

The Apology Book Notes

The Apology by Plato

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Author/Context

Plato was born in 427 BC. He came from a family played prominent in Athenian politics. However, he did not join politics, as he was outraged by its violence and corruption, and sickened by the execution of Socrates, his friend and teacher, in 399 BC. Inspired by Socrates, Plato dug deeper into the nature of ethics, knowledge and virtue, and came to the conclusion that no kingdom would be happy unless philosophers became kings, or kings became philosophers.

Late in the Fourth century, Plato founded the Academy in Athens, which was the first permanent institute devoted to philosophical research and teaching, and was used as a prototype for all western universities. He was well traveled, and was the political advisor to the ruler of Sicily. He died in 347 BC.

Plato was a student of Socrates, and went on to teach many famous people such as Aristotle, who wrote treatises on everything from poetry to biology, and Alexander the Great. Plato was also an advisor to the king of Syracuse, but this ended in drastic failure and he was eventually exiled from Sicily. His "influence throughout the history of philosophy has been monumental" (Ron Turner) and he is often considered the father of Western philosophy. However, his works also contain mathematics, history and moral and religious aspects. He wrote over twenty philosophical dialogues and thirteen letters. Although *The Apology* is considered a dialogue, it is truly more of a monologue. The reason for writing philosophy in conversational format is that it allowed Socrates to be depicted in action. Furthermore, Socratic philosophy can only be realized through question and answer, and thus the dialogue format of his works allows for this philosophical realization and understanding.

In this book, written after Socrates' death, Plato attempts to make the reader feel that Socrates is a person who is being treated unjustly. Also, he tries to bring across Socrates' claim that the only way in which his wisdom exceeds that of others is that he recognizes the state of his ignorance. Plato is giving us his version of what Socrates said at his trial, and trying to show us Socrates' defense and arguments, as well as his last words. Furthermore, he is trying to bring across the last messages, and words of wisdom, Socrates had to say, and is backing them up, as a philosopher himself.

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Plot Summary

Socrates is being prosecuted for three claims: inquiring into things below the earth and in the sky, making the weaker argument defeat the stronger, and teaching others for a fee. He begins his defense by saying that his prosecutors are lying, and that he will prove it. Then, he asks the jury to allow him to speak in the same manner as he speaks in the marketplace. He is unfamiliar with the court manner of speech as he is seventy and has never been to court in his life yet. Thus, he asks not to be judged on his manner of speech, but instead on whether his cause is just or unjust.

As he has many critics, he decides to defend himself chronologically, and attempt to rid the jury of the false impressions his prosecutors have made of him. They accused him of being a physical philosopher, a sophist, and a professional teacher. However, he is sure that the jury wants to know how he gained such a reputation if he only went about regular activities. He claims that his childhood friend, Chaerophon, went to an oracle and asked if there was anybody wiser than Socrates and the oracle said that there wasn't. Socrates didn't believe this and went out to see the hidden meaning in this, as the oracle could not be lying.

To this end, he interviewed many people, politicians, poets and craftsmen, who were known, and claimed, to be wise. In interviewing all these people, he came to the conclusion that none were wise, and that the greater the reputation they had for being wise, the less wise they were. He believed this because there were many things that these people did not know, yet thought they knew. He realized that he was wiser than they because he knew that he did not know them. His examinations caused many people to dislike him and be hostile towards him, because as he proved other people unwise, they thought that he was saying that he was wise. For this reason, he believes it is his divine duty to teach all who think that they are wise but are not, that they are not. Thus, he has ended up in poverty, being followed by people who want to learn; and now prosecuted.

Next, he attempts to prove his innocence. Through a conversation with Meletus, he shows that Meletus has not thought out the charge of Socrates corrupting the minds of the young, as he states that everybody benefits the minds of the young, thus this charge is frivolous and just an excuse to get Socrates into court.

As for the charge of not believing in gods, it does not make sense because it contradicts the charge of teaching of supernatural beings, of which he is accused. Thus, neither of these charges stands. However, it is the public's disfavor of him that he believes will bring about his downfall. Yet he is not scared of death, because he thinks that nobody knows enough about death to be scared of it, and that if it an endless peaceful sleep then it is restful, and if his soul lives on to meet everybody who is already dead, he will enjoy that. Therefore, either way he is not afraid, and thinks it is better to die an honorable death than to disobey God's orders and live.



However, when the verdict is guilty, he suggests a reward for himself as an alternative to death, as he thinks of himself as a hero. He then proposes a fine, which the jury refuses to grant to him.



Major Characters

Socrates: This is the orator, and person who is on trial. He was a philosopher and inquired into peoples' lives, actions and habits. This annoyed the people of the city who eventually brought him to court on this charge. He speaks of how it is the gods' will, told by an oracle, that he philosophizes, and that he must do this no matter what. Therefore, he refuses to stop his duty, and is punished with the death sentence.

Meletus: Meletus is one of the people who attacked Socrates, and is more than willing to bring someone to court for any reason. He attacked Socrates on behalf of the poets. However, Socrates makes him look like a fool in court as he shows the jury that Meletus keeps contradicting himself and has no basis for his attacks.

