Crito

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF PLATO

Plato was born to an aristocratic family in Athens in the violent era of the Peloponnesian War. Though initially inclined to take up a political career, he ultimately opted for philosophy, joining and participating in Socrates' intellectual circle for roughly a decade until the latter's execution. Some years later, he founded the Academy, the first philosophical school of its kind, in Athens. The institution became extremely influential, attracting many students, including Aristotle, who went on to enjoy illustrious careers. While practicing and teaching philosophy, Plato wrote an extensive series of philosophical dialogues featuring his old teacher, Socrates. While it is clear that these dialogues are at least partially meant to commemorate his mentor, it is equally clear that they served as vehicles for Plato to publicize and develop his own philosophy. For this reason, sifting Socrates' thoughts from Plato's is a complicated task. Though he generally avoided direct political engagement, Plato maintained a complicated relationship with the tyrants of Syracuse, attempting to train the tyrant Dionysus II to philosophically govern the state. By all indications, these experiments failed: the tyrant and the philosopher had a falling out, Dionysus was driven from power, and Plato kept his distance from politics afterwards. He died at an old age, handing over the Academy to his nephew Speusippus. The Academy remained active for many centuries.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The main historical event centering the text is the execution of Socrates, which took place in Athens in 399 BC after Socrates was condemned for *asebeia* (impiety against the gods) and for corrupting the youth of the city. However, one should also read the dialogue in context of contemporary Athenian politics, which were quite unstable. The Athenian Empire had recently been crushed by Sparta in the Peloponnesian War (in which Socrates served), and its famous democracy was replaced in 404 BC by the short and bloody rule of the oligarchic Thirty Tyrants, backed by the Spartans. The Thirty were overthrown in 403 BC and democracy was restored, but their rule cast a long shadow on the city's politics. As the city sought to restore stability, the populace was particularly sensitive to threats, and major public figures with ambiguous politics, like Socrates, were in an especially precarious position.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Crito is the third part of a four-part series of dialogues recording the trial and death of Socrates: *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*. Each of these dialogues showcase Socrates's practice of employing the technique of cross-examination to instigate productive intellectual conversations. *Crito* is generally considered one of Plato's "early dialogues," written shortly after Socrates' death (other dialogues are classified as "middle" or "late"), although these groupings are largely based on stylistic analysis rather than historical evidence, making it difficult to classify the dialogues with certainty. *Crito* bears direct thematic relevance to other major dialogues in which Plato takes up questions of citizenship, politics, and obligation, such as the *Republic* and the *Laws*. *Crito* also references Homer's the *Iliad*, aligning the heroic and larger-than-life figure of Achilles with Socrates.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Crito*
- **When Written:** Sometime in the 4th century BC
- **When Published:** Sometime in the 4th century BC
- **Literary Period:** Classical
- **Genre:** Philosophical dialogue
- **Setting:** Athenian prison
- **Antagonist:** N/A
- **Point of View:** Third person

EXTRA CREDIT

Reconstructing Plato. Although he was an enormously influential figure, Socrates left behind no philosophical texts of his own authorship. For this reason, later generations have only been able to reconstruct his thoughts through the (sometimes contradictory) writings of his students, like Plato and Xenophon.

A New Genre. Before Plato, most philosophical Greek authors had recorded their thoughts as poetry. Plato's prose dialogues combined elements of a variety of Greek literary genres (like drama and historiography) into a very different kind of philosophical writing. They were considered literary masterpieces in antiquity, and later students of philosophy attempted to emulate his style often enough that scholars are still debating whether certain texts were written by Plato himself or by later enthusiasts.

PLOT SUMMARY

Socrates has been condemned to death by a jury of Athenian citizens for the crimes of *asebeia* and corrupting the youth.

Now he sits in prison awaiting his execution, which cannot take place until the conclusion of a nearby religious ceremony. No one is sure exactly when the ceremony will conclude, so Socrates can only guess how long he has left to live. He wakes up early one morning to find Crito, his friend and student, waiting to speak with him. Crito tells him that he has come to arrange for him to break out of prison, and asks him to prepare to leave quickly, as he suspects executions will resume soon. Socrates disagrees––a vision in a dream told him he still has a few days to live––but they put the question aside as Crito reasserts the urgency of departing immediately. He makes an impassioned plea for Socrates to leave, begging him to consider not only his own well-being but also that of his friends and family. Socrates responds by criticizing Crito's sensitivity to public opinion, which he claims has absolutely no bearing on the immorality of escaping a death to which he has been legally condemned. Crito continues to push him, arguing that it would be cowardly to make no effort to save himself, stressing how shameful it would be if Socrates died and the public assumed that Crito and Socrates' other friends had made no effort to help him. Socrates asks Crito to remember how they have always addressed such problems, and challenges him to rationally justify the course of action he proposes.

This challenge initiates the philosophical dialogue proper. Socrates minimizes the importance of the public's perception of his death, arguing that the public has no capacity to distinguish moral and immoral behavior. He reminds Crito that they have always agreed that it is wrong to take revenge for whatever wrongs one has suffered, since acting unjustly in return for injustice still means acting unjustly. When Crito affirms that he still believes this, Socrates accuses him of inconsistency. To illustrate this accusation, he outlines a three-part argument for why citizens owe complete loyalty to the state: first, that citizens owe the state for the benefits it provides; second, that citizens always have the opportunity to convince the state to take a different course of action; and third, that citizens can always leave the state if they disapprove of its **laws**. Taken together, Socrates' arguments imply that living in a state as a citizen is like signing a social contract consenting to obey its will, even when one disagrees with it. Breaking the law in response to an unfair verdict would mean violating this contract for the sake of taking revenge, and therefore committing a wrong for a wrong.

Socrates also considers what his life would be like in exile. He argues that any well-governed city would view him with suspicion, given that he had already shown his willingness to break the law when it suited him. In a badly governed city, on the other hand, he would be forced to spend the rest of his days surrounded by political chaos. Furthermore, if he dies in Athens, his friends will take care of his family; if he dies abroad, he cannot vouch for them.

Socrates concludes by arguing that violating his moral principles for the sake of his own self-interest would mean risking a bad fate in the afterlife, adding that he feels both intuitively and intellectually confident that his convictions line up with the principles of divine justice. Crito declines to admit that Socrates is correct, but concedes that he has nothing left to say. Socrates bids him farewell.

