

The Two Apologies: A Comparison of the Defense Speeches of Plato and Xenophon

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If one were to mention *The Apology*, most likely the work that would come to mind is *The Apology* of Plato. However, there is another *Apology*, not so well-known as Plato's, yet equally valuable. Plato's contemporary, the historian Xenophon, also wrote an *Apology of Socrates*, as well as three other Socratic works, *The Symposium*, *The Memorabilia*, and *The Oeconomicos*. While both Plato and Xenophon, each in his respective *Apology*, present Socrates' defense in court against the charges of impiety and corrupting the youth, the two works differ greatly in both content and character. Plato's *Apology* "professes to be a report, complete but without comment by the reporter, of the three speeches delivered by Socrates at his trial. Xenophon's is a description of Socrates' conduct before, during and after trial, in the course of which is reported that is confessedly only a small portion of what Socrates said."¹ In this paper, I shall discuss the major points of difference in these two works and the possible meaning and authorial purpose of these differences.

Narrative Structure

The first, and perhaps the most obvious, difference the reader encounters lies in the narrative structure of each work. Plato, in his *Apology*, has abandoned, for the most part, his usual dialog form. Instead, his Socrates speaks directly to the jury, employing

¹ L. R. Shero, "Plato's *Apology* and Xenophon's *Apology*," *The Classical Weekly* 20, no. 14 (Jan. 31, 1927), 107, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4388911>.

something very close to our extant fifth/fourth century forensic oratory, even employing some of the familiar τόποι of the genre. After the first section of his speech, in which Socrates deals with the earlier causes of the φθόνος and διαβολή against him (19a8-24b2), he begins his cross-examination of Meletos. At this point, Plato resumes his usual dialog form for a short time (24c4-27c3). The remainder of Socrates' speech is once again in direct address to the jury.

The narrative structure found in Plato's *Apology* stands in sharp contrast to that of Xenophon. Instead of a straightforward address to the jury, Xenophon relates Socrates' address to the jury as reported to him by Hermogenes². This second-hand reporting, when taken together with "the fact that it contradicts Plato's *Apology* in several important particulars,"³ has led some critics to suggest that Xenophon's account of the speech should be viewed as less accurate than that of Plato. Shero goes so far as to say, "Xenophon's report is avowedly second-hand, and we have therefore to make allowance for the possibility that the writer misunderstood his informant."⁴ However, as I will discuss later, these differences, far from proving one account to be more accurate than another, are directly related to what each author wished to accomplish in his *Apology*.

The Indictment

We possess three extant versions of the indictment against Socrates. The first, found in Diogenes Laertius 2.40, was taken from Favorinus, who claims to have taken it

² Although not mentioned by Plato as having been in attendance at Socrates' trial, Plato, in the *Phaedo* (59b), does say that he was with Socrates in prison when he died. This fact clearly indicates that Hermogenes was an intimate of Socrates.

³ Ibid., 107

⁴ Ibid., 108

from the version preserved in the Metroon, the temple of Cybele where the official documents of Athens were housed.⁵ It reads as follows: ἀδικεῖ Σωκράτης, οὓς μὲν πόλις νομίζει θεοὺς οὐ νομίζων, ἐτερα δὲ καινὰ δαιμόνια εἰσηγούμενος. ἀδικεῖ δὲ καὶ τοὺς νέους διαφθείρων. The second version, from Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.1.1)⁶, is virtually identical to the first: ἀδικεῖ Σωκράτης, οὓς μὲν πόλις νομίζει θεοὺς οὐ νομίζων, ἐτερα δὲ καινὰ δαιμόνια εἰσφέρων. ἀδικεῖ δὲ καὶ τοὺς νέους διαφθείρων. The only difference between the first and second versions of the indictment is a single word (*εἰσηγούμενος*/*εἰσφέρων*). As Kato says, “There is little to be gained by speculating about the implications of this minute difference.”⁷ The third version of the indictment is found in Plato’s *Apology*: Σωκράτη φησὶν ἀδικεῖν τούς τε νέους διαφθείροντα καὶ θεοὺς οὓς ἡ πόλις νομίζει οὐ νομίζοντα, ἐτερα δὲ δαιμόνια καινά. The form of indictment, as found in Plato, differs so greatly from the others, “not only in phraseology, but also in the order of the clauses themselves, as to constitute a quite distinct form of the indictment.”⁸ What, then, if anything, does Plato’s different form of the indictment indicate? The answer to this question can only be found if we examine each author’s purpose in writing his *Apology*, which I will do below.

