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The Apology

Plato

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SparkNotes Publishing
A Division of SparkNotes LLC
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 **CONTEXT**

The life and teachings of Socrates (c. 469-399 B.C.) stand at the foundation of Western philosophy. He lived in Athens during a time of transition (Athens' defeat at the hands of Sparta in the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.) ended the Golden Age of Athenian civilization) and had a tremendous influence on the Athenian youth of his day. Socrates himself never recorded his thoughts, so our only record of his life and thought comes from his contemporaries. These accounts are mixed and often biased by the authors' personal interpretations.

It seems that Socrates led a very simple life, renouncing wealth and holding himself aloof from political ambitions, preferring instead to mingle with the crowds in Athens' public places, engaging whomever he could in conversation. Nonetheless, he did serve as a hoplite (heavy infantryman) in several battles during the Peloponnesian War, and was distinguished by his fortitude and bravery. In 399, Socrates was brought before a jury of around 500 Athenians on charges of not recognizing the gods recognized by the state, of inventing new deities, and of corrupting the youth of Athens.

The most likely reason for this trial is Socrates' close association with a number of men who had fallen out of political favor in Athens. But because an amnesty had been declared for political offenders, other charges had to be brought against him. Socrates was found guilty by a narrow margin and then sentenced to death.

Plato (c. 427-347 B.C.), the author of *The Apology*, was one of Socrates' greatest admirers, and our knowledge of Socrates stems mostly from Plato's dialogues (for competing accounts, see Aristophanes' satirical presentation in *The Clouds* and the writings of Xenophon). Plato was born into a prominent Athenian family, and was expected to pursue a career in politics. However, the short-lived Spartan-imposed oligarchy of the Thirty Tyrants (404-403) and the trial and execution of his mentor, Socrates, led Plato to become disgusted with Athenian political life, and he devoted himself instead to teaching and philosophical inquiry. To that end, he founded the Academy around 385 B.C., which counted Aristotle among its students. The Academy lasted in one form or another until 527 A.D., 912 years in total, and served as the prototype for the Western university system.

Plato's thought is mostly recorded in the form of dialogues which feature Socrates as the protagonist. Apparently, the Socratic dialogue was a genre form at the time; not just Plato, but many of Socrates' other students recorded philosophical debates in this form. Plato's dialogues are generally classed into early, middle, and late periods. The early dialogues were written soon after Socrates' death, and in them we get the clearest picture of Socrates and Socratic philosophy. As Plato matured, however, he developed an increasingly distinct voice and philosophical outlook. The figure of Socrates in the middle and late dialogues (for example, *The Republic* and *Phaedo*) is more of a mouthpiece for Plato's own views. *The*

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Apology is one of Plato's earlier dialogues, in which we find none of his more characteristic doctrines, but rather a stolid attempt to present an honest and sympathetic portrait of his mentor. Presumably, Plato's aim was, at least in part, to defend Socrates' reputation after Socrates' trial and execution.

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 **CHARACTERS**

Socrates—The protagonist of *The Apology*, as well as all of Plato's other dialogues. Socrates seems to be a very simple man, not having many material possessions and speaking in a plain, conversational manner. However, this seeming plainness is all a part of the ironic characteristic of Socrates' method. Professing his own ignorance, he engages in conversation with someone claiming to be an expert, usually in ethical matters. By asking simple questions, Socrates gradually reveals that his interlocutor is in fact very confused and does not actually know anything about the matters about which he claimed to be an expert. The quest for wisdom and the instruction of others through dialogue and inquiry were considered by Socrates to be the highest aims in life: one of his most famous sayings is, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Some have argued that Socrates himself never advanced any theories of his own, and certainly many of the doctrines that appear in the later dialogues are of Plato's invention. In early dialogues, such as *The Apology*, Plato presents us with a Socrates who is less informed by Platonic philosophy and serves more as foil for his interlocutors who claim to have positive knowledge.

Meletus—The chief accuser of Socrates, responsible for bringing him to trial. Little is known about Meletus and by all accounts, he seems to have been a rather insignificant figure. Plato's portrayal of him, both in *The Apology* and in *The Euthyphro* (see 2b) is far from sympathetic. Socrates' cross-examination of him in *The Apology* puts Meletus to shame.

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 SUMMARY

Plato's *The Apology* is an account of the speech Socrates makes at the trial in which he is charged with not recognizing the gods recognized by the state, inventing new deities, and corrupting the youth of Athens. Socrates' speech, however, is by no means an "apology" in our modern understanding of the word. The name of the dialogue derives from the Greek "apologia," which translates as a defense, or a speech made in defense. Thus, in *The Apology*, Socrates attempts to defend himself and his conduct—certainly not to apologize for it.

For the most part, Socrates speaks in a very plain, conversational manner. He explains that he has no experience with the law courts and that he will instead speak in the manner to which he is accustomed: with honesty and directness. He explains that his behavior stems from a prophecy by the oracle at Delphi which claimed that he was the wisest of all men. Recognizing his ignorance in most worldly affairs, Socrates concluded that he must be wiser than other men only in that he knows that he knows nothing. In order to spread this peculiar wisdom, Socrates explains that he considered it his duty to question supposed "wise" men and to expose their false wisdom as ignorance. These activities earned him much admiration amongst the youth of Athens, but much hatred and anger from the people he embarrassed. He cites their contempt as the reason for his being put on trial.

Socrates then proceeds to interrogate Meletus, the man primarily responsible for bringing Socrates before the jury. This is the only instance in *The Apology* of the *elenchus*, or cross-examination, which is so central to most Platonic dialogues. His conversation with Meletus, however, is a poor example of this method, as it seems more directed toward embarrassing Meletus than toward arriving at the truth.

In a famous passage, Socrates likens himself to a gadfly stinging the lazy horse which is the Athenian state. Without him, Socrates claims, the state is liable to drift into a deep sleep, but through his influence—irritating as it may be to some—it can be wakened into productive and virtuous action.

Socrates is found guilty by a narrow margin and is asked to propose a penalty. Socrates jokingly suggests that if he were to get what he deserves, he should be honored with a great meal for being of such service to the state. On a more serious note, he rejects prison and exile, offering perhaps instead to pay a fine. When the jury rejects his suggestion and sentences him to death, Socrates stoically accepts the verdict with the observation that no one but the gods know what happens after death and so it would be foolish to fear what one does not know. He also warns the jurymen who voted against him that in silencing their critic rather than listening to him, they have harmed themselves much more than they have harmed him.

