APOLOGY OF SOCRATES

Dear Reader,

You are welcome to read this free excerpt of my translation of Plato's *Apology of Socrates*. I hope that these few pages will give you a feel for the translation's tone and flow. I aimed to make the language understandable to college students in introductory philosophy, political theory, and humanities courses. It should be accessible to high school students and the general reader, too.

The inexpensive, full version of this translation is available from Apple Books (epub) and Amazon.com (paperback and Kindle). Search for "Plato Armstrong" on either platform. The ISBN numbers appear on the copyright page below.

If you have a suggestion for improving the translation, introduction, notes, or appendices, please send it to me at tulli106@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

John M. Armstrong

Plato

APOLOGY OF SOCRATES

With the Death Scene from *Phaedo*

Translated, with Introduction and Notes,
by John M. Armstrong

Tully Books
Buena Vista, Virginia

Copyright © 2021 John M. Armstrong
All rights reserved

Tully Books is named for Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC), the Roman statesman whose 18th-century anglicized nickname was Tully. Cicero was educated in Greek language and philosophy. In his later years, he wrote books in Latin about Greek philosophy for a Roman readership. Tully Books publishes classical texts in new, inexpensive translations for students and the general public.

Tully Books LLC
Buena Vista, Virginia
tulli106@gmail.com

ISBN 9781957448008 (paperback)
ISBN 9781957448015 (Kindle)
ISBN 9781957448022 (epub)

CONTENTS

Preface vii

Introduction ix

Apology of Socrates 1

Death Scene from Phaedo 41

Citing Plato 49

Further Reading 50

About the Author 52

About the Translator 53

PREFACE

I made this translation for my students, many of them in their first year of college. I want them to read and understand Plato's fascinating portrayal of Socrates' defense, so I translated Plato's Greek into plain, 21st-century English as well as I could, using American spelling and punctuation. Most college students have little money for books, so I keep the price low. My students receive the ebook for free.

For Plato's Greek text, I used the Oxford Classical Text in Volume I of *Platonis Opera* edited by E. A. Duke, W. F. Hicken, W. S. M. Nicoll, D. B. Robinson, and J. C. G. Strachan (Oxford UP, 1995). I regularly consulted the textual and interpretive comments in *Plato: Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates, Crito*, edited by John Burnet (Oxford UP, 1924), *Plato: Apology*, edited by James J. Helm (revised edition, Bolchazy-Carducci, 1999), and *Plato: Phaedo*, edited by C. J. Rowe (Cambridge UP, 1993). I received suggestions for improving the translation from Eric Brown, Dan Cline, Caleb Cohoe, Thomas Gaskin, Bryce Gessell, R. J. Hankinson, Kristen Hessler, and Jan-Erik Jones. I received especially detailed and insightful suggestions from Julia Annas. I am grateful to each of them and accept responsibility for flaws that remain.

Lewis Campbell suggests that vocative expressions in Plato often indicate the speaker's mood or a feature of the situation rather than a characteristic of the person addressed. See Appendix D in his *The Theaetetus of Plato* (Oxford UP, 1861; reprinted by Arno Press, 1972). In this translation, readers will accordingly find, for example, “That’s amazing, Meletus!” rather than “O amazing Meletus!” (26d).

Burnet (p. 184) objects to translating *νομίζω* (*nomizo*) as “I believe,” arguing that the verb is about practices more than beliefs. However, Helm (p. 33) rightly points out that, in the passages in question, the issue is whether Socrates thinks that the traditional gods, or any gods, exist (Greek: εἶναι, “are”), not whether he participates in particular worship practices. Some scholars suggest “I acknowledge that the gods exist” as an improvement over “I believe that the gods exist” in these passages, but the latter seems to me the more common English expression for what Socrates and Meletus are talking about.

Passages in Plato’s dialogues are usually cited by their Stephanus page numbers. In this version, these numbers appear between square brackets within the text rather than in the margin.

