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Plato (ca. 427-ca. 347 BCE): *Apology of Socrates*

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The title of Plato's *Apology of Socrates* (the classic commentary is Burnet 1924) indicates that it is a 'defense speech' (an ἀπολογία [apologia] → I.2.1. Apologia), but it does not fit comfortably in the genre. This has been known for some time. In antiquity (→ II.1.1. Antiquity), the author of Περὶ ἐσχηματισμένων [*On figured speeches*] had already made the point. (Neither the author nor the date are known. The work was ascribed, wrongly, to Dionysius of Halicarnassus. For translation and discussion, see Hunter 2012, 113–117). The author notes that the *Apology* is overtly a defense speech in which several other subjects are artfully concealed, including an accusation of the Athenians, an encomium of Socrates, and an exhortation on what a philosopher should be like. Given this, one might wonder whether it would be more illuminating to place the *Apology* in a different genre. Certainty is not possible, but the *Apology* has the marks of autofiction (→ I.2.6. Autofiction). Here, again, the author of *On figured speeches* points the way. The *Apology* is more than a defense speech. (There is a tradition according to which Socrates made no speech in his defense. This tradition may have its origins in Plato's *Gorgias*, where Socrates is made to say that he would not know what to say at court (521d–522e). For discussion, see Oldfather 1938). It also teaches certain lessons about Socrates. The lessons that

the author of *On figured speeches* mentions are not the ones I will discuss, but either way the suggestion is the same: Plato's *Apology of Socrates* is an instance of autofiction.

The *Apology* can appear to be biographical. Certainly, it has a historical component. It is an account of a courtroom speech that Plato tells from the point of view of a character named 'Socrates'. Further, given that Plato twice refers to himself by name, it is clear that he wanted his readers to know that he was present. (The *Apology*, in this way, is unusual among the Platonic dialogues. The only other dialogue in which Plato refers to himself is the *Phaedo*). At 34a, to the jury, Socrates is made to say that he sees several of the men he allegedly corrupted when they were young. He invites their older relatives to accuse him if they believe that their younger family members were harmed. He says that he sees Adeimantus, "brother of Plato here". Subsequently, at 38b, in the penalty phase of the trial, Socrates says to the jury that "Plato here", and Crito, Critobulus, and Apollodorus, bid him to increase his offer of penalty to thirty minae of silver and that they guarantee payment. (In suits of the kind brought against Socrates, no penalty was fixed by law. The accuser proposed a penalty if the accused was found to be guilty. The accused was permitted to counter with an alternative penalty). But none of this shows that Plato intended the *Apology* to be a purely historical document. Socrates was a perplexing figure, as the comic portrait in Aristophanes' *Clouds* clearly demonstrates, and so it is more natural to think that Plato wanted his readers to understand Socrates as he himself understood him.

If Plato did want his readers to understand Socrates and the trial as he understood them, then the *Apology* belongs to the literary genre in which the author tries to bring out something important about a person or a series of events that the author witnessed, but that the reader would miss in a straightforward historical account. This genre is autofiction. To show that the *Apology*

fits in this genre, it is necessary to identify what Plato thought was important about Socrates and to explain why this would be obscured by a straightforward historical account.

In the *Apology*, Socrates does not follow the custom of the day. He does not implore the jury (34b–35c). Instead, he speaks to them as men he has the right to rebuke. He says that his defense is on their behalf. He says that he seeks to prevent them from wrongdoing, that he is a gift to the city of Athens, and that he makes his defense to prevent them from mistreating him, this gift, someone who has spent his life caring for the city and its citizens (30d–33c). The jury, however, saw the situation very differently: the majority voted to execute him.

In this way, the *Apology* portrays a difference of opinion about Socrates. Many in the jury viewed him unfavorably, as someone who was harmful and who was at least partly to blame for Athens' downfall. Socrates' associates, Plato among them, did not see him this way. When, at 33d–34b, Socrates invites the fathers and brothers of the young he has allegedly corrupted to bear witness against him, none do. When Socrates considers the counter-assessment he should make, Plato and Crito, Critobulus, and Apollodorus urge him to assess the penalty at thirty times the sum Socrates thought that he himself could pay, which itself was not inconsiderable.