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**ANALYSIS AND THEMES**

The Apology is one of those rare works that gracefully bridges the divide between philosophy and literature. The work is less concerned with asserting any particular philosophical doctrines than it is with creating a portrait of the ideal philosopher. On trial, with his life at stake, Socrates maintains his cool and unwaveringly defends his way of life as unassailably just. This speech has served as inspiration and justification for philosophical thinkers ever since. It is also valuable in that it links three major themes in Socratic thought: Socratic irony, the *elenchus* (the Socratic mode of inquiry), and the higher ethical concerns that dominate Socrates' life.

The Delphic oracle, which proclaimed that Socrates was the wisest of men because he knows that he knows nothing, can be posited as the source of Socratic irony. This oracle has led Socrates to assume his highly ironic stance of confessing his own ignorance, and yet showing his interlocutors to be even more ignorant than he; great wisdom turns out, contrary to expectation, to reside in a humble acknowledgment of ignorance. With wisdom of this kind, Socrates does not take himself too seriously. Indeed, his wisdom is deeply humbling, as it casts all pretensions to human knowledge into question. With a smile, Socrates accepts that he is better off the less he thinks he knows, and passes this wisdom along with appropriate wit.

This irony, then, deeply informs the *elenchus*, Socrates' preferred mode of inquiry. It is important to note that almost all written accounts of Socrates are dialogues (*The Apology* is an exception)—Socrates never lectures on his beliefs in a one-sided manner. This supports the idea that Socrates has no knowledge of his own to put forward. His method of inquiry consists of identifying what his interlocutor thinks he knows, and then slowly dissecting those claims of knowledge. *The Apology*, however, is presented almost exclusively in the form of a monologue, because Socrates is not discussing and dismantling any one particular claim so much as he is laying out the method behind these dismantlings. As such, it is an invaluable commentary on the other dialogues.

The elenchus acts to disabuse Socrates' interlocutors of their pretensions and thereby deepens their wisdom. For Socrates, wisdom and virtue are closely connected, so his efforts serve to improve society as a whole. In Socrates' view, if we are all wise, none of us will ever do wrong, and our self-knowledge will lead to healthier, more fulfilling lives. Thus, the philosopher, according to Socrates, does not merely follow abstract intellectual pursuits for the sake of amusement, but is engaged in activities of the highest moral value.

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SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

17a - 18a

Note: There are only two natural breaks in the text as Plato wrote it, both of which appear near the end. These notes on the text were made later, sections beginning or breaking off where a new theme or topic is introduced or dropped. I have used sections demarcated according to the Stephanus numbers (the page numbers from the 1578 complete works edited by Henri Estienne ("Stephanus" in Latin)). For Plato, the Stephanus numbers are the standard page references, and most editions of Plato's work contain the Stephanus numbers along the margins.

Summary

Socrates opens his case with an appeal to the jury to listen to him openly and to pardon him if he slips into his usual conversational style. His accusers have already spoken against him in the flowery manner common in courts of law, and have warned the jury not to be deceived by Socrates, a skillful speaker. Socrates immediately addresses himself to that issue, claiming that while his accusers' speeches contained great refinement and skill, he lacks the ability to speak so well. However, he remarks, he will speak the truth whereas his opponents uttered only falsehood.

Socrates further contrasts himself with his accusers, suggesting that while their rhetorical flourishes were the result of prepared speech, his speech will be fully improvised, issuing thoughts as they come to him. His accusers' artificial and studied speech would be unbecoming of a man of his age (Socrates was seventy at the time of the trial), and so he hopes to address the jury simply by saying what is true.

He asks the jury's forgiveness if he slips into his usual conversational style. This is his first appearance in a court of law, he explains, and so he is completely unfamiliar with the language of the place. As the jurors might forgive a foreigner for speaking in his accustomed dialect, Socrates asks their patience if he, a stranger to the law courts, might speak as he normally would as well. Rather than pay attention to his style, Socrates asks the jurors to pay attention to the substance of his speech and consider whether what he says is true or not.

Commentary

The sharp contrast that runs throughout this first section lies between the studied, artificial—and false—speech of Socrates' accusers, and Socrates' own improvised, conversational—and

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true-speech. At this time in Athens, there were a great many sophists, professional teachers who would instruct the wealthy youth of the city in oratory. Throughout his works, Plato gives a rather unkind picture of these sophists—it seems they were generally considered shallow thinkers who taught budding politicians to overcome sound reasoning with shoddy reasoning by means of flowery rhetoric. We shall see that Socrates has often been mistakenly classed with these sophists, whom he despises. The speech of his accusers, then, comes from careful training with sophists, who have taught them to speak convincingly and yet falsely. By contrasting himself with these men, Socrates at once invokes the common prejudice against sophistry against his accusers and distances himself from their practices. He remarks (17b) that he is only a skillful speaker if by "skillful speaker" is meant someone who speaks the truth.

This first section immediately thrusts upon us the depth and richness of Socratic irony. While Socrates professes to be a plain man who speaks only simple truths, he is employing some very clever rhetoric in doing so. Apparently, it was a common rhetorical practice in the law courts to profess one's lack of skill in public speaking. We shouldn't take Socrates' words at face value: in claiming that he is not a clever speaker, he is in fact showing himself to be very clever indeed. It would be more accurate to say that Socrates is parodying the usual rhetoric (which was undoubtedly employed by his accusers), turning it on itself. He is using rhetorical devices to show the uselessness of rhetorical devices, thereby devaluing his accusers' words. This act of turning his opponents' own words against themselves is typical of the kind of irony Socrates uses so skillfully. We shall see that after this introductory flourish, Socrates does indeed slip into his normal conversational tone, having sufficiently parodied his opponents.

Another point of note comes at 17c, where Socrates claims that his speech will be entirely improvised. The speech we are reading, however, does not come from Socrates' improvised speech but from Plato's well-trained writing. Obviously, this is not a word-for-word transcription of Socrates' speech, but is rather a reconstruction by Plato. We find Plato inserting a further layer of irony here, as the words that we are reading are very clearly not improvised.

