Socrates on Trial

The Apology

• What is Socrates apologizing for?
• Apologia
  • means “Defense” (not “apology”)
• Charges brought in 399 B.C. by Anytus, Lycon, and Meletus.
• Trial is historical
• Speeches may or may not be historical.

The Apology

• The Formal charges (24b):
  • Corrupting the young.
  • Not believing in the gods of Athens.
  • Believing in other new spiritual things:
    • Daimon
    • = Conscience?

The Apology

• Bad reputation
• The Earlier accusations (19b):
  • Studies things in the sky and below the earth.
  • Makes the worse into the stronger argument.
  • Teaches others to do the same.

Response to Earlier Accusations

• Is Socrates a sophist?
• Why doesn’t Socrates mind his own business?
• Socrates’ mission.

Aristophanes

(448-380 B.C.)

“The Clouds”

(423 B.C.)
Oracle at Delphi

- Yes-or-No questions:
  - “Should I raise sheep?”
  - “Is the child Annyla is pregnant with my child?”
  - “Is now a good time to attack?”
  - “Is anyone wiser than Socrates?”
  - “No.” Mission (33c)

Socrates’ Mission

- What could that mean? How could it be true?
- Socrates didn’t think he really knew anything.
- Socrates knew that he didn’t know.
- Gadfly: rouse Athenians to reflection.
- God’s gift to Athens! (30e-31b)

Response to Formal Charges

- Questions Meletus:
  - Corrupts the young?
  - Not intentionally.
  - Examples?

Chairephon goes to Delphi

“Oracle”: Pythian priestess answers questions

Temple of Apollo at Delphi

“Oracle”: Pythian priestess answers questions

Oracle at Delphi

Socrates’ Mission

Response to Formal Charges
Alcibiades  
(450-404 B.C.)
Athenian General, 421-415  
flees to Sparta, 415  
flees to Persia, 413  
returns to Athens, 411  
Athenian General, 411-406  
exiled, 406  
assassinated by Persians, 404.

Response to Formal Charges
Questions Meletus:
Corrupts the young?
Not intentionally.
Examples?
• Disbelieves in gods?/Introduces gods?
• What does this mean?
• Proof that he believes?

Socrates’ Beliefs
• “The unexamined life is not worth living for a man.” (38a)
• But the examined life is extremely painful.
  – Malcolm X (1925-1965)

Plato’s Symposium

Response to Formal Charges
• What do you think of Socrates’ defense?
• Attitude?
• Penalty.

Socrates’ Beliefs
• “A good man cannot be harmed either in life or in death.” (41d)
• What does he mean by this?
• Do you agree?
• Why or why not?
Socrates’ Fate

- Convicted.
- Sentenced to death.
- “Crito”: refused chance to escape.
- “Phaedo”: conversation on last day of his life, and his death.
- Paper assignment.