CHARACTERS

Socrates – An important philosopher and public figure in Athens in the fourth century BC. Socrates' philosophical practice always involves engaging others in dialogue, interrogating them by asking questions in order to challenge their existing beliefs (a practice called *elenchos*, or the "Socratic method"). In *Crito*, he makes use of this technique when his friend Crito attempts to convince him to escape from the prison where he awaits execution. Socrates challenges Crito on the morality of attempting to evade a legally rendered verdict, asking him questions aimed at showing the inconsistency of Crito's proposal with convictions he and Socrates had always shared. Here, as in other dialogues, Socrates takes this method one step further by trying to get his interlocutor to eventually agree with Socrates' own convictions. Socrates delivers an extended account of the obligations that accompany membership in a political community, attempting to convince Crito to admit that dying willingly is the only moral choice Socrates has left. Though Crito does not directly express his agreement with Socrates' arguments, he ends the discussion defeated––another common conclusion in the dialogues. Though based on the historical Socrates, the character is ultimately a literary invention of Plato. For this reason, as in other dialogues, it is difficult to tell how much this character represents views which Socrates actually held versus how much he serves as a mouthpiece for Plato's own beliefs.

Crito – A wealthy and well-connected young Athenian who is friends with Socrates. Throughout the dialogue, he aims to convince Socrates to make use of his (Crito's) substantial resources to escape the Athenian prison and resettle elsewhere. In particular, he promises Socrates safe harbor with his friends in other cities, which indicates some degree of involvement in contemporary Greek politics. Despite his impassioned argument, Crito fails to convince Socrates to escape. Through a series of logical arguments that build from abstract to specific, Socrates insists that escaping would put him at odds with the moral beliefs he has advocated for his entire life, and which Crito, as his friend and student, claims to support. In the end, Crito has no choice but to leave Socrates to his death. Though the dialogue shows Crito's intense affection for Socrates, he does not appear very philosophically inclined, showing himself either unfamiliar with or unable to grasp certain basic tenets of Socrates' worldview. Like Socrates himself, Crito is based on a historical figure—Crito is listed

elsewhere as one of Socrates' major followers in the years before his death. He also appears relatively often in other works of Socratic literature: he plays a role in Plato's *Phaedo* and *Euthydemus* and receives mention in the *Apology*. He also appears in works of Socrates' other student, Xenophon, indicating that his activity in Socrates' circle was well recognized.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

THE VIRTUOUS LIFE

In Plato's *Crito*, Socrates is visited in prison by his wealthy friend Crito shortly before his execution for corrupting the youth of Athens. Crito tries to convince Socrates to escape to another city, promising that he'll use his wealth to assist him. Socrates refuses, challenging Crito to justify the morality of illegally fleeing Athens. Crito takes up that challenge by forcing Socrates to consider how his execution will reflect on those close to him. He claims that the public would assume that Socrates's friends, including Crito, abandoned him to die without trying to save him. Socrates responds by arguing that obedience to **the law** is a more important principle than any of those for which Crito advocates: although the Athenian jury was wrong to condemn him, escaping illegally would mean betraying his obligations to his community as a citizen. In this sense, Crito and Socrates present two different accounts of the virtuous life. Crito defends an account of morality according to which living well means supporting one's friends and family above all, rejecting the law when the law is unjust. Socrates, however, makes the case that virtue is measured by one's consistency in sticking to one's own principles and those of democratic community—even at the cost of one's life.

Crito tries to convince Socrates to flee by reminding him of the people who depend on him. When he learns that Socrates intends to accept his death passively, he reproaches him for choosing "the easiest path, whereas one should choose the path a good and courageous man would choose, particularly when one claims throughout one's life to care for virtue." He likewise accuses him of "betraying [his] sons" by abandoning the work of raising them, adding that Socrates's death would render his sons "orphans" (though their mother is still alive, Athenian women had very few legal rights). Finally, he asks Socrates to consider the possibility that the public will blame him and Socrates' other friends for failing to save him out of "cowardice and unmanliness." For this reason, he labels Socrates' choice "not only evil, but shameful, both for you and for us." All these arguments rely on the vocabulary of conventional morality ("cowardice and manliness" versus acting as a "good and courageous man") to convince Socrates of the wrongness of his action, implying that Socrates's obligation to relatives and friends outweighs his obligation to the laws and the state, and that he therefore must break the law.

Socrates counters by arguing that obedience to the law is a greater good than familiar piety. First, he points out that his death will leave his family in a better position than his exile: if he dies in Athens, he can count on his Athenian friends to look after his children, but if he took them with him in flight, they would be forced to live as "strangers" (*xenoi*) with limited political rights in their new community. In this way, he refuses to concede that dying willingly means sacrificing his family's well-being. However, for him, the entire question is beside the point. Breaking the law, he says, implies that the law is worthless. Since a city cannot survive without its laws, breaking the law is morally equivalent to attempting to "destroy" Athens itself––a greater wrong than destroying a single family. Ultimately, he says, one's country "is to be honored more than [one's] mother, [one's] father, and all [one's] ancestors." For that reason, even if dying *did* mean abandoning his family, escaping illegally would mean nothing less than betraying his entire community––a far greater crime.

This rebuttal relies on a fundamentally different conception of virtue than Crito's. For Crito, virtue entails staying true to one's loved ones at all costs. For Socrates, however, that definition relies on a conventional and dangerous morality. If one admits that the existence of the law is generally a good thing, he says, then one cannot reject its verdicts, even when wrongly condemned by the court. Even someone who has been wronged, he says, cannot "inflict wrong in return, as the majority believe, since one must never do wrong." This argument directly contradicts Crito's assertion that illegally escaping the city would be courageous. If illegality is as destructive as Socrates claims, then escaping would show the jury that they'd been right to condemn him for corrupting Athens' youth, "for anyone who destroys the laws could easily be thought to corrupt the young and the ignorant." From this perspective, breaking the law would simply compound the wrongs committed in Socrates' situation rather than counteract them. For that reason, virtue is measured by one's willingness to make principled sacrifices in support of the communal good rather than loyalty to one's loved ones. Socrates warns himself: "do not value either your children or your life or anything else more than goodness." This goodness––a more social, less personal form of goodness than the kind Crito defends––demands a total readiness to sacrifice.

TRUTH AND PUBLIC OPINION

For Crito, public dishonor is a great evil. He suggests that one can only maintain good moral standing in one's community by acting in accordance with their values, and that acting in any other way is "shameful." Crito's argument is therefore premised on his belief that the community is the ultimate judge of right and wrong action. Socrates, on the other hand, insists that the truth is fully independent from public opinion. For this reason, there's no reason to worry about how others perceive one's actions, so long as they're undertaken in accordance with the greater good.