The concept of irony in Socrates and Plato can be (and has elsewhere been) discussed extensively. Such a slippery concept is difficult to present concisely. That being said, one (but by no means the only) way to consider the significance of all this irony is to point out the essential flexibility of words and language—how the same words can be manipulated to serve different purposes. The end result might be to persuade the jury (and the reader) to mistrust the rhetorical flourishes of both Socrates and his accusers and to pay attention rather to the justness of their claims. Socrates is firmly convinced that his accusers have slandered him and that careful attention to the facts of the case will make this clear. Thus, in his introductory speech, Socrates hopes to do away with rhetoric and sophistry and to focus the jury's attention instead on the facts.

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18a - 20c

Summary

Socrates remarks that Meletus, Anytus, and Lycon, who have brought the present charges before the court, are only the most recent of a number of people who have spoken out against him. He has more reason to fear his older accusers than these recent ones, because the former have been speaking out against him for some time, prejudicing many of the jurors against him from the time of their youth. These older accusers levy two principal accusations against Socrates: first, that he does not believe in the gods, but rather teaches purely physical explanations for heavenly and earthly phenomena; and second, that he teaches how to make a weaker argument overcome a stronger argument by means of clever rhetoric. Socrates complains that he is not even certain who these older accusers are, though he makes a passing allusion to Aristophanes (the comic playwright who parodied Socrates in *The Clouds*). As a result, he cannot cross-examine these accusers, and he must acknowledge that the prejudices they have lodged against him go very deep. All he can do is answer their accusations as best as he can.

Socrates first addresses himself to the accusation that he "inquires into things below the earth and in the sky" (19b)—that is, that he tries to provide physical explanations for matters that are normally considered to be the workings of the gods. He refers here to Aristophanes' play, where Socrates is portrayed as floating about in the air and uttering all sorts of nonsense about divine matters. Socrates responds that he does not pretend to have any knowledge of these things, nor is he interested in them. He has no complaints against people who do claim to be experts in these affairs, but he is not one of them. He asks the jury to consider whether any of them has ever heard him speak about any of these subjects.

Socrates then distances himself from the sophists (the men who are typically disdained for teaching their students how to make weaker arguments overcome stronger arguments). These men generally charge a fee for their services, and Socrates denies ever having charged anyone for engaging in conversation with him. He ridicules such behavior, saying that a sophist will persuade young men "to leave the company of their fellow citizens, with any of whom they can associate for nothing, attach themselves to him, pay money for the privilege, and be grateful into the bargain" (19e-20a). These sophists claim to teach their students about virtue and how to become better citizens, and Socrates concedes that such teaching may well be worth a great fee, but that he himself lacks any skill in teaching these matters.

Commentary

The main thrust of this section is to distance Socrates from the Presocratic philosophers and from the sophists, distinguishing him as unique among the Athenian intellectuals. The

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claim that Socrates provides physical explanations for divine phenomena is true of the Presocratics, and the claim that Socrates charges a fee for teaching rhetoric is true of the sophists, but neither claim is true of Socrates himself. He consistently professes to have no expertise in any field whatsoever; that he has never claimed such expertise; and that he has certainly never charged a fee for passing on such knowledge.

"Presocratic" philosophy refers to Greek philosophy untouched by Socrates' influence. The Presocratics date back to the sixth century B.C., when thinkers began to question the existing mythological explanations for the existence of the world, the universe, and matter, and began looking for physical explanations instead. Among the famous Presocratics are Thales, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, and Parmenides. The state sanctioned devout worship of the Olympian gods, so the Presocratics' teaching was considered illegal and dangerous. In the *Phaedo* (96a-98b), Socrates claims that in his youth, he was attracted to the teachings of Anaxagoras, one of the great Presocratics, but that he later abandoned that line of thinking. However, Socrates himself never taught such matters, and his defense at 19d is not that he was never interested in Presocratic philosophy, but that he never claimed expertise or taught it himself. Indeed, Socrates' teachings remained exclusively in the human realm, dealing with questions of ethics and virtue. One of his great contributions to philosophy is the introduction of ethical questions, and his dismissal of the Presocratic interest in cosmology.

The sophists were discussed in the previous section as men who trained Athenian youths for a career in politics by teaching them how to make convincing arguments and flowery speeches. Plato is determined to set Socrates apart from such men, and many of his dialogues have Socrates showing up the emptiness of their teachings. One of the great differences between Socrates and the sophists is that the sophists charged a fee for their services, and Socrates' poverty speaks to the fact that he has clearly not profited greatly from teaching.

As was mentioned earlier, one great source of these prejudices against Socrates comes from Aristophanes' *The Clouds*, in which Socrates is portrayed as an eccentric old fool who floats about suspended from a crane, spouting all sorts of nonsense about the heavens and the earth. Aristophanes also characterizes Socrates as charging a fee for his services. *The Clouds* was written in 423 B.C., 24 years before this trial, so whether it is the source of these prejudices or a reflection of even older prejudices, we can see that accusations against Socrates date from long before the trial.

Socrates' confession that he lacks any kind of expertise in any field whatsoever is central to his philosophy, and sets him apart from both the sophists and the Presocratics. Teachers from these two groups both claimed that through experience, inspiration, or investigation, they had gained access to special knowledge that could be taught. Socrates, on the other hand, never makes any particular claims to knowledge, and his inquiries tend to show the ignorance of his interlocutors rather than his own expertise. Socrates, then, has no particular knowledge, as such, to teach at all, but has instead a peculiar kind of wisdom that will be clarified in the sections following.

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20c - 24e

Summary

Having claimed that he is not like either the Presocratics or the sophists, Socrates opens himself up to the question of what might have led to these false accusations. He answers that he has developed a reputation for wisdom—but a kind of limited, human wisdom, not the kind of super-human wisdom that would be required to speak authoritatively about matters such as the Presocratics and the sophists discuss. This reputation originated in a prophecy given by the oracle at Delphi to his friend Chaerephon. Chaerephon asked the omniscient oracle if there was anyone wiser than Socrates, and the priestess replied that there was not.

Socrates recounts how he took this news with great puzzlement: he knew the oracle could not lie, and yet he was only too aware that he had no particular wisdom or specialized knowledge at all. In order to test the oracle, or to prove it wrong, Socrates sought out and questioned Athenian men who were highly esteemed for wisdom. First, he interrogated the politicians, then the poets, and then the skilled craftsmen. In questioning the politicians, he found that though they thought they were very wise, they did not in fact know much of anything at all. The poets, though they wrote great works of genius, seemed incapable of explaining them, and Socrates concluded that their genius came not from wisdom but from some sort of instinct or inspiration which was in no way connected to their intellect. Furthermore, these poets seemed to think they could speak intelligently about all sorts of matters concerning which they were quite ignorant. In the craftsmen, Socrates found men who truly did have great wisdom in their craft, but invariably, they seemed to think that their expertise in one field allowed them to speak authoritatively in many other fields, about which they knew nothing. In each case, Socrates affirmed that he would rather be as he is, knowing that he knows nothing, than to be inflated by a false sense of his own great wisdom. Thus, he concludes, he truly is wiser than other men because he does not think he knows what he does not know.