⁵ Shinro Kato, “The Apology: The Beginning of Plato’s Own Philosophy,” *The Classical Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1991), 357-8, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/638905>.

⁶ The indictment against Socrates does not appear in Xenophon’s *Apology*, but is has been included in this discussion because Socrates’ speech is a defense against this indictment.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 358

⁸ *Ibid.*, 358

Authorial Purpose

It is generally agreed among scholars that neither Plato nor Xenophon, in his respective *Apology*, sought to record the actual defense speech made by Socrates. As Kato explains,

... there was simply no literary tradition of writing historically truthful biography, and Plato's *Apology* should be thought of as more akin to Thucydides' history, in which the circumstances and details were narrated partly by those who had played an important role in the events, portrayed as speaking in the way in which they could be expected to have spoken on those occasion.⁹

Rather, each author, in his respective work, chose to focus on a particular theme. For Xenophon, the important question was, "What exactly are the sources of conflict between Socrates, or men of his type and way of life, and the rest of society?"¹⁰ In order to answer this question, "Xenophon focuses on what he admits is only a part of Socrates' speech and deed, and hence intends to recall only a part of his deliberation—that which prompted his *megalegoria* ("big talk," "boasting")."¹¹

One important goal shared by both authors was to address the post-trial controversy. This goal of addressing public attitude after the trial goes a long way in helping explain why Xenophon chose to use a narrator in his *Apology*: "Xenophon's writings are particularly important, since he offers comments that shed light on the nature of the public debate that surrounded this trial. Unlike Plato, Xenophon makes use of a narrator, which enables him to describe the public atmosphere at the time he was writing.

⁹ Ibid., 356

¹⁰ Thomas L. Pangle, "The Political Defense of Socratic Philosophy: A Study of Xenophon's "Apology of Socrates to the Jury"," *Polity* 18, no. 1 (Autumn, 1985), 99, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3234734>.

¹¹ Ibid., 99

... There is good reason, then, to accept statements made by Xenophon's narrator on points of public knowledge.”¹²

Socrates' *megalegoria*, according to Xenophon, was a source of much post-trial discussion. Xenophon concedes that Socrates did indeed speak arrogantly during his trial and that this arrogance, and not any skill on the part of the prosecutors, was a major factor in his conviction: Σωκράτης δὲ διὰ τὸ μεγαλύνειν ἑαυτὸν ἐν τῷ δικαστηρίῳ φθόνον ἐπαγόμενος μᾶλλον καταψηφίσασθαι ἑαυτοῦ ἐποίησε τοὺς δικαστάς (And Socrates, fostering envy in court through making himself great (*i.e.*, speaking arrogantly), made the jurymen more inclined to vote against him)¹³ (X. *Ap.* 32).

From Chapters 32-33 of Xenophon's *Apology*, it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that Socrates engaged in this *megalegoria* intentionally, in order to arouse the φθόνος of the jury and thus be sentenced to death: ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν δοκεῖ θεοφιλοῦς μοίρας τετυχηκέναι· τοῦ μὲν γὰρ βίου τὸ χαλεπώτατον ἀπέλιπε, τῶν δὲ θανάτων τοῦ ὁάστου ἔτυχεν (He seems to me, then, to have met a god-loved fate. He escaped the hardest part of life and met the easiest of deaths). If we accept this interpretation, that Socrates wished to die, then we are left with a Socrates who “talked big simply as a way of contemptuously using the city and its legal system to do the dirty work of arranging a comfortable suicide for him.”¹⁴ Xenophon, in the opening of his *Apology*, warns against making this assumption: ἀλλ’ ὅτι ἥδη ἑαυτῷ ἡγεῖτο αἰρετώτερον εἶναι τοῦ βίου

¹² Gabriel Danzig, “Apologizing for Socrates: Plato and Xenophon on Socrates’ Behavior in Court,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-) 133, no. 2 (Autumn, 2003), 285-6, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20054089>.

¹³ Translations not otherwise attributed are my own.

