



Text Plato's "Apology"

In Plato's "Apology," Socrates believes that the annoyance he causes helps Athens and they will suffer if they put him to death. Socrates thinks he plays a unique role in Athenian society and that this further proves his innocence.

Socrates explains that he will argue not for his own sake, but instead for the benefit of the Athenians. He explains that he "goes after the city the way a gadfly goes after a big thoroughbred horse," and that "god has inflicted me on the city" to "never stop rousing and persuading and chiding every one of you, landing on you everywhere all day long (101-104). Socrates likens himself to a fly who was sent by god to wake up the people from their state of sleep. This suggests that it is the god's will to wrest the Athenian citizens from their ignorance, and Socrates is merely doing what he has been called to do (108-109). In fact, by remaining loyal to this godly calling Socrates had to put aside his own personal interests and remained impoverished in order to help out the Athenians (109-111). Socrates thus defends himself by proving to the Athenians how much of a help to society he is.

To strengthen his argument, Socrates tells the Athenians that even though they "might get vexed" and "swat" at him, it is for their own benefit, for without him they will "spend the rest of your lives sleeping" (105-107). Further, he explains that putting him to death will give the Athenians a "bad name" (156) and that once he is killed, his accusers' punishment will be much worse than what they gave to Socrates (184). Socrates argues that though his condemners have successfully quieted him, they will still be held accountable for their dishonest lives (184-190).