PLATO
XENOPHON
SAMUEL GRISWOLD GOODRICH

ENRICHED EDITION

THE TRUE SOCRATES

Plato, Xenophon, Samuel Griswold Goodrich

The True Socrates

Enriched edition. The Dialogues Written in Defense of Socrates by the Founders of Western Philosophy

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Introduction

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The True Socrates gathers converging portraits from antiquity and a later biographical account to approach a figure whose influence spans philosophy and civic life. Its unifying thread is the pursuit of Socrates as he appears in distinct but related modes: as defendant and interlocutor in Plato, as moral guide in Xenophon, and as subject of narrative synthesis in Samuel Griswold Goodrich’s The Life of Socrates. Under the headings Socrates According to Plato and Socrates According to Xenophon, the collection invites consideration of a consistent character tested by law, conversation, and daily conduct. Coherence arises from recurring questions and exemplified habits.

In the works attributed to Plato—Apology, Crito, and Phaedo—Socrates is encountered in concentrated scenes that interlace public speech, private counsel, and reflective dialogue. The Apology presents a formal defense that clarifies method and motive. Crito turns to obligations within the city and the demands of justice when personal stakes are high. Phaedo extends the inquiry to the meaning of philosophical practice in the face of finitude. Across these pieces, the tone shifts from courtroom austerity to intimate examination and contemplative poise, yet the underlying commitment to reasoned argument, moral steadiness, and examined living binds the episodes into an integrated vision.

Xenophon’s Socrates emerges through Memorabilia and Apology with a different emphasis. Memorabilia assembles recollections of conversations and examples that highlight

practical instruction, self-discipline, and usefulness to friends and community. Xenophon’s Apology compresses the stance of defense into a succinct portrait of disposition and principle. The style is direct, the concerns often concrete, and the effect is to present Socrates as a teacher whose wisdom is verified in everyday choices as much as in formal debate. Where Plato’s scenes dramatize inquiry, Xenophon underlines reliability and beneficence, creating a complementary image of the same man at work among ordinary responsibilities.

Placed together, the Platonic and Xenophontic depictions converse through contrast. Plato’s dialogues intensify questioning and the search for definitions, while Xenophon foregrounds guidance and civic service. One draws the reader into contested meanings; the other highlights stable counsel and steady example. Yet motifs recur across both: devotion to ethical clarity, restraint in speech, and calm under pressure. Differences of tone—dramatic, interrogative, or matter-of-fact—do not obscure shared dilemmas about virtue, law, and the claims of conscience. The productive tension between philosophical aspiration and practical instruction allows the figure of Socrates to appear both searching and grounded, incandescent and ordinary.

Samuel Griswold Goodrich’s The Life of Socrates provides a narrative through-line that situates these portraits within a coherent life story. By outlining the stages, relationships, and public circumstances that surround the dialogues and recollections, it offers orientation without supplanting them. Goodrich’s contribution clarifies how themes threaded through separate works may relate across time and setting, allowing readers to trace continuities of character and question. The work opens a gateway from biographical interest to philosophical and ethical reflection, bridging

genres so that ancient conversations and memorials can be appreciated as episodes in a larger arc of lived inquiry.

Considered as a whole, the collection resonates with contemporary concerns about speech, accountability, and civic belonging. Artists find in these texts a template for dramatizing integrity; educators encounter a model of questioning that invites participation rather than deference; public discourse recognizes the tension between personal conviction and communal order. The works show how argument can be both rigorous and humane, how teaching can shape character, and how dissent can be expressed without rancor. Their cultural afterlife persists because they present not a doctrine but an activity—thinking together about what is just, useful, and worthy—amid pressures that remain familiar.

The True Socrates, then, is less a verdict than a symposium of witnesses. Plato, Xenophon, and Goodrich each contribute a vantage: the dialogue, the recollection, the life. Their interplay encourages triangulation rather than agreement, with themes repeating across differing voices until a profile emerges through resonance. The resulting figure is tested in public, examined in companionship, and recalled in memory. Such a composite invites renewed attention to how philosophy inhabits conversation, citizenship, and daily practice. By aligning these works, the collection honors a tradition of inquiry whose truth is enacted in its method as much as in its claims.

