

human being does, and, like Proteus,¹⁹ you mustn't be let go until you tell it. For if you didn't know with full clarity what the pious and the impious are, you'd never have ventured to prosecute your old father for murder on behalf of a day laborer. On the contrary, you wouldn't have risked acting wrongly because you'd have been afraid before the gods and ashamed before men. As things stand, however, I well know that you think you have fully clear knowledge of what's pious and what isn't. So tell me what you think it is, my excellent Euthyphro, and don't conceal it.

EUTHYPHRO: Some other time, Socrates. You see, I'm in a hurry to get somewhere, and it's time for me to be off.

16 SOCRATES: What a way to treat me, my friend! Going off like that and dashing the high hopes I had that I'd learn from you what things are pious and what aren't. Then I'd escape Meletus' indictment by showing him that Euthyphro had now made me wise in religious matters, and ignorance would no longer cause me to improvise and innovate about them. What's more, I'd live a better way for the rest of my life.

19. Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea, was a god who could change himself into any shape he wished. In this way, he avoided being captured, until his daughter, Eidothea, revealed this secret: keep tight hold of him, no matter what he changes into. See Homer, *Odyssey* iv.351-569.

APOLOGY

APOLOGY

~~Plato~~

Differences between
notions of philosophy
- Truth
- falsehood
- knowledge
- ignorance

Persecution vs
17 Truth

18's accusation
b

way
of
truth

c
18's
speech
=
truth

d

18

18's
speech
=
truth

I don't know, men of Athens, how you were affected by my accusers. As for me, I was almost carried away by them, they spoke so persuasively. And yet almost nothing they said is true. Among their many falsehoods, however, one especially amazed me: that you must be careful not to be deceived by me, since I'm a dangerously clever speaker. That they aren't ashamed at being immediately refuted by the facts, once it becomes apparent that I'm not a clever speaker at all, that seems to me most shameless of them. (Unless) of course, the one they call "clever" is the one who tells the truth. If that's what they mean, I'd agree that I'm an orator—although not one of their sort. No, indeed. Rather, just as I claimed, they have said little or nothing true, whereas from me you'll hear the whole truth. But not, by Zeus, men of Athens, expressed in elegant language like theirs, arranged in fine words and phrases. Instead, what you hear will be spoken extemporaneously in whatever words come to mind, and let none of you expect me to do otherwise—for I put my trust in the justice of what I say. After all, it wouldn't be appropriate at my age, gentlemen, to come before you speaking in polished, artificial language like a young man.

Socrates
trusts in
justice

Indeed, men of Athens, this I positively entreat of you: if you hear me making my defense using the same sort of language that I'm accustomed to use both in the marketplace next to the bankers' tables—where many of you have heard me—and also in other places, please don't be surprised or create an uproar on that account. For the fact is that this is the first time I've appeared before a law court, although I'm seventy years old. So the language of this place is totally foreign to me. Now, if I were really a foreigner, you'd certainly forgive me if I spoke in the accents and manner in which I'd been raised. So now, too, I'm asking you, justly it seems to me, to overlook my manner of speaking (maybe it will be less good, maybe it will be better), but consider and apply your mind to this alone, whether I say what's just or not. For that's the virtue or excellence of a juror,¹ just as the orator's lies in telling the truth.

Translated by C.D.C. Reeve.

1. A member of an Athenian jury (a *dikastēs*) combined the responsibilities that are divided between judge and jury in our legal system. Hence *dikastēs* is sometimes translated as "judge" and sometimes (as in the present translation) as "juror."

The first thing justice demands, then, men of Athens, is that I defend myself from the first false accusations made against me and from my first accusers, and then from the later accusations and the later accusers. You see, many people have been accusing me in front of you for very many years now—and nothing they say is true. And I fear them more than Anytus² and the rest, though the latter are dangerous as well. But the earlier ones, gentlemen, are more dangerous. They got hold of most of you from childhood and persuaded you with their accusations against me—accusations no more true than the current ones. They say there's a man called Socrates, a "wise" man, a thinker about things in the heavens, an investigator of all things below the earth, and someone who makes the weaker argument the stronger. Those who've spread this rumor, men of Athens, are my dangerous accusers, since the people who hear them believe that those who investigate such things do not acknowledge the gods either. Moreover, those accusers are numerous and have been accusing me for a long time now. Besides, they also spoke to you at that age when you would most readily believe them, when some of you were children or young boys. Thus they simply won their case by default, as there was no defense. But what's most unreasonable in all this is that I can't discover even their names and tell them to you—unless one of them happens to be a comic playwright. In any case, the ones who used malicious slander to persuade you—as well as those who persuaded others after having been persuaded themselves—all of these are impossible to deal with. One cannot bring any of them here to court or cross-examine them. One must literally fight with shadows to defend oneself and cross-examine with no one to respond.

So you too, then, should allow, as I claimed, that there are two groups of accusers: those who accused me just now and the older ones I've been discussing. Moreover, you should consider it proper for me to defend myself against the latter first, since you've heard them accusing me earlier, and at much greater length, than these recent ones here.

All right. I must defend myself, then, men of Athens, and try to take away in this brief time prejudices you acquired such a long time ago. Certainly, that's the outcome I'd wish for—if it's in any way better for you and for me—and I'd like to succeed in my defense. But I think it's a difficult task, and I am not at all unaware of its nature. Let it turn out, though,

2. Anytus was a democratic leader who helped restore democracy to Athens in 403 B.C. after the overthrow of the Thirty Tyrants (32c4 note), under whom he had lost most of his wealth. As a general in the Athenian army he faced indictment, but he allegedly "bribed the jury and was acquitted" (Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens* 27.5). There is evidence that he believed Socrates was responsible for the ruin of his son (Xenophon, *Socrates' Defense* 29–31) and that he was passionately opposed to the sophists (Plato, *Meno* 89e6–92c5).

in whatever way pleases the god. I have to obey the law and defend myself.

Let's examine, then, from the beginning, what the charge is from which the slander against me arose—the very one on which Meletus relied when he wrote the present indictment of me. Well, then, what exactly did the slanderers say to slander me? Just as if they were real accusers their affidavit must be read. It's something like this:

Socrates commits injustice and is a busybody, in that he investigates the things beneath the earth and in the heavens, makes the weaker argument the stronger, and teaches these things to others.

Indeed, you saw these charges expressed yourselves in Aristophanes' comedy.³ There, some fellow named Socrates swings around claiming he's walking on air and talking a lot of other nonsense on subjects that I know neither a lot nor a little but nothing at all about. Not that I mean to disparage this knowledge, if anyone's wise in such subjects—I don't want to have to defend myself against more of Meletus' lawsuits!—but I, men of Athens, take no part in them. I call on the majority of you as witnesses to this, and I appeal to you to make it perfectly plain to one another—those of you who've heard me conversing (as many of you have). Tell one another, then, whether any of you has ever heard me discussing such subjects, either briefly or at length, and from this you'll realize that the other things commonly said about me are of the same baseless character.

In any case, none of them is true. And if you've heard from anyone that I undertake to educate people and charge fees, that's not true either. Although, it also seems to me to be a fine thing if anyone's able to educate people in the way Gorgias of Leontini does, and Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis.⁴ For each of them, gentlemen, can enter any city and

3. The version of *Clouds* referred to here, which is earlier than the revised version we possess, was first staged in 423 B.C.

4) All three, like Evenus of Paros mentioned below, were sophists— itinerant professors who charged sometimes substantial fees for popular lectures and specialized instruction in a wide variety of fields, including natural science, rhetoric, grammar, ethics, and politics. Sophists did not constitute a single school or movement, however, and were neither doctrinally nor organizationally united. Gorgias of Leontini in Sicily (c. 480–376) was primarily a teacher of rhetoric, who was noted for his distinctive style. He is the author of the *Defense of Palamedes*, parts of which bear a striking resemblance to the *Apology* and may have either influenced or been influenced by it, Plato named a dialogue critical of rhetoric after him. Prodicus of Ceos, about whom little is known, was also a fifth-century teacher of rhetoric, with an interest in fine distinctions of meaning (*Protagoras* 337a1–c4) and the correctness of names (*Cratylus* 384a8–c2). Hippias of Elis, like Prodicus a contemporary of Socrates, claimed expertise in astronomy, physics, grammar, poetry, and other

persuade the young—who may associate with any of their own fellow citizens they want to free of charge—to abandon those associations, and associate with them instead, pay them a fee, and be grateful to them besides.

