

PLATO LOGOGRAPHOS: DEFENSE OF SOCRATES

Plato's defense speech for Socrates splendidly deploys Plato's genius while raising many controversies¹. Of course I have just now raised a major one: was *Defense* (I shall not call it *Apology*) composed by Plato or by Socrates? I shall return to this question which proves central to my thesis, while noting here some arguments for Platonic authorship and for significant independence from what Socrates said in court. Thus, this text was transmitted as a work of Plato; stylometric analysis confirms his authorship²; Xenophon and others wrote quite different speeches, something possibly unlikely if Plato's text was known to be close to Socrates'. Despite *Defense*'s various strategies to suggest otherwise (notably, mentioning or claiming Plato's presence in court: 34 a, 38 b), no other speech in Plato (or any other ancient writer, including Thucydides) reproduces what speakers said. Plato was a creative genius, not a stenographer. Xenophon (*Defense*, 1-2) notes that the arrogant tone (μεγαληγορία) of Socrates' courtroom speech suggested that he wanted to be convicted (*ibid.*, 3-9), something we probably would not call typical of Plato's *Defense*, with its insistent piety and many flourishes directed to a democratic audience, as we shall see. It has also been suggested that so many versions of Socrates' defense speech were composed precisely because as Plato's Crito says (*Cr.*, 45 e; cf. *Gorg.*, 486 a-b), Socrates' own speech was so inadequate, again something we would not say of Plato's *Defense*. Xenophon himself refers to other versions (*Defense*, 1), whether or not in Socrates' voice, and we know

1. An earlier version of this essay was presented at the Academy of Athens in April 2012. Many thanks to E. Moutsopoulos, Anna Tatsi, and Doukas Kapantaïs for their warm hospitality on that occasion, and to Maria Protopapas-Marneli and Chloe Balla for organizing the event. I am grateful to Gabriel Danzig, Lowell Edmunds, Robin Waterfield, and my Northwestern Philosophy colleagues Richard Kraut and Kenneth Seeskin for comments on this text, and to Robin Waterfield for sending me a copy of his fine book *Why Socrates Died*, New York, W.W. Norton, 2009 (on Plato's defense speech see especially pp. 8-19). I have also profited from the first chapter of G. Danzig's, *Apologizing for Socrates*, Lanham, Md., Lexington Books, 2009 (cf. earlier *TAPA*, 133, 2003, pp. 281-321), a fresh take on Plato's speech not incompatible with the approach developed here, and well worth reading.

2. See L. BRANDWOOD, Stylometry and chronology, in R. KRAUT (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1992, pp. 90-120.

of fourth-century *Defenses* by Lysias (frr. 220-224), Theodektes of Phaselis (ARIST., *Rhet.* 2, 23, 13; *Souda* s.v. calls Theodektes Plato's student), and Demetrios of Phaleron (frr. 91-98 WEHRLI).

Furthermore, many scholars have seen that some two dozen parallels of structure, concept, and phrase indicate that a model for Plato's *Defense of Socrates* was Gorgias' fanciful *Defense of Palamedes* – Gorgias who embodied for Plato the art of rhetoric (*Gorg.*, 449 a and *passim*)³. For example, in Gorgias' prologue Palamedes says he is perplexed by the accusation and at a loss to speak, «unless I discover something out of the truth itself»; as for his opponent, «I shall show you that he is not speaking the truth» (11 a 4-5). Socrates opens by saying that his accusers talked so persuasively that «I all but forgot myself...; but scarcely a word of what they said was true» (17 a). Palamedes said life is not worth living, βίος οὐ βίος, for someone deprived of πίστις (11 a 21; cf. 20). Socrates called an unexamined βίος οὐ βίος (38 a). Socrates says he looks forward to meeting Palamedes in the underworld (41 a). Of course Palamedes was unjustly convicted, as Socrates notes, and by a democratic court. Nonetheless, a further reason for mentioning so minor a figure is evident. Plato's Socrates says that his speech was not prepared in advance but «spoken at random, from the first words that occurred to me» (17 c). Xenophon says that Socrates' divine sign prevented him from preparing a defense speech and so he improvised (*Ap.*, 4). He was executed soon afterward. Could he have improvised such densely textured echoes of Gorgias' *Palamedes*? It seems less likely that the historical Socrates would play such literary games and at so critical a moment, than that Plato would. The parallels between these two defense speeches suggest potent subtexts to an artful speech by a literary master. Some have suggested that if Plato strayed far from what Socrates actually said, hundreds of eyewitnesses would object⁴. I think this objection misses what Plato was up to, and the intended readers of his text⁵.

3. See K. SEESKIN, *Is the Apology of Socrates a parody?*, *Philosophy and Literature*, 6, 1982, pp. 94-105, D. FEAVER and J. HARE, *The Apology as an inverted parody of rhetoric*, *Arethusa*, 14, 1981, pp. 205-16, and (i.a.) J. A. COULTER, *The relation of the Apology of Socrates to Gorgias' Defense of Palamedes and Plato's critique of Gorgianic rhetoric*, *HSCP*, 68, 1964, pp. 269-303.