A major component of Crito's argument is the question of how others perceive Socrates' execution. He finds this question concerning not only for Socrates himself, but also for his friends, worrying that the people of Athens will think he was executed because no one went to the trouble of helping him escape. He fears for the damage his own reputation will suffer as a result: "there can be no worse reputation," he says, "than to be though to value money more highly than one's friends, for the majority will not believe that you yourself were not willing to leave prison while we were eager for you to do so." By arguing that Socrates should prioritize counteracting this perception over his own belief in what's right, Crito implies that it is both morally acceptable and occasionally necessary to compromise one's principles to accommodate public perception. In this sense, Crito argues that the truth ultimately matters less than what others think. Telling lies, acting hypocritically, and even breaking **the law** are more acceptable than allowing oneself and the people one cares about to face the dangers that come with a bad reputation.

Crito justifies his conviction by reminding Socrates that he himself was condemned only because the public misunderstood him. He cites Socrates' own case back to him: "your present situation makes clear that the majority can inflict not the least but pretty well the greatest evils if one is slandered among them." He thinks this experience proves the power of majority opinion: public perception matters because the public has power over life and death. This argument relies on the premise that death, and other punishments the public can inflict, are the greatest possible evils—all moral questions pale in comparison to the imperative of staving these things off from oneself and one's loved ones. In that sense, public opinion doesn't deserve a person's attention because it's important *per se* that others agree with that person's action. Rather, it matters because the public has immense power to inflict evil. This power demands a respect rooted in fear.

Socrates responds by questioning the premise of Crito's argument, countering that the evils the public can inflict are far less threatening than the prospect of betraying the truth. He rebukes Crito immediately: "would that the majority could inflict the greatest evils, for they would then be capable of the greatest good, and that would be fine, but they cannot do either. They cannot make a man either wise or foolish, but they inflict things haphazardly." This quote aligns wisdom and foolishness with great good and great evil, respectively, thereby challenging Crito's assumption that death is the greatest evil of all. Because of this different conception of good and evil, Socrates argues that the majority does not deserve one's attention. Rather, one should care only for the opinions of "wise men"––that minority of the population which shares what Socrates takes to be correct views on the nature of the good. He compares a wise man's opinion on the good to a doctor's opinion on the body: it is credible because it is rooted in a specialized expertise. Respecting the opinions of the unwise majority, on the other hand, would be as dangerous as taking medical advice from a layman. Moral questions, from this point of view, have nothing to do with common opinion; they are matters for a qualified, learned, philosophical elite. Public dishonor, on the other hand, counts for nothing.

POLITICAL OBLIGATION

Socrates' account of the virtuous life is based on a version of what later theorists will call social contract theory. According to this theory, living in a politically organized community is like signing a contract consenting to follow the rules that govern it. For Socrates, there is no real alternative to this contract––the disconnected life of the exile is, from his point of view, hardly a life at all. This contract serves as the basis for his views on morality: because one owes obedience to one's community, its collective good must always serve as the standard for evaluating right and wrong actions.

Midway through the dialogue, Socrates adopts a new register of speech, pretending to speak as the personified "**laws**" (*nomoi*) of Athens. However, the Greek word rendered as law, *nomos*, is significantly broader than this translation indicates. Though it does refer to the city's laws, the word can also mean "custom" or "institution" more generally. In line with this broad definition, Socrates gives the "laws" credit for virtually all the goods he has enjoyed in life, up to and including his own biological existence. He does this by stressing every individual's dependence on community norms: his mother and father, for example, conceived him within a legally sanctioned marriage. Because his parents could not have married if the institution of marriage did not exist, he goes so far as to claim that one can think of the state as his real parent. He likewise credits the state for the care and education he received as a child. Although he was privately educated, he claims that the fact that the state "instructed" his father to educate him––presumably through the social expectation that men of good standing educate their sons––mean that the state was ultimately responsible for that instruction. Once again, Socrates' education cannot be chalked up to the written laws themselves;

it ultimately came down to the choices his father made (and the resources at his disposal). However, the broadness of the word *nomoi* stresses the fact that even private affairs like marriage and education are unthinkable without the organizing social framework the state provides.

This conception of social existence seems to be why Socrates so intensely denigrates the possibility of living in exile. Still speaking as the voice of the law, he mocks the idea sharply: "will you," he asks himself, "avoid cities that are well governed and men who are civilized? If you do this, will your life be worth living?" Though he does not elaborate on this statement, it is reasonable to assume that Socrates considers life meaningless outside of a "well-governed" city because it entails losing access to not only a just set of laws, but also to the customs and institutions important to living a good life.

Socrates' explanation of the importance of "the laws" becomes the first step of a three-step argument in favor of total loyalty to the state. First, the benefits one receives from the state, like education and marriage, entail a reciprocal obligation to obey it. Second, he qualifies the first step by showing that a person is not obligated to obey the state *uncritically*: Socrates stresses that democratic institutions like the courts provide the opportunity to convince the state that it is acting wrongly. The state might ultimately act wrongly all the same, as in the case of Socrates' guilty verdict. However, he blames such cases on individual actors, like his jurors, rather than the institutions themselves, which retain their moral authority. Finally, his third step adds that citizenship is always consensual. Still speaking as the law, Socrates stresses: "not one of our laws raises any obstacle or forbids [an adult male citizen], if he is not satisfied with us or the city, [to go] ... anywhere else, and keep his property. We say, however, that whoever of you remains ... has in fact come to an agreement with us to obey our instructions." Any adult male citizen can leave if he decides he doesn't like the city's laws. However, if a citizen decides to stay, he implicitly consents to obey them. This triple obligation amounts, for Socrates, to a binding contract of loyalty. No matter what the state orders a citizen to do––to go to war, to go to prison, to face execution––there is no moral choice but consent. For that reason, obedience to the state outweighs all other interests.

DYING WELL

Socrates is strikingly unfazed by the prospect of his own execution. According to his worldview, this attitude models a wise person's approach to death: if one's goodness matters more than one's life, then death is insignificant for anyone who has lived well. The good philosopher can die without fear. This promise is one of the main concerns of Platonic philosophy: living by well-reasoned, consistent principles can liberate the individual from fleeting, day-to-day concerns in order to cultivate knowledge of an absolute, eternal truth that transcends life and death.