Since we're on that topic, I heard that there's another wise gentleman here at present, from Paros. For I happened to run into a man who has spent more money on sophists than everyone else put together—Callias, the son of Hipponicus.⁵ So I questioned him, since he has two sons himself.

"Callias," I said, "if your two sons had been born colts or calves, we could engage and pay a knowledgeable supervisor—one of those expert horse breeders or farmers—who could turn them into fine and good examples of their proper virtue or excellence. But now, seeing that they're human beings, whom do you have in mind to engage as a supervisor? Who is it that has the knowledge of *this* virtue, the virtue of human beings and of citizens? I assume you've investigated the matter, because you have two sons. Is there such a person," I asked, "or not?"

"Certainly," he replied.

"Who is he?" I said.

"His name's Evenus, Socrates," he replied, "from Paros. He charges five minas."⁶

I thought Evenus blessedly happy if he truly did possess that expertise and taught it for so modest a fee. I, at any rate, would pride myself and give myself airs if I had knowledge of those things. But in fact, men of Athens, I don't know them.

Now perhaps one of you will interject: "But Socrates, what, then, is your occupation? What has given rise to these slanders against you? Surely if you weren't in fact occupied with something out of the ordinary, if you weren't doing something different from most people, all this rumor and talk wouldn't have arisen. Tell us, then, what it is, so that we don't judge you hastily." These are fair questions, I think, for the speaker to ask, and I'll try to show you just what it is that has brought me this slanderous reputation. Listen, then. Perhaps, some of you will think I'm joking. But you may be sure that I'll be telling you the whole truth.

You see, men of Athens, I've acquired this reputation because of nothing other than a sort of wisdom. What sort of wisdom, you ask, is that? The very sort, perhaps, that is human wisdom. For it may just be that I

subjects. Two Platonic dialogues are named after him; he also appears in *Protagoras* (315b9–c7, 337c6–338b1).

5. Callias was one of the richest men in Greece and a patron of the sophists. Both Plato's *Protagoras* and Xenophon's *Symposium* are set in his house.

6. Evenus is described as a poet (*Phaedo* 60c8–e1) and as an orator (*Phaedrus* 267a1–5). A few fragments of his elegies survive. A drachma was a day's pay for someone engaged in public works; a mina was a hundred silver drachmas.

really do have that sort of wisdom, whereas the people I mentioned just now may, perhaps, be wise because they possess *superhuman* wisdom. I don't know what else to call it, since I myself certainly don't possess that knowledge, and whoever says I do is lying and speaking in order to slander me.

Please don't create an uproar, men of Athens, even if you think I'm somehow making grand claims. You see, I'm not the author of the story. I'm about to tell, though I'll refer you to a reliable source. In fact, as a witness to the existence of my wisdom—if indeed it is a sort of wisdom—and to its nature, I'll present the god at Delphi to you.⁷

You remember Chaerephon, no doubt.⁸ He was a friend of mine from youth and also a friend of your party, who shared your recent exile and restoration.⁹ You remember, then, what sort of man Chaerephon was, how intense he was in whatever he set out to do.

Well, on one occasion in particular he went to Delphi and dared to ask the oracle¹⁰—as I said, please don't create an uproar, gentlemen—he asked, exactly as I'm telling you, whether anyone was wiser than myself.

7. Apollo, who was god of, among other things, healing, prophecy, purification, care for young citizens, music, and poetry.

8. A long-time companion of Socrates. He makes brief appearances in *Charmides* and *Gorgias*, and in *Clouds* 102–4, 144–47, 156 ff., 500–4, 831.

9. Members of the democratic party left Athens when the Thirty Tyrants came to power in 404 B.C. They returned to power when the tyrants were overthrown in 403.

10. The Delphic Oracle was one of the most famous in antiquity. There were two methods of consulting it. One method, involving the sacrifice of sheep and goats, was quite expensive but resulted in a written response. The other—the so-called method of the two beans—was substantially cheaper but resulted only in a response by lot. Since Chaerephon was notoriously poor, it seems probable that he consulted the oracle by the latter method (something also suggested by Socrates' characterization of the priestess as *drawing forth* the response at 21a6–7). The inscriptions on the walls of the temple well convey the spirit the oracle stood for: know thyself; do nothing in excess; observe the limit; hate hubris; bow before the divine; glory not in strength. There is no unambiguous record of the oracle's ever having praised anyone for what we would think of as his significant or noteworthy positive achievements or abilities. On the other hand, there are many stories of the following kind. Someone who is powerful, grand, famous for his wisdom, or in some other way noteworthy for his accomplishments, asks the oracle to say who is wisest, most pious, happiest, or what have you, expecting that he himself will be named. But the oracle names some unknown person living in humble and quiet obscurity. What we know about the oracle, then, makes it very unlikely that it was praising Socrates for his positive contributions to wisdom and very likely that it was using him—as he himself comes to believe that it was (23a5–b4)—as an example of someone who was wise because he made no hubristic claims to wisdom.

The Pythia drew forth the response that no one is wiser. His brother here will testify to you about it, since Chaerephon himself is dead.¹¹

Please consider my purpose in telling you this, since I'm about to explain to you where the slander against me has come from. You see, when I heard these things, I thought to myself as follows: "What can the god be saying? What does his riddle mean? For I'm only too aware that I've no claim to being wise in anything either great or small. What can he mean, then, by saying that I'm wisest? Surely he can't be lying; that isn't lawful for him."

For a long time I was perplexed about what he meant. Then, very reluctantly, I proceeded to examine it in the following sort of way. I approached one of the people thought to be wise, assuming that in his company, if anywhere, I could refute the pronouncement and say to the oracle, "Here's someone wiser than I, yet you said I was wisest."

Then I examined this person—there's no need for me to mention him by name; he was one of our politicians. And when I examined him and talked with him, men of Athens, my experience was something like this: I thought this man seemed wise to many people, and especially to himself, but wasn't. Then I tried to show him that he thought himself wise, but wasn't. As a result, he came to dislike me, and so did many of the people present. For my part, I thought to myself as I left, "I'm wiser than that person. For it's likely that neither of us knows anything fine and good, but he thinks he knows something he doesn't know, whereas I, since I don't in fact know, don't think that I do either. At any rate, it seems that I'm wiser than he in just this one small way: that what I don't know, I don't think I know." Next, I approached another man, one of those thought to be wiser than the first, and it seemed to me that the same thing occurred, and so I came to be disliked by that man too, as well as by many others.

After that, then, I kept approaching one person after another. I realized, with distress and alarm, that I was arousing hostility. Nevertheless, I thought I must attach the greatest importance to what pertained to the god. So, in seeking what the oracle meant, I had to go to all those with any reputation for knowledge. And, by the dog, men of Athens—for I'm obliged to tell the truth before you—I really did experience something like this: in my investigation in response to the god, I found that, where wisdom is concerned, those who had the best reputations were practically the most deficient, whereas men who were thought to be their inferiors were much better off. Accordingly, I must present all my wanderings to you as if they were labors of some sort that I undertook in order to prove the oracle utterly irrefutable.

You see, after the politicians, I approached the poets—tragic, dithyrambic,¹² and the rest—thinking that in their company I'd catch myself in the

11. The brother is Chaerecrates (Xenophon, Memorabilia ii.3.1).
12. A dithyramb was a choral song in honor of the god Dionysus.

very act of being more ignorant than they. So I examined the poems with which they seemed to me to have taken the most trouble and questioned them about what they meant, in order that I might also learn something from them at the same time.

