

Apology:

Start by asking what the context of the trial is.

Meletus, Anytus and others have brought charges against Soc.

Note that some of what Socrates says suggests he has hidden strategies that lie behind the things he actually says to the jury. Don't let this persuade you that he does not mean what he says to the jury, but something else he has not said. Remember that if he is playing rhetorical games with the jury, he is doing so under threat of death. Given what he claims are his views about death, and his apparent general seriousness as a person, it is far less plausible here that he is being disingenuous than it might be in some of the other dialogues, where much less is immediately at stake. So, before you decide that Socrates does not mean what he says, ask yourself whether it makes sense for him to misrepresent himself, given the situation in which he finds himself (particularly since the way he talks here is exactly the way he has talked in the agora, and which has upset many people in Athens, including, presumably, many who are on the jury).

Is Socrates guilty of anything?

Two ways to take this:

- a) is he guilty of one of the charges they specify?
- b) is his mission a bad thing for Athens?

First we will consider the actual charges, both old and new, and his replies to each of these. Then, perhaps next time, we will consider the larger question whether Socrates is guilty of anything, even if it was not something of which he was specifically charged.

The Charges:

Old: Studies things in sky and below earth

Makes the weaker arg. stronger

Teaches these to others

S: no one has heard him speak of any of these things. Is not a Sophist (accepts no money, does not advise how to make weak arg. strong). The Oracle-made-me-do-it.

New: Corrupts the young

Does not believe in old gods

Believes in new divinities

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S's refutation of first of new charges: couldn't be only one who corrupts, all others not (analogy to doing good and relation to expertise).

No one harms himself willingly. That is, it would be nec for S to wish to harm himself willingly, since to harm the young he would have to be prepared to harm himself (for to do the kind of harm of which he is being accused, i.e., to make someone evil, is to make someone such that they could conceivably do Him harm...and thus it would not be rational to make someone evil deliberately). So, S must have done harm unintentionally, and this Athenian law does not make a crime which deserves such charges as were brought, but rather, it is the Athenian way to simply privately advise such people of their bad-making, but unintentional, behavior. S's refutation of second & third charge: ties up Meletus by getting him to agree both that S believes in gods and does not believe in gods.

Now that we've looked at all the evidence and the arguments for and against, is S guilty or innocent? If guilty, of what? What is the appropriate punishment? If not, what should Athens do that it did not do? Is Athens guilty of anything?

Is S a teacher?

If he is a teacher, what is he teaching? Read: eudaimonia defn.

Is S a misogynist? Arrogant?