Thomas C. Brickhouse Nicholas D. Smith ← Oxford U. Press, 2002

Apology of Socrates - by Plato, found in

The title of this work in Greek is *Apologia Socratous.* We have given it the common title, *Apology of Socrates* (and refer to it generally as the *Apology*), because that is the way it is commonly referred to by scholars and readers around the world. This title is, however, somewhat misleading, for *apologia* in Greek simply means "defense"; it does not mean what we mean by "apology." Of course, one might well offer some sort of apology for one's behavior in a defense speech, but readers will not find such a tactic offered by Socrates in this work by Plato, which purports to be the defense Socrates gave at his trial. Socrates does *defend* the way he has lived his life, but he plainly does not *apologize* for anything here.

The extent to which Plato's writing is faithful to the actual speech Socrates gave is a matter of considerable controversy. (See our discussion in the Introduction to this book.) After first defending himself against the slanders that have been told about him for many years and then interrogating the prosecutor Meletus, Socrates makes his defense of philosophy, as he practices it, the centerpiece of the speech. He has, he says, been engaged in nothing less than a philosophical "mission," undertaken at the behest of the god. Over the years he tried to improve the souls of those with whom he has practiced philosophy by freeing them from any pretense to wisdom and exhorting them to make moral virtue and the perfection of the soul their first concern.

After he is convicted, Socrates is required to propose a counterpenalty to the prosecution's proposed penalty of death. Socrates is willing to have a substantial fine of 30 minas be paid on his behalf by four of his friends. The last part of the *Apology*, which follows the jury's rejection of Socrates' proposed counterpenalty, was not a formal part of the proceeding. However, it is possible that Socrates would be permitted to make final remarks to the jurors before leaving the court.

17a I don't know what effect my accusers[21] have had on you, Athenians, but they were speaking so persuasively that I myself almost forgot who I am. And yet they said virtually nothing that's true. Of their many lies, one surprised me most of all: When they said you needed to be on your
b guard against getting tricked by me, because I'm a clever speaker. Their not being ashamed of that seems to me to be the worst thing they did, because I'm immediately going to refute them by what I do—as soon as

[21]The speeches given by Socrates' accusers took place during the morning of the trial. Meletus was the man who actually brought the formal charges against him. But it was not uncommon to ask others to speak in court, as part of the presentations of the prosecution or the defense to the jurors. Apparently, speaking in support of Meletus' indictment were two others, Anytus and Lycon, which is why Socrates refers to more than one accuser. It does not appear that Socrates had anyone else give a speech as part of his defense.

I show that I'm not a clever speaker at all—unless they call a clever speaker one who tells the truth. If this is what they mean, I'd agree that I'm an orator, though not the way they are. As I say, they've said almost nothing that's true. But you'll hear only the truth from me, and yet not, by god, Athenians, in beautifully crafted language like theirs, carefully arranged with words and phrases. Instead, you'll hear things said by me without any planning, in words as they occur to me—for I assume that what I say is just—and none of you should expect anything else. Nor would it be appropriate, I suppose, men, for someone at my age to come before you like a boy planning out what he's going to say. I really implore you to grant me one thing: If you hear me making my defense with the same language I'm used to using in the marketplace at the merchants' tables, where many of you have heard me, and elsewhere, don't be surprised and don't make a disturbance because of it. The truth is this: Now is the first time I've come before a court, although I'm seventy years old. I'm a complete stranger to the language used here.[22] So just as if I really were a stranger, you would surely forgive me if I spoke in that dialect and manner of speaking in which I had been brought up, so what I am now asking is fair, it seems to me, namely, that you ignore the way I speak—it's not important—and you pay attention to and concentrate on this one thing: if what I say is just or not. This is the virtue of a judge; the virtue of a speaker is to tell the truth.

First, then, it's right for me to make my defense, Athenians, against the first of the false accusations made against me and against my first accusers, and then against the later ones and the later accusers. Many have accused me before you, and have done so for a long time now, though they didn't say anything that's true. I'm more afraid of them than I am of Anytus and those with him, although they do worry me. But the earlier ones worry me more, men, who having gotten hold of many of you when you were children, convinced you with accusations against me that weren't any truer than the ones I now face. They said that there's a certain Socrates, a wise man, who thinks about what's in the heavens and who has investigated all the things below the earth and who makes the weaker argument appear to be the stronger. Those who spread this rumor, Athenians, are the accusers who worry me. For the people who hear such things believe that those who inquire about such topics also don't believe in the gods. There are lots of these accusers and they've been at it for a long time already, telling you these things when

[22]Socrates is not claiming not to know how people speak or act in courtrooms, for later he shows that he does have some knowledge of such things (see 32a and 34c). His claim is only that he has never before been a litigant in a courtroom. In Athens' participatory democracy, those who did fancy themselves clever speakers would be very likely to have direct experience in litigation. Here and elsewhere, Socrates emphasizes the fact that he has not engaged in the sorts of political activities one would expect from him, if indeed he were the sort of "clever speaker" his accusers have made him out to be.

you were still at an age when you were most apt to believe them, when some of you were children and others were adolescents, and they made their case when absolutely no one presented a defense. But the most unreasonable part of all is that it's impossible to know and say their names, except one who happens to be a certain writer of comedies.[23] Those who persuaded you by using malice and slander, and some who persuaded others after they themselves had been persuaded—all are very hard to deal with. It isn't even possible to bring any of them up here and to question them, and it's absolutely necessary in making my defense to shadow-box, as it were, and to ask questions when no one answers. Trust me, then, that, as I say, two groups of accusers have arisen against me: the ones who are accusing me right now and the others who I say have been accusing me for quite a while. And please understand that I should defend myself against the latter group first. After all, you heard them accusing me earlier and with much more intensity than the ones who came later.

Well, then, I must make my defense, Athenians, and try to remove from your minds in such a short time the slander you accepted for a long time. I'd hope this happens, if it's better for you and for me, and that in making my defense I do it successfully. But it's not lost on me that this sort of task I'm facing will be difficult. In any case, let this turn out as the god wants; I must obey the law and make a defense.

Let's take up from the beginning what the accusation against me is from which the slander about me arose—the one that Meletus in particular put his faith in when he brought this indictment against me. Well, what did the slanderers say? I must read it as if it were the sworn statement of accusers: "Socrates does wrong and is too concerned with inquiring about what's in the heavens and below the earth and to make the weaker argument appear to be the stronger and to teach these same things to others"—something like this. For you yourselves saw these things in the comedy by Aristophanes: a Socrates being carried around there, saying that he's walking on air and all kinds of other nonsense which I don't understand at all.[24] And I don't mean to disparage knowledge of this sort, if anyone is wise about such things (may I not have to answer such charges by Meletus as that!), but, as a matter of fact, I don't possess a bit of that wisdom, Athenians. I'm supplying many of you as my witnesses, and I ask you to talk to and inform each other, as many of you as ever heard me carrying on a discussion—and there are many of you in this category—tell each other whether any of you have ever

[23]Socrates is referring to Aristophanes, the comic playwright. He refers to Aristophanes explicitly below, at 19c.