Well, I'm embarrassed to tell you the truth, gentlemen, but nevertheless it must be told. In a word, almost all the people present could have discussed these poems better than their authors themselves. And so, in the case of the poets as well, I soon realized it wasn't wisdom that enabled them to compose their poems, but some sort of natural inspiration, of just the sort you find in seers and soothsayers. For these people, too, say many fine things, but know nothing of what they speak about. The poets also seemed to me to be in this sort of situation. At the same time, I realized that, because of their poetry, they thought themselves to be the wisest of people about the other things as well when they weren't. So I left their company, too, thinking that I had gotten the better of them in the very same way as of the politicians.

Finally, I approached the craftsmen. You see, I was conscious of knowing practically nothing myself, but I knew I'd discover that they, at least, would know many fine things. And I wasn't wrong about this. On the contrary, they did know things that I didn't know, and in that respect they were wiser than I. But, men of Athens, the good craftsmen also seemed to me to have the very same flaw as the poets: because he performed his own craft well, each of them also thought himself to be wisest about the other things, the most important ones; and this error of theirs seemed to overshadow their wisdom. So I asked myself on behalf of the oracle whether I'd prefer to be as I am, not in any way wise with their wisdom nor ignorant with their ignorance, or to have both qualities as they did. And the answer I gave to myself, and to the oracle, was that it profited me more to be just the way I was.

From this examination, men of Athens, much hostility has arisen against me of a sort that is harshest and most onerous. This has resulted in many slanders, including that reputation I mentioned of being "wise." You see, the people present on each occasion think that I'm wise about the subjects on which I examine others. But in fact, gentlemen, it's pretty certainly the god who is really wise, and by his oracle he meant that human wisdom is worth little or nothing. And it seems that when he refers to the Socrates here before you and uses my name, he makes me an example, as if he were to say, "That one among you is wisest, mortals, who, like Socrates, has recognized that he's truly worthless where wisdom's concerned."

So even now I continue to investigate these things and to examine, in response to the god, any person, citizen, or foreigner I believe to be wise. Whenever he seems not to be so to me, I come to the assistance of the god and show him that he's not wise. Because of this occupation, I've had no leisure worth talking about for either the city's affairs or my own

Handwritten notes on the left margin of page 120, including "b", "c", "d", "e", and "22".

Handwritten note "Crafter" in the left margin of page 121.

Handwritten notes on the right margin of page 121, including "d" and "e".

Handwritten number "23" in the right margin of page 121.

Handwritten notes at the bottom of page 121, including "said I am to" and "no leisure".

domestic ones; rather, I live in extreme poverty because of my service to the god.

In addition to these factors, the young people who follow me around of their own accord, those who have the most leisure, the sons of the very rich, enjoy listening to people being cross-examined. They often imitate me themselves and in turn attempt to cross-examine others. Next, I imagine they find an abundance of people who think they possess some knowledge, but in fact know little or nothing. The result is that those they question are angry not at themselves, but at me, and say that Socrates is a thoroughly pestilential fellow who corrupts the young. Then, when they're asked what he's doing or teaching, they've nothing to say, as they don't know. Yet, so as not to appear at a loss, they utter the stock phrases used against all who philosophize: "things in the sky and beneath the earth," and "not acknowledging the gods," and "making the weaker argument the stronger." For they wouldn't be willing to tell the truth, I imagine: that it has become manifest they pretend to know, but know nothing. So, seeing that these people are, I imagine, ambitious, vehement, and numerous, and have been speaking earnestly and persuasively about me, they've long been filling your ears with vehement slanders. On the basis of these slanders, Meletus has brought his charges against me, and Anytus and Lycon along with him: Meletus is aggrieved on behalf of the poets, Anytus on behalf of the artisans and politicians, and Lycon on behalf of the orators. So, as I began by saying, I'd be amazed if I could rid your minds of this slander in the brief time available, when there's so much of it in them.

There, men of Athens, is the truth for you. I've spoken it without concealing or glossing over anything, whether great or small. And yet I pretty much know that I make enemies by doing these very things. And that's further evidence that I'm right—that this is the prejudice against me and these its causes. Whether you investigate these matters now or later, you'll find it to be so.

Enough, then, for my defense before you against the charges brought by my first accusers. Next, I'll try to defend myself against Meletus—who is, he claims, both good and patriotic—and against my later accusers. Once again, then, just as if they were really a different set of accusers, their affidavit must be examined in turn. It goes something like this:

Socrates is guilty of corrupting the young, and of not acknowledging the gods the city acknowledges, but new daimonic activities instead.

Such, then, is the charge. Let us examine each point in this charge.

Meletus says, then, that I commit injustice by corrupting the young. But I, men of Athens, reply that it's Meletus who is guilty of playing around with serious matters, of lightly bringing people to trial, and of professing

to be seriously concerned about things he has never cared about at all—and I'll try to prove this.

Step forward, Meletus, and answer me. You regard it as most important, do you not, that our young people be as good as possible?

I certainly do.

Come, then, and tell these jurors who improves them. Clearly you know, since you care. For having discovered, as you assert, the one who corrupts them—namely, myself—you bring him before these jurors and accuse him. Come, then, speak up, tell the jurors who it is that improves them. Do you see, Meletus, that you remain silent and have nothing to say? Yet don't you think that's shameful and sufficient evidence of exactly what I say, that you care nothing at all? Speak up, my good man. Who improves them?

The laws.

But that's not what I'm asking, my most excellent fellow, but rather which person, who knows the laws themselves in the first place, does this?

These gentlemen, Socrates, the jurors.

What are you saying, Meletus? Are they able to educate and improve the young?

Most certainly.

All of them, or some but not others?

All of them.

That's good news, by Hera, and a great abundance of benefactors that you speak of! What, then, about the audience present here? Do they improve the young or not?

Yes, they do so too.

And what about the members of the Council?¹³

Yes, the councilors too.

But, if that's so, Meletus, surely those in the Assembly, the assemblymen, won't corrupt the young, will they? Won't they all improve them too?

Yes, they will too.

But then it seems that all the Athenians except for me make young people fine and good, whereas I alone corrupt them. Is that what you're saying?

Most emphatically, that's what I'm saying.

I find myself, if you're right, in a most unfortunate situation. Now answer me this. Do you think that the same holds of horses? Do people in general improve them, whereas one particular person corrupts them

13. The Council consisted of 500 male citizens over the age of 30, elected annually by lot, 50 from each of the 10 tribes of Athens (32b3 note). The Council met daily (except for some holidays and the like) as a steering committee for the Assembly. Its responsibilities included state finance, public buildings, and the equipment of navy and cavalry.

Handwritten notes on the left margin: "Jump to 123", "d", "e", "24", "b", "c".

Handwritten note: "Step forward Meletus" with an arrow pointing to the text.

Handwritten notes on the right margin: "Education", "and", "d", "improving", "young".

Handwritten note: "25".

Handwritten note: "b".

or makes them worse? Or isn't it wholly the opposite: one particular person—or the very few who are horse trainers—is able to improve them, whereas the majority of people, if they have to do with horses and make use of them, make them worse? Isn't that true, Meletus, both of horses and of all other animals? Of course it is, whether you and Anytus say so or not. Indeed, our young people are surely in a very happy situation if only one person corrupts them, whereas all the rest benefit them.

*Meletus c
is the law*

Well then, Meletus, it has been adequately established that you've never given any thought to young people—you've plainly revealed your indifference—and that you care nothing about the issues on which you bring me to trial.

Next, Meletus, tell us, in the name of Zeus, whether it's better to live among good citizens or bad ones. Answer me, sir. Surely, I'm not asking you anything difficult. Don't bad people do something bad to whoever's closest to them at the given moment, whereas good people do something good?

Certainly.

d Now is there anyone who wishes to be harmed rather than benefited by those around him? Keep answering, my good fellow. For the law requires you to answer. Is there anyone who wishes to be harmed?

Of course not.

Well, then, when you summon me here for corrupting the young and making them worse, do you mean that I do so intentionally or unintentionally?

Intentionally, I say.