¹⁴ Pangle, *The Political Defense of Socratic Philosophy: A Study of Xenophon’s “Apology of Socrates to the Jury”*, 100

θάνατον, τοῦτο οὐ διεσαφήνισαν· ὥστε ἀφορουνεστέρα αὐτοῦ φαίνεται εἶναι ἡ μεγαληγορία (But that he thought death to be more sought-after for himself than life, this they have not made clear, with the result that his boasting was rather foolish).

Accepting the notion that Socrates wished to be put to death, Danzig claims that Xenophon accomplished his goal of denying incompetence on Socrates' part. As she states, since death was the goal, Socrates did not fail. Rather he succeeded splendidly:

"[I]n Xenophon's view, death was Socrates' goal, and it was really the best thing for him, so the outcome was actually a success. ... It is worth noting that once he has explained Socrates' arrogance as aiming at his own conviction, Xenophon does not feel any further need to apologize for this arrogance: in itself arrogance is not a bad thing, and it may even be a good one. It only seems foolish if it leads to one's downfall and destruction."¹⁵

Since conviction was the goal, according to Danzig, it represents neither a downfall nor self-destruction and, therefore, was not foolish. She does admit, however, that "[t]here was undoubtedly something ridiculous in the spectacle of the great master of persuasion failing on the one occasion when he really needed to persuade."¹⁶ If we follow Danzig's theory, then, it is this perceived failure on Socrates' part that was the source of the post-trial controversy Xenophon felt the need to address in his *Apology*.

Pangle sees the situation differently. Instead of using "big talk" as a means to secure conviction and execution, he sees an entirely different motive: "The principal purpose that guided Socrates, *and which therefore explains his big talk*, was his intention

¹⁵ Danzig, *Apologizing for Socrates: Plato and Xenophon on Socrates' Behavior in Court*, 288

¹⁶ Ibid., 289

to appear neither impious nor unjust.”¹⁷ In order to support his theory, Pangle points to Chapters 22-23 of Xenophon’s *Apology*:

...ἀλλ’ ἡρκεσέ μοι δηλώσαι ὅτι Σωκράτης τὸ μὲν μήτε περὶ θεοὺς ἀσεβῆσαι μήτε περὶ ἀνθρώπους ἄδικος φανῆναι περὶ παντὸς ἐποιεῖτο· τὸ δὲ μὴ ἀποθανεῖν οὐκ ὤθετο λιπαροτέον εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ καιρὸν ἥδη ἐνόμιζεν ἔαυτῷ τελευτᾶν.

But it has been sufficient for me to show that Socrates considered it of the utmost importance neither to be impious to the gods nor to appear unjust to men. He did not think that it was necessary to beg not to die, but he thought it already the right time for him to die.

For Pangle, then, Socrates’ arrogance was not a deliberate effort to secure a conviction and execution. In fact, Pangle sees this as an unlikely scenario, since the trial was made up of two separate stages, the trial phase, after which the jury decided the defendant’s guilt or innocence, and the penalty phase, during which the jury determined the punishment for a defendant found guilty. Socrates’ “big talk” could have, and probably did, contribute significantly to his conviction, but that was not its primary purpose. Instead, Pangle sees this “big talk” as designed “to enrage most of his immediate audience, but to gratify men like Hermogenes. That is, Socrates is shown as exaggerating his independence from, and his disdain for, civil society.”¹⁸ For Pangle, Xenophon’s focusing on Socrates’ “big talk” was intended to address the post-trial controversy, allowing Socrates’ supporters to point to a Socrates who refused to beg for his life from a city that would put to death a man who had done nothing unjust nor impious in his entire life. In short, Socrates’ “big talk” serves as an indictment against Athens.

¹⁷ Pangle, *The Political Defense of Socratic Philosophy: A Study of Xenophon’s “Apology of Socrates to the Jury”*, 102

¹⁸ Ibid., 110

For Plato, the goal of addressing the post-trial controversy was similar to Xenophon's, but he achieved it in an entirely different manner. Plato's Socrates addressed the jury personally, without the use of a narrator to comment on current public opinion. Therefore, Plato's Socrates could not address any post-trial controversy without speaking anachronistically. To overcome this difficulty, Plato gives Socrates a third speech, given after the death penalty has been handed down, in which he is able to address some of the post-trial controversy. This address of post-trial controversy, however, is not limited to Socrates' third speech. Danzig believes that "virtually the entire composition addresses the post-trial controversy implicitly or explicitly."¹⁹

