

away, their fathers and families will drive me out because of these same ones. 37e

Perhaps, then, someone might say, "By being silent and keeping quiet, Socrates, won't you be able to live in exile for us?" It is hardest of all to persuade some of you about this. For if I say that this is to disobey the god and that because of this it is impossible to keep quiet, you will not be persuaded by me, on the ground that I am being ironic.⁷¹ And on the other hand, if I say that this even happens to be a very great good for a human being—to make speeches every day about virtue and the other things about which you hear me conversing and examining both myself and others—and that the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being, you will be persuaded by me still less when I say these things. This is the way it is, as I affirm, men, but to persuade you is not easy. 38a

And at the same time, I am not accustomed to deem myself worthy of anything bad. For if I had money, I would have proposed as much money as I could pay, for that would not harm me. But as it is, I do not have any—unless, of course, you wish me to propose as much money as I am able to pay. Perhaps I would be able to pay you, say, a mina of silver. So I propose that much. b

But Plato here, men of Athens, and Crito and Critobulus and Apollodorus bid me to propose thirty minae,⁷² and they will stand as guarantors. So I propose that much, and they will be trustworthy guarantors of the money for you.

[*Voting between the penalties proposed by the accuser and the accused, the jury condemns Socrates to death. He has time to make some further remarks before he is taken away to prison to await execution.*]

For the sake of a little time, men of Athens, you will get a name and be charged with the responsibility, by those wishing to revile the city, for having killed Socrates, a wise man. For those wishing to reproach you will assert that I am wise, even if I am not. At any rate, if you had waited a short time, this would have come about for you of its own accord. For you see that my age is already far advanced in life and close to death. I say this not to all of you, but to those who voted to condemn me to death. d

I also say the following to these same ones. Perhaps you sup-

⁷¹"To be ironic" (*eirōnēsthai*) is to dissemble, to say less than one thinks, to present oneself as less than one is. The opposite of irony is boastfulness, claiming to be more than one is.
⁷²A mina consists of 100 drachmae (n. 46), a fairly small amount for a fine. Thirty minae is a quite substantial sum of money.

pose, men of Athens, that I have been convicted because I was at a loss for the sort of speeches that would have persuaded you, if I had supposed that I should do and say anything at all to escape the penalty.⁷³ Far from it. Rather, I have been convicted because I was at a loss, not however for speeches, but for daring and shamelessness and willingness to say the sorts of things to you that you would have been most pleased to hear: me wailing and lamenting, and doing and saying many other things unworthy of me, as I affirm—such things as you *have* been accustomed to hear from others. But neither did I then suppose that I should do anything unsuitable to a free man because of the danger, nor do I now regret that I made my defense speech like this: I much prefer to die having made my defense speech in this way than to live in that way. 38d

For neither in a court case nor in war should I or anyone else devise a way to escape death by doing anything at all. In battles it often becomes clear that one might escape death, at least, by letting go of his arms and turning around to supplicate his pursuers. And there are many other devices to escape death in each of the dangers, if one dares to do and say anything at all. But I suspect it is not hard, men, to escape death, but it is much harder to escape villainy. For it runs faster than death.⁷⁴ And now I, since I am slow and old, am caught by the slower, while my accusers, since they are clever and sharp, are caught by the faster, by evil. And now I go away, condemned by you to pay the penalty of death, while they have been convicted by the truth of wretchedness and injustice. And I abide by my penalty, and so do they. Perhaps these things even had to be so, and I suppose there is due measure in them. 39a

After this, I desire to deliver oracles to you, O you who voted to condemn me. For in fact I am now where human beings particularly deliver oracles: when they are about to die.⁷⁵ I affirm, you men who condemned me to death, that vengeance will come upon you right after my death, and much harsher, by Zeus, than the sort

⁷³"Escape" in this passage translates *phugein* and cognates, more literally "flee." This word also means "be prosecuted," just as "pursue" below may also mean "prosecute" (cf. *Euthyphro* 3e–4a). The word for "penalty" is *dike*, "justice" (also in 39b). This term is also translated "lawsuit" (19c) and "court case" (38e).

⁷⁴"It runs faster than death" is an alliterative jingle in Greek: *thlōton thlōton thlōi*.
⁷⁵Socrates may allude here to two famous death scenes in Homer's *Iliad*: Patroclus' last words when he is slain by Hector, and Hector's last words when he is slain by Achilles. In each case the man about to die oracularly forecasts the death of his slayer. (*Iliad* XVI.843–857, XXII.355–363.)

you give me by killing me. For you have now done this deed
 supposing that you will be released from giving an account⁷⁶ of
 your life, but it will turn out much the opposite for you, as I affirm.
 There will be more who will refute you, whom I have now been
 holding back; you did not perceive them. And they will be harsher,
 inasmuch as they are younger, and you will be more indignant. For
 if you suppose that by killing human beings you will prevent
 someone from reproaching you for not living correctly, you do not
 think nobly. For that kind of release is not at all possible or noble;
 rather, the kind that is both noblest and easiest is not to restrain
 others, but to equip oneself to be the best possible. So, having
 divined these things for you who voted against me, I am released.