Anytus: Anytus joined Meletus in attacking Socrates. He attacked him on behalf of the professionals. Without the votes earned by Anytus and Lycon, Meletus would have never won the trial. However, Socrates believes that he would be found guilty because of the general public's negative opinion of him, and not because of these peoples' attacks.

Lycon: Lycon joined Meletus in attacking Socrates. He attacked him on behalf of the orators. Without the votes earned by Anytus and Lycon, Meletus would have never won the trial.

Minor Characters

Gorgias of Lintini: He was a teacher of rhetoric. He resembled the sophists in his manners of traveling, public demonstrations of art, and charging fees for private lessons, and thus Socrates refers to him as a teacher.

Prodicus of Ceos: Prodicus was an expert in languages. Socrates took a course with him, and associated with him. In the context of the book, Socrates referred to him as a great teacher.

Hippias of Elis: A polymath, he was also referred to by Socrates as an influential teacher.

Callias: Callias inherited a huge fortune from his father, Hipponicus, and spent it all on sophists' fees. He claimed Evenus of Paros to be the best philosopher and teacher of humans, and said that he would send his two sons to him for education.

Hipponicus: The father of Callias.

Evenus of Paros: A sophist, referred to as the best teacher by Callias. He charged people 500 Drachmae.



Chaerophon: One of Socrates' friends from childhood. He went to the Delphi and asked him who the wisest person was, and the Delphi said that it was Socrates.

Delphi: An oracle.

Son of Thetis: One of the heroes that died at Troy. Socrates uses him as an example to show that death is not to be feared, and is not the greatest evil of all. He knew that once he killed Hector he would die, however he still killed him in order to avenge his friend, Patroclus.

Hector: The person the son of Thetis wants to kill in order to avenge his friend, Patroclus.

Patroclus: The person the son of Thetis wanted to avenge. The son of Thetis was ready to die to avenge this person, instead of live in dishonor.

Antiochis: A tribe that was ruling at the time Socrates was serving on the Council. Members of the tribe were selected for duty by lot, and each tribe served as president for one month. This tribe wanted to try people en bloc, however this was illegal and Socrates opposed it.

Aristophanes: A famous playwright and philosopher who wrote a play, The Clouds, criticizing Socrates, and depicting him as a person who thought he was above everybody else, and walked on clouds.

Plato: A student of Socrates who became a famous philosopher, and author of this book. He, and his three friends, Crito, Critobolus, and Apollodorus offered 3000 Drachmae to meet Socrates' punishment.

Crito: One of Socrates' friends, who, along with three other friends, offered money to help Socrates pay the fine instead of being executed.

Critobolus: One of Socrates' friends, who offered money to help Socrates pay the fine as punishment, instead of being executed.

Apollodorus: One of Socrates' friends, who offered money to help Socrates pay the fine as punishment, instead of being executed.



Objects/Places

Marketplace: This is where the people of the towns used to meet and do their shopping. It is significant because it is where Socrates used to address people and converse, and criticize them. It is in the language used in the marketplaces that Socrates addresses the court, as opposed to courthouse language.

Critics: These are the people that accused Socrates and took him to court. They fall into two categories: those who directly accused him, and those who influenced others to have a negative opinion of him.

Prytaneum: Free dining at the Prytaneum is provided for Olympic winners, and members of certain eminent families. It is a place of honor. Socrates is suggesting that he deserves to be rewarded by saying that free dinner at the Prytaneum would be a just punishment.

Human wisdom: This is the kind of wisdom that Socrates claimed he had. He said that other philosophers had some other type of wisdom that he did not have. The Delphi also claimed that he was the wisest person. He said that he has more human wisdom than anyone because he knows that he does not know everything.

Sophist: A teacher of human virtues, who charges fees to teach youngsters, and is claimed to inquire about the heavens and things below the earth, disbelieve in gods, and make the weaker argument stronger.

Troy: A famous battle happened here. Socrates uses the example of the son of Thesis fighting in this battle, without regard to death.

Death: Socrates says that people should not make their decisions on whether they will be harmful towards life or death; but instead on how just they are. Also, he says that death is not something to be feared just because we know nothing of it.

Council: The government of the city. Socrates served in the Council for a while, but then decided he could not serve in the Council and follow his conscience at the same time, and so he left.

En bloc: Trying people in groups. The Antiochis wanted to do this in Athens to the men who failed in rescuing people in a naval engagement. Socrates opposed this, and later they found out that it was illegal.

Thirty Commissioners: The oligarchy that came to power and tried as many people as possible for as many crimes as possible. Socrates did not feel that this was just, and so regardless of punishment, he did not collect men from their houses for execution. The oligarchy would have killed him had they not fallen soon after.



Fine: Socrates offered to pay a fine as a punishment, and offered 100 Drachmae, which was all he could afford considering he had paid no attention to money throughout his life. His friends offered to pay a fine of 3000 Drachmae.

Prophetic voice: A voice that came to Socrates whenever he made a wrong decision. This voice did not come to him throughout the trial, which meant that he was not making any wrong decisions, and that he was meant to die at this time and in this manner.



