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## Portraying Socrates Plato's Artistic Genius in the *Apology*

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### Part I

#### *Introduction*

All the Platonic dialogues have survived. Perhaps that is why they are normally considered as a body of work. People look at individual dialogues, but always in the context of the others. I look at the *Apology* all by itself. I do not read it in the context of the other dialogues. I read the *Apology* as if the other dialogues did not exist. My justification for this is that I think the *Apology* was the first dialogue, and if it was the first, it must have been read, at least for a time, without reference to the others.

We cannot know for certain which dialogue was the first. It is generally agreed that the *Apology* was among Plato's earliest works and P. Friedlander reports that E. Wolff, J. Geffken and H. Gauss all treated the *Apology* as the very first.<sup>i</sup> Friedlander adds "No proof of this is possible".

By the same token, no one could prove that the *Apology* was *not* the first Platonic dialogue and one of the dialogues must have been the first. Isn't it most likely to have been the *Apology*? The *Apology*

may be the most distinctive of the dialogues.<sup>ii</sup> It alone among the dialogues has the form of a monologue. If the *Apology* was not the first dialogue, Plato has to have written one or more dialogues in dialogue form, then switched to the monologue form for one dialogue, and then switched back.

Two switches are harder to account for than one, so on purely formal grounds, the *Apology* is likely to have been the first thing Plato wrote, but even if we look “non-formally”, isn’t it most likely that the one monologue among the dialogues came at the beginning of the 50 years that Plato was writing? Isn’t it easier to imagine him writing a monologue and then switching to dialogues than to imagine him writing one or more dialogues, switching away from that form for one work, and then switching back?

Not only is the *Apology* a monologue, it contains the only words Plato speaks in any of the dialogues. They are said by Socrates. “Plato, who’s sitting over there, says; ‘Thirty pieces of silver’.” (38b)<sup>iii</sup> This seems like a device a beginner might use and then not continue, rather than like something inserted once by a more mature writer.

More importantly, G. Vlastos has convinced modern scholars that there is a progression in the dialogues. They go from being more concerned with conveying a portrait of Socrates to being more concerned with conveying Plato’s philosophy.<sup>iv</sup> The *Apology* has no philosophical purpose. Philosophy can be read back into the *Apology* from the later dialogues, but by itself, the *Apology* is basically free of philosophy.<sup>v</sup> It produces completely different reactions in readers from those produced by the other dialogues. All the other dialogues are puzzling and make readers think. The *Apology* is troubling, but it makes readers *feel* things rather than *think* things.

There are questions one can ask oneself *about* the *Apology*, for instance, What is Socrates being ironic about and what is he being

serious about? But these are not “philosophical questions”. The only question posed *in the Apology* is whether or not it was just to kill Socrates and Socrates, Plato and all the rest of us agree about the answer to that question. We think of the trial of Socrates as a travesty of justice. As Socrates predicted in the *Apology*, we refer to the Athenian jury that found him guilty and sentenced him to death as “the idiots who killed Socrates for being a wise man.” (38c)

I assume that Plato’s only goal in the *Apology* was to artistically recreate a rhetorical space reminiscent of the rhetorical space generated by the real Socrates. I do not claim that in the *Apology* we find the “real” Socrates, but the Socrates in the *Apology* is the “realist” portrait of Socrates we can find. When told his portrait of Gertrude Stein did not resemble her, Picasso is supposed to have said, “Not yet.” I treat Plato as having achieved this level of art in the *Apology*. We do not hear the real Socrates in the *Apology*; we hear a Socrates that is realer than the real one. What literary and artistic devices did Plato use to create this portrait?

### Socrates’ trial

The *Apology* is Plato’s artistic representation of the speech Socrates gave at his trial in 399 B.C.<sup>vi</sup> Socrates was charged in an Athenian court with

ruining the young men by teaching them not to believe in the gods the city believes in and making up new divinities. (24b, 26b)

In modern terms, Socrates was accused of teaching the young people of Athens not to believe what their *polis*, their culture, believed.

The title, *Apology*, translates the Greek word *ἀπολογία* (pronounced *ah paw law gee’ ah* with the accent on *gee*, which is not

pronounced as in “gee, whiz” but as in “geek”). *Apologia* is the root of the modern word “apology” but *apologia* did not mean “apology”. Socrates does not apologize to anyone for anything in the *Apology*. *Apo-logia* means “away-speaking” and is usually translated “speech in defense”, but Socrates is not the least bit defensive in the *Apology*. Indeed, he denies that he is making a defense for himself. “I’m not making this defense for myself, the way some of you might think. I’m making it for you, so you won’t make the mistake of voting against the gift God has given you.” (30d)

There was one person for whom Socrates’ trial was not a trial: Socrates himself. He didn’t care what happened. He denies that he teaches anyone anything and he denies that he believes anything different from what everyone else believes, but he does not deny that as a result of his actions young men might have come to believe things other than what everyone believed. On the contrary, in the *Apology* Socrates glories in the behaviour that leads to his trial. He says he’s been doing something good for Athens, not something bad. After he has been found “guilty”, Socrates says his “punishment” should be that he “be fed for life at the public expense in the marshals’ hall”. (36d, 37a)

For a man charged with a serious crime, Socrates has a remarkably cavalier attitude. The dominant impression one gets in the *Apology* is that Socrates does not care one way or the other about the result of his trial. He is not afraid to say whatever comes into his head. This is Plato’s creation, of course, but Plato meant readers to believe it, and he has been successful. We believe that the real Socrates did not concern himself with how the jury would react to what he said. We think Socrates did not ponder his words or calculate the effect they would have. There is a lot of play in Socrates, but no pretense. As Friedlander says, in the *Apology*, Socrates works to “reveal his own existence and bear witness to it.”<sup>vii</sup> Socrates does not try to be acquitted in the *Apology*. Socrates doesn’t

care whether he is acquitted or not. All he cares about is being true to himself. Socrates is totally authentic.

From the earliest days, readers have been trying to separate Socrates and Plato, trying to find the “real” Socrates.<sup>viii</sup> It is not possible to do this, but if it could be done, if there was one place where we might be able to make a start at peeling some of the Plato off of Socrates, perhaps it would be here, at Socrates’ loose tongue. Socrates did not think long and hard about what he said at his trial; it is obvious that Plato must have thought very long and very hard about what Socrates says in the *Apology*. At his trial, the real Socrates said whatever he said once. Is there any doubt that before he published the *Apology*, Plato rewrote what he has Socrates say? Must he not have rewritten at least some parts many times?

Even those who read Plato for his philosophy say he writes carefully and artfully. In the *Apology*, this care and art is put to the task of writing words that do not sound careful or artful, or rather, words that sound sort-of careful and artful and sort-of not. Plato simulates Socrates’ shimmering authenticity. Readers are not supposed to understand what Socrates says in the *Apology*. Readers are supposed to hear Socrates, not what he says.

People did not understand what Socrates said when he was alive. Great genius that he was, Plato was able to create a “Socrates” that still cannot be understood. He created a riddle because the real Socrates was a riddle. Plato makes the Socrates in the *Apology* jump around like a fly on a hot griddle. He writes a character that can almost but not quite be understood. He makes a *mimesis* – an artistic representation – of a person he actually saw. The real, completely unconstructed Socrates comes to life in Plato’s carefully constructed portrait.

Plato achieves this remarkable artistic feat, first and foremost, by writing for an audience that is ashamed of itself. The Athenians, who first made Plato into a successful author, were ashamed of having sentenced Socrates to death. Soon after Socrates executed their death sentence on himself, ordinary Athenians had come to see his trial as an excess of their democracy. This was part of what made the *Apology* so successful. The Athenians read it to wallow cathartically in their guilt.

Readers since have read the *Apology* with a double shame. We all know we could be part of a mob. Even when what they say is right, people who say things that are not the same as everyone else can get killed for it. Modern readers are ashamed to think that they could have voted against Socrates. They are also ashamed because they fear that they could not be as true to their own integrity as Socrates was to his. If modern readers did not doubt their own commitment to what they are, Socrates' commitment to what he was would not have the power it still does.

### The democratic Athenian trial

Plato did not invent Socrates, his trial or his execution. The *Apology* relies on the fact that all readers know the story and know it is true. The *Apology* is not a mystery. Before Socrates begins speaking, readers know it does not matter what Socrates says. The jury of 500 or 501 Athenian citizens is going to convict him and sentence him to death, because that is what the real jury did.<sup>ix</sup>

Jury trials were a striking feature of democratic Athenian life. The comic playwright, Aristophanes, makes fun of the amount of time Athenian citizens spent as jurors.<sup>x</sup> Juries of hundreds and even thousands sat regularly in Athens to hear all kinds of business, from private suits about inheritances, to public suits about the conduct of the government, including diplomacy, to criminal charges, like those

against Socrates. All these trials had the same form. One or a few Athenian citizens accused another Athenian citizen of having done something “unjust” or “wrong”, ἀδικία (*ah dee key' ah*, with the accent on *key*).

*Adikia* also means “illegal” but the large democratic Athenian courts were very different from our courts. There were no lawyers to appear for the parties. The accusers and the accused spoke for themselves and there were no judges as we know them, either. No one ruled on what the parties could say and no one told the jurors what they could or could not take into account in making their decision. The only rule governing speeches was that they had to stop when the water clock ran out. We do not know how long this was. Scholars guess about two hours, maybe a little more.

Athenian trials lasted one day and one day only. The jurors heard first from the accuser or accusers. Then they heard from the accused. Then each juror, each δικαστήρ (pronounced *dee koss tays'* with the accent on *tays*, which is just like “taste” without the second “t”) voted. The voting was a “*dikasterial* ritual”. Before the trial, each *dikastes* was given a pair of what were called ψῆφοι (pronounced *p'say' foi*, with the accent on *say*). In more ancient times, the name *psêphoi* had been applied to black and white pebbles, but by Socrates' time, the pebbles had become bronze disks, like coins, each of which had a dowel driven through its center, like an axle in a wheel. One *psêphos* had a dowel that was hollow; the other had a solid dowel. The *psêphoi* with the hollow dowels were votes for conviction. Those with the solid dowels were votes for acquittal.<sup>xi</sup>

In the *dikasterial* ritual, each juror walked to the front of the court with one *psêphos* in each hand, carefully concealing the ends of the dowels between his thumbs and forefingers. Each juror then dropped one *psêphos* in a wooden discard collector; the other in a copper voting urn. After all the jurors had voted, several jurors

chosen by lot for this task displayed the *psêphoi* from the voting urn on a peg board. There were two rows of *psêphoi* next to each other, a row of *psêphoi* with solid dowels and a row of *psêphoi* with hollow dowels. When the *psêphoi* were all displayed, one of the rows extended out past the other and everyone immediately saw who had won.

The vote by an Athenian jury was at once intensely public and intensely secret. The jurors had been selected from among all the adult male citizens of Athens in an elaborately random way and they were paid so that poor people could afford to serve. The *psêphos* and the *dikasterial* ritual were symbols of the Athenian democracy. Aristotle says it was by giving the *psêphos* to the *demos* (δῆμος, variously translated as “the people” or “the mob” and pronounced *day’ moss*, with the accent on *day*,) that Solon the great law giver of Athens made the *demos* κράτος, “ruling” (pronounced *kra’ toss*, with the accent on *kra*, as in “lycra”).<sup>xii</sup> “Democracy” is the *kratos* of the *demos*.<sup>xiii</sup>

### The writing of the *Apology*

Socrates was convicted and sentenced to death. Though the Athenians made it easy for him to escape from prison and go into exile, he chose to suffer the death penalty imposed by the court and drank the poison provided to him. Several years later,<sup>xiv</sup> Plato wrote the *Apology*, an artistic version of the speech Socrates had given at his trial. The *Apology* was written as a memorial to Socrates, a man Plato loved and admired above all other men. In it, Plato set out to show that Socrates was not guilty of the charges against him and to recreate for his readers the vivid feelings Socrates had created in those who had actually heard him speak.

Socrates was famous in his own time as a unique and compelling speaker. It is not easy to recreate in writing the

impression one gets listening to someone speak – let alone a unique and creative speaker, but the *Apology* was very successful. Its success encouraged Plato to write more books. As he wrote, Plato became increasingly philosophical. A character called “Socrates” continued to appear in his new books, but Plato became less and less concerned with conveying an accurate portrait of the real Socrates. In his later works, Socrates became a character who was used by Plato to express his own philosophy.

I am concerned with neither Plato’s philosophy nor his later works.<sup>xv</sup> I treat Plato as a writer, not a philosopher, and look solely at the *Apology*. I examine the various dramatic and literary devices Plato used in the *Apology* to capture the feeling Socrates created in the people who actually heard him speaking.

### Recreating a rhetorical space

One sign of Plato’s artistic genius is that he chose to recreate, as closely as possible, the rhetorical space created by Socrates by having Socrates deliver an oration. Socrates was famous for asking people questions. Only a genius can use a shadow self to recreate a self. A legal trial is a powerful verbal interaction. Plato deliberately left out one side of one of the most dramatic forms of human spoken encounter. Socrates alludes to the speeches given by Meletus and Anytus,<sup>xvi</sup> two of his accusers, but Plato does not include even a passage from these speeches in the *Apology*. Plato wrote a monologue to amplify the sound of Socrates’ speech.

A dialogue is, in and of itself, a dramatic device and much of the drama occurs between the characters. In a monologue, one speaker has to produce all the drama. The author of a monologue is required to employ literary and dramatic devices to accomplish what a speaker accomplishes with a wink, a shrug or a nod. Plato had to recreate, in one short piece, the rhetorical space Socrates had built up

day after day over seventy years. To do this, Plato had to amplify and concentrate characteristic ways in which the real Socrates actually spoke.

Some things in the *Apology* undoubtedly mimic things the real Socrates actually said and did. Most distinctively, Plato has Socrates use a made-up word that was undoubtedly used by the real Socrates. In the *Apology*, Socrates says “Some god or δαιμόνιον comes and talks to me.” (31d) *Daimonion* (pronounced, *die maw’ knee on*, with the accent on *maw*) is not an ordinary Greek word. It is a pun on δαίμονος (pronounced *die’ maw noss*, with the accent on *die*).

δαιμόνιον  
δαίμονος

The two words are the same except for an extra *iota* in δαιμόνιον a different accent and a slightly different ending – *ιον, ος*.

δαίμονος is a form of δαίμων (pronounced *die’ moan*, with the accent on *die*). A *daimonion* is a little *daimôn*. The lexicon says a *daimôn* is a “god or goddess, like θεός, θεά”<sup>xvii</sup> The lexicon uses *theos* as a definition in the entry for *daimôn* but *daimôn* isn’t even mentioned in the lexicon’s entry for *theos*. *Theos* is the basic Greek word for a god.<sup>xviii</sup> The word *daimôn* is more unusual than the word *theos* and the word *daimonion* is even more unusual than the word *daimôn*.

Plato is not the only Greek writer to use the word *daimonion*, but it is very rare. A *daimôn* is something a bit different from a god or goddess and a *daimonion* is something different yet again. It is not “a divine being” or “divine sign”, which is how many people translate it. Socrates and Plato are using a made-up Greek word. We should translate it with a made-up English word. A *daimonion* is a “divinitie” (pronounced with a hard *I* at the end, instead of the hard

E in “divinity”). As a plural, it is “divinitize”, rather than “divinities”.

### Xenophon

Plato must have copied the word *daimonion* directly from Socrates. Xenophon, another contemporary of Socrates, also wrote books about him after he was dead and in these books too the word *daimonion* appears. In one of the works by Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, Socrates says his *daimonion* tells him what to do<sup>xix</sup> but in the *Apology*, Plato makes Socrates say

Some god or divinitie comes and talks to me .... I have heard this voice since I was young. It tells me what not to do. It never tells me what to do, only what not to do.  
(31d)<sup>xx</sup>

The real Socrates undoubtedly used the word *daimonion* quite a lot and if he had frequently said his *daimonion* only told him what *not* to do, Xenophon would not have forgotten it. It's too powerful to forget. When the real Socrates said “I have a *daimonion*”, he must have added “it tells me what to do”. Xenophon took this literally. He thought Socrates was saying his *daimonion* told him what to do.