Historical Context

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Socio-Political Landscape

The anthology’s Athenian setting is a city-state negotiating defeat, faction, and litigious democracy. Plato’s Apology stages a mass jury, public accusation, and competing performances of civic virtue, exposing anxieties about impiety, youth, and intellectual novelty. Crito presents the prison’s procedural rhythms and the daunting finality of legal verdicts, while Phaedo frames detention as a disciplined, quasi-sacral interval before state-sanctioned death. The Life of Socrates condenses this civic turbulence into a biographical cadence. Rather than an abstract quarrel, the works depict law, assembly, and rumor as lived forces, showing how political authority sought to discipline inquiry through legal ritual.

Across the collection, the storm after oligarchic rule haunts democratic self-confidence. Plato’s Apology recalls an episode under the Thirty when Socrates refused an unlawful order, defining loyalty as obedience to justice rather than faction. Crito then dramatizes the citizen’s obligations to law even when verdicts seem unjust, revealing a polity wrestling with authority’s legitimacy. Xenophon’s Memorabilia defends Socrates as a stabilizing presence, pious, temperate, and useful to the city, while Xenophon’s Apology emphasizes composure before the volatile crowd. Each text probes where personal conscience meets collective power, charting the narrow civic space for philosophical independence.

Military service, civic duty, and economic strain form the lived background these works presume. Plato’s Apology alludes to Socrates’ soldierly steadfastness, contrasting battlefield obedience with courtroom truth-telling. Xenophon’s Memorabilia elaborates the virtues prized in a hoplite democracy—endurance, restraint, and rational courage—mapping them onto daily governance of self and household. The Life of Socrates gathers scattered references to austerity, public festivals, and marketplace scrutiny, signaling how scrutiny of character functioned as informal regulation. Political authority appears diffuse: magistrates, jurors, informers, and acquaintances contribute to a climate where reputation can harden into prosecution, and where philosophical persona becomes a public office.

Intellectual & Aesthetic Currents

The authors present dialogue as both inquiry and art. Plato’s Apology, Crito, and Phaedo orchestrate voice, irony, and dramatic framing to test claims rather than declare doctrines. Examination proceeds through short questions, refutations, and reframings—the elenchus—while vivid scenes, such as the prison conversations, stage philosophy as a lived practice. The Life of Socrates offers a narrated throughline that normalizes these tensions, translating performance into biography. Xenophon’s Memorabilia and Apology simplify the stagecraft, favoring declarative defense and exempla. Across the collection, rhetoric is acknowledged yet disciplined, subordinated to the search for reasons sufficient for action.

Philosophically, the texts probe knowledge, virtue, and the soul’s care with distinct emphases. Plato’s Apology frames inquiry as divine service and civic antidote to unexamined opinion. Crito explores whether consent to law binds justly even in extremis, developing a minimal social contract in

dialogue. Phaedo turns inward to examine purification, argument, and philosophical readiness for death without collapsing into sentiment. Xenophon’s Memorabilia complements this arc by presenting practical counsel, demonstrations of piety, and refutations of moral slander. Together with The Life of Socrates, the anthology maps a constellation where ethical self-mastery anchors intellectual ambition.

Aesthetically, the contrast between Plato and Xenophon is instructive. Plato crafts layered dramatic time: recollection within recollection, escalating motifs, and tonal modulation from irony to gravitas, culminating in Phaedo’s composed serenity. Language serves argument by placing hypotheses under pressure through characters’ temperaments. Xenophon writes with sparer rhythms; in Memorabilia, compact scenes present teachable moments and dialogues that read like case studies. His Apology prefers succinct summary to theatricality, projecting calm over spectacle. The Life of Socrates mediates these modes by stitching maxim, anecdote, and moral portrait, offering readers a bridge between dialogic experimentation and exemplary narrative.

Legacy & Reassessment Across Time

Reception has long turned on the tension between Platonic and Xenophontic portraits. Readers debate whether the trial speeches in Apology are documentary or artful reconstruction, and whether Memorabilia’s defenses reflect apologetic strategy more than historical memory. Crito’s rigorous loyalty to law has provoked questions about civil disobedience, while Phaedo’s composure shaped expectations about philosophical death. The Life of Socrates aggregates these impressions into a durable template of character. Across centuries, editors, teachers, and jurists

have weighed which portrayal most reliably captures the historical man, often concluding that the anthology’s multiplicity is itself the most instructive witness.