[24]The reference is to Aristophanes' play, the *Clouds*, which was first produced in 423 B.C.E. A central character named "Socrates" is made to look mischievous and silly to achieve a comic effect.

heard me discussing anything at all about things of this sort. And from this you'll know that the other things that most people say about me are no different.

In fact there's nothing to these claims, not even if you've heard someone say that I try to instruct people and make money that way. No, not even this is true. Although as a matter of fact I think it's impressive if anyone is able to instruct people in the way Gorgias of Leontini, Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis pretend to do.[25] Each of them is able to go into any city and persuade the young—who can associate for free with any of their own citizens they want to—to abandon their associations with the local people and to associate instead with them and pay them and to thank them for it on top of it all. And then there's another wise man, a Parian, who I learned was living here. For I happened to run into Callias, the son of Hipponicus, a man who had paid more money to the sophists than anyone else. So I asked him—he has two sons—"Callias," I said, "if your two sons were two colts or two calves, and we could get hold of and hire an expert for them, who would make them admirable and good in the appropriate virtue? This person would be knowledgeable either about horses or farming. But now, since they're men, what expert do you have in mind to get for them? Who's knowledgeable about this sort of virtue, that of a human being and a citizen? I imagine you've looked into it, because you have two sons. Is there someone," I said, "or not?" "Of course," he said. "Who is he," I said, "and where does he come from, and how much does he charge for instruction?" "Evenus," he said, "a Parian, and 5 minas." And I called Evenus blessed, if he really has such a skill and teaches for such a reasonable fee.[26] I myself would certainly be pretty puffed up and would act like a bigshot if I knew these things. But the fact is that I don't know them, Athenians.

One of you, perhaps, might respond: "So what's the matter with you, Socrates? Where did these accusations come from? For surely if you weren't engaged in something unusual but were only doing something different from most people, these rumors and talk about you wouldn't have gotten started. So tell us what it is, so that we don't reach

[25]Each was a prominent sophist. The sophists were teachers who traveled throughout Greece. It is difficult to generalize about the various subjects they professed to teach, but the most prominent of the sophists taught forensic and public speaking. Because some made extravagant claims about improving the character of their students, they were viewed with suspicion and outright contempt by many Athenians, who saw moral education as the province of the family and state (see 24d–25a).

[26]A mina was equal to 100 silver drachmae. One drachma was the average daily wage for a worker in Athens at this time, and so a single mina was equivalent to 100 days' wages for many Athenian workers. Even though 5 minas is, then, a considerable sum of money, Socrates is being sincere when he says that it is really quite reasonable if Evenus can indeed do what he claims, namely provide Callias with sons of good character.

a hasty judgment about you." I think this is a fair question, and I'll try to show you what produced both my reputation and the slander. So listen. No doubt, I'll seem to some of you to be joking. Rest assured, however, that I'll say only what's true. Athenians, I acquired this reputation on account of nothing other than a sort of wisdom. Well, what sort of wisdom is this? It is, surely, just human wisdom. It's likely that I really e am wise in that sense. These men, to whom I was referring just now, might perhaps be wise in a way that's greater than human, or else I don't know what to call it. For I'm certainly not wise in that way, and whoever says I am is either lying or saying it to slander me. And don't interrupt me with your jeering, Athenians, not even if I seem to you to be bragging. The story I'm about to tell you isn't mine, but I refer you to a speaker you trust. About my wisdom, if it really is wisdom and what 21a sort of wisdom it is, I'll produce as a witness the Delphic god.[27] I suppose you know Chairephon. He was both my friend ever since we were young, and also a friend to your democratic faction, and he took part in your faction's exile, and he came back into the city with you.[28] And you know what sort of person Chairephon was and how impulsive he was about whatever he had an urge to do. Once, in particular, he had the nerve to go to Delphi and ask the oracle this question—and, as I say, don't interrupt me, men—he really did ask if anyone is wiser than I am. Then the Pythia responded that no one is wiser. His brother here will serve as a witness for you about these matters, since Chairephon is dead.

b Consider why I'm telling you this. I'm about to explain to you how the slandering of me came about. When I heard about what the oracle told Chairephon, here's what I thought about it: "What's the god saying and what's he hinting at? For I'm aware that, in fact, I'm not wise at all. What then does he mean in saying that I'm the wisest? He certainly isn't lying. That isn't divinely sanctioned for him." And for a long time I was puzzled about what he meant. And then, and with great reluctance, I undertook a search for its meaning in this way: I went to one of c those who's reputed to be wise in order there, if indeed anywhere, to refute the oracle's response and show the oracle: "This person here is wiser than I am, but you claimed that I'm the wisest man." Then after thoroughly examining him—I needn't mention his name, Athenians, but he was one of the politicians that I had this sort of experience with.

[27]The Greek god Apollo was believed to communicate to humans through the oracle at Delphi. Delphi is located in the mountains, about seventy miles northwest of Athens.

[28]At the end of the Peloponnesian War, a commission of thirty men was established to rewrite the laws of Athens. The group soon became known as the Thirty Tyrants, for they soon made it clear that they had no interest in recognizing the rights most Athenians enjoyed under democratic rule (see also note 38, below). Many who wanted to see democracy reestablished in Athens left the city and later retook the city by force from those loyal to the Thirty. Socrates' friend, Chairephon, was one who fought on the side of the democrats.

After conversing with him, I thought that this guy seems to be wise to many other people and, most of all, to himself, yet he isn't. And then I tried to show him that he thought he is wise, but he isn't. And so, as a result, I became hated by him and by many of those who were there. So, as I went away from him, I concluded to myself that I'm, indeed, wiser than this guy. I'm afraid that neither of us knows anything admirable and good, but this guy thinks he knows something when he doesn't, whereas I, just as I don't know, don't even think I know. At least, then, I seem to be wiser in this small way than this guy, because I don't even think I know what I don't know. From him, I went to someone else, one of those reputed to be wiser than the first guy, and the very same thing seemed to me to be true, and at that point I became hated by that guy and by many others too.

After that I went from one person to the next, and although I was troubled and fearful when I saw that I had become hated, nevertheless I thought I had to make the god's business the most important thing. In searching for the meaning of the oracle, I had to proceed on to all who had a reputation for knowing something. And, by the Dog,[29] Athenians—for I must tell you the truth—the fact is that I experienced something of this sort: Those who enjoyed the greatest reputation seemed to me, as I searched in accordance with the god, to be pretty much the most lacking, whereas those who were reputed to be less worthy of consideration were better men when it came to having good sense.

Now, I must instruct you about my wandering, undertaken like labors, which resulted in my not refuting the oracle. After the politicians I went to the poets—those who write tragedies, dithyrambs, and the others, so that right in the very act of questioning them, I would catch myself being more ignorant than they are. Then when they read their poetry, which I thought they had really worked at, I asked them what they meant in order to learn something from them. Now I'm embarrassed to tell you the truth, but I must say it. Virtually everyone present could have given a better account of what they had written. After a little while, I realized this about the poets: They composed what they did, not out of wisdom but by some kind of natural ability and because they were divinely inspired, just like seers and prophets. For even though they in fact say many fine things, they don't know what they're saying. It was evident to me that the poets had been affected in some way like this. I found out that because of their poetry, they thought they were the wisest of people in other ways as well, which they weren't. So I left them, thinking that I'm superior to them in just the way that I'm superior to the politicians.