Plato, a much smarter man than Xenophon and an incomparably better writer, either understood that Socrates' *daimonion* only told him what not to do or he had Socrates say this in the *Apology* because a divinitie that tells someone what not to do has far more literary power than a divinitie that tells someone what to do. Just as using the monologue form in which only Socrates speaks creates negative power in the *Apology*, so using a divinitie that only tells Socrates what *not* to do creates negative power.

### Aristophanes' *Clouds*

The trial of Socrates was a big event in Athens and after his death, many portraits of Socrates were published. These were called *Socratikoi Logoi*, “Words about Socrates” or perhaps even, “Socrates’ Words”. All of these portraits have disappeared except for Plato’s and Xenophon’s. We do, however, have one other contemporary portrait of Socrates, the *Clouds*. It is a comedy, written by Aristophanes while Socrates was still alive. Socrates is said to have seen it performed and to have stood up in the audience to show himself to the crowd.

The word *daimonion* is not used in the *Clouds*. This is not surprising because the Socrates in the *Clouds* says Zeus and the other gods have been replaced by “the clouds” νεφέλαι (*neh feh’ lie*, the accent is on *feh*, which, like *neh*, has a soft e as in “never”). In the *Clouds*, the Greek word *nefelai* takes the place of *theos*, *daimôn* and *daimonion*.

The *Clouds* is a broad lampoon of Socrates. Its “purpose [was] to make Socrates the mouthpiece of every philosophical and religious principle to which he objected.”<sup>xxi</sup> Socrates mentions the play in the *Apology*. He says the indictment against him charges that

Socrates quote, unjustly makes it his business to look into what is under the ground and up in the sky. And he makes weak words strong and teaches others to do this too, unquote. Anyway, it’s something like that.

That’s what you saw in that comedy by Aristophanes. A Socrates swings in and says, Oohh! I can walk on air and then he fools around with some other foolishnesses that I don’t have a clue about. The whole of what he says is lost on me and the details leave my head swimming. (19c)<sup>xxii</sup>

The *Clouds* turns Socrates upside-down.

“Thinking about things up in the air and under the ground” is a way of referring to what we call “science”.<sup>.xxiii</sup> The Socrates in the *Clouds* explains ‘scientifically’ that the buzzing of gnats is farting. He runs a school and charges people money to teach them things like this. He also teaches people how to lie and cheat. This is “making weak words strong”. The Socrates in the *Clouds* is a postmodern moral relativist. He teaches a young man to beat his father and rationalize it as for his father’s own good. He is a sophist in the worst sense of the word.

### The sophists

Today, “sophistry” is a bad word. It means twisting words for bad purposes, making things mean what they do not mean in order to produce an undeserved result. “Sophist” was not a bad word in ancient Athens. The sophists were professional teachers who had only recently appeared in Greek society. They taught things that had not been taught before. Socrates mentions several of them in the *Apology*: Gorgias of Leontini, Hippeas of Elia, Prodicus of Chios, Anaxagoras of Claezemone, Euenos of Paros. The sophists all came from other cities to Athens, the centre of Greece, the place where people had the money to pay for their teaching. Until they came to Athens, the young Athenian men were taught about the gods, they were taught to fight, to play music and perhaps to read and write. The sophists taught other things. Some taught about the natural world. Others taught mathematics. Others taught new religions.

Still others taught people how to use words cleverly. This was very important in democratic Athens and the young Athenians hung around the sophists, particularly those who taught clever speaking. These men were highly sought after and made fortunes just before,

during, and after Socrates' lifetime. Socrates talks about them in the *Apology*.

If you've heard that I teach people as a job and make money at it, that is not the truth. Don't get me wrong. Someone who can teach people the way Gorgias of Leontini, Prodicus of Cheos and Hippias of Elea is great. Each of these, gentlemen of the jury, can go anywhere he wants and wherever he goes, he can convince the young people, who could be with anyone they want to be with, to leave the people they're with, and be with him. He can convince them, moreover, to pay for this privilege and to be grateful for the opportunity to do so. (19d-e)

#### Socrates

In the *Clouds*, Aristophanes portrays Socrates as a particularly gross sophist, but Socrates was not a sophist. The young men did hang around Socrates, just as they hung around the sophists:

Particularly the idle young men, the sons of the rich. It amuses them to hear me It amuses them to hear me cross-examine people into contradiction. (23c)

Like many of the sophists, Socrates examined words and the ideas behind them. But *Socrates did not take money for his teachings*. "I never took money for talking and I never didn't talk because I wasn't paid." (33a-b) If Socrates had taken money for his "teachings"; he would have been a sophist, especially if he had come to Athens for that purpose.

Socrates did not come *to* Athens, as the sophists did. Socrates was *from* Athens and he did not have the goal of making money as the sophists did. He also did not have the goal of teaching other

people things. Socrates had no “goals” beyond the doing of what he did. He showed people that they did not know what they thought they knew and weren’t half as smart as they thought they were. Exactly why Socrates did this is not clear. Perhaps it was because he was so good at it. Certainly, we cannot imagine him doing it if he had not been good at it. He himself said he did it because it was “a duty cast on me by a god”. (33c)

In the *Apology*, Socrates says he questioned other people because he was commanded to do so by the god at Delphi. According to the *Apology*, Socrates received many negative commands from his *daimonion*,<sup>xxiv</sup> and this one positive command (given in a remarkably negative way) from the god at Delphi. The command was to “to examine everyone who had a reputation for being wise”.(21e) It was by doing this that Socrates began what we call “moral philosophy”.

Before Socrates, philosophy was about how the world had started and what the world was like. Socrates turned attention from these questions to the questions, what is right? and what is wrong? He did this by unraveling what people said about right and wrong. He cross-examined the leaders of Athenian society and showed that what they said made no sense. Socrates undressed the Athenians in public<sup>xxv</sup>.

People, especially rich, powerful people, the leaders of society, talk a great deal about what is right and wrong. Socrates made fun of these people. He asked them questions and then he would

take them apart and using their own words, I’d show that they didn’t know what they were talking about. (29e)

Having their moral views unraveled by Socrates – being intellectually undressed by him in front of the young men – enraged

the leaders of Athens. But that is not why Socrates was brought to trial. Democratic Athens was quite conformist about the citizens' personal behaviour. Everyone was expected to act like everyone else. Aristotle remarks that in a democracy the heads of wheat that stand up above the others have to be cut off.

So, for Socrates to be different from everyone else was a thorn in the side of the Athenians but annoying as he was, Socrates would probably not have been charged with anything if Athens had not been fighting "World War III" while he was making fun of its leaders. The first recorded "world war" was in Troy. The second was in Greece. The Spartan army and the Athenian navy together defeated an incomparably larger Persian force. The third world war of which we have records was the Peloponnesian War, in which Sparta and Athens fought against each other. On and off, this war lasted almost 30 years and Athens was defeated.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Socrates publicly undressed the leaders of Athens during a *losing* war. But even this would probably not have gotten him charged, if Alcibiades, the most important of the young men who hung around with Socrates, had not betrayed the city to the Spartans. Even this might not have been enough to get Socrates charged, if the leader of the Thirty Tyrants, the 30 Athenian traitors Sparta imposed on democratic Athens after her defeat, had not been Critias, another of the young men who had followed Socrates around. Less than 50 years after his trial and death, the Athenians were openly saying that they had killed Socrates as a scapegoat.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Socrates' reputation for wisdom:  
The *daimonion* and the oracle

Socrates got into trouble for publicly "examining everyone who had a reputation for being wise." (21e) He says in the *Apology* that he was commanded to do this by the god at Delphi. He also says

“Those who have been around and seen me unravel someone else into a contradiction thought I was wise”. (23a) There is obviously a very strong connection between Socrates’ reputation for wisdom and the Delphic Oracle, but the oracle did not *cause* Socrates to have a reputation for wisdom. Socrates’ reputation for wisdom led *to* the oracle, not *vice versa*.

Socrates says his friend Chaerophon went to Delphi and asked the oracle “whether anyone was wiser than me.” (21a) This means that even before the oracle answered “no one is wiser” to Chaerophon’s question, Socrates already had a reputation for wisdom, at least among his friends. This reputation was caused by Socrates’ *daimonion*, which, according to Xenophon, told him not just what *he* shouldn’t do, but also what his friends shouldn’t do.<sup>xxviii</sup>

When he was a boy, before he had ever received the command from the god at Delphi, Socrates used to hang around outside the cobblers’ and potters’ shops. When someone was about to do something he shouldn’t do, Socrates’ *daimonion* would say to Socrates “Oh, oh. He shouldn’t do that.” Socrates would then pass the advice along and Xenophon says Socrates’ *daimonion* was always right. This is why Chaerophon asked the Delphic Oracle whether anyone was wiser than Socrates.

The oracular answer to Chaerophon’s question caused Socrates to examine “those with a reputation for wisdom”. Men like this were not to be found at the doors of the cobblers’ and potters’ shops. Mostly, they were found “in the agora at the tables of the money lenders”. (17c) Examining the leaders of society in public did not give Socrates his reputation for being wise; it broadened a reputation he already had and turned it political.

After the oracle spoke, Socrates’ reputation for wisdom grew in scale and went from being private to public, but, big as it was, we

must remember that whatever reputation Socrates had for wisdom, it was limited. Many, if not most people did not think Socrates was wise. They thought of him as a weird pest. A “gadfly” as how he himself puts it. (30e)

Most people thought Socrates was a tiresome fellow, a bore, who talked too much about things that made people uncomfortable. Once Socrates got started, he could talk your ear off and great artist that he was, Plato recreates this in the *Apology*. Xenophon claims that his *Apology* records what Socrates “actually” said at his trial and he has Socrates speak very little. Though it sounds ironic to say so, one of the reasons Plato’s *Apology* is such a great work of art is that it is a little too long. Just before the first vote, Socrates’ speech becomes so elaborate and twisted that it is impossible to follow. When it is performed as a play,<sup>xxix</sup> the audience gets bored. Their minds begin to wander. They become uncomfortable. They have had enough of listening to Socrates’s voice. They find him annoying. As Friedlander says: “Plato’s *Apology* is meant to be ... a gadfly to the reader.”<sup>xxx</sup>

#### Socrates’ weirdness<sup>xxxi</sup>

Socrates was a weird duck, a street performer. He is said to have been exceedingly ugly and to have played on his ugliness. He played on all his weirdness. “Being as old as I am and having this name – whether it’s true or false, Socrates has a reputation for being different.” (34e) This reputation belonged to Socrates, even if we put aside his “wisdom”. Socrates was obviously a great speaker with a uniquely powerful style. That’s why he was killed. If he had just been some dope who talked too much, no one would have cared.

Socrates was a great speaker who talked to everyone and anyone. He created a distinctive rhetorical space. Plato’s artistry is his ability to recreate something akin to the distinctive rhetorical

space in which the real Socrates actually lived. Socrates was down-to-earth and completely understandable, but he was also off in the clouds and very elusive. Everything he says in the *Apology* is immediately transparent, but ultimately opaque. He is a riddle. One always feels as if one were just about to really understand him.

Take his questioning. Socrates says it was his response to the command of a god. But what was Socrates trying to do with his questions? On the one hand, he wanted to show people that they weren't as smart as they thought they were. This was the result of the oracle's prophecy. But Socrates also wanted to show people that they did not care about what they said they cared about.

As long as I have breath in me. As long as I can do anything, I will never stop loving wisdom and pleading and pointing out to whomsoever I happen to meet, what I always say. Oh great one, you're an Athenian, a citizen of the *polis* that has the best reputation as smart and strong. How can you not be ashamed that you spend all your time thinking about money and how to get more of it.  
(29d)

In later dialogues, Plato treats the different virtues, wisdom, courage, goodness, and piety, as one big, unified Virtue. This philosophy can be read back into the *Apology*. So Friedlander says of the *Apology*

... by "reverence to the gods" Socrates means something very different from what his accusers mean. It is piety together with or indissolubly linked with justice, courage, and wisdom. The unity of the virtues is visible throughout, *even if it is not stated as an explicit theme.*"  
(emphasis added)<sup>xxxii</sup>

The reason the unity of the virtues is not stated as an explicit theme in the *Apology* is because it is not there. The relationship between wisdom and goodness is a puzzle in the *Apology*. Over the 50 or so years Plato wrote, as he became more interested in philosophy and less interested in recapturing Socrates, he came to read his own first text in a new way. Over and over again in the *Apology*, Socrates says he is not wise. Plato did not invent this. The real Socrates must certainly have said this a great deal and he must have said it, at least in part, without any irony at all. No man who was wise could think he was wise.

Before Plato ever started to write he thought Socrates was wise, but over the 50 years he wrote, Plato came to think that he, Plato, was wise for recognizing how wise Socrates was. In this process, he lost sight of the Socrates he had created in his own first text. He came to think that in the *Apology* when Socrates said "I am not wise", he was being ironic. This may be the one thing about which Socrates is *not* ironic in the *Apology*.

We can hardly see the real Socrates. As Friedlander says, "... Plato's Socrates almost hides the historical figure ... .<sup>xxxiii</sup>" We cannot know what the real Socrates actually thought about his own wisdom; all we can do is hope that the real Socrates did not think he was wise the way Plato later came to think he was. If Socrates thought he combined all the virtues, if he thought of himself as having what Plato later came to call "a golden soul", then he was suffering from *hubris*. No one who is wise, thinks he is wise. Socrates knew it sounded funny when he said this, but he was not being ironic.

Socrates never sounds smug in the *Apology*. He sounds proud and determined, but not smug. In later dialogues, Socrates does sometimes sound a little smug. If there is one thing about which Socrates is *not* ironic in the *Apology*, it is that he doesn't think he knows what he doesn't know. This may make him wiser than men

who think they do know what they don't know, but it does not make him wise. Plato came to think that Socrates was Wise, that he knew what was Good and Just. How Socrates knew this is Plato's philosophy.

Socrates was a very colorful character, who had all sorts of strange ideas and odd mannerisms. He didn't wear shoes and had nothing to do with money. He was a bit like a modern hippy. He took the values of his society both more and less seriously than everyone else. The hippies did not make up Peace and Love. Those values are part of American Christianity. The hippies tried to live out those values. Socrates did the same thing. He tried to live out the values the Athenians said they held highest. He called others into question because they did not live out those values. They just mouthed them. All they really cared about, Socrates said, was money.

Socrates was also like a hippie in that he drifted off at times into a world of his own. On one famous occasion, while he was serving in the army, Socrates is said to have spent the whole day standing in one spot, with his eyes wide open, not moving at all. He is said to have stayed that way through the whole night. The other soldiers are said to have brought their bedding out of their tents and watched him. In the morning, Socrates walked away as if nothing had happened.

This story is too public to be false. Just like the hippies, Socrates created "happenings". He made moments memorable. The way he did this, the way Socrates created his happenings, was mostly with his words. He was a punster and an ironist. He played with the Greek fascination for what Heraclitus called *palintonos harmoneia*, the back-bending tension of opposites in contradiction. Socrates knew in his bones that if the context changes, words mean their opposites. Irony is the art of switching context and Socrates was a genius at this

art. He used this ability to capture people's attention. He talked in a way that left the Athenians open-mouthed and baffled, gaping in consternation or admiration.

Friedlander says:

a reasonable quiet human type of stable character is not easily represented by the poet; it is difficult to grasp and, hence, unpopular with the audience. But did not Plato represent, always and everywhere, this type of man in Socrates?<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Perhaps one can say of the Socrates presented in the later dialogues that he is "a reasonable quiet human type of stable character", but if one says it of the Socrates in the *Apology*, one is in danger of making him out to be calm and steady. Socrates was not calm and steady. He was a gadfly, jumping about and biting people. His character was stable, but only in one way: he would not trim his sails to suit anyone else's wind. He said what he had to say, regardless of what anyone else thought. Socrates' character was stable, but not reasonable and quiet.

## Part II

*Literary devices and repetition*

Plato captured the flavour of the real Socrates by the artistic use of literary devices. Once in the *Apology* Plato has Socrates say “Doggone it!” At other times he has him exclaim “God!” (17b) One time he has him swear “By Hera!” Perhaps the real Socrates actually used expressions like this, but frequently in the *Apology* Plato has Socrates say his own name and this is very odd. For instance, Socrates says, “Whether it’s true or false, Socrates has a reputation for being different.” (34e) Most people would say, “Whether it’s true or false, I have a reputation for being different.”