4. So, e.g., J. BURNET, *Plato's Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates and Crito*, Oxford, Oxford U.P., 1924, pp. 63-64 (many have followed him), and G. VLASTOS, *Introduction: the Paradox of Socrates*, in G. VLASTOS (ed.), *The Philosophy of Socrates*, Garden City N.J., Anchor Books, 1971, p. 3.

5. *Pace* E. DE STRYCKER and S. R. SLINGS, *Plato's Apology of Socrates*, Leiden, Brill, 1994, pp. 10, 12, surely Plato was not trying to persuade «the man in the street» (to whom he was indifferent).

My theme derives from teaching Plato's *Defense* as a courtroom speech, which of course it purports to be. John Burnet and others have shown that this speech follows the standard format of an ancient speech: *exordium*, *tractatio*, and *epilogue*⁶. It includes propositives, proofs, refutations, and other components of ancient *logoi*. It also includes various standard motifs of Athenian democratic speeches. For example, speeches often begin with a paradox to pique the audience's attention, as Pericles does in Thucydides' Funeral Oration: «most of those who have spoken here praise the institution of this speech, but in my opinion...» (2, 35, 1). As we have seen, Socrates opens by saying that he «all but forgot» himself because of his accusers' persuasive arguments; «but scarcely a word of what they said was true» (17 a). His claim not to be a clever speaker and to be unfamiliar with the law courts, his begging for an impartial hearing, his claim to state simply the plain truth: the opening half of the *exordium* is a pastiche of Athenian forensic clichés. As many have noted, Socrates' claim not to be a good speaker is conventional and also seems false and a joke, as *Defense* itself shows, along with Plato's other dialogues. Plato's Socrates was among Athens' greatest speakers. Here I add one further small point, about the *exordium*. In the very sentence where Socrates says that he has never before appeared in court and is a complete stranger to its language, he mentions that he is seventy years old (17 d)⁷. Now, Solon had said the span of a man's life is 70 (fr. 27 WEST; cf. also HER., 1, 32, 2), Protagoras is said to have died at «about 70» (PLAT., *Meno* 91 e), Aristotle is falsely said to have died at 70, and by drinking hemlock (DIOG. LAERT., 5, 6, citing Eumelos' *Histories*). Like Plato's echoes of the *Palamedes*, might a conventional length for Sokrates' life be another little confirmation to his sophisticated readers that the truths of this text are not what they seem⁸? In *Phaedrus*, 272 d-e, Plato's Socrates says that in court, «competent speakers need not bother with the truth... nobody has any concern for the truth».

With its parodies, literary allusions, and joking falsehoods, the *exordium* gives a curious tone to the opening of Socrates' defense speech. As we shall see, similar strategies, especially involving rhetorical sleight-of-hand (and often misleading modern scholars), pervade other sections of this text.

How shall we explain these components, alongside *Defense*'s compelling portrait of Socrates? Many admirers of this speech consider its uses of democratic rhetoric ironic and a parody. They also judge Plato's speech a poor defense to the charges brought against Socrates. Burnet commends George

6. J. BURNET, n. 4, pp. 64-67 and *passim*; E. DE STRYCKER and S. R. SLINGS, n. 5, pp. 21-25, proposing a somewhat different structure; and M. C. STOKES, *Plato: Apology*, Warminster, Aris and Phillips, 1997.

7. Plato repeats this number in Socrates' imaginary dialogue with the laws in *Cr.*, 52 e.

8. According to DIOG. LAERT., 2, 44, some thought Socrates died at 60.

Grote's judgment that Plato's text «deliberately foregoes the immediate purpose of a defense –persuasion of his judges» (p. 65, n. 4). De Strycker and Slings believe Socrates «is not primarily interested in securing his acquittal» (p. 33, n. 5). R. E. Allen notes that while «the function of forensic rhetoric is to win ... acquittal if accused», Socrates «aims at telling the truth in accordance with justice even if the truth leads to conviction»⁹.

By contrast, Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith are inclined to consider Plato's text basically a factual account of Socrates' defense and in any case a serious effort to refute the charges brought against him, albeit «in a manner consistent with his principles»¹⁰. For them the exordium's rhetorical elements are not humorous parodies but true (for example, Socrates did believe that his prosecutors told lies about him), its courtroom conventions «indicate just how seriously [Socrates] regards his legal plight» (p. 53). Although it has sometimes met a chilly reception¹¹, their work reflects hard thought and includes many useful observations.