This difference of opinion might be taken as nothing more than a record of the historical facts, but when the *Apology* is read within the context of Plato's dialogues, a straightforward historical interpretation becomes improbable. Socrates takes the lead in almost all of Plato's dialogues. These dialogues belong to the genre of 'Socratic conversations'. (Aristotle refers to Σωκρατικοὶ λόγοι [Socratikoi logoi] as an established literary genre (*Poetics* 1147b1). Only Plato's dialogues and Xenophon's Socratic writings have survived intact. For discussion, see Kahn 1996). The *Apology* is not a dialogue. It is a representation of Socrates' courtroom speech. In this way, it is similar in form to Thucydides' account of Pericles' Funeral Oration (*History of*

the Peloponnesian War, 2.34–2.46), but nothing much follows from this formal similarity. It is possible to understand Plato, even in the *Apology*, as trying to help himself and his readers understand the significance of the historical Socrates (Long 1998, 119–120; Matthews 2009). If this is Plato’s intention, then although there are differences in form between the *Apology* and Plato’s dialogues, what many of the dialogues have in common with the *Apology* is more important than their differences. (For argument to the contrary, see Kahn 1996, 88–89). Plato is trying to defend and to make sense of Socrates, of his interactions with Socrates and of the interactions involving Socrates that he has heard about. The sense Plato makes is not something a historical account of what Socrates said and did, at his trial or elsewhere, would have captured. Presumably no historian has ever seriously thought that the *Apology* records all and only Socrates’ actual words. (“The first question we have to ask about the *Apology* is how far we may regard it as a historical document. That it is not a word-for-word reproduction of the actual speech delivered by Socrates may be granted at once. Plato was not a newspaper reporter” (Burnet 1924, 143)). At the same time, it is equally clear that if the *Apology* is autofiction, then Plato is doing more than simply using different words to report what Socrates said.

It may seem to some that this is an improbable interpretation of the *Apology*, and there is an argument in support of this perspective. In the other Platonic dialogues in which Socrates is the main character, it is extremely natural to think that Plato was not present at the conversation. The dramatic dates are too early, occurring when Plato was a boy or before he was born. (Historians stress the point; see Kahn 1996, 2). In other dialogues, such as in the *Euthyphro*, which shows Socrates before the trial, Plato portrays a conversation between Socrates and a single interlocutor in which no witnesses are shown to be present. In the *Apology*, however, in striking contrast to his practice in his works generally, Plato clearly indicates that he was present.

For this reason (as the trial itself was something of a spectacle and would have had a large audience), it can seem tempting to think that the best explanation for Plato's unusual practice in the *Apology* is that he wants his readers to know that he was a witness to the trial because he wants his readers to conclude that the *Apology* is a purely historical document.

By now, however, it should be apparent that the available evidence is too weak to support such a strong conclusion. The *Apology* is an account of a historical event. Plato is not simply writing fiction, but it does not follow that historical accuracy is his goal. It could be that instead of faithfully reporting Socrates' speech, Plato is trying to get at what he understands as the significance of what Socrates did and said at his trial and in his life more generally. Certainty on the point is not possible. (Myles Burnyeat summarizes the current state of the academic literature: "Plato could have preserved the gist of what Socrates said and re-presented it in his own inimitable prose. That indeed is what many scholars think the *Apology* does. But it is equally possible that Plato, like Xenophon and perhaps others as well, devised his own independent defense of Socrates, that had little or nothing in common with what Socrates said on that day. The scholarly literature on this topic is a paradise of inclusive guesswork" (Burnyeat 1997, 1). But if the *Apology* is autofiction, then Plato has the character Socrates express fundamental points more clearly than the historical Socrates himself ever did.

Are there such passages? One likely possibility is *Apology* 29c6–30b4. In this well-known passage, Socrates explains what he in fact does do and will not stop doing. It is here, if anywhere, that Plato could be expected to help himself and his readers understand something important about Socrates that would be missed in a historical account. Socrates, at this point in his defense, explains why he persists in the activity that has gotten him into so much trouble and is about to cost him his life. He explains that he would not desist from this activity even if the

jury were to acquit him on that condition. In no uncertain words he says that he would continue his examining and testing, because care for the soul is all important, and because there is no greater good in the city of Athens than the one he brings by testing and examining the people he happens to meet, in the marketplace and elsewhere. The passage reads as follows:

“ὦ Σώκρατες, νῦν μὲν Ἄνύτῳ οὐ πεισόμεθα ἀλλ’ ἀφιεμέν σε, ἐπὶ τούτῳ μέντοι, ἐφ’ ᾧ τε μηκέτι ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ ζητήσῃ διατρίβειν μηδὲ φιλοσοφεῖν: ἐὰν δὲ ’ ἀλῶς ἔτι τοῦτο πράττων, ἀποθανῆ” —εἰ οὖν με, ὅπερ εἶπον, ἐπὶ τούτοις ἀφίοιτε, εἵπομι’ ἂν ὑμῖν ὅτι “ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ἀσπάζομαι μὲν καὶ φιλοῶ, πείσομαι δὲ μᾶλλον τῷ θεῷ ἢ ὑμῖν, καὶ ἕωσπερ ἂν ἐμπνέω καὶ οἷός τε ᾧ, οὐ μὴ παύσωμαι φιλοσοφῶν καὶ ὑμῖν παρακελευόμενός τε καὶ ἐνδεικνύμενος ὅτῳ ἂν ἀεὶ ἐντυγχάνω ὑμῶν, λέγων οἷάπερ εἶωθα, ὅτι ‘ὦ ἄριστε ἀνδρῶν, Ἀθηναῖος ὢν, πόλεως τῆς μεγίστης καὶ εὐδοκιμωτάτης εἰς σοφίαν καὶ ἰσχύν, χρημάτων μὲν οὐκ αἰσχύνῃ ἐπιμελούμενος ὅπως σοὶ ἔσται ὡς πλεῖστα, καὶ δόξης καὶ τιμῆς, φρονήσεως δὲ καὶ ἀληθείας καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς βελτίστη ἔσται οὐκ ἐπιμελῆ οὐδὲ φροντίζεις;’ καὶ ἐὰν τις ὑμῶν ἀμφισβητήσῃ καὶ φῆ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, οὐκ εὐθὺς ἀφήσω αὐτὸν οὐδ’ ἄπειμι, ἀλλ’ ἐρήσομαι αὐτὸν καὶ ἐξετάσω καὶ ἐλέγξω, καὶ ἐὰν μοι μὴ δοκῆ κεκτηῖσθαι ἀρετὴν, φάναι δέ, ὄνειδιῶ ὅτι τὰ πλείστου ἄξια περὶ ἐλαχίστου ποιεῖται, τὰ δὲ φαυλότερα περὶ πλείονος. ταῦτα καὶ νεωτέρῳ καὶ πρεσβυτέρῳ ὅτῳ ἂν ἐντυγχάνω ποιήσω, καὶ ξένῳ καὶ ἀστῷ, μᾶλλον δὲ τοῖς ἀστοῖς, ὅσῳ μου ἐγγυτέρῳ ἔστε γένει. ταῦτα γὰρ κελεύει ὁ θεός, εὖ ἴστε, καὶ ἐγὼ οἶομαι οὐδέν πω ὑμῖν μείζον ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι ἐν τῇ πόλει ἢ τὴν ἐμὴν τῷ θεῷ ὑπηρεσίαν. οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο πράττων ἐγὼ περιέρχομαι ἢ πείθων ὑμῶν καὶ νεωτέρους καὶ πρεσβυτέρους μήτε σωμάτων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι μήτε χρημάτων πρότερον μηδὲ οὕτω σφόδρα ὡς τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς ἀρίστη ἔσται, λέγων ὅτι ‘οὐκ ἐκ χρημάτων ἀρετὴ γίγνεται, ἀλλ’ ἐξ ἀρετῆς χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαντα καὶ ἰδία καὶ δημοσία.’

[‘Socrates, we do not believe Anytus now; we acquit you, but only on condition that you spend no more time on this investigation, and do not practice philosophy, and if you are caught doing so you will die;’ if, as I say, you were to acquit me on those terms, I would say to you: ‘Gentlemen of the jury, I am grateful to and I am your friend, but I will obey the god rather than you, and as long as I draw breath and am able, I shall not cease to practice philosophy, to exhort you and in my usual way to point out to any one of you whom I happen to meet: Good Sir, you are an Athenian, a citizen of the greatest city with the greatest reputation for both wisdom and power; are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth, reputation and honors as possible, while you do not care nor give thought to wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul?’ Then, if one of you disputes this and says he does care, I shall not let him go at once or leave him, but I shall question him, examine him and test him, and if I do not think he has attained the goodness that he says he has, I shall reproach him because he attaches little importance to the most important things and greater importance to inferior things. I shall treat in this way anyone I happen to meet, young and old, citizen and stranger, and more so the citizens because you are more kindred to me. 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. For 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 for the best possible state of your soul, as I say to you: ‘Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence makes wealth and everything else good for men, both individually and collectively’. (29c6–30b4) (translation by G. M. A. Grube in Cooper 1997)]

These are perhaps the most famous words in all of philosophy, but Plato’s intention in making Socrates utter these words is not obvious. It can appear as if Plato is having Socrates voice well-known points that the historical figure made and said repeatedly, but this need not be what is happening. Instead, it may be that Plato is trying to explain behavior that was baffling to many of the Athenians that had heard about or had themselves interacted with Socrates.