Though many bystanders take Socrates to be an expert in the fields in which he questions others, Socrates denies any expertise, and interprets the oracle as saying that the wisest of men are men like Socrates who humbly accept that their wisdom is deficient. He feels it his duty to the God of the oracle to continue questioning men who think they are wise in order to show them that they are not. The result has been to earn him many young admirers, and to earn the deep resentment of those whose ignorance he makes evident. These men lack any substantial reason for disliking Socrates, and so, Socrates claims, they invent charges against him, accusing him of being a sophist or a Presocratic. This they prefer to accepting the truth: that they are far more pretentious than they are wise.

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Commentary

The oracle of Apollo at Delphi was the most famous and most revered oracle of the ancient world. That Chaerephon did in fact visit the oracle is confirmed by Xenophon, though in his account, the oracle declared Socrates to be "the most free, upright, and prudent of all people" (Xenophon, *Socrates' Defense*) rather than the most wise. In either case, it is clear that the oracle made a positive claim about Socrates. Most of Plato's early dialogues—those that center more on Socrates' thought than on Plato's own—are concerned with ethical questions, and so we can perhaps reconcile Xenophon's and Plato's accounts by saying that Socrates' wisdom is a kind of ethical wisdom, one that would make him supremely free, upright, and prudent. But the Delphic oracle sided primarily with Sparta during the Peloponnesian War, so it is doubtful how much an Athenian jury would trust or appreciate the evidence given by the oracle.

Also of relevance is the famous motto inscribed above the entrance to the oracle at Delphi: "Know thyself." Socrates is an ardent advocate of self-knowledge, and his investigations can be seen as an attempt to come to a better understanding of his own nature. He is famous for claiming that no one could ever knowingly and willingly do evil, that evil is a result of ignorance and deficient self-knowledge. His investigations generally ask such questions as what it is to be virtuous, or pious, or just. In his dogged efforts to understand these terms himself, and his persistence in showing his interlocutors to be wrong in assuming they have such understanding, Socrates reveals himself as a man intent on gaining the self-knowledge necessary to lead a virtuous life.

Socrates' account of his conversations with the supposed wise men of Athens provides us with a valuable account of his method of *elenchus*, or cross-examination. *The Apology* is a rare exception in Plato's works, in that only a small part of it is given over to the *elenchus*; in most of the works, it is the principal means by which Plato lays out Socrates' arguments. The *elenchus* begins with Socrates' interlocutor claiming to have a perfect understanding of some term, usually an ethical term like "justice," "virtue," or "piety," though epistemology and metaphysics are sometimes discussed in Plato's more mature work. Socrates then proceeds to question his interlocutor about his knowledge of that term, trying to arrive at the essence of the matter. Usually, the interlocutor will manage to find several cases that he thinks exemplify that term, but he will have trouble saying what they all have in common that make the given term apply to them. Through careful interrogation, Socrates will show that his interlocutor does not in fact know anything more than a few scattered and imprecise examples.

In this passage, Socrates gives us the bigger picture, helping us to contextualize all the other dialogues. His reason for questioning so many people on so many subjects is ultimately done out of his duty to Apollo, the god of the oracle. Since the oracle has proclaimed him to be the wisest of men, he feels it his duty to show others that human wisdom does not come from any specialized knowledge, as the politicians or poets or craftsmen would like

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to claim, but rather from a recognition of the limitations of such knowledge. "Philosopher" in Greek literally means "lover of wisdom" and here, Socrates gives us the model for a true philosopher: he accepts resentment and risks death because his love for wisdom far outweighs any concerns for his own safety or well-being. The wisdom of the philosopher consists ultimately in clear and precise thinking (which we can contrast with the creative genius of the artist or the body of knowledge that can be accumulated by the scientist). This distinction made by Socrates, that the role of the philosopher is to question and to clarify knowledge rather than to affirm it, is original and has strongly informed Western philosophy up to the present.

24b - 28a

Summary

Socrates now turns from his old accusers to his new ones, those who have brought him to trial. Socrates reminds the court that they accuse him of corrupting the minds of the young and of believing in supernatural phenomena of his own invention rather than in the gods of the state. In order to defend himself against these charges, Socrates calls on Meletus, his principal accuser, and interrogates him in the familiar form of the *elenchus*, or cross-examination.

If he has such a bad influence on the youth of Athens, Socrates asks, what is it that has a good influence? Meletus responds that the laws make people good. Socrates then urges Meletus to clarify which people might have this good influence, whose business it is to know the laws. In response to Socrates' persistent questioning, Meletus first asserts that the jurymen are responsible for knowing the laws, and then accepts both Councilors and members of the Assembly as equally good influences. Because the Assembly is open to all adult males, Meletus finds himself claiming that the entire population of Athens has a positive influence on the youth, with the sole exception of Socrates. Socrates then draws an analogy with horses, saying that only horse- trainers, very specialized people, have a positive influence on horses, whereas most people would have a negative influence. Surely, Socrates suggests, if it takes such expertise to improve a horse, it would be odd to think that pretty much anyone can improve a person.

Next, Socrates' questioning leads Meletus to claim that wicked people like Socrates intentionally do harm to those with which they live in contact, and that this acts to the detriment of all in that society. Socrates replies to Meletus that, in doing harm to others and hurting all of society, Socrates would thus also be hurting himself, as a member of society. Socrates claims that he cannot possibly be so foolish as to want to hurt himself, and so if he does cause harm, it must be unintentional. And, he concludes, one who unintentionally does harm should be instructed and reprovved, not tried and punished.