Here I shall argue for a third approach to the problem posed by *Defense's* democratic rhetorical components. While little of this speech reflects what Socrates actually said, Plato has written a masterly defense against charges brought in an Athenian democratic courtroom. In one of the threads running through this complex artful text, Plato has assumed (and sometimes satirized) a well-known persona around Athens' democratic courts, the logographer or professional speech writer. Skilled in legal strategies and democratic courtroom discourse, logographers wrote the speeches that their clients *should* give in court. In addition to logography, Plato's text reproduces some genuine qualities of Socrates as Plato saw them (e.g., that Socrates will only speak the truth), and colors the whole with jokes, parodies, satire, and biting condemnation, reflecting his and Socrates' contempt for the demos and its system of justice, something he could safely do because this was not a real speech to a dikastery. Why Plato adopted his logographic strategy we

9. *Socrates and Legal Obligation*, Minneapolis, Minneapolis U.P., 1980, p. 6. Cf. also (among many) A. E. TAYLOR, *Plato: the Man and his Work*, London Methuen, 1960, pp. 156-167, and G. KENNEDY, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece*, Princeton, Princeton U.P. 1963, p. 150: Plato's speech «probably would not have won a victory in court». On p. 152 Kennedy concludes that «the great significance of the *Apology*» is to show that «traditional rhetoric was already so deeply implanted in the Greek consciousness that there was no question of any successful deviation from it». I hope to show Plato's more deliberate purposes.

10. See especially their *Socrates on Trial*, Princeton, Princeton U.P., 1989. The «principles» quotation is from p. 210, and is explained on pp. 210-214. C. D. C. REEVE, *Socrates in the Apology*, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1989, is in important ways similar and also a valuable dissent from majority opinions.

11. See reviews by M. R. WRIGHT, *CR*, 42, 1992, pp. 71-72, S. R. SLINGS, *Mnemosyne*, 47, 1994, pp. 116-119, and C. ROWE, *JHS*, 114, 1994, pp. 191-192.

shall come to consider, but one motivation reflects his scorn for the practices of democratic justice.

Athenian legal cases were brought into court under a rubric, in this case impiety. The prosecutor's indictment, or charge, specified in greater detail the nature of the offense, not in statute language. The text of Socrates' indictment is preserved (DIOG. LAERT., 2, 40; cf. PLATO, *Defense*, 24 b, XENOPHON, *Defense*, 10ff.):

«This indictment and affidavit is sworn by Meletos ... against Socrates ...: Socrates does wrong in refusing to recognize the gods whom the city recognizes, but introducing other new spiritual beings. He also does wrong in corrupting the youth. The penalty demanded is death».

The first of these charges, not believing in the city's gods but «new spiritual beings» (*i.e.* the *daimonion*), is clear enough. As we shall see, claims that this charge meant that Socrates was an atheist (cf. T. C. BRICKHOUSE and N. D. SMITH p. 31, n. 10 and reff.) reflect confusion devised by Plato. What was «corrupting the youth»? Following Xenophon, Aeschines, and Polycrates, most scholars agree that the Athenians prosecuted Socrates in 399, after he had lived, taught, and philosophized in Athens for many years, in large part because his students Critias and Charmides were leaders of the Thirty Tyrants, who brutalized Athens in 404, killing 1500 persons for their money¹². In his seventh *Letter* (324 c-d) Plato himself says that the horrors of this regime made the preceding democracy seem like a reign of gold; he mentions that some of the Thirty were his relatives. Hansen (p. 145, n. 12) is surely right that after the Thirty were overthrown, Socrates would have continued to say, as he does in all sources, that democracy was a bad form of government and should be replaced: very dangerous language after 404. In *Defense*, 29 c, 30 b-c, Plato has

12. «The accuser» in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* observes that Socrates taught both Critias, «the most avaricious and violent of all the oligarchs», and Alcibiades, «the most dissolute and arrogant of all the democrats» (*Mem.*, 1, 2, 12). According to Xenophon (*Mem.*, 3, 7, 9), Socrates convinced the oligarch Charmides to enter politics. Isocrates reports that in his attack on Socrates in 393 or 392, Polycrates argued that Socrates had been the teacher of Alcibiades (11, 4-6). Aeschines expressly says that the Athenians executed «Socrates the sophist» because «he was shown to be the teacher of Critias, one of the Thirty who overthrew the democracy» (1, 173). In *The trial of Sokrates from the Athenian point of view*, in M. SAKELLARIOU (ed.), *Démocratie athénienne et culture*, Athens, Academy of Athens, 1996, p. 162, Mogens Hansen observes that of the fifteen persons who talk with Socrates in Plato's dialogues and whose political affiliations are known, only five are loyal democrats (and one of these is Socrates' prosecutor Anytos). The remaining ten were «crooks and traitors». In Plato *Defense*, 24 b, another prosecutor, Meletos, claims to be *philopolis*, a «lover of the city», a «patriot». For the ancient sources for the Thirty's 1500 victims, cf. R. W. WALLACE, *Plato's Socrates on Obeying the Laws of Democratic Athens*, *Philosophia*, 41, 2011, p. 91, n. 11.