⓪

What's that, Meletus? Are you so much wiser at your age than I at mine, that you know bad people do something bad to whoever's closest to them at the given moment, and good people something good? Am I, by contrast, so very ignorant that I don't know even this: that if I do something bad to an associate, I risk getting back something bad from him in return? And is the result, as you claim, that I do so very bad a thing intentionally?

e

I'm not convinced by you of that, Meletus, and neither, I think, is anyone else. No, either I'm not corrupting the young or, if I am corrupting them, it's unintentionally, so that in either case what you say is false. But if I'm corrupting them unintentionally, the law doesn't require that I be brought to court for such mistakes—that is, unintentional ones—but that I be taken aside for private instruction and admonishment. For it's clear that if I'm instructed, I'll stop doing what I do unintentionally. You, however, avoided associating with me and were unwilling to instruct me. Instead, you bring me here, where the law requires you to bring those in need of punishment, not instruction.

26

Well, men of Athens, what I said before is absolutely clear by this point, namely, that Meletus has never cared about these matters to any extent, great or small. Nevertheless, please tell us now, Meletus, how is it you say I

b

corrupt the young? Or is it absolutely clear, from the indictment you wrote, that it's by teaching them not to acknowledge the gods the city acknowledges, but new daimonic activities instead? Isn't that what you say I corrupt them by teaching?

I most emphatically do say that.

⓪

Then, in the name of those very gods we're now discussing, Meletus, speak yet more clearly, both for my sake and for that of these gentlemen. You see, I'm unable to tell what you mean. Is it that I teach people to acknowledge that some gods exist—so that I, then, acknowledge their existence myself and am not an out-and-out atheist and am not guilty of that—yet not, of course, the very ones acknowledged by the city, but different ones? Is that what you're charging me with, that they're different ones? Or are you saying that I myself don't acknowledge any gods at all, and that that's what I teach to others?

c

That's what I mean, that you don't acknowledge any gods at all. → *acknowledge gods*

You're a strange fellow, Meletus! What makes you say that? Do I not even acknowledge that the sun and the moon are gods, then, as other men do?

d

No, by Zeus, gentlemen of the jury, he doesn't, since he says that the sun's a stone and the moon earth.

My dear Meletus, do you think it's Anaxagoras you're accusing?

Are you that contemptuous of the jury? Do you think they're so illiterate that they don't know that the books of Anaxagoras of Clazomenae are full of such arguments? And, in particular, do young people learn these views from me, views they can occasionally acquire in the Orchestra¹⁴ for a drachma at most and that they'd ridicule Socrates for pretending were his own—especially as they're so strange? In the name of Zeus, is that really how I seem to you? Do I acknowledge the existence of no god at all?

Anaxagoras

e

No indeed, by Zeus, none at all.

You aren't at all convincing, Meletus, not even, it seems to me, to yourself. You see, men of Athens, this fellow seems very arrogant and intemperate to me and to have written this indictment simply out of some sort of arrogance, intemperance, and youthful rashness. Indeed, he seems to have composed a sort of riddle in order to test me: "Will the so-called wise Socrates recognize that I'm playing around and contradicting myself? Or will I fool him along with the other listeners?" You see, he seems to me to be contradicting himself in his indictment, as if he were to say, "Socrates is guilty of not acknowledging gods, but of acknowledging gods." And that's just childish playing around, isn't it?

What brought Meletus to write

27

Please examine with me, gentlemen, why it seems to me that this is what he's saying. And you, Meletus, answer us. But you, gentlemen,

14. The Orchestra was part of the marketplace (agora) in Athens.

please remember what I asked of you at the beginning: don't create an uproar if I make my arguments in my accustomed manner.

Is there anyone, Meletus, who acknowledges that human activities exist but doesn't acknowledge human beings? Make him answer, gentlemen, and don't let him make one protest after another. Is there anyone who doesn't acknowledge horses but does acknowledge equine activities? Or who doesn't acknowledge that musicians exist but does acknowledge musical activities? There's no one, best of men—if you don't want to answer, I must answer for you and for the others here. But at least answer my next question. Is there anyone who acknowledges the existence of daimonic activities but doesn't acknowledge daimons?

No, there isn't.

How good of you to answer, if reluctantly and when compelled to by these gentlemen. Well then, you say that I acknowledge daimonic activities, whether new or familiar, and teach about them. But then, on your account, I do at any rate acknowledge daimonic activities, and to this you've sworn in your indictment against me. However, if I acknowledge daimonic activities, surely it's absolutely necessary that I acknowledge daimons. Isn't that so? Yes, it is—I assume you agree, since you don't answer. But don't we believe that daimons are either gods or, at any rate, children of gods? Yes or no?

Of course.

Then, if indeed I do believe in daimons, as you're saying, and if daimons are gods of some sort, that's precisely what I meant when I said that you're presenting us with a riddle and playing around: you're saying that I don't believe in gods and, on the contrary, that I do believe in gods, since in fact I do at least believe in daimons. But if, on the other hand, daimons are children of gods, some sort of bastard offspring of a nymph, or of whom ever else tradition says each one is the child, what man could possibly believe that children of gods exist, but not gods? That would be just as unreasonable as believing in the children of horses and asses—namely, mules—while not believing in the existence of horses and asses.

Well then, Meletus, you must have written these things to test us or because you were at a loss about what genuine injustice to charge me with. There's no conceivable way you could persuade any man with even the slightest intelligence that the same person believes in both daimonic activities and gods, and, on the contrary, that this same person believes neither in daimons, nor in gods, nor in heroes.¹⁵

In fact, then, men of Athens, it doesn't seem to me to require a long defense to show that I'm not guilty of the charges in Meletus' indictment, but what I've said is sufficient. But what I was also saying earlier, that

15. Heroes are demigods (28c2), children of gods and mortals, whose existence therefore entails the existence of gods.

much hostility has arisen against me and among many people—you may be sure that's true. And it's what will convict me, if I am convicted: not Meletus or Anytus, but the slander and malice of many people. It has certainly convicted many other good men as well, and I imagine it will do so again. There's no danger it will stop with me.

But perhaps someone may say, "Aren't you ashamed, Socrates, to have engaged in the sort of occupation that has now put you at risk of death?" I, however, would be right to reply to him, "You're not thinking straight, sir, if you think that a man who's any use at all should give any opposing weight to the risk of living or dying, instead of looking to this alone whenever he does anything: whether his actions are just or unjust, the deeds of a good or bad man. You see, on your account, all those demigods who died on the plain of Troy were inferior people, especially the son of Thetis, who was so contemptuous of danger when the alternative was something shameful. When he was eager to kill Hector, his mother, since she was a goddess, spoke to him, I think, in some such words as these: 'My child, if you avenge the death of your friend Patroclus and slay Hector, you will die yourself immediately,' so the poem goes, 'as your death is fated to follow next after Hector's.' But though he heard that, he was contemptuous of death and danger, for he was far more afraid of living as a bad man and of failing to avenge his friends: 'Let me die immediately, then,' it continues, 'once I've given the wrongdoer his just deserts, so that I do not remain here by the curved ships, a laughingstock and a burden upon the earth.' Do you really suppose he gave a thought to death or danger?"

You see, men of Athens, this is the truth of the matter: Wherever someone has stationed himself because he thinks it best, or wherever he's been stationed by his commander, there, it seems to me, he should remain, steadfast in danger, taking no account at all of death or of anything else, in comparison to what's shameful. I'd therefore have been acting scandalously, men of Athens, if, when I'd been stationed in Potidea, Amphipolis, or Delium¹⁶ by the leaders you had elected to lead me, I had, like many another, remained where they'd stationed me and run the risk of death. But if, when the god stationed me here, as I became thoroughly convinced he did, to live practicing philosophy, examining myself and others, I had—for fear of death or anything else—abandoned my station.

That would have been scandalous, and someone might have rightly and justly brought me to court for not acknowledging that gods exist, by disobeying the oracle, fearing death, and thinking I was wise when I wasn't. You see, fearing death, gentlemen, is nothing other than thinking one is wise when one isn't, since it's thinking one knows what one doesn't

16. Three battles in the Peloponnesian War between Athens and its allies and Sparta and its allies.

hostility will convict him

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b. Thetis!

