



THE APOLOGY OF SOCRATES



apologia ἀπολογία = trial-defense speech

The situation: Five years after Athens' disastrous defeat to Sparta in the Peloponnesian War, Socrates has been brought to trial before a jury of 500 Athenian citizens. He is charged with having corrupted the youth of Athens through subversive teachings concerning the gods.

404 B.C.E. Athens' defeat to Sparta results in brief rule of **oligarchy** favored by Sparta. Athens' **democracy** is restored within a year.

399 B.C.E. Trial of Socrates



18b-c

“There have been many who have accused me to you for many years now... saying that there is a man called Socrates, a wise man, a student of all things in the sky and below the earth, who makes the worse arguments stronger. Those who spread that rumor, gentlemen, are my dangerous accusers, for their hearers believe that those who study these things do not even believe in the gods.”



wise	<i>sophos</i>	σοφος
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wisdom	<i>sophia</i>	σοφια
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Sophist	<i>sophistēs</i>	σοφιστης	≈ “expert” or “professor”
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philosopher	<i>philosophos</i>	φιλοσοφος
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20a–b

“Callias, I said, if your sons were colts or calves, we could find and engage for them a supervisor for them who would make them excel in their proper qualities, some horse breeder or farmer. Now since they are men, whom do you have in mind to supervise them? Who is an expert in this kind of excellence, the human and social kind?

excellence, *aretē* ἀρετή
quality
virtue

craft / art *technē* τεχνη

examination / *elenchos* ἐλεγχος
investigation



25d

“My dear Meletus, do you think you are prosecuting Anaxagoras?”

....

29b

“Surely it is the most blameworthy ignorance to believe that one knows what one does not know.

“If I were to claim that I am wiser than anyone in anything, it would be in this: that, as I have no adequate knowledge of things in the underworld, so I do not think I have [any such knowledge].



29b

“I do know, however, that it is wicked and shameful to do wrong, to disobey one’s superior, be he god or man.”

30c–d

Neither Meletus nor Anytus can harm me in any way...
Certainly [Meletus] might kill me, or perhaps banish or disenfranchise me... I think he is doing himself much greater harm doing what he is doing now, attempting to have a man executed unjustly”



30a–b

“I go around doing nothing but persuading both young and old among you not to care for your body or your wealth in preference to, or as strongly as, [you care for] the best possible state of your soul...

soul

psychē

ψυχή

≈ “self”, or “mind”



36d

“The Olympian victor makes you think yourself happy;
[but] I make you be happy.”

happy

eudaimōn

εὐδαιμων

≈ “fortunate,
flourishing, successful

happiness

eudaimonia

εὐδαιμονια



38a

“If I say that it is impossible for me to keep quiet because that means disobeying the god, you will not believe me and will think that I am being ironical.

On the other hand, if I say that it is the greatest good for a man to discuss virtue every day and those other things about which you hear me conversing and testing myself and others — for the unexamined life is not worth living for men — you will believe me even less”

irony

eironeia

εἰρωνεία