

although it is no more true than the present charge—that there is a certain Socrates, a wise man a thinker⁸ on the things aloft, who has investigated all things under the earth, and who makes the weaker speech the stronger. Those, men of Athens, who have scattered c this report about, are my dangerous accusers. For their listeners hold that investigators of these things also do not believe in gods.

Of my wisdom, if indeed it is wisdom of any kind, and ^{20e} what sort of thing it is, I will offer for you as witness the god in Delphi. Now you know Chaerephon, no doubt. He was my comrade from youth as well as a comrade of your multitude, and he ^{21a} shared in your recent exile and returned with you. You do know what sort of man Chaerephon was, how vehement he was in whatever he would set out to do. ²⁷ And in particular he once even went to Delphi and dared to consult the oracle about this—now as I say, do not make disturbances, men—and he asked whether there was anyone wiser than I. The Pythia²⁸ replied that no one was wiser. And concerning these things his brother here will be a witness for you, since he himself has met his end. Now consider why I say these things: I am going to teach you b where the slander against me has come from. When I heard these things, I pondered them like this: “What ever is the god saying, and what riddle is he posing? For I am conscious that I am not at all wise, either much or little. So what ever is he saying when he claims that I am wisest? Surely he is not saying something false, at least; for that is not sanctioned for him.” And for a long time I was at a loss about what ever he was saying, but then very reluctantly I turned to something like the following investigation of it. I went to one of those reputed²⁹ to be wise, on the ground that there, if anywhere, I would refute the divination³⁰ and show the c oracle, “This man is wiser than I, but you declared that I was wisest.” So I considered him thoroughly—I need not speak of him by name, but he was one of the politicians³¹—and when I considered him and conversed with him, men of Athens, I was affected ^{21c} something like this: it seemed to me that this man seemed to be wise, both to many other human beings and most of all to himself, but that he was not. And then I tried to show him that he supposed he was wise, but was not. So from this I became hateful both to d him and to many of those present.

For my part, as I went away, I reasoned with regard to myself: “I am wiser than this human being. For probably neither of us knows ⁵ anything noble and good, but he supposes he knows something when he does not know, while I, just as I do not know, do not even suppose that I do. I am likely to be a little bit wiser than he in this very thing: that whatever I do not know, I do not even suppose I know.”

I would respond to him with a just speech: “What you say is ignoble, fellow⁴⁹ if you suppose that a man who is of even a little benefit should take into account the danger of living or dying, but ^{28b} not rather consider this alone whenever he acts: whether his actions are just or unjust, and the deeds of a good man or a bad. For according to your speech, those of the demigods who met their c end at Troy would be paltry, especially the son of Thetis. Rather than endure anything shameful, he despised danger so much that when his mother (a goddess) spoke to him as he was eager to kill Hector—something like this, as I suppose: ‘Son, if you avenge the murder of your comrade Patroclus and kill Hector, you yourself will die; for straightway,’ she says, ‘after Hector, your fate is ready at hand’—he, upon hearing this, belittled death and danger, fearing much more to live as a bad man and not to avenge his friends. d ‘Straightway,’ he says, ‘may I die, after I inflict a penalty on the doer of injustice, so that I do not stay

here ridiculous beside the curved ships, a burden on the land.' Surely you do not suppose¹² that he gave any thought to death and danger?"⁵⁰ This is the way it is, men of Athens, in truth. Wherever someone stations himself, holding that it is best, or wherever he is stationed by a ruler, there he must stay and run the risk, as it seems to me, and not take into account death or anything else compared to what^{28d} is shameful. So I would have done terrible deeds, men of Athens, if, when the rulers whom you elected to rule me stationed me in e Potidaea and Amphipolis and at Delium,⁵¹ I stayed then where they stationed me and ran the risk of dying like anyone else, but when the god stationed me, as I supposed and assumed, ordering me to live philosophizing and examining myself and others, I had then left my station because I feared death or any other matter^{29a} whatever.