Scholarly reassessment repeatedly returns to method. Some treat Plato’s dialogues as philosophical dramas whose truth lies in enacted inquiry, judging Crito and Phaedo by coherence and moral illumination. Others privilege Xenophon’s plain speech, trusting Memorabilia’s case histories and his Apology’s brevity as signs of sobriety. The Life of Socrates remains a convenient but contested digest, prized for accessibility yet scrutinized for harmonizing divergences. Classroom and civic forums re-stage Apology as a test of free speech, responsibility, and piety. This anthology invites comparative reading, encouraging judgments that balance literary design with plausibility about how Socrates argued, taught, and died.

Synopsis (Selection)

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The Life of Socrates

A compact biographical sketch traces Socrates's milieu, questioning method, and the civic anxieties surrounding his trial, delivered with expository clarity and moral focus.

It sets a baseline portrait that Plato's dramatic-philosophical vision intensifies and Xenophon's practical defense steadies, together converging on a multifaceted true Socrates.

Socrates According to Plato: Apology, Crito, Phaedo

Moving from public defense to private deliberation and a final meditation on the soul, these dialogues present Socrates with ironic wit, ethical rigor, and composed courage.

Their speculative reach and dramatic texture amplify the stakes outlined by the biography while inviting contrast with Xenophon's earthbound emphasis on utility and moderation.

Socrates According to Xenophon: Memorabilia, Apology

Collected conversations and a concise defense depict a plainspoken Socrates as a practical moral instructor, stressing self-mastery, piety, and usefulness in everyday life.

This pragmatic, reassuring tone complements and sometimes corrects Plato’s loftier portrait, grounding the anthology’s composite figure in lived ethics and social responsibility.

The True Socrates

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The Life of Socrates

Socrates According to by Plato

Apology
Crito
Phaedo

Socrates According to Xenophon:

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The Life of Socrates

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The Life of Socrates

Socrates was born at Athens 468 B. C. His father, Sophroniscus, was a sculptor of humble reputation and in moderate circumstances. He educated his son to his own profession, in which it appears that the latter made considerable proficiency. He did not, however, devote himself wholly to this pursuit, but spent a large share of his time in reading the works of philosophers. Crito, an intimate friend, supplied him with money to pay the masters who taught him various accomplishments, and he became an auditor of most of the great philosophers who visited Athens, during his youth. By these means, he received the best education which an Athenian youth could command in those days.

In the early part of his life, he wrought at his trade, so far as to earn a decent subsistence. Receiving a small property at his father's death, when he was about thirty years of age, he devoted himself entirely to philosophical pursuits. His habits were simple and economical; his dress was coarse, and he seldom wore shoes. By his frugality, he was thus able to live without labor, and yet without being dependent upon others.

With regard to his public life, it appears that he served his country faithfully as a soldier, according to the duty of every Athenian citizen. He took part in three campaigns, displaying the greatest hardihood and valor. He endured, without repining, hunger and thirst, heat and cold. In a skirmish with the enemy, his pupil, Alcibiades, fell wounded in the midst of the enemy. Socrates rescued him and carried

him off, for which the civic crown was awarded as the prize of valor. This reward, however, he transferred to Alcibiades. In another campaign he saved the life of his pupil, Xenophon, whom he carried from the field on his shoulders, fighting his way as he went.

At the age of sixty-five, he became a member of the council of Five Hundred, at Athens. He rose also to the dignity of president of that body; by virtue of which office, he for one day managed the popular assemblies and kept the key of the citadel and treasury. Ten naval officers had been accused of misconduct, because, after the battle of Arginusæ, they had omitted the sacred duty of burying the slain, in consequence of a violent storm. Their enemies, finding the people disposed to acquit them procured by intrigue, the prorogation of several assemblies. A new assembly was held on the day when Socrates was president; and the citizens, instigated by bad men, violently demanded that sentence of death should be pronounced on all the accused at once, contrary to law. But the menaces of violence were unable to bend the inflexible justice of Socrates, and he was able afterwards to declare, on his own trial, that ten innocent men had been saved by his influence.