Quotes

Quote 1: "can make the weaker argument defeat the stronger." Line 18c

Quote 2: "one simply has to conduct one's defense and argue one's case against and invisible opponent..." Line 18d

Quote 3: "proclaiming that he is walking on air, and uttering a great deal of other nonsense about things of which I know nothing whatsoever." Line 19c

Quote 4: "the very fact that they were poets made them think that they had a perfect understanding of all other subjects, of which they were totally ignorant." Line 22c

Quote 5: "on the strength of their technical proficiency they claimed a perfect understanding of every other subject..." Line 22d

Quote 6: "whenever I succeed in disproving another person's claim to wisdom in a given subject, the bystanders assume that I know everything about that subject myself." Line 23a

Quote 7: "summons people to stand their trial on frivolous grounds, and professes concern and keen anxiety in matters about which he has never had the slightest interest." Line 24c

Quote 8: "The heroes who died at Troy would be poor creatures, especially the son of Thetis. He, if you remember, made so light of danger in comparison with incurring dishonor that when his goddess mother warned him, eager as he was to kill Hector, in some such words as these, I fancy, 'My son, if you avenge your comrade Patroclus's death and kill Hector, you will die yourself; Next after Hector is thy fate prepared,'--when he heard this warning, he made light of his death and danger, being much more afraid of an ignoble life and of failing to avenge his friends. 'Let me die forthwith,' said he, 'when I have requited the villain, rather than remain here by the beaked ships to be mocked, a burden on the ground.'" Line 28c

Quote 9: "'Wealth does not bring goodness, but goodness brings wealth and every other blessing, both to the individual and to the State.'" Line 30b

Quote 10: "as though it were a large thoroughbred horse which because of its great size is inclined to be lazy and needs the stimulation of some stinging fly." Line 30e

Quote 11: "No man on earth who conscientiously opposes either you or any other organized democracy, and flatly prevents a great many wrongs and illegalities from taking place in the state to which he belongs, can possibly escape with his life." Line 31e

Quote 12: "life without this sort of examination is not worth living..." Line 38a



Quote 13: "Well, gentlemen, for the sake of a very small gain in time you are going to earn the reputation - and the blame from those who wish to disparage our city - of having put Socrates to death." Line 38c

Quote 14: "When I leave this court I shall go away condemned by you to death, but they will go away convicted by Truth herself of depravity and wickedness. And they accept their sentence even as I accept mine." Line 39b

Quote 15: "above all I should like to spend my time there, as here, in examining and searching people's minds, to find out who is really wise among them, and who only thinks that he is." Line 41b

Quote 16: "Now it is time that we were going, I to die and you to live; but which of us has the happier prospect is unknown to anyone but God." Line 42a



Topic Tracking: Death

Death 1: A man should not spend his time weighing up prospects of life and death, but instead be evaluating whether his actions are right or wrong, just or unjust. This is because it is the value and justness of our lives that count. Furthermore, we should not be afraid of death, as we do not know what it is. To be afraid of something that we do not know is to assume we know about it, and that is unwise.

Death 2: The son of Thetis does not care that he will die if he kills his enemy. He would rather avenge his friend and die, than live a dishonorable life of sorrow. This goes to show that people should not make decisions based on life or death, but on justness and fairness.

Death 3: Nothing should stop a man from fighting for what he believes in, not even death. Death should not scare anyone, as nobody knows what death is. Otherwise, that would mean they think they know what it is, and to think you know what you do not know is unwise.

Death 4: Nobody knows whether death is something we should look forward to or not, and yet people are afraid of it as though it were an evil. This goes to show that most people think they know what they do not know and are therefore not wise.

Death 5: Socrates says he would rather die a hundred deaths than terminate his philosophical life, for this is what he believes in. Furthermore, he is not afraid of death as he realizes that it is either a peaceful sleep or a place where you meet those who have died before you, and thus it cannot be evil.

Death 6: If they put Socrates to death, they will harm themselves more than harming Socrates. This is because his followers will criticize their lifestyles more than Socrates did, and they are younger and have more energy.

Death 7: To stand up for what you believe in is more important than to be scared of imprisonment or death.

Death 8: The death penalty is demanded. Socrates' request of a fine is denied, and the death penalty is given.

Death 9: If they had just waited a little while longer, Socrates would have died a natural death, and they would not feel guilty for killing one of the greatest philosophers, nor would they bear the criticism for doing this from the people who supported Socrates.

Death 10: Escaping death is not difficult; it is escaping wickedness that is difficult. Through wit, one can escape death. However, it is more difficult to face death and keep doing justice, than it is to escape death and be unjust.

Death 11: Socrates turns the tables on his jury by saying that although he is condemned to death, they are convicted of depravity and injustice by Truth herself.



Death 12: Socrates believes his death was brought about because the jury was trying to rid themselves of his criticisms of their lives. However, his followers will criticize them more than he did. The only way this will stop is if they improve the way that they live their lives.