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Socrates then addresses the accusation that he does not believe in the gods sanctioned by the state, assuming that this is the negative influence Meletus refers to. Under Socrates' questioning, Meletus asserts that Socrates believes in no gods whatsoever. Socrates replies that Meletus is confusing him with Anaxagoras, a well-known Presocratic, whose theories Meletus is ascribing to Socrates. To prove Meletus wrong, Socrates undertakes to show that he must believe in gods of some sort. He suggests that it would be impossible to believe in human matters without believing in human beings, or in equine matters without believing in horses, or in musical matters without believing in musicians, and so it must analogously be impossible to believe in supernatural matters without believing in supernatural beings. But the affidavit Meletus himself drew up against Socrates claims that Socrates believes—and teaches others to believe—in supernatural matters. That must imply, then, that Socrates believes in supernatural beings. Since the only kinds of supernatural beings, according to Socrates, are gods and children of the gods, it must follow that Socrates believes in gods, contrary to Meletus' initial assertion.

Commentary

This is the only appearance in *The Apology* of a speaker other than Socrates, and it is the only instance of the *elenchus*. However, the dialogue is disappointingly poor, and the reasoning on both sides is shoddy. While most of Socrates' cross-examinations bear the careful consideration of a curious inquirer, this exchange is bitter and dismissive. Socrates does not even pretend to have an interest in identifying the source of Meletus' views. Instead, he sets out to dismiss Meletus as mean-spirited and ignorant. Throughout, Socrates bullies Meletus, mocking him and pushing him to answer more quickly. Often, particularly when his arguments reach their conclusions, Socrates leaves off questioning Meletus altogether, and answers his questions for him with derogatory scorn. Socrates' purpose in doing this is most likely to dismiss Meletus as a worthwhile opponent. He has already given thoughtful answers to his old accusers, and his strategy here is to suggest that even by taking Meletus seriously, he would be conceding too much. Meletus is spoken of harshly here and in the *Euthyphro*, and we can reasonably suppose that Plato was also intent on smearing the reputation of one of the men responsible for Socrates' death.

Socrates' analogy of the horse-trainer is dubious at best, as we are never given a solid reason for putting our faith in the analogy. Why should we suppose that making horses physically fit is a similar activity to making humans virtuous? Just when we hope Socrates will give us an answer, he simply dismisses the whole affair, saying to Meletus, "you make it perfectly clear that you have never paid the slightest attention to the matters over which you are now indicting me" (25c).

His argument that he cannot possibly be causing harm intentionally is similarly dubious. It rests on the doctrine that no one ever does evil willingly and knowingly. This is an interesting and much discussed doctrine, but it is one of Socrates' own invention, and it

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is bold, to say the least, that he presents it here without further argument on its behalf. Furthermore, if he is right in saying that no one intentionally does evil, and those who unintentionally do evil deserve instruction rather than punishment, he is calling the whole purpose of the law court into question. If the court exists in order to try and punish, there must exist people who deserve punishment—at least in the eyes of the jurymen.

When discussing Socrates' belief in the gods, Meletus associates Socrates with Anaxagoras. As mentioned earlier, Anaxagoras was a Presocratic philosopher with whom Socrates studied in his youth and who posited an atheistic worldview. Anaxagoras was exiled from Athens around 450 B.C. for his irreligious views, and so it would indeed be a serious charge to associate Socrates with Anaxagoras. However, as Socrates has already argued, he is different from the Presocratics in that his teachings do not concern themselves with cosmology in any way. Nevertheless, Socrates' "proof" that he does believe in the gods is again far more questionable than the reasoning behind his more sophisticated dialogues. Probably the most problematic leap is the one that takes Socrates from believing in supernatural beings to believing in gods. Traditional Greek thought held that there were several kinds of supernatural beings, gods and children of gods being only two of them, while dead souls, fate, and fortune were also supernatural beings. Strangely, Socrates dogmatically asserts that all supernatural beings are either gods or children of the gods, and Meletus agrees to this assertion without objection.

28a - 32e

Summary

Socrates asks himself before the jury why he should have been so willing to pursue his line of philosophical inquiry if the resentment it has earned him has put his life in danger. He answers his own question, saying that when performing an action, the only relevant question to concern oneself with is whether one is acting justly or not. Considerations of life and death are selfish and unimportant next to considerations of justice. Since his calling to the philosophical life came from no lesser power than Apollo himself, Socrates should be even less willing to abandon his post as a seeker of truth than a good soldier would be to abandon his post in battle.

Socrates' wisdom comes from acknowledging that he does not know what he does not know, and his acknowledgment that he does not know what awaits him in the afterlife leads him not to fear it. A fear of death, then, is just another kind of false wisdom, of claiming to know the unknowable. On the other hand, he knows for certain that it would be wrong to disobey the will of Apollo and stop philosophizing, so he would be foolish to do what he knows is wrong for fear of an unknown quantity. Socrates goes further to suggest that

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if the court were to acquit him only on the condition that he give up philosophizing, he would refuse their offer, choosing to die rather than to abandon his duty to Apollo. His priorities are clear: wealth and honor are trifling concerns next to the pursuit of truth and the perfecting of the soul. This is the message he preaches to the youth of Athens, and unless such preaching corrupts them, he is innocent of the charges laid against him.

Putting an innocent man to death is far worse, and thus far more to be feared, than dying oneself, according to Socrates, and so really it is the jury, and not Socrates himself, that is in grave danger. In doing what he does, Socrates claims he is doing Athens a great favor, and he will not be easy to replace. In a famous passage, he likens himself to a gadfly and the state to a large, lazy thoroughbred horse. He is constantly buzzing about, waking his fellow citizens out of their sleep. Though his presence may be irritating, the state will be more awake and productive thanks to his services.

Unlike most Athenian men, Socrates has mostly kept aloof from politics and public affairs, preferring to interact with people on an individual level. He explains that this behavior results from a supernatural sign, an inner voice which comes to him and dissuades him from getting involved. This, he claims, is the only reason he has lived to the ripe old age of seventy, since no man who acts in opposition to the state, however justly, can survive for long. To prove his point, he refers to two occasions on which he opposed the authorities in the name of justice; in both cases, he nearly died from his bravery.

Commentary

While in his more mature works, Plato asserts all sorts of positive doctrines (the most famous of which was his theory of forms), it is highly debatable whether Socrates advances any positive theses at all. On one hand, he quite explicitly claims that he knows nothing, and that his wisdom lies in his acknowledgment of that fact. On the other hand, there do seem to be some ethical principles that radically inform all of Socrates' thinking. For instance, he is famous for stressing the importance of knowing oneself and for asserting that no one ever knowingly and intentionally does evil rather than good.