Socrates tell the dikasts that, if he is acquitted, he will continue to say and do what he has always said and done. «Do not make an outburst, men»! Xenophon's *Memorabilia* interprets the accusation against Socrates to include «teaching his companions to despise the established laws, by insisting on the folly of appointing public officials by lot...; such sayings led the youth to despise the established constitution and made them violent» (1, 2, 9). As I have quoted (n. 12), Aeschines said the Athenians executed Socrates because he taught Critias, «one of the Thirty who overthrew the democracy» (1, 173). Polycrates' accusation against Socrates in 393 or 392, put in the mouth of Anytos, also took this line. In his response to Polycrates, Libanios says that Socrates «is charged by his enemies with destroying the democracy» (*Defense*, 57). Some scholars have wanted to think that Socrates was a democrat. As Richard Kraut has pointed out, there is not a shred of evidence to support this idea¹³. Socrates was formally charged with impiety partly because the democratic amnesty of 403 outlawed prosecutions for offenses committed before that date, in particular in 404.

Defense directly mentions the Thirty Tyrants only briefly at the end, as we shall see. Rather (and here I begin my detailed analysis of this text), Plato brilliantly focuses his defense speech on the formal rubric under which Socrates was charged, impiety, which I agree may have been an issue in this prosecution¹⁴, but which most ancients and moderns agree was not the main issue. Right from the second half of the exordium and alluding to «a certain comic poet» (Aristophanes in *Clouds*, 423 BC), Plato's Socrates says that people have long heard that he was a student of things in the sky and under the earth and, hence, that he does not believe in the gods and that he makes the worse argument seem the stronger. Hence, on this formulation, he was an immoral atheist. The people who made these charges, Socrates says, are my «dangerous accusers» (18 a-c). Please note that all this conveniently locates Socrates' accusers and his offense long before the horrors of 404. Note further Socrates' lengthy argument that such accusations were not playing by democracy's rules, as he has had no opportunity to defend himself (18 c-e). And note, finally, that we have shifted from the actual charge in the indictment, which was not that Socrates was an atheist but that he believed in strange new spiritual beings. He ends the *exordium* by implying that he is religious and law-abiding. «Let the matter proceed as the god may wish ... I must obey the law» (19 a).

13. R. KRAUT, *Socrates and the State*, Princeton, Princeton U.P., 1984, pp. 194-99; cf. also R. W. WALLACE, pp. 88-89, n. 12.

14. See W. R. CONNOR, The other 399: Religion and the trial of Socrates, in M. A. FLOWER and M. TOHER (eds), *Georgica. Greek Studies in Honour of George Cawkwell*, London, University of London-Institute of Classical Studies, 1991, pp. 49-56.

Moving now into the arguments, and still on the theme of his early reputation, Socrates first immediately *reformulates the indictment* in a way that he can more easily defend himself against. «Socrates is guilty of wrongdoing in that he busies himself studying things in the sky and below the earth; he makes the worse into the stronger argument, and he teaches these same things to others» (19 b). Socrates now expressly says that he owes this reputation to Aristophanes' *Clouds* (19 c), which does represent Socrates in this way, and says that this representation is false. It may or may not be false: but Socrates was not so charged in 399. He, then, discusses the charge of teaching, and when mentioning other teachers in each case he also mentions pay (19 d-20 c), something that, notoriously, the self-styled filthy and laconizing (the Spartans used no money) Socrates did not take, and which was also not mentioned in the indictment. He mentions pay to separate himself off from other teachers, again an irrelevant point to his formal charge in 399.

Now comes the story about Chairephon, whom he calls «my *hetairos* from boyhood and a *hetairos* to the mass of you» and who he says sided with the democracy in 404 (21 a) –note how subtly the theme of 404 is introduced, Socrates' friend is a supporter of the democracy¹⁵. Adducing democratic loyalty was a standard logographic technique to gain the jury's sympathy, but –bitter oxymoron– in later fifth century Athens *hetairos* was an elite anti-democratic term. Aristophanes had also ridiculed Chairephon in *Clouds*: he and Socrates are «charlatans, palefaces, wearing no shoes» (103-4, cf. 503-4: «half a corpse»); *Birds*, 1296, 1564 call him νυκτερίς, «bat», from that creature's nocturnal habits (cf. *Horai*, fr. 584 K-A, νυκτὸς παῖδα; *Telemêssês* (fr. 539/552 K-A) calls him συκοφάντης, a charge possibly related to his summons as a «yellow faced» (i.e. pale) witness in *Wasps*, 1388-1414. According to Plato's *Defense*, Chairephon visited Delphi and «dared to ask the oracle» –«men, do not make an outburst!»– if any man was wiser than Socrates (21 a). The Pythia said no (this story implies, of course, that Socrates is innocent of impiety). Socrates, then, tells how he sought «with considerable reluctance» to «investigate» (ζητεῖν) and «cross-examine» (ἐλέγχειν) the oracle which he did not think could be true but to which he «attached great importance» (21 b-c, 22 a), by cross-questioning «in the service of the god» (23 b) those who thought themselves wise, and thereby made himself unpopular. «Even now I continue this investigation as the god bade me ...». If anyone thinks he is wise but is not, «I come to the assistance of the god and show him that he is not wise... I live in great poverty because of my service to the god» (23 b). All these comments at once defend Socrates against the charge of impiety, and offer an explanation for

