

# A comparison of the ethical value of characters in the apology of socrates and so...

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## **Socrates and Evagoras, Worthy of Imitation?**

Plato's Apology and Isocrates' Evagoras both strive to frame a highly valued man's life in a way that portrays their ethical ideals and character in order to preserve them for future generations. Even though they lived around the same time and place, Socrates and Evagoras had different virtues and concepts of what the "good life" consists of. Both men are respectable, but I only feel that one is really worthy of imitation.

Socrates' life and virtues are captured in Plato's Apology, where Plato writes about Socrates' appeal to the court of Athens. Socrates' defense was deeply rooted in his idea that, "the unexamined life is not worth living". He believed that by going around and examining those who think they are wise was his duty to Athens, and by this he seeks out truth and virtue. He thought that it was his duty from God to "improve" the lives of Athens' citizens. The Delphic Oracle called him the wisest man, and Socrates acts humbly about this; however, this almost seems like false humility considering his actions. The place Socrates went wrong by continuing to provoke others to think about their life, and in turn provoking them to be angry with him. You would think Socrates with all his wisdom would realize the possible effect of his actions and change his ways. In the end, Socrates was given the option to choose what punishment he would receive, and he should have stayed quiet. His suggestion was that he should be praised, be given special housing, and be fed all by the expense of the city. Socrates clearly thinks highly of himself, and certainly has no filter when speaking. This response pushed the

jury to give Socrates the death penalty, ending with him dying for what he believes in.

Evagoras' life is depicted in Isocrates' funeral oration. In which, Isocrates aims to summarize the type of man Evagoras was so that " younger generations might with greater zeal strive for virtue". We can clearly see by Isocrates words that this man is worthy of interpretation. Considering this is a eulogy, there is much praise towards Evagoras; however, I do not feel as if this praise is " forced". I believe that Isocrates really felt this way about this man, and I also believe this man was worthy of praise and imitation. First off, Evagoras is an honorable man and a strong military leader. He wisely fled when faced with certain persecution, and returned to reclaim his throne with only fifty men and succeeded. It is clear that he is strong, courageous leader. Not only did he accomplish this amazing feat, but he did it very honorably and not through trickery. Evagoras was humble and wise because he much of his time taking counsel, which he believed to sharpen his mind. Just like Socrates' quote, he left nothing in his life unexamined. He was aware of himself as well as his people, which is how a good king should be. Isocrates stresses towards the end of the prose that the young men should study the life of Evagoras and philosophize about it in order to find what the " good life" is. This study of praise-worthy men is what Isocrates believes will lead to understanding the " good life". Since this prose is a eulogy meant to be spoken at Evagoras' funeral, we do not get to see much of Evagoras' faults. However, we can assume that he had some faults, but they were not enough for him not to be praised.

Both men have qualities worthy of imitation. Socrates' saying, "the unexamined life is not worth living", is something I find to be true and worthy of practice. However, Socrates took that saying a little too far when he started causing trouble in order to make others examine their life. He may of thought he was doing good by this, but he caused enough trouble to get himself in trouble, which is not very wise. Socrates almost got off the hook, but his pride caused him to lose his life. Evagoras on the other hand seems like a very worthy man to imitate. He was a very good military leader and was a king that was close to his people. He acted very honorably when retaking his throne, and was very brave and courageous in doing so. Evagoras' life is very admirable and he has many qualities that are appealing. Both were good men in different ways, but I feel that Evagoras is more worthy of imitation when compared to Socrates. The main reason I say this is that I feel like Evagoras was more of a humble man who cared for others, and I feel like Socrates was close to the opposite.

In my opinion, a life well lived consists of humility and self sacrifice towards others. An example of those this would be Christ's life. He put others before himself even to the point of death and was glorified in doing so. This is a very high standard for a life well lived and may be impossible to fully imitate, but we should strive to live as close as we can to that example. Evagoras' life is more similar to Christ's than Socrates, and therefore is more similar with my own ideals of a life well lived. If Socrates motive was to simply get people to examine their life I do not think he would have had a problem, but I feel as his actual motive was to make himself feel good by "outsmarting" others.

On the other hand, I feel like Evagoras actually cared about his people, and it

makes his way of live more identical to the “ ideal” way of life. Both men have respectable qualities, but I feel like Evagoras is the only one worthy of following when compared to my idea of a well lived life