[29]The expression is uncommon. Socrates is clearly using it to signal to the jury the importance of what he is about to say.

And then finally, I went to the craftsmen. I was aware that I knew
d virtually nothing, but I also knew that I'd discover that they knew many admirable things. I wasn't deceived about this: They did know what I didn't know, and in that way they were wiser than I am. But, Athenians, the good craftsmen also seemed to me to make the same mistake the poets committed. Because of practicing his craft well, each one believed he was supremely wise in other things, the most important things—and
e this very mistake of theirs seemed to me to overshadow that wisdom they did have. So I asked myself on behalf of the oracle whether I would prefer to be simply as I am, neither being wise in their sort of wisdom, nor ignorant in the way they are ignorant, or to be in both ways as they are. Then I answered myself and the oracle that I'd be better off being simply as I am.

23a This very investigation, Athenians, has generated for me a great deal of hatred, which is most difficult to handle and hard to bear, and the result has been a lot of slandering, and the claim made that I'm "wise." It's because every time the people present think that I'm wise about the subject I refute someone else on. But what's likely, men, is that the god is really wise and that in this oracle he means that human wis-
b dom is of little or no value. And he appears to mean that such a person is Socrates and to have used my name, taking me as an example, as if to say, "This one of you, O human beings, is wisest, who—as Socrates does—knows that he's in truth worthless with respect to wisdom." And so even now I go around searching and questioning, in keeping with the god, any citizen or stranger whom I think is wise. And when he doesn't seem to me to be so, I help the god out and show that he isn't wise. It's because of this occupation that I have no leisure time worth mentioning
c to do anything for the city or for my family, but instead I'm in complete poverty on account of my service to the god.

But in addition to this, the young who follow me around, doing so of their free will, who have complete leisure—the sons of the richest people—enjoy hearing people examined, and they often imitate me, and then try to examine others. And then, I imagine, they find an abundance of people who think they know something but know virtually nothing. That's why those who are examined by them get angry with
d me and not with them, and say that a certain Socrates completely pollutes[30] the land and corrupts the youth. And when anyone asks them what I do and what I teach, they have nothing to say and draw a blank, but so they don't appear to be confused, they say what's commonly said against all philosophers—"what's in the heavens and below the earth,"

[30]An ancient Greek notion that one who commits offenses against the gods "pollutes" the surrounding land and makes himself and everyone who inhabits the area liable to divine punishments until the land is "cleansed" by having the one who has offended undergo the proper punishment for the offense.

"doesn't believe in gods," and "makes the weaker argument the stronger." But I think they wouldn't want to say what's true, that they're plainly pretending to know, and they don't know anything. In so far, then, as they are, I think, concerned about their honor, and are zealous, and numerous, and speak earnestly and persuasively about me, they've filled your ears for a long time by vehemently slandering me. It was on this account that Meletus, Anytus, and Lycon came after me: Meletus, angry on behalf of the poets; Anytus, on behalf of the craftsmen and politicians;[31] and Lycon, on behalf of the orators. The 2
result is that, as I was saying when I began, I'd be amazed if I were able to refute in such a little time this slander you accept and that has gotten out of hand. There you have the truth, men of Athens, and in what I'm saying, I'm neither hiding nor even shading anything large or small. And yet I know pretty well that in saying these things, I'm making myself hated, which is evidence that I'm telling the truth and that such is the slander against me and that these are its causes. And whether you investigate these things now or later, you'll discover that they're so.

Let this be enough of a defense for you about what my first accusers accuse me of. But regarding the good and patriotic Meletus, as he says, and the later accusers, I'll try to present a defense next. Just as if they were in fact a different group of accusers, let's take up their sworn statement in turn. It goes, I suppose, like this: They're saying that Socrates does wrong because he corrupts the youth and doesn't believe in the gods that the city believes in, but believes in other new divinities. Such is the charge. But let's examine each part of this accusation.

He says that I do wrong because I corrupt the young. But I say, Athenians, that *he* does wrong, because he's playing around in what's serious business, thoughtlessly putting people on trial, while pretending to be serious and troubled about matters which he has never cared about at all.[32] I'll try to show you this is so.

Come here, Meletus, and tell me. Isn't it true that you take it to be very important that the young be as good as possible?

I do.

Come on now and tell these people: Who improves them? It's clear that you know; at least it's a matter of concern to you. Since you've discovered me as the one who corrupts them, as you say, and you're bringing me to trial before these people here and you're accusing me. Come and tell us who improves them and show these people who he is. Do you notice, Meletus, that you're silent and can't say anything? And yet

[31]Anytus was a craftsman who became one of the leading members of the democratic faction in Athens. Nothing is known about Lycon other than his participation as one who spoke against Socrates at his trial.

[32]Socrates is punning on the Meletus' name. "Meletus" sounds like *melein*, a Greek verb that means "to care about."

doesn't it seem to you to be disgraceful and sufficient proof of what I'm talking about, that none of this has mattered to you? But tell me, my good man, who improves them?

The laws.

I'm not asking you that. But who's the person who knows the laws to begin with?

These men, Socrates, the jurors.

What're you saying, Meletus—that they're able to educate the young and improve them?

Absolutely.

And which is it? All of them, or is it that some are able to do so and others not?

Everyone is.

What good news, by Hera! There's no shortage of those who provide help! But what about this? Do those who are here listening to the
5a trial improve them or not?

They do, too.

What about the members of the Council[33]?

The members of the Council do, too.

But, then, Meletus, do those in the Assembly, its members, corrupt the youth, or do all of those people improve them?

They do, too.

Therefore, it seems, all Athenians except me make the youth admirable and good, but I alone corrupt them. Is this what you're saying?

That's exactly what I'm saying.

You've condemned me to a terrible fate! But tell me this: Don't you
b think this also holds with horses? Everyone improves them and an individual corrupts them? Or isn't it just the opposite of this, that one person or only a few are able to improve them—the horse trainers—whereas most people, if in fact they're around and use horses, corrupt them? Isn't that true, Meletus, both with horses and with all other animals? It's absolutely clear that it is, whether you and Anytus say so or
c not! The young would be fortunate indeed if only one person corrupts them and the others improve them! But the fact is, Meletus, that you're making it quite clear that you've never even thought about the young, and you're making your lack of concern readily apparent, because you haven't been concerned at all about what you're bringing me to trial for.

Anyway, tell me, in the name of Zeus, whether it's better to live among good citizens or bad? Answer, my good man, for I'm not asking

[33]The Council was the body of 500, selected by lot and rotated among the citizens, whose primary responsibility was the preparation of the agenda for the Athenian Assembly, the law-making body that all citizens could attend.

you anything difficult! Don't bad people always do something bad to those who happen to be closest to them, whereas good people do something good for those who are closest to them?

Of course.

Then is there anyone who'd rather be harmed by those they're d
around instead of benefited? Answer, my good man, for the law commands you to answer! Is there anyone who wishes to be harmed?