→ others just a weight

death vs. justice

fear of death vs. acting just

fear of death = thinking

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But in the end...

know. I mean, no one knows whether death may not be the greatest of all goods for people, but they fear it as if they knew for certain that it's the worst thing of all. Yet surely this is the most blameworthy ignorance of thinking one knows what one doesn't know. But I, gentlemen, may perhaps differ from most people by just this much in this matter too. And if I really were to claim to be wiser than anyone in any way, it would be in this: that as I don't have adequate knowledge about things in Hades, so too I don't think that I have knowledge. To act unjustly, on the other hand, to disobey someone better than oneself, whether god or man, that I do know to be bad and shameful. In any case, I'll never fear or avoid things that may for all I know be good more than things I know are bad.

Suppose, then, you're prepared to let me go now and to disobey Anytus, who said I shouldn't have been brought to court at all, but that since I had been brought to court, you had no alternative but to put me to death because, as he stated before you, if I were acquitted, soon your sons would all be entirely corrupted by following Socrates' teachings. Suppose, confronted with that claim, you were to say to me, "Socrates, we will not obey Anytus this time. Instead, we are prepared to let you go. But on the following condition: that you spend no more time on this investigation and don't practice philosophy, and if you're caught doing so, you'll die." Well, as I just said, if you were to let me go on these terms, I'd reply to you, "I've the utmost respect and affection for you, men of Athens, but I'll obey the god rather than you, and as long as I draw breath and am able, I won't give up practicing philosophy, exhorting you and also showing the way to any of you I ever happen to meet, saying just the sorts of things I'm accustomed to say:

My excellent man, you're an Athenian, you belong to the greatest city, renowned for its wisdom and strength; are you not ashamed that you take care to acquire as much wealth as possible—and reputation and honor—but that about wisdom and truth; about how your soul may be in the best possible condition, you take neither care nor thought?

Then, if one of you disagrees and says that he *does* care, I won't let him go away immediately, but I'll question, examine, and test him. And if he doesn't seem to me to possess virtue, though he claims he does, I'll reproach him, saying that he treats the most important things as having the least value, and inferior ones as having more. This I will do for anyone I meet, young or old, alien or fellow citizen—but especially for you, my fellow citizens, since you're closer kin to me. This, you may be sure, is what the god orders me to do. And I believe that no greater good for you has ever come about in the city than my service to the god. You see, I do nothing else except go around trying to persuade you, both young and old

alike, not to care about your bodies or your money as intensely as about how your soul may be in the best possible condition. I say,

It's not from wealth that virtue comes, but (from virtue) comes money, and all the other things that are good for human beings, both in private and in public life.

Now if by saying this, I'm corrupting the young, *this* is what you'd have to think to be harmful. But if anyone claims I say something other than this, he's talking nonsense."

"It's in that light," I want to say, "men of Athens, that you should obey Anytus or not, and let me go or not—knowing that I wouldn't act in any other way, not even if I were to die many times over."

Don't create an uproar, men of Athens. Instead, please abide by my request not to create an uproar at what I say, but to listen. For I think it will profit you to listen. You see, I'm certainly going to say some further things to you at which you may perhaps exclaim—but by no means do so.

You may be sure that if you put me to death—a man of the sort I said I was just now—you won't harm me more than you harm yourselves. Certainly, Meletus or Anytus couldn't harm me in any way: that's not possible. For I don't think it's lawful for a better man to be harmed by a worse. He may, of course, kill me, or perhaps banish or disenfranchise me. And these *he* believes to be very bad things, and others no doubt agree. But I don't believe this. Rather, I believe that doing what he's doing now—attempting to kill a man unjustly—is far worse.

So, men of Athens, I'm far from pleading in my own defense now, as might be supposed. Instead, I'm pleading in yours, so that you don't commit a great wrong against the god's gift to you by condemning me. If you put me to death, you won't easily find another like me. For, even if it seems ridiculous to say so, I've literally been attached to the city, as if to a large thoroughbred horse that was somewhat sluggish because of its size and needed to be awakened by some sort of gadfly. It's as just such a gadfly, it seems to me, that the god has attached me to the city—one that awakens, cajoles, and reproaches each and every one of you and never stops alighting everywhere on you the whole day. You won't easily find another like that, gentlemen. So if you obey me, you'll spare my life. But perhaps you'll be resentful, like people awakened from a doze, and slap at me. If you obey Anytus, you might easily kill me. Then you might spend the rest of your lives asleep, unless the god, in his compassion for you, were to send you someone else.

That I am indeed the sort of person to be given as a gift to the city by the god, you may recognize from this: it doesn't seem a merely human matter—does it?—for me to have neglected all my own affairs and to have put up with this neglect of my domestic life for so many years now, but

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always to have minded your business, by visiting each of you in private, like a father or elder brother, to persuade you to care about virtue. Of course, if I were getting anything out of it or if I were being paid for giving this advice, my conduct would be intelligible. But, as it is, you can plainly see for yourselves that my accusers, who so shamelessly accused me of everything else, couldn't bring themselves to be so utterly shameless as to call a witness to say that I ever once accepted or asked for payment. In fact, it's I who can call what I think is a sufficient witness that I'm telling the truth—my poverty.

But perhaps it may seem strange that I, of all people, give this advice by going around and minding other people's business in private, yet do not venture to go before your Assembly and give advice to the city in public. The reason for that, however, is one you've heard me give many times and in many places: A divine and daimonic thing comes to me—the very thing, Meletus made mocking allusion to in the indictment he wrote. It's something that began happening to me in childhood: a sort of voice comes, which, whenever it does come, always holds me back from what I'm about to do but never urges me forward. It is what opposes my engaging in politics—and to me, at least, its opposition seems entirely right. For you may be sure, men of Athens, that if I'd tried to engage in politics I'd have perished long ago and have benefited neither you nor myself.

Please don't resent me if I tell you the truth. The fact is that no man will be spared by you or by any other multitude of people if he genuinely opposes a lot of unjust and unlawful actions and tries to prevent them from happening in the city. On the contrary, anyone who really fights for what's just, if indeed he's going to survive for even a short time, must act privately not publicly.

I'll present substantial evidence of that—not words, but what you value, deeds. Listen, then, to what happened to me, so you may see that fear of death wouldn't lead me to submit to a single person contrary to what's just, not even if I were to perish at once for not submitting. The things I'll tell you are of a vulgar sort commonly heard in the law courts, but they're true nonetheless.

You see, men of Athens, I never held any other public office in the city, but I've served on the Council. And it happened that my own tribe, Anti-ochis, was presiding¹⁷ when you wanted to try the ten generals—the ones

17. A *phulē* is not a tribe in our sense, but an administrative division of the citizen body, most probably of military origin. The presiding committee of the Council (25a5 note) consisted of the fifty members of one of the ten tribes, selected by lot to serve for one-tenth of the year. It arranged meetings of the Council and Assembly, received envoys and letters to the state, and conducted other routine business.

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who failed to rescue the survivors of the naval battle—as a group.¹⁸ That was unlawful, as you all came to recognize at a later time. On that occasion, I was the only presiding member opposed to your doing something illegal, and I voted against you. And though the orators were ready to lay information against me and have me summarily arrested,¹⁹ and you were shouting and urging them on, I thought that I should face danger on the side of law and justice, rather than go along with you for fear of imprisonment or death when your proposals were unjust.

This happened when the city was still under democratic rule. But later, when the oligarchy had come to power, it happened once more. The Thirty²⁰ summoned me and four others to the Tholus²¹ and ordered us to arrest Leon of Salamis²² and bring him from Salamis to die. They gave many such orders to many other people too, of course, since they wanted to implicate as many as possible in their crimes. On that occasion, however, I showed once again not by words but by deeds that I couldn't care less about death—if that isn't putting it too bluntly—but that all I care about is not doing anything unjust or impious. You see, that government, powerful though it was, didn't frighten me into unjust action: when we came out of the Tholus, the other four went to Salamis and arrested Leon, whereas I left and went home. I might have died for that if the government hadn't fallen shortly afterward.

There are many witnesses who will testify before you about these events.

Do you imagine, then, that I'd have survived all these years if I'd been regularly active in public affairs, and had come to the aid of justice like a good man, and regarded that as most important, as one should? Far from

18. After the naval battle at Arginusae on the Ionian coast of Asia Minor (406 B.C.), ten Athenian generals were indicted for failing to rescue survivors and to pick up the bodies of the dead. Both Council and Assembly voted to try them as a group, which was against Athenian law. See Xenophon, *Hellenica* i.7.