Socrates’ speaking of himself by name is a Platonic invention. If the real Socrates had made a habit of referring to himself by name, we would expect to find him doing this in the other works that were written about him. Unlike Plato, who makes it clear that he has invented some of what he has Socrates say, Xenophon says he is reporting real conversations that he actually had with Socrates. Socrates does not refer to himself by name in any of the books Xenophon wrote about him (*Memorabilia*, *Symposium* or *Apology*) and he does not do it in the *Clouds*. If the real Socrates had regularly referred to himself by name, even a dull writer like Xenophon would have reported his doing so and Aristophanes would have made great comic use of such a quirk.

In Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates says “Socrates” 19 times. For the defendant in a Greek trial to refer to himself by name was not something Plato invented. In *On the Mysteries*, a speech he gave defending himself around the same time Socrates was tried, Andocides says his own name several times. In the *Apology*, Plato inflates this rhetorical technique. The *Apology* is a *mimesis*, not just of Socrates, but of Greek trials in general.

In the *Apology*, Plato copied some things that Socrates actually said and did, but no one thinks the *Apology* is a transcript of the actual speech Socrates gave at his trial. Xenophon has Socrates say almost nothing at his trial. When he is convicted, Xenophon's Socrates refuses to propose any punishment, on the grounds that he was not guilty. It is obvious that in the *Apology* Plato made up some things that the real Socrates did not say or do. What Plato made up had to be in character, of course, but the *Apology* is not history, it is an artistic representation, a *mimesis* of the general way Socrates spoke and in particular, of the way he spoke to the jury at his trial. Plato's task in the *Apology* was to represent – in writing – a unique speaker's unique style of speaking – not mimic it exactly, but recreate the feelings it generated, the rhetorical space.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Speaking and writing have only one thing in common. They both use words. Otherwise, speaking and writing are completely different. Speech is oral; it is meant to be heard. Writing is visual. It is meant to be read. Speaking and hearing occur simultaneously. They both take place in the present and they both take place in each other's presence. Writing and reading do not usually take place at the same time. The writing is (normally/always) in the past and the writer and the reader are seldom together. If they are together, it is usually only by accident.

Speakers move around when they talk and written words stay in one place. But written words are portable in a way a speaker is not. There can be many copies of written words but not of spoken words (at least not when Socrates spoke). We can read the words of a dead writer (Plato) but not hear the words of a dead speaker (Socrates). Speakers use gestures. Writers cannot. Writing requires implements. Speech takes none. Speech is far more "natural" or "primitive" than writing and thus, spoken languages are always developed long before written ones. Of course, the biggest difference

between speaking and writing is that what we say is meant to disappear, while what we write is meant to last. The whole purpose of writing is to make words last.

Plato may have adopted some of the real Socrates' real mannerisms, but in order to recreate the feelings people got when they heard Socrates speak, Plato had to create new mannerisms for him. He had to use literary and dramatic devices in his writing. Great artists make something truer than real by taking what is there to hand, and adding something to it.

Xenophon portrays Socrates as also making hortatory, educational and sermonizing speeches. ... Xenophon's description is derived from what he correctly remembered .... Even so, Plato's account would still give us the greater truth because it brings out explicitly what distinguished Socrates and made him unique.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

### Repetition

The primary literary technique Plato uses is repetition. "On the whole", J. D. Denniston says, "Greek repeats words rather less than English does ..." but he says this in a chapter called "Repetition" about the use of repetition in Greek prose. In this chapter he says

In some passages a great effect of force is obtained by the frequent employment of the same word or cognate words, at short intervals .... The word in question is naturally a key word, which forms the text of the passage.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

[T]he repeated word often forms a hinge on which the unfolding of the thought pivots.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

These are perfect descriptions of the *Apology*, but Denniston, who takes many of his examples of repetition from Plato, finds all of them in other works, for instance, the *Republic*, the *Laws*, the *Symposium* and *Gorgias*. Denniston never mentions the repetitions in the *Apology* and the fact that the *Apology* is highly repetitive is not even mentioned by J. Derrida in *Plato's Pharmakon*,<sup>xxxix</sup> where he points out the centrality of repetition to Plato's work.

Its repetitiveness is one of the most striking things about the *Apology*, but it is not mentioned in the commentaries. Perhaps it is too obvious. For instance, in his commentary, J. Burnet does not think it worth noticing when Socrates says

ἀγῶνος ἀγῶνα ἀγωνιζόμενος<sup>xl</sup> (34c)

This means roughly "to fight the fights you were fighting".<sup>xli</sup>

This primitive kind of repetition is facilitated by the ancient Greek language, but it is not the only kind of repetition used in the *Apology*. The *Apology* is repetitive in many different ways. Certain words occur again and again throughout the whole text. The most repeated words are: "I am". "Men of Athens". "Truth". "I say". If one heard only these repetitions, one would have a very good idea of what Socrates was saying in the *Apology*.

Though people hear, they do not take in every word that is spoken, especially when a speaker is addressing a large crowd in the open air. Words that are repeated again and again are heard subliminally. They enter listeners below the level of their consciousness. A good speaker has a short message and repeats it many times in different ways. For writing to capture the flavour of speech, it has to be repetitive.

Plato has Socrates use certain words over and over again throughout the *Apology* but there are other words that he has Socrates repeat only in certain places. For instance, Socrates does not use the word “night” in the *Apology* until very near the end, when he is talking about death and then, in one short passage, he says “night” seven times in quick succession:

If it's not feeling anything, like being asleep without dreaming or seeing things, death would be a great gain. I would guess that if someone had to choose between one night where he slept without dreams or thoughts and all the other nights and days of his life, if he contrasted that one night and looking carefully, said how many days and nights of his life he had enjoyed better than that night, no private man, not even the great king, could count many days or nights. If this is what death is, then I say it's a gain, for the whole of time would seem like one night.  
(40d-e)<sup>xlii</sup>

“Night” is an ordinary word. Again and again in the *Apology*, Socrates uses an unusual word that he uses no where else and then, almost immediately, he repeats it. At one point, for instance, he uses the word ἀθαδέστερον, *ow tha des' teh ron*, which means “stubborn”. This word occurs only one other time in the *Apology* and that is a few lines later, where Socrates says ἀθαδιζόμενος, “being stubborn”.

Sometimes Socrates uses a common word over and over again for a while. Then he drops it and picks it up again later. An example is θάνατος<sup>xliii</sup> “death”. *Thanatos* appears over and over on one page, then disappears, only to be used over and over again later. Another example is νομίζειν θεοὺς<sup>xliv</sup> “to believe in gods”. *Nomizein theous*, also appears over and over on one page, disappears and then is used over and over again elsewhere.

Socrates tells the jury, “My speech will not be well arranged” (17c) but his speech is actually extremely well arranged. Scholars have broken it up into 33 pieces that address one topic after another.<sup>xlv</sup> Many of the repetitions follow the topics. This is not surprising. When you talk about one thing, you use a certain vocabulary; when you switch and talk about something else, you use another vocabulary.

### Poetry, prose and the use of literary devices

English speakers are quite conscious of the use of literary devices in poetry and several passages in the *Apology* might be called “poetry”. One “poem” is very brief. It relies on a simple alliteration of θ, the Greek letter that is pronounced as the *th* in its name “theta”.<sup>xlvi</sup>

quicker      death      it runs (39a)  
 θᾶπτον γὰρ θανάτων θεῖ

These four Greek words sound like this: *tha ton gar tha nah ton thay ee*. This is not what the Greeks meant by “poetry”. Ancient Greek poetry was based on the rhythmic repetition of stress patterns using long and short syllables. But just as it sounds special to our ears, so the repetition of θ would have sounded special to a Greek ear.

If we take a generous attitude toward “poetry” we can say it is the use of words in a way that is meant to sound musical. Repetition is obviously part of this. Here is another example from the *Apology* of what we might call a “poem”.

πότερον δεξαίμην ἂν οὕτως  
 ὥσπερ ἔχω ἔχειν

μήτε τι σοφὸς ὢν τὴν ἐκείων σοφίαν  
μήτε ἀμαθὴς τὴν ἀμαθίαν  
 ἢ ἀμφοτέρω ἅ ἐκεῖνοι ἔχουσιν ἔχειν (22e)

Even someone who does not know what they say can see that these lines are “poetic”. Anyone can see the alliteration at the end of lines 2 and 5 -- ἔχω ἔχειν and ἔχουσιν ἔχειν. Anyone can see the repetitions μήτε ... μήτε, σοφὸς ... σοφίαν, ἀμαθὴς ... ἀμαθίαν.

These lines do not just look poetic even to someone who does not know Greek. . They can sound poetic, too. To replicate the sound of the Greek, read the following syllables out loud, as if they were English words. They don’t mean anything in English, so don’t try to figure out what they mean. Just say them quickly, running them together a little. Say each syllable as it would be said in English, except for “math”, which is said with the a in “mama”. Say A and E as if they were the letters A and E. Say *e* in the last line as the *e* in “bed” and say the *chs* in *ech owe ech A in* and *ech who sin ech A in* as *ch* is pronounced in Bach.<sup>xlvi</sup>

*pot' err on decks eye' main on' who' toes*  
*hoss' per ech' owe ech' A in*  
*may' t' sew foss' own' ten' sew fee' on*  
*may' t' ah math ace' ten' ah math E' on*  
*A' ahm foe' tear ah ha'*  
*e cane' oy ech' who sin ech' A in.*

This is a poem if each word is translated word-for-word.

Whether worth would these  
 as I have have  
 Not the wisdom of those wisdom  
 Nor the unlearning of unlearning  
 Or both

them they have to have

It is even a poem when it is translated to make sense.

Whether I was better off having  
Neither the wisdom of their wisdom  
Nor the ignorance of their ignorance  
Or whether I'd be better off if I had both?

To draw attention to the poem, Plato has Socrates cap it with a joke.

I answered myself and the oracle that I was better off  
leaving myself alone.

This writing is very clearly meant to have a distinctive sound and the *Apology* also contains quotes from Homer which are clearly poetry. Aside from these, however, the *Apology* is written almost entirely in what we would call "prose", and English speakers tend more or less to ignore the use of literary devices in anything we call "prose". The power of great prose is supposed to come from *what* is said, not from *how* it is said. This is particularly true of non-fiction, but even with stories, their power is thought to be in the timing of the reversals and revelations in the plot.<sup>xlviii</sup> The power of a story is not thought to be in the details of the writing. It is obvious that great prose writers choose words carefully to create moods, but that they use literary devices to generate artistic power in their work is largely unnoticed.

A great deal of commentary has been written about *The Turn of the Screw*. All of it fails to notice what Clayton Burns, a brilliant, unpublished reader, points out: in the first paragraphs of Chapter IV of *The Turn of the Screw*, Henry James, makes particularly extensive use of fricatives, f's and v's.

... an unmentionable *relative* kept in unsuspected *confinement* ... a *confusion of curiosity* ... Agitation, in the *interval* ... a *comparatively* human chill ... The most singular part of it in *fact* ... and of the good surprised look of my friend. ... *relieved* anxiety ... her *comfortable face* ... my thus *finding myself* ... this *fact* that my real beginning of fear was one ... *for* a reason I couldn't *have phrased* ... *achieved* an inward *revolution* ... *offered* a *vague* pretext for my lateness ... of the beauty of the night and of the *heavy dew* ...

The third paragraph takes the fricatives even further and finishes with a veritable flourish of fricatives.

... the rose *flush* of his innocence: he was only too *fine* and *fair* for the little horrid school-world, and he had paid a price for it. I *reflected* acutely that the sense of such *individual differences*, such superiority of quality, always on the part of the majority – which include *even* stupid sordid head-masters – turns *infallibly* to the *vindictive*.

Exactly why James used all these fricatives and whether he was aware that he was using them or not is hard to say. But that these fricatives are not accidental seems quite beyond question. There are too many fricatives for them to be accidental. This is the test for whether something is a literary device or not. Does a particular linguistic form occur so often that it passes the bounds of accident and becomes a pattern? This is not a precise test. We are talking about art here, not science.

### Part III

#### *Eleven different literary and dramatic devices in the Apology*

##### 1. Repetition with a twist

In both speech and writing it is natural to repeat both words and ideas. There are more than the natural number of repetitions in the *Apology* and more repetitions than in other Greek prose. Not only that, the repetitions in the *Apology* stand out because Plato often twists them. He does this in many ways. Sometimes he has Socrates repeat the same word; sometimes he has him use two words that are *not* the same but might sound similar or related, particularly to an ordinary Athenian, listening in the open air. “Staid” and “stayed” would be an example in English, or “brayed” and “braid”.

Plato uses this technique in the first lines of the *Apology*. In quick succession, he has Socrates use the words *πεπόνθατε* and *πιθανῶς*, *peponthate* and *pithanôs*. These are quite similar and might be thought to come from the same root. They don't. *πεπόνθατε* is a form of the verb *πάσχω*, which means “to be effected by”; *πιθανῶς* is a form of the verb *πείθω*, which means “convince”.

I don't know whether you've been affected by my accusers, men of Athens. Even I lost myself a little in what they had to say. That's how convincing they were.  
(17a)

The meaning of these two words is very similar and between them Plato adds another twist by having Socrates say something that is patently false. Socrates did not lose himself even a little in what his accusers said. He was being ironic.

### Irony

The big thing everyone knows about Socrates is that he is ironic. He says this himself in the *Apology*. He imagines someone asking him, “Would it be impossible for you to live in exile from us and be quiet?” and imagines himself responding:

This is the hardest thing to convince you of. When I say I'd be disobeying a god and couldn't do that quietly, you don't believe me. You say I'm being ironic when I say the best thing for people is to think and talk all the time about being good and the other things I talk about when I'm unraveling myself and others. You believe me even less when I say that for a human being, a life that has not been unraveled is not worth living. (37e-38a)

Our word "irony" comes from the Greek word εἰρωνεία (pronounced A (as in the letter A) *row neigh' ah* (with the accent on *neigh*). Irony is making fun of things by saying one thing while meaning the opposite. Irony is saying something grossly false as if it were obviously true. It is also saying something that is obviously true as if it were grossly false. Irony is pretending not to know what everyone knows. Irony is taking what other people take seriously more seriously than they take it and making light of what others say they take lightly but really take seriously. Irony turns on an internal contradiction in words.

To be ironic is to abandon the normal conventions of speech and change context without announcing the fact. Socrates was a genius at doing this. He had a special gift for it. He could see and play with what Aristotle came to later explain: every word contains its own opposite. In one context it means one thing. In another context, it means the opposite thing.

You can say "yes" eagerly or grudgingly. These are opposites. You can say "yes" when "yes" is expected or when "no" is expected. These are opposites in another dimension. You can say "yes" knowing what you are saying yes to or not knowing. These are opposite in still another dimension. You can say "yes" publicly or

only where no witnesses can hear. You can say “yes” in particular or you can say “yes” in general.

“No” is a contrary of “yes” but from some point of view “yes” is also a contrary of “yes”. Since there are various points of view, words have more than one contrary meaning.<sup>xlix</sup> Words mean different contraries in different dimensions. Words shimmer with opposite meanings. When we use them, on the one hand we understand each other; on the other hand we do not and cannot. Socrates understood this better than anyone. He applied it to moral words like “good” and “just”. He did this a great deal and Kierkegaard said “Socrates’ entire activity consists in ironizing”<sup>1</sup>.

Literally, this cannot have been true. Socrates was known as an ironic man because he spoke ironically more than other men, but, most of the time, even Socrates must have spoken without irony. He must have sounded just like every one else. Because he was more unusual than other men and unusual more often, Socrates got to be known for being unusual. He was recognized as someone who created a rhetorical space that was uniquely his own.

By being ironic every now and then on a daily basis for seventy years, Socrates came to be known as a man whose speech was characterized by irony. Socrates created his reputation for irony *over 70 years*. Plato had to recreate Socrates’ rhetorical space *all at once*. To do this, he had to amplify and condense what was special about the way Socrates spoke. He did this by making Socrates more consistently ironic than he was in real life.