John M. Armstrong
August 2021

INTRODUCTION

In 399 BC, Socrates of Athens was tried for corrupting the Athenian youth and for not believing in the city's traditional gods but in new "daimonic" activities. After hearing from the prosecutors and then from Socrates (pronounced SOCK-ruh-teez), the large jury of Athenian citizens found Socrates guilty. The vote was about 280 to 221. He was then sentenced to death. Socrates was 70 years old.

He had lived in Athens his entire life. With bulging eyes and a snub nose, Socrates was not handsome by classical Greek standards, but he had extraordinary courage. As a citizen-soldier, he fought bravely for Athens in three foreign campaigns in his thirties and forties. Like an ordinary citizen, he married and had children. By his mid-forties, though, he had spent enough time in public discussions of virtue, justice, beauty, and knowledge that he had gained a reputation for wisdom, a reputation that he would dispute.

Fifth-century Athens had many people reputed to be wise. Many of them were foreigners. Some theorized about the cosmos, some taught public speaking, and some claimed to teach virtue. Ordinary Athenians often viewed them with suspicion. Socrates denied that he taught a special skill of any kind. But there was something else that set Socrates apart. Throughout his life, an inner voice often warned him against doing or saying whatever it was he was about to do or say. He believed that these warnings came from a daimon, a kind of god, and that it was always beneficial for him to heed it.

Some Athenians thought that Socrates was a pest, but others were inspired by his words. He exhorted both citizens and foreigners to improve their characters, their souls, before pursuing wealth, fame, or power. He reproached them for cowardice, injustice, and false claims to wisdom. If someone claimed to know how to live well, he would question them to see if they could make their knowledge plain. If they could not, he would expose contradictions in their ideas. The embarrassment led some to improve themselves, but others just hated the questioner.

Why did Socrates treat others this way? In Plato's account, Socrates had two reasons. First, the god, presumably Apollo, ordered Socrates to do so. Socrates says that the god is concerned about the Athenians, which probably means that the god wanted them to live well and thought they wouldn't do so unless they realized that they're not as good or as wise as they supposed. Socrates' second reason was that discussing virtue every day is good for people and that any worthwhile life includes honestly examining oneself and others for virtue and wisdom.

Why did Socrates think that such examination and discussion are necessary for living well? In his lifetime, Socrates had seen the fear of death negatively affect his fellow Athenians in war, politics, the courts, and an epidemic. He had also seen desires for wealth and power cause people to put private gain above the public good and to trample other people's interests. Giving in to such desires undermined law, justice, and piety, producing social chaos and private misery and despair. To avoid these outcomes for Athens and for himself, Socrates encouraged personal and civic virtue through daily conversations about the nature of virtue and by shaming those who did not give the highest priority to living justly. These examinations, exhortations, and chastisements came to constitute Socrates' pursuit of wisdom, his philosophy.

Plato was more than 40 years younger than Socrates and admired him greatly. He attended Socrates' trial and afterward published *Socrates' Defense Speech*, otherwise known as *Apology of Socrates*. (In ancient Greek, an *apologia* is a defense speech.) Plato wrote it as if it were a transcript of what Socrates said during and immediately after the trial. How accurately it represents Socrates' words is a matter of scholarly debate.

Xenophon was another of Socrates' admirers. His account of Socrates' defense also survives and is worth reading, but Xenophon was not at the trial itself.

The fact that Plato, Xenophon, and many other followers of Socrates wrote so much about him indicates how impressive Socrates was. We are fortunate that some of these writings have survived so that we can glimpse for ourselves the man and his arguments.

APOLOGY OF SOCRATES

What effect my accusers have had on you, Athenians, [17a] I don't know. As for me, they spoke so persuasively that I almost forgot who I was. But hardly anything they said was true. Of their many false statements, I was most surprised at one in particular: that you should be careful not to be deceived by me on the grounds that I'm a clever speaker. [17b] You see, the fact they're not ashamed that I would prove them wrong as soon as I opened my mouth and revealed that I'm not a clever speaker at all was, I thought, most shameful of them—unless, of course, they call someone who tells the truth a "clever speaker." If that's what they mean, I would admit that I'm a speaker above their level. So, as I was saying, they said little or nothing that's true. From me, however, you'll hear the whole truth. But by Zeus, Athenians, you won't hear flowery speeches like theirs, [17c] adorned with fine words and phrases. No, you'll hear an unprepared speech made of whatever words come to me, for I trust that the things I say are just. None of you should expect otherwise. I mean, it surely wouldn't be proper at my age to come before you and invent stories like a teenager.