When Socrates formed the resolution of devoting himself to the pursuit of divine and human knowledge, the sophists, a set of arrogant philosophers, were perverting the heads and corrupting the hearts of the Grecian youth. He therefore put himself in opposition to these false guides, and went about endeavoring to instruct everybody in a wiser and better philosophy than that which prevailed. He was, in fact,

an instructor of the people; and, believing himself an ambassador of God, he was occupied from the dawn of day in seeking persons whom he might teach either what is important to mankind in general, or the private circumstances of individuals. He went to the public assemblies and the most crowded streets, or entered the workshops of mechanics and artists, and conversed with the people on religious duties, on their social and political relations; on all subjects, indeed, relating to morals, and even on agriculture, war, and the arts. He endeavored to remove prevailing prejudices and errors, and to substitute right principles; to awaken their better genius in the minds of his hearers; to encourage and console them; to enlighten and improve mankind, and make them really happy.

It is manifest that such a course must have been attended with great difficulties. But the serenity of Socrates was undisturbed; he was always perfectly cheerful in appearance and conversation. In the market-place and at home, among people and in the society of those whom love of truth and virtue connected more closely with him, he was always the same. It cannot be doubted that a happy physical and mental temperament contributed to produce this equanimity. But it was, likewise, a fruit of self-discipline and the philosophy he taught. He treated his body as a servant, and inured it to every privation, so that moderation was to him an easy virtue; and he retained in old age his youthful vigor, physical and mental. He was kind as a husband and a father. Though his wife, Xantippe, was a noted shrew, he viewed her as an excellent instrument of discipline, and treated her with patience and forbearance.

Although the Greeks at this time were zealously devoted to their heathen mythology, Socrates was a sincere worshipper of the Supreme Being; yet, from his care not to offend his weaker brethren, he observed, with punctilious exactness, the religious uses which antiquity and custom had consecrated. He was constantly attended by a circle of disciples, who caught from him the spirit of free inquiry, and were inspired with his zeal for the highest good, for religion, truth and virtue. The succeeding schools of philosophy in Greece are therefore justly traced back to him; and he is to be regarded as the master who gave philosophical investigation among the Greeks its highest direction. Among his most distinguished disciples were Alcibiades, Crito, Xenophon, Antisthenes, Aristippus, Phædon, Æschines, Cebes, Euclid, and Plato. From the detached accounts given us by Xenophon and Plato, it appears that he instructed them in politics, rhetoric, logic, ethics, arithmetic, and geometry, though not in a systematic manner. He read with them the principal poets, and pointed out their beauties; he labored to enlighten and correct their opinions on all practical subjects, and to excite them to the study of whatever is most important to men.

To make his instructions attractive, they were delivered, not in long lectures, but in free conversations, rendered interesting by question and answer. He did not reason *before*, but *with* his disciples, and thus exercised an irresistible power over their minds. He obliged them to think for themselves, and if there was any capacity in a man, it could not fail to be excited by his conversation. This method of question and answer is called the *Socratic method*. The

fragments of his conversations, preserved by Xenophon, often leave us unsatisfied; Plato alone has transmitted to us the genuine spirit of this method; and he was therefore viewed by the ancients as the only fountain of the Socratic philosophy,—a fact which has been too much disregarded by modern writers.

Socrates fell a victim to the spirit of bigotry, which has sacrificed so many persons, who were in advance of the age. The document containing the accusation against him was lodged in the Temple of Cybele, as late as the second century of the Christian era. The following is a translation:—"Melitus, son of Melitus, accuses Socrates, son of Sophroniscus, of being guilty of denying the existence of the gods of the republic, making innovations in the religion of the Greeks, and of corrupting the Athenian youth. Penalty,—death."

Melitus, who was a tragic writer of a low order, was engaged as an accuser in this affair, by the wealthy and more powerful enemies of Socrates. Amongst them were Anytus and Lycon, the former a rich artisan and zealous democrat, who had rendered very important services to the republic, by aiding Thrasybulus in the expulsion of the thirty tyrants, and in establishing the liberty of his country. The latter was an orator, and therefore a political magistrate, to which office the Athenian orators were entitled, by virtue of the laws of Solon.

Socrates was seventy years of age when summoned to appear at the Areopagus. The news of this event did not excite much surprise, as the people had long expected it. Aristophanes, the celebrated comic poet of Athens, had

previously undertaken, at the instigation of Melitus, to ridicule the venerable character of the philosopher; and when once he was calumniated and defamed, the fickle populace ceased to revere the man whom they had before looked upon as a being of a superior order.