Not everyone got all of Socrates’ irony when he was alive and still, people do not get all of it. As has already been pointed out, even Plato himself mistakenly came to believe Socrates was being ironic when he said he was not wise. People still ask: “Are Socrates’

arguments in the *Apology* convincing?" As if Socrates made "arguments" in the *Apology* or wanted to be "convincing".

In the *Apology*, Socrates uses the argument style as a joke. He takes two words, "divinities" and "divinitize", and treats the pun as an argument. In his later dialogues, Plato does the same thing with "ideas" and "Ideas", but in the *Apology*, part of Plato's greatness as an artist is that he recognized that Socrates was making a joke, not an argument.

Socrates had only one "goal": to unravel people's belief that they knew things. Why he had this goal is puzzling. He says it was a command given to him by the god at Delphi, but Socrates is ironic about the command of the god at Delphi. One time in the *Apology*, Socrates says his name was used by the god at Delphi:

It seems that when the oracle said "Socrates" it was just using my name as a kind of stand-in, as if what was being said was that the people who are wisest are those who know, as Socrates does, that as far as wisdom is concerned the truth is that he has none.(23a-b)

Earlier in the *Apology*, Socrates has said that the oracle did not use his name. Socrates says his friend Chaerophon went to Delphi and

dared to get an oracle ... and as I said before, don't get excited, gentlemen of the jury ... he asked if anyone was wiser than me. The Pythian priestess answered that no one was wiser. (21a)

According to this account, the oracle did not say "Socrates is the wisest one," nor did it answer "Socrates" to the question who is wisest? According to this account, the oracle did not use Socrates'

name at all. Asked if anyone was wiser than Socrates, the oracle simply said “no.”

Of course, some might say Socrates is not repeating the actual words the oracle used, but that is precisely the point. To paraphrase the legendarily Delphic Oracle is ironic. When Croesus asked the Delphic Oracle whether he should invade Greece, the oracle did not say “no”. It said, if he did, a great kingdom would be destroyed. Croesus took this as validating his plans, but the kingdom that was destroyed turned out to be his own. When asked what the Athenians should do against the attack of the Persians, the oracle said, the Athenians should protect themselves with “a wall of wood”. No one could figure out what this meant, till Themistocles convinced the Athenians to abandon Athens and take to their ships. The ships’ hulls were the “wall of wood”.

One cannot paraphrase the Oracle at Delphi except ironically. When Plato has Socrates reflect on what the prophecy meant he uses his own voice treated as another voice and he uses repetition with a twist.

Hearing what the oracle said, I took it to heart. Why did the god say this and why did he speak in riddles? I had no idea at all that I myself was wise. Why then had he said I was the wisest? It never occurred to me that he could be lying. An oracle wouldn’t do that.

I thought a lot and for a long time about why he had said what he said. I worked very hard to find a way to understand it. I went to someone who had a reputation for being wise, for there if anywhere, I thought, I’ll refute the prophecy and make clear to the oracle: you said I was the wisest, look, here’s a person wiser than me. (21b)

Socrates asks the same question twice: “Why did the god say this?” and “Why then had he said I was the wisest?” This is not the repetition of a word, but it is a repetition and it is associated with an overt contradiction. Socrates says it never occurred to him that the oracle could be lying, but he treats the oracle as if it were lying. He speaks of “refuting” the prophecy.

A little further on in the *Apology*, Socrates says he tries to “confirm” the prophecy, but according to what he says here, Socrates did not set out to confirm the prophecy, he set out to refute it. Precisely what Socrates was doing with the prophecy must have been unclear to everyone, including himself.<sup>li</sup>

According to the *Apology*, the Delphic Oracle’s prophecy was what got Socrates into trouble. The prophecy was what led him to unravel people. But *how* did it do that? Socrates says he “thought a lot and for a long time about” it and he “went to someone who had a reputation for being wise”.

The oracle didn’t command Socrates to examine people. Socrates examined people to figure out what the oracle meant. It wasn’t following the oracle’s command that got Socrates in trouble, it was trying to understand it.

### Socrates’ trial as a legal event

People treat the *Apology* as Socrates’ speech in defense but Socrates’ speech is not a defense.<sup>lii</sup> Socrates is not the least bit defensive. He was charged with being a revolutionary, with undermining the authority of Athenian society by unraveling its leaders. Socrates cannot defend himself against this charge and does not. He glories in unraveling the leaders of Athens.

In modern terms, Meletus's charge is that Socrates "ruined the young people by teaching them not to believe what the city believes". Socrates "defense" to this charge is three puns. First, he says I don't "teach" anyone anything.

I never became anyone's teacher, but if anyone, whether younger or older, wanted to hear me talking and going about my business, I never refused. But I never took money for talking and I never didn't talk because I wasn't paid. I treated the rich and the poor the same. They could ask me questions, and if they wanted to answer, they could hear what I would say. Whether any of them became useful citizens or not, that's not my fault, because I never undertook either for them to learn or for me to teach them anything. (33b)

The treachery of Critias and Alcibiades actually comes very close to being the real "issue" in the trial, but what Socrates says is hardly a "defense". It's a pun on the word "teach".

Socrates' second "defense" is also a pun. The indictment charges him with teaching the young men to believe in "new divinitize" *daimonia kaina* (24c, 26b). His defense is that if he believes in divinitize" *daimonia*, he must believe in "divinities" *daimonas* (27c-d). Finally, Socrates says that if he taught the young men not to believe what everyone believes, it was without realizing he was doing it. Then he complains that he shouldn't have been brought into court for this. Court, he says, is where you bring someone who needs to be "punished", not someone who needs to be "taught a lesson". (26a) This is still one more pun.

Socrates does not offer any "legal" argument in his speech and while it is hard to imagine what "legal" argument he could have offered, it is even harder to imagine what "legal" argument his

accusers could have made against him. What can they have said except that Socrates was a pest who made fun of the things that were taken seriously in Athens? Arguments like this often get made and they are often cast in legal terms. But they are not serious legal arguments. They have a legal form and that is all.

As an ostracism, the trial of Socrates would have made sense. The Athenians wanted to get rid of Socrates. "You can't stand my words or my actions anymore. They've become such a heavy burden for you to bear ... more a source of pain than anything else. Now you're just looking for some relief from them." (37d) As a trial, the trial of Socrates makes no sense. To say Socrates "broke the law" is ridiculous and Socrates treats the charges against him as if they were ridiculous. His "defense" against them is a long, elaborate joke. The core of the *Apology* is that Socrates is not defensive. He doesn't care whether he is acquitted or convicted. If the defendant does not care about the outcome of a legal trial, it is not a "trial", it is a joke. The *Apology* is a spoof on the trial form.

If Socrates had been acquitted that would have been some sort of validation from the Athenians. It would have been a vote of confidence, and after he has been convicted, Socrates says that what he deserves is "free meals for life at the public expense in the marshals' hall" (36d, 37a). But Socrates does not seek the approval of the Athenians. He did not need their approval or the approval of anyone. This may be the most striking thing about Socrates. He is a self-contained man. He does not need the approval of others.

The trial form virtually requires Socrates to solicit the approval of the jury, if only as a way to avoid their condemnation. This is the nature of law. It is either up or down, condemnation or acquittal. Socrates doesn't seek to avoid the jury's condemnation or gain an acquittal. Because of this, the trial form makes it seem almost as if

Socrates wanted to be convicted, and Xenophon says Socrates wanted to die. He wanted to avoid the pains and indignities of old age.

Many people view the trial of Socrates as a legal suicide, but Plato does not suggest that Socrates wanted to die. Near the end of the *Apology*, Socrates does say

It seems clear to me that the best thing for me would be if I were already dead, if I had already given up this business of living. (41d)

But this is after he has already been convicted and sentenced to death.

At that point, yes, Socrates would rather be dead, but Socrates does not seek death in the *Apology*. As he explains again and again, he doesn't care one way or the other about death. Socrates' goal in his trial was the same goal he had all the time. He was determined to be true to himself <sup>liii</sup> and he was determined to turn his trial into a happening. By bringing him to court, the Athenians gave Socrates a chance to speak in a forum where they were required to listen to him. He used this opportunity, or Plato portrayed him as using it, to show the Athenians that their law, like all the products of their vaunted human wisdom, made no sense.

The Athenians were particularly proud of their law, their νόμος, (pronounced *gnaw moss*, with the accent on *gnaw*). They thought of their *nomos* as one of their greatest achievements. Wilamowitz, a leading 19<sup>th</sup>-century German scholar, goes so far as to suggest that Athens should be called a *nomocracy*, rather than a *democracy*. In 4<sup>th</sup>-century Athens, he says, the power was not in the *demos*, it was in the *nomos*.<sup>liv</sup>

Friedlander describes Socrates as Athens' "most loyal servant, who was ready to die for the city and finally did die for its laws".<sup>lv</sup> This is what Plato says in later dialogues, but at his trial, as it is portrayed in the *Apology*, Socrates does not die *for* Athenian law. He dies to unravel Athenian law. He dies to show that it does injustice.

Socrates obviously took pleasure in how close the vote was. "if only 30 votes had gone the other way, I'd have been acquitted" (36a) This is ironic. Socrates' goal was not to be acquitted. If he can be said to have had any "goal" at all, it was, assuming there were 501 jurors, to have 251 votes for conviction and 250 for acquittal. Then he'd have been able to say he'd been convicted by a tyrant in a democracy, a tyrant who wasn't even aware he was a tyrant. If there were only 500 jurors, Socrates would have been happy with a dead tie: 250 to 250.

Irony is a form of perversity and Socrates was a perverse legal genius. He could see the other side of everything, the black surrounding every white, the white surrounding every black. Socrates realized that law has to reach a conclusion. If it does not, if it gets stuck, it looks foolish. Socrates "goal" was to tie the law in a knot, which was precisely what he had done in his first trial.

Socrates' first trial and the irony of his obedience to law

The trial in which Socrates was convicted and sentenced to death was the second trial in which Socrates was a participant. The two trials were as different from each other as they could be. Socrates' second trial took place in a court. His first trial took place in the assembly. In his second trial, Socrates was the accused. In his first trial, he was the presiding officer.

Socrates describes his first trial in the *Apology*. He says

I, men of Athens, have never held public office in this city, except once I was on the counsel. We of the tribe of Antiochus were serving as marshals of the assembly. As luck would have it, that was when you were judging the ten commanders who didn't pick up the survivors after the naval battle. You wanted to judge them all together, on one vote, rather than one at a time. That was illegal. You all agreed to that later, but at the time, I was the only marshal who refused to go along with what was illegal. I refused to take the vote. (32b)

At the battle of Arginusae, Athens had won a great naval victory over Sparta. Unfortunately, because of a sudden localized storm, the need to lift a blockade elsewhere, and a breakdown in the chain of command, the survivors in the water were not picked up. They were left to drown. Perhaps even more important, the dead bodies in the water were not recovered for burial.

The Athenians were incensed. The ten generals in charge of the naval force were indicted and tried in the assembly. This was a special form of proceeding, like an impeachment today. By an amazing stroke of luck (on which he himself comments in the *Apology*), Socrates was presiding over the assembly on the day the generals were tried.<sup>lvi</sup> He had been chosen by lot to preside for that one day from among the 50 randomly chosen members of the tribe of Antiochus who were serving as marshals of the assembly for that month.

When the generals were brought forward, the mob of 6,000 crazed Athenian citizens demanded their blood. "Kill them!" they screamed. "Kill them all!"

“I’m sorry,” Socrates told the screaming mob, “I cannot accept that motion. It’s not *kata nomon*.<sup>lvii</sup> It’s not “according to law.” You have to say, kill this one, kill that one, kill that one ....”

“Kill them all!” the mob screamed. “Kill them all and kill you too!”

“I’m sorry,” Socrates said, “I cannot accept that motion. It has to be kill this one, kill that one, kill that one ....” .

Some of the speakers wanted to bring me up on charges. While you went along roaring like animals, I followed the law and justice. I risked the danger of being put in jail or killed, rather than go along with your counsels of injustice. (32b-c)

Socrates speaks first of “law and justice,” then of “injustice” alone. He equates injustice and illegality. The equation is ironic. Injustice and illegality are the same and not the same. Socrates risked death to stand firm on a point of *procedural* law. He did not say he thought the generals were innocent or that it was unjust to convict them. He said it was *illegal* to convict them on one vote.

Socrates’ actions were almost irrelevant. The next day, under a different randomly chosen chairman, the assembly voted to convict the generals and sentenced them to death. One imagines this was as a group, rather than individually, and while one could see Socrates’ stand as highly principled, that is not how it seems in the *Apology*.

Obedience to law is a very high value for democratic governments. They must obey the law. That is what rule of law means. One can see Socrates’ insistence on obeying the law when he was on the council as highly principled, but in the *Apology*, Socrates does not act on the principle that the law must be obeyed. In the

*Apology*, the only concern Socrates has is to be true to himself. In a later dialogue, Plato has the law speak to Socrates and he makes Socrates treat obedience to law as an absolute value. Because of this, Socrates has become famous as perhaps the most law-abiding man ever, but in the *Apology*, Socrates does not make obedience to the law into a value that trumps all others. When the 30 tyrants ordered him to go to Salamis and pick up Leon of Salamis, Socrates wouldn't do it. He went home. He disobeyed.

Some scholars analyze this disobedience away. They say the 30 tyrants were not proper lawgivers, so disobeying them was not disobeying "the law". Burnet, for instance, says

Socrates proceeds to give two instances in which he opposed the government of the day, regardless of the consequences to himself. There is nothing about the 'divine sign' here. It is not that but his own judgment of what was lawful (νόμιμον) and right (δίκαιον) which guided him.<sup>lviii</sup>

The distinction between "the government of the day" and "lawful" is problematic at best, as is the equation of νόμιμον and δίκαιον. What if the νόμιμον is not δίκαιον? What if the law is unjust instead of just? In later dialogues, Plato says "a bad law is no law",<sup>lix</sup> but if Socrates only obeyed good laws, his famous obedience to law turns out to be empty. Everyone obeys good laws. For an individual, the only time obedience to law means anything is when someone obeys a law he thinks is bad.

Scholars give a similar explanation for what Socrates says when he imagines the jury saying they will acquit him if he gives up philosophizing. He says he wouldn't do it. Scholars explain that the jury did not have the legal power to give such an order. The jury had to give the punishment proposed by the accusers or the punishment

proposed by the defendant. The effort to find technical ways to keep what is lawful equivalent to what is just is almost pathetic.

Suppose that when Socrates was convicted, his accusers had proposed, not that he be killed, but that he be ordered to stop philosophizing. Suppose the jury had voted that Socrates should stop doing philosophy or better yet, suppose the Athenian assembly had conducted a procedurally correct vote and passed a new law banning philosophy. Does anyone think Socrates would have obeyed this law?

Because of later dialogues, we think of Socrates as a man who died for the principle that the law is the law and must be obeyed. The Socrates in the *Apology* was not a man of principle. He was an ironist. He tied up the Athenian assembly not to support the law, but to show that law can be made absurd by insisting on obeying it. Just as he misread the *Apology* when he later came to think Socrates was being ironic about not being wise, so Plato misread it reciprocally when he came to think Socrates was *not* being ironic about obeying the law.

In the *Apology*, Socrates does not obey the law to support it. He obeys the law to unravel it. Adhering to its strict letter brings law to a standstill and Socrates insistence on literal obedience in the trial of the generals was prototypically Socratic. He had an uncanny appreciation of Athenian law. He played with it. In the *Apology*, after he is convicted, he says

As far as Meletus's charges are concerned, I think I've been acquitted. It's clear that if Anytus and Lykon hadn't joined him, he'd have been fined a thousand drachmas for not getting a fifth of the vote. (36a-b)

This is a legal joke. In Athens, if a prosecutor brought a charge and did not get a fifth of the vote, he was punished. Socrates is dividing the 280 votes for conviction among his three accusers. Nothing like this was actually done in Athenian law. Socrates imagines a completely unreal legal procedure to make fun of the real ones.