19. *Endeiknurai . . . kai apagein*: *Endeixis* (lay information against) and *apagoge* (have summarily arrested) were formal legal actions of a specific sort.

20. After Athens was defeated by Sparta in 404 B.C., its democratic government was replaced by a brutal oligarchy, the so-called Thirty Tyrants, which survived barely eight months. During that time it allegedly executed some fifteen hundred people, and many more went into exile to escape. Two members of the Thirty—Critias and Charmides—were relatives of Plato and appear as Socratic interlocutors in the dialogues named after them. Socrates' association with them is often thought to have been one of the things that led to his indictment.

21. The Tholus was a dome-shaped building, also called the Skias ("parasol"). The presiding committee of the Council (32b3 note) took its meals there.

22. Leon is otherwise unknown. The episode, however, is widely reported (*Seventh Letter* 324d8–325c5; Xenophon, *Hellenica* ii.3.39, *Memorabilia* iv.4.3).

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33 it, men of Athens, and neither would any other man. But throughout my entire life, in any public activities I may have engaged in, it was evident I was the sort of person—and in private life I was the same—who never agreed to anything with anyone contrary to justice, whether with others or with those who my slanderers say are my students. In fact, I've never been anyone's teacher at any time. But if anyone, whether young or old, wanted to listen to me while I was talking and performing my own task, I never begrudged that to him. Neither do I engage in conversation only when I receive a fee and not when I don't. Rather, I offer myself for questioning to rich and poor alike, or, if someone prefers, he may listen to me and answer my questions. And if any one of these turned out well, or did not do so, I can't justly be held responsible, since I never at any time promised any of them that they'd learn anything from me or that I'd teach them. And if anyone says that he learned something from me or heard something in private that all the others didn't also hear, you may be sure he isn't telling the truth.

c Why, then, you may ask, do some people enjoy spending so much time with me? You've heard the answer, men of Athens. I told you the whole truth: it's because they enjoy listening to people being examined who think they're wise but aren't. For it's not unpleasant. In my case, however, it's something, you may take it from me, I've been ordered to do by the god, in both oracles and dreams, and in every other way that divine providence ever ordered any man to do anything at all.

d All these things, men of Athens, are both true and easily tested. I mean, if I really do corrupt the young or have corrupted them in the past, surely if any of them had recognized when they became older that I'd given them bad advice at some point in their youth, they'd now have come forward themselves to accuse me and seek redress. Or else, if they weren't willing to come themselves, some of their family members—fathers, brothers, or other relatives—if indeed their kinsmen had suffered any harm from me—would remember it now and seek redress.

e In any case, I see many of these people present here: first of all, there's Crito, my contemporary and fellow demesman, the father of Critobulus here;²³ then there's Lysanius of Sphettus, father of Aeschines here;²⁴ next, there's Epigenes' father, Antiphon of Cephisia here.²⁵ Then there are others whose brothers have spent time in this way: Nicostratus, son of

23. Crito was a well-off farm owner (*Euthydemus* 291e8), able and willing to help his friends financially (38b7, *Crito* 44b6-c5; Diogenes Laertius ii.20-21, 31, 105, 121).

24. Aeschines of Sphettus (fourth century B.C.) was a devoted follower of Socrates, present at his death (*Phaedo* 59b8). He taught oratory and wrote speeches for the law courts. He also wrote Socratic dialogues, only fragments of which are extant.

25. Epigenes was present at Socrates' death (*Phaedo* 59b8) and was a member of his circle (*Xenophon, Memorabilia* iii.12).

Theozotides,²⁶ brother of Theodotus—by the way, Theodotus is dead, so that Nicostratus is at any rate not being held back by him; and Paralius here, son of Demodocus, whose brother was Theages;²⁷ and there's Adeimantus, the son of Ariston, whose brother is Plato here, and Aeantodorus, whose brother here is Apollodorus.²⁸ And there are many others I could mention, some of whom Meletus most certainly ought to have called as witnesses in the course of his own speech. If he forgot to do so, let him call them now—I yield time to him. Let him tell us if he has any such witness. No, it's entirely the opposite, gentlemen. You'll find that they're all prepared to come to my aid, their corruptor, the one who, Meletus and Anytus claim, is doing harm to their families. Of course, the corrupted ones themselves might indeed have reason to come to my aid. But the uncorrupted ones, their relatives, who are older men now, what reason could they possibly have to support me, other than the right and just one: that they know perfectly well that Meletus is lying, whereas I am telling the truth?

Well then, gentlemen, those, and perhaps other similar things, are pretty much all I have to say in my defense. But perhaps one of you might be resentful when he recalls his own behavior. Perhaps when he was contesting even a lesser charge than this charge, he positively entreated the jurors with copious tears, bringing forward his children and many other relatives and friends as well, in order to arouse as much pity as possible. And then he finds that I'll do none of these things, not even when I'm facing what might be considered the ultimate danger. Perhaps someone with these thoughts might feel more willful where I'm concerned and, made angry by these very same thoughts, cast his vote in anger. Well, if there's someone like that among you—of course, I don't expect there to be, but if there is—I think it appropriate for me to answer him as follows: "I do indeed have relatives, my excellent man. As Homer puts it,²⁹ I too 'wasn't born from oak or from rock' but from human parents. And so I do have relatives, sons too, men of Athens, three of them, one already a young man while two are still children. Nonetheless, I won't bring any of them forward here and then entreat you to vote for my acquittal."

Why, you may ask, will I do none of these things? Not because I'm willful, men of Athens, or want to dishonor you—whether I'm boldly facing death or not is a separate story. The point has to do with reputation—yours and mine and that of the entire city: it doesn't seem noble to me to do these

26. Theozotides introduced two important democratic reforms after the fall of the Thirty Tyrants (32c4 note).

27. Otherwise largely unknown.

28. Apollodorus, an enthusiastic follower of Socrates, given to emotion (*Phaedo* 59a8-b1, 117c3-d6), is the narrator in the *Symposium*.

29. *Odyssey* xix.163.

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things, especially at my age and with my reputation—for whether truly or falsely, it's firmly believed in any case that Socrates is superior to the majority of people in some way. Therefore, if those of you who are believed to be superior—in either wisdom or courage or any other virtue whatever—behave like that, it would be shameful.

I've often seen people of this sort when they're on trial: they're thought to be someone, yet they do astonishing things—as if they imagined they'd suffer something terrible if they died and would be immortal if only you didn't kill them. People like that seem to me to bring such shame to the city that any foreigner might well suppose that those among the Athenians who are superior in virtue—the ones they select from among themselves for political office and other positions of honor—are no better than women. I say this, men of Athens, because none of us who are in any way whatever thought to be someone should behave like that, nor, if we attempt to do so, should you allow it. On the contrary, you should make it clear you're far more likely to convict someone who makes the city despicable by staging these pathetic scenes than someone who minds his behavior.

Reputation aside, gentlemen, it doesn't seem just to me to entreat the jury—nor to be acquitted by entreating it—but rather to inform it and persuade it. After all, a juror doesn't sit in order to grant justice as a favor, but to decide where justice lies. And he has sworn on oath not that he'll favor whomever he pleases, but that he'll judge according to law. We shouldn't accustom you to breaking your oath, then, nor should you become accustomed to doing so—neither of us would be doing something holy if we did. Hence don't expect me, men of Athens, to act toward you in ways I consider to be neither noble, nor just, nor pious—most especially, by Zeus, when I'm being prosecuted for impiety by Meletus here. You see, if I tried to persuade and to force you by entreaties, after you've sworn an oath, I clearly would be teaching you not to believe in the existence of gods, and my defense would literally convict me of not acknowledging gods. But that's far from being the case: I do acknowledge them, men of Athens, as none of my accusers does. I turn it over to you and to the god to judge me in whatever way will be best for me and for yourselves.