Consider the verb φιλοσοφῶ [philosophēō], which can be translated as “philosophize” but literally means “love wisdom.” Prior to Plato, the two attested uses are in Herodotus and Thucydides. (For discussion, see Frede 2000 and 2004). Herodotus has Croesus say to Solon, “ξεῖνε Ἀθηναῖε, παρ’ ἡμέας γὰρ περὶ σέο λόγος ἀπῖκται πολλὸς καὶ σοφίης εἵνεκεν τῆς σῆς καὶ πλάνης, ὡς φιλοσοφῶν γῆν πολλὴν θεωρίας εἵνεκεν ἐπελήλυθας: νῦν ὧν ἐπειρέσθαι με ἵμερος ἐπῆλθέ σε εἴ τινα ἤδη πάντων εἶδες ὀλβιώτατον” [“my Athenian guest, we have heard a lot about you because of your wisdom and of your wanderings, how as one who loves wisdom you have traveled much of the world for the sake of seeing it, so now I desire to ask you who is the most fortunate man you have seen”] (I.30.2). Croesus attributes to Solon a certain sort of interest in a certain sort of knowledge. The knowledge in which Solon is interested is not easy to acquire, as Solon must travel the world. Further, to Croesus, Solon’s interest in this knowledge is unusual. It is not tied to any obvious practical purpose. Solon travels the world “for the sake of seeing it”, not as a merchant or ambassador, which would have been the more usual reasons.

Thucydides, in the “Pericles’ Funeral Oration”, uses the verb similarly. On behalf of the Athenians he addresses, Pericles says that “φιλοσοφοῦμεν ἄνευ μαλακίας” [“we love wisdom without softness”] (II.40.1). His point is directed against the kind of anti-intellectualism represented, for example, in Plato’s *Gorgias*, where Calicles tells Socrates that philosophy is fine for the young but is unseemly for a man because it renders him helpless in the practical

affairs that properly define the life of a man (484c–486d) (cf. *Theaetetus* 174a). Pericles' point is that the Athenians are interested in intellectual matters. They pursue knowledge on various subjects, and their pursuit of this knowledge is not always clearly tied to some practical pursuit. But this pursuit does not in any way make them soft or ineffectual. The Athenian's love of wisdom does not prevent them from acting decisively in practical matters.

In *Apology* 29c6–30b4, Plato is concerned to show that Socrates was doing something whose nature should not be misunderstood. The verb φιλοσοφῶ [philosopheō] and its cognates had been used infrequently. Further, in their known uses in Herodotus and Thucydides, they were used to characterize the activity of pursuing uncommon knowledge primarily for the sake of having the knowledge, not for some clearly identified practical purpose. Plato is concerned to show that this is not what Socrates was doing. Socrates first and foremost was practicing a discipline. It is questionable whether this discipline is philosophy, given the current meaning of the word, but it is easy to see why English translators are tempted to have Socrates describe himself as a 'philosopher'. Although the Greek noun φιλοσοφία [philosophia] transliterates as 'philosophy', it would be a mistake to translate Herodotus so that Croesus addresses Solon as a philosopher. Equally, in the Funeral Oration, it would be a mistake to translate Thucydides so that Pericles says that the Athenians are philosophers but that this practice does not make them soft (Burnet 1921, 195–196). Socrates, as Plato portrays him, did something much more systematic than love wisdom in the way Solon did when he travelled the world, or the way Pericles says that the Athenians do (Burnet 1924, 201). This is why it is reasonable to translate the *Apology* so that Socrates says that he will “not cease to practice philosophy”.