I do ask this favor of you, though: if you hear me defending myself with the same arguments that I normally use in the market by the moneychangers' tables, where many of you have heard me, and in other places, don't be surprised or make a commotion for that reason. [17d] You see, the situation is like this: although I'm seventy years old, this is my first trial. The way of talking here is simply foreign to me. If I really were a foreigner, you'd certainly excuse me if I spoke in the accent and manner I'd been raised in. [18a] So, I think that what I'm now asking of you is fair: that you overlook the manner of my speech, which may be better or worse, and examine and focus your attention on whether my claims are just or not. That is a juror's virtue; a speaker's virtue is telling the truth.

It's right for me, Athenians, to begin by defending myself from the initial false accusations against me and from the initial accusers, and then from the recent accusations and the recent accusers. [18b] You see, many people have been accusing me in front of you for many years now, and nothing they've said is true. I fear them more than Anytus and his associates, although they, too, are clever. The initial accusers are more clever, though. They took many of you under their wing from the time you were children and were persuading you and accusing me no less falsely than Anytus and his companions are now, saying that there's a certain wise man called Socrates, a deep thinker who's been investigating everything in the sky and under the earth and who makes the weaker argument stronger. [18c] Those who smeared me with this talk are my clever accusers, gentlemen, since the people who hear them think that those who study these things don't believe in gods. What's more, these accusers are many, and they've been accusing me for a long time now. Also, they spoke to you at that age when you were most likely to believe them, some of you being children and some teenagers. They simply won their case by default since no one spoke in my defense.

What's most unreasonable of all is that it isn't possible to know or say their names—unless one of them happens to be a comedic playwright. [18d] The people who misled you with their malice and slander—and those who, when misled, persuaded others—are all very hard to deal with; one can't make any of them come up here and cross-examine them. Instead, one must, when making one's defense, simply fight with shadows, as it were, and examine when no one is responding.

As I said, you should accept that my accusers are of two kinds—those who accused me just now and those who accused me long ago, [18e] whom I'm describing—and you should allow that I must first defend myself against the initial accusers, since you heard from them before you heard from these recent accusers and to a much greater extent.

Well, Athenians, I must make my defense and try in a very short time to rid you [19a] of the slander you've entertained for a long time. I want this to happen if it's in some way better for you and for me, and I want my defense to succeed. I think this is difficult; just how difficult doesn't escape me in the least. That said, the matter should proceed in whatever way the god likes. I must obey the law and make a defense.

Let's take up the matter from its beginning. What's the accusation from which the slander against me arose, [19b] the accusation on which Meletus surely relied when writing the formal charge against me? What were the slanderers saying when they slandered me? One must read the sworn declaration as if it were from the accusers themselves: "Socrates is guilty of wrongdoing and is a busybody, investigating things under the earth and in the heavens, making the weaker argument stronger, [19c] and teaching these same things to others." It's something like that. I mean, you've seen these things yourselves in Aristophanes' comedy.[1] In the play, a character named Socrates swings around the stage on a hook while claiming that he's walking on air and talking a lot of other nonsense about matters on which I have no expert understanding, big or small. I don't speak in disrespect of such expertise if someone is wise concerning such things—I don't want Meletus to bring even more cases against me!—but in fact, Athenians, I don't participate in them. [19d] I present the majority of you as witnesses. I call upon you to inform and tell each other, those of you who've ever heard me having a discussion—and many of you who have—tell each other if any of you has ever heard me discussing such things to any extent, large or small. You'll realize from this that the other things most people say about me are of the same kind.

---

[1] *The Clouds*, first produced in 423 BC, was a comedic play by Aristophanes (446?–386? BC). It is read and performed still today. Another 423 BC comedy that lampooned Socrates, *Connus*, was written by Ameipsias and named for Socrates' music teacher. It has not survived from antiquity.

