun in 410 completed; board appointed to add new laws, assisted by Council; Alcibiades; Spartans enter the city under Lysander; long

democratic Assembly. The *authority* of the government that was subsequently elected, three per tribe – “the Thirty” – lies at the root of any discussion of whether Socrates committed what would now be called civil disobedience when he disobeyed their order (Plato, *Apology* 32c-e). None of the contemporaneous sources, no matter how hostile to the rule of the Thirty – Isocrates, Lysias, Plato, and Xenophon – denies the legitimacy of their election. That they formed a government that abused and exceeded its authority no one could reasonably deny, but it is against just such governments that acts of civil disobedience must sometimes be directed. Undermining a corrupt government by refusing to harm a good man might be unlawful, but not unjust.

The Thirty moved quickly after the election to consolidate power by calling for Spartan aid, seizing the property of wealthy Athenians and foreign residents, many of whom they executed (including Lysias' brother, Polemarchus; and Nicias' son, Niceratus – all associates of Socrates). Critias and Charicles, two leaders of the Thirty, sought to intimidate Socrates by forbidding him, unsuccessfully, to speak to men under thirty (Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.2.35). As the scope of the government's executions widened to include detractors, and a select citizen roll of 3,000 was named, and all others disarmed, a moderate member of the Thirty, Theramenes, objected to the wanton killings and found himself taken captive at Critias' instigation. Socrates, and two young men with him, were said to have attempted to intervene unarmed against the Scythian guards, stopped only when Theramenes himself implored them to desist (Diodorus Siculus 14.5.1-3, likely apocryphal). After Theramenes' execution, many citizens left the walled city: some regrouped in the distant and mountainous deme of Phyle, planning to topple the Thirty (among them was Socrates' childhood friend, Chaerephon); others went only as far as the Piraeus where “the Ten” (including Charmides) chosen by the Thirty were less effective at suppression than the Thirty themselves.

The Thirty, now increasingly referred to as an oligarchy, were also making contingency plans: they sent forces to secure the deme of Eleusis for themselves by putting to death the population on charges of supporting democracy (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.4.8-10; Diodorus Siculus 14.32.5). Socrates remained in the city. The Thirty attempted to implicate him in their executions by ordering him to join others in going to Salamis to fetch the former democratic general, Leon. It was Socrates' refusal to obey this order that has controversially been called an act of civil disobedience. Luckily for Socrates, before the Thirty could exact revenge, the democrats from Phyle entered the city through the Piraeus and met the forces of the Thirty in a battle where both Critias and Charmides were killed. Remnants of the Thirty returned to the city to consider their options. The Three Thousand, increasingly suspicious of one another, deposed the Thirty and replaced them with a Board of Ten elected one per tribe (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.4.23). The Thirty began abandoning the city for Eleusis as the board called for Spartan help. The Spartans arrived, led by Lysander and by one of their two kings, Pausanias. Pausanias especially attempted to effect reconciliation among all the Athenian factions, allowing the exiles to return and the oligarchs to rule themselves in Eleusis. One such exile was Anytus, a character hostile to Socrates and who would later support charges of irreverence against him. **[402 *Meno*]**. As soon as the Spartans' backs were turned, the restored democrats raided Eleusis and killed the remaining oligarchic supporters, suspecting them of hiring mercenaries. **[winter 401/o *Menexenus*]**

walls demolished; “the Thirty” elected; seizures and executions; roll of “the Three Thousand”; Theramenes; democratic exodus to Phyle

403 battle of Munychia; Board of Ten takes charge, calls for Spartan aid; Spartans arrive; reconciliation talks begin; exiles return

403/2 new legal era proclaimed; new religious calendar adopted; Sparta encourages reconciliation among Athenian factions

402-400 Spartan war with Elis

401 remaining oligarchs killed; Xenophon leaves Athens

400 conflict shifts to the courts

SOCRATES' TRIAL AND EXECUTION

This brings us to the spring and summer of 399, to Socrates' trial and execution. Twice in Plato's dialogues (*Symposium* 173b, *Theaetetus* 142c-143a), fact-checking with Socrates took place as his friends sought to commit his conversations to writing before he was executed. **[spring 399 Theaetetus]**

