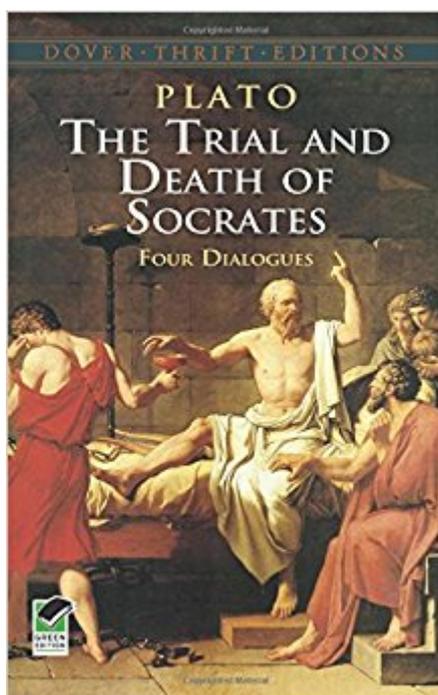


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The Trial And Death Of Socrates: Four Dialogues (Dover Thrift Editions)



Synopsis

The Dialogues of Plato (427–347 B.C.) rank with the writings of Aristotle as the most important and influential philosophical works in Western thought. In them Plato cast his teacher Socrates as the central disputant in colloquies that brilliantly probe a vast spectrum of philosophical ideas and issues. None is more exciting and revelatory than the four dialogues — Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, and Phaedo — on themes evoked by the trial and death of Socrates, accused by his enemies and detractors of crimes against the state, among them "impiety" and "corruption of the young." In Euthyphro, Socrates explores the concepts and aims of piety and religion: in Apology, he courageously defends the integrity of his teachings; in Crito, he demonstrates his respect for the law in his refusal to flee his death sentence; and in Phaedo embraces death and discusses the immortality of the soul. The four dialogues are presented here in the authoritative translation by the distinguished classical scholar Benjamin Jowett, renowned for his translations of Plato.

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Customer Reviews

The Greek philosopher Socrates is the the acknowledged Founding Father of Philosophy. Born in Athens circa 470 BC, in the time of its apogee, Socrates lived a poor life, not paying any tribute to the so-called frivolities and luxuries of life, thus irritating his many foes, which took monetary advantage of their philosophical practice. The great Socrates had Plato as his most dedicated disciple, among others, who set himself to write down all Socratic discourses, thus preserving to

posterity the very special way of thinking Socrates had, known as "maieutics". Socrates did not leave to posterity any written document of his handwriting, and that is why that the dedication Plato had to him was important to us. It is something like the work of a match who kindles a very beautiful candle. Socrates was the son of a midwife and a sculptor and his very particular philosophical method was performed by means of very well-formulated questions, that showed that the answers to the questions asked were already there at the very first time, and only had to be delivered out of the inner self by means of philosophical questioning, something akin to the help a mid-wife does to a pregnant woman in her labours prior before the baby is born. In my opinion, the most important part of this small booklet is the Apology of Socrates, where the wisest of all men shows to the tribunal that the only superiority he had over his accusers was that he did not pretend to know anything at all, while his accusers boasted a knowledge they did not have.

This edition of The Trial and Death of Socrates contains Plato's four famous dialogues between Socrates and his friends and detractors before the noteworthy philosopher was condemned to death by the Athenian tribunal in ancient Greece. I find this topic of interest because of the close relationship between Platonic thought and early Christian philosophy during the period of roughly 250-750 A.D. when the fundamentals of Christian doctrine were formed. It is clear from a reading of this series of texts why Plato, although a pagan preceding Christ for several hundred years, was very popular among Christian prelates, monks, polemicists, theologians and philosophers. The texts make somewhat awkward reading because they are presented in the forms of dialogue between Socrates and his friends and detractors and thus Plato does not have to express unequivocally what his own opinions are regarding the debates. The first text discussed in this volume is entitled "Euthyphro" and discusses the nature of piety. Here Plato has Socrates question many of the concepts associated with the polytheistic worship and piety of ancient Athens. Socrates' famous "Apology" is a treatise against the accusations of the courts of Athens. Socrates argues for the fact that only God is ultimately the source of wisdom and in all his interactions with fellow poets, artists, philosophers, statesmen, etc., he has not found true wisdom, at least not any wisdom that he himself does not already possess. In "Crito" Socrates debates with those among his followers who entreat him to flee Athens and take up refuge in a safer city. "Phaedo" contains the account of Socrates' last dialogue and concludes with Socrates' death by consuming hemlock poison as ordered by the Athenian court.

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