The Athenians were very sensitive about their democratic law. They were well aware that their democracy sometimes sent the law off the tracks. One particularly dramatic occasion on which this occurred was during the war with Sparta, when Mytilene, (Mitt a lea' knee) an Athenian ally, went over to the Spartan side. The Athenians sent out an expedition and retook the city. The general in charge sent a message home, asking for orders about what to do with the citizens of Mytilene. Over 6,000 Athenians met in the assembly and voted to kill all the men of Mytilene and sell all the women and children into slavery. That would teach the rest of the allies not to rebel.

A ship was dispatched bearing the assembly's order but the next morning, the Athenians awoke and said, "What have we done? They were our friends and allies. We can't kill them and sell them into slavery." Another assembly was held at which 6,000 Athenians voted to countermand the first order. A second ship was dispatched. Luckily, it caught the first one and the Athenians were saved from having to live with what they themselves now regarded as a terrible excess of their democracy.

When it came to his own trial, Socrates had the opportunity not to let the Athenians off the hook. Under Athenian law, after the jury convicted Socrates, his accusers proposed a punishment for him. Socrates' accusers proposed death. It was then up to Socrates to make a counter proposal. Any other person would have made a reasonable offer and the jury would have accepted it.

Socrates could have treated his trial as the ostracism it should have been. He could have proposed banishment as a punishment. He refused to do this. In the *Apology* written by Xenophon, Socrates refused to propose any punishment on the grounds that he wasn't guilty. In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates proposes three different punishments. First, he proposes that he should be fed for the rest of his life at the public expense like an Olympic hero. He said that's what he deserves for what he had been doing, asking questions, unraveling people, and showing that they did not know what they thought they knew.

At the end of the sentencing speech in Plato's *Apology*, Socrates proposes two more punishments. First he says he should pay a fine of one piece of silver; then, at Plato's suggestion, he says his fine should be 30 pieces of silver. Scholars say the jury was required to select between the punishment proposed by the accuser and the punishment proposed by the defendant. What was the punishment proposed by Socrates? What was the punishment alternative to death? Plato's *Apology* makes that into a mystery

The trial of Socrates was an ostracism sent awry by Socrates himself. In his first trial, when he refused to accept the motion that the generals be tried with one vote, Socrates forced Athenian law to the breaking point. In his second trial, he did the same thing when he dared the jury to sentence him to death, and then, when the Athenians made it easy for him to escape from prison and go into exile, he did the same thing again. He refused to leave. This time, there would be no second ship to save the Athenians from themselves. Socrates rubbed the Athenians' noses in the excess of their democracy by killing himself in obedience to their vote. He died to show the Athenians how unwise they were.

In the *Apology* we see Socrates obey the law ironically, not to support it, but to unravel it, and ironically, it was by getting himself

convicted and sentenced to death that Socrates made himself immortal. If Socrates had *not* been convicted and sentenced to death, if he had been acquitted or banished, he would long since have been forgotten. Xenophon says explicitly that he wrote about Socrates to clear his name and it's not clear that even Plato would have written about Socrates if Socrates had died as Plato did, of old age at home in bed.

It is hard to imagine Plato not writing; harder still to imagine him not writing about Socrates, but notorious as he was during his life, Socrates was made memorable by his execution. Socrates "lives" because of three things, how he died, that Plato wrote about him and that the works of Plato have survived.

We think of Socrates' death as an excess of democracy. This too is ironic. It was not an excess of democracy that killed Socrates. If Socrates had lived in a tyranny, he'd have been killed the first time he opened his mouth. It is only because he lived in democratic Athens that Socrates got to speak publicly and it was only because he spoke publicly in democratic Athens that Socrates was publicly tried, found guilty and executed for speaking.

### Conveying irony in writing

Socrates was a riddle and in the *Apology* Plato wrote him as a riddle. As hard as it is to be a riddle, it may be even harder to create one in writing. It may be impossible, as many scholars say, to peel Socrates and Plato apart, but one thing is clear, Socrates did not ponder his words before he spoke and Plato pondered very carefully before he wrote what he says Socrates said. Socrates was a genius at irony and Plato was a genius at recreating Socrates' irony, but much of Socrates' irony must have come through his demeanor and tone of voice. Socrates' irony must have been at least as much in *how* he said things as in *what* he said.

Plato had to recapture Socrates' irony in writing. In modern writing, we indicate irony by using single, or as they are sometimes called, "ironic" quotes. We write "shameful" and "'shameful'" and everyone knows the second one is ironic. Ancient Greek did not have any kind of punctuation at all, let alone quotation marks of two different kinds. Plato had to imply the irony. He used a literary device to do this. He made Socrates repeat himself with a twist.

We have already looked at the first passage in the *Apology*:

I don't know whether you have been *affected* by my accusers, men of Athens. Even I lost myself a little in what they had to say. That's how *convincing* they were.  
(17a)

This contains a punning repetition and a twist. Socrates' speech continues this way

But as for *the truth*, if we were going to talk about *the truth*, they said nothing. What amazed me most in their tissue of lies was when they said you had to be careful not to be fooled by me because I'm such a *dangerous, crafty speaker*. How could they not be *ashamed* to say this? As soon as I open my mouth, it's obvious that I am not a *dangerous, crafty speaker*. This seems to me the most *shameful* thing they said unless of course, by a *dangerous, crafty speaker*, they mean someone who tells *the truth*. If that's what they mean, O.K., then I agree with them. (17a-b)

The contradiction in "ashamed" and "shameful" can be seen by reading "ashamed" naturally and "shameful" as if it had single quotes around it. What we are ashamed of may or may not be

‘shameful’. Shame is what you are ashamed to do and what you do so as not to be ashamed. The contradiction in “shame” is captured in the Greek word, αἰδώς,<sup>lx</sup> which means both “shame” and “self-respect”.

Plato does not use the word *aidôs* in this passage. He uses another word, αἰσχύνη,<sup>lxi</sup> which means only one thing – “shame”. But one can be ashamed of things that are not shameful and not ashamed of things that are shameful. Some things are shameful and others are ‘shameful’.

All words have contrary meanings and from different points of view, they have different contrary meanings. The genius of Socrates lay in his ability to find the places at which the words “good”, “just” and “holy” had contrary meanings. Socrates could see that these words flickered in ways others could not see.

Plato has Socrates repeat the Greek word δεινός<sup>lxii</sup> three times in this paragraph. It has been translated as “dangerous, crafty”. *Deinos* is what Odysseus is said to be in the *Odyssey*. He tells stories and tricks the Cyclops with his clever words. Odysseus is clever, crafty, and tricky in both a positive and a negative sense. “Dangerous” is a pun on the sound of *deinos*.

All three times the word *deinos* is repeated, it is coupled with the word λέγειν<sup>lxiii</sup>, literally, “to speak”. The phrase *deinos legein* has been translated as “dangerous crafty speaker”. All through the *Apology*, Socrates is a smart aleck. He is particularly so at the very beginning. He is being crafty in saying he is not crafty. Socrates himself explains the twist in the repetition of *deinos legein*.

They say I’m a dangerous, crafty speaker. I’m not a quote/unquote dangerous, crafty speaker. Unless, of course, by a “dangerous, crafty speaker” they mean

something completely different from what “dangerous crafty speaker” usually means, in which case, O.K., I am a dangerous, crafty speaker.

The word *legein* can take many different forms in Greek. λόγος, *logos* (pronounced *law' goss* as in “gossamer, with the accent on *law*) means “word”, “words” or “language”. λέγω, *legô* (pronounced *leg' oh*, with the accent on *leg*) means “I say”. Plato uses the word *legein* or one of its forms in the *Apology* 146 times. It may be natural to speak about speaking in a speech about crimes that involved speaking, but 146 times? This is not an accident. It is art.

ἀληθής, <sup>lxiv</sup> “true”, *alêthês* (pronounced, *ah lay thace*, with the accent on *thace*) is another word that is repeated at the beginning of the *Apology*. It is repeated many times thereafter. In the translation of the first passage, it is repeated three times, though in the Greek, Plato only used it twice. The first time he used it, what he said, translated literally, is “And the truth, that word to say, nothing they said.” Plato is clearly playing with the word “truth”. The translation amplifies this, as it does in the very next passage, where in the Greek, ἀληθής is used twice more.

But I'm not like them as a speaker. From them, I say you'll hear only partial truths or no truth at all. From me, you'll hear the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. (17b)

In the *Apology*, *alêthês* appears 35 times as a noun, an adjective, a verb, and an adverb. This is a literary device. By having him say the word “truth” over and over again, Plato is telling us that when people heard Socrates speaking, they felt they were hearing the truth.

Some people might deny that there is any significance in any of the repetitions that have been pointed out. They might say there is

nothing at all special about this writing. In both writing and speaking, they might say, repetition is normal or ordinary. Whenever we talk about anything we use certain words and when we change topics, we use other words. What makes the *Apology* great, these people might say, is not devices in the writing, but the ideas of Plato and Socrates. However true this is, if we do not notice the repetitions in the *Apology*, we are missing at least part of Plato's artistry as a writer.

## 2. The repetition of negatives

It would be hard to write anything without using negative words. If someone wrote without any negatives at all, that would be a literary device, but we would also miss a great deal of Plato's artistry if we were not aware of the number of negatives he uses in the *Apology*. We can miss this easily because many Greek writers use more negatives than are used in English.

In ancient Greek, a generous sprinkling of negatives could be used to cast a generally negative flavour over a whole passage. Repeated negatives did not cancel each other out the way they do in modern English. In ancient Greek repeated negatives intensified each other, just as they once did in English:

And that no woman has; nor never none shall be mistress of it.  
(Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*)

Multiple negatives are still used in English by people who ain't got no education, but they have disappeared from "proper" English and we always translate Plato's Greek into proper English. To do this, we have to drop some of the negatives. We translate Socrates as saying:

There is nothing in any of this. If you've heard that I teach people as a job and make money at it, that is not the truth.

(19d-e)

Translated literally, the Greek of the passage above says

But *neither* of this *nothing* it is, *nor* if some have heard as I teach as a job, people and money practice, *not* that true.

Matched up, word-for-word, with the Greek this is:

But neither of this nothing it is,  
ἀλλὰ γὰρ οὔτε τούτων οὔδέν ἐστίν,

nor if some have heard as I teach  
οὔδέ γ' εἴ τις ἀκηκόατε ὡς ἐγὼ παιδεύειν

as a job, people and money practice,  
ἐπιχειρῶ ἄνθρώπους καὶ χρήματα πράττομαι

not that true.  
οὔδὲ τοῦτο ἀληθές.

The negative, οὐ, ου (pronounced oo as in "who") occurs four times in 23 words. This is not an accident. Plato used more negatives than other Greek writers and he clustered them. Here is another passage with a clustering of negatives:

This is how it is, men of Athens, the truth. If someone takes up a position, either because he thinks it's where he belongs or because someone in charge has told him to go there, then that is where he should stay, *not* taking *no*

account, *neither* of death, *nor* of *nothing* else that might lead to shame. (28d)

This translation stresses the negativity by using five negatives. In the last 10 Greek words there are actually only four negatives.

not talking to themselves not death  
 μηδὲν ὑπολογιζομενον μήτε θάνατον

not other not toward the shame  
 μήτε ἄλλο μηδὲν πρὸ τοῦ αἰσχροῦ

There are many passages like this in the *Apology*. Some use *ou*, some use *μη* (pronounced *may*). Some combine *ou* and *mê*. There is also a third negative in Greek. It does not stand by itself, however. It is called the “alpha privative”. If an  $\alpha$  is placed before a word, the word becomes negative. *Alêthês*, “true”, is actually *not-lêthês*. In Greek mythology, when people died, they crossed the river *lêthê*, Lethe, the river of forgetfulness. Literally, *alêthês*, “true”, is “not forgotten” or “not hidden”.<sup>lxv</sup>

### Negativity

Kierkegaard says “Socrates is constantly negative.”<sup>lxvi</sup> Most people today would be reluctant to describe Socrates as “negative”, let alone as “constantly negative”. Socrates is a hero for us and it is generally a put-down to speak of someone as “negative”. But Socrates is negative. In the passage near the end of the *Apology*, where Socrates uses the word “night” seven times (40d-e), what he says is that nothing is better than something. It isn’t possible to say anything more negative than this and ironically, to say Socrates was “negative” is the only way to describe him positively.

Socrates insisted that people did not acquire any positive knowledge from him, but as one scholar points out, Socrates was responsible for

an essential preliminary thereto, consisting in the removal of an all but complete bar to knowledge naturally present in man. This bar is the conceit that we already know.<sup>lxvii</sup>

People treat Socrates as if he had a positive “philosophy”. This is the message of Plato’s later dialogues. In the *Apology*, Socrates has no quote/unquote philosophy, or to put it differently, what philosophy Socrates has cannot be expressed positively.

In the *Apology*, Socrates says several things that might be construed as positive moral philosophy. For instance, he says

The only thing a person should look at when they are trying to decide what to do is whether it’s just or unjust, whether it would be done by a good man or a bad one (28b-c)

This is positive but it is not moral philosophy. It is a truism.

Socrates also says

To do wrong and not be convinced by your betters, whether god or man, that is bad and shameful. I know that. (29b)

This too is a truism. Of course it’s bad to do what’s unjust; that’s what “bad” and “unjust” mean; and if you know who your “betters” are, of course, you should be convinced by them.

Socrates asks why people do not pay attention to “Having good sense and truth and being alive. How to be the best you can be.”(29d-e) This is good advice, as is “pay attention to virtue”, another thing Socrates says in the *Apology*. But they are nothing so grand as “moral philosophy”. Everyone knows they should pay attention to virtue. People don’t pay attention to virtue, but they know they should. As Socrates himself says over and over again, he does not teach anyone anything they don’t already know.

Any attempt to express Socrates’ “moral philosophy” positively winds up sounding banal and sententious. This is what is wrong with Xenophon. He tried to express Socrates’ philosophy positively. Plato’s *Apology* is great because, great artist that he was, Plato was able to give us a negative portrait of Socrates that does not denigrate him. Plato did this by using negatives far more than other writers and we should not let the needs of translation undercut our understanding of what Plato was doing.

In his wonderful commentary on the *Apology*, John Burnet explains that one easy way in which Socrates could have responded to some of the charges against him would have been to make fun of science. Burnet puts this idea in an odd way. He says, “Socrates is not to be frightened into expressing a contempt for science which he does not feel.”<sup>lxviii</sup> Burnet uses two negatives to say one thing that is untrue and a second thing that is unnecessary. Socrates does feel contempt for science; he feels contempt for all the products of humanity’s supposed intelligence. And Socrates cannot be frightened into anything; that is his dominant characteristic.

Whether consciously or not, Burnet expressed himself as he did because he was so deeply steeped in Plato’s writing. This writing uses negatives as a device to make readers see how negative Socrates was. All the best-known things about Socrates make no sense without their negativity. Here is the classic passage, in which

Socrates reports the conversation he had with someone who had a reputation for being wise:

There is no danger that neither of us knows anything worth knowing, but he thinks he does and doesn't, whereas I don't, but I don't think I do. Maybe I am a little wiser than him. I don't think I know what I don't know.  
(21d)

The negatives in this passage stand out even in English but they are more apparent in Greek.

The danger is that we neither nothing  
κινδυνεύει μὲν γὰρ ἡμῶν οὐδέτερος οὐδὲν

fine and good know.  
καλὸν κάγαθὸν εἰδέναι

But this one, on the one hand, thinking something  
ἀλλ' οὗτος μὲν οἶταί τι

knows, not knows.  
εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς

I, on the other hand, as not knowing, not thinking.

ἐγὼ δέ ὥσπερ οὖν οὐκ οἶδα οὐδὲ οἶομαι

I am likely so, that a smidgen some him that  
ἔοικα γοῦν τούτου γε σμικρῶ τινι αὐτῶ τούτῶ

wiser to be.  
σοφώτερος εἶναι

In that, whereas, not knowing, not thinking I know.

ὅτι ἄ μὴ οἶδα οὐδὲ οἶομαι εἰδέναι

In this 43-word passage, there are seven negatives.

### Repetition, Contradiction, Negativity and \$

Plato uses the device of repetition a great deal in the *Apology* but he did not invent the use of repetition as a literary device. Repetition is used extensively in the works of Homer, the earliest Greek literature. The sea is mentioned a great deal in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Repeatedly it is called the “wine-dark sea”; when Apollo is mentioned, he is referred to as “far-seeing Apollo”, when Athena is mentioned, she is referred to as “ox-eyed Athena” or “grey-eyed Athena”. Repetitions like this are particularly prominent in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* because these poems were created orally and only written down later. Repetition saved the oral poet the trouble of having to extemporize new words to fit the rhythm. It also made the poetic lines easier to remember.