Death 13: Death can be one of two things: an endless sleep or a migration of the soul to another place. Either way, it is something Socrates looks forward to. This is especially true of the latter where he will be free to examine the lives of all who have died before him without threat of death, as he will be immortal

Death 14: People should look to death as Socrates does, with confidence. If the contrary is true and people look to death as an evil, they will be considered unwise, as they are scared of something they do not know, and they think they know that it is evil, when in fact they know nothing of it.

Death 15: A good man cannot be harmed, neither in life nor in death. This is a belief that Socrates thinks everyone should have fixed in his or her mind.



Topic Tracking: Resentment

Resentment 1: People resented Socrates' efforts when he tried to show them that they were overestimating their wisdom. However, Socrates felt it was his divine duty to show people who thought that they were wise, but were not wise, that they were not.

Resentment 2: Socrates' examinations to try to find the hidden meaning of what the oracle said caused people to dislike and resent him. Socrates did not believe that he was the wisest person but knew that the oracle could not be lying and therefore went out to find the hidden meaning by examining people's wisdoms. However his findings that people were not as wise as they claimed to be upset many people.

Resentment 3: Socrates is aware that many people will cast their votes against him out of anger and resentment because of impressions in their minds. However, he did not believe that he did anything wrong, and thought that if nobody was angry or resentful of him, they would realize that he was being treated unjustly.

Resentment 4: Socrates realizes that some people may cast their votes in anger because he did not attempt to stir pity and bring his children up to the stand, as others often did when they were on trial. However, he thinks that using wits or pity to avoid death is unjust, and would thus never do it.

Resentment 5: Just like people in Athens resented him and did not tolerate him, people in other towns will do the same thing, and thus there is no point in moving to another town. In answer to an implied suggestion that he stop philosophizing, Socrates said that it was his divine duty to philosophize and he would never stop.



Topic Tracking: Wisdom

Wisdom 1: Socrates claims that he gained his reputation from having human wisdom, and nothing else. This is contrary to the accusation that he has something better than human wisdom, which Socrates cannot describe as he does not know what it is.

Wisdom 2: Socrates says that the sophists are wise in a sort of wisdom that he does not have. He does not understand this type of wisdom, and therefore cannot possibly have it, which makes the accusations against him false.

Wisdom 3: The Delphi says that Socrates is the wisest person there is. Socrates does not believe this and goes out to find somebody wiser, or the true meaning of the Delphi.

Wisdom 4: Socrates does not believe that he is the wisest person there is, and sets out to find out what the Delphi meant.

Wisdom 5: The greater a person's reputation for wisdom, the less wise that person is. Through examining the people who have a reputation for wisdom, Socrates finds that the people who have greater reputations are less wise than those with lesser reputations, as they think they know what they do not know, and that makes them less wise.

Wisdom 6: The real wisdom belongs to the gods, and human wisdom is worthless. By reaching this conclusion, Socrates shows that when the Delphi said that he was the wisest person, he did not mean Socrates as an individual, but instead as an example of a person who realizes that human wisdom is worthless.

Wisdom 7: It is Socrates' divine duty to teach all who are wise but are not, that they are not. The greatest wisdom is knowing that one does not know. Thus, the more a person thinks they know, the less wise they are. Socrates believes that it is his divine duty to spread this wisdom.

Wisdom 8: Socrates claims that he is wiser than everybody else because he knows that he does not know everything.

Wisdom 9: People enjoy watching others who think they are wise being proved otherwise. This can be comical at times and is the reason many people watched Socrates and had opinions about him. However, when he proved that someone does not know something, the crowd assumed that Socrates did, and thus formed false opinions.

Wisdom 10: It is not honorable for a man with a reputation of wisdom to bring family into the court in order to stir pity. Thus, Socrates did not bring his family to the court, and many people resented this, and thus voted against him.

Wisdom 11: Socrates would like to examine people after death in the afterworld to see who, of all the famous people, was indeed wise and who was not. As a result, he is not

scared of death, and thinks he may enjoy it. Furthermore, he cannot be condemned to death for examining people, as he would then be immortal.



Introduction

Socrates starts his speech by saying that although he doesn't know what effect his accusers had on the jury, they almost convinced him that everything they said was true, and yet he knew it was all a lie. This was particularly true when they called him a skillful speaker and asked the jury to be careful when he spoke so that he wouldn't deceive them. Plato considered this to be a bold move by his accusers, as they knew that he was about to speak and prove them wrong.

Socrates tells the jury that he will tell them the complete truth in the straightforward language that first comes to his mind, and not in phrases that have been well thought through. This is because he is confident in his innocence. Despite this, he asks them to disregard the way he speaks as he is seventy years old and has never been to court and therefore he is unaccustomed to the court's manner of speech. Thus, he says that he will speak in the same manner that he speaks in the marketplace and around trading stalls. As a result, he asks the jury to grant him the same courtesies as they would grant a foreigner when he speaks in his foreign tongue, and focus on whether his claims are just.