In fact, none of it is true, and if you've heard from someone that I try to educate people and charge fees, that's not true either. [19e] I think that charging fees is fine, though, if one can educate people as Gorgias of Leontini does, or Prodicus of the island of Keos, or Hippias of Elis. Each of them, when he goes into any of the cities, is able to persuade the young people—who can associate for free with any of their fellow citizens they want [20a]—to abandon those relationships, associate with him, give him money, and thank him, too.

Now, another wise man from the island of Paros is here. I learned that he's in town because I ran into a man who's paid more money to sophists than everyone else put together: Callias, the son of Hipponicus. Since he has two sons, I asked him a question.

"Callias," I said, "if your sons were colts or calves, we could recruit and hire a trainer for them who'd make them fine and good with respect to their proper virtue. [20b] The trainer would be a horse trainer or a farmer. But now, since they are humans, whom do you intend to recruit as their trainer? Who's an expert in this kind of virtue, that of a human being and a citizen? Since you have sons, I assume you've looked into this. Is there someone," I asked, "or not?"

"Certainly," he said.

"Who is he," I asked, "where's he from, and how much does he charge for his teaching?"

Pages 6–33 have been omitted from this sample. The inexpensive, full version is available from Apple Books (epub) and Amazon.com (paperback and Kindle). Search for “Plato Armstrong” on either platform.

—JMA

which you've heard me having discussions and examining myself and others, and that the life without examination isn't worth living for a human being, you'll believe me even less. I say, though, that that's how things really are, gentlemen, but it's not easy to convince you. At the same time, I'm not used to thinking that I deserve anything bad. [38b] If I had money, I would propose as much of a fine as I could pay, since I wouldn't be hurt at all. But I don't have money at the moment, unless you want to propose a fine I can pay. Perhaps I could pay you about a mina of silver. I propose that amount, then.

On the other hand, Athenians, Plato here, and Crito, Critobolus, and Apollodorus are urging me to propose a fine of thirty minas. They say they'll guarantee payment. I propose that amount, then, and you'll have these men as reliable guarantors of the silver. [38c]

◆

For the sake of a little time, Athenians, you'll get the reputation and blame from the city's critics for having killed Socrates, a wise man—because those who want to criticize you will, of course, say that I'm wise even if I'm not. If you'd waited a little while, my death would've happened on its own. Look at my age. My life is far along, and death is near. I don't say this to all of you, [38d] but to those who condemned me to death. To them I also say this: Maybe you think, gentlemen, that I stand condemned because I lack the kind of arguments that would've persuaded you if I thought that one should do and say anything to avoid the penalty. Far from it. I was convicted not by a lack of arguments, but by a lack of nerve, shamelessness, and willingness to tell you the kinds of things that would've been most pleasant to your ears: wailing, lamenting, and my doing and saying many other things that I say are unworthy of me, [38e] the kind you're used to hearing from others. No, I didn't think then that I should do anything undignified because of the danger I faced, nor do I now regret how I defended myself. I much prefer to die having defended myself this way than to live that way. I mean, neither in a trial nor in a battle should I or anyone else concoct ways of avoiding death at any price. [39a] It's often clear in battles that one can escape death by tossing aside one's weapons and turning to supplicate one's pursuers, and in every dangerous situation there are many other ways of escaping death if one has the nerve to do and say anything.

It isn't hard to avoid death, gentlemen. It's much harder to avoid wickedness. [39b] It runs faster than death. I've now been caught by the slower of the two since I'm old and slow, but my accusers, being clever and sharp, have been caught by the faster one, badness. I'm going away now, having been condemned by you to suffer the death penalty, but they've been condemned by the truth to wickedness and injustice. I'm staying with my penalty, and they're staying with theirs. Perhaps these things had to be this way, and I suppose they turned out just right. [39c]