Clearly not.

Come then. Are you putting me on trial here on the ground that I corrupt the youth and make them worse voluntarily or involuntarily?

I say you do it voluntarily.

What's that, Meletus? Are you at your age so much wiser than I am at mine that you knew that bad people always do something evil to those who are their closest neighbors, whereas good people always do e
something good, but I've reached the point of such ignorance that I don't know this, because if I make someone I'm with bad, I'm likely to receive something bad from him, and so I'm doing such an evil voluntarily, as you say? I'm not persuaded by you about these things, Meletus, nor do I think anyone else is! Either I don't corrupt them, or if I do corrupt them, I do so involuntarily, so that, either way, you're not telling 26a
the truth! If I corrupt them involuntarily, however, the law here isn't to bring people to trial for errors of this sort but to take them aside in private to teach and admonish them. For it's clear that once I understand, I'll stop what I'm doing involuntarily. But you've avoided associating with me and you didn't want to instruct me, and instead wanted to bring me here to trial where it's the law to try those who need punishment, not instruction.

Well, anyway, Athenians, what I was saying is obvious, namely, that Meletus has never cared anything at all about these things. Never- b
theless, tell us now: How do you say that I corrupt the youth, Meletus? Isn't it in fact clear according to the indictment you wrote that I do so by teaching the young not to believe in the gods that the city believes in but instead to believe in other new divinities? Aren't you claiming that it's by teaching that I corrupt them?

That's exactly what I'm claiming!

In the name of these very gods that we're arguing about, Meletus, tell me and these men here still more clearly. I'm not able to understand c
whether you're saying that I teach people not to believe that some gods exist—and therefore that I myself believe gods exist and am not a complete atheist, nor am not a wrongdoer in that way—and yet I do not believe in the ones that the city believes in, but others, and this is what you're accusing me of, because I believe in the others? Or are you saying that I don't believe in gods at all and that I teach others such things?

I'm saying that you don't believe in the gods at all.

Wonderful Meletus, why are you saying these things? Don't I even d
believe that the sun and the moon are gods, as other people do?

No, by god, jurymen, since he says that the sun is a stone and the moon is earth.

Do you think you are prosecuting Anaxagoras,[34] Meletus? Are you being contemptuous of these men, and do you think they're so illiterate that they don't know that Anaxagoras of Clazomenae's books are full of these sayings? And, indeed, do you think the young learn from me what they can sometimes buy for at most a drachma in the stalls in the marketplace, and laugh at Socrates, if he pretends they're his own, especially since they're so absurd! In the name of Zeus, do you really think this about me, that I don't believe in any god?

No, by Zeus, you don't, not at all.

You're not to be believed, Meletus—and what's more, I think, not even to yourself! He seems to me, Athenians, to be completely insolent and out of control and this indictment is just the result of insolence, lack of self-restraint, and immaturity. He seems to be testing me by making a riddle, as it were. "Will the wise Socrates recognize that I'm fooling around and contradicting myself, or will I trick him and the others who are listening?" He seems to be saying contradictory things in his indictment, as if he were saying: Socrates is guilty since he doesn't believe in the gods, but he does believe in the gods. And this is the sort of thing someone says when he's fooling around.

So let's consider together, men, in what sense he appears to me to mean what he's saying. Answer us, Meletus; and you, members of the jury, as I requested at the beginning, bear in mind that you're not to interrupt me if I present my arguments in the way I'm used to.

Is there anyone, Meletus, who believes in what is associated with human beings, but who doesn't believe in human beings? Let him answer, men, and don't keep on interrupting. Is there anyone who doesn't believe in horses but who believes in what's associated with horses? Or is there anyone who doesn't believe in flute-players but who believes in what's associated with flute-players? There is not, O best of men! If you don't want to answer, I'll give the answer to you and to the others here. But answer the next one at least: Is there anyone who believes in the existence of what's associated with spiritual things, but who doesn't believe in spirits?

There isn't.

How helpful it was that you answered so reluctantly when you were forced to by the jurors here! Aren't you saying that I believe in and teach that there are spiritual things, whether new or old, and I believe in spiritual things, at least according to your argument, and you swore to that in your indictment. But if I believe in spiritual things, surely it

[34]A nature-philosopher who was at one time on friendly terms with Pericles and who may have been exiled. His views about natural change put him at odds with those who held traditional views about the way the gods cause many natural changes.

absolutely has to be true that I believe in spirits. Isn't that so? Of course it is! I take it that you agree with me, since you're not answering. But don't we believe that spirits are at least either gods or the children of gods? Do you say so or not?

Of course.

Then if I believe in spirits, as you're saying, and if spirits are gods, then this is what I'm saying that you're making a riddle of and fooling around about when you say that I don't believe in gods and then in addition to that, that I do believe in gods, since at least I believe in spirits. But if spirits are the illegitimate children of gods, either from nymphs or any others from whom it's also said they come, could someone believe that the children gods had with human beings exist, but not believe that gods exist? It would be similarly absurd if someone believed in the children of horses and donkeys, that is, mules, but didn't believe in horses and donkeys. Meletus, isn't it true that you wrote this indictment either to test us out or because you were confused about what actual wrongdoing you could accuse me of! It just isn't possible that you could persuade anyone who has even a little sense that the same person could believe in spiritual and divine things and yet for the same person not to believe in spirits, gods, and heroes!

Well anyway, Athenians, that I'm not guilty according to Meletus's indictment doesn't seem to me to need much of a defense, and what I've said about it is enough. But what I was saying earlier—that there's great deal of hatred directed at me and by many people, you may be sure that's true. And it's this that'll convict me, if indeed I'm going to be convicted—not Meletus nor even Anytus but the prejudice and ill will of most people. This is what's convicted many other good men and, I think, it'll do so in the future. And we needn't fear that it'll end with my case.

Perhaps someone could say, "But then aren't you ashamed, Socrates, of having been devoted to such a pursuit that's likely to lead to death at this time?" I should respond to this person as follows: "You're wrong, sir, if you think that a person who has any merit needs to consider the likelihood of life or of death and not to look only to this when he acts: Is he acting justly or unjustly and performing the deeds of a good or a bad person? By your argument, all those demigods who died at Troy would be worthless people, and especially the son of Thetis,[35] who scorned such danger when the choice was to endure disgrace, so that his mother, who's a goddess, spoke to him when he was eager to kill Hector, I suppose, in this fashion. 'My child, if you avenge the killing of your friend Patroclus and kill Hector, you yourself will

[35]The son of Thetis was Achilles, the Greek hero who, believing that it was right for him to avenge the death of his friend, Patroclus, went forth in battle to kill Hector, even though Achilles knew that the killing of Hector would eventually result in his own death.

die—for right away,' she says, "after Hector, your death awaits you." But when he heard this, Achilles thought little of danger and death, but instead since he had a much greater fear of living as a bad man and not
d of avenging his friends, he says, 'may I die after I dispense justice to the unjust in order that I not remain here, a laughingstock, beside the curved ships, a burden of the earth?' You don't really think *he* considered death and danger, do you?"

