

# THE APOLOGY OF SOCRATES IN KAUFBEUREN

by Angelos Spartalis

a 6 minute, 16mm, fake-documentary film projected by a Ghost Machine and a mural-size oil painting on canvas.

The Apology of Socrates in Kaufbeuren consists of two independent artworks. The first one is a 6 minute, **16mm, fake-documentary film** presenting a patient with a mental illness who thinks he is Socrates, in an asylum which supposedly is Kaufbeuren mental hospital, in South Bavaria, Germany. The film is projected as a continuous loop by a **ghost machine**. A portable 16mm film projector. The feed reel is out of film and is spinning like crazy. But the projector keeps projecting.

The second artwork is a **mural-size oil painting on canvas**, 3 meters tall and 9 meters wide in 18 parts. It also represents a scene from the same fictional mental hospital. The fake-documentary as well as the oil painting, apart from the supposed Socrates, show a student of Socrates offering him a cup of hemlock, two nurses, two army officers, a doctor, a harlequin and a little girl dressed as a princess. In the center, in a window in the wall there is a dead hare and a hawk eating the hare's liver (I copied this part from a Dirck de Bray painting) and opposite them a cat lurking. On the left wall there is a graffiti (I copied it from an art piece attributed to Banksy) saying "NO FUTURE". There are three more signs in the artwork. One embroidered on the doctor's blouse; "Kaufbeuren", the name of the institution. This is the only indication that the institution supposedly is Kaufbeuren. The second one is on the outside of the institution, a sign that says "Heil und Pflege Anstalt", meaning "Institution of Salvation and Medical Care". The last one is a rusty metal sign on the cord barrier around the projector saying "Hochspannung, Lebensgefahr", meaning "High Voltage, Danger of Death".

Why is Socrates mentally ill? Why the hospital supposedly is Kaufbeuren? The artwork does not answer those questions. At least not in words. Moreover, no reference is made to the specific characteristics of Kaufbeuren mental hospital. Yet, if one makes some research, one could easily find out that in Kaufbeuren and its branch at Irsee, mental patients were systematically euthanized and medical experiments were performed on children from 1939 until 1945. The director of Kaufbeuren hospital (1980-2006) himself, Dr. Michael von Cranach, provided this information in his speech given for International Amnesty in 2008. The speech was given at Kaufbeuren hospital and is more like an apology. Yet, this modern apology as well as the ancient apology of Socrates are not included in the artwork. Let the

curators of exhibitions of the artwork in the future decide which and how much information regarding Kaufbeuren-Irsee shall get across to the audience, through printed texts or explanatory signs on the walls and the Internet.

My only intention was, as always, to create another bittersweet artwork. An intension which I think is intensified by the little girl's presence who happens to be my youngest daughter. The same sense of bitter sweetness and instability is exuded from the nurses who are flirting with the patients, from the animals, especially the dead hare, the dancing army officers and, of course, Elias Logothetis' unequalled enigmatic performance as Socrates.

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[www.spartalis.gr/socrates](http://www.spartalis.gr/socrates)