The enemies of Socrates were of two classes,—the one consisted of citizens who could not help admiring his genius and virtue, but who regarded him as a dangerous innovator and subverter of public order. They were ready, with him, to acknowledge that some reformation might be made in the tenets of Paganism; that the gods and goddesses were not patterns of virtue; and that the conduct of the sovereign of the skies, himself, was far from exemplary; but, said they, the thunders of Jupiter exercise a salutary influence over the minds of some, and the pains of Tartarus still operate as a bridle upon the passions of others. To bring in question the ancient faith, was at once to attack the institutions of the republic at their base, and excite revolution. The philosophy of Socrates, even though true, must be suppressed; for the life of one man is not to be put in the balance with the repose of a whole people,—with the safety of the country. It is better that Socrates should die, than Athens perish. Such was the reasoning of one portion.

The other class was composed of the superstitious and bigoted,—of the vicious and imbecile,—who were daily exposed to the censures and sarcasms of the philosopher; in fine, of that set of narrow, jealous-minded men, who looked upon the welfare and fame of their neighbors with envy and with malice. The race that had exiled Aristides, because he was great, was ready to condemn Socrates, because he was

wise. The friends and disciples of the great philosopher saw the danger that menaced him, and with anxiety and fear they crowded around their master, supplicating him to fly, or to adopt some means of defence; but he would do neither. Lysias, one of the most celebrated orators of the day, composed a pathetic oration, which he wished his friend to pronounce, as his defence, in the presence of his judges. Socrates read it, praised its animated and eloquent style, but rejected it, as being neither manly nor expressive of fortitude. The anxiety and trouble of avoiding condemnation appeared to him of little moment, when compared to the performance of his duty in upholding to the last moment, the truth of his principles and the dignity of his character.

Socrates, though both eloquent and persuasive in conversation, was not capable of addressing a large assembly; therefore, on the day of his trial, he asked permission of his judges to use the means of defence to which he had been accustomed; namely, to speak familiarly with, and ask questions of, his adversaries.

"Athenians," he said, in commencing, "I hope I shall succeed in my defence, if, by succeeding, good may result from it; but I look upon my success as very doubtful, and, therefore, do not deceive myself in that respect. But let the will of the gods be obeyed."

The two chief accusations against Socrates, were firstly, that he did not believe in the religion of the state; secondly, that he was guilty of corrupting the minds of young men, and of disseminating the disbelief of the established religion.

Socrates did not reply, in a direct manner, to either of these charges. Instead of declaring that he believed in the religion of his country, he proved that he was not an atheist; instead of refuting the charge of instructing youth to doubt the sacred tenets of the law, he declared and demonstrated that it was morality which he taught; and instead of appealing to the compassion of his judges, he did not disguise the contempt in which he held the means practised by parties accused, who, in order to excite sympathy and compassion, brought their children and relations to supplicate, with tears in their eyes, the mercy of the judges. "I, also, have friends and relations!" he said, "and, as to children, I have three,—one a stripling, the other two in childhood; yet I will not allow them to come here to excite your sympathy. Why will I not do so? It is not caused by stubbornness, nor by any disdain I have for you. For my honor, for your honor, for that of the republic, it is not meet that, with the reputation, whether true or false that I have acquired, I should make use of such means to procure your acquittal. Indeed, I should be ashamed if those that distinguish themselves for wisdom, courage, or any other virtue, should, like many people that I have seen, although they have passed for great men, commit actions the most grovelling—as if death were the greatest misfortune that could befall them, and that,—if their lives were spared,—they would become immortal!"

When Socrates had ceased speaking, the judges of the Areopagus found him guilty, by a majority of three. On being demanded, according to the spirit of the Athenian laws, to pass sentence on himself, and to mention the death he

preferred, Socrates, conscious of his own innocence, replied, —"Far from deeming myself guilty, I believe that I have rendered my country important services, and, therefore, think that I ought to be maintained in the Prytaneum at the public expense, during the remainder of my life,—an honor, O Athenians, that I merit more than the victors of the Olympic games. They make you happy in appearance; I have made you so in reality."

This reply in the highest degree exasperated his judges, who condemned him to die by poison. When the sentence was passed, Socrates remained, for a few minutes, calm and undisturbed, and then asked permission to speak a few words.

