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Socrates' Closing Words

A Note on Plato's Apology of Socrates 41e1-42a5

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Socrates' words at the very end of Plato's *Apology* are well-known: 'Now the hour to part has come. I go to die, you go to live. Which of us goes to the better lot is known to no one, except the god' (42a2-5).¹ These words are without any doubt meant to make a lasting impression, but at whom are they directed: at everyone present at the trial—that is at Socrates' accusers, members of the jury, and the audience—or only at some of these groups? This question is seldom addressed. In the following note I argue that the closing words are directed at two specific groups of people: Socrates' three accusers—Meletus, Anytus and Lyco—and the jurors who voted for his death penalty.²

1 I use Grube's revised translation in Cooper 1997.

2 According to D.L. 2.41-42, there were 281 votes for the verdict of guilty in the first round, and then 80 more votes for the death penalty in the second round of voting. This would mean that 361 jurors of the total of 501 voted for the death penalty in the second round. However, Hansen 1995, 18 bids caution regarding Diogenes' statement of the increase by 80 votes in the second round, since his number of votes for the verdict of guilty in the first round (281) does not exactly correspond to the number that can be inferred from what Plato wrote at 36a4-6 (280). "Since Diogenes' information about the first vote is corrupt or mistaken (a majority of 281 votes)", Hansen urges in n. 82, "we cannot trust his second figure either, but he may well be right that the prosecutors won a greater majority when the jurors voted on the sentence."

Socrates's third speech, following the round of voting that decided on his death penalty, is commonly divided into two parts, one directed at the members of the jury who voted for the death penalty (38c1-39d9), and the other directed at the members of the jury who voted against his death penalty (39e1-42a5). The transition between these two parts is clearly marked in the text.

Early in his address to the friendly members of the jury, at 40a2-3, Socrates refers to them as *ἄνδρες δικασταί*, which was a rather usual way of addressing the jury in Athenian courts. Up to this point in his defence, however, Socrates has been addressing the whole body of jurors with *ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι* or simply *ὦ ἄνδρες*. The reason for this switch is no doubt that Socrates wanted to make a point by reserving the honourable name of *δικασταί* for those who pay heed only to whether the defendant's words are right or not (cf. 18a4-6), and in Socrates' view, predictably, these were the members of the jury who voted against his death penalty.

After 40a2-3, where he uses the form *ὦ ἄνδρες δικασταί* for the first time, Socrates addresses the jury four more times, three consecutive times in that very same form (40e7, 41b8, c8) and one last time (41e3) in the form *ὦ ἄνδρες*. While the former three times Socrates is clearly addressing the friendly members of the jury, it is not entirely clear whom he addresses the fourth time: for instance, De Strycker and Gallop think that Socrates address the whole body of jurors, whereas Miller and Platter seem to think that he addresses only his accusers.³ By contrast, I think that he addresses jointly the accusers and the jurors who voted for his death penalty.

Socrates explains to the friendly members of the jury—the true *δικασταί*—that the events at the trial are a signal that the time has come for him to die and to get rid of the troubles (41d3-5).⁴ That is why his divine sign has not intervened in the course of the trial and that is why he is not angry with those who voted for his death penalty and with his accusers (*ἔγωγε τοῖς καταψηφισαμένοις μου καὶ τοῖς κατηγοροῖς οὐ πάνυ χαλεπαίνω*, 41d6-7). Socrates is quick to add that these two groups of men nevertheless deserve the blame, because the intention of those who voted for his death penalty and of those who filed their ac-

3 De Strycker 1994, 395 n. *ad* 41e1-2 and Gallop 1997, 103 n. *ad* 41e vs. Miller and Platter 2010, 146 n. *ad* 41e1. Jowett's 1875, 374 ("O my friends") suggests that he addresses either only the friendly jurors or everyone indiscriminately.

4 Presumably, Socrates has in mind the troubles of the old age, as suggested by *X. Ap.* 6.11-16, 8.2-4, 27.23-26 (Marchant) and endorsed by Riddell 1877, 107; De Strycker 1994, 395; and West 1979, 230. Cron and Uhle 1929, 102 note that Socrates means life more generally in all its bustle, unrest and travail. Burnet 1924, 251 thinks that Socrates speaks of the toils of examining himself and others that Apollo imposed on him. De Strycker 1994, 395 argues convincingly against Burnet's reading.