With respect to whether the *Apology* is a work of autofiction, the crucial question is who did what. Did Socrates make it clear in his words and actions that he was introducing and

practicing a new discipline and that he was stretching the meaning of an infrequently used word to describe his practice? Or was it Plato who made these points clear in his portrayal as part of an attempt to make sense of the significance of what Socrates did and said? On the hypothesis that the *Apology* is autofiction, Socrates himself never clearly explained and perhaps did not even completely grasp what he was doing. It is Plato who highlights the details of the practice, the way in which it is a discipline, and the way it goes beyond the traditional practice of loving wisdom. Given the existing evidence, it is hard to see what could show definitively that this is the right way to understand *Apology* 29c6–30b4, but given Plato’s philosophical originality and ability as a writer, it should hardly be surprising if this interpretation were true.

A similar question arises about the new discipline in which Socrates engaged and its connection to the human ψυχή [psuchē] or “soul”. In the *Apology* at 36c, Socrates says that he tries to persuade those he goes to privately “μὴ πρότερον μήτε τῶν ἑαυτοῦ μηδενὸς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι πρὶν ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμεληθεῖν ὅπως ὡς βέλτιστος καὶ φρονιμώτατος ἔσοιτο” [“not to care for any of his belongings before caring that he himself should be as good and as wise as possible”] (cf. *Apology* 39d). Previously, in *Apology* 29c6–30b4, in connection with what Socrates will not stop doing, Plato is careful to have his character link the good for a human being to the condition of his soul and to link the condition of the soul to the presence of ‘wisdom’ and ‘truth’. Socrates, as Plato portrays him, engages in this new discipline for a clear practical purpose.

Unlike in the case of the new discipline, there is independent evidence for the way Socrates talked about the soul and its connection to wisdom. The *Clouds* of Aristophanes (423 BCE; cf. Dover 1968) shows that Socrates talked about the soul as early as 423 BCE, when Socrates was in his middle forties and Plato was a boy. (Socrates refers to and mentions Aristophanes at *Apology* 18d and 19c; for discussion of the way Socrates appears in Athenian comedy, see

Guthrie 1971, 39–57). In the play, Aristophanes has Strepsiades derisively refer to the denizens of the think-tank that Socrates heads as “ψυχῶν σοφῶν” [“wise souls”] (94).

This satirical put-down is supposed to be funny, but the joke is no longer obvious. A modern reader may be tempted to think that Socrates and his followers in the think-tank are absurd because the control they exercise over their actions through the care of their souls has turned them into fools, not wise men, contrary to what they believe and advertise. This understanding of the joke presupposes that the audience conceived of human beings as psychological beings, beings whose actions are caused by the states and processes in their soul. As such, a human being exerts control over the direction his life takes by exerting control over the beliefs and other states in his soul. Socrates and his followers, however, go about this in a comical way. Aristophanes represents them as devotees of the new scientific/sophistical education, and he shows how this has turned them into fools, pale-faced bare-footed characters who are removed from and unfit for the practical matters and affairs of the real world.

But there is another possibility. The joke may turn on the fact that members of the audience did not think that wisdom was a function of the soul at all. On this interpretation, as John Burnet puts the point, Socrates “was known as a man who spoke strangely of the soul” (Burnet 1916, 161; Burnet’s interpretation of Socrates has come under criticism [Claus 1981, although he comes to essentially the same conclusion: that Aristophanes parodies a “rational notion of ψυχή [psuchē]”, 159; for a review of Claus see Sullivan 1982, and for more recent criticism, as well as helpful general discussion of the soul in Greek thought, Lorenz 2009]). The conception of human beings as psychological beings was not always the commonplace it is today. In Homer, the soul marks the difference between a living human body and a corpse. In the opening lines of the *Iliad*, the wrath of Achilles is said to send many souls of heroes to Hades but to leave them, the heroes

themselves, on the battlefield as food for dogs and birds. The soul in these lines is something a human being loses at the moment of death, and is something that endures in the underworld, but thinking and feeling in the living is not a function of the soul (Claus 1981, 61; Hunter 2012, 41). So, on this interpretation, Aristophanes pokes fun at the idea of an intelligent soul.