Very early in the dialogue, Crito notes that Socrates is able to face death with extraordinary tranquility. He does not immediately wake Socrates when he enters his cell, letting him sleep in order to spare him thought of the fate that awaits him. Crito assumes that this is the kindest course of action by picturing himself in a similar situation, imagining that he would not want to lie awake in distress, thinking of his impending death. However, when Socrates awakes, it is clear that Crito has failed to empathize with him. He appears quite calm, and gently reproaches Crito for not waking him right away. Crito can only respond to this attitude with uncomprehending wonder and admiration: "often in the past throughout my life, I have considered the way you live happy, and especially so now that you bear your present misfortune so easily and lightly." Crito's failure to anticipate his emotional state shows that they see death in fundamentally different ways. Socrates' way of life seems to have granted him a happiness so deeply rooted that it holds out even in the face of death; however, this happiness remains beyond immediate comprehension for those who are not as wise. Somehow, the way Socrates lives his life has taught him to peacefully accept things that would make Crito miserable, enabling him to experience a uniquely stable and permanent sort of peace.

Socrates does not respond to Crito's surprise beyond noting that it would not be reasonable for him to fear death. He neglects to justify this conviction, but it seems to have something to do with being old: "it would not be fitting at my age," he says, "to resent the fact that I must die now." Crito agrees, but notes that many other people of Socrates' age are nevertheless quite frightened of it. Socrates merely confirms Crito's comment––"that is so"––before turning the conversation in another direction. This response falls short of a full argument about why it is unreasonable for an old man to fear death. However, by emphasizing his age, Socrates implicitly stresses that he has lived a full life: it makes no sense, he seems to say, to resent the fact that his life is being cut short, since death would come soon anyways.

Though curt, Socrates' response implicitly demonstrates what makes him different from other people. He and Crito agree that it would not make sense to resent the inevitability of death, especially as an old man. By admitting that others resent it all the same, Socrates shows that other people's fear of death directly contradicts a logical perspective on the matter. His philosophical approach allows him to look death in the face and assess it reasonably, making peace with something that terrifies most everyone else. In this sense, the practice of philosophy has prepared him for death.

The end of the dialogue reinforces this interpretation, as Socrates concludes the part of his argument delivered through the persona of "**the laws**" by considering his fate in the underworld. He does not detail his views on the afterlife, but he makes the stakes of his decision quite clear: "do not value either

your children or life or anything else more than goodness, in order than when you arrive in Hades you may have all this as your defense before the rulers there. ... If you depart ... the laws of the underworld will not receive you kindly, knowing that you tried to destroy us [the laws] as far as you could." This conclusion aligns Socrates' moral convictions with an absolute cosmic good attainable by acting in accordance with certain fixed moral principles. Modifying one's beliefs to suit one's circumstances, on the other hand, link one with the chaos of the mortal world, and apparently incurs some risk of punishment in the afterlife.

Finally, Socrates drops the voice of "the laws" to affirm his absolute belief in this approach to death: "be assured that these are the words I seem to hear, as the Corybants [a musical band of worshippers of the goddess Cybele] seem to hear the music of their flutes, and the echo of these words resounds in me, and makes it impossible to hear anything else." Socrates' relentless pursuit of logical conclusions has aligned him so thoroughly with the divine order of things that he perceives the certainty of his convictions as a mystical experience. His belief in absolute truth makes questions of life, death, and public opinion meaningless; he rests easy, surrounded by a divine music which only he can hear.

These discussions of death comprise the very beginning and very end of the *Crito*, structurally framing the entire dialogue. All the intervening topics discussed––politics, morality, and so on––are therefore, in some sense, inflected and shadowed by death. Through this structural choice, Plato implicitly makes the case for living as Socrates did: by following Socrates' example, it stands to reason that the reader, too, can experience his uncanny, unshakeable happiness at the hour of death. This promise is a silent but central dynamic of the dialogue's work, making the case that ceaselessly and rationally investigating the beliefs others take for granted can win the philosopher access to an permanent and transcendent peace.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE LAW OF ATHENS

In *Crito*, the law of Athens symbolizes the divinely sanctioned wisdom and authority of organized political community. Midway through the dialogue, Socrates begins speaking as the personified law of Athens in order to support his arguments about what a citizen owes to the state. However, it quickly becomes clear that he is not just talking about the written laws which govern Athens. The Greek word translated as "law," *nomos*, actually means quite a bit more: the word can also be translated as "custom" or "institution" more broadly. Because the *nomoi* enable all the benefits that come from existing in a social community, Socrates argues that a citizen owes the law even greater loyalty, piety, and obedience than they owe their parents. This is especially important to note because Socrates seems to give the "law" credit for all social goods a citizen receives from living in a political community—a claim which might seem exaggerated if taken in reference to only written statutes.

However, the symbolic scope of the law in the *Crito* does not stop there: it also extends to the realm of the gods, as the laws come to symbolize divine truth. At the end of the dialogue, the laws threaten Socrates with punishment in the afterlife if he disrespects them. The fact that the laws possess sufficient knowledge to make this kind of threat indicates that they simultaneously stand for human institutions and for superhuman truth: trespassing against the law means trespassing against the gods. The law of Athens, then, encompasses more than the social norms which support the state's political structures; it also gestures towards divine, transcendent authority Socrates finds reflected in a well-ordered state.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Hackett edition of *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo* published in 2002.

Crito Quotes

❝ Often in the past throughout my life, I have considered the way you live happy, and especially so now that you bear your present misfortune so easily and lightly.

Related Characters: Crito (speaker), Socrates

Related Themes:

Page Number: 46

Explanation and Analysis

When Crito enters Socrates' cell, he expects to find an agitated man anxiously awaiting his impending execution. Instead, Crito finds Socrates at peace, calmly aware of his impending death. Crito reacts with surprise and admiration: he observes that Socrates seems to have accessed a deep tranquility beyond Crito's reach, allowing Socrates to quietly accept "misfortunes" which would make others miserable. He connects this tranquility to his past observations of Socrates, and begins to apprehend that there is some fundamental distinction between Socrates'

way of living and his own. Though Crito does not understand precisely where this difference lies, he notes the otherworldly happiness it seems to enable for Socrates with a wonder bordering on envy. This observation sets up for the dialogue to come: the mystery of Socrates' happiness, and the question of how to obtain it, becomes one of the text's central occupations.

SOCRATES: Then I do not think [the ship] will arrive on this coming day, but on the next. I take to witness of this a dream I had a little earlier during this night [...] I thought that a beautiful and comely woman in white approached me. She called me and said: "Socrates, may you arrive at fertile Phthia on the third day."