"Athenians," he said, "your want of patience will be used as a pretext by those who desire to defame the republic. They will tell you that you have put to death the wise Socrates; yes, they will call me wise, to add, to your shame —though I am not so. If you had but waited a short time, death would have come of itself, and thus saved you from disgracing yourselves. You see I am already advanced in years and must shortly die. All know that in times of war, nothing is more easy than saving our lives by throwing down our weapons, and demanding quarter of the enemy. It is the same in all dangers; a thousand pretexts can be found by those who are not scrupulous about what they say and do. It is difficult, O Athenians, to avoid death; but it is much more so to avoid crime, which is swifter than death. It is for this reason that, old and feeble as I am, I await the latter, whilst my accusers, who are more vigorous and volatile, embrace the former. I am now about to suffer the punishment to

which you have sentenced me; my accusers, the odium and infamy to which virtue condemns them."

"What is going to happen to me," he added, "will be rather an advantage than an evil; for it is apparent, that to die at present, and to be delivered of the cares of this life, is what will best suit me. I have no resentment towards my accusers, neither have I any ill-will against those who condemn me, although their intention was to injure me, to do all in their power to do me harm. I will make but one request; when my children are grown up, if they are seen to covet riches, or prefer wealth to virtue, punish and torment them as I have tormented you; and if they look upon themselves as beings of importance, make them blush for their presumption. This is what I have done to you. If you do that, you will secure the gratitude of a father, and my children will ever praise you. But it is time that we should separate; I go to die, and you to live. Which of us has the best portion? No one knows except God."

When he had finished, he was taken to prison and loaded with chains. His execution was to have taken place in twenty-four hours, but it was postponed for thirty days, on account of the celebration of the Delian festivals. Socrates, with his usual cheerfulness and serenity, passed this time in conversing with his friends upon some of the most important subjects that could engage the mind of man. Plato relates, in the dialogue entitled The Phedon, the conversation which took place on the day preceding his death. That dialogue, without exception, is the most beautiful that the Greeks have left us. We can give only

those passages which are more immediately connected with his death.

"After the condemnation of Socrates," says Phedon, "we did not allow a day to escape without seeing him, and on the day previous to his death, we assembled earlier than usual. When we arrived at the prison door, the jailor told us to wait a little, as the Eleven were then giving orders for the death of Socrates."

Speaking of the fear of death, Socrates said, "Assuredly, my dear friends, if I did not think I was going to find, in the other world, gods good and wise, and even infinitely better than we are, it would be wrong in me not to be troubled at death; but you must know that I hope soon to be introduced to virtuous men,—soon to arrive at the assembly of the just. Therefore it is that I fear not death, hoping, as I do, according to the ancient faith of the human race, that something better is in store for the just, than what there is for the wicked."

The slave who was to give Socrates the poison, warned him to speak as little as possible, because sometimes it was necessary to administer the drug three or four times to those who allowed themselves to be overheated by conversation.

"Let the poison be prepared," said Socrates, "as if it were necessary to give it two or three times;" then continued to discourse upon the immortality of the soul, mixing in his arguments the inspiration of sentiment and of poetry.

"Let that man," said he, "have confidence in his destiny, who, during lifetime, has renounced the pleasures of the body as productive of evil. He who has sought the pleasures

Reflection

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Question 1

How do Platonic and Xenophontic portraits reconcile Socratic obedience with uncompromising philosophical conscience?

In Plato’s Apology, Socrates insists he must obey the god by practicing philosophy, even if the court forbids it; yet in Crito he personifies the Laws and accepts their authority, declining escape. The tension between divine vocation and civic duty appears deliberate rather than contradictory: his “gadfly” service is presented as benefiting the city, aligning conscience and obedience. The question asks how the same figure can both challenge the assembly and honor its statutes, using the dialogues’ contrasting settings—public trial versus private cell—to probe what obedience means.

Xenophon’s Memorabilia portrays a Socrates scrupulous about lawful conduct, counseling friends to obey regulations and fulfill obligations; Xenophon’s Apology likewise stresses that Socrates’ steadfastness stems from piety and self-mastery, not contempt for the court. Read alongside Plato’s Apology, Xenophon shifts emphasis from prophetic defiance to ethical reliability: the same daimonion that restrains Socrates also supports measured civil behavior. Together these accounts suggest obedience is not mere submission but fidelity to a higher rational order that, when rightly understood, underwrites rather than overturns the city’s norms.