Plato addresses the charge that Socrates spoke incompetently in a number of ways. First, in the opening of Plato's *Apology*, Socrates apologizes to the jury for his way of speaking. Denying that he is "clever at speaking" (*ώς δεινοῦ ὄντος λέγειν*), Socrates says that instead of a prepared speech, he will speak at random, using unadorned words and phrases as they come to him (*όρημασί τε καὶ ὀνόμασιν οὐδὲ κεκοσμημένους, ἀλλ’ ἀκούσεσθε εἰκῇ λεγόμενα τοῖς ἐπιτυχοῦσιν ὀνόμασιν*). Additionally, he points out that speaking the truth is more important than speaking elegantly. Claiming an inability to speak well is a common *τόπος* of forensic oratory, but in this case, rather than an attempt to garner sympathy from the jury, Plato uses this as "a response to the charges of arrogance and incompetence that were raised against Socrates, an apology or at least an explanation for his behavior. ... Unable to deny that

¹⁹ Danzig, *Apologizing for Socrates: Plato and Xenophon on Socrates' Behavior in Court*, 294

Socrates spoke poorly, he can apologize for and explain this fact, while giving him a much more polished speech than he actually made.”²⁰

A further defense against charges of incompetence can be found in Plato’s need to address the earlier charges against Socrates. For Plato, these earlier charges held much of the responsibility for Socrates’ conviction. This fact is clear from 28a, where Socrates says

ὅ δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν ἔλεγον, ὅτι πολλή μοι ἀπέχθεια γέγονεν καὶ πρὸς πολλούς, εὖ ἵστε ὅτι ἀληθές ἐστιν. καὶ τοῦτ’ ἐστιν ὃ ἐμὲ αἰρεῖ, ἐάνπερ αἰρῇ, οὐ Μέλητος οὐδὲ Ἀνυτός ἀλλ’ ἡ τῶν πολλῶν διαβολή τε καὶ φθόνος.

And that which I said to you before, that much hatred has arisen against me from many people, you know well that this is true. And this is the thing that will convict me, if it convicts, not Meletos or Anytos, but the slander and envy of many.

This statement seems “aimed not at the audience in court, but at a post-trial audience Socrates never met, an audience that wants to know why Socrates was convicted.”²¹

In order to address the post-trial discussion of Socrates’ defeat, and the shame and humiliation it no doubt brought to his supporters, Plato has Socrates actually claim a small degree of victory by saying that he lost only by a small margin (38a):

οὐ γὰρ ωόμην ἔγωγε οὕτω παρ’ ὄλγον ἔσεσθαι ἀλλὰ παρὰ πολὺν δέ, ως ἔοικεν, εἰ τριάκοντα μόναι μετέπεσον τῶν ψήφων, ἀπεπεφεύγη ἄν.

²⁰ Ibid., 297-8

²¹ Ibid., 310

I did not think that it would be by such a small margin, but by a large one. But now, as it seems, if only thirty votes had been cast differently, I would have been acquitted.

Finally, in an effort to answer those post-trial critics who believed that Socrates wished to die, Plato has Socrates say that, despite the difficulty he foresees, he really does want to make an effective defense and win acquittal (18d-19a):

Εἶν· ἀπολογητέον δή, ὁ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, καὶ ἐπιχειρητέον ὑμῶν ἔξελέσθαι τὴν διαβολὴν ἣν ὑμεῖς ἐν πολλῷ χρόνῳ ἔσχετε ταύτην ἐν οὔτως ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ. βουλούμην μὲν οὖν ἀν τοῦτο οὔτως γενέσθαι, εἴ τι ἄμεινον καὶ ὑμῖν καὶ ἐμοί, καὶ πλέον τί με ποιῆσαι ἀπολογούμενον· οἵμαι δὲ αὐτὸς χαλεπὸν εἶναι, καὶ οὐ πάνυ με λανθάνει οἶόν ἐστιν. ὅμως τοῦτο μὲν ἵτω ὅπῃ τῷ θεῷ φίλον, τῷ δὲ νόμῳ πειστέον καὶ ἀπολογητέον.