For it really is this way, Athenians, that wherever someone stations himself, believing it to be best or where someone has been stationed by his commander, I think, he must remain there to face danger, not weighing death or anything else more than disgrace.

e Thus, I would have done a terrible thing, Athenians, if, when my commanders, whom you elected to command me, stationed me at Potidaia, and Amphipolis, and Delium, and then remained where they stationed me, like anyone else, and risked death and yet when the god ordered—as I believed and understood myself to have been so ordered—that I must spend my life philosophizing and examining myself and others, I would have abandoned my position through fear of death or any
29a other concern whatsoever. That would be terrible and then someone might really bring me to court justly on the ground that I don't believe the gods exist, since I disobey the oracle, fear death, and think I'm wise when I'm not. In truth, the fear of death, men, is nothing but thinking you're wise when you're not, for you think you know what you don't. For no one knows whether death happens to be the greatest of all goods for humanity, but people fear it because they're completely convinced
b that it's the greatest of evils. And isn't this ignorance, after all, the most shameful kind: thinking you know what you don't? But in this respect, too, men, I'm probably different from most people. If, then, I'd say that I'm wiser than someone in some way, it would be in this way: While I don't really know about the things in Hades, I don't think I know. But I do know that it's evil and disgraceful to do what's wrong and to disobey
c one's superior, whether god or man. Rather than those things that I know are bad, I'll never run from nor fear those things that may turn out to be good. The upshot is that even if you let me go because you don't believe Anytus—who said that either you shouldn't bring me here in the first place or since you've done so, you have to kill me, telling you that if I were acquitted, all of your sons will be completely corrupted by spending their time practicing what Socrates teaches—well, if you'd respond to me: "Socrates, this time we won't do as Anytus says. We'll let you go,
d but on this condition, that you stop spending your time in this inquiry of yours and philosophizing. But if you're caught still doing so, you'll die." Thus, if, as I was saying, you were to let me go on this condition, I'd tell you, "Athenians, I respect and I love you, but I'll obey the god rather than you, and as long as I breathe and am able, I won't stop philosophizing and exhorting you and pointing out to any of you I ever happen upon, saying just what I usually do, 'Best of men, since you're an Athenian,

from the greatest city with the strongest reputation for wisdom and e
strength, aren't you ashamed that you care about having as much money, fame, and honor as you can, and you don't care about, or even consider wisdom, truth, and making your soul as good as possible?"' And if any of you disputes me on this and says he does care, I won't immediately stop talking to him and go away, but I'll question, examine, and try to 30a
refute him. And if he doesn't appear to me to have acquired virtue but says he has, I'll shame him because he attaches greater value to what's of less value and takes what's inferior to be more important. And I'll do this for whomever I come upon, young and old, foreigner and citizen, but I'll be more concerned with citizens insofar as you're more closely related to me.

You may be sure that the god has commanded this, and I think that there's no greater good for the city than my service to the god. For the only thing I do is to go around trying to persuade you, young and old, not to care more about either your bodies or money, nor so passionately b
as you do about the perfection of your souls, saying, "Virtue doesn't come from money, but money and all other good things for human beings, both in private and in public, come from virtue." If I corrupt the young by saying these things, then this would be harmful. But if anyone maintains that I say anything else, he's lying. "Therefore," I would say, "Athenians, be persuaded by Anytus or not, let me go or not, c
because I won't do anything else, even if I have to die many times."

Don't interrupt me, but stick to what I asked you to do. Listen to what I'm saying and don't interrupt. I think you'll benefit by listening. For I'm about to tell you some other things that'll probably cause you to yell out. But don't ever do this. Rest assured that if you kill me—since I am the person I say I am—you won't harm me more than you harm yourselves. Neither Meletus nor Anytus could do anything to harm me; it isn't even possible. For I don't think it's divinely sanc- d
tioned for a better man to be harmed by a worse. Doubtless, he could kill me, or send me into exile, or take away my rights, and doubtless he and others also think these things are great evils. But I don't. In fact, I think that what he's doing now—trying to kill a man unjustly—is a much greater evil. Athenians, at this point I'm far from making this defense on my behalf, as one might think, but instead I'm making it on yours, so that by condemning me you don't make a terrible mistake e
regarding the gift the god has given you. For if you kill me, you won't easily find another person like me, simply put, even if it's funny to say so, who's been attached to the city by the god as if it were a large and well-bred horse, though one that's somewhat sluggish on account of its size and that needs to be disturbed by a gadfly. In some such way as this I think the god has attached me to the city—such a person who disturbs you and stirs you up and shames each one of you, I never stop 31a
landing on you everywhere all day long. Another one like me won't quickly come to you, men, and if you're persuaded by me, you'll spare

me. But it's more likely that you'll be angry, like those who are disturbed when they're drowsy, and swat me—having been persuaded by Anytus—and easily kill me, then you'd spend the rest of your life asleep, unless the god, in his concern for you, were to send someone else to you. That I am the sort of person who's been given to the city by the god, you'll see from what I'm about to say. For it doesn't seem to be human nature for me to have neglected all of my own affairs and endured not caring for my family's concerns all these years, and instead to have always done what's in your interest, coming to each of you individually like a father or an older brother, trying to persuade you to care about virtue. If I profited at all from these things and gave advice for a fee, it would make some sense. But now you yourselves see that my accusers, while accusing me of everything else in such a shameless way, couldn't bring themselves to be so shameless as to produce witnesses that I ever made money from anyone or that I asked for any. I think that I'm producing a sufficient witness that I'm telling the truth: my poverty.

Perhaps it would seem odd that I go around giving advice in private and sticking my nose into other people's business but don't dare step up and give the city advice about your concerns in public. The reason for this is the one you've often heard me give in many places, namely, something divine and spiritual comes to me, and it's this that Meletus made fun of in the indictment he wrote. It's come to me since childhood—this voice—and whenever it comes, it always turns me away from what I'm about to do but never turns me toward anything. This is what opposes my engaging in politics, and I think it's wonderful that it's done so. For you can be sure, Athenians, that if I'd tried to engage in politics earlier, I'd have been put to death earlier, and neither you nor I would've benefited. Don't be upset at me for telling the truth: No one will survive who genuinely opposes you or any other populace and tries to prevent many unjust and illegal things from happening in the city. Instead, one who really fights for what's just, if he's to survive even for a little while, must live as a private and not as a public man.

