
CRITO

43a **SOCRATES.** Why have you come at this hour, Crito? Isn't it still early?

CRITO. Very Early.

SOCRATES. What time, exactly?

CRITO. Depth of dawn, before first light.

SOCRATES. I'm surprised the guard was willing to admit you.

CRITO. He's used to me by now, Socrates, because I come here so often. Besides, I've done him a kindness.

SOCRATES. Did you come just now, or a while ago?

CRITO. Quite a while ago.

b **SOCRATES.** Then why didn't you wake me right away, instead of sitting there in silence?

CRITO. No, Socrates. I might wish I weren't in such wakeful pain myself, and I've been marvelling for some time at how sweetly you sleep. I didn't wake you on purpose, so that you could spend the time as pleasantly as possible. Often before through the whole of our lives I've thought you happy in your ways, but never more than now in the present misfortune—so cheerfully and lightly do you bear it.

c **SOCRATES.** But surely, Crito, it would scarcely be appropriate in a man of my age to be distressed that he now has to die.

CRITO. Other men as old have been taken in similar misfortune, Socrates, and age did not relieve their distress at what faced them.

SOCRATES. True. But why are you here so early?

CRITO. I bring grievous news, Socrates. Not grievous to you, it appears, but grievous to me and to all your companions, and heaviest to bear, I think, for me.

d **SOCRATES.** What is it? Has the ship come from Delos, on whose arrival I'm to die?

CRITO. Not yet. But I think it will come today, to judge from the report of some people who've arrived from Sunium and left it there.

From what they say, it will clearly come today, and then tomorrow, Socrates, your life must end.

SOCRATES. Well, Crito, let it be for the best. If so it pleases the Gods, let it be so. Still, I don't think it will come today.

CRITO. From what do you infer that?

SOCRATES. I'll tell you. I'm to die, I think, the day after the ship arrives.

CRITO. Yes—so the authorities say, at any rate.

SOCRATES. Then I think it will come tomorrow, not today. I infer that from a dream I saw a little while ago tonight. Perhaps you chose a good time not to wake me.

CRITO. What was the dream?

SOCRATES. A woman appeared to me. She came, fair and beautiful of form, clothed in white, and she called to me and said, "Socrates, on the third day shalt thou go to fertile Phthia."

CRITO. A strange dream, Socrates.

SOCRATES. But, Crito, I think a clear one.

CRITO. Yes, too clear, it seems.

Crito's Exhortation to Escape (44b-46a)

CRITO. But, please, Socrates, my beloved friend, please let me persuade you even at this point. Save yourself. As for me, if you should die it will be a multiple misfortune. Quite apart from the loss of such friendship as I shall not find again, people who don't really know us will think I didn't care, because I could have saved you if only I'd been willing to spend the money. Yet what could seem more shameful, than the appearance of putting money before friends? People won't believe that you refused to escape even though we were eager to help.

SOCRATES. But Crito, why should we be so concerned about what people will think? Reasonable men, who are the ones worth considering, will believe that things happened as they did.

CRITO. Surely at this point, Socrates, you see how necessary it really is to care about what people think. The very things now happening show that they can accomplish, not the least of evils, but very nearly the greatest, if a man has been slandered among them.

SOCRATES. If only they could work the greatest evils, Crito, so that they might also work the greatest goods, it would truly be well. But as it is, they can do neither; they cannot make a man wise or foolish. They only act at random.

CRITO. Very well, let that be so. But tell me this, Socrates. Are you worried about me and the rest of your friends? Are you afraid that, if you escape, the sycophants will make trouble for us for helping you, so that we may be compelled to forfeit our estates or a great deal of money, or suffer more besides? If you're afraid of something of that sort, dismiss it. It is right for us to run that risk to save you, and still greater risk if need be. Please, let me persuade you to do as I say.

SOCRATES. Of course I'm worried about those things, Crito, and many other things too.