Now I want to prophesy to you who voted against me. I'm now at the very moment when people prophesy the most: when they're about to die. I say to you who voted for my execution that soon after my death, by Zeus, much harsher vengeance will come upon you than the death you've inflicted on me. You've done this supposing that you won't now have to give an account of your life, but I say that quite the opposite will happen to you. [39d] Those who test you will be more numerous. I was holding them back, but you didn't notice. Because they're younger, they'll be harder to deal with, and you'll be more annoyed. If you suppose that by killing people you'll keep anyone from reproaching you for not living rightly, you're not thinking things through very well. In fact, it's neither possible nor fine to escape this criticism. No, what's finest and easiest isn't to suppress others, but to prepare oneself to become as good as possible. Having made these prophecies to you who voted against me, I take my leave. [39e]

While the officials are conducting their business and I'm not yet off to where I must die, I would enjoy talking with those who voted to acquit me about this thing that's happened. Stay with me a moment, gentlemen. Nothing keeps us from talking to each other while it's permitted. [40a] Since you're my friends, I'm ready to show you the meaning of what's just happened to me. Something amazing has happened to me, men of the jury—for in calling you "jurors," I'm using the word correctly. To date, my usual prophetic sign from the daimonic source was in each case very persistent, blocking me even on trivial matters if I was about to act incorrectly in some way. But now things have happened to me, as you can see for yourselves, that may be thought to be—and are usually considered to be—the worst of evils. [40b] But the god's sign didn't oppose me when I left home this morning, or when I was coming into the court here, or at any point in the speech when I was about to say something. Although in other discussions it often held me back in the middle of something I was saying, now, with regard to this proceeding, it hasn't opposed anything I've done or said at any point.

So, what do I suppose the reason is for this? I'll tell you. You see, what's happened to me is probably a good thing, and those of us who assume that being dead is bad are mistaken. [40c] I have strong evidence for this: my usual sign would've opposed me if I wasn't about to do something good.

But let's consider in the following way, too, that there's a strong reason to expect that being dead is a good thing. I mean, being dead is one of two things: either it's like being nothing, and the dead person has no perception of anything, or it's a kind of change that people talk about, a migration of the soul from here to another place. Now, if there's no perception, like a dreamless sleep, [40d] then death would be an amazing gain. I think if one had to choose the night in which one slept so soundly that no dreams appeared and had to compare this night with all other nights and days of one's life and say how many days and nights in one's past were better and more pleasant than this night, I imagine that not just some private individual, but the king of Persia himself would find them easy to count compared with the other days and nights. [40e] So, if death is like that, I say it's a gain since the whole of time would then seem no longer than a single night.

On the other hand, if death is a kind of journey from here to another place, and if what's said is true, that all the dead are there, what greater good than this could there be, gentlemen of the jury? [41a] If arriving in Hades after escaping the people called "jurors" here one will find the true judges, the ones who are said to judge cases there—Minos, Rhadamanthus, Aeacus, Triptolemus, and other demigods who were just during their own lifetimes—would the journey be disappointing? Or how much would one of you give to interact with Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod, and Homer? I'm ready to die many times if these things are true. [41b] For me at least, spending time there would be amazing: when I met Palamedes and Ajax, the son of Telamon, and anyone else of long ago who died because of an unjust judgment, I'd compare my experiences with theirs. I imagine it'd be pleasant. Above all, though, the greatest would be to spend time examining and searching the people there, as I do the people here, to find out which of them is wise, and which thinks he is but isn't.

How much would one give, gentlemen of the jury, to examine the man who led the great army against Troy, [41c] or Odysseus, or Sisyphus, or the countless others one could mention, both men and women? Wouldn't it be an indescribable happiness to talk with the people in the underworld, and to associate with them and examine them? In any case, the people there surely don't kill one for doing so. In all other respects, the people there are happier than the people here, and they're now immortal for the rest of time—if what's said is indeed true.

But you, too, gentlemen of the jury, should be of good hope when facing death and should keep in mind this one truth: there's nothing bad for a good man, [41d] not when he's alive or when he's dead, nor are his affairs neglected by gods. My present circumstances didn't happen on their own. Rather, it's clear to me that to die and be freed from my circumstances is a better thing for me after all. That's why the sign didn't block me at any point and why I, at least, am not at all upset with those who voted against me or with my accusers. Of course, that wasn't their intent when they were condemning and accusing me. No, they thought they were harming me. [41e] They deserve to be blamed for that.