15. J. Burnet says, «it is interesting to know this; for the young men whom Socrates influenced in later life were mostly opposed to the democracy» (p. 90, n. 4).

his unpopularity far from the events of 404, including his students' murderous plundering of wealthy Athenians (Socrates remains poor). And, he continues, when his followers imitate his ways, those whom they question «are angry with me. They say, "That man Socrates is a pestilential fellow who corrupts the young"» (23 c). Plato here masterfully addresses the charge of corrupting the young, again interpreting it far from politics and also far from any substance: these students only chose to imitate Socrates' methods, not the contents of his teaching.

So, in refuting his «early» accusers, Socrates mentions first *Clouds*, then (in service to the god) his cross-questioning various Athenians who professed to be wise, then his students who copied his techniques. He concludes, «There you have the causes which led to the attack upon me ... There, gentlemen, you have the true facts, which I present to you without any concealment or suppression, great or small. I am fairly certain that this plain speaking of mine is the cause of my unpopularity; and this really goes to prove that my statements are true, and that I have described correctly the nature and the grounds of the calumny that has been brought against me. Whether you inquire into them now or later, you will find the facts as I have just described them» (24 a-b). But Socrates has suppressed, he has concealed, he has not described correctly. The elephant in the courtroom was the spectre of the Thirty, led by Socrates' students. Furthermore, except when mentioning how his students copied his methods, Socrates interprets «corrupting the young» strictly in religious terms. Plato has Socrates say, «Surely the terms of your indictment make clear that you accuse me of teaching [the young] to believe in new deities» (26 b), a point that the indictment by no means makes clear. This permits Socrates to devote almost his entire defense to the charge of religious belief. The Thirty remain unmentioned until the end of Plato's speech, when Socrates recounts not what he taught them, including to despise the democracy's established customs and laws (cf. Xenophon), but only how they tried to implicate him in one of their murders (32 c-d). According to Plato he said nothing but just went home: οὐ λόγῳ ἀλλ' ἔργῳ ἐνεδειξάμην: «I showed not by word but by deed ... that I would do nothing unjust». Plato's speech conceals the real worry of Athens' dikasts, that because the anti-democratic Socrates taught Critias and other anti-democrats, he helped provoke and thus was partly responsible for the overthrow of Athens' democracy and subsequent violence, as Aeschines, Xenophon, and Polycrates said, despite all his claims to teach «about justice and virtue» (LYS., fr. I 2 THAL.; cf. XEN., *Mem.*, 1, 1, 16), and that he might help overthrow it again.

Why does Plato's *Defense* not explain the previous relationship of Socrates with important members of the Thirty? Plato offers Socrates the best defense of all: silence. Had Plato addressed this issue, it would stand as an issue. Silence helped it go away. Indeed, many scholars have denied its significance because Plato does not mention it. *Defense*'s claim that Socrates' bad reputation was due to Aristophanes' *Clouds*, performed 24 years earlier, is a red herring –but

as Plato brilliantly saw, a useful one for the impiety indictment, because it represented Socrates as rejecting the conventional gods. Plato brilliantly distracts our attention away from the real basis for Socrates' reputation, as a philolaonian anti-democrat who professed to teach justice and virtue but whose students overthrew Athens' democracy and killed 1500 people for their money, and who refused to apologize or to change his ways¹⁶. In my view, both Xenophon and Plato (see below) rightly say that Socrates sought execution in 399 because he was and felt responsible for the nightmare of 404, but knew he could not alter his behavior.

Finally (24 b ff.), Socrates turns to the actual indictment and engages in dialogue with Meletos, trapping him into stating absurdities by arguments that are far from compelling, while again avoiding directly addressing the charges brought against him. For example, when Socrates refutes Meletos' ridiculous claim that only he, Socrates, corrupted the youth (25 a), it does not follow that Meletos does not care about the youth (25 c), or that Socrates does. And when Meletos is reluctant to answer, Socrates says that the law compels him to (25 d). Implication: Socrates is law-abiding. Socrates trots out the hackneyed argument that if a teacher corrupts his pupils he risks being harmed by them (25 e). He then gets Meletos to agree (within the speech! Plato's brilliant device) that the charge meant corrupting the youth in religious matters (26 b) – a point other contemporaries did not agree with (cf. n. 12) – and then ties Meletos up in arguments regarding his (Socrates') religious beliefs by arguing that he is not an atheist (26 c) – but the indictment did not accuse Socrates of being an atheist. Socrates' whole line of argument, that you can't believe in horsiness without believing in horses and so too of gods (27 b), is irrelevant to the actual charge brought against him, which said that Socrates believed in spiritual beings but not the right ones.