Prior to the action in the *Theaetetus*, a young poet named Meletus had composed a document charging Socrates with the capital crime of irreverence (*asebeia*): failure to show due piety toward the gods of Athens. This he delivered to Socrates in the presence of witnesses, instructing Socrates to present himself before the king archon (the same magistrate who would later preside at the pre-trial examination and the trial) within four days. At the end of the *Theaetetus*, Socrates was on his way to that preliminary hearing. As a citizen, he had the right to forgo the hearing, allowing the suit to proceed uncontested. He also had the right to exile himself voluntarily, as the personified laws remind him (*Crito* 52c). Socrates exercised neither right. Rather, he set out to enter a plea and stopped at a gymnasium to talk to some youngsters about mathematics and knowledge.

When he arrived at the king archon's stoa, Socrates fell into a conversation about reverence with a diviner he knew, Euthyphro **[399 Euthyphro]**, and afterwards answered Meletus' charge. This preliminary hearing designated the official receipt of the case and was intended to lead to greater precision in the formulation of the charge. In Athens, religion was a matter of public participation under law, regulated by a calendar of religious festivals; the city used revenues to maintain temples and shrines. Socrates' irreverence, Meletus claimed, had resulted in the corruption of the city's young men (*Euthyphro* 3c-d). Evidence for irreverence was of two types: Socrates did not believe in the gods of the Athenians (indeed, he had said on many occasions that the gods do not lie or do other wicked things, whereas the Olympian gods of the poets and the city were quarrelsome and vindictive); Socrates introduced new divinities (indeed, he insisted that his *daimonion* had spoken to him since childhood). Meletus handed over his complaint, and Socrates entered his plea. The king-archon could refuse Meletus' case on procedural grounds, redirect the complaint to an arbitrator, or accept it; he accepted it. Socrates had the right to challenge the admissibility of the accusation in relation to existing law, but he did not, so the charge was published on whitened tablets in the agora and a date was set for the pre-trial examination. From this point, word spread rapidly, probably accounting for the spike of interest in Socratic conversations recorded (*Symposium* 172a-173b). **[399 Symposium frame]** But Socrates nevertheless spent the next day in two very long conversations promised in *Theaetetus* (210d). **[399 Sophist, Statesman]**

At the pre-trial examination, Meletus paid no court fees because it was considered a matter of public interest to stop irreverence. To discourage frivolous suits, however, Athenian law imposed a heavy fine on plaintiffs who failed to obtain at least one fifth of the jury's votes, as Socrates points out (*Apology* 36a-b). Unlike closely timed jury trials, pre-trial examinations encouraged questions to and by the litigants, to make the legal issues more precise. This procedure had become essential because of the susceptibility of juries to bribery and misrepresentation. Originally intended to be a microcosm of the citizen body, juries by Socrates' time were manned by elderly, disabled, and poor volunteers who needed the meager three-obol pay.

In the month of Thargelion **[May-June 399 Apology]** a month or two after Meletus' initial summons, Socrates' trial occurred. On the day before, the Athenians had launched a ship to Delos, dedicated to Apollo and commemorating Theseus' legendary victory over the Minotaur (*Phaedo* 58a-b). Spectators gathered along with the jury (*Apology* 25a) for a trial that probably lasted most of the day, each side timed by the water clock. Plato does not provide Meletus' prosecutorial speech or those of Anytus and Lycon, who had joined in the suit; or the names of witnesses, if any (*Apology* 34a implies Meletus called none). *Apology* – the Greek '*apologia*' means 'defense' – is not edited as are the court speeches of orators. For example, there are no indications in the Greek text (at 35d and 38b) that the two votes were taken; and there are no breaks (at 21a or 34b) for witnesses who may have been called. Also missing are speeches by Socrates' supporters; it is improbable that he had none, even though Plato does not name them.