In this section of the text, these ethical principles come into play in force as Socrates passionately defends the justice of the philosophical life. As he has already stated, his role as a philosopher is to question people regarding their own supposed knowledge and to show them that their wisdom extends only as far as their acceptance of their ignorance. In this respect, he is helping people gain wisdom (his kind of wisdom, that is) and overcome ignorance. Socrates implicitly associates wisdom with goodness and ignorance with evil, in accordance with his principle that no one knowingly does evil. If we are all uniquely wise, we cannot possibly do evil, since evil deeds are the result of ignorance above all else. Thus, leading the philosophical life is a supreme moral duty, as it is the most direct way of overcoming evil.

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A proper treatment of the Socratic claim that no one knowingly does evil could be a very long discussion; we will only touch on it briefly. First, to clarify, Socrates does not mean to suggest that no one ever commits an evil act out of hatred or selfishness. Rather, he wishes to suggest that hatred, selfishness, and any other source of evil action can ultimately be traced back to ignorance. For Socrates, hatred between people is the result of misunderstanding or miscommunication, and selfishness is the result of deficient self-knowledge. If we knew ourselves and others fully, and had a full understanding of the facts at hand, we would never commit an evil act.

Another question regarding the Socratic claim is how far we can take it to be a claim at all. Interestingly, Socrates never seems to directly assert this claim, and he certainly never argues for it. Usually, he just implicitly treats it as though it were self-evident. If it is not a positive claim that can be argued for, Socrates is not violating his claim that he has no positive knowledge in any specialized field. But if it is not a positive claim, what sort of claim is it? Perhaps we could argue that it is an intuition, one that has no evidential basis. Alternatively, we could read it as an empty claim, asserting nothing more than the fact that if we knew everything, we would know what was best for ourselves. There is no easy answer to this question that presents itself to us in the text.

For a man such as Socrates, who claims to be so committed to improving the state and its citizenry, it would strike the jury as odd that he places so little emphasis on public affairs. This, he explains, is the advice of his supernatural sign, the voice in his head that warns him against such activities. This sign could be taken to be one of the supernatural things that Socrates believes in, which he used as evidence of his belief in gods during his earlier cross-examination of Meletus. Interestingly, though Socrates persists in saying that this voice is of supernatural origin, he nowhere suggests that it has to be a god, in spite of his earlier assumption that all supernatural things are either gods or children of gods.

In any case, the "sign" is right: Socrates would not last long in public affairs. His present trial is just one of many cases in Athenian history where justice was unfairly suspended when the safety of the state was thought to be at stake. Socrates' emphasis is on the ethical life as expressed on the personal level and through self-knowledge. In Socrates' view, the health and prosperity of the state would follow if every one of the citizens were wise and virtuous, but no set of laws can ensure such health and prosperity if the citizens act unjustly. These considerations were especially pertinent following the Peloponnesian War, as Athens fell into decline.

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32e - 35d

Summary

Socrates affirms that he has been consistent and just in his dealings with people throughout his life. He has never charged a fee for his teaching, has never kept secret any of thoughts, and has never refused to converse with anybody. The young men of Athens flock to him not because he preaches impious doctrines, as his accusers charge him, but because they enjoy hearing his cross-examinations: there is a good deal of amusement to be gained from watching the embarrassment of a pompous busybody. If these young have been corrupted by his bad influence, Socrates asks, why have they not since learnt the error of their ways and stepped forward to denounce him? On the contrary, Socrates cites the names of several of his pupils present in the jury—Plato among them—who are here in his support. Not only they, but their older relatives also take his side.

In summing up, Socrates alludes to the common practices of shedding tears, begging, and making mention of family members and loved ones in order to gain mercy. Though he has three sons of his own, Socrates scorns such methods for three reasons: first, it would be shameful and embarrassing, and such behavior would earn the scorn of foreigners; second, he would be asking the jury to consider facts that are irrelevant to the case at hand—if they are to deal justly with him, they should not consider such extraneous matters; and third, he would be asking the jurymen to break their oath of judging justly and impartially, a deed which would be highly impious. Of all places, Socrates would not like to appear impious when he is at court on charges of impiety.

Commentary

In referring to the "corrupted" youth of Athens one more time, Socrates is not saying anything new, except that this time he identifies a number of his pupils by name. This is significant because Plato is one of the students mentioned. Most of Plato's dialogues, particularly the more mature works, are framed in a very complex manner. The dialogues are usually told by a third or fourth party who heard from a friend or acquaintance about a dialogue of Socrates' at which another friend was present. Not only does *The Apology* present Socrates' words verbatim, without any framing devices to distance the narration, but Plato makes a particular effort to point out that he was actually present at Socrates' defense. The purpose here might be to lend the retelling a certain authenticity: the author was present at the trial, and has copied down Socrates' speech word for word. It would be important for Plato to be able to claim such authority, as he wishes to acquit Socrates posthumously as much as possible.

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Socrates' final remarks about not begging for mercy can be taken as either arrogant or ironic. On one hand, he is showing defiant bravery in a dangerous situation, while openly criticizing the normal practices of the law courts. On the other hand, this defiance could be read as very tongue-in-cheek. After all, Socrates alludes to his three children almost immediately after claiming that he would make no pleas based on his family life. This could be seen as a parody of a typical rhetorical maneuver. One's reading of this final passage depends on whether one prefers to see Socrates as the passionate and noble defender of a philosophical ideal, or as an ironic trickster who refuses to be taken too seriously.

35e - 38b

Summary

After some deliberation, the jury finds Socrates guilty by a vote of 280 to 221. The only surprise that Socrates registers is that the vote was so close: he expected to lose by a much wider margin. Meletus has proposed the death penalty, and Socrates is invited to propose an alternative form of punishment. True to form, Socrates does not ask himself what penalty he would like to pay, but what penalty he deserves. Considering he has occupied himself by dissuading his fellow citizens from pursuing personal ambitions and urging them instead toward mental and moral perfection, Socrates concludes he deserves a reward rather than a penalty. Accordingly, he proposes that he be given free dining in the Prytaneum, where victorious athletes are feasted during the Olympic Games.