CRITO: A strange dream, Socrates.

Related Characters: Crito, Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 46

Explanation and Analysis

Crito anticipates that the Athenian ship whose arrival will signal Socrates' execution will return that day. In this passage, Socrates disagrees, citing a dream from the previous night which he takes to be prophetic. In this dream, a woman in white quotes a line of Homer's the *Iliad* (9.363). That line was originally spoken by Achilles, the strongest fighter in the Greek army. Isolated from the rest of the army after an argument, he threatened to leave Troy, anticipating reaching his homeland, Phthia, three days later. The quote serves two purposes here. First, it plays up Socrates' heroism, implicitly aligning him with a legendary Greek warrior. Second, it illustrates Socrates' connection to otherworldly forces, which seem to grant him access to a sort of prophetic wisdom. This mysterious wisdom is part of what sets Socrates apart from Crito, who, in this passage, dismisses Socrates' dream as "strange. By having Socrates mention his prophetic dream, Plato preemptively legitimizes Socrates' views even before the dialogue kicks off by implying that they are backed by divine authority.

Surely there can be no worse reputation than to be thought to value money more highly than one's friends, for the majority will not believe that you yourself were not willing to leave prison while we were eager for you to do so.

Related Characters: Crito (speaker), Socrates

Related Themes:

Page Number: 47

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Crito upbraids Socrates for endangering his friends' reputations by refusing to accept their offer to accept him escape. Previously, he argued that Socrates should escape out of concern for his own well-being. Since that argument failed to convince Socrates, Crito now frames escape as a moral imperative, effectively attempting to shame Socrates into breaking the law. This flip shows the intensity of Crito's determination: he attempts to weaken Socrates' conviction from every possible argumentative angle. Underlying this particular attempt is Crito's fear for his own public reputation, which is one of the major tensions of the dialogue. By enjoining Socrates to consider majority opinion, Crito implies that concern for what other people think should dictate Socrates' behavior. Crito does not attempt to convince Socrates of the value of public opinion by argument, but simply assumes that its importance is self-evident. In that sense, Crito advocates uncritically for what he takes to be common sense––exactly what Socrates is interested in interrogating.

Would that the majority could inflict the greatest evils, for they would then be capable of the greatest good, and that would be fine, but now they cannot do either. They cannot make a man either wise or foolish, but they inflict things haphazardly.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker), Crito

Related Themes:

Page Number: 47

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Socrates interrogates Crito's belief in the importance of majority opinion by making a large, contentious claim about the nature of good and evil. Though he never says as much, Crito's concern for public appearances implies that the public possesses some power which makes it deserving of fear. In his response, Socrates lays out and takes issue with this unspoken premise––a premise which Crito himself had, apparently, failed to directly consider. However, Socrates' response goes further than refutation, quietly

making several other important arguments which Socrates neglects to spell out: first, that whatever is capable of the greatest evil is capable of the greatest good; second, that wisdom and foolishness have something to do with good and evil; and third, that the public has nothing to do with any of these things. Unlike Crito, Socrates is fully conscious of what claims he is making. The fact that he does not bother proving them points to the mystical element of his nature: apparently, he knows more than he cares to explain.

You seem to me to choose the easiest path, whereas one should choose the path a good and courageous man would choose, particularly when one claims throughout one's life to care for virtue.

Related Characters: Crito (speaker), Socrates

Related Themes:

Page Number: 48

Explanation and Analysis

Crito continues his attempt to shame Socrates into accepting his offer of help. This time, he admonishes Socrates quite sharply, attacking his moral character and accusing him of being cowardly. Crito seems to hope this argument will be especially effective on Socrates, given Socrates' general concern with the nature of good and evil. In actuality, though, it reveals just how uncritical Crito's conception of virtue is. He makes no attempt to justify his characterization of Socrates' willingness to die as "the easiest path," nor does he consider what would make escape the path of a "good and courageous man." Rather, he simply assumes that he and Socrates share the same standards of moral evaluation––based, once again, in a kind of common sense. For Crito, this common sense is the only justification a moral argument leads. This shows that Crito has accepted the values of the public uncritically rather than making an effort, as Socrates does, to interrogate and challenge them.

We must therefore examine whether we should act in this way or not, as not only now but at all times I am the kind of man who listens to nothing within me but the argument that on reflection seems best to me.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker), Crito

Related Themes:

Page Number: 48

Explanation and Analysis

Socrates signals a shift in the dialogue, transitioning from an emotional back-and-forth with Crito into the logical "Socratic method": argument based on self-consistent logical principles framed by Socrates' questions to his interlocutor. Even in announcing this shift, he preemptively highlights the fundamental difference between Crito's views and his own: while Crito is concerned with the public and their values, Socrates heeds no principles except those which he personally takes to be logically sound. His phrasing here is revealing. He not only implies that he pays no heed to public opinion; he adds that he listens to nothing *within himself* except arguments that seem valuable on reflection. This implies a certain kind of emotional balance. Not only does he disregard what others think; he disregards all thoughts, feelings, and impulses that contradict his rational conclusions. This provides some hints at Socrates' psychology, including his ability to remain calm and composed in the face of his own execution.

SOCRATES: [...] Examine the following statement in turn as to whether it stays the same or not, that the most important thing is not life, but the good life.

CRITO: It stays the same.

SOCRATES: And that the good life, the beautiful life, and the just life are the same; does that still hold, or not?

CRITO: It does hold.

Related Characters: Crito, Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

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Explanation and Analysis

Socrates poses this question while rehearsing conclusions upon which he and Crito previously agreed, asking Crito whether he still approves of each. This, the final and most important of these prior conclusions, elaborates Socrates' views on the nature of good: goodness, beauty, and justice are the same, at least in reference to a human life. This equation will serve as something like a linchpin for the consecutive discussion, which ranges between questions of personal morality and civic duty without making much

distinction between the two: after all, if goodness and justice are the same, there is no need to make such distinctions. Plato chooses not to make an argument here for why goodness, beauty, and justice are the same, sidelining the matter as something already covered in previous discussions between Socrates and Crito. This might be because such an argument would be lengthy, and thereby distract from the dialogue's immediate concerns; nevertheless, it is striking that such an important premise of the discussion passes without further elaboration.

