

## Shifting Priorities: Revisiting the Relationship between Xenophon's *Apology* and Plato's *Apology*

The “Socratic defense” seems to have constituted something of a genre in its own right in antiquity. The opening lines to Xenophon's *Apology* (*XA*) suggest that multiple examples of this genre were already in circulation by the time Xenophon produced his:

Σωκράτους δὲ ἄξιόν μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι μεμνησθαι καὶ ὡς ἐπειδὴ ἐκλήθη εἰς τὴν δίκην ἐβουλεύσατο περὶ τε τῆς ἀπολογίας καὶ τῆς τελευτῆς τοῦ βίου. γεγράφασι μὲν οὖν περὶ τούτου καὶ ἄλλοι καὶ πάντες ἔτυχον τῆς μεγαληγορίας αὐτοῦ: ᾧ καὶ δῆλον ὅτι τῷ ὄντιούτως ἐρρήθη ὑπὸ Σωκράτους.

I think that it's also worth recalling how Socrates, after being summoned to trial, made up his mind about both his defense and his death. Now, other people have also written on this subject, and they all touched on his arrogant tone, which makes it clear that Socrates's speech really had this character (*Xen. Ap.* 1).

However, only one other such defense from the fourth-century BCE has survived, namely, that of Plato. Various views regarding the relationship between *XA* and Plato's *Apology* (*PA*) have been canvassed in modern scholarship from the 19th century to the present. Over the past several decades, a consensus seems to have emerged in favor of *PA* as the earlier of the two works and Plato as one of the anonymous “others” to whom Xenophon alludes at the beginning of *XA*. This current consensus owes much to arguments in Kahn 1996 regarding the relationship between Plato's dialogues and Xenophon's Socratic writings generally (according to which the influence runs entirely in one direction, from the former to the latter) and to specific treatments of the relationship between *XA* and *PA* found in Stokes 2012.

In this paper, I wish to push back against the prevailing view and the various arguments adduced by Kahn and Stokes, *et al.* My focus will be on a novel argument related to the explicit disagreement between Xenophon and Plato on the subject of whether Socrates proposed a counter-penalty. I will, however, also touch briefly on a variety of other issues, including the role played by Socrates's "divine sign" (τὸ δαιμόνιον), Chaerephon's putative consultation of the Delphic Oracle, and Socrates' post-sentencing speech to his supporters in *XA* and *PA*, respectively.

The case I will present for the priority of *XA* is necessarily speculative. It does, however, have the preponderance of the available evidence on its side. The reasons usually proffered for *PA* as the earlier work are all inconclusive at best; and, in at least some cases, are perhaps even more reasonably construed as favoring the opposite hypothesis. I shall argue that consideration of the differences between the two works on the subject of a counter-penalty proposal by Socrates tips the scales decidedly in favor of Xenophon.

#### Works Cited

C. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue* (Cambridge, 1996).

M. Stokes, "Three Defenses of Socrates: Relative Chronology, Politics and Religion" in F.

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