The Defense (Section 1)

The proper thing for Socrates to do, in his opinion, is to defend himself from his accusers chronologically. This is because there have been many of them for many years, despite the fact that none of them have ever said a word of truth. The most amazing accusers, however, are those that made the untrue accusations of him in front of, and to, children. They accused him of saying that he had theories about the earth and heavens, and did not believe in the gods. Furthermore, they continued to say that he "can make the weaker argument defeat the stronger." Line 18c. Socrates considered these people to be his most dangerous accusers because they influenced children from a very early age when they are most impressionable, and because there was nobody there to defend him. He deems it impossible to know, or name, all of his accusers, and thus he says that it is very difficult to deal with them or cross-examine them all. Because of this, "one simply has to conduct one's defense and argue one's case against an invisible opponent..." Line 18d Socrates believes that his critics fall into two classes: those who directly accused him; and those mentioned previously, the latter whom he will defend himself against first.

After this introduction, Socrates begins his defense, aiming to convince the jury that the impressions that they have of him are false. However, he realizes that this task is difficult and will thus go back to the beginning and examine the factors that have made people so critical of him, and have caused them to attack his character, and eventually Meletus to draw up this indictment. The primary accusations were that he was a physical philosopher, a sophist, and a professional teacher. He was depicted, in Aristophanes' play, as someone who was lifted around, "proclaiming that he is walking on air, and uttering a great deal of other nonsense about things of which I know nothing whatsoever." Line 19c He now asks the members of the jury to stand witness to his statement that these claims are false, and tell each other whether they have ever heard him speak of such things. By proving that there is little truth in this statement, he believes that they will realize that there is little truth in the others as well.

Socrates claims that just as there is no truth in these charges, there is also no truth that he tried to educate people for a fee. However, he claims that it is truly something to be proud of if a man does have this ability, such as Gorgias of Lintini, Prodicus of Ceos and Hippias of Elis. He says that each of these people are capable of convincing anyone that they are better off paying for their company than spending time with their friends. In meeting Callias, Hipponicus's son, who pays more in sophist's fees than anybody else, Socrates asked him who the best teacher in perfecting societal virtues is, and who he would hire to teach his sons these things, if there is such a person. Callias answered him that of course there is such a person, and that Evenus of Paros was the best at doing this, and charged 500 Drachmae. Socrates felt that Evenus should be congratulated if he truly was a master at these things, and that it was surprising that he should charge such a moderate fee. Now, he continues to say that he would certainly be a proud gentleman if he had his understandings, but he does not.



To answer the unasked question of how such a reputation befell him if he had engaged only in regular activities, Socrates says he will give whole truth. He gained this reputation from human wisdom.

Topic Tracking: Wisdom 1

Furthermore, he believes that the geniuses he just mentioned have a wisdom that is more than human, as he does not know how to account for it, and he knows he does not have it. Thus anyone who says he does must be lying.

Topic Tracking: Wisdom 2

Although this may sound extravagant, he calls as his witness, Delphi. When Chaerophon, his friend from childhood and an excellent democrat, visited Delphi and asked the god if there was anyone wiser than Socrates. The Delphi answered that there was not.

Topic Tracking: Wisdom 3

When Socrates heard this claim, he asked himself what hidden meaning the god had because he was only too aware that he is not wise, let alone the wisest man in the world. However, as gods cannot lie, he set out to find out what the god meant.

Topic Tracking: Wisdom 4



The Defense (Section 2)

He interviewed a man with a high reputation for wisdom in order to disprove the oracle. However, when he examined this person and conversed with him, he realized that people only thought this person was wise, and the person also thought he was wise, when in fact, Socrates realized that he was not. When Socrates tried to show him that he was overestimating his wisdom, he, and other people present, resented his efforts.

Topic Tracking: Resentment 1

As he left, he realized that he was wiser than this man because even though neither of them had any knowledge to boast of, the man thinks that he does, whereas Socrates is aware that he doesn't. Thus, Socrates is wiser than the man because he does not think that he know things that he does not know.

Socrates then interviewed a man of an even greater reputation for wisdom, and came to the same conclusion, again causing the man, and everybody present, to resent him. He did this again and again. Although Socrates knew that he was becoming unpopular, the god's business and oracle's words were more important, and he wanted to interview with everyone who was known to have knowledge. As a result, he realized that the people with greater reputations were less wise than those with inferior reputations.

After he interviewed all the 'wise' politicians, he turned to the poets. He chose some of their best works, and asked them about the meanings in them, hoping to expand his knowledge. He soon came to the conclusion that any person could explain their poems as well as they could, and that it was not wisdom that enabled them to write their poetry, but instinct and inspiration. Furthermore, "the very fact that they were poets made them think that they had a perfect understanding of all other subjects, of which they were totally ignorant." Line 22c

Lastly, he turned to the skilled craftsmen. Since he knew nothing about this area, he knew he would find them all full of knowledge. He was happy about this as they understood things that he didn't and therefore could be considered wiser than he was. However, they had the same fault of the poets: "on the strength of their technical proficiency they claimed a perfect understanding of every other subject..." Line 22d He found this fault to be greater than their wisdom. As a result, he asked himself whether he would rather have their wisdom and ignorance, or have neither. His answer was that he preferred to be the way he was.

Topic Tracking: Wisdom 5

His examinations have caused many people to dislike him and be hostile towards him, in a persistent and malicious way, making wrong suggestions about him.