Socrates excuses what might have seemed like a joke, insisting that he cannot propose an appropriate penalty when he is convinced that he has not intentionally wronged anybody. Since he is incapable of intentionally wronging anyone, he can hardly intentionally wrong himself by proposing an unjust penalty. Even so, he rejects most of the penalties the jury might consider to be acceptable. Imprisonment would leave him to the whim of whichever magistrates were in charge of the prisons. Banishment would just send him to wander from town to town, earning resentment and expulsion from each, just as he has here. One last time, Socrates also refuses to give up his philosophizing, as it is only through this that he can do his duty to God and pursue goodness. Only through philosophy can he properly come to know himself, and it is here that he makes his famous assertion that the unexamined life is not worth living. Finally, he suggests, if he must pay a fee, that it be set at one hundred drachmae, a small fee that is barely within his limited means. At the last minute, several young admirers, Plato, Crito, Critobulus, and Apollodorus offer some of their own money, raising the fine to three thousand drachmae.

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Commentary

Similar to his refusal to beg the jury for mercy, Socrates refuses to beg for the death penalty to be commuted. Simply to do so for personal reasons, or out of fear, would be petty and disgraceful. The only reason for commuting the penalty would be if it were an unjust penalty. Socrates does indeed consider the penalty to be unjust, not because it is so harsh, but because it was laid down at all. His alternative, then, is not a lighter penalty, but a reward. His suggestion of being feasted like a hero of the Olympic Games is just one in a long string of comparisons he makes between himself and more generally recognized heroes. For instance, at 28c, he likens himself to Achilles, the hero of *The Iliad*, in his determination to fulfill his duty regardless of the danger, and at 22a, he alludes to the Labors of Hercules in connection with his own project of showing the ignorance of others. In these comparisons again, we find a form of Socratic irony. Socrates knows full well that the jury would find it perverse that he, a meddling busybody, should in any way resemble these legendary heroes. The irony then lies in the fact that, in many ways, he is even more beneficial to his fellow person than an Achilles or a Hercules.

In reference to the victorious Olympic athletes, Socrates says, "these people give you the semblance of success, but I give you the reality" (36d). While heroic feats might allow us to admire and bask in perfection, Socrates teaching allows us to strive for perfection ourselves. (This distinction between semblances and reality possibly foreshadows Plato's later teaching, where the difference between illusion and reality, between the imperfect world of matter and the perfect, transcendent world of forms, is central.)

Socrates' claim that the unexamined life is not worth living makes a satisfying climax for the deeply principled arguments that Socrates presents on behalf of the philosophical life. The claim is that only in striving to come to know ourselves and to understand ourselves do our lives have any meaning or value. Again, goodness is associated with wisdom, making the life of the philosopher—the lover of wisdom—the most desirable life of all. If we refuse to question ourselves and the world, we will act without reason, unable to distinguish between good actions and bad actions. Without philosophy, Socrates might argue, humans are no better off than animals. The good life is one in which we make both ourselves and those around us happier and better off, and the only way to pursue that life is to pursue wisdom and self-knowledge. If Socrates were to give up philosophizing, he would be abandoning the examined life, and without wisdom or self-knowledge he would be better off dead.

38c - 42a

Summary

After Socrates' brief and rather flippant request for the death penalty to be commuted, the jury votes to put Socrates to death. This time, the margin is greater—over two thirds—in

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contrast to the narrow margin that found Socrates guilty. Socrates now makes his final address to the jury before being led off to prison.

He warns those that sentenced him that they will hereafter be blamed for putting a wise man to death. If only they had had a little patience, he suggests, he would have died without their help; after all, he already an old man of seventy. He reflects that perhaps he might have saved himself by saying whatever was necessary to secure his acquittal, of weeping or appealing to the jury's mercy. However, he has not done so for lack of ingenuity, but for lack of impudence: he would be disgracing himself and the court if he were to make such appeals. The difficulty, as he sees it, is not to outrun death, but to outrun wickedness, which is a far more dogged pursuer. Socrates accepts that he has been outrun by death, but points out that, unlike him, his accusers have been outrun by wickedness. While he has been condemned to death by a human jury, his accusers have been convicted of depravity and injustice by no less a tribunal than Truth herself. He is happier accepting his sentence than theirs, and considers this to be a fair sentence.

He finishes his address to those who voted against him with a stern prophecy. Though they may have managed to silence him in the hopes that they can continue to live free of criticism, he will be replaced by even more critics who until now have kept silent. Socrates warns his accusers that in order to live free of criticism, one must behave well rather than stop the mouths of one's critics.

Socrates then addresses those who voted to acquit him, to reconcile themselves to his fate. He remarks that the divine voice that often warns him against harmful actions has remained silent throughout the trial and throughout his own speech. From this he concludes that perhaps death is a blessing, since his sign would have opposed him unless his actions were to bring about a good result. After all, Socrates reasons, death is either annihilation—a complete and final sleep—or death is a transmigration, where his soul would live on somewhere else. If death is annihilation, it is to be looked forward to as we would look forward to a deep, restful sleep. On the other hand, if death is a transmigration to some sort of afterlife, that afterlife will be populated by all the great figures of the past, from Homer to Odysseus. Socrates remarks how delightful it would be to pass amongst these great figures, questioning them regarding their wisdom.

The conclusion Socrates reaches, then, is that the good man has nothing to fear either in this life or the next. He denies any grudge against his accusers, even though they seek his life, and asks his friends to look after his three sons and to make sure that they always put goodness above money or other earthly trappings. Socrates concludes with the famous phrase: "Well, now it is time to be off, I to die and you to live; but which of us has the happier prospect is unknown to anyone but God" (42a).

Commentary

We find another interesting application of Socratic irony in Socrates' assertion that he would be showing impudence if he were to weep and beg for mercy. To the jury, he would have been showing impudence by not doing so and defiantly maintaining his position. The fact is, Socrates does show impudence to the court, but this kind of impudence is of little value or interest to Socrates. When he speaks of impudence, he refers to impudence before the much higher tribunals of Truth and goodness. He would be compromising his dignity and his duty to truth if he were to so debase himself. Socrates then is ultimately condemned by this jury because he does not speak to them, but to the truth. His moral position in general is one of always trying to be just and honest rather than to please his fellow person, knowing that even if he irritates others, he is ultimately doing them good by living justly and truthfully.

Socrates' warning that he will be replaced, and by many, is a curious one. Only a bit earlier, at 31a, he warns the jury not to condemn him, as he will not be easy to replace. Now he suggests that he is quite replaceable, and that the jury will not solve their problem at all by putting him to death. Perhaps we see here that Socrates does indeed change his tactics and his position in order to avoid death. Before he was sentenced, he argued that he was irreplaceable in an attempt to convince the jury not to sentence him. Once he was sentenced, he warned the jury they would only be causing themselves more headaches if they put him to death—perhaps another attempt to get them to change their verdict.