The way the Greeks thought about the soul changed dramatically in the sixth and fifth centuries. The matter is exceedingly complicated (for discussion of the soul in early Greek thought, see Burnet 1916, 141–160; Furley 1956; Claus 1981; Bremmer 1983, and Lorenz 2009), but it appears that the soul became increasingly associated with emotions and desires and was increasingly understood as underlying the behaviors that reveal a person’s character: “In Homeric Greek the *psyche* is not mentioned except in accounts of death or fainting, but first the lyric poets and then the other writers increasingly refer to it all kinds of emotion – love and hate, joy and grief, desire, anger, and so on – and the enduring characteristics that are manifested in these emotions” (Furley 1956, 7). In Herodotus, for example, Cambyses takes the Egyptian king Psammenitus prisoner and “διεπειρᾶτο αὐτοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς ποιέων” [“makes a trial of his soul”] (III.14.1) by forcing him to watch as Cambyses has his daughter enslaved and son led away to be executed in a public spectacle. Similarly, in Thucydides, in the Funeral Oration, Pericles says that those who do not shrink from danger, even though they know very well both the pains and the pleasures in life, are “κράτιστοι δ’ ἂν “τὴν ψυχὴν δικαίως κριθεῖεν” [“rightly judged strongest in soul”] (II.40.3). Further, the explanation of character in terms of the soul was not limited to human beings. At III.108.2, Herodotus comments that because of divine forethought, animals that are good to eat and “ψυχὴν τε δειλὰ” [“timid in soul”] are prolific. (For helpful discussion of the use of *ψυχή* [*psuchē*] in Herodotus, see Huffman 2009).

In Philolaus, a contemporary of Socrates, there is additional evidence for the conception of the soul as what underlies the emotions and desires that constitute character. Philolaus, as a Pythagorean, believed in the transmigration of souls. The Neoplatonist philosopher Iamblichus (ca. 245– ca. 325 CE) reports that Philolaus says that “κεφαλὰ μὲν νόου, καρδία δὲ ψυχᾶς καὶ αἰσθήσιος” [“the head <is the seat> of intellect, the heart of soul and sensation”] and that “ἐγκέθαλος δὲ τὰν ἀνθρώπω ἀρχάν, καρδία γεννήσιος” [“the brain <contains> the origin of man, heart that of animal”] (DK 44 B 13). In this fragment, the soul is not associated with the intellect. It is less clear what the function of the soul is, but there is reason to think that Philolaus understood the soul to be the underlying cause of emotions and desires and to be paired in the heart with the faculty of perception (Huffmann 2009, 23; for detailed discussion of the fragment, see Huffmann 1993, 307-323). On this account, the animal perceives and responds to its perceptions in terms of its particular emotions and desires. This account of the soul fits with the theory of transmigration, since it is implausible to think that the intellect transmigrates from human beings to nonhuman animals. The emotional character passes, and it is somehow connected to the intellect when the transmigration is from nonhuman animal to human being. (Xenophanes, a contemporary of Pythagoras, reports that Pythagoras once intervened when a puppy was being whipped because he recognized the soul of a friend in the puppy when it yelped [DK B 21 7]. The soul here is not associated with anything specifically intellectual.)

If this is how members of Aristophanes’ audience thought of the soul, as a basis in human beings and animals for emotions and desires that constitute character, then Socrates would be someone who spoke strangely about the soul if he thought the soul was somehow associated with wisdom. It is not that the care for the soul that Socrates urges has turned him and his followers into fools, not wise men. Many in the audience would have thought that this was true, but this

was not the real point of the joke. Rather, Socrates and his followers are comical figures because it was laughable to think that the soul underlies any specifically intellectual cognition in human beings. It is true of course that the emotions typically have an intellectual component, but it seems to have been a stretch to talk about intelligence and the knowledge that constitutes wisdom in terms of the soul. And Socrates and the denizens of the think-tank are all the more laughable and absurd because their devotion to this novel idea has made them pale and wholly unfit for practical matters, and so has made them like the souls the audience knew from Homer, the witless and feeble shades that survive after a man's death (Havelock 1972, 15–16; for a more general discussion of psychological terms in Aristophanes, see Handley 1956).

In the *Apology*, as Plato portrays him, Socrates associates the soul with 'wisdom and truth'. He asks the Athenians he happens to meet, “χρημάτων μὲν οὐκ αἰσχύνη ἐπιμελούμενος ὅπως σοι ἔσται ὡς πλεῖστα, καὶ δόξης καὶ τιμῆς, φρονήσεως δὲ καὶ ἀληθείας καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς βελτίστη ἔσται οὐκ ἐπιμελῆ οὐδὲ φροντίζεις;” [“are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth, reputation and honors as possible, while you do not care nor give thought to wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul?”] (29d–e). Plato in this way makes it very clear that the soul, as Socrates understands it, can be made better or worse and that this better or worse state of the soul is a function of the presence of 'wisdom' and 'truth'. The evidence from Aristophanes shows that Socrates talked about wisdom in connection with the soul, but it was left for Plato to clarify the significance of this novel way of talking.