Topic Tracking: Resentment 2



This is because "whenever I succeed in disproving another person's claim to wisdom in a given subject, the bystanders assumed that he know everything about that subject myself." Line 23a But Socrates isn't arrogant about his own knowledge or wisdom; he believes that human wisdom has little or no value.

Topic Tracking: Wisdom 6

As he realizes this, it seems apparent that when the oracle named him as the wisest person, they did not name him as Socrates, but instead named him as an example of a person who realizes that human wisdom is worthless. That is why he believes that it is his divine duty to teach all who think that they are wise but are not, that they are not.

Topic Tracking: Wisdom 7



The Defense (Section 3)

This duty has kept him too busy to do much else--so he ended up in poverty. Furthermore, he claims that wealthy young men with much leisure time on their hands follow him around as they enjoy hearing people cross-questioned. Taking him as their model, they go out and try to question people themselves. As their victims become annoyed, they blame Socrates for filling these youths' heads with wrong ideas. However, if they ask them what he does, they will not know what to say, and therefore they fall back on the charges given to any sophist: that he inquires about the heavens and below the earth, disbelieves in gods, and makes the weaker argument stronger.

Socrates claims that these are the reasons that Meletus, Anytus and Lycon have attacked him. Meletus' attack was on behalf of poets, Anytus on behalf of professionals, and Lycon on behalf of orators. It is apparent to him that his plain speaking is the reason for these attacks, and this goes to show that his statements are true.

First, he defends himself against Meletus' charges, which are that he is guilty of corrupting the minds of the young. Socrates first charges Meletus with a crime of treating a serious matter lightly because he "summons people to stand their trial on frivolous grounds, and professes concern and keen anxiety in matters about which he has never had the slightest interest." Line 24c He says that he will prove to the jury that Meletus is guilty. His first statement is that Meletus regards it of supreme importance that our young people should be exposed to the best possible influence, to which Meletus agrees. From here, Socrates states that Meletus seems to know exactly who disrupts the minds of the young, and asks him who influences the young for the better. To this, Meletus names jurymen, councilors and many others. Socrates claims that Meletus has named all the population of Athens, and compares this situation to a similar one: in the case of horses, only a few people improve them while most people harm them. Just as this is the case with all animals, it is also the case with humans. From this reasoning, and Meletus' answer, Socrates finds that it is obvious that Meletus has never even thought about the matter that he is using to indict Socrates.

The second part of his defense is based on the fact that it is obviously better to live in a good community than in a bad community; and that everybody prefers to be benefited than harmed. Therefore, if he is being indicted for intentionally harming the minds of the young, this is irrational, as he would never harm a society that he has to live in and then be harmed by it. On the other hand, if they are charging him for unintentionally harming the minds of the young, then they should not be charging him, but taking him aside and giving him some words of advice. But this would be difficult for them to do since they have been avoiding him in the past.

Following through this chain of reason, it is clear that no attention has been paid to this subject. However, he moves on to the next accusation which he claims is paradoxical as it states that he teaches the young to believe in gods not recognized by the state, and that he disbelieves in gods. This is a contradiction because just as there is nobody that believes in musical things but not music, there is nobody that believes in supernatural



things, but not supernatural beings. Therefore, since they claim he teaches supernatural things, he most definitely must believe in supernatural beings. Since supernatural beings are gods, he most definitely believes in gods, and thus this charge is worthless.

Socrates believes that what he has said should be enough to clear him of Meletus's accusations. However, he believes that his destruction will not be brought about by Meletus's nor Anytus's accusations; instead it will be brought about by the hostility of the general public who have condemned so many before him because of their anger, and will do the same to him.

Topic Tracking: Resentment 3

He addresses those who are curious as to whether he feels any remorse for acting in a way that put his life in danger by saying that he feels no remorse. Instead, he believes a man should not spend his time weighing up prospects of life and death, but instead be evaluating whether his actions are right or wrong, and just or unjust.

Topic Tracking: Death 1

Here is an example taken from mythology:

"The heroes who died at Troy would be poor creatures, especially the son of Thetis. He, if you remember, made so light of danger in comparison with incurring dishonor that when his goddess mother warned him, eager as he was to kill Hector, in some such words as these, I fancy, 'My son, if you avenge your comrade Patroclus's death and kill Hector, you will die yourself; Next after Hector is thy fate prepared,'--when he heard this warning, he made light of his death and danger, being much more afraid of an ignoble life and of failing to avenge his friends. 'Let me die forthwith,' said he, 'when I have requited the villain, rather than remain here by the beaked ships to be mocked, a burden on the ground.'" Line 28c

Topic Tracking: Death 2

Socrates believed that once a man has taken a stand for what he believes in, nothing would stop him from fighting for it--not even death.

Topic Tracking: Death 3

Thus, when God appointed him to lead the philosophic life, nothing could stop him. With that in mind, he continues to say that if he decides not to lead the philosophic life, he should have been summoned to court for not believing the oracle, and being afraid of death. For him, being afraid of death is only another form of thinking that one is wise when one is not because it is to think that one knows what death is, when in reality, one does not know. Nobody knows whether death is something we should look forward to or not, and yet people are afraid of it as though it was an evil.