But with those who voted for me I would be pleased to converse
 on behalf of this affair which has happened, while the officials are
 occupied and I do not yet go to the place where, when I do go, I
 must die. Please stay with me, men, for this much time; nothing
 prevents our telling tales⁷⁷ to one another as long as it is possible.
 For I am willing to display to you, as to friends, what ever this
 thing means which has occurred to me just now. For to me, judges—
 for by calling you judges I would address you correctly⁷⁸—
 something wondrous has happened. For my customary divination
 from the *daimonion* was always very frequent in all former time,
 opposing me even in quite small matters if I were about to do
 something incorrectly. Now, you yourselves see what has occurred
 to me, these very things which someone might suppose to be, and
 are believed to be, extreme evils. But the sign of the god did not
 oppose me when I left my house this morning, nor when I came up
 here to the law court, nor anywhere in the speech when I was
 about to say anything, although in other speeches it has often
 stopped me in the middle while I was speaking. But as it is, it has
 nowhere opposed me either in any deed or speech, concerning this
 action. What, then, do I take to be the cause of this? I will tell you.
 Probably what has occurred to me has turned out to be good, and
 there is no way that those of us take it correctly who suppose that
 being dead is bad. In my view, a great proof of this has happened.
 For there is no way that the accustomed sign would not have
 opposed me unless I were about to do something good.

⁷⁶Literally, "giving a retutation" (*elenchon ditainon*), grammatically analogous to the common Greek expression, "paying the penalty" (*tikhēn ditainon*).
⁷⁷"To tell tales" is *diamythologein*, which contains the word *mythos*, "tale" or "story," often associated with the tales told by the poets.
⁷⁸Throughout the trial Socrates has carefully avoided the usual practice of addressing the jurors by the name of "judges" (as Meletus does at 26d).

Let us also think in the following way how great a hope there is
 that it is good. Now being dead is either of two things. For either it
 is like being nothing and the dead man has no perception of any-
 thing, or else, in accordance with the things that are said, it hap-
 pens to be a sort of change and migration of the soul from the place
 here to another place.

And if in fact there is no perception, but it is like a sleep in which
 the sleeper has no dream at all, death would be a wondrous gain.
 For I suppose that if someone had to select that night in which he
 slept so soundly that he did not even dream and had to compare
 the other nights and days of his own life with that night, and then
 had to say on consideration how many days and nights in his own
 life he has lived better and more pleasantly than that night, then I
 suppose that the Great King⁷⁹ himself, not to mention some pri-
 vate man, would discover that they are easy to count in compari-
 son with the other days and nights. So if death is something like
 this, I at least say it is a gain. For all time appears in this way
 indeed to be nothing more than one night.

On the other hand, if death is like a journey from here to another
 place, and if the things that are said are true, that in fact all the
 dead are there, then what greater good could there be than this,
 judges? For if one who arrives in Hades, released from those here
 who claim to be judges, will find those who are judges in truth—
 the very ones who are said to give judgment there, Minos and
 Rhadamanthys, and Aeacus, and Triptolemus,⁸⁰ and those of the

⁷⁹The King of Persia, called the "Great King" by the Greeks, was popularly believed to be the happiest of men because of his enormous wealth and empire.

⁸⁰Minos: In Homer's *Odyssey* Odysseus pays a visit to Hades; among those he says he saw there was Minos, "brilliant son of Zeus, holding a golden scepter, and seated, giving laws to the dead, while they, seated and standing around the lord through the wide-gated dwelling of Hades, asked for judgments" (XI.568–571). Minos was said to be an ancient king of Crete, the first to clear the seas of pirates (Thucydides I.4, 1.8). There was a tradition that he exacted an annual Athenian tribute of seven youths and seven maidens, whom he would feed to a great beast. Theseus freed Athens from the tribute by going to Crete and killing this Minotaur (see *Crito* n. 3). Minos was said to have been the original lawgiver for the Cretans and to have been a just man while he lived (*Minos* 318d–321b; *Lysis* beginning).
 Rhadamanthys: The brother of Minos, he too had a reputation for great justice. (See above references to *Minos* and *Lysis*.) The poet Pindar speaks of the "straight counsel" of Rhadamanthys, who was placed in authority in the Isles of the Blessed, where men who have lived justly go to live after their deaths (*Olympian* II.68–77).