In the *Apology*, Plato coupled repetition with contradiction, but he did not invent contradiction any more than he invented repetition. Quite the contrary, contradiction is a striking feature of ancient Greek culture and a prominent feature of the ancient Greek language. Like αἰδώς, which means both “shame” and “self-respect”, many Greek words mean contradictory things. Φάρμακον<sup>lxix</sup> *pharmakon* means “poison” and “remedy”, χωρέω<sup>lxx</sup> *xôreô* means to go back and to go forward, ὀργαίνω<sup>lxxi</sup> *orgainô* means to make angry and to be made angry, χρεία<sup>lxxii</sup> *xreia* means use and need, ἄπειρος<sup>lxxiii</sup> *apeiros* means inexperienced and limitless, μέλλω<sup>lxxiv</sup> *mellô* means to intend to do and to put off doing, ἔρχομαι *erxomai* means to come and to go.

Not only do many Greek words mean contradictory things, it was a standard practice in Greek to counterpoise two contradictory statements, phrases or words in a formula:

“something μὲν ... something δὲ ....”

In his textbook on Greek,<sup>lxxv</sup> D. J. Mastronardi refers to “on the one hand ... on the other” as “a common, but clumsy, translation” of *men/de*.

An example of *men/de* from the *Apology* is

That one on the one hand you happy to seem  
 ὁ μὲν γὰρ ὑμᾶς εὐδαίμονας δοκεῖν

I on the other hand to be  
 ἐγὼ δὲ εἶναι

and that one on the one hand food not needing  
 καὶ ὁ μὲν τροφῆς οὐδεν δεῖται

I on the other hand need  
 ἐγὼ δὲ δέομαι

He makes you seem happy, whereas I make you be happy.

And he doesn't need the food, while I do. (36d-37a)

All Greek writers used the *men/de* form and the figures in Greek literature all lived *men/de* lives. Orestes *men* had to do something absolutely right and kill the killers of his father, but *de* he had to do something absolutely wrong and kill his mother. Agamemnon *men* was required to sail to Troy, but *de* he had to sacrifice his daughter to

get wind. Achilles *men* was the bravest hero, but *de* he was required to sulk in his tent over his offended honour. Oedipus *men* saw, but Oedipus *de* was blind.

So characteristic is contradiction of Greek culture and language that Aristotle, the first philosopher after classical Greece<sup>lxxvi</sup> says “Everything is opposites or comes from opposites.”<sup>lxxvii</sup> Aristotle also says “The quantity of words is limited. The number of things is not limited. Words must mean more than one thing.”<sup>lxxviii</sup> These comments might almost be meant to summarize Greek language and culture.

The story of Greece is the story of people living with the strain of contradictory absolutes. The reason Greek culture is so rich is that it dwells in the conflict of mixed motives. Rome, the culture that followed Greece, could not or would not accept mixed motivations. This is what made Rome and its law so powerful.

Greek law was characterized by struggle – ἀγών (*ah gone*, the accent is on *gone*, which is pronounced with a hard o as in “cone”). This becomes “agony” in English. In Greek, it could refer to a battle, an Olympic contest, a tragedy or a legal trial. Greek law was about drama and tragedy, it was about mixed motives, not about single answers. The *Apology* is a prime example.

The Romans thought the Greek culture was superior to their own, but they found it confusing. People cannot function efficiently with conflicting motives. They cannot build an empire and rule the world. The Romans gave themselves (and every civilized culture that has followed them) a single absolute goal, money.

As Socrates points out many times in the *Apology*, by the 4<sup>th</sup> century Athens was awash in money. But Greek culture began before the invention of money. The Greeks had a cultural memory of

a world without money. This memory was recorded in the works of Homer, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. These were written down at about the time money first came into use, but they reflected a time before that, a time without money. The *Iliad* opens with a scene in which a father is trying to ransom his captured daughter. He offers things, not money.

The *Iliad* ends with another father offering ransom, this time for the body of a dead son. This father too offers things, not money. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus returns to his home disguised as a beggar. One of the suitors for Penelope, Odysseus's wife, offers to "hire" Odysseus to

clear stones  
from wasteland for me – you'll be paid enough –  
boundary walls and planting trees.  
I'd give you a bread ration every day,  
a cloak to wrap in, sandals for your feet.<sup>lxxix</sup>

The words "hire" and "paid" are used here because there was an "economy" even before there was money. It was an economy of things. Some people call it a "gift economy", though the word "gift" is a little strange because the "gifts" were often coerced. The key here is that there was no money:

People who use money seem to form different relationships with one another and with objects than people who do not. Marx gave the name "alienation" to this difference. Marx believed that money makes the objects we use into alien things and makes the people with whom we exchange them into alien people.<sup>lxxx</sup>

Socrates had nothing to do with money. He mentions his poverty several times in the *Apology*. He holds it up as the best proof

of the truth of what he says. There is one thing “I always say,” Socrates says,

Oh great one, you’re an Athenian, a citizen of the *polis* that has the best reputation as smart and strong. How can you not be ashamed that you spend all your time thinking about money and how to get more of it. (29d)

It is no accident that the first time a cluster of negatives appears in the *Apology* it is in connection with money. (19d-e) The word “money” is repeated a great deal in the *Apology*. In Socrates’ mouth this word carries an inherent contradiction. Money is negative, Socrates said, because people treat it so positively.

### 3. Other voices

By choosing to write the *Apology* as a monologue, Plato made it much harder for himself to recreate the way Socrates spoke. Socrates was not a monologist. As he himself says “This kind of talk is totally foreign to me.” (17d)

Socrates spoke with people who spoke back to him. He asked them questions and answered their questions. The question-and-answer form was part of what it was like to hear Socrates speak. After the *Apology*, Plato only wrote dialogues. Questions and answers fit quite well in this form. In the *Apology*, Plato had to recreate the question-and-answer sound of Socrates in a monologue. He did this by using another dramatic device. Repeatedly in the *Apology*, Plato makes Socrates speak in another voice. He has Socrates project himself into another character. Plato makes Socrates do this so that Socrates can ask himself questions.

Here are two examples. (Notice the similarity of these two passages. They occur at widely different places in the *Apology* and are an example of another kind of repetition Plato uses.)

If anyone asked me, Socrates, you must do something to get people to attack you the way they do, what is it? You must do something different from everyone else. Tell us what it is, so that we don't have to guess. (20c)

Of course, someone might say, Socrates, if there wasn't anything shameful about doing what you are doing, why do you now find yourself in danger of being put to death? (28b)

In both of these passage Socrates signals the move into the other voice with an introduction that identifies the speaker. – “If some of you were to ask me ....” – “Of course, someone might say ....” He then speaks in another voice and asks himself a question. – “You must do something to get people to attack you the way they do, what is it?” – “Why do you now find yourself in danger of being put to death?”

When Socrates moves out of the other voice, back into his own voice, he does so abruptly.

Now, that's a fair question and I will undertake to try to show you what I did that got me this reputation and these attacks. (20d)

If someone asked me this, I would be right to respond, if you think a man worth anything takes the danger of dying into account – life or death – then you don't know what you're talking about. (28b)

Notice how differently Socrates treats the speakers. With one, he is quite gentle – “Now, that’s a fair question and I will undertake to try to show you what it is that I did that got me this reputation and these attacks.” With the other, he is quite rough – “If you think a man worth anything takes the danger of dying into account – life or death – then you don’t know what you’re talking about.”

When Socrates answers the first question, it is not clear whether he is speaking to the whole jury or only to the “some of you” who asked him the question. This ambiguity is cleared up immediately.

Listen carefully. Otherwise some of you may think I’m fooling around. I’m not. I’m going to tell you the whole truth. (20d)

Socrates is speaking in his own voice to the whole jury here. This is clear because the words “the whole truth” are used many times in the *Apology* where Socrates can only be speaking to the whole jury.

#### 4. Personal pronouns

The movement in and out of the other voices in the *Apology* is manifested in the personal pronouns, “you”, “I”, “me” and “us”. In the first of the passages examined (20c-d), “you” is used in four different ways. Here is the Greek:

Under-taking should some of you all the same,  
 ὑπολάβοι ἂν οὖν τις ὑμῶν ἴσως

but Socrates, the you what is business?  
 ἀλλ’ ὃ Σώκρατες τὸ σὸν τί ἐστι πρᾶγμα

Where these attacks against you themselves come from?

πόθεν αἰ διαβολαί σοι αὐται γεγόνασιν

Not it must be supposed you not  
οὐ γάρ δήπου σοῦ γε οὐδέν

of others extra business  
τῶν ἄλλων περιπτότερον πραγματεθόμενον

since so is saying and words come  
ἔπειτα τοσαύτη φήμη τε καὶ λόγος γέγονεν

if not busying other than the many.  
εἰ μή ἔπραττες ἄλλοῖον ἢ οἱ πολλοί

Tell us, what it is,  
λέγε οὖν ἡμῖν τί ἐστίν

so that it's not for us about you to by ourselves  
approximate.

ἵνα μή ἡμεῖς περὶ σοῦ αὐτοσχεδιάζωμεν

This, to me, it seems right, to say, to the one who says,  
ταυτί μοι δοκεῖ δίκαια λέγειν ὁ λέγων

and I carry you to try to show,  
καγὼ ὑμῖν πειράσομαι ἀποδειξαι

what then, is it that to me made  
τί ποτ' ἐστὶ τοῦτο ὃ ἐμοί πεποίηκε

this name and these attacks.  
τό τε ὄνομα καὶ τὴν διαβολήν

Listen. Equally it seems to some of you,

ἀκούτε δὴ καὶ ἴσως μὲν δόξω τισὶν ὑμῶν

I am being childish. Well know, all to you,  
παίξειν εὖ μέντοι ἴστε πᾶσαν ὑμῖν

the truth, I say.  
ἀλήθειαν ἐρῶ

The heavy use of personal pronouns is one of the most striking things about the *Apology*. The word “I”, *egô*, appears 302 times.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

Personal pronouns are among the first words a baby learns. They are among the easiest words to learn in any language and hence, are among the first words a new speaker learns in a foreign language. When people are first learning to read Greek, they are told to read Plato because he uses so many personal pronouns and repeats words so often. Quick repetition is a bonus for new readers. They get double value for each trip to the dictionary.

Plato is a great writer of Greek, but he is also easy for someone to read who is only just learning the language. This can be said of some children’s writers, Antoine de Saint Exupéry and Hans Christian Andersen, for example, but what other great writer for adults could be said to be easy for new readers to read?

Because the words “you” and “I” are required in English where they are not required in Greek, Plato’s heavy use of personal pronouns is lost a little in translation. In English, “you say” and “I say” both use the same word: “say”. Who is speaking must be indicated with “you” or “I”. In Greek the verbs take endings that indicate who is doing the action. *Legô* means “I say”. *Legeis* means “you say”, where you is one person. *Legete* means “you say” where you are more than one person. In the *Apology*, Plato uses the phrase

*egô legô* several times.<sup>lxxxii</sup> *Egô* means “I” and is unnecessary. *Egô legô* is “I I say”. Mastronardi says this is “emphatic”.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> It is a device.

Plato makes his writing simple to convey to readers something that Burnet pointed out about Socrates, the “simplicity of his heart”.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Socrates spoke in a simple way and though he describes himself as “one of god’s gifts to this city” (31a-b), Socrates is not self-important. He thinks he is a boon to Athens because of what he does, but he does not expect to be respected for what he does. Socrates takes himself seriously, but he laughs at himself as he laughs at everything else. When he mentions his *daimonion*, he says “Some god or divinitie comes and talks to me, just like Meletus says in this comedy he’s written.” (31d)

The most striking thing about Socrates is that he has no fear and no self doubt. This is what gives him his power, but it does not make him into a saint. Socrates is a tremendous egotist and completely unembarrassed about it. The word εἰμι, *eimi* (pronounced *amy*) “I am”, appears 284 times in the *Apology*.<sup>lxxxv</sup> This is not surprising since the actual title of the *Apology* is the *Apology of Socrates* or *Socrates’ Apology*.

## 5. Socrates’ name

The use of “you” and “I” stands out in the *Apology*, especially in conjunction with the use of other voices. Another thing that stands out in conjunction with the use of other voices is the use of Socrates’ name. As pointed out earlier, Socrates speaks his own name 19 times in the *Apology*.<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

Sometimes when Socrates says his own name he is speaking to the jury about himself.

Being as old as I am and having this name – whether it's true or false, Socrates has a reputation for being different from most other people. (34e-35a)

Most people would say "I have a reputation for being different from other people." Plato shows that Socrates deserves this reputation by having him say his own name.

Most of the time when the name "Socrates" appears in the *Apology*, Socrates is speaking in another voice:

Of course, someone might say,

"Socrates, if there wasn't anything shameful about doing what you are doing, why do you now find yourself in danger of being put to death?"

If someone asked me this, I would be right to respond, if you think a man worth anything takes the danger of dying into account – life or death – then you don't know what you're talking about. The only thing a person should look at in deciding what to do is whether it's just or unjust, whether it would be done by a good man or a bad one.

On your account the heroes, those who met their fates at Troy, would be all screwed up, the son of Thetis among them, he so much minimized danger as against patiently suffering disgrace, that when he was eager to kill Hector and his mother, being a god, said something like this to him:

"My son, if you avenge the murder of your comrade Patrokolos and kill Hector, you will die.

Immediately," she says, "behind Hector, thy fortune lies waiting."

He, hearing of his death and the danger, made little of them. He was much more afraid of living badly by not avenging his friend, so bang! just like that, he said,

"Let me die,  
having set right the wrongdoers,  
rather than wait  
with laughter raining down on me  
by ships bent prows  
a burden sown upon the ground."

Do you think he was thinking about death or danger?  
(28b-d)

In this passage, Socrates speaks in five different voices. There is the voice of the person who asks Socrates why he is in danger of dying, the voice of Themis, the voice of Achilles, the voice of Homer (whom Plato is quoting) and the voice of Socrates himself. This is a very elaborate device. Plato used it to convey the slippery feeling people must have gotten when they heard Socrates speaking. People did not know where they were with him. The extra voices recreate that feeling in writing.

## 6. Asides

In the *Apology*, Plato frequently has Socrates speak in an aside. This is a dramatic device. The following passage uses an aside – "he has two sons" – another voice – the voice of Kallias, the son of Hipponicus<sup>lxxxvii</sup> – and Socrates' name.

I found among the people, this man from Paros who is wise, and I happened to meet a man who pays him money for his wisdom, more than all the other sophists take in. His name is Kallias. He's the son of Hipponicus. Well, I went to him and asked him – he has two sons – so I said,

Kallias, if your two sons were horses or bulls, we would take the two of them to someone who knew how to make them make them fine and good as befits the virtue of a horse or bull, and we would pay for this. This would be either some kind of horseman or a farmer.

But your sons are people. Who do you think has the knowledge they need? Who is knowledgeable in the virtue of being human and living in a polis? I take it that, having two sons, you've looked into this. Is there someone," I said, "or not?"

"Absolutely, there is such a one."

"Who?" I asked. "Where does he come from and how much does he charge?"

"Euenos" he said, "Socrates, from Paros. He charges five minae."

I said, "if he can really teach people to be what they should be and charges so little for it, Euenos was a great guy. If I knew how to teach people that sort of thing, I'd be so proud there'd be no living with me."

But I don't, men of Athens. (20a-c)

## 7. Meletus – a puppet

The most elaborate other voice in the *Apology* is the voice of Meletus. Meletus was one of the three men who brought the charges against Socrates. The other two were Lykon and Anytus. Socrates mentions Lykon's name a few times in the *Apology*, but basically he ignores him entirely. He is more interested in Meletus and Anytus. Meletus has a bigger part to play in the *Apology*, but Socrates treats Anytus as his most serious accuser. Several times he speaks of the jury being convinced by Anytus. (30b, 31a) He never says anything like that about Meletus. Throughout the *Apology*, Socrates treats Meletus as a dummy.