Topic Tracking: Death 4

This is where Socrates claims he is wiser than the rest--because he knows that he does not know.

Topic Tracking: Wisdom 8



The Defense (Section 4)

However, he does know that it is wrong to disobey his superior--whether man or god. For this reason, should they acquit him on the basis of his terminating his philosophical life, he would not agree. Although he would be grateful, he would rather die a hundred deaths.

Topic Tracking: Death 5

All that his message says to the people, young and old alike, is that "Wealth does not bring goodness, but goodness brings wealth and every other blessing, both to the individual and to the State." Line 30b This message tells people that they should be trying to improve their soul, not their material position. If this is harmful to the young, then he corrupted the young. However, this is his message, and nothing else.

Socrates claims that by putting him to death, the jury will harm themselves more than they will harm him.

Topic Tracking: Death 6

Although his accusers think that banishing him, depriving him of his civic rights, or putting him to death may harm him, he claims that these punishments will not. He believes that what they are doing now--trying to put him to death unjustly - is far worse than anything else. Furthermore, he claims that he is really pleading on behalf of the jury and society, for if he is put to death, they will not easily find somebody to replace him. God has assigned him to this city, "as though it were a large thoroughbred horse which because of its great size is inclined to be lazy and needs the stimulation of some stinging fly." Line 30e Thus, like the fly, he never settles and insists on provoking energy and thought. If they doubt that God has sent him here, he asks them to think of the fact that in order to busy himself with improving each and every one of them, he has neglected his family. In addition, he has never asked for a fee from anyone, as his poverty proves.

He acknowledges that it may seem strange that he goes around giving private advice and does not engage in public office. The reason for this, he repeats, is that he is subject to a divine experience, which started when he was a child. At that time, a certain voice starting coming to his head, dissuading him from doing whatever it was he wanted to do. This is what prevents him from joining public office. This is because:

"No man on earth who conscientiously opposes either you or any other organized democracy, and flatly prevents a great many wrongs and illegalities from taking place in the state to which he belongs, can possibly escape with his life." Line 31e

He will give them two examples of cases when this has personally happened, both of which plenty of people can testify to.



The first case was when he served on the Council in the city (the only office he ever held). This was in the presidency of the tribe, Antiochis. It was decided that the ten commanders who had failed to rescue the men lost in a naval engagement were to be tried *en bloc*, although later everybody found out that it was illegal. He was the only member to oppose this unconstitutional action, and everybody was ready to arrest him. However, he believed that to stand up for what he believed in is more important than to be scared of imprisonment or death.

Topic Tracking: Death 7

In the second case, when the oligarchy came to power, the Thirty Commissioners tried to arrest as many people as possible for as many crimes as possible. They issued instructions for the people in office to go and collect somebody from his house for execution. Paying no heed to death or punishment, he refused to do this, as he did not feel that it was just. This would have cost him his life if the oligarchy did not fall soon after.

It is obvious that he would not have lived as long as he did if he had taken up public office and conducted himself in accordance with his conscience. He has never taken the position as any person's teacher; however, should anybody wish to listen to his conversations, they are more than welcome. Should anybody wish to ask him questions or converse with him and answer his questions, they are also more than welcome. The reason some people enjoy this more than others, he says, is simply because some people enjoy watching him examine others who think that they are wise when they are not, as it may be rather comical at times.

Topic Tracking: Wisdom 9

However, if it is a fact that he corrupts the young, then some of these young, whom he has corrupted in the past and are now grown up, should be complaining and want to punish him themselves. In defense of an argument that they are corrupt and do not know it, then their direct relatives who live with this corruption should want to punish him. However, he sees many of these people in the jury, and they are all there in his defense, as they know Meletus is lying.

Socrates says that this is all he can possibly say in his defense. He does, however, continue to state that some of the jury, in their own defenses, may have brought their children up to the stand in order to stir pity and help them be acquitted. Although he does not expect this, there may be some people who have done that and will cast their votes in anger.

Topic Tracking: Resentment 4

To these people, he says that he too has family. However he does not intend to do anything of the kind because he does not think that it is honorable for him to use any of these methods in his age and with his reputation. Neither is it honorable for any man of reputation for wisdom or virtue to do so, as this shows that they are afraid of death, as if they would be immortal should the jury decide to acquit them.



Topic Tracking: Wisdom 10

Apart from all this, he does not think that such actions are just. Although a jury should have all the information, they should not be influenced by such emotions, and should return a just and lawful verdict. Therefore, he refuses to behave this way, as he does not consider it reputable, just or in accordance with his religious beliefs. He claims that if he did try to do such a thing, he would be teaching the jury contempt for religion, and thus accusing himself and proving that he has no religious belief. Since this is far from the truth and since he has more religious belief than his accusers, he tells them that he leaves it to them and to God to judge him.



The Verdict is 'Guilty'

Socrates claims that there are many reasons why he is not distressed by this result, the main one being that it was not unexpected. What he found surprising, however, was the closeness of the result. A mere thirty votes would have changed the outcome and he would have been acquitted. However, he now faces the fact that the death penalty is demanded and that he is to suggest a substitute for it.