Goodrich’s The Life of Socrates frames the trial within Athens’ volatile politics, highlighting how public suspicion could misread principled dissent as disloyalty. This context sharpens Plato’s Crito, where Socrates treats lawful procedures as a covenant formed by lifelong participation, even while Plato’s Apology displays his refusal to abandon inquiry. The biographical lens makes coherent a composite portrait: a citizen who resists unlawful commands yet accepts legal penalties, embodying a model in which conscience seeks harmony with law through reasoned allegiance rather than opportunistic compliance.

Question 2

What consistent idea of piety emerges from both Plato’s and Xenophon’s accounts of Socrates’ divine sign?

In Plato’s Apology, Socrates describes a divine sign that warns but never commands, guiding him away from unjust or imprudent actions; its silence during his defense is framed as approval of his course. In Phaedo, piety surfaces through philosophical purification and calm argument about the soul’s fate, presenting reverence as intellectual honesty and disciplined attachment to truth. Across these dialogues, piety is less ritual than attunement to a rational, beneficent order, with the sign serving as an inward check consistent with sustained inquiry.

Xenophon’s Memorabilia complements this by stressing practical piety—Socrates consults divination appropriately, respects customary worship, and interprets signs in light of prudence. Xenophon’s Apology underscores that Socrates’ confidence before judgment arises from trust in divine governance, not bravado. When set beside Plato’s emphasis on philosophical purification, Xenophon’s emphasis on

customary observance yields a composite: piety encompasses both public rites and private moral discernment, with the divine sign validating actions that cohere with reason and civic practice rather than authorizing arbitrary exceptions.

Goodrich's The Life of Socrates presents the charge of impiety against the backdrop of Athenian religiosity and suspicion of heterodox thought, clarifying what is at stake in Plato's Apology and Xenophon's Apology. The biographies' contextualization highlights how the daimonion, far from flouting religion, is consistently portrayed as harmonizing inquiry with reverence. Read together, these sources propose a definition of piety grounded in measured responsiveness to divine indications and in rational moderation, a posture manifest in both philosophical argument (Phaedo) and conscientious practice (Memorabilia).

Question 3

How do differing literary forms shape Socrates' authority as teacher, defendant, and friend?

Plato's Apology stages a juridical monologue that confers prophetic authority, with Socrates addressing the polis and recasting accusation as civic service. Crito, by contrast, narrows to intimate dialogue, where authority emerges through gentle elenchus and the imagined voice of the Laws, modeling friendship disciplined by principle. The shift from public rhetoric to private counseling demonstrates how form calibrates moral suasion: courtroom defiance seeks to awaken citizens at large, whereas the prison conversation exemplifies mentorship that guides a single friend toward reasoned allegiance.

Phaedo adds another layer through its narrated frame—Phaedo recounts the conversation to Echecrates—where memory and community transmit Socratic authority beyond the original setting. This mediated telling contrasts with Xenophon's Memorabilia, a mosaic of exempla and practical counsels designed to defend and instruct. While Plato crafts dramatic scenes that immerse readers in philosophical experience, Xenophon curates instructive cases to establish character. The forms differ—tragedy-tinged narrative versus moral anthology—yet both elevate Socrates' pedagogic voice, shaping what authority feels like to readers.

Xenophon's Apology condenses the trial into a brisk, exemplary defense, emphasizing character and restraint, while Goodrich's The Life of Socrates supplies historical narration that situates these literary choices within fifth-century Athens. The biography's linear account clarifies stakes and sequence; the apologies, whether Platonic or Xenophontic, render ethical posture in specific moments; the conversations (Crito, Phaedo) cultivate a companionable authority. Together the varied forms—biography, courtroom speech, recollected dialogue—construct a multifaceted legitimacy grounded in consistency across genres rather than in a single authoritative performance.

Question 4

Across testimonies, how is Socrates' influence on the young defended against accusations of corruption?

In Plato's Apology, Socrates challenges Meletus by arguing that corrupting the young harms a citizen himself, making deliberate corruption implausible; he also emphasizes accepting no fees, distinguishing his practice from sophistry. Crito presents a loyal former pupil whose practical concerns meet Socratic reasoning, suggesting a pedagogical bond