During his speech, Socrates calls Meletus up onto the platform and cross-examines him. Meletus can be thought of as a separate character speaking in his own voice, but twice during his cross-examination of Meletus, Socrates answers questions for him. (25b, 27b) Sometimes Socrates speaks for Meletus and even when he doesn't, he makes Meletus say what he wants him to say.

Meletus is a puppet in Socrates' hands but for maximum dramatic effect, we can see him as a puppet *on* Socrates' hand. We do not have to read Meletus as a separate character speaking in his own voice. We can read him as one of the other voices in which Plato makes Socrates speak. When Socrates cross-examines Meletus, he can be seen as playing both parts. We can read Meletus as an actual dummy and Socrates as a ventriloquist. This maintains the monologue form and there is some orthographic justification for it. In later dialogues, each speaker's name appears before his speech. In the *Apology*, Socrates' speeches and Meletus's speeches occur without any identification.

## 8. The noisy jury



## 9. The implicit silent narrator

The *Apology* has three scenes but they are not indicated in any formal way. Each scene is introduced by an implicit unspeaking narrator. We hear this narrator only in what Plato makes Socrates say. For a Greek audience, the narrator was largely unnecessary. They knew how a Greek trial worked. But Plato makes Socrates speak after the trial is over. This was not what actually happened and so it had to be indicated even to a Greek audience.

For us the narrator is essential and he is essential as a formal element. The *Apology* begins as follows

*[Silent Narrator: In 399 B.C., Socrates was charged before an Athenian jury. His accusers spoke against him. Then Socrates answered. Scene I:]*

I don't know whether you've been affected by my accusers, men of Athens ... (17a)

Later we read the following

*[Silent Narrator: At this point, the jury voted. The votes were counted and Socrates was found guilty. His accusers spoke and said his penalty should be death. Then Socrates answered. Scene II: ]*

Men of Athens, I'm not upset about what has happened. You voted against me. A lot of things, taken together, led to this verdict and you could almost say this turn of events is not unexpected. The amazing thing is how close the vote was. I thought I would lose by far more than this. (35e-36a)

Finally, the *Apology* concludes

*[Silent Narrator: At this point, the jury voted again and again the votes were counted. Socrates was sentenced to death. Socrates spoke once more. Scene III:]*

It won't be long, men of Athens, before the people who want to mock this city will refer to you as "the idiots who killed Socrates because he was a wise man." Those who want to blame you will say I was wise, even though I was not and if you had waited a little while you would have gotten the same result automatically. I'm an old man. I'd have died soon anyway (38c)

#### 10. The implicit guards

The third scene of the *Apology* occurs after the trial has been completed. Socrates has been convicted and sentenced to death. Before the *Apology* is over, however, Socrates has a few more things to say to the jury, extra-judicially, so to speak. What he says is broken up into two parts. First, he speaks to those who voted against him; then, presumably as they are leaving, he speaks to those who voted for him, his "friends". Plato puts an implicit stage direction into Socrates' mouth to mark this break.

That's the prophecy I give as I go to those of you who voted against me.

*[Socrates turns to go. Notices guards are busy. Turns back and says:]*

Since the guards are busy and can't take me to the place where I will die, I can speak sweetly about what has happened with those of you who voted for me. Stay with me men. Nothing stops us from swapping a few stories while we can and since you're my friends, I can show you how to understand what has happened. (39d-e)

Plato uses the implicit guards to stress the distinction Socrates draws between "those who voted against me" and "those who voted for me". This distinction is also stressed by two kinds of repetition. The phrase "those who voted against me" is said twice and repeated twice more in slightly different words, once as "those who voted for my death" and once as "those who voted that I should pay the penalty of death". The phrase "those who voted for me" is repeated as "my friends".

Drawing a distinction between "those who voted against me" and "those who voted for me" is manifestly inconsistent with everything else that Socrates says in the *Apology*. Throughout the rest of his speech, Socrates insists that he does not speak one way to some people and another way to other people. "If anyone says they learned anything from me in private that everyone couldn't learn by listening to me in the street, that is not the truth." (33b)

Again and again in the *Apology*, Socrates says he tells the whole jury the whole truth. Why, here, does Socrates distinguish so particularly between what he says to those who voted against him and what he says to those who voted for him? Does he tell something other than the whole truth to those who voted against him? Does he tell those who voted for him some kind of special truth?

Death

Socrates speaks about death to both those who voted against him and those who voted for him. He tells those who voted against him two things. One is a prediction:

After all we've been through, I want to make a prediction for those of you who voted against me. Men make predictions when they are about to die and I am almost there. What I say, gentlemen, is that when you kill me, your punishment will, by god, be much worse than killing me. (39b-c)

The other thing Socrates tells those who voted against him is that the only reason he was convicted is that he wouldn't beg them with tears or plead with them:

I didn't think that I should let the danger I faced, turn me into a slave. And even now, I'm not sorry that I gave the speech I gave. I'd much rather die having given that speech, than live the other way. (38e)

This is a prelude to what Socrates tells them about death:

Nobody should look for ways to run from death at any cost, not in court, not in war, not nowhere.... It's not hard to run away from death. It's harder to run away from wickedness. It runs faster than death. (39a-b)

Socrates assumes something very surprising here. He assumes that he *could* have given a speech that would have led to a different result. In other words, he assumes that he could have run away from death, or rather, that he could have avoided being killed. This distinction – between escaping from death and avoiding being killed – runs through the whole climax but death seems to be the same for Socrates whether you just die of old age or get executed after a trial.

if you'd only waited a little while you'd have gotten the same result automatically. I'm an old man. I'd have died soon anyway.

(38c)

Inconsistency: the special truth and whistling in the dark

Socrates' remarks to his friends about death are very powerful. They are the emotional heart of the *Apology*. But dramatic as they are, Socrates' remarks about death make absolutely no sense. They contradict themselves internally and go against everything Socrates says elsewhere in the *Apology*.

The *Apology* concludes with this line.

But I see it's time for us to go. Me to be put to death; you to live. Only god knows which of us is going to the better thing. (42a)

The last thing Socrates says is that "only god knows" what death is. He has expressed this same idea earlier in the *Apology*.

If, gentlemen of the jury, there's one way in which I am different from most other men, it's that I don't know anything about what happens when you die and don't think I do. (29b)

When he talks to his friends, Socrates reverses himself completely and says he does know about death. He says he has learned about it from being sentenced to it.

Normally, in the past, if I were going to do something that was the opposite of what I should, even if it was

something very small, I received a prophecy from my divinitie telling me not to do it. As you can see, some people would think that what was happening to me now could be considered the last step in badness. (40a)

But there's been no sign:

What do I think is behind this? I'll tell you. The danger that has come to me is a good thing. Our usual idea – thinking death is bad – that's not right. (40b-c)

This too Socrates has said earlier in the *Apology*:

Nobody knows but what dying may not be the very best thing that happens to people. But people fear death as if they knew somehow that it was the worst thing that could happen. If this isn't the stupidest, most self-disrespecting thing a person could do – to think they know something they don't know – then I don't know what is. (29a-b)

All through the *Apology*, Socrates says he does not know what happens when you die. Then, in the climax, he says he does know what happens when you die:

Our usual idea – thinking death is bad – that's not right. I've had great evidence of this. It's not usual for there to be no opposition, if what I'm doing isn't good. It seems we can have high hopes that death is a good thing. (40b-c)

Socrates then speculates about what it is like to be dead. He makes a joke about it. He says death

is one of two things. Either someone who's dead doesn't feel anything anymore or, as they say, it's like lucking out and getting a great new place to live. Instead of living one place, you live someplace else. (40c)

Notice the inconsistency here. When you're *dead*, you *live* someplace else. Then comes the passage with the seven "nights", in which Socrates says nothing is better than something. Then comes a long speculation about what death would be like if

it is like being away from home, if it's like being from then on in a new place and it's true what they say that all those who have died before us are there. (40e)

### Time

Death is an apparent theme in the *Apology*. So is wisdom. So is goodness. Wisdom and goodness may be the same theme. Justice is also an apparent theme in the *Apology*, as is shame. A less apparent theme in the *Apology* is time. Time and death may be the same theme, especially at the end of the *Apology*, but at the beginning of the *Apology*, time is brought in as a theme separate from death.

I'm seventy years old but I've never been involved in a trial before. (17d)

It would be just, men of Athens, if I spoke to you first in my defense about the first false accusations that were made against me and those who made them and then later about the accusations that came later and those that made them later. Many people have been making accusations against me to you for a long time. None of them has ever been the truth. I fear the old accusers more than the new ones, the ones over there with Anytus. The

new ones are dangerous and crafty, gentlemen of the jury, but the old ones, ahh, the old are more dangerous and crafty yet, because they got to you with their untrue allegations when you were young and likely to be convinced. (18a-b)

The substance of the last words is repeated almost at once.

There have been many such accusers, making such accusations for a long time. And they said these things to you at a good time, when you were most likely to believe them, some of you being only kids and others merely boys.(18c)

The theme continues:

You have to believe what I say. There are two sets of accusers working against me. The new ones and the old ones. You can see that I have to defend myself against the second ones before the first ones because you heard the second ones before the first ones and the first ones are stronger than the second ones.  
(18d-e)

This joke about time, which reverses “first” and “second”, is made more clear in the translation than it is in the Greek.

At the end of the *Apology* the themes of death and time are woven together. Socrates says,

I'd want to die many times over if this were true, if amazingly, I could pass my time right there and if I had a chance meet Palamedes or Ajax, the son of Telemon, or some of the other ancient figures who died unjustly. I

would contrast my suffering with theirs and that would not taste bad. (41a-b)

Notice the inconsistency here. Is there *time* to pass after death? Notice also that the phrase “pass my time” is repeated almost immediately.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

And I would unravel the biggest ones there and pass my time that way, figuring out which of them was wise, and which ones thought they were wise but weren't. (41b)

Socrates says he'd be “extraordinarily happy” if he could talk to the great figures of the past and examine them:

And they wouldn't be likely to kill me for it either. Everything there is happier than here because if what people say is true, they are already deathless for the rest of time. (41c)

If the dead are “deathless for the rest of time”, how can one “die many times”? This makes no sense and the last thing Socrates says to his friends about death makes even less sense.

You, gentlemen of the jury, must look happily forward to death, knowing this one thing to be true, that bad things cannot happen to good men, not while they're alive and not when they're dead. (41d)

If this is true, how can there be “ancient figures who died unjustly”? How can Socrates compare his suffering with theirs? Good people can only suffer if bad things can happen to them.

Inconsistency as a literary device

The inconsistencies about death, time, and whether bad things can happen to good people are not the only inconsistencies in the *Apology*. Socrates says he is a “a gadfly” sent by a god to wake up Athens:

To pester you and get after you, not stopping for even a moment landing here and there and biting you. (30e-31a)

But in the very next line, Socrates says,

You’ll never find anyone to take my place and if you take my advice, you’ll let me go. But maybe you were convinced by Anytus. Maybe you hear me now like some annoying bug, buzzing in your ear when you’re asleep. Maybe you mean to smack me dead. (31a)

Who tells the Athenians Socrates is an annoying bug? Socrates or Anytus?

There is a tremendous amount of inconsistency in the *Apology*.<sup>xc</sup> The height of it comes, as it should, in the climax, where Socrates explains to his friends on the jury the special truth about death. If it were philosophy, the inconsistencies in the *Apology* might count against it, but the *Apology* is not philosophy, it is art, and art is not supposed to be consistent. It is only supposed to be moving and the *Apology* is quite moving, particularly the climax.

To be great, art may have to be inconsistent. The power of great art may lie precisely in its inconsistency. Perhaps the climax of the *Apology* is as powerful as it is because of the inconsistencies in it. Perhaps they enable us to feel the fear Socrates feels. The essence of Socrates, the most basic thing about his character is that he does not feel fear and in the climax of the *Apology* he says there is nothing to

be afraid of. All the inconsistencies make this special truth sound like whistling in the dark.

### Conclusion

#### 11. The author's own voice and the number 30

In the second scene of the *Apology*, Socrates starts out by suggesting that his punishment should be that he be fed for life at the public expense like an Olympic hero. He changes this later and says he could pay a small fine, "one piece of silver", but then, at the end of his speech on sentencing, Socrates says: "Plato, who's sitting over there, suggests that I make it 30 pieces of silver." (38b)

This is a remarkable literary *tour de force*. Plato makes his own voice speak in the *Apology* through the mouth of Socrates<sup>xci</sup> and the number 30 is not an accident. The number 30 occurs three times in the *Apology*. The 30 pieces of silver is the final time.

The first time the number 30 occurs is when Socrates refers to the "30 Tyrants."

When the oligarchy was in power, the Thirty Tyrants summoned five of us into the Tholos and ordered us to go to Salamis and bring Leon of Salamis back from Salamis to be killed. They ordered many people to do things like this. They wanted to taint as many as they could with responsibility for their regime. (32c)

The second time the number 30 occurs in the *Apology* is at the very beginning of Socrates' speech on sentencing. The jury has just voted that he is guilty. He says,

Men of Athens, I'm not upset about what has happened. You voted against me. A lot of things, taken together, led

to this verdict and you could almost say this turn of events is not unexpected. The amazing thing is how close the vote was. I thought I would lose by far more than this. The way it turns out, if only 30 votes had gone the other way, I'd have been acquitted. (35e-36a)

The 30 tyrants, the 30 votes and the 30 pieces of silver, inserted into the *Apology* in Plato's own mouth, are not a coincidence. Plato chose the number 30 because of the Thirty Tyrants. He then used that number for the number of votes that had to be different for Socrates to be acquitted and for the number of pieces of silver that Socrates should pay as a punishment. In doing this Plato was making Socrates say that if he had bribed 30 jurors with a piece of silver each, he'd have been acquitted. The 30 Athenian jurors would have betrayed their oaths as jurors just as the 30 Athenian tyrants had betrayed Athens.

When he used the phrase "30 pieces of silver" in the *Apology*, Plato was creating a symbol for betrayal, and it is striking that 30 pieces of silver is the price Judas was paid for betraying Christ. We cannot know this for sure, but the symbol for betrayal that Plato created in the *Apology* might well have become a common symbol for betrayal in the ancient world. Perhaps the Romans picked it up. Perhaps that's how they knew how much they were supposed to pay Judas. Perhaps St. Matthew picked it up when he wrote about that betrayal. (26:15)

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<sup>i</sup> *Plato* (Pantheon, 1958) Vol. 2, p. 330, n. 4, trans. H. Meyerhoff.

<sup>ii</sup> Perhaps the *Laws*, the last dialogue Plato wrote, is more distinctive. It is the only one in which Socrates does not appear.

<sup>iii</sup> The phrase "who is sitting over there" does not appear in the Greek. I use the phrase in my translation of this passage because I treat the *Apology* as a play meant to be performed, and if the *Apology* is performed, Socrates must gesture at this point to where Plato was supposed to be sitting. The phrase "who is sitting over there" is meant to indicate that gesture. I also translate "30 minae" as "30 pieces of silver". My reasons for doing this are explained in the last paragraphs of this essay.

<sup>iv</sup> G. Vlastos, *Socrates: ironist and moral philosopher*, (Cambridge, 1991) passim. In *Socratic Studies* (Cambridge, 1994), Vlastos, speaks of “the metamorphosis of Plato’s teacher into Plato’s mouthpiece” (p. 37) and of the “flock of *obiter dicta*” Plato “puts into Socrates’ mouth.” (p. 29).

<sup>v</sup>R. Hackforth, *The Composition of Plato’s Apology* (Cambridge U. Press 1933) p. 46, n. 1

[T]hat the *Apology* is non-philosophical in the sense that Plato is concerned not to discuss impersonal philosophical problems but to present an individual portrait of a philosopher, seems to me beyond question.

<sup>vi</sup> 399 is the first year of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. 399, 398, 397 etc. The 400’s are the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The 5<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century are the period we refer to as “Classical Athens”.

<sup>vii</sup> P. Friedlander, *Plato* (Pantheon, 1958) Vol. 2, p. 165, trans. H. Meyerhoff. “Socrates lives on beyond his death ... precisely because he was true to himself unto death.” (p. 170)

<sup>viii</sup> Hackforth, *The Composition of Plato’s Apology* (Cambridge U. Press 1933) p. vii. “The main purpose of this essay is to determine, so far as possible, the relation of the *Apology* of Plato to the actual speech delivered by Socrates at his trial.”