Very well. A defense must be made, men of Athens, and I just try to remove from you the slander, which you have held for a long time, and this must be done in such a short time. I should wish this to be so, if it is at all better for you and me, that I, in defending myself, accomplish something worthwhile. I think that this will be difficult, and it is not such a thing as to escape my notice. Nevertheless, let this be in whatever way it is dear to the god. The law must be obeyed and a defense must be made.

It seems out of place for a defendant to actually say that he wishes to be acquitted and that he will put on a defense, but such a statement, “uncalled for in an actual defense speech, may be designed to respond to those who believed ... that Socrates never really tried to defend himself effectively.”²²

Whereas Xenophon chose to focus on Socrates’ μεγαληγορία, Plato makes many attempts, while not denying it, to play it down. For example, Socrates’ refusal to beg the jury to acquit, an act seen both as arrogant and a major cause of his conviction, is

²² Ibid., 314

explained by Plato as instead honorable behavior. Socrates says (34d-e) that he is not being arrogant or disrespectful (*οὐκ αὐθαδιζόμενος, ὁ ἀνδρες Αθηναῖοι, οὐδ' ὑμᾶς ἀτιμάζων*). Rather, he says, begging will not contribute to their opinion (*δόξα*), but would instead be disgraceful. And so, while Plato “acknowledges that there was no begging, he defends Socrates: this was not arrogance on his part, but honorable behavior.”²³

At this point it is necessary to revisit my earlier statements regarding the different form of the indictment found in Plato’s *Apology*. Shero sees the different form of the indictment merely as Plato’s “represent[ing] Socrates as quoting it from memory.”²⁴ Kato, however, sees this alternate form of the indictment as contributing significantly to Plato’s post-trial commentary, saying “Meletus’ charge against Socrates becomes mainly the education charge of corrupting the youth. The religious charge is added to the first as an auxiliary one, explaining in what way Socrates is corrupting the youth.”²⁵ That the charge was primarily a religious one can be determined by the fact that the trial took place in the court of the King Archon. However, as many commentators have theorized, “the real ground of suspicion against Socrates on the part of the democrats was … his close relationship with Critias and Charmides, their enemies, and with the traitor Alcibiades.”²⁶ Under the amnesty of 404/3 B.C., it was not possible to accuse Socrates on these grounds, so it was necessary for a charge to brought on some other grounds.

²³ Ibid., 302

²⁴ Shero, *Plato’s Apology and Xenophon’s Apology*, 111

²⁵ Kato, *The Apology: The Beginning of Plato’s Own Philosophy*, 359

²⁶ Ibid., 359

Much has been written about the verb *vouίζειν* and its significance in this case. According to Burnet, this verb cannot refer to “one’s subjecting ‘believing in’ the gods, but only to one’s objective behaviour with regard to religious observance—‘to observe the cult of the religion of the City’.”²⁷ Therefore, Plato’s Socrates, in changing the wording of the indictment, deliberately transferred the charge from one of “religious observance, where Meletus had directed his attack, to that of religious belief, from which Socrates would launch his defence.”²⁸ Perhaps even more significantly, the altered indictment in Plato serves to emphasize the charge of corrupting the youth, a charge that Plato’s Socrates could easily refute.

Plato, like Xenophon, was concerned in his *Apology* with providing answers to the post-trial question that had arisen. Each author has chosen one or more questions to address. For Xenophon, the main issue was Socrates’ arrogance, while for Plato the main issue addressed was Socrates’ incompetence in handling his own defense. Each author, however, makes a point of clearly showing that it was not Socrates who was responsible for his own death. Rather, “faced with the impossibility of blaming Socrates for his own failure, and with the triviality of blaming a particular Athenian jury (although [Plato] does that as well), [each author] took the only option left: [each] blamed the nature of human political life.”²⁹

²⁷ John Burnet, *Plato’s Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates, and Crito* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1979), 104.

²⁸ Kato, *The Apology: The Beginning of Plato’s Own Philosophy*, 359

²⁹ Danzig, *Apologizing for Socrates: Plato and Xenophon on Socrates’ Behavior in Court*, 311

The Counter-Penalty

Directly related to the ultimate outcome of the trial is the proposal, or lack of proposal, of a counter-penalty. Under the Athenian judicial system, the party bringing a charge must specify in the indictment what penalty he thinks appropriate. The accused, if convicted, proposes a counter-penalty. The jury then chooses between these two penalties. In the case of Socrates, the penalty specified in the indictment was death by hemlock.

