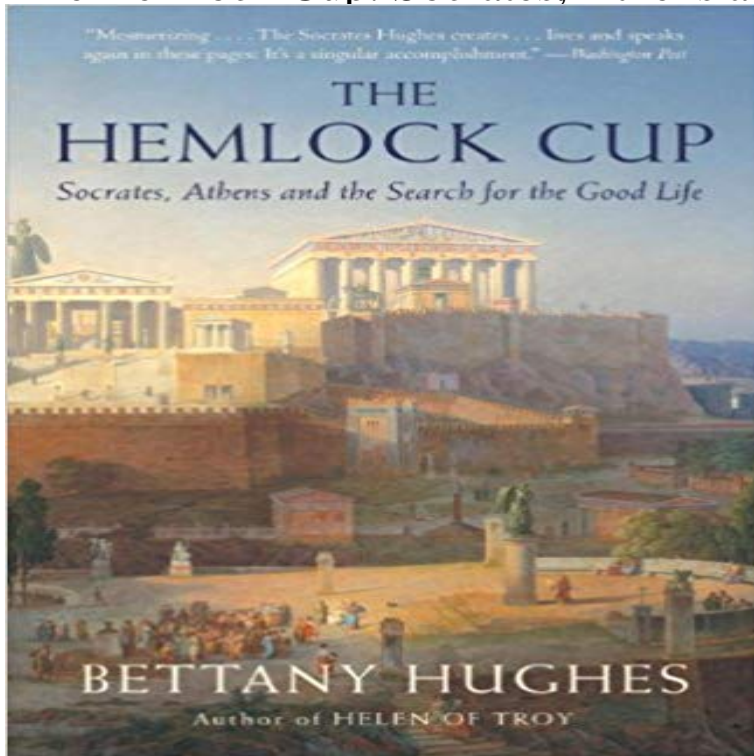


The Hemlock Cup: Socrates, Athens and the Search for the Good Life



We think the way we do because Socrates thought the way he did; in his unwavering commitment to truth and in the example of his own life, he set the standard for all subsequent Western philosophy. And yet, for twenty-five centuries, he has remained an enigma: a man who left no written legacy and about whom everything we know is hearsay, gleaned from the writings of Plato, Xenophon and Aristophanes. Now Bettany Hughes gives us an unprecedented, brilliantly vivid portrait of Socrates and of his homeland, Athens in its Golden Age. His life spanned seventy of the busiest, most wonderful and tragic years in Athenian history. It was a city devastated by war, but, at the same time, transformed by the burgeoning process of democracy, and Hughes re-creates this fifth-century B.C. city, drawing on the latest sources—archaeological, topographical and textual—to illuminate the streets where Socrates walked, to place him there and to show us the world as he experienced it. She takes us through the great, teeming Agora—the massive marketplace, the heart of ancient Athens—where Socrates engaged in philosophical dialogue and where he would be condemned to death. We visit the battlefields where he fought, the red-light district and gymnasia he frequented and the religious festivals he attended. We meet the men and the few women—including his wife, Xanthippe, and his inspiration and confidante, Aspasia—who were central to his life. We travel to where he was born and where he died. And we come to understand the profound influences of time and place in the evolution of his eternally provocative philosophy. Deeply informed and vibrantly written, combining historical inquiry and storytelling élan, *The Hemlock Cup* gives us the most substantial, fascinating, humane depiction we have ever had of one of the most influential thinkers of all time. From the Hardcover edition.

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