<sup>ix</sup> We know a good deal about the Athenian courts, but we do not know whether they used an even number of jurors (100, 500, 1000) or an odd number (101, 501, 1001) to avoid ties. Perhaps, they used both, at different times.

<sup>x</sup> Aristophanes, *Wasps*.

<sup>xi</sup> One could say that the *psêphoi* with the hollow axles were *used to vote* for acquittal or that they *were votes* for acquittal. In *Sophistical Refutations*, 165a 10, Aristotle says words stand for things but are not things the way *psêphoi* are votes.

<sup>xii</sup> Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, 9.1.

<sup>xiii</sup> Two other aspects of Athenian democracy were the assembly and ostracism, in both of which any adult male citizen could vote. For details, see S. Wexler and A. Irvine, *Aristotle and the Rule of Law* 23 POLIS 116 (2006).

<sup>xiv</sup> We do not know exactly how long after Socrates’ death the *Apology* was written. Maybe it was as much as five or six years later. It can’t have been more than that. The date is discussed in many books, e.g. Hackforth, *The Composition of Plato’s Apology* (Cambridge U. Press 1933) Ch. II.

<sup>xv</sup>P. Friedlander says there is “a contrast between the Socratic and the Platonic way of philosophy.”

Plato does not conclude, as Socrates did, with an assertion of not knowing. He discovered a metaphysical world, and it was his task to make others see it through his own eyes.

*Plato* (Pantheon, 1958) Vol. 1, p. 168-9, trans. H. Meyerhoff

<sup>xvi</sup> The fact that there is a third accuser, Lykon, is mentioned in the *Apology*, but there are no allusions to his speech.

<sup>xvii</sup> Pronounced *the oss´, the ah´*. The accent on *oss* or *ah* and *th* is pronounced as in “theta”. Liddell & Scott, *Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1888).

<sup>xviii</sup> Socrates uses it here with δαίμόνιον. θεϊόν τι (something godish) καὶ δαίμόνιον.

<sup>xix</sup> *Memorabilia* IV. 3. 12.

<sup>xx</sup> Literally, “It turns me away from what I am planning to do. It turns me toward, never.”

<sup>xxi</sup> W.J.M. Starkie, *The Clouds of Aristophanes* (A.M. Hakkert, Amsterdam, 1966)

<sup>xxii</sup> The words “quote” and “unquote” do not appear in the Greek.

<sup>xxiii</sup> It also refers to abstract thought (things up in the air) about the most basic things (things under the ground).

<sup>xxiv</sup> The only specific negative command of the *daimonion* mentioned in the *Apology* by Socrates is the command not to be involved in the public business. (31d )

<sup>xxv</sup> Friedlander speaks of “intellectual undressing”. *Plato* (Pantheon, 1958) Vol. 1, p. 159, trans. H. Meyerhoff.

<sup>xxvi</sup> A very instructive book about the war and Socrates is R. Waterfield, *Why Socrates Died* (McClelland & Stewart, 2009).

<sup>xxvii</sup> In *Against Timarchus*, Aeschines suggested that Socrates was tried in place of Critias, 173.

The period just before Athens lost the war was filled with factional fighting and changes in the forms of government. A great many Athenians were killed by other Athenians. This continued under the 30 tyrants, whose regime lasted eight months. Then the Athenians revolted and restored their old democracy. This was also quite bloody. The Athenians realized that they could not live together without an amnesty for things that had been done during and just after the war.

The amnesty leads scholars talk about whether or not it was “legal” for the Athenians to try Socrates. At this distance, and given the sketchiness of what we know about the amnesty, no one can say with any certainty whether or not Socrates’ trial was legal. As he himself makes clear in the *Apology*, Socrates was a great stickler for legality. If there had been a serious question about whether or not it was legal to try him, it seems that Socrates would at least have mentioned this in the *Apology*, and he does not.

More important, though we are sometimes forced to ask unanswerable legal questions about the present, we are not compelled to ask such questions about the past. At the end of Xenophon’s *Apology*, a young follower of Socrates weeps and says it hurts him to see Socrates convicted unjustly. Xenophon reports that Socrates replied by asking him “Would it have hurt you less if I’d been convicted justly?”

This has to be something the real Socrates actually said. Xenophon is not smart enough to have invented it. Since we cannot get a legal answer to the technical question of whether or not it was legal under Athenian law to try Socrates, perhaps we should ask with the real Socrates, “Would sentencing Socrates to death have been any better if it was legal? If it was illegal, does that make any worse?”

<sup>xxviii</sup> Xenophon says this in the *Memorabilia*, I, 1, 4,

<sup>xxix</sup> No matter how good his beard was, to perform the role of Socrates in the *Apology*, an actor would have to learn the lines and be a person who would not learn lines.

<sup>xxx</sup> *Plato* (Pantheon, 1958) Vol. 2, p. 167, trans. H. Meyerhoff. This part of the *Apology* is discussed with particular care by R. Hackforth, *The Composition of Plato’s Apology* (Cambridge U. Press 1933) p. 110-134. His approach to it is very different. He explains the difficulties to make them go away.

<sup>xxxi</sup> R.B. Rutherford, *The Art of Plato* (Duckworth, 1995) describes Socrates as “eccentric, amusing, ingenious, playful, maddening, physically grotesque” p. 8

<sup>xxxii</sup> *Plato* (Pantheon, 1958) Vol. 2, p. 165, trans. H. Meyerhoff.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> *Plato* (Pantheon, 1958) Vol. 1, p. 47, trans. H. Meyerhoff.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> *Plato* (Pantheon, 1958) Vol. 1, p. 121, trans. H. Meyerhoff.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Though he was not, J. Derrida might have been speaking of the *Apology* when he denied this possibility in *Plato's Pharmacy*, reprinted in *Dissemination*, (trans. B. Johnson, U. of Chicago, 1981) p. 137. Derrida says “writing gives itself as the image of speech”. He says writing.. “inscribes in the space of silence and in the silence of space the living time of voice. ... violently wrests out of its element the animate interiority of speech”.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> P. Friedlander, *Plato* (Pantheon, 1958) Vol. 1, p. 157, trans. H. Meyerhoff.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> J. D. Denniston, *Greek Prose Style* (Oxford, 1952) p. 80.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> J. D. Denniston, *Greek Prose Style* (Oxford, 1952) p. 92.

<sup>xxxix</sup> In *Disseminations*, (U. of Chicago, 1981) trans. B. Johnson. *Disseminations*

<sup>xi</sup> ἄγῶνος is pronounced *ah go nos*. The accent is on *go* and *nos* is pronounced as in “nostril”.

ἄγῶνα is pronounced *ah go nah*. The accent is on *go*.

ἄγωνιζόμενος is pronounced *ah go knee sew men nos*. The accent is on *sew*, which is pronounced like the English word “sew” said with a z sound instead of an s.

<sup>xli</sup> ἄγῶν, pronounced *og* as in “cog” and “own” with the accent on “own”, becomes our “agony”. It is used for a war, an Olympic event and a legal trial.

<sup>xlii</sup> Burnet does not mention the repetition of “night”, but in a comment about the alternative that Socrates proposes, that death is like “taking a journey”, he says:

Here Socrates once more falls into the language of the *Phaedo*. ... This is a fresh indication that Plato, even at the early date when he wrote the *Apology*, thought it quite appropriate to attribute the doctrine in the *Phaedo* to Socrates.

J. Burnet, *Plato's Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates, and Crito, edited with notes* 1924, Oxford) p. 168.

This is an example of the tendency mentioned earlier to read the philosophy of the later dialogues back into the *Apology*.

<sup>xliii</sup> θάνατος is pronounced *than ah toss*. The accent is on *than* and the th in *than* is the th in method.

<sup>xliiv</sup> νομίζειν is pronounced *gnaw me zane*. The accent is on *me* and *zane* is like “sane” with a z. θεοῦς is pronounced *the ouss*. The accent is on *ouss* which is the “ous” in “couscous”. The th in *the* is the th in method.

<sup>xliv</sup> J. Riddell, *Apology of Plato, with a revised text and English notes* (Oxford, 1877)

<sup>xlvi</sup> Other scholars have, of course, noticed this alliteration. E.g. J. Burnet, *Plato's Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates, and Crito, edited with notes* 1924, Oxford) p. 163.

<sup>xlvii</sup> No one knows whether the accent in ancient Greek was a stress or a release. Perhaps it was tonal, like Chinese. If you want to use the accents, they are indicated with ´.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, xi, 1452a 22

<sup>xlix</sup> At 1055b 30 of *Metaphysics*, Aristotle insists that each thing has only one contrary, but that is in a given context. He recognizes that there are different contexts and hence, there are different contraries. He himself discusses oppositeness and contradiction, two different kinds of contrariness. “All” and “none” are opposites and “all” and “some” are opposites but they are different opposites, opposites in different dimensions.

<sup>i</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony with Constant Reference to Socrates*, (trans. L.M. Capel, London, Collins, 1966) p. 174.

<sup>ii</sup> Burnet explains Socrates' relation to the oracle. He says that at first Socrates does not understand its meaning and seeks to refute it. Later, after he "has discovered the true meaning of the oracle", Socrates tries to help the god by confirming the prophecy. J. Burnet, *Plato's Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates, and Crito, edited with notes* (1924, Oxford) p. 97. If there is one problem in Burnet's great work, it is that Burnet thinks Socrates understands the "true meaning" of the oracle and that everything Socrates says is consistent and makes sense.

<sup>iii</sup> P. Friedlander, *Plato* (Pantheon, 1958) Vol. 2, p. 165, trans. H. Meyerhoff. "... the defense against the official indictment is not the main thing."

<sup>iiii</sup> Friedlander says what is at stake for Socrates is "the reaffirmation of his own existence." *Plato* (Pantheon, 1958) Vol. 2, p.169, trans. H. Meyerhoff.

<sup>liv</sup> Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, "Exkurse, Die Herrschaft des Gesetzes," *Philol. Unters.*, 1 (1880), p. 47.

<sup>lv</sup> *Plato* (Pantheon, 1958) Vol. 1, p, 8, trans. H. Meyerhoff.

<sup>lvi</sup> The records of the trial are as sketchy as the records of the naval battle. Some sources treat Socrates as chairman of the assembly; others as just one of the marshals. Thus, Burnet says there is no evidence that Socrates was presiding. J. Burnet, *Plato's Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates, and Crito, edited with notes* (1924, Oxford) p. 133. He says Socrates was one of a group of marshals that refused to accept the vote. All the others gave in under pressure; but Socrates held out. This difference in detail does not change the story.

<sup>lvii</sup> *Kata nomon* is pronounced *k'ta nomon*

<sup>lviii</sup> J. Burnet, *Plato's Euthyphro., Apology of Socrates, and Crito/ edited with notes* (1924, Oxford) p. 130.

<sup>lix</sup> P. Friedlander, *Plato* (Pantheon, 1958) Vol. 1, p. 287, trans. H. Meyerhoff. This comment is contained in chapter XVI, which is an essay by H. Cairns, "Plato's Theory of Law" reprinted from 56 Harv. L. R. 359 (1942)

<sup>lx</sup> αἰδώς is pronounced *eye dose*. The accent is on *dose*.

<sup>lxi</sup> αἰσχύνη is pronounced *ice chyounigh*. The accent is on *you*, which is said as the English word "you". The *ch* is the *ch* in Bach.

<sup>lxii</sup> Δεινός is pronounced *day nos*. The accent is on *nos*, which is said as in "nostril".

<sup>lxiii</sup> λέγειν is pronounced *leg gay in*. The accent is on *leg*.

<sup>lxiv</sup> ἀληθής is pronounced *ah lay thace*. The accent is on *thace*, in which *th* is pronounced as in "method" and "ace" as the word is said in English.

<sup>lxv</sup> M.Heidegger makes a great deal of this in *Plato's Sophist* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind., 1997).

<sup>lxvi</sup> *The Concept of Irony*, p. 231.

<sup>lxvii</sup> R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (Oxford, 1953), p. 13.

<sup>lxviii</sup> J. Burnet, *Plato's Euthyphro., Apology of Socrates, and Crito/ edited with notes* (1924, Oxford) p. 83.

<sup>lxix</sup> Φάρμακον is pronounced *farm ah con*, with the accent on *farm*. J. Derrida makes a great deal of the contradictory meanings of this word in his essay *Plato's Pharmacy*, reprinted in *Dissemination*, (trans. B. Johnson, U. of Chicago , 1981) p. 63.

<sup>lxx</sup> **χωρέω** is pronounced *choe re owe*. The accent is on *choe* which is like “hoe” with the *ch* from Bach. *Re* is like “red” without the *d*.

<sup>lxxi</sup> **ὄργαινω** is pronounced *oar guy no*. The accent is on *oar*.

<sup>lxxii</sup> **Χρεία**. The pronunciation of this word is difficult to convey. It is pronounced almost like “crayon”, except the *c* is the *ch* in Bach and the *on* is *ah*.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> **ἄπειρος** is pronounced *ah pay ros*. The accent is on *ah*, and *ros* is as in “rostrum”.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> **μέλλω** is pronounced as if it were the English word “mellow”.

<sup>lxxv</sup> *Introduction to Attic Greek*, (University of California, 1993) p.86.

<sup>lxxvi</sup> H.G. Liddell reveals this very casually in the preface to Liddell & Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1888) when he says:

... from Homer downwards, to the close of Classical Attic Greek, care has been taken to insert all words. Besides these, will be found words used by Aristotle ....

<sup>lxxvii</sup> *Metaphysics*, IV. ii, 1005a 4. The Greek word could be translated as “opposites” or “contraries”. The contrariety of language comes up quite often in *Metaphysics*, e.g. IX. i, 1046 b 5-11 and X. i, 1052b 27. At *Physics*, I. v, 188b 25, Aristotle repeats that “everything that comes in nature is opposites or from opposites” and at I. v, 189a 10, he says “it appears that the beginnings must be contraries”.

<sup>lxxviii</sup> *Sophistical Refutations*, I, 165a 11-12

<sup>lxxix</sup> *The Odyssey*, trans. by Robert Fitzgerald, Garden City: Anchor Books, 1963, Book XVIII, line 358.

<sup>lxxx</sup> A. Carson, *The Economy of the Unlost*, (Princeton, 1999) p. 17.

<sup>lxxxi</sup> J.J. Helm, *Plato Apology* (Bolchazy-Carducci, Wauconda IL., 1997)

<sup>lxxxii</sup> **ἐγὼ λέγω** is pronounced *egg owe leg owe*. The accent in **ἐγὼ** is on *egg*, in **λέγω** on *leg*. Plato also uses **ἐγὼ φημί** (*fay me*, with the accent on *me*), which also means “I I say”.

<sup>lxxxiii</sup> *Introduction to Attic Greek*, (University of California, 1993) p.54.

<sup>lxxxiv</sup> J. Burnet, *Plato’s Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates, and Crito/ edited with notes* (1924, Oxford) p. 82.

<sup>lxxxv</sup> J. Helm, *Plato’s Apology* (Bolchazy-Carducci, Wauconda, Ill. 1997).

<sup>lxxxvi</sup> p. 20.

<sup>lxxxvii</sup> The *Apology* does not mention this fact, but in his speech *On the Mysteries*, Andocides identifies Hipponicus as “the richest man in Greece.”(1.130) In the same speech, Andocides tells a scandalous story about Kallias and his two sons.

<sup>lxxxviii</sup> **θορυβεῖν** is pronounced, *tho rue bane*. The accent is on *bane*, which is pronounced as if it had two syllables *bay in*. *Tho* is pronounced as in “thorough” and *rue* is pronounced as the French word for “street”.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Two different Greek words are used: **διατριβή** ... **διάγειν**

<sup>xc</sup> As M. C. Stokes says, Plato’s “Socrates reasons less than cogently and exaggerates what force his reasoning possesses.” “*Socrates’ Mission*” in B.C. Gower & M.C. Stokes *Socratic Questions* (Routledge, 1992) p. 32.

<sup>xci</sup> This is the only time in Plato’s works where he is said to speak.