

Apology I 17a–35d¹

Introduction. This is the first part of Socrates's defence speech, before the verdict.

Questions.

1. How did Socrates gain his dubious reputation (20d ff.)?
2. What is the verdict of the oracle in Delphi (21a)?
3. How does Socrates react to the oracle's claim (21b ff.)?
4. What is the result of Socrates's investigations (23a)?
- 5.★ Between 24c and 28a, Socrates engages Meletus (one of the accusers) in an elenchus (cf. Handout 3). In your view, what is the main point of this exchange?
- 6.★ With regard to the same exchange: do you find Socrates's arguments compelling? Why, or why not?
7. Explain why Socrates suggests that his death would harm the city (30c).
8. At 35c, Socrates says that it would be 'impious' to appeal to pity in his defence. Explain.

Background. (a) At 18c, Socrates refers to a 'stronger' and 'weaker' argument. This is part of the plot in Aristophanes's *Clouds*, who also is the 'playwright' mentioned at 18d. (b) The three areas of examination (22a–e), i.e. politics, poetry, and crafts, roughly correspond to the occupations of the three accusers Meletus (poet), Lycon (orator), and Anytus (tanner and democratic politician), see 23e. (c) Socrates suggests that poets are not wise (22c), and that it is not reason or wisdom that helps them produce art. Rather, narrative art is grounded in intuition or divine inspiration. Plato deals with this the short dialogue *Ion* too: fictional art demands the suspension of rationality and in some sense is comparable to madness; e.g., we emotionally engage with people or events we know do not exist.

¹ *The Last Days of Socrates*, pp. 39–63.

