Outline of the Apology

Rorty

Introduction:
My accusers say I am skilled in speaking (which I deny)—but that is irrelevant, in any case. My job is to speak the truth: yours is to judge the justice of what I say.

I: Defense against the earlier accusations: being interested in cosmology, and making the weaker argument the stronger. (=characterizations of the Sophists)
   a—I have never breathed a word about any cosmological topics. [“Not that I have anything against knowledge of this kind, if anyone is an expert on such subjects; I hope Meletus will never bring enough cases against me to reduce me to that.” (19c)]
   b—I do not, and have never, taught for pay. (see also 23b: “I live in extreme poverty as a result of my service to the god.”)

“But then, what DO you do, Socrates?”
   c—defense via the oracle at Delphi: my friend Chaerephon asked the oracle if there was anyone wiser than me; and she replied (as Apollo’s voice) there was no one wiser. I decided I needed to verify that claim (or falsify it). (20e)
      i—so I went to a politician, and examined him [in the way we recognize from the Euthyphro] and decided that I was indeed wiser than he—because I knew I knew nothing—and he thinks he knows, although he doesn’t.
      ii—then I had the same experience with the writers;
      iii—and then with the craftsmen. (They came off a bit better; at least they do have some knowledge of something, although it doesn’t necessarily transfer as widely as they seem to believe.)

It is this constant examination of others in hopes of finding wise men that has created the widespread social animus against me, the background to my present accusation.

d—A second factor is the affection in which the young hold me. Seeing me challenge the wisdom of their elders, they too become critical, outraging their victims, who then blame me. Because they cannot claim that I do not speak the truth, my accusers must claim about me things that even they know are untrue.

II: Defense against the recent accusations: Socrates is a bad influence on the young; and does not recognize the gods the state recognizes, but instead believes in the supernatural.
   a— If I am a bad influence on the young, Meletus, who is a good influence?
      i—[no answer]
      ii—the laws
      iii—these men, the [500] members of the jury—and the spectators—and the members of the council; and the rest of the citizens of Athens! [=you, alone, Socrates, are a bad influence.]

But: in the case of horses, not everyone is capable of doing them good; only a few, the experts, their trainers. Should it be different in the case of the young?

b— If I am a bad influence on the young,
   i—is it better to live with bad citizens than good?
   ii—is it not the case that bad citizens can do harm to their neighbors?
   iii—does ANYONE choose to be harmed, rather than helped?

c— If I am a bad influence on the young, am I so deliberately, or without realizing it?
   i—if deliberately—you must really think me a fool! NO One chooses deliberately to be harmed, rather than helped.
   ii—if inadvertently—we teach people we think misled; we don’t take them to court.

d— how is it that you claim I harm the young? Is this charge related to the other part of your charge? Is it by teaching them not to recognize the gods of the state religion, but to practice this “new religion” of the supernatural instead? (26b)
   i—Do I teach them to accept some gods, but not the state gods? (in that case I’m not an atheist) Or: do I not recognize any gods?

   Meletus: the latter!
Not even the sun and the moon?

   NO! You think the sun is a stone, and the moon made of earth!

Bosh! You are confusing me with Anaxagoras! They don’t need
me, uniquely, to teach them that nonsense! (see 19c) But you are claiming that I
believe in no gods at all, whatever?

ii--If so, your accusation is self contradictory. For none can accept the existence of the
supernatural, without accepting the existence of supernatural beings, the agents that
produce the activity of the supernatural.

Thus it is clear, fellow citizens, that there is no basis in truth to the accusations of my present day accusers.
(28a)

III: Why do I live the way I do, then, if that life is such that it causes people to hate me, object enough to it
to bring false accusations against me?

   a—I act the way I do because I think it right to do so; it is shameful and wrong to disobey one’s
   superiors, be they gods or men [and if I have a charge from the gods, it is to continue to try to
   improve myself and my fellow men].
   
   b—it would be disgraceful to avoid one’s duty for fear of danger or death.
   
   c—if you were to acquit me on condition of my ceasing my search for wisdom, I would be forced
   to refuse the offer; for I would obey the gods rather than you.
   
   d—Further, rather than wishing to harm you by my activities, I believe “this service of mine to the
god is the most valuable asset you in this city have ever possessed”—whether you recognize it as
such or not. (30a)

If you put me to death, you will harm yourselves more than me.

   a—it is worse to do injustice than to suffer it.

   b—the evil of putting a man to death unjustly is much worse than the evils of death, exile or loss
   of citizenship, which are the worst you can do to me [and since the charges are hokum, that would
   be unjust].

   c—Socrates as gadfly: “the god has settled me on this city as a horsefly on a horse…”

You may think it odd that I do all this as a private man—but let me tell you: if I had gone
into politics, I’d have been dead long ago, and of no use at all to myself or to you. (32e)

Examples from his few forays into public life, when he consistently refused to
act in a way he considered wrong
--voted against trying the 10 admirals
--refused to bring Leon from Salamis to Athens for trial

   d—I have played the part a good man should play: supporting what is just and placing the highest
   importance on it.

IV: Alternate explanation of his effect on the youth: They like hearing the cross-examination of people
who think they are wise when they are not. After all, it is quite entertaining.

   Call to those among the spectators whose children have been among those influenced by Socrates:
none will come forward.

   Refusal to plead for sympathy and play on the emotions of the jury, or beg for mercy.

The vote: Socrates is judged guilty, and his accusers set as the penalty, death by
hemlock. He proposes as an alternate penalty, an honor offered to Olympic games
winners: to be fed at the public expense for the rest of his life. His friends among the
spectators object, so to satisfy them, he proposes a fine of 3000 Drachmas, instead; but
the alternative proposal is turned down by the court.

V: Socrates’ response to the verdict:

   1—what a waste. I’m 70; if you’d been more patient, you would have been free of me without
   incurring the shame, the damage to your reputation, of having put a wise man to death.

   2—don’t think that we have come to this point through my incapacity to make the kind of speech
   that would have persuaded you otherwise; it was not incapacity, but unwillingness to behave in that
   shameful way.
3—it is not right to devote all your efforts to avoiding death at all costs; it is easy to avoid death, if you pay no heed to what you have to do to do so. It is much harder to avoid wickedness. So I will be overtaken by the one; and my accusers by the other.

4—you hope to avoid by my death the necessity to examine the life you lead; but you will not succeed. Others will follow, more critical than me. It would be easier to reform.

5—to those of you who voted for my acquittal, let me assure you that my daimon, which speaks to stop me from acting unjustly, has been silent throughout. The chances are that what has happened to me here is a good thing.

A digression on death: it is either like a good night’s sleep; or there is an afterlife in which good men will be in the company of other good men. In either case, we can know for sure—that no harm can come to a good man, either in his life or after death.

6—I have a favor to ask: treat my sons as I have treated yours. Let them not concern themselves with money, or with anything other than goodness.