Topic Tracking: Death 8

He realizes that he could have led an ordinary life, making money and having a comfortable home, although he believes he is too fair-minded for politics. But instead, he spent his life trying to do good for others by persuading them to think of their mental and moral well being instead of material possessions; thus he believes he deserve a reward. What he deems appropriate for a poor man like himself is free dining at the Prytaneum, as he believes that he deserves this more than any victor at the races at the Olympia. Furthermore, as he tries to do public good, he needs maintenance, unlike those victors, and this would be very good maintenance.

He realized that perhaps when he says this, he might give the jury the impression that he is stubborn. However, he only says this because he knows that he never intentionally did anybody any wrong. He would probably be able to convince them of this if there was more time for discussion. Knowing that he did nothing wrong, he says that he cannot be expected to claim that he deserves a punishment, let alone recommend one. In order to suggest banishment, he claims that would have to be in love with life. This is because just as the people of this city did not tolerate him, no other town will.

Topic Tracking: Resentment 5

If they should ask him why he does not stop philosophizing in other towns and 'mind his own business,' it is because that would be disobedient to God. However, he realizes that they probably think he is 'pulling their leg.' Yet, they would be even less inclined to believe him if he were to continue his work, and tell them that discussing goodness and other subjects he talks about is the best thing a man can do and that "life without this sort of examination is not worth living...." Line 38a

Furthermore, he does not think he deserves a punishment. Despite this, he is willing to pay a fine since money does not matter to him. He can afford, and offers, one hundred drachmae. At this time, Plato, Crito, Critobolus and Apollodorus propose three thousand drachmae on their security, which everybody knows is reliable.



The Penalty is Death

"Well, gentlemen, for the sake of a very small gain in time you are going to earn the reputation--and the blame from those who wish to disparage our city--of having put Socrates to death." Line 38c He says that had they waited a short period of time, he would have died a natural death and they would not have to live with condemning him.

Topic Tracking: Death 9

He now addresses those people who voted for his execution and says that he does not doubt that they condemned him for the lack of arguments he used. He realizes that there are many things he could have said and done which would have ensured his acquittal. However, it is not that he refused to do these things that made them condemn him, it is that he refused to address them in the manner they wished to be addressed, and to plead and weep for his acquittal, as many people do who stand trial. Despite this, he does not regret the way he acted, for at least he was truthful. Furthermore, he believes that nobody should use wits to escape death, regardless of the situation--whether it is court or warfare. This is because he believes that escaping death is not difficult, it is escaping wickedness that is.

Topic Tracking: Death 10

He says:

"When I leave this court I shall go away condemned by you to death, but they will go away convicted by Truth herself of depravity and wickedness. And they accept their sentence even as I accept mine." Line 39b

Topic Tracking: Death 11

Having said this, Socrates feels moved to prophesy to those who voted to condemn him and says that as soon as he is dead, vengeance shall fall upon them and their punishment shall be far greater than that they condemned him with. They brought about his death in the belief that through this, they will rid themselves of the criticisms of their lives.

Topic Tracking: Death 12

However, they do not realize that he has restrained many other people from criticizing them, most of who are younger than he and more energetic, and will criticize them more than he did. Thus, they accomplished the opposite of their goal. The only way to stop people criticizing from them is to improve their lives to the best of their abilities.

He also gave a few words of reconciliation to those that voted for his acquittal by saying that his experience has been truly remarkable. In the past, whenever he was following a wrong path, no matter how great or small, a prophetic voice would redirect him. However, throughout this trial, he has not heard that voice once. This can only mean



that this is a blessing. He considers this to be true for death can be one of two things: an endless sleep or a migration of the soul to another place.

Topic Tracking: Death 13

If it is the first, death must be a 'marvelous gain' as a dreamless sleep for eternity would be the most restful experience ever. As for the alternative, that all that are dead are there, this would be a great blessing for one would meet all the great people and demi-gods and converse with them freely. "[A]bove all I should like to spend my time there, as here, in examining and searching people's minds, to find out who is really wise among them, and who only thinks that he is." Line 41b.

Topic Tracking: Wisdom 11

Anyway, he could not be put to death there for such conduct, because everybody there is immortal. He says that all who believe him should also look forward to death with confidence, and have one belief fixed in their mind: that a good man cannot be harmed in life or in death.

Topic Tracking: Death 14

Topic Tracking: Death 15

He does know, however, that it is time for him to die. Otherwise, his sign would have turned him back and changed his course of conduct. He does not bear any grudges against those who condemned him, although they were trying to hurt him. However, he does ask them to grant him one favor: when his sons grow up, please correct them as he corrected those who condemned him, and do not let them put their money or anything else before their goodness, or neglect the important things in life. He asks them to take their revenge by plaguing them as he plagued these people, and criticizing them as he criticized this society. In that manner, they would have served him justice.

"Now it is time that we were going, I to die and you to live; but which of us has the happier prospect is unknown to anyone but God." Line 42a