Socrates, as Plato understands him, reinterprets an existing notion of soul in terms of the intellect as opposed to the emotions. The soul is the underlying cause of character, but Socrates understands the mechanism in terms of specifically intellectual states. This is the Socratic intellectualism that Plato explores in other dialogues, most famously the *Protagoras* (*Protagoras*

352–358; for some discussion, see Frede 1992; also Blackson [forthcoming]). Somehow the behavior that constitutes character is supposed to stem completely from what one knows or believes. Moreover, it is not only character that the soul explains. As Plato portrays Socrates in the *Apology*, the soul accounts for whatever a human being does. In the range of human behavior, there are actions. It is behavior that human beings themselves do. It is not something that happens to them. They are not forced by anybody or anything to do what they do. Human beings can control their behavior and consequently can control the direction their life takes. This thought in itself would not have been surprising. Presumably, it is how human beings have always conceived of themselves. The innovative step, and the step that would have seemed extraordinarily unintuitive and perplexing at the time, was in the explanation of just how a human being controls his actions and the direction his life takes. According to Socrates, as Plato portrays him, human beings are psychological beings. A human being controls his actions, and thereby controls his life, by controlling his soul. His soul is intellect or reason, and it is in a better or worse state to the extent that it has ‘wisdom’ and ‘truth’. (Michael Frede is the classic representative of this general interpretation, but he seems to understand the Pythagorean conception of the soul to include specifically intellectual cognition [Frede 1996, 19].)

In the *Apology* at 29d–30b, where Socrates explains what he does and will not stop doing, Plato makes it clear that the discipline Socrates practiced has an important practical component. Socrates makes it clear that ‘philosophy’ is the practice of caring for the soul so that it is in the best state possible. He makes it clear that in the best possible state the soul possesses ‘wisdom’ and ‘truth’. Moreover, he makes it clear that caring for the soul is caring for one’s self. Socrates says that “οὐκ ἐκ χρημάτων ἀρετὴ γίγνεται, ἀλλ’ ἐξ ἀρετῆς χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαντα” [“wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence makes wealth and

everything else good for men”] (30b). Contrary to what is so often thought, the possession of wealth is not what makes a human being and his or her life good. Instead, a human being makes his life good to the extent that he makes the appropriate choices in the various situations he faces as he lives his life. To make these choices, the possession of ‘wisdom’ and ‘truth’ is necessary. It is also sufficient. Human beings are psychological beings. In human beings, action is a function of the states and processes in the soul. Further, the controlling state in the soul is knowledge. When a human being has the knowledge that constitutes wisdom, he makes his life good because he acts appropriately with respect to money and other things in the circumstances.

Once again the question remains whether Socrates made this point or whether it is Plato who makes it for him. Whether Plato’s *Apology of Socrates* is a work of autofiction is twofold. It is a question about what the historical Socrates said, and it is a question about Plato’s intentions as the author of the *Apology*. Unfortunately the extant evidence holds out little prospect of providing definitive answers to these questions. The possibilities themselves, however, are relatively clear. With respect to *Apology* 29c6–30b4, Plato might be doing one of two things. He might be repeating the content of a point that Socrates made in his speech at his trial. The point, in this case, would be one that Socrates himself had made. It would be a point that he expressed to his close associates, and perhaps to others as well, on countless occasions in his life.

Alternatively, Plato might be attributing to Socrates a position that the historical figure himself never so clearly and succinctly expressed. In this case, in *Apology* 29c6–30b4, Plato is engaging in autofiction. Plato is trying to make sense of Socrates. He is trying to understand Socrates’ unusual talk about the soul and his interest in unusual intellectual questions. Accurate historical reporting would not accomplish what Plato wants to accomplish. He is trying to crystalize the position that makes the best sense of what Socrates was saying and doing, something that no

factual description of what Socrates said and did could reveal. In this way, Plato uses the genre of autofiction to rewrite the history of what Socrates said and did. Plato's intention is not to hide mistakes. This is not the point of autofiction. Instead, Plato wants to help the world to see the brilliance that he glimpsed in the words and deeds of the historical Socrates.

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