CRITO. Then don't be afraid. In fact, it's not a large sum which certain people are willing to take to manage your escape, and as for the sycophants, you see how cheaply they can be bought; it wouldn't take much money for them. You have mine at your disposal, and it is, I think, enough, but if you're at all worried about me and think you shouldn't spend mine, your friends from abroad are ready. One of them, Simmias of Thebes, has brought enough money just for the purpose, and Cebes and quite a few others are ready, too. So as I say, you mustn't hesitate because of that. Nor should you be troubled about what you said in court, how if you went into exile you wouldn't know what to do with yourself. There are many places for you to go where they'd welcome you warmly, but if you want to go to Thessaly, I have friends there who will honor and protect you, so that no one will cause you distress.

Furthermore, Socrates, I think the thing you're doing is wrong. You betray yourself when you could be saved. You hasten a thing for yourself of a kind your very enemies might hasten for you—and have hastened, wishing you destroyed. In addition, I think you're betraying your sons. You desert them when you could raise and educate them; so far as you're concerned, they're to take what comes, and what is likely to come is just what usually comes to orphans in the poverty of their orphanhood. No. Either a man shouldn't have children, or he should accept the burden of raising and educating them; the choice you're making is one of the most heedless indifference. Your choice should be that of a good and courageous man—especially since you say you've had a lifelong concern for virtue. I'm ashamed, Socrates, ashamed both for you and for your friends, because its going to seem that the whole business was done through a kind of cowardice in us. The case was brought to court when it needn't have been. Then there was the conduct of the trial. And now, as the final absurdity of the whole affair, it is to look as if we let slip this final opportunity because of our own badness and cowardice, whereas we could have saved you or you could have saved yourself if we were worth anything at all. These things are bad, and shameful both to you and to us. Decide. Or rather at this hour, it isn't time to decide

but to have decided. This is the last chance, because everything must be done this coming night, and if we wait it won't any longer be possible. Please, Socrates, be persuaded by me and do as I ask.

Socrates' Reply to Crito (46b-49a)

SOCRATES. My dear Crito, your eagerness is worth much, if rightly b directed. But if not, the greater it is, the worse. We must consider carefully whether this thing is to be done, for I am now and always have been the sort of man who is persuaded only by the argument which on reflection proves best to me, and I cannot throw over arguments I formerly accepted merely because of what has come; they still seem much c the same to me, and I honor them as I did before. If we can't find better ones, be assured that I will not give way to you, not even if the power of the multitude were far greater than it now is to frighten us like children with its threats of confiscation, bonds, and death.

Now, how might we most fairly consider the matter? Perhaps we should first take up this argument of yours about beliefs. We often used to say that some beliefs are worth paying attention to and others not. d Was that wrong? Or was it right before I had to die, whereas it is now obviously idle nonsense put for the sake of arguing? I'd like to join with you in common inquiry, Crito. Does that appear in any way changed now that I'm here? Let us dismiss it or be persuaded by it. We often used to say, I think—and we used to think it made sense—that among e the beliefs men entertain, some are to be regarded as important and others are not. Before the Gods, Crito, were we wrong? At least insofar as it lies in human agency, you aren't about to die tomorrow, and the 47a present situation won't distort your judgment. So consider the matter. Don't you think it's satisfactory to say that one shouldn't value the beliefs of every man, but of some men and not others, and that one shouldn't value every belief of men, but some beliefs and not others? Isn't that right?

CRITO. It is.

SOCRATES. Now, it's useful beliefs which should be valued, not harmful or bad ones?

CRITO. Yes.

SOCRATES. Useful ones being those of the wise, bad ones those of the foolish?

CRITO. Of course.

SOCRATES. To continue, what did we used to say about things like this. Suppose a man goes in for athletics. Does he pay attention to the b

opinions, the praise and blame, of everybody, or only the one man who is his physician or trainer?

CRITO. Only the one.

SOCRATES. Then he ought to welcome the praise and fear the blame of that one man, not of the multitude.

CRITO. Clearly.