> Let us examine the question together, my dear friend, and if you can make any objection while I am speaking, make it and I will listen to you, but if you have no objection to make, my dear Crito, then stop now from saying the same thing so often, that I must leave here against the will of the Athenians. I think it important to persuade you before I act, and not to act against your wishes.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker), Crito

Related Themes:

Page Number: 51

Explanation and Analysis

Once again, Socrates encourages Crito to engage him in argument based on consistent logical principles. His explanation for this desire deserves notice: evidently, despite his contempt for majority opinion, he considers Crito's approval somehow valuable. It is unclear exactly why this is the case, and Socrates neglects to provide further justification. Nevertheless, one might take it as evidence of the extent to which Socrates cares for his friends and family, despite his decision to abandon them in death: it seems reasonable to conclude that Socrates does not wish to leave Crito without explaining himself first. This reframes the urgency of the argument. Socrates, it seems, is already certain of his own conviction; though he invites Crito to object to him, he seems unlikely to budge. By explaining himself to Crito, however, he can potentially convince him of wisdom underpinning his choices, thereby granting Crito some degree of the peace Socrates himself feels.

> You will also strengthen the conviction of the jury that they passed the right sentence on you, for anyone who destroys the laws could easily be thought to corrupt the young and the ignorant. Or will you avoid cities that are well governed and men who are civilized? If you do this, will your life be worth living?

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker), Crito

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 56

Explanation and Analysis

Socrates reproaches himself in the voice of the law of Athens, arguing that he is morally obligated to remain in the city and face his execution. This quote is part of a larger series of arguments based in a concept of civic duty and a version of the social contract. Here, the argument reaches something of a climax: although Socrates may have been unjustly condemned, he argues that disrespecting the laws of the city in which he has spent his life would, ironically, make him just as contemptible as the court originally judged him to be. If Socrates wishes to behave morally, he must accept his unjust condemnation peacefully. If, on the other hand, he defies the state because he was unjustly condemned, then he will act contrary to his moral duty as a citizen, and his condemnation will retroactively *become* just. The statement also highlights Socrates' belief that life is only meaningful in the context of political community: life as a solitary individual, or in a poorly governed city, is apparently not "worth living."

> Do not value either your children or your life or anything else more than goodness, in order that when you arrive in Hades you may have all this as your defense before the rulers there. If you do this deed, you will not think it better or more just or more pious here, nor will any one of your friends, nor will it be better for you when you arrive yonder.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker), Crito

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 57

Explanation and Analysis

Socrates, still speaking as the law, finishes explaining the moral necessity of accepting his execution by indicating a connection between the authority of the state and the authority of the gods. Apparently, due to the binding nature of the imperatives of civic duty Socrates has previously outlined, disobeying the state would mean endangering his moral goodness. This quote adds that such disobedience risks punishment in the afterlife. Moreover, that threat of punishment is delivered in the voice of the laws of Athens. That would indicate that, from Socrates' perspective, the laws of the city exist in some sort of harmony with the laws of divine justice; violating the former seems to mean violating the latter as well. As in other passages which hint at the mystical element of Socrates' knowledge, the logic of this statement is not fully explained. However, its cryptic quality, combined with the absolute certainty of its conviction, makes it all the more foreboding.

SOCRATES: Crito, my dear friend, be assured that these are the words I seem to hear, as the Corybants seem to hear the music of their flutes, and the echo of these words resounds in me, and makes it impossible for me to hear anything else. As far as my present beliefs go, if you speak in opposition to them, you will speak in vain. However, if you think you can accomplish anything, speak.

CRITO: I have nothing to say, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Let it be then, Crito, and let us act in this way, since this is the way the god is leading us.

Related Characters: Crito, Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 57

Explanation and Analysis

These words conclude Socrates' argument in favor of submitting to the authority of the Athenian state. They reinforce the absolute certainty of Socrates' conviction: although he repeats his willingness to continue arguing, he also asserts that it will be impossible to convince him to escape prison and sidestep his execution. This certainty stems from the fact that Socrates does not consider the arguments he has just made to be entirely his own: rather, he "hears" them, just as the Corybants (worshippers of the goddess Cybele) hear divine music through a sort of revelation. This quote helps to explain Socrates' absolute tranquility towards death: his arguments are not tentative conclusions, but rather convictions seated at the core of his being. By ending the dialogue on this note, Plato seems to offer Socrates' happiness as a promise: perhaps, by attempting to live as Socrates did, any reader can experience a similar feeling of total harmony with the cosmos.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CRITO

It is 399 BC in Athens, and Socrates sits condemned in prison, awaiting his execution. No one knows exactly when it will come, as a religious festival is taking place on the nearby island of Delos, and Athens has sent a delegation; no executions may take place before it returns. In the meantime, Socrates sits, sleeps, and waits.

Crito opens with Socrates in solemn contemplation before his death. The setting is not without pathos; isolated from his city and community, Socrates is left alone with his own mind.

At early dawn, Socrates wakes up to find his friend and student, Crito, in his cell. Socrates is surprised that the guards let him in, but Crito explains that he bribed them. Socrates also wonders why Crito didn't wake him when he entered. Crito explains that he let Socrates sleep as a kindness; if he himself were about to be executed, Crito says, he wouldn't want to lie awake waiting for death a moment longer than he had to.

An old friend interrupts Socrates' isolation––a necessary premise for a dialogue, the standard literary vehicle of Platonic philosophy, to begin. Crito tries to empathize with Socrates' situation by letting him sleep, assuming that Socrates must be as scared as he himself would be, In other words, Crito assumes that they share a basic attitude towards death.

Crito sees, however, that Socrates appears completely untroubled by his impending death. He mentions this to Socrates, who merely counters that someone as old as he is shouldn't "resent" death. Crito notes that most people his age "resent" it all the same. Socrates admits this, but changes the subject, asking Crito why he's come so early.

Socrates shows Crito that his attempt at empathizing has failed. Apparently, Socrates' concept of death is not only completely at odds with Crito's, but also with that of the average view of someone his age. Socrates' conclusions issue a challenge both to public opinion and to what someone like Crito might consider common sense.

Crito explains that he comes as the bearer of bad news: the ship that carried the Athenian delegation to Delos is expected to return today, allowing executions to resume the next day. If true, this means Socrates will die tomorrow.

Crito tries to impress Socrates with the urgency of his situation, hoping to inspire him to take some sort of action to save himself. Through Crito's words and actions, it's clear that he's fearful of death and believes that Socrates must do something to avoid such a supremely awful fate. In other words, Crito seems to think that there's no such thing as a good time or a good way to die—a mindset Socrates will soon challenge.