I'm going to provide you with compelling evidence of this, not just talk, but what you respect—actions. Listen now to what happened to me so that you'll know that I'd give in to no one, under any conditions, out of fear of death, contrary to what's just, even if by not giving in I'd die right away. I'm going to tell you some of the things one commonly hears in law courts, but they're true nonetheless. Athenians, I never held any other office in the city, but I was a member of the Council. My district, Antiochis, was in charge of the Council,[36] when you wanted to judge as a group the ten generals who failed to pick up those who died in the sea

[36]Each district had fifty representatives (selected by rotation and lot) on the Council (see note 33, above) each year and each group of fifty took a turn being in charge of the Council.

battle.[37] What you wanted though was against the law, as you all realized some time later on. At that time, I was the only one of the Councilors in charge who opposed you, urging you to do nothing against the law, and I voted in opposition. And though the orators were ready to denounce me and arrest me, and though you urged them to do so by your shouting, with the law and justice on my side I thought that, though I feared imprisonment or death, I should run the risk rather than to join with you, since you wanted what's not just. These things happened when the city was still a democracy. But when the oligarchy came to power, the Thirty summoned me and four others to the Rotunda and ordered us to bring Leon from Salamis to be put to death.[38] They often ordered many others to do such things, since they wanted to implicate as many as possible in their causes. At that time I made it clear once again, not by talk but by action, that I didn't care at all about death—if I'm not being too blunt to say it—but it mattered everything that I do nothing unjust or impious, which matters very much to me. For though it had plenty of power, that government didn't frighten me into doing anything that's wrong. So when we left the Rotunda, the other four went to Salamis and arrested Leon, and I left and went home. I suppose I'd have been killed for doing so if that regime hadn't been deposed shortly thereafter. You can also have many witnesses to these things.

So do you think I could've lasted all these years if I had been engaging in politics and by acting in a way that's worthy of a good man I had supported the right causes and, as one must, attached the greatest importance to this? Far from it, men of Athens. Nor could anyone else. For my whole life shows that I am this sort of person whether I did anything in public or in private, namely one who never gave in to anyone at all contrary to what's just, nor to any of those whom my accusers say are my students. I've never been anyone's teacher. But if anyone, young or old, wants to hear me talking or carrying out my own work, I never refused him, nor do I carry on a conversation when I get paid but not when I don't get paid. Instead, I make myself question rich and poor and by answering if anyone wants to hear what I have to say. And if any of those who listen becomes good or not, I couldn't rightly be held to be the cause, since I've never promised any of them any knowledge, nor have I ever taught anyone anything. If anyone says that he's ever learned anything from me or heard in private something that everyone else hasn't heard, you can be sure he's not telling the truth.

[37]Socrates is referring to the sea battle at Arginusae, which took place in 406 B.C.E., just two years before the end of the Peloponnesian War. The Athenian generals were charged as a group with a failure to retrieve the bodies of those Athenians who died during the battle.

[38]The arrest of Leon was by no means the only such illegal arrest that took place during the reign of the Thirty Tyrants, but it must have been especially egregious in the eyes of many Athenians.

c Why then do some enjoy spending so much time with me? Listen, Athenians, I'm telling you the whole truth. They enjoy hearing me examine those who think they're wise when they're not. It's not unpleasant. But, as I say, I've been ordered to do this by the god through dreams and oracles and in every way in which divine providence has ever ordered a human being to do anything whatever.

This, Athenians, is the truth, and it's easily tested. If indeed I am d corrupting some of the young and have corrupted others, then surely some of them who have grown up and recognized that I encouraged them to do wrong when they were younger ought to accuse me and take their revenge by coming forward. And if they don't want to, some of their relatives—their fathers and brothers and others who are close to them, if in fact any of their relatives suffered any harm from me—should make their complaint now and take their revenge. In any case, I see quite a few of them present here. First, there's Crito here, who's my e age and from the same part of the city, the father of Critoboulus; then, there's Lysanias of Sphettus, the father of Aeschines here; and also Antiphon of Cephisus, the father of Epigenes, is here; and others still, whose brothers kept my company: Nicostratus, the son of Theozotides and brother of Theodotus—Theodotus is dead and so he couldn't beg 34a his father not to accuse me—and Paralius there, the son of Demodocus, whose brother was Theages. There's Adeimantus, the son of Ariston, whose brother is Plato here; and Ainantodorus, whose brother is Apollodorus here. And I can name many others for you, some of whom Meletus certainly should've called as witnesses when he gave his speech. If he forgot, let him call them—I yield up the time—and let him speak if he has anything of this sort to say. You'll find, however, that just the opposite's the case, men. All of those related to those I "corrupted" b are ready to help me, the guy who did "bad things" to their relatives, according to Meletus and Anytus. Those who've been corrupted would probably have some reason to help me. But what reason could those who haven't been corrupted and who are already older men—their relatives—have except the correct and right one, namely, that they know Meletus is lying and I'm telling the truth?

Well then, men, this and perhaps other things like it are about all I c can say in my defense. Perhaps some one of you may be angry when he thinks about himself if he went to trial on a less serious matter than this and he begged and pleaded with lots of tears with the members of the jury, and brought in his children, as well as many other relatives and friends in order to be shown as much pity as possible. But I'll do none of these things, and although in doing this, I appear to him to be run- d ning the ultimate risk. Then perhaps when some of you consider this, you'll become more closed-minded about me and, having become angry, will cast your vote in anger. If indeed any of you is so disposed—I don't expect it of you, but if there is anyone—I think it's fair for me to say to this person, "I have a family, too, sir. This is just what Homer said:

'not from oak or rock' was I born, but from human beings. And so I do have a family, and sons, three of them, one in adolescence and two in childhood. Nevertheless, I won't bring them in here and beg you to e acquit me." Why won't I? Not because I'm indifferent, Athenians, nor out of disrespect for you. But whether I'm courageous in the face of death or not is another matter; but it seems to me not a good thing—for the reputation of me and you and of the whole city—for me at my age and with this reputation to do any of these things. Whether it's true or 35a not, there's a view that Socrates is superior in some way to most people. If those of you who think they're superior—whether in wisdom or courage or in any virtue whatsoever—would act in that way, it would be disgraceful. I've often seen certain people put on trial, who, though they are reputed to be important, do surprising things, because they think their death is something terrible, as if they would be immortal if you didn't kill them. But I think they are bringing disgrace to the city, b so that a foreigner would suppose that those Athenians who're superior in virtue, whom they judge from among themselves to be worthy of getting offices and other honors, are no better than women. Such things, Athenians, those of you who seem to be important in any way whatever shouldn't do; nor, if we do them, should you allow it. But you should make this very thing clear: You'll do much better to condemn one who makes these pitiable scenes and who makes a laughingstock of the city than one who maintains his composure.

But apart from the issue of one's reputation, it doesn't seem to me right to beg the members of the jury, nor to grant acquittal to the one c who asks, but instead it's right to try to instruct and persuade. For the member of the jury doesn't sit for this reason—to make gifts out of what's just—but to judge what's just. He's taken an oath not to make gifts to whom he wants but to judge according to the laws. Therefore, we shouldn't get you in the habit of breaking your oaths, nor should you get in the habit of doing so. That wouldn't be pious for either of us. So please don't think that I, Athenians, should do for you what I believe d isn't noble, or just, or pious, and especially, by Zeus, when I'm being prosecuted by Meletus here for impiety. For it's clear that if I should persuade you and force you by begging when you have taken oaths, I'd be teaching you not to believe the gods exist, and in presenting a defense, I'd have simply made the charge against myself that I don't believe in the gods. But that's far from the truth. For I do believe in them, Athenians, as none of my accusers do, and I leave it to you and to the god to judge in what way it's going to be best for you and for me.