Here I must mention another comic touch by our brilliant but mocking logographer. When Plato has Meletos say that Socrates believes the sun is a stone, Socrates replies, «Do you imagine you are prosecuting Anaxagoras, my dear Meletos? Have you so poor an opinion of these gentlemen [the dikasts], and do you assume them to be so unversed in letters as not to know that the writings of Anaxagoras of Klazomenai are full of theories like these?» (26 c-d). While flattering the dikasts just as logographers would, Plato and Socrates knew very well that the dikasts were ignorant of Anaxagoras' writings.

Socrates refutes not the indictment (for example, by discussing his actual religious views) but what Plato sets up as Meletos' claim that Socrates did

16. Contrast E. DE STRYCKER and S. R. SLINGS, pp. 12-13, n. 5: «Socrates was not found guilty because he was irreligious or a corruptor of the young, but because the judges could not admit that his lofty religious and educational ideals were genuine and sincere».

not believe in any gods, by showing that it was inconsistent with the indictment. Refuting not the indictment but Meletos' supposed interpretation of it is a masterly, clever courtroom strategy rather than substantive argument. What we need to hear is a discussion of Socrates' actual religious views, which are referred to only very briefly at the end of the speech. In addition, the passage is full of references to dikastic *thorubos*, outbursts, the emotional irrationality of the crowd of dikasts.

Socrates' section on arguments now shifts again (28 b ff.), to moving passages about his life, activities, and values, beginning with his commitment to justice even at the cost of his own life because death may not be anything bad (these passages will support Xenophon that in court, Socrates seemed to seek execution), and linking these with patriotism, for example in military service (another motif of Attic courtroom speeches), and with the god's instructions (29 b). Here, finally, we shift out of pure courtroom debate strategies into a mix including some discussion of what may echo Socrates' own views and persona, as perhaps Plato wanted to account for why the court condemned him despite this brilliant speech. So he has Socrates say that, if the court should order him to stop philosophizing «I will obey the god rather than you... I shall not cease to practice philosophy» (29 c) –as if the god commanded him to practice philosophy, a delicious oxymoron¹⁷, not least as religion was based on received conventions of which Socrates was relentlessly critical. Socrates' defiant assertion may not contradict his statements that he is law-abiding, but would certainly provoke the dikasts. «I shall not change my conduct, even if I am to die many times. Don't make an outburst, men! ... Be sure that this is what the god orders me to do, and I think there is no greater blessing for the city than my service to the god. Do not create a disturbance, men! ... Indeed, men, I am far from making a defense now on my own behalf, as might be thought, but on yours, to prevent you from wrongdoing by mistreating the god's gift to you by condemning me... I was attached to this city by a god... as upon a great and noble horse which ... needed to be stirred up by a horsefly¹⁸. It is to fulfil some such function that I believe the god has placed me in the city ... I am a gift of god to the city» (30 b-31 b). As a defense against a charge of impiety, all this is nonpareil, while Plato has Socrates candidly acknowledge that he was by nature a public provocateur. In response the dikasts can only burst out in *thorubos*, hubbub, confirming their irrationality.

Socrates now talks briefly about his divine sign (31 c-d), his single mention of what the actual indictment refers to, «strange new spiritual beings», the sign that forbade him from taking part in democratic politics (and therefore,

17. Cf. R. HACKFORTH, *The Composition of Plato's Apology*, London, Cambridge U.P., 1933, pp. 92-93.

18. The archaizing standard English translation «gadfly» is a defensive euphemism.

avoiding his civic responsibilities was not his fault but the god's). He then narrates his refusal to disobey the law during the Arginousai crisis (32 b-c): in contrast to the irrational demos, we are to conclude that he was law-abiding, but in fact Athens had no law outlawing trials of more than one person¹⁹. And then he mentions his refusal, «not in words but in action», to obey the Thirty's orders to arrest Leon (32 c-d). He does not explain why he did not try to warn Leon of the danger facing him, or convince his students of their wrongdoing. Finally, without naming Critias or anyone else he proclaims that he has never taught anyone. «If anyone says that he has learned anything from me..., be assured that he is not telling the truth» (33 b). This is nonsense, as Plato well knew. Just a few lines later Socrates says he seeks to teach (διδάσκειν) the dikasts (35 c), and a few lines after that, he says his method was to approach individuals privately, trying to persuade them to be good and wise (36 c). The argument that he does not teach is a further defense against the indictment's charge of corrupting Critias and Charmides, and other evil oligarchs (cf. 33 b): he never taught them a thing, he is not responsible. Only in these final sections of the argument does Plato have Socrates engage, however partially and briefly, the substance of the charges brought against him in 399.

In the peroration, Socrates excoriates the democratic jury for yielding to emotional appeals, as litigants bring children into court or beg for mercy. He ends, «I leave it to you and the god to judge me in the way that will be best for me and for you» (34 d-35 d).