Socrates is of a different opinion. He describes a dream he had the previous night in which he was visited by a beautiful woman in white who delivered a divinely inspired message: "Socrates, may you arrive at fertile Phthia on the third day." Assuming that this dream implies that he will die in three days, he deduces that the ship won't return for two.

Again, Socrates shows himself to be operating under a completely different set of assumptions than Crito. Socrates' dream hints that he somehow has access to a degree of divine wisdom, which seems to allow him to know things Crito doesn't.

Crito has no interest in talking about dreams. He believes that Socrates must escape from the prison immediately, and he has come to offer his help in doing so. He frames this escape as imperative not just for Socrates, but for Crito himself: he wishes neither to lose Socrates, nor for the people of Athens to believe he was unwilling to pay the money to save Socrates' life.

Recognizing that Socrates is thinking along very different lines, Crito attempts to convince Socrates to escape prison through a short, emotional argument which relies on the bonds of love and care between Socrates, his friends, and his family.

Socrates criticizes Crito for being overly concerned with what other people think. The common people of Athens, he says, can believe what they will. Ultimately, their opinion has nothing to do with what's right and wrong. Crito disagrees. Socrates' own case, he says, proves that popular opinion can mean the difference between life and death. Socrates is unfazed. The people can put someone to death, but both "the greatest evils" and "the greatest good" lie beyond their reach.

Once again, Socrates hints somewhat cryptically at his access to a deeper kind of knowledge, this time concerning the nature of good and evil. Crito considers death one of the worst things that can befall a person, but Socrates disagrees. Because of this disagreement, Crito is much more afraid of the punishments the public can inflict than Socrates is. This disagreement uncovers the first argumentative distinction between the two characters' worldviews.

Crito tries again. He wonders if Socrates is hesitant to escape because he's worried that his friends would get in trouble with the authorities if they broke him out of prison. He attempts to reassure him, promising that Socrates' life is worth the risk. But Socrates doesn't engage with this line of argument at all, except to affirm that "I do have these things in mind, Crito, and also many others."

Crito neglects to pursue his analytical disagreements with Socrates, preferring to keep the problem in personal terms. Unable to understand Socrates' objections to escaping, he tries anticipating them on his own by assuring him that he and others are willing to sacrifice for his well-being.

Crito keeps at it, listing all the people and foreign governments that would be willing to help Socrates. This time, though, he expands his argument, adding that he considers it unjust for Socrates to die when given the opportunity to live, as he would be abandoning his sons and his loved ones. Crito begs Socrates once again to think of how his death would reflect on his friends who had the ability to save him, lest they be accused of "cowardice and unmanliness."

As Crito's pleas become increasingly emotional, they begin to sound like accusations. He reproaches Socrates for neglecting an assumed moral obligation to his kin. For Crito, virtue hinges on supporting one's friends and family above all, even if that means rejecting the law in the process. In addition, this switch in registers indicates that Crito is willing to adjust his arguments in order to convince Socrates to do what he wants.

Socrates insists that the matter must be decided through argument and reflection. He tells Crito to remember how he has always approached such questions in the past, and asks him whether the fact of his impending execution should be enough to undo all the beliefs and principles by which he lives.

Socrates senses the sincerity of Crito's argument, along with its rather jagged logical progression. He challenges him to think not just of the emotionally charged personal issues at stake, but to argue consistently based on the general principles that guide his life. With this, Socrates begins to flesh out the idea of consistently living in accordance with one's values as a means to a virtuous life.

From here, Socrates begins the dialogue in earnest. He asks Crito if one should only care for the opinions of the wise rather than the foolish. After Crito agrees, Socrates expands on this thought, comparing the opinions of fools about justice to the opinions of laymen about medicine. Taking advice on medicine from someone who isn't a doctor could harm the body; likewise, taking advice on justice from someone who is not wise harms "that part of ourselves that is improved by just actions and destroyed by unjust actions." At Socrates' prompting, Crito affirms every step of this argument.

Socrates insists on beginning the dialogue by finding a basic principle which both he and Crito share: that one should only care what wise people think. After establishing this common ground, he then makes a large jump from this principle by asserting that wisdom concerning moral questions is analogous to the specialized expertise of a doctor. The logic of this leap is not obvious, but Crito is a rather passive dialogue partner, so for now he merely assents.

Socrates asks Crito whether the part of the self "destroyed by unjust actions" is more or less valuable than the health of the body. Crito replies that it is more valuable. Socrates replies that this shows that one should not care for the opinion of the majority, but for that of those who understand justice.

Here, Socrates develops his argument on wisdom by adding that one's moral "health" is more important than one's physical health. Once again, this addition is not analytically justified, but Crito agrees all the same. In elevating moral health above physical health, Socrates gestures to the idea that in order to live a truly virtuous life, one must consistently stick to their principles.

Carrying the argument forward, Socrates asks why it matters so much that the majority is able to put him to death. He and Crito agree that "the good life, the beautiful life, and the just life" are one and the same. Accordingly, the ability to live a good life becomes contingent on acting justly. If continuing to live would mean living unjustly, then, Socrates concludes, he must die.

Socrates articulates a major tenet of Platonic philosophy: that goodness, beauty, and justice––at least to the extent that a human life can model them––are the same thing. In combination with the previous step, this argument leads him and Crito to agree that dying justly is better than living unjustly.

Having reached agreement on this point, Socrates starts another discussion, adding that he considers it "important" to persuade Crito of the reasoning behind his choices. He recalls that they have always agreed that one must always attempt to avoid doing wrong, and asks if public opinion has suddenly acquired any relevance to that question. Crito admits that it hasn't, affirming their shared conviction that one must never do wrong.

Up to this point, the dialogue has mostly consisted of Socrates repeating basic elements of his belief system and eliciting Crito's agreement. He now announces his intention to apply these first principles to develop an argument specific enough to dictate the proper course of action in his own case.

Socrates explores the implications of this belief, asking Crito whether it is acceptable to, for example, act wrongly as revenge for a wrong committed against oneself. Following from their previously stated convictions, Crito asserts that this would not be acceptable, and agrees with Socrates that a person must never act wrongly, regardless of the wrongs inflicted against them.

Having agreed that one should always try to avoid doing evil, Socrates crafts a more specific argument against the morality of revenge. He and Crito never directly articulate what counts as committing a wrong, apparently taking a shared definition for granted, despite this definition's central importance to the argument.