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[39]The jury now votes on whether or not to convict Socrates. He begins his next speech after the number of votes for guilt and for innocense is announced. For violations of this sort, the

Many things contribute to my not being angry at what's happened—that you voted against me—and the result was not unexpected by me, but I was much more surprised by the total number of votes on each side. For I didn't think it would be such a small majority. I thought it would be much larger. Now, it seems, if only thirty votes had gone the other way, I'd have been acquitted.[40] I think that as far as Meletus is concerned, I've now been acquitted, and not only have I already been acquitted, but isn't it obvious to everyone that if Anytus and Lycon hadn't come forward to prosecute me, he would have incurred a 1000 drachma fine for not having received one-fifth of the votes?[41]

So the gentleman [Meletus] asks that the penalty be death. Well, what should I propose for you as a counterpenalty? Isn't it clear that it should be what I deserve? So, what would that be? What do I deserve to suffer or to pay for not having led an inactive life and for not caring about what most people care for—making money, managing my affairs, being a general or a political leader and any of the different offices and parties and factions that come about in the city? I believed that I was really too good to go down that path and survive. I didn't go where I would've been no help at all to you or to me, but went, instead, to each one of you in private to do the greatest good. As I say, I went there, undertaking to persuade each of you not to care about your possessions before you care about how you will be the best and wisest you can be, nor to care about what the city has, before you care about the city itself, and to care about other things in just the same way. Being this sort of person, what do I deserve to suffer? Something good, Athenians, if indeed I should truly assess my penalty according to what I deserve! Yes, and the sort of good thing that would be appropriate for me. What's appropriate for a poor man who's your benefactor and who needs to have the leisure to exhort you? There's nothing more appropriate, Athenians, than that such a person be given meals in the Prytaneum;[42] in fact, it's much more appropriate than for one of you who had won at Olympia with either a pair or a team of horses. For he makes you think you are happy, but I make you happy, and he doesn't need the

trial procedure was called an *agon timētos*, which meant that the law itself did not set the penalty for a conviction, leaving it for the defendant to propose a counterpenalty to whatever penalty had already been proposed by the prosecutor (in the indictment itself). Meletus had called for the death penalty. In this section of the *Apology*, Socrates explains why he chooses to propose the counterpenalty he does.

[40]Plato does not tell us exactly how large the jury was, but it is likely that the jury consisted of 500 citizens, in which case, 280 jurors voted to convict and 220 voted to acquit.

[41]Imposing this fine, which was quite substantial, served to discourage frivolous prosecutions.

[42]The Prytaneum was a building in which various Athenian heroes, Olympic victors, generals, and others were given meals at public expense. The privilege was, perhaps, the highest honor Athens bestowed on anyone.

food, but I do. So if I'm supposed to propose a penalty in accordance with what I deserve, I propose to be given meals at the Prytaneum.[43] 37a

In speaking in this way I probably strike some of you as speaking impudently pretty much as I did when I spoke about wailing and begging. But it isn't this sort of thing at all, Athenians, but in fact it's more like this: I'm convinced that I've never willingly wronged anyone, but I haven't convinced you of this. For we've conversed with each other for just a little while. What I mean is, I think that if you had a law, as other people do, about not judging death-penalty cases in a single day but over many, you'd have been persuaded by me. But as it is, it isn't easy to destroy widespread slanders in a short time. Since I'm convinced that I've never been unjust, I'm not about to treat myself unjustly and to say of myself that I deserve something evil and to propose that sort of penalty for myself. Why should I? Can it be that I should suffer the penalty that Meletus proposes, which I say that I don't know whether it's good or not? Or should I choose what I'm convinced is an evil, making this my counterproposal instead? Imprisonment? Why should I live obedient to those who happen to hold the office of the eleven prison commissioners? Or a fine, and be imprisoned until I pay it? But that's the same thing I was just talking about, for I have no money to pay it with. Shall I now offer exile? Perhaps you'd impose that as my penalty. I'd really have to be in love with living, men of Athens, to be so illogical as not to be able to see that if you, who are my fellow citizens, weren't able to bear my activities and arguments—but they became so burdensome and hateful that you're now seeking to be free of them—yet others will endure them easily. I think that's pretty unreasonable, Athenians. A fine life I'd have to live, a man of my age, after going into exile, going from one city to the next, always being sent into exile? You can be sure that wherever I'd go, young people will listen to what I have to say, just as they do here. If I drive them away, they themselves will send me into exile by persuading their elders. But if I don't drive them away, their fathers and relatives will send me into exile for their sakes. b c d e

Perhaps some of you might say, "Can't you leave us to live in exile and keep quiet and not talk?" This is the most difficult thing to convince some of you of. If I say that this is disobedience to the god and that's why it's impossible to keep quiet, you'll think I'm not being sincere. And if I say that this really is the greatest good for human beings—to engage in discussion each day about virtue and the other things which you have heard me talking about and examining myself and others, and the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being—you'll be persuaded even less by what I say. These things are true, as I say, but it's not easy to persuade you. At the same time, I'm not in the habit of 38a b

[43]Socrates does not actually propose "free meals at the Prytaneum" as his counterpenalty; he only says that this is what he should propose, if he were to propose what he really deserves.

thinking that I deserve anything bad. If I had money, I'd offer what I could afford to pay; for I wouldn't be harming anything. But as it is, that isn't possible, unless you want to impose a penalty on me that I can pay. I suppose I could probably offer to pay you a mina of silver.[44] So I offer this amount.

Plato, here, Athenians, and Crito, Critobulus, and Apollodorus bid me to pay a penalty of 30 minas, and they'll guarantee that it's paid. I offer that much, then, and they'll be guarantors of the silver for you; they're good for it.[45]

. . .[46]

Just to gain a little time, Athenians, you'll be notorious and blamed by those who want to revile the city because you killed Socrates, a wise man—for those who want to hold you in contempt will say that I am in fact wise, even if I'm not. If you had held off for a little while, you'd have gotten what you wanted without having to do anything. For you see that I'm far along in life and that death is near. I say this not to all of you, but to those of you who voted for my execution. To them I have this to say: "Men, perhaps you think that I was convicted because of a failure to understand what words would have persuaded you, if I thought I should do and say anything that would gain my acquittal. That's far from accurate. I was convicted, not because of a failure to understand what to say, but because of not being brazen and shameless and because of not wanting to say the things you'd most like to hear—wailing and crying out and doing and saying many other unworthy things, which indeed, as I say, you're used to hearing from others. Nor did I think then that I should simply do anything slavish on account of the danger I was in, nor am I sorry that I've defended myself in this way, but I'd much rather choose to die having defended myself in the way I have than to live on in that other way. Neither in the law court nor in war should I or
a any other person try to come up with plans to avoid death by doing anything we can. In battles it often becomes clear that one could avoid death

[44]See note 26 above. Because Socrates insists that he is at this point in his life a poor man and because he refuses to go to prison until money can be raised, it is reasonable to think that one mina is all that he could pay as a fine.

[45]See note 26, above. Thirty minas was the equivalent of 3000 days wages for an ordinary Athenian worker—hence, quite a substantial sum of money. It was not uncommon for others to provide assistance to those required to pay large fines—those who could not find sufficient resources to pay their fines would have all of their property confiscated and would be sent into exile. The four who encourage Socrates to raise the amount of his proposed fine to the much higher amount all come from some of the wealthiest families in Athens.