Though it can be supported with textual evidence, this reading is not a desirable one; it would contradict so much of what Socrates has said about not fearing death and maintaining his position that it would drastically weaken the force and integrity of his words. Perhaps a better reading comes from asking what rhetorical effects Plato was aiming for in these two different passages. At 31a, Plato is honoring Socrates, his great mentor, pointing out that he is unique among thinkers, and completely original. Here, at 39c-d, Plato is alluding to himself and many of the other pupils of Socrates who became active after Socrates' death, writing Socratic dialogues and passing on his teachings. Socrates' claim, at 39d, that these new critics will be younger and harsher is borne out by *The Apology* itself, in which Plato provides a damning criticism of Meletus and the Athenian justice system. Furthermore, the seemingly inconsistent claims at 31a and 39c-d can be reconciled in this reading. Plato is right in saying that Socrates is unique and original: no one like him has appeared in the subsequent two-and-a-half millennia. On the other hand, it is also true that his influence did breed a whole new generation of critics. In fact, Socrates almost single-handedly gave birth to the Western rational philosophical tradition, and if all philosophers that have come since are following in his footsteps, his form of criticism has multiplied exponentially.

Socrates' attitude toward death and the afterlife is fleshed out in far greater detail in Plato's *Phaedo*, a more mature work that deals primarily with the question of the immortality of the soul. In this dialogue, Socrates' uncertainty is gone, and he is quite convinced that his soul will live on in the afterlife. This contrast between *The Apology* and the *Phaedo*


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is illustrative of the contrast between the early and more mature works of Plato. An early work, *The Apology* centers more around Socrates' philosophical opinions, which, as he so persistently claims, are agnostic regarding any factual questions. As Plato developed his own voice, he began increasingly to speculate on more metaphysical and epistemological questions, and used Socrates as more of a mouthpiece for putting forward his own views. Thus, in the later *Phaedo*, we see Socrates claiming to have positive knowledge of what happens after death. As for *The Apology*, Socrates concludes in typical manner, acknowledging that he does not, and cannot, know for certain what awaits him after death.

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STUDY QUESTIONS

1. *Does Socrates make any philosophical assertions, and if so, of what kind are they? On one hand, he denies having any kind of specialized knowledge, and on the other hand, he makes assertions such as "the unexamined life is not worth living" and "no one ever knowingly does wrong." Can we reconcile these two positions?*

One (but by no means the only) way of answering this question is to suggest that Socrates' ethical assertions are not really assertions of fact. They are maxims more than substantial claims, and cannot really be verified or disproved. Certainly, this can be said of his claim that the unexamined life is not worth living. The assertion that no one ever knowingly does wrong is a little more difficult to step around, but can be managed through an appeal to some of Socrates' other maxims. Socrates tends to equate wisdom with goodness, seeing the ultimate end of wisdom and knowledge as being that it gives us the wisdom and knowledge to act rightly. Wisdom would not be so valuable if it were not so intimately connected to the good. Certainly, Socrates, the wisest of men, has lived faultlessly. If anything, he serves as evidence in favor of the claim that knowledge helps us to avoid evil.

2. *Was Socrates trying to get himself acquitted? If he was not, what effect was he trying to exert on the jury?*

Socrates is quite explicit on this question. Getting acquitted is completely immaterial to him. The only thing of importance is the truth. Rather than provide arguments in his defense, Socrates insists solely on speaking the truth, which he feels should be sufficient to acquit him if only the jury were just. Socrates points out that he has always been consistent in his behavior and his values, and he would be doing himself a great injustice to be inconsistent now. Rather than behave differently before a court, he continues to behave as he always has.

We might want to question whether all of this is true, however. This is certainly the rhetoric that Socrates employs, but his speech is so laden with irony that we should not be hasty to take his words at face value. Certainly, he seems to accept his condemnation, but we see in his many rhetorical flourishes and his merciless attack on Meletus that pure truth is not his only aim. Perhaps he also wants to have a deeper effect on the jury, to lead them to acknowledge the unjust state of affairs that persists in the deteriorating city-state.

3. *Socrates asserts that he is wise only in that he knows that he knows nothing. He sets up the model of the philosopher as one who does not have any specialized knowledge, but who is instead well- skilled at revealing the ignorance of others. Plato, Socrates' immediate successor, wants to claim all sorts of positive wisdom*

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for the philosopher (such as knowledge of the theory of forms). To what extent do you think Socrates is correct in saying that philosophy does not consist of positive wisdom?

The answer to this question largely depends upon your conception of philosophy. The majority of philosophers since Plato have followed in Plato's tradition, using philosophical methods to try to build up positive systems of knowledge. This tradition includes Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and most other major philosophers. However, there is another line of thinking that applies to different philosophers to greater and lesser extents that is more in accord with Socrates' teaching. These philosophers see the role of philosophy as one of provoking and critiquing thought without building any positive assertions of its own. Arguments could be made for including both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein in this camp.

4. Characterize Socratic irony and the role it plays in Socrates' method. To what extent and to what effect is this irony employed? Can we take anything Socrates' says seriously? And is there a rigid connection between being serious and speaking the truth?

5. What is the supernatural sign or divine voice that Socrates alludes to at 31c-d and 40a? Might we count this as some kind of specialized knowledge, the kind which Socrates vehemently denies having? Or is this a kind of intuition or inspiration of the kind Socrates identifies with the poets? How seriously does Socrates mean what he says here? And if he is joking, what is the purpose of the joke?

6. Is there a conflict between 31a, where Socrates claims he is irreplaceable, and 39c-d, where he claims that many more critics will take his place if he is executed? How can these two claims be reconciled?

7. Discuss Socrates' attitude toward religion. He is on trial in part for being impious and irreligious, and responds only very briefly to these charges. Furthermore, his attitudes toward the supernatural seem to waver a great deal. In his cross-examination of Meletus, he seems to suggest that only the gods and the children of the gods are supernatural, and yet at other points, he alludes to his supernatural sign and to the possibility of human souls living after death. Is Socrates guilty of impiety?

8. Explain and discuss theelenchus, or cross-examination, between Socrates and Meletus. Whose side would you take in their argument? Can you think of arguments Meletus might have made against Socrates had he been quicker witted?

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