I ask this much of them, though. When my sons grow up, gentlemen, punish them by giving them grief in exactly the same ways I gave you grief if they seem to you to care about money or anything else before virtue, and if they think they're something when they're not. Reproach them as I did you for not caring about the things one should care about and for thinking they're something when they're worthy of nothing. [42a] If you do that, I will have been treated justly by you, as will my sons.

Well then, it's time to leave—for me to die and for you to live. Which of us is going to a better situation, though, is unclear to everyone except the god.

DEATH SCENE FROM *PHAEDO*

Translator's note: Plato wrote the Phaedo *as an account of Socrates' last day. The narrator, a young Phaedo of Elis, was one of more than a dozen friends of Socrates who had gathered to talk with him in prison. Socrates would die by drinking hemlock at sunset. Plato was not there due to illness. He depicts Phaedo as narrating the events to an interested Echecrates, a philosopher living in Phlius, a city about 74 miles west of Athens. The account could be completely fictional, but the affection of Socrates' friends for him was surely genuine. The passage begins with Phaedo quoting Socrates.*

"It's about time for me to head off to the bath. It seems better to drink the poison after bathing and not to give the women the trouble of washing a corpse." [115b]

When Socrates had said these things, Crito said, "OK, Socrates. What instructions do you have for these men or me about your children or anything else? What could we do that would be of most service to you?"

"The things I'm always saying, Crito," he said, "and nothing new: if you take care of yourselves in whatever you do, you will do me and mine and yourselves a service, even if you don't promise me anything now. On the other hand, if you neglect yourselves and aren't willing to live by following the tracks, as it were, of our present and earlier discussions, then even if you make many fervent promises now, [115c] you won't do any good."

"Then we'll be eager to do as you say," he said. "How should we bury you, though?"

"However you want," he said, "provided you catch me, that is, and I don't escape from you." After laughing quietly and glancing at us, he said, "Gentlemen, I'm not convincing Crito that I'm this Socrates, the one now participating in the conversation and organizing each of the items under discussion. No, he thinks that I'm that corpse he'll see in a little while, [115d] so he asks how he should bury me. I've been making the case for some time and at some length that when I drink the poison, I shall stay with you no longer, but shall depart, going off to certain states of happiness of the blessed dead.[11] I seem, though, to have said all this to him in vain while trying to comfort both you and myself. So please offer a pledge to Crito for me, a pledge opposite to the one he gave the jurors. You see, he pledged that I would stay around, but you must pledge that, when I die, I shall not stay around, [115e] but shall depart and be off. That will help Crito bear it more easily, and when he sees my body being burned or being buried in the ground, he won't be angry for me, as if I were suffering terrible things, and he won't say at the funeral that he's laying Socrates out for display or carrying me out for burial or burying me in the ground. I mean, you can be sure, my dear friend Crito," he said, "that speaking imprecisely is not only discordant in itself; it also produces a bad effect in souls. No, you must be of good courage and say that you are burying my body, and you can bury it as you like, [116a] in whatever way you think most customary."

---

[11] Socrates' optimism in the *Phaedo* about the possibility of an afterlife contrasts with his agnosticism in the *Apology* about an afterlife

After saying these things, he got up and went into another room to take a bath. Crito followed him, but he told us to wait. So we waited, discussing among ourselves what had been said and reviewing it and sometimes going over how great a misfortune had befallen us, feeling simply as though we'd been deprived of a father and would spend the rest of our lives as orphans. After he washed and his children were brought to him [116b]—you see, he had two little sons and one big one—and those women of the household arrived, he talked with them in Crito's presence and gave them instructions regarding his wishes. He then told the women and the children to leave and rejoined us.