Terrible that would be, and truly then someone might justly bring me into a law court, saying that I do not believe that there are gods, since I would be disobeying the divination, and fearing death, and supposing that I am wise when I am not. For to fear death, men, is in fact nothing other than to seem to be wise, but not to be so. For it is to seem to know what one does not know: no one knows whether death does not even happen to be the greatest of all goods for the human being; but people fear it as though they knew well that it is the greatest of evils. And how is this not that reproachable ignorance b of supposing that one knows what one does not know? But I, men, am perhaps distinguished from the many human beings also here in this, and if I were to say that I am wiser than anyone in anything, it would be in this: that since I do not know sufficiently about the things in Hades,⁵² so also I suppose that I do not know. But I do know that it is bad and shameful to do injustice and to disobey one's better, whether god or human being. So compared to the bad things which I know are bad, I will never fear or flee the things about which I do not know whether they even happen to be good

But I will speak just the sorts of things I am accustomed to: 'Best of men, you are an Athenian, from the city that is greatest and best reputed for wisdom and strength: are you not ashamed that you care for having as much money as possible, and reputation, and honor, but e that you neither care for nor give thought to prudence, and truth, and how your soul will be the best possible?' And if one of you disputes it and asserts that he does care, I will not immediately let him go, nor will I go away, but I will speak to him and examine and test him. And if he does not seem to me to possess virtue, but only says he does, I will reproach him, saying that he regards the things^{30a} worth the most as the least important, and the paltrier things as more important. I will do this to whomever, younger or older, I happen to meet, both foreigner and townsman, but more so to the townsmen, inasmuch as you are closer to me in kin

"Know well, then, that the god orders this. And I suppose that until now no greater good has arisen for you in the city than my service to the god. For I go around and do nothing but persuade you, both younger and older, not to care for bodies and money b before, nor as vehemently as, how your soul will be the best possible I say: 'Not from money does virtue come, but from virtue comes money and all of the other good things for human beings both privately and publicly.' If, then, I corrupt the young by saying these things, they may be harmful. But if someone asserts that what I say is other than this, he speaks nonsense. With a view to these things, men of Athens," I would say, "either obey Anytus or not, and either let me go or not, since I would not do otherwise, not even if I were going to die many times."

This is something which began for me in childhood: a sort of voice comes, and whenever it comes, it always turns me away from whatever I am about to do, but never turns me forward. This is what opposes my political activity, and its opposition seems to me altogether noble. For know well, men of Athens, if I had long ago attempted to be politically active, I would long ago have perished, and I would have benefited neither you nor myself. Now do not be vexed with me when I speak the truth. For there is no human being who will preserve his life if he genuinely opposes either you or any other multitude and prevents many unjust and unlawful things from happening in the city. Rather, if someone who really fights for the just is going to preserve himself even for a short time, it is necessary for him to lead a private rather than a public life.

So that I do have a family, and sons too, men of Athens, three of them, one already a youth, and two still children. Nevertheless I will bring none of them forward here in order to beg you to vote to acquit me. Why, then, will I do none of these things? Not because I am stubborn, men of Athens, nor because I dishonor you. Whether I am daring with regard to death or not is another story; but at any rate as to reputation, mine and yours and the whole city's, to me it does not seem to be noble for me to do any of these things. For I am old and have this name; and whether it is true or false, it is reputed at least that Socrates is distinguished from the many human beings in some way. If, then, those of you who are reputed to be distinguished, whether in wisdom or courage or any other virtue at all, will act in this way, it would be shameful. I have often seen some who are just like this when they are judged: although they are reputed to be something, they do wondrous deeds, since they suppose that they will suffer something terrible if they die—as though they would be immortal if you did not kill them. They seem to me to attach shame to the city, so that a foreigner might take it that those Athenians who are distinguished in virtue—the ones whom they pick out from among themselves for their offices and other honors—are not at all distinguished from women. For those of you, men of Athens, who are reputed to be something in any way at all, should not do these things; nor, whenever we do them, should you allow it. Instead, you should show that you would much rather vote to convict the one who brings in these piteous dramas and makes the city ridiculous than the one who keeps quiet

What, then, am I worthy to suffer, being such as this? Something good, men of Athens, at least if you give me what I deserve according to my worth in truth—and besides, a good of a sort that would be fitting for me. What, then, is fitting for a poor man, a benefactor, who needs to have leisure to exhort you? There is nothing more fitting, men of Athens, than for such a man to be given his meals in the Prytaneum, much more so than if any of you has won a victory at Olympia with a horse or a two- or four-horse chariot.⁶⁷ For he makes you seem to be happy, while I make you be so; and he is not in need of sustenance, while I am in need of it. So if I must propose what I am worthy of in accordance

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 anything, or else, in accordance with the things that are said, it happens 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 steep 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 private man, would discover that they are easy to count in comparison e 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 ^{41 a} 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 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 b 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 herewho 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 ²³ army against Troy, or Odysseus, or Sisyphus,⁸³ or the thousand c others whom one might mention, both men and women? To converse and to associate with them and to examine them there would be inconceivable ⁸⁴ happiness. Certainly those there surely do not kill on this account. For those there are happier than those here not ^{41c} 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

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 ^{42a} 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