I conclude that with the partial exception of Socrates' brief defiance of the court (but in favor of the god) at the end of the speech, Plato has produced a brilliant lawyer's defense. He constantly draws the argument away from the central issue, whether in 404, distant from the fooleries of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Socrates shared guilt for the Thirty's murders and robberies and continued to represent a danger to Athens. Plato reformulates the impiety charge in such a way that Socrates can easily refute it. He claims that the indictment's mention of corrupting the young refers strictly to religion, or else implies that it wasn't Socrates' fault if his youthful admirers imitated his methods. Only at the end, outside the main argument, does Socrates mention his own religious peculiarities (the *daimonion*) –something the Athenians will not have cared about– and briefly defend himself against involvement with the Thirty: he refused to cooperate, he did not teach anybody anything, he was law-abiding.

19. See D. M. MACDOWELL, *The Law of Classical Athens*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell U.P. 1978, p. 189, and R. W. WALLACE, When the Athenians did not obey their laws, in G. THUR and B. PALME (eds), *Symposion 2011*, Vienna, Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2013, pp. 115-116.

One central point drives Socrates' defense throughout: that the god at Delphi commanded him to do philosophy –an oxymoron, as I have said. When asked if there was anyone wiser than Socrates, the Pythia said no. Can Delphi really have said this²⁰? The Pythia will surely have known little –and of that, little good– about Socrates, a man who never traveled (PLAT., *Cr.*, 52 b) and whom the Athenians considered an «idle prattler» (ἄδολέσχης)²¹, a subversive teacher, and impious, not believing in the traditional gods as for example in the *Clouds*, which is why Socrates was accused under this rubric, and which contributed to his conviction. In Xenophon (*Defense*, 15), the Pythia is reported to have told Chairephon something different, that there was no man freer (ἐλευθεριώτερος), juster (δικαιότερος), or more temperate (σωφρονέστερος) than Socrates. Although H. W. Parke reports that «modern scholars have unanimously rejected Xenophon's tradition in favor of Plato's»²², we can trace the origin of Plato's story about Delphi and Socrates as wise, *sophos*. In a well-known tale of the seven *sophoi*, Greece's first intellectuals, in the early sixth century (e.g., DIOG. LAERT., 1, 27-28), some Milesian fishermen recovered a golden tripod from the sea. The Milesians sent to Delphi to discover its owner, and were told it belonged to the wisest man. They gave it to Thales, but he passed it on to another *sophos* as wiser, and so on around the seven. Finally, Thales deposited the tripod at Delphi, each of the seven thinking that he was not the wisest man. Plato's Delphi story linked Socrates with the venerable seven *sophoi*. Whatever the Pythia may or may not have told Chairephon (Plato calls Chairephon Gorgias' friend: *Gorg.*, 447 b; the Pythia was famous for ambiguity), Plato's version is myth, not history, and like the *Palamedes* parody, his intelligent and learned readers will have understood it as such. Meanwhile, the masses are fooled by Socrates' conclusion that the god commanded him to do philosophy, a daring paradox, the god will have commanded no such thing. Plato wrote in *Gorgias* (454 e) that the purpose of rhetoric is to induce belief; it is indifferent to truth or falsity. So we have here.

What were Plato's purposes in writing *Defense*? First, he defends his teacher (and also Socrates' followers, a valid thesis of Danzig [n. 1]), because Socrates had not done this very well, and presents a compelling portrait of him.

20. For various answers to this question, cf. C. D. C. REEVE, pp. 28-32, n. 10 (Why Delphi praised Socrates' wisdom), M. C. STOKES, Socrates' mission, in B. S. GOWER and M. C. STOKES (eds), *Socratic Questions: The Philosophy of Socrates and its Significance*, London and New York, Routledge, 1992, pp. 26-81, and G. DANZIG, pp. 49-53, n. 1. For different reasons from mine, the tradition is doubted by H. ERBSE, Die Nachrichten von Anklage und Verteidigung des Sokrates, *Hermes*, 132, 2004, p. 138, and R. HACKFORTH, pp. 101-102, n. 16.