• • • —> Connected Socrates

There are many reasons, men of Athens, why I'm not resentful at this outcome—that you voted to convict me—and this outcome wasn't unexpected by me. I'm much more surprised at the number of votes cast on each side: I didn't think that the decision would be by so few votes but by a great many. Yet now, it seems, that if a mere thirty votes had been cast differently, I'd have been acquitted. Or rather, it seems to me that where

Meletus is concerned, I've been acquitted even as things stand. And not merely acquitted. On the contrary, one thing at least is clear to everyone: if Anytus had not come forward with Lycon to accuse me, Meletus would have been fined a thousand drachmas, since he wouldn't have received a fifth of the votes.

But be that as it may, the man demands the death penalty for me. Well then, what counterpenalty should I now propose to you, men of Athens? Or is it clear that it's whatever I deserve? What then should it be? What do I deserve to suffer or pay just because I didn't mind my own business throughout my life? Because I didn't care about the things most people care about—making money, managing an estate, or being a general, a popular leader, or holding some other political office, or joining the cabals and factions that come to exist in a city—but thought myself too honest in truth, to engage in these things and survive? Because I didn't engage in things, if engaging in them was going to benefit neither you nor myself, but instead went to each of you privately and tried to perform what I claim is the greatest benefaction? That was what I did. I tried to persuade each of you to care first not about any of his possessions, but about himself and how he'll become best and wisest, and not primarily about the city's possessions, but about the city itself, and to care about all other things in the same way.

What, then, do I deserve to suffer for being such a man? Something good, men of Athens, if I'm indeed to propose a penalty that I truly deserve. Yes, and the sort of good thing, too, that would be appropriate for me. What, then, is appropriate for a poor man who is a public benefactor and needs to have the leisure to exhort you? Nothing could be more appropriate, men of Athens, than for such a man to be given free meals in the Prytaneum—much more so for him, at any rate, than for any one of you who has won a victory at Olympia, whether with a single horse or with a pair or a team of four.³⁰ You see, he makes you think you're happy, whereas I make you actually happy. Besides, he doesn't need to be sustained in that way, but I do need it. So if, as justice demands, I must propose a penalty I deserve, that's the penalty I propose: free meals in the Prytaneum.

Now perhaps when I say this, you may think I'm speaking in a quite willful manner—just as when I talked about appeals to pity and supplications. That's not so, men of Athens, rather it's something like this: I'm convinced that I never intentionally do injustice to any man—but I can't get you to share my conviction, because we've talked together a short time. I say this, because if you had a law, as other men in fact do, not to try

30. The Prytaneum, a building on the northeast slope of the Acropolis, was the symbolic center of Athens, where the communal hearth was housed.

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Why they are convicted of being

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a capital charge in a single day, but over several, I think you'd be convinced. But as things stand, it isn't easy to clear myself of huge slanders in a short time.

Since I'm convinced that I've done injustice to no one, however, I'm certainly not likely to do myself injustice, to announce that I deserve something bad and to propose a penalty of that sort for myself. Why should I do that? In order not to suffer what Meletus proposes as a penalty for me, when I say that I don't know whether it's a good or a bad thing? As an alternative to that, am I then to choose one of the things I know very well to be bad and propose it? Imprisonment, for example? And why should I live in prison, enslaved to the regularly appointed officers, the Eleven?³¹ All right; a fine with imprisonment until I pay? But in my case the effect would be precisely the one I just now described, since I haven't the means to pay.

Well then, should I propose exile? Perhaps that's what you'd propose for me. But I'd certainly have to have an excessive love of life, men of Athens, to be so irrational as to do that. I see that you, my fellow citizens, were unable to tolerate my discourses and discussions but came to find them so burdensome and odious that you're now seeking to get rid of them. Is it likely, then, that I'll infer that others will find them easy to bear? Far from it, men of Athens. It would be a fine life for me, indeed, a man of my age, to go into exile and spend his life exchanging one city for another, because he's always being expelled. You see, I well know that wherever I go, the young will come to hear me speaking, just as they do here. And if I drive them away, they will themselves persuade their elders to expel me; whereas if I don't drive them away, their fathers and relatives will expel me because of these same young people.

Now perhaps someone may say, "But by keeping quiet and minding your own business, Socrates, wouldn't it be possible for you to live in exile for us?" This is the very hardest point on which to convince some of you. You see, if I say that to do that would be to disobey the god, and that this is why I can't mind my own business, you won't believe me, since you'll suppose I'm being ironical. But again, if I say it's the greatest good for a man to discuss virtue every day, and the other things you've heard me discussing and examining myself and others about, on the grounds that the unexamined life isn't worth living for a human being, you'll believe me even less when I say that. But in fact, things are just as I claim them to be, men of Athens, though it isn't easy to convince you of them. At the same time, I'm not accustomed to thinking that I deserve anything bad. If I had the means, I'd have proposed a fine of as much as I could afford to pay, since that would have done me no harm at all. But as things stand, I don't have them—unless you want me to propose as much as I'm in fact able to

31. Officials appointed by lot to be in charge of prisons and executions.

pay. Perhaps I could pay you about a mina of silver. So I propose a fine of that amount.

One moment, men of Athens. Plato here, and Crito, Critobulus, and Apollodorus as well, are urging me to propose thirty minas and saying that they themselves will guarantee it.³² I propose a fine of that amount, therefore, and these men will be sufficient guarantors to you of the silver.

• • •

For the sake of a little time, men of Athens, you're going to earn from those who wish to denigrate our city both the reputation and the blame for having killed Socrates—that wise man. For those who wish to reproach you will, of course, claim that I'm wise, even if I'm not. In any case, if you'd waited a short time, this would have happened of its own accord. You, of course, see my age, you see that I'm already far along in life and close to death. I'm saying this not to all of you, but to those who voted for the death penalty. And to those same people I also say this: Perhaps you imagine, gentlemen, that I was convicted for lack of the sort of arguments I could have used to convince you, if I'd thought I should do or say anything to escape the penalty. Far from it. I have been convicted for a lack—not of arguments, however, but of bold-faced shamelessness and for being unwilling to say the sorts of things to you you'd have been most pleased to hear, with me weeping and wailing, and doing and saying many other things I claim are unworthy of me, but that are the very sorts of things you're used to hearing from everyone else. No, I didn't think then that I should do anything servile because of the danger I faced, and so I don't regret now that I defended myself as I did, far rather die after such a defense than live like that.

You see, whether in a trial or in a war, neither I nor anyone else should contrive to escape death at all costs. In battle, too, it often becomes clear that one might escape death by throwing down one's weapons and turning to supplicate one's pursuers. And in each sort of danger there are many other ways one can contrive to escape death, if one is shameless enough to do or say anything. The difficult thing, gentlemen, isn't escaping death; escaping villainy is much more difficult, since it runs faster than death. And now I, slow and old as I am, have been overtaken by the slower runner while my accusers, clever and sharp-witted as they are, have been overtaken by the faster one—death. And now I take my leave, convicted by you of a capital crime, whereas they stand forever convicted by the truth of wickedness and injustice. And just as I accept my penalty, so must they. Perhaps, things had to turn out this way, and I suppose it's good they have.

