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PLATO *APOLOGY* 28d6-29a1 AND THE EPHEBIC OATH

The purpose of this paper is to show that Socrates' words in *Ap.* 28d6-10 "wherever a man's station is, whether he has chosen it himself in the belief that it is for the best, or he has been placed in it by a commander, there I believe he must remain and face the danger, taking no account of death or of anything else in comparison with disgrace" (tr. B. Jowett -- H. Pelliccia, with slight changes) are a paraphrase of what will later become firmly established as the ephobic oath and that the essentials of the latter are also deliberately evoked in a broader context of the passage. I will argue that this previously unnoticed correspondence would add a new dimension to our understanding of Plato's rhetorical strategies in the dialogue.

As P. Siewert showed in an important article, while the institution of *ephebeia* as such is attested by inscriptions not earlier than 334/3 B.C., several fifth- and early fourth-century sources testify to the fact that something similar to the ephobic oath did exist in Athens even before that date. Plato's *Apology* has never been mentioned in this context. I will argue that Socrates' words closely correspond to ll. 6-8 of the epigraphic version of the oath ("I will not disgrace these sacred arms, and I will not desert the comrade beside me wherever I shall be stationed in a battle line;" tr. J. Plešcia -- P. Siewert), whereas Socrates' claiming patriotic motives for his activity in *Ap.* 29d-30a evokes ll. 9-11 ("and I will not hand over [to the descendants] the fatherland smaller, but greater and better, so far as I am able, by myself or with the help of all").

It seems significant in this connection that the section to which the passage under consideration belongs is generally recognized as the most important part of Socrates' speech and that its purpose as set by Plato is overtly apologetic. Yet, *Ap.* 28d6-29a1 is usually regarded as nothing more than a particular application to the personal experience of Socrates as a hoplite soldier of the general principle that duty is more important than life. On this interpretation, the mythological example of Achilles that directly precedes it would be the main illustration of the principle in question. If I am correct in suggesting that *Ap.* 28d6-10 is a paraphrase of the ephobic oath, this will lead to the conclusion that, rather than simply making a reference to Socrates' military experience at Amphipolis, Delion, and Potidaia, Plato's associating Socrates' obedience to his god with the behaviour of the hoplite soldier should be seen as a sophisticated rhetorical move meant to reach the central core of Athenian consensus.