Socrates seizes on this moment, claiming that Crito does not really share this belief as he claims to. He promises to show him how. Socrates then provides an example, asking whether it is just to break an agreement one has reached with someone. When Crito agrees that this would be unjust, Socrates returns to the matter at hand, asking Crito if his escape would not be "harming people whom we should least do harm to." Crito is baffled by the way the argument has progressed and feels unable to answer the question.

In this passage, Socrates highlights the importance of living consistently in accordance with one's personal values. By promising to show Crito that he does not truly hold the beliefs he professes, Socrates shows once again that he thinks more deeply than Crito: he can apparently anticipate the course of the discussion to come before it's even begun. This promise provides the chance to turn the discussion from abstract morality to concrete matters of law and government.

Socrates proceeds by speaking rhetorically as the "**laws** and the state," or the *nomoi*, asking if it's possible to ignore the verdicts of a court without implying that the courts have no validity. That would mean nothing less than attempting to destroy the city by undermining its laws.

The "laws" which Socrates personifies here are more than just the written statutes of Athens; the Greek word used here (nomoi) *also refers to the customs and institutions of the polity. By pretending to personify the laws, Socrates implies that these institutions are sufficiently unified and consistent to speak with a single voice.*

Crito counters, at Socrates' suggestion, by asserting that the **law** acted wrongly towards Socrates by condemning him; for that reason, one can disobey it. Still speaking as the laws, Socrates does not contradict that a wrong was committed, but argues that he is nevertheless bound to obey the state.

Socrates distinguishes between wrongs committed through *the "laws" and wrongs committed* by *the laws themselves. He puts his own guilty verdict in the former category.*

Before allowing Crito to break in, Socrates insists on explaining where this obligation comes from. He lists the goods he received from the state, arguing that there are so many of these goods that any citizen must accord the state a position of honor even greater than that of their parents. If it is impious to disrespect one's mother or father, it is even worse to disrespect the state, even if it "leads you to war to be wounded or killed." A just citizen can only obey the state or convince it to act differently. Crito agrees.

Socrates outlines the first two parts of his three-step argument for total loyalty to the state: that a person owes the state for what they receive from it, and that the state always provides the opportunity to convince it to change its intended course of action. Both of these arguments apply specifically to Athens, a state rich enough to provide many benefits and mostly governed by democratic institutions; it is unclear how they might apply to other states where this is not the case.

Though he has already elicited Crito's agreement, Socrates keeps pushing. He observes that any Athenian of age has the right to leave the city and go somewhere else if he dislikes the **law**. Escaping prison would therefore be wrong for three reasons: first, it would be equivalent to disobeying his "parents"; second, because he had already been given the opportunity to convince the state to act differently in court, and therefore had already had a fair shot at disputing its intended course of action; and third, because he had spent his whole life in the city, and thereby consented to obey its laws.

Freedom of movement becomes the third leg of Socrates' argument, despite the fact that economic and political conditions often made "going elsewhere" more difficult than Socrates' words would indicate. Most significantly, the argument also makes no effort to account for the enormous segments of the population which were not considered citizens, including women and slaves. This failure significantly limits the general applicability of Socrates' argument.

Socrates now applies these arguments to his own case. He justifies this by repeating that he has stayed in the city his whole life and taken advantage of the goods it offered, and even had children there. This, he argues, means that he was "satisfied" with the **law** and the state of Athens. Furthermore, at his trial, he stated that he preferred death to exile. Contradicting that belief, together with his agreement to follow Athens' laws, would make him like "the meanest type of slave." He asks Crito if he agrees. He does.

Continuing the dialogue's trend, Socrates only addresses specifics after establishing the general principles which will dictate his engagement with them. He stresses the importance of absolute logical consistency, comparing inconsistency to slavery as a wretched and shameful condition. These statements elicit Crito's immediate agreement.

Here, Socrates takes a moment to return to Crito's earlier argument that dying would mean abandoning his friends and children. He points out that those same friends would stand in danger of retribution if he escaped successfully.

Socrates reveals that his decision includes some consideration for his loved ones after all. It remains unclear how this point fits into the arguments about citizenship he made above, or whether he adds it merely for the sake of refuting Crito as thoroughly as possible.

Addressing another one of Crito's points, Socrates imagines what his life would be like in a new city. If he went to a well-governed city, he says, the people would look on him with justified suspicion as one who had already showed his contempt for the **law**. On the other hand, if he went to Crito's friends in Thessaly, he would be forced to live a hard life amid political instability and chaos, making it difficult to give his children a good life. If he dies, however, he can count on his friends to take care of his family.

Socrates' arguments become even more practical, showing his sensitivity to the contemporary political situation in Greece. He also hints further towards an unelaborated philosophy of kinship, indicating that he recognizes obligations to his family and expects loyalty from his friends (both institutions being at least partially determined by the Athenian "laws").

Socrates, still pretending to speak as the **law** of Athens, concludes his argument by considering his own fate after death. If Socrates dies willingly, the laws declare that he can count on the "rulers" of the underworld to defend him, since he has been wronged "not by us, the laws, but by men." If he flees, on the other hand, he will live a wretched life among the living and can expect that things will be no less wretched after death.

Socrates returns to divine matters, vaguely indicating his belief in some sort of important moral judgment after death. It remains unclear how this belief influences his views on the nature of good and evil, if at all; the dialogue's mentions of divine things serve only to demonstrate Socrates' connection to immortal truths that Crito does not understand.

Socrates turns to his old friend and addresses him directly. He tells Crito that he hears the words of the "**laws**" around him, like the music of the flutes of the Corybants, and the "echo of these words [...] makes it impossible for [him] to hear anything else." He invites Crito to continue to object if he thinks he can still make a case for his proposal; for his own part, however, he declares the argument closed.

Socrates' words sound increasingly mystical as he reports an experience of divine inspiration, balancing out the prophetic dream he mentioned at the dialogue's beginning. This mysticism adds an extra degree of mystery and allure to his character.

Crito concedes, resigned and defeated: "I have nothing to say, Socrates." Socrates accepts this concession, bidding Crito to make his peace with things: "let it be then, Crito, and let us act in this way, since this is the way the god is leading us."

Crito refuses to admit that he has been proven wrong, but gives up all the same. The dialogue concludes with his somber goodbye to his old friend, further impressing the reader with the setting's intense emotional charge. Socrates' parting words suggest that living by consistent and well-reasoned principles liberates him from the fear and concern that Crito is clearly still riddled with. In other words, the good philosopher has no reason to fear death.

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