32. Thirty minas (three thousand silver drachmas) was almost ten years' salary for someone engaged in public works.

Handwritten notes on the left margin: "I have been convinced that I've done injustice to no one, however, I'm certainly not likely to do myself injustice, to announce that I deserve something bad and to propose a penalty of that sort for myself." "31. Officials appointed by lot to be in charge of prisons and executions." "38" "39" "40" "41" "42" "43" "44" "45" "46" "47" "48" "49" "50" "51" "52" "53" "54" "55" "56" "57" "58" "59" "60" "61" "62" "63" "64" "65" "66" "67" "68" "69" "70" "71" "72" "73" "74" "75" "76" "77" "78" "79" "80" "81" "82" "83" "84" "85" "86" "87" "88" "89" "90" "91" "92" "93" "94" "95" "96" "97" "98" "99" "100"

Handwritten notes on the right margin: "Fine" "Allegory" "39" "40" "41" "42" "43" "44" "45" "46" "47" "48" "49" "50" "51" "52" "53" "54" "55" "56" "57" "58" "59" "60" "61" "62" "63" "64" "65" "66" "67" "68" "69" "70" "71" "72" "73" "74" "75" "76" "77" "78" "79" "80" "81" "82" "83" "84" "85" "86" "87" "88" "89" "90" "91" "92" "93" "94" "95" "96" "97" "98" "99" "100"

Handwritten notes in the center margin: "On the way to the trial" "Accused" "by the state"

c Next, I want to make a prophecy to those who convicted me. Indeed, I'm
 now at the point at which men prophesy most—when they're about to die.
 I say to you men who condemned me to death that as soon as I'm dead
 vengeance will come upon you, and it will be much harsher, by Zeus, than
 the vengeance you take in killing me. You did this now in the belief that
you'll escape giving an account of your lives. But I say that quite the
 d opposite will happen to you. There will be more people to test you, whom
 I now restrain, though you didn't notice my doing so. And they'll be all the
 harsher on you, since they're younger, and you'll resent it all the more.
 You see, if you imagine that by killing people you'll prevent anyone
 from reproaching you for not living in the right way, you're not thinking
 straight. In fact, to escape is neither possible nor noble. On the contrary,
what's best and easiest isn't to put down other people, but to prepare
 e oneself to be the best one can. With that prophecy to those of you who
 voted to convict me, I take my leave.

e However, I'd gladly discuss this result with those who voted for my ac-
 quittal while the officers of the court are busy and I'm not yet on my way to
 the place where I must die. Please stay with me, gentlemen, just for that
 short time. After all, there's nothing to prevent us from having a talk with
 one another while it's still in our power. To you whom I regard as friends
 40 I'm willing to show the meaning of what has just now happened to me.
 You see, gentlemen of the jury—for in calling you "jurors" I no doubt use
 the term correctly—an amazing thing has happened to me. In previous
 times, the usual prophecies of my daimonic sign were always very fre-
 quent, opposing me even on trivial matters, if I was about to do something
 that wasn't right. Now, however, something has happened to me, as you
 can see for yourselves, that one might think to be, and that's generally
 regarded as being, the worst of all bad things. Yet the god's sign didn't
 b oppose me when I left home this morning, or when I came up here to the
 law court, or anywhere in my speech when I was about to say something,
 even though in other discussions it has often stopped me in the middle of
 what I was saying. Now, however, where this affair is concerned, it has
 opposed me in nothing I either said or did.

c What, then, do I suppose is the explanation for that? I'll tell you. You
 see, it's likely that what has happened to me is a good thing and that those
 of you who suppose death to be bad make an incorrect supposition. I've
 strong evidence of this, since there's no way my usual sign would have
 failed to oppose me, if I weren't about to achieve something good.

But let's bear in mind that the following is also a strong reason to hope
 that death may be something good. Being dead is one of two things: either
 the dead are nothing, as it were, and have no awareness whatsoever of
 anything at all; or else, as we're told, it's some sort of change, a migration

of the soul from here to another place. Now, if there's in fact no awareness,
 but it's like sleep—the kind in which the sleeper has no dream whatso-
 ever—then death would be an amazing advantage. For I imagine that if
 d someone had to pick a night in which he slept so soundly that he didn't
 even dream and had to compare all the other nights and days of his life
 with that one, and then, having considered the matter, had to say how
 many days or nights of his life he had spent better or more pleasantly than
 that night—I imagine that not just some private individual, but even the
 e great king,³³ would find them easy to count compared to the other days
 and nights. Well, if death's like that, I say it's an advantage, since, in that
 case, the whole of time would seem no longer than a single night.

On the other hand, if death's a sort of journey from here to another
 place, and if what we're told is true, and all who've died are indeed there,
 what could be a greater good than that, gentlemen of the jury? If on
 arriving in Hades and leaving behind the people who claim to be jurors
 here, one's going to find those who are truly jurors or judges, the very ones
 41 who are said to sit in judgment there too—Minos,³⁴ Rhadamanthys,
 Aeacus, Triptolemus, and all the other demigods who were just in their
 own lifetimes—would the journey be a wretched one?

Or again, what would any one of you not give to talk to Orpheus and
 Museus, Hesiod and Homer?³⁵ I'd be willing to die many times over, if
 that were true. You see, for myself, at any rate, spending time there would
 b be amazing; when I met Palamedes or Ajax, the son of Telemon, or anyone
 else of old who died because of an unjust verdict, I could compare my own
 experience with theirs—as I suppose it wouldn't be unpleasing to do. And
 in particular, the most important thing: I could spend time examining and
 searching people there, just as I do here, to find out who among them is
 wise, and who thinks he is, but isn't.

What wouldn't one give, gentlemen of the jury, to be able to examine
 the leader of the great expedition against Troy, or Odysseus, or Sisyphus,³⁶
 c or countless other men and women one could mention? To talk to them
 there, to associate with them and examine them, wouldn't that be incon-
 ceivable happiness? In any case, the people there certainly don't kill one
 for doing it. For if what we're told is true, the people there are both happier
 in all other respects than the people here and also deathless for the re-
 mainder of time.

But you too, gentlemen of the jury, should be of good hope in the face of
 death, and bear in mind this single truth: nothing bad can happen to a

33. The king of Persia, whose wealth and power made him a popular exemplar of
 human success and happiness.

34. Minos was a legendary king of Crete.

35. Orpheus was a legendary bard and founder of the mystical religion of Or-
 phism. Museus, usually associated with Orpheus, was also a legendary bard.

36. Sisyphus is a legendary king and founder of Corinth.

d ~~good man, whether in life or in death, nor are the gods unconcerned about his troubles. What has happened to me hasn't happened by chance; rather, it's clear to me that to die now and escape my troubles was a better thing for me.~~ It was for this very reason that my sign never opposed me. And so, for my part, I'm not at all angry with those who voted to condemn me or with my accusers. And yet this wasn't what they had in mind when they were condemning and accusing me. No, they thought to harm me—and for that they deserve to be blamed.

e This small favor, however, I ask of them. When my sons come of age, gentlemen, punish them by harassing them in the very same way that I harassed you, if they seem to you to take care of wealth or anything before virtue, if they think they're someone when they're no one. Reproach them, just as I reproached you: tell them that they don't care for the things they should and think they're someone when they're worth nothing. If you will
42 do that, I'll have received my own just deserts from you, as will my sons.

But now it's time to leave, I to die and you to live. Which of us goes to the better thing, however, is unclear to everyone except the god.

CRITO

SOCRATES: Why have you come at this hour, Crito? Isn't it still early? 43

CRITO: It is indeed.

SOCRATES: About what time?

CRITO: Just before dawn.

SOCRATES: I'm surprised the prison warden was willing to let you in.

CRITO: He knows me by now, Socrates, I come here so often. And besides I've done him a good turn.

SOCRATES: Have you just arrived or have you been here for a while?

CRITO: For quite a while.

SOCRATES: Then why didn't you wake me right away, instead of sitting there in silence? b

CRITO: In the name of Zeus, Socrates, I wouldn't do that! I only wish I weren't so sleepless and distressed myself. I've been amazed all this time to see how peacefully you were sleeping, and I deliberately kept from waking you, so that you could pass the time as pleasantly as possible. In the past—indeed, throughout my entire life—I've often counted you happy in your disposition, but never more so than in this present misfortune. You bear it so easily and calmly.

SOCRATES: Well, Crito, it would be an error for someone of my age to complain when the time has come when he must die.

CRITO: Other people get overtaken by such misfortunes too, Socrates, but their age doesn't prevent them in the least from complaining about their fate. c

SOCRATES: That's right. But tell me, why *have* you come so early?

CRITO: I bring bad news, Socrates. Not bad in your view, it seems to me, but bad and hard in mine and that of all your friends—and hardest of all, I think, for me to bear.

SOCRATES: What news is that? Or has the ship returned from Delos, at whose return I must die?¹ d

Translated by C.D.C. Reeve.

1. Legend had it that Athens was once obliged to send King Minos of Crete an annual tribute of seven young men and seven maidens to be given to the Minotaur—a monster, half man and half bull, that he kept in a labyrinth. With the help of a thread given to him by Minos' daughter Ariadne, Theseus, a legendary king of Athens, made his way through the labyrinth, killed the Minotaur, and escaped,