Aeacus: Pindar (in *Isthmian* VIII.22–24) says that he was "most careful" of mortals and "gave judgments even to gods."
 Triptolemus: Legendary king of Eleusis, near Athens, he learned from the goddess Demeter the mysteries of the seasonal growth and harvest of grain; he passed on to men these "Eleusinian Mysteries" (which centered upon the worship of Demeter and her daughter Persephone) and the art of farming. Athenian vase-painting depicts Triptolemus, Rhadamanthys, and

other demigods who turned out to be just in their own lives— would this journey be a paltry one? Or again, to associate with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer,⁸¹ how much would any of you give? For I am willing to die many times if these things are true, since especially for myself spending time there would be wondrous: whenever I happened to meet Palamedes and Telemonian Ajax,⁸² or anyone else of the ancients who died because of an unjust judgment, I would compare my own experiences with theirs. As I suppose, it would not be unpleasant. And certainly the greatest thing is that I would pass my time examining and searching out among those there—just as I do to those here—who among them is wise, and who supposes he is, but is not. How much would one give, judges, to examine him who led the great army against Troy, or Odysseus, or Sisyphus,⁸³ or the thousand others whom one might mention, both men and women? To converse and to associate with them and to examine them there would be inconceivable⁸⁴ happiness. Certainly those there surely do not

41a

b

c

Aeacus as judges of the dead (Minos was apparently left out because he was thought harsh and unjust by the Athenians on account of the tribute). Socrates seems to have been the first to include both Minos and Triptolemus among the judges of the dead. In the *Gorgias* he speaks at length about the judgments of the dead (523e–527a). There he names Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Aeacus as the judges. See also *Crito* 54b–c.

⁸¹These are the four seminal poets of the Greeks, although little is known of Orpheus and Musaeus, and they may be merely legendary. Hesiod's chief poems are *Works and Days* and *Theogony*. In Aristophanes' *Frogs* the four poets are mentioned in the same order as here:

For Orpheus showed us our rites, and how to hold back from murders,

Musaeus cures for diseases, and oracles; Hesiod

how to work the earth, and seasons of harvest and tilling; and the divine Honner, did he not get his fame from teaching uprightness,

orders [of battle], virtues, and armings of men?

(1032–1036)

⁸²The legendary Palamedes was the subject of several lost tragedies. Gorgias (n. 17) wrote an *Apology* ["Defense"] of *Palamedes* which has been compared to the *Apology of Socrates*. Palamedes' famous cleverness brought him into conflict with Odysseus, either because Odysseus was jealous of him or because Palamedes shrewdly foiled Odysseus' scheme to avoid serving in the Trojan War. (The story has several variants.) Odysseus implicated Palamedes in a plot to betray the Greeks to the Trojans, and Palamedes was stoned to death by the army. Ajax, one of the foremost Greek warriors at Troy, was outwitted and tricked by Odysseus in a contest over the arms of Achilles, which had been set for a prize after Achilles' death. Odysseus apparently won the contest by some underhanded device. Ajax sought to avenge the defeat by killing Odysseus and Agamemnon, but instead, in a fit of madness visited on him by the goddess Athena, he slaughtered a flock of sheep. When he came to his senses, Ajax committed suicide from shame and humiliation. (*Odyssey* XI.541–562; Sophocles, *Ajax*.)

⁸³"The one who led the great campaign" was Agamemnon, whose quarrel with Achilles touches off the action of the *Iliad*. Sisyphus in Hades labors to move a huge stone over a hill, but it always rolls down again just as he reaches the hilltop (*Odyssey* XI.593–600). In the *Iliad* Sisyphus is called "craftiest of men" (VI.153).

⁸⁴*Antichanon*, translated "inconceivable," is literally "unable to be devised."

kill on this account. For those there are happier than those here not only in other things but also in that they are immortal henceforth for the rest of time, at least if the things that are said are in fact true.

But you too, judges, should be of good hope toward death, and you should think this one thing to be true: that there is nothing bad for a good man, whether living or dead, and that the gods are not without care for his troubles. Nor have my present troubles arisen of their own accord, but it is clear to me that it is now better, after all, for me to be dead and to have been released from troubles. This is also why the sign did not turn me away anywhere, and I at least am not at all angry at those who voted to condemn me and at my accusers. And yet it was not with this thought in mind that they voted to condemn me and accused me: rather, they supposed they would harm me. For this they are worthy of blame.

This much, however, I beg of them: when my sons grow up, punish them, men, and pain them in the very same way I pained you, if they seem to you to care for money or anything else before virtue. And if they are reputed to be something when they are nothing, reproach them just as I did you: tell them that they do not care for the things they should, and that they suppose they are something when they are worth nothing. And if you do these things, we will have been treated justly by you, both I myself and my sons.

But now it is time to go away, I to die and you to live. Which of us goes to a better thing is unclear to everyone except to the god.⁸⁵

41c

d

e

42a

⁸⁵A variant manuscript reading would change "except" (*plên ti*) to "unless" (*plên ei*). If the latter reading is correct, Socrates would be professing doubt even about the god's knowledge of what is best. The word "thing" in this sentence is *pragma*, translated "matter," "trouble," or "affair" elsewhere (n. 25).