In Xenophon's *Apology*, Socrates refused to propose a counter-penalty; neither would he allow any of his supporters to propose any, on the grounds that any such proposal of a counter-penalty implied an acknowledgment of guilt (X. *Ap.* 23):

πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ κελευόμενος ὑποτιμᾶσθαι οὔτε αὐτὸς ὑπετιμήσατο οὔτε τοὺς φίλους εἴασεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔλεγεν ὅτι τὸ ὑποτιμᾶσθαι ὄμολογοῦντος εἴη ἀδικεῖν. ἐπειτα τῶν ἔταιρων ἐκκλέψαι βουλομένων αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔφείπετο, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπισκώψαι ἐδόκει ἐργόμενος εἴ που εἰδείεν τι χωρίον ἔξω τῆς Ἀττικῆς ἔνθα οὐ προσβατὸν θανάτῳ.

First, when asked to name a lesser penalty, neither he himself named one nor did he allow his friends, but he even said that in naming a lesser penalty he was admitting to wrongdoing. He did not listen to his friends wishing to steal him away, but he seemed to ridicule them, asking if they know of any place outside Attica not accessible to death.

Xenophon, then, argues that this was not another case of Socrates' arrogance, but rather an honorable act of a man unwilling to admit guilt when he felt he was not guilty. It is not Socrates, then, but the jury who must take responsibility for Socrates' death: "In

effect, Socrates would have forced his accusers, perhaps against their own intentions, to become responsible for his execution.”³⁰

In Plato’s version of events, Socrates does propose a counter-penalty. He first proposes that, as a punishment, he be given free meals in the *prytaneum*, pointing out that he does actually need the food (P. *Ap.* 36d-e):

τί οὖν εἰμι ἄξιος παθεῖν τοιοῦτος ὡν; ἀγαθόν τι, ὁ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, εὶ δεῖ γε κατὰ τὴν ἀξίαν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ τιμάσθαι· καὶ ταῦτα γε ἀγαθὸν τοιοῦτον ὅτι ἀν πρέποι ἔμοι. τί οὖν πρέπει ἄνδρὶ πένητι εὐεργέτῃ δεομένῳ ἄγειν σχολὴν ἐπὶ τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ παρακελεύσει; οὐκ ἔσθ’ ὅτι μᾶλλον, ὁ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, πρέπει οὕτως ὡς τὸν τοιοῦτον ἄνδρα ἐν πρυτανείῳ σιτεῖσθαι, πολὺ γε μᾶλλον ἢ εἴ τις ὑμῶν ἵππῳ ἢ συνωρίδι ἢ ζεύγει νενίκηκεν Ὄλυμπίασιν· ὁ μὲν γάρ ὑμᾶς ποιεῖ εὑδαίμονας δοκεῖν εἶναι, ἐγὼ δὲ εἶναι, καὶ ὁ μὲν τροφῆς οὐδὲν δεῖται, ἐγὼ δὲ δέομαι.

What, then, am I, being such a man, worthy to suffer? Something good, men of Athens, if it is necessary to be honored truly according to my worth. And, more than that, whatever is fitting for me is such a good thing. For a poor man, a do-gooder, being in need, what is necessary for him to lead a life of leisure for the sake of advising you? There is not anything, men of Athens, that is more fitting than for such a man to be fed at the prytaneum, much more fitting than if someone of you won an Olympic victory on a single horse or a two-horse chariot or a yoked chariot with four horses. For that man makes you seem to be happy, but I actually make you happy. Also, that man has no need of food, whereas I do.

Socrates then reverses himself and offers to pay a fine of one *mna*, about one-fifth of his property according to Xenophon (X. *Oec.* 2.3). By first having Socrates propose such an outrageous and arrogant counter-penalty, then offer to pay a small fine, Plato is again

³⁰ Ibid., 307

acknowledging the μεγαληγορία that Socrates is known to have shown during his trial, while at the same time trying to soften it.