It was now almost sunset. He'd spent a long time inside, you see. He came and sat down, freshly washed. Not much was discussed after that. The assistant to the Eleven arrived, came up to him, and said, [116c] "Socrates, I won't fault you as I do others for being angry with me and cursing when I order them to drink the poison as required by the officers. In your time here, I have come to know you in other moments as the most genuine, gentle, and good man of those who've ever come here, and now in particular I'm sure that you're not angry with me, for you recognize the ones responsible and will direct your anger at them. Now then—for you know the message I've come to deliver [116d]—goodbye and try to bear what's required as easily as you can." The assistant wept as he turned around and left.

Socrates looked up at him and said, "Goodbye to you, too. We'll do that." Then to us he said, "What a charming person! Throughout my time here, he has visited me, had discussions with me sometimes, and been a most agreeable man. How genuinely he now weeps for me! But come on, Crito, let's obey him: let someone bring the poison if it's been prepared. If it hasn't been, let the man prepare it." [116e]

Then Crito said, "But I think, Socrates, that the sun is still on the mountains and hasn't gone down yet. Besides, I know that others drink the poison long after they've received the order. They have dinner and enjoy their wine. Some even have sex with their loved ones. Don't be in a hurry. There's still time."

Then Socrates said, "It's reasonable for the people you mention to do those things since they think they'll gain something thereby. It's also reasonable for me not to do them. [117a] You see, I think I gain nothing by drinking the poison a little later—at least nothing other than becoming ridiculous in my own eyes by clinging to life and sparing it when it has nothing left to offer. No, go on," he said, "do what I ask and not something else."

Hearing him, Crito nodded to the slave standing nearby. The slave left and, after spending a long time, came back with the one who was to administer the poison. He carried the prepared substance in a cup. When Socrates saw the man, he said, “OK, my friend, since you’re an expert on these things, what must one do?”

“Just drink it,” he said, “and then walk around until your legs feel heavy. [117b] Then lie down, and it will act on its own.” Then he offered the cup to Socrates.

He received it very graciously, Echecrates. He didn’t hesitate from fear, nor did his color or countenance change. He instead looked at the man from under his brow, as was his custom, and said, “About this drink: what do you say about pouring an offering to someone? Is it allowed or not?”

“Socrates,” he said, “we prepare only the dose that we think is just right.” [117c]

“I understand,” said Socrates, “but I suppose it’s both allowed and necessary to at least pray to the gods that the migration from here to there will be fortunate. That’s what I pray for, and may it be so.”

He said these things while holding out the cup, and then he very coolly and calmly drank it down. To this point, most of us were fairly able to keep from crying, but we couldn’t any longer when we saw him drinking it and had drunk it. In my case, the tears came pouring out against my will so that I hid my face and mourned deeply for myself. You see, I wasn’t mourning for him, but for my misfortune in being deprived of such a man as a companion. [117d] Even before me, Crito had got up and left when he couldn’t hold back his tears. Apollodorus, though, hadn’t stopped crying from before, and now he howled with such sobs and anger that everyone there started bawling except Socrates himself.

“What a way to behave, you guys!” said Socrates. “This was mainly why I sent the women away—so that they wouldn’t make such a racket. [117e] I mean, I’ve heard that we’re supposed to die in silent reverence. So get a grip and bear up!”

Hearing this, we felt ashamed and held back our tears. He walked around, and when he said that his legs were heavy, he lay down on his back as the man had ordered. The man, the one who gave him the poison, was keeping hold of him. After a while, he examined the feet and legs. He then squeezed his foot hard and asked if he felt it. [118a] Socrates said no. After that, he did the same to his lower legs. Moving up the body like this, he showed us that it was growing cold and stiff. He kept hold and said that when it reached his heart, Socrates would pass on.

By this time, the chill was pretty much around his lower abdomen. Socrates uncovered his face—he’d covered it, you see —and said—this was the last thing he spoke—“Crito,” he said, “we owe a rooster to Asclepius. You all must make the offering and not forget.”

“It shall be done,” said Crito. “See if you have anything else to say.”

Crito asked this, but Socrates answered nothing further. Instead, after a little while, he shook, and the man uncovered his face. His eyes were fixed. Seeing this, Crito closed the mouth and eyes.