[46]A third speech of the sort Socrates now gives was not called for by Athenian legal procedure. If he spoke to the jury at all after the vote to execute him, he must have done so as they were preparing to leave the court.

by throwing down his weapons and turning to plead with his pursuers. And there are many other ways in each sort of danger to escape death if one would resort to doing and saying anything. For, men, it's surely not difficult to flee from death, but it's much more difficult to flee from evil; b
for evil runs faster than death. And now, being slow and old, I'm caught by the slower one, but my accusers, being clever and sharp-witted are caught by the faster one, evil. And now I go away, having been sentenced by you to death and they go away, sentenced by the truth to evil and injustice. I'll stand by my penalty and they, by theirs. I suppose it had to be this way, and I think it's appropriate.

Next I want to prophesy to those of you who voted against me. For c
I'm already here at that point at which people most often make their prophesies, when they're just about to die. I say, you who are putting me to death, that immediately after my death you'll have a much worse penalty, by Zeus, than the one you've imposed me by killing me. For you're achieving this now, thinking that you'll get off from having your life tested, exactly the opposite will happen to you, so I claim. There'll d
be more people who'll examine you—people I've held in check, but you didn't see it. And they'll be harder to deal with, in as much as they're younger, and you'll find them more irritating. If you think that by killing people you'll put a stop to anyone criticizing you because you don't live as you should, you're not thinking clearly. Escape is neither really possible nor admirable; the best and easiest course is not to restrain others, but instead to do what you need to do to be as good as possible. Now that I have made these prophesies to those of you who voted against me, I make my escape.

But to those who voted for me, I'd enjoy talking about what's just e
happened while the officers are taking a break and I'm not yet going to the place where I have to go to die. Stay with me during this time. For nothing prevents us from conversing while we can. As my friends, I 40a
want to show you the meaning of what's happened to me just now. Judges—for in calling you judges I'm referring to you as I should[47]—something wonderful has happened to me. In the past, the usual oracular voice of the spiritual thing has always come very quickly and has opposed me on quite trivial matters if I was about to do something that wasn't right. But now, as you can see for yourselves, what might well be thought—and is generally considered to be—the greatest of evils has b
befallen me. Yet this sign from the god didn't oppose me when I left home at dawn, nor when I came here to court, nor when I was about to say anything at all in my speech. And yet often at other times when I

[47]Prior to this point in any of Socrates' speeches, he addressed his jurors only as "men," or "Athenians," reserving their formal title (*dikastai*, which we have translated as "judges") only for the subgroup of the jurors to whom he now speaks—those, that is, whom he thinks actually performed their duty as judges in the correct manner.

was talking, it held me back when I was in the middle of what I was saying. But today, concerning this matter, it hasn't opposed me at any point in what I was doing or saying. What, then, do I take to be the explanation? I'll tell you. What's happened to me will probably be something good, and it can't be that we're right in supposing that death's an evil. I've got strong evidence that this is so. It can't be that I haven't been opposed by my usual sign unless I'm about to have good luck.

Let's also consider that we have good reason to be hopeful that this is a good thing. Death is one of two things. Either it's like nothingness and the dead have no awareness of anything, or it's, as they say, a change and the soul migrates from this place to another place. If it's the absence of sentience and is like sleep, as when someone sleeps and doesn't even dream, death would be a wonderful gain. For I think that anyone who picked a night in which he slept so soundly that he didn't even dream and put it up against the other days and nights of his life, and after thinking about it, had to say how many days and night were better and more pleasant in his life than this night, why I think that not just a private individual but even the great king[48] would discover that such nights are easily counted compared to the other days and nights. If death's like this, I say it's a gain; for the whole of time seems no more than a single night.

If, on the other hand, death's like taking a journey from here to another place, and what they say is true, that all the dead are there,
1a what greater good could there be than this, judges? For if anyone who arrives in Hades, having escaped those who claim to be judges here, will discover real judges, who are said to sit in judgment there, Minos and Rhadamanthus, and Aeacus and Triptolemus, and the other demigods who lived just lives, would the journey be a bad one? Or, in addition, how much would any of you give to be with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer? I'd want to die many times if this is true! It would be wonderful for me personally to spend time there, since I could fall in with Palamedes and Ajax, the son of Telemon, and any of the other ancients who died on account of an unjust verdict, as I compare my suffering with theirs—I think it wouldn't be unpleasant—and what's the greatest part of all, to spend my time testing and examining those who are there, just as I do those who live here, to see if any of them is wise and to see if any thinks he's wise when he's not. How much would one pay, members of the jury, to examine the leader of the great army at Troy,[49] or Odysseus, or Sisyphus, or countless other people one could mention, men and women? Wouldn't it be unimaginable happiness to converse and associate with, and examine those who are there?

[48]This is a common way of referring to the King of Persia.

[49]Socrates is referring to Agamemnon, the legendary King of Mycenae and leader of the Greek force that attacked Troy.

Surely those who are there don't kill people for that! For in addition to being happier than those who live here, those who are there are now deathless for eternity, if indeed what they say is true.

And so, members of the jury, you should be optimistic about death and think about this one truth, that no harm comes to a good man in life d
or in death, and his problems are not neglected by the gods. And what's happened to me now hasn't come about by chance, but it's clear to me that dying now and escaping these problems is better for me. This is why my sign hasn't turned me away from anything, and I'm not at all angry with those who condemned me or with my accusers. Yet, it wasn't with that in mind that they were condemning and accusing me, e
but instead they thought they'd injure me. They deserve to be blamed for that. At any rate, I do ask this of them. When my sons come of age, "punish" them, men, by disturbing them with the same things by which I disturbed you, if they seem to you to care about money or anything more than virtue. And if they think they've amounted to anything when they haven't, reproach them as I've reproached you because they don't care about what they should and because they think they've amounted 42a
to something when they're worthless. If you'd do this, I myself and my sons will have been treated justly by you. But now the time has come to leave, me to die and you to live on; which of us is going to the better fate is unclear to anyone except the god.

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Crito[50]

Athenian law forbade any execution from taking place during the so-called Delia, a religious festival in which a ship sailed to Delos and back to commemorate the legendary return of Theseus to Athens. Because Socrates' trial took place just as the Delia began, he was given a reprieve of approximately one month, during which time he continued to philosophize with his friends in his prison cell. In the *Crito*, Socrates' lifelong friend Crito has come to his cell early in the morning to urge him to escape that evening, for the ship has been seen on its return voyage not far from Athens. Unmoved by Crito's various arguments that it would actually be wrong for Socrates to remain in Athens to allow himself to be executed,

[50]It appears that Crito and Socrates came from the same deme, or precinct, in Athens. Unlike Socrates, however, Crito seems to have been a wealthy man. He was one of the four who guaranteed the fine of 30 minas that Socrates offered as his counterpenalty at his trial (see *Apology* 38b). Whether or not Crito urged Socrates to escape from prison or whether Socrates responded with the arguments Plato attributes to him, we cannot say. Xenophon, however, does confirm in his *Apology* (23) that some of Socrates' companions urged him to escape before he could be executed.