Unlike Xenophon's account, Plato has Socrates' friends offer to add to the sum, bringing the total up significantly to 30 *mnas*. Danzig believes that Plato included this passage as a way to answer the post-trial criticism that Socrates' friends did not do enough to help him. "Socrates could not possibly have offered such a sum personally, so it was up to his friends. But it would be inappropriate for another speaker to interrupt Socrates' speech in order to offer additional funds. So Socrates has to make the announcement himself."³¹

The Oracle

Perhaps the most striking difference between Plato's *Apology* and Xenophon's *Apology* is found in the wording of the oracle. Xenophon describes the oracle as follows (14):

Χαιρεφῶντος γάρ ποτε ἐπερωτῶντος ἐν Δελφοῖς περὶ ἑμοῦ πολλῶν παρόντων ἀνεῖλεν ὁ Ἀπόλλων μηδένα εἶναι ἀνθρώπων ἑμοῦ μήτε ἐλευθεριώτερον μήτε δικαιότερον μήτε σωφρονέστερον.

Once, when Chaerephon was inquiring at Delphi about me with many people present, Apollo replied that no man was more free, more just or more sensible than me.

Xenophon's Socrates is not at all puzzled by this statement. Instead, "[h]e takes it in his stride and proceeds to explain to the jury why the Oracle was justified in this complimentary pronouncement. He even goes so far as to explain that he is also wise (X.

³¹ Ibid., 308

Ap. 16 σοφός), something that the Oracle had not even said.”³² This arrogance is, however, tempered by some slight humility when Socrates points out that the Oracle did not compare him to a god.

This episode serves, once again, to show Xenophon’s goal of highlighting Socrates’ μεγαληγορία. In Xenophon’s *Apology*, the oracle serves no purpose other than to allow Socrates to boast about his moral virtues. Plato, on the other hand, uses the oracle and its response as a way to justify Socrates’ behavior.

In Plato’s *Apology* (21a), unlike Xenophon’s, Chaerephon asks the oracle a specific question: Is anyone wiser than Socrates? (ἢρετο γὰρ δὴ εἴ τις ἐμοῦ εἴη σοφώτερος). The oracle answers that no one is wiser than Socrates (μηδένα σοφώτερον εἶναι). Socrates tells the jury that he questioned the meaning of the oracle. He did not think that he was wise, but surely the oracle would not lie. Socrates then, in an effort to understand the oracle, sets out to question people whom he believes to be wise and, in the course of this questioning, he becomes hated by many.

Plato uses the story of the oracle quite differently from Xenophon. For Plato, the story of the oracle “explains how Socrates acquired his practice of questioning others, who thought themselves wise, in order to prove that they were not, and thus provoked widespread enmity, while the pleasure which the young took in witnessing and imitating these examinations led to his reputation for ‘corrupting the youth.’”³³ Plato, looking at the post-trial controversy, has thus explained why Socrates behaved as he did. In short, he behaved this way because he had no choice. By portraying Socrates’ behavior as

³² Ibid., 303

³³ Kato, *The Apology: The Beginning of Plato’s Own Philosophy*, 362

divinely inspired, Plato also effectively negates the notion that Socrates did not believe in the gods. In fact, this incident “contributes to transforming that death from a source of shame to a source of pride, and religious pride at that: Socrates was a martyr for the god of Delphi.”³⁴

* * *

Both Xenophon and Plato had a specific purpose in mind with writing his *Apology*. For Xenophon, it was important to present Socrates with all his μεγαληγορία and to show, through his portrayal of Socrates, that this μεγαληγορία was not presented purposely in order to anger the jury. Rather, Xenophon’s Socrates speaks from a deeply-held belief that he has done nothing wrong and, therefore, has nothing to be sorry for. For Xenophon, Socrates’ perceived μεγαληγορία is, in fact, an honorable thing, because he would rather die than beg for his life in a servile fashion.

Plato, on the other hand, uses his *Apology* “for a variety of his own goals, philosophical and biographical as well as social and polemical. The central goal is the defense of the reputation of Socrates, and through it of all who still associated themselves with Socrates’ name.”³⁵

Neither speech can be viewed as completely accurate with respect to what Socrates actually said in court. Each author, however, has crafted a defense speech that not only served as a defense to the actual charges brought against Socrates, but also to the specific post-trial question that each author thought important to address. For both Xenophon and Plato, although they achieved their goals in very different ways,

³⁴ Danzig, *Apologizing for Socrates: Plato and Xenophon on Socrates’ Behavior in Court*, 310

³⁵ Ibid., 316

answering these post-trial questions was more important than recording what Socrates actually said.

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