SOCRATES. So he is to train and exercise, eat and drink, in a way that seems good to a supervisor who knows and understands, rather than anyone else.

CRITO. True.

c SOCRATES. Very well. But if he disobeys that supervisor, scorns his judgment and praises, values those of the multitude who are without understanding, won't he suffer an evil?

CRITO. Of course.

SOCRATES. What is that evil? Whither does it tend, and into what possession of the man who disobeys?

CRITO. Into the body, clearly, for it ruins that.

d SOCRATES. Right. And isn't this also true in other matters, Crito? We don't need to run through them all, but isn't it especially true of what is just and unjust, honorable and shameful, good and evil—just the things our decision is now concerned with? Are we to fear and follow the multitude in such matters? Or is it rather the opinion of one man, if he but have knowledge, which we must reverence and fear beyond all the rest, since if we do not follow it, we will permanently damage and corrupt something we used to say becomes better by justice and is harmed by injustice. Or is there no such thing?

CRITO. I certainly think there is, Socrates.

e SOCRATES. Very well then, suppose that, by disobeying the opinion of those who understand, we were to ruin what becomes better by health and is damaged by disease. Would life be worth living for us once it has been damaged? That is the body, of course.

CRITO. Yes.

SOCRATES. Well, would life be worth living with a wretched, damaged body?

CRITO. Surely not.

48a SOCRATES. Then is it worth living when there is damage to what the just benefits and the unjust corrupts? Or do we think that this—whatever it is of ours to which justice and injustice pertain—is of less worth than the body?

CRITO. Surely not.

SOCRATES. Of more worth?

CRITO. Far more.

SOCRATES. Then perhaps we shouldn't give much thought to what the multitude tells us, my friend. Perhaps we should rather think of what

he will say who understands things just and unjust—he being but one man, and the very Truth itself. So your first claim, that we ought to pay attention to what the multitude thinks about what is just and honorable and good, is mistaken. “But then,” someone might say, “the multitude can kill us.”

CRITO. Yes, Socrates, it is very clear someone might say that. b

SOCRATES. And yet, my friend, the conclusion we’ve reached still seems much as it did before. Then too, consider whether this agreement still abides too: that it is not living which is of most importance, but living well.

CRITO. It does.

SOCRATES. But “well” is the same as honorably and justly—does that abide too?

CRITO. Yes.

SOCRATES. Then in light of these arguments, we must consider whether or not it would be right for me to try to escape without permission of the Athenians. If it proves right, let us try; if not, let us dismiss the matter. But as for these other considerations you raise about loss of money and raising children and what people think—Crito, those are really fit topics for people who lightly kill and would raise to life again without a thought if they could—the multitude. As for us, the argument has chosen: there is nothing to be considered but the things we’ve already mentioned—whether it is right to give money with our thanks to those who are going to manage my escape, whether in actual fact we shall do injustice by doing any of these things. If it proves to be unjust, then perhaps we should give thought neither to death nor to anything else except the doing of injustice. c

CRITO. You are right, Socrates. Look to what we should do.

SOCRATES. Let’s examine the matter together, my friend, and if you can somehow refute what I’m going to say, do so, and I’ll be persuaded. But if not, then please, my dear friend, please stop returning over and over again to the same argument about how I ought to escape from here without permission from the Athenians. For I count it important that I act with your agreement, not against your will. So look to the starting point of the inquiry. See whether it is satisfactorily stated, and try to answer what I ask as you think proper. d

CRITO. I’ll certainly try.

Two Premises (49a–50a)

SOCRATES. Do we say that there are any circumstances in which injustice ought willingly or wittingly be done? Or is injustice to be done in some circumstances but not others? Is the doing of injustice in no

way honorable or good, as we often in the past agreed, or have those former agreements been cast aside these last few days? Has it long escaped our notice, Crito, that as old men in serious discussion with each other we were really no better than children, or is it rather precisely as we used to claim: that whether the multitude agrees or not, whether we must suffer things still worse than this or things more