Socrates, in his defense, mentioned the harm done to him by Aristophanes' *Clouds* (§2.1). Though Socrates denied outright that he studied the heavens and what is below the earth, his familiarity with the investigations of natural

philosophers and his own naturalistic explanations make it no surprise that the jury remained unpersuaded. And, seeing Socrates out-argue Meletus, the jury probably did not make fine distinctions between philosophy and sophistry. Socrates three times took up the charge that he corrupted the young, insisting that, if he corrupted them, he did so unwillingly; but if unwillingly, he should be instructed, not prosecuted (*Apology* 25e-26a). The jury found him guilty. By his own argument, however, Socrates could not blame the jury, for it was mistaken about what was truly in the interest of the city (cf. *Theaetetus* 177d-e) and thus required instruction.

In the penalty phase of the trial, Socrates said, "If it were the law with us, as it is elsewhere, that a trial for life should not last one but many days, you would be convinced, but now it is not easy to dispel great slanders in a short time" (*Apology* 37a-b). This isolated complaint stands opposed to the remark of the personified laws that Socrates was "wronged not by us, the laws, but by men" (*Crito* 54c). It had been a crime since 403/2 for anyone even to propose a law or decree in conflict with the newly inscribed laws, so it was ironic for the laws to tell Socrates to persuade or obey them (*Crito* 51b-c). In a last-minute capitulation to his friends, he offered to allow them to pay a fine of six times his net worth (Xenophon *Oeconomicus* 2.3.4-5), thirty *minae*. Sentenced to death, he reflected that it might be a blessing: either a dreamless sleep, or an opportunity to converse in the underworld.

While the sacred ship was on its journey to Delos, no executions were allowed in the city. Although the duration of the annual voyage varied with conditions, Xenophon says it took thirty-one days in 399 (*Memorabilia* 4.8.2); if so, Socrates lived thirty days beyond his trial, into the month of Skirophorion. A day or two before the end, Socrates' childhood friend Crito tried to persuade Socrates to escape. [June-July 399 *Crito*] Socrates replied that he "listens to nothing ... but the argument that on reflection seems best" and that "neither to do wrong or to return a wrong is ever right, not even to injure in return for an injury received" (*Crito* 46b, 49d), not even under threat of death (cf. *Apology* 32a), not even for one's family (*Crito* 54b). Socrates could not point to a harm that would outweigh the harm he would be inflicting on the city if he now exiled himself unlawfully when he could earlier have done so lawfully (*Crito* 52c6); such lawbreaking would have confirmed the jury's judgment that he was a corrupter of the young (*Crito* 53b-c) and brought shame on his family and friends.

The events of Socrates' last day, when he "appeared happy both in manner and words as he died nobly and without fear" (*Phaedo* 58e) were related by Phaedo to the Pythagorean community at Phlius some weeks or months after the execution. [June-July 399 *Phaedo*] The Eleven, prison officials chosen by lot, met with Socrates at dawn to tell him what to expect (*Phaedo* 59e-60b). When Socrates' friends arrived, Xanthippe and their youngest child, Menexenus, were still with him. Xanthippe commiserated with Socrates that he was about to enjoy his last conversation with his companions; then, in the ritual lamentation expected of women, was led home. Socrates spent the day in philosophical conversation, defending the soul's immortality and warning his companions not to restrain themselves in argument, "If you take my advice, you will give but little thought to Socrates but much more to the truth. If you think that what I say is true, agree with me; if not, oppose it with every argument" (*Phaedo* 91b-c). On the other hand, he warned them sternly to restrain their emotions, "keep quiet and control yourselves" (*Phaedo* 117e).

Socrates had no interest in whether his corpse was burned or buried, but he bathed at the prison's cistern so the women of his household would be spared from having to wash his corpse. After meeting with his family again in the late afternoon, he rejoined his companions. The servant of the Eleven, a public slave, bade Socrates farewell by calling him "the noblest, the gentlest, and the best" of men (*Phaedo* 116c). The poisoner described the physical effects of the *Conium maculatum* variety of hemlock used for citizen executions (Bloch 2002), then Socrates cheerfully took the cup and drank. Phaedo, a former slave echoing the slave of the Eleven, called Socrates, "the best, ... the wisest and the most upright" (*Phaedo* 118a).