That, Echecrates, was the end of our companion, a man who, as we would say, was the best of those we knew at the time and otherwise the wisest and most just.

CITING PLATO

Most editions of Plato's works show Stephanus page numbers, which makes it easy to refer to a passage no matter which translation of Plato you use. Each Stephanus page contains five parts: a, b, c, d, and e. Suppose you want to quote the following passage:

> I go around doing nothing but persuading you, both young and old, not to care for your bodies or your possessions [30b] before or as keenly as you care for the soul, that it may be as good as possible.

Because the passage stretches over two parts of Stephanus page 30, you would introduce and quote the passage like this, removing the bracketed page number from the quoted material:

> In Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, Socrates says, "I go around doing nothing but persuading you, both young and old, not to care for your bodies or your possessions before or as keenly as you care for the soul, that it may be as good as possible" (30a–b).

You would then include this translation in your list of works cited as follows:

Plato. *Apology of Socrates, with the Death Scene from Phaedo*. Translated, with Introduction and Notes, by John M. Armstrong, Tully Books, 2021.

FURTHER READING

PRIMARY SOURCES

Plato wrote accounts of pre-trial and post-trial conversations of Socrates in the *Theaetetus*, *Euthyphro*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*, but unlike the trial, Plato did not witness these conversations himself. Although these writings could be entirely fictional, they perhaps indicate what Plato understood to be Socrates' reasons for standing trial and accepting its outcome.

Xenophon, another admirer of Socrates, wrote an *Apology of Socrates*, too, but he was not in Athens for the trial and had to rely on others' reports of the event.

Plato's *Apology of Socrates* mentions a comedy by Aristophanes, *The Clouds*, that was first produced 24 years before Socrates' trial. In it, a character named Socrates heads a ridiculous school, the Thinkery, where, among other things, students learn to make weak arguments appear strong.

Except for the *Theaetetus*, these sources are collected with Plato's *Apology* in *The Trial and Execution of Socrates: Sources and Controversies*, edited by Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith (Oxford UP, 2002), and in *The Trials of Socrates: Six Classic Texts*, edited by C.D.C Reeve (Hackett Publishing Co., 2002).

Fragments from many other followers of Socrates have been arranged by topic in *The Circle of Socrates: Readings in the First-Generation Socratics*, edited and translated by George Boys-Stones and Christopher Rowe (Hackett Publishing Co., 2013).

For an account of the turbulent political and military history of Athens prior to the trial, including the alleged impiety and actual treason of Socrates' former acquaintance Alcibiades and the horrific but brief rule of the anti-democratic Thirty, which included another acquaintance of Socrates as a leader, the ruthless Critias, see Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* and Xenophon's *Hellenica*.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Debra Nails discusses recent approaches to the interpretation of ancient writings about Socrates and provides a summary of events in Socrates' life, including the trial, in her entry on Socrates in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta (online).

For introductions to the trial's historical context and to Plato's representations of events before, during, and after the trial, see Debra Nails's "The Trial and Death of Socrates" in *A Companion to Socrates*, edited by Sara Ahbel-Rappe and Rachana Kamtekar (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 5–20, and Josiah Ober's "Socrates and Democratic Athens" in *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, edited by Donald R. Morrison (Cambridge UP, 2011), 138–78.

For a careful study of the arguments in Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, see *Socrates on Trial* by Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith (Princeton UP, 1989).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Plato (428?–347 BC) was an Athenian citizen and a follower of Socrates. He wrote more than two dozen philosophical dialogues, most of them featuring Socrates as a participant. The dialogues investigate such topics as human virtue, the just society, immortality, knowledge, reality, language, and the structure of the universe. Plato founded a school, the Academy, that attracted a young Aristotle and others as students and researchers. The Academy lasted for three centuries. Many thinkers have considered themselves Platonists since then, and the influence of Plato's writings on human civilization has been profound.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

John M. Armstrong, Ph.D., is the Willis J. Smith Professor of Philosophy at Southern Virginia University, where he has taught philosophy and ancient Greek since 1998.