21. EUPOLIS, *incert. fab.*, 386 K-A, AR., *Frogs*, 1491-1499, AMEIPSIAS, *Konnos*, fr. 9 K-A; cf. LYS., fr. 1 THAL.

22. Chaerephon's inquiry about Socrates, *CP*, 56, 1961, p. 249.

The accuracy of that portrait will continue to be subject to debate, especially as some may think that Socrates' stress on the god in the more personal sections of this text (28b ff.) reflects the historical Socrates, not Plato's defense against impiety. I have argued that Plato's defense was not straightforwardly honest (for example in not fairly addressing the indictment's charges), but at the same time highly effective, as Plato saw he could adapt rhetorical strategies he thought typical of Athens' democratic courts. Right at the start he shows his hand, when his Socrates says that he «speaks at random (εἰκῇ) from the first words that occur to me» (τοῖς ἐπιτυχοῦσιν ὀνόμασιν, 17 c). These words echo Plato's criticisms of democracy, that the masses «do whatever occurs to them» (ποιοῦσι δὲ τοῦτο ὅ,τι ἂν τύχωσι, *Cr.*, 44 d), and say «whatever comes into the mouth» (ὅ,τι νῦν ἤλθ' ἐπὶ στόμα, *Rep.*, 563 c). From other perspectives, in the contest between rhetoric and philosophy he shows he can out-*logographēin* the *logographoi* by producing a brilliantly clever defense speech of the logographic type, with lots of clever but specious arguments before a rowdy dikastery whose frequent outbursts damn it as a judicial body. The extraordinary importance of *Defense* in later Western history confirms its masterly defense, while also reflecting major post-Renaissance themes, of a citizen's trial by a mob for exercising the freedoms of speech and religion. This speech supplies reasons, in particular Socrates' defiance of the court, to explain why the court condemned him: not the main reasons (which Plato conceals) but something. I agree with the standard view that another purpose of *Defense* was to exhort people to do philosophy. Finally, this *tour de force* was to amuse and inspire Plato's coterie of brilliant, learned, and anti-democratic friends who were its readers. We continue to be inspired by this masterpiece. I hope to have foregrounded some of its other qualities.

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ΠΛΑΤΩΝ ΛΟΓΟΓΡΑΦΟΣ: Η ΥΠΕΡΑΣΠΙΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΣΩΚΡΑΤΟΥΣ

Περίληψη

Έχει πρὸ πολλοῦ ἐπισημανθεῖ ὅτι τὸ προοίμιο τοῦ ὑπερασπιστικοῦ λόγου τοῦ Πλάτωνος γιὰ τὸν Σωκράτη παρῶδῃ βασικά στοιχεῖα τῶν δικανικῶν λόγων τῆς Ἀθηναϊκῆς δημοκρατίας, καὶ ὅτι ὁ συγκεκριμένος λόγος ἀπηχεῖ συχνὰ τὴν *Υπὲρ Παλαμήδους Ἀπολογία* τοῦ Γοργία. Ὑποστηρίζω ὅτι στὴν πραγματικότητα τὸ μεγαλύτερο μέρος τοῦ πλατωνικοῦ λόγου εἶναι μίᾳ ἀριστουργηματικῇ φανταστικῇ ὑπεράσπιση τοῦ Σωκράτους, προορισμένη γιὰ ἓνα δημοκρατικὸ δικαστήριον, στὸ ὁποῖο κατὰ τὴν ἀποψη τοῦ Πλάτωνος δὲν εἶναι ἀπαραίτητο νὰ εἰπωθεῖ ἡ ἀλήθεια. Ἐτσι, παραδείγμα-τος χάριν, ὁ Πλάτων τροποποιεῖ τὸ κατηγορητήριον ὥστε νὰ διατυπώνει κατηγορίες ἐναντίον τοῦ Σωκράτους ποὺ μποροῦν εὐκόλῃ νὰ καταρριφθοῦν· βάζει τὸν Μέλητο νὰ ἰσχυρισθεῖ ὅτι ὁ Σωκράτης εἶναι ἄθεος, κάτι ποὺ ἐπίσης δὲν περιλαμβάνεται στὸ ἀρχικὸ κατηγορητήριον καὶ τὸ ὁποῖο μπορεῖ ἐξίσου εὐκόλῃ νὰ καταρριφθεῖ· ἐπισημαίνει ὅτι οἱ μαθητὲς τοῦ Σωκράτη ἀκολουθοῦσαν ἀπλῶς τὶς μεθόδους ἀντίκρουσης ἐπιχειρημάτων τοῦ δασκάλου τους καὶ ὄχι τὴν ἀντι-δημοκρατικὴν του διδασκαλία ὅπως ἔγραψε ὁ Ξενοφών. Ἡ ἀκρίβεια τοῦ χρησιμοῦ ποὺ ἔλαβε ὁ Χαιρεφών ἀπὸ τὸ μαντεῖο τῶν Δελφῶν ὁμοίως ἀμφισβητεῖται. Σὲ ἄλλα σημεία τοῦ λόγου, ὁ Πλάτων παρουσιάζει τὶς πραγματικὲς ἀρετὲς τοῦ Σωκράτους ὅπως τὶς διαπίστωσε ἰδίῳις ὁμῖαισι, καὶ προσδίδει συνολικὰ στὸν λόγο του σατιρικὸ ὕφος καὶ ἓναν αἰχμηρὰ καταδικαστικὸ τόνο γιὰ τὴ δημοκρατία ποὺ τόσο ὁ ἴδιος ὅσο καὶ ὁ Σωκράτης περιφρονοῦσαν. Ἡ ἐξαιρετικὰ σύνθετη στρατηγικὴ τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἔχει πείσει τὴν πλειονότητα τῶν ἀναγνωστῶν του γιὰ τὴν ἀθωότητα καὶ τὸν ἀκέραιον χαρακτήρα τοῦ Σωκράτη.

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