

A Map of Socrates's Apology (ΑΠΟΛΟΓΙΑ ΣΟΚΡΑΤΟΥΣ)

1. First Part: Apology proper

- 17a–18a Opening: Socrates plays down his rhetorical skills and promises a plain defence. He justifies the way he is going to defend himself.
- 18b–20c In order to understand the charge, Socrates considers the history of his unpopularity. He alludes to Aristophanes's *Clouds* (18d, 19c), where he is wrongly portrayed as a natural philosopher and (dubious) teacher (cf. Handout 5). Socrates denies that he takes money to teach, i.e. denies being a sophist.
- 20c–23e The source of Socrates's bad reputation: according to the oracle in Delphi, nobody is wiser than Socrates. Socrates does not think that he knows what he does not know; others think they know when they do not. This relentless search for someone who is wiser meets with hostility. The oracle's real meaning: like Socrates, those are wisest who came to realise they actually are worthless in regard to wisdom (οφώτατος ἐστίν, ὅστις ὥσπερ Σωκράτης ἐγνώκεν ὅτι οὐδενὸς ἀξιὸς ἐστὶ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πρὸς σοφίαν).¹
- 23e–24c The charges by Meletus, Anytus, and Lycon: Socrates corrupts the young and does not recognise the official gods but creates new ones. (Σωκράτη φησὶν ἀδικεῖν τοὺς τε νέους διαφθείροντα καὶ θεοὺς οὓς ἡ πόλις νομίζει οὐ νομίζοντα, ἕτερα δὲ δαιμόνια καινά).²
- 24d–27e Dialogue with Meletus, in which Socrates aims to prove the incoherence of the charges (and Meletus's incompetence). (a) Everyone except Socrates corrupts the young; but this is like saying that all but a few know how to improve horses. (b) Nobody intentionally harms anyone; so, he either corrupted nobody or unintentionally; but then Socrates would need instruction rather than punishment. (c) The charge is contradictory. For if Socrates invents supernatural entities, such as the *daimonion*, and this entails belief in gods, then it follows that he does, and (according to the charge) does not, believe in gods.
- 28a–35d Return to old hostilities; it would be inconsistent to refrain from doing philosophy now. He would disobey the oracle and his god. In fact, he does the city a service: being a gadfly (μύωπος; myôpos), which stings a lazy horse into action. The daimonion did not stop him, so he was doing good. Socrates also mentions two occasions when he served the city.³ He distances himself from pleading with the jury, giving three reasons: (a) it is dishonourable; (b) it is unjust; and (c) it is impious, which would *prove* his guilt.

1 Translit. *Sophôtatos estin, hostis hôsper Sokratês engnôken hoti oudenos axios esti tê aletheia pros sophian.*

2 Translit. *Sokratê phêsîn adikeîn tous te neous diaphtheironta kai theous hous he polis nomizei ou nomizounta, hetera de daimonia kaina.*

3 At 32d, Socrates mentions an act of civil disobedience, which seems inconsistent with one of the arguments in *Crito*.

2. Second Part: after the (close) guilty verdict

- 36a–e Socrates is not surprised. Since he believes that he has done the city a service, he thinks he deserves a reward reserved for very eminent persons: free dining in the Prytaneum.
- 37a–38b He adds that he has never wronged anyone intentionally. Hence he cannot be expected to wrong himself by suggesting something bad for himself. Even if exiled, discussing goodness and doing philosophy is the best anyone could do, for an unexamined life is not worth living (*ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ*).⁴ More like an afterthought, he suggests a fine paid by Plato and others.

3. Third Part: after the death sentence

- 38c–39e Socrates's irony: the jury swiftly has earned a reputation by putting to death an old man whose time is up anyway. Rather than arguments, it is his refusal to meet the jury's expectations that condemned him. The difficulty is not escaping death (this is impossible), but to escape wickedness or malice (*πονερία*, *poneria*): he is caught by death, and his accusers are caught by immorality (*κακίας*, *kakias*). Prophecy: the city will regret killing him.
- 40a–42a The *daimonion* has not stopped Socrates at any stage in his defence. Thus, the condemnation is not a bad thing after all. Reflections on death. Either the soul is annihilated (like in dreamless sleep) or it goes to another place, and both are gains. He imagines doing philosophy with Homer, Odysseus, *et al.* Socratic irony: he cannot be put to death for incessant enquiry *there*. Last ethical thought: nothing can harm a good person in life or death. He asks the jury to look after the moral well-being of his sons, and then Socrates is off: he, to die; they, to live (*ἐμοὶ μὲν ἀποθανομένῳ, ὑμῖν δὲ βιωσομένοις*).⁵ Only god knows who has the better deal.

4 Translit. *ho de anexetastos bios ou biotos anthrópō*.

5 Translit. *emoi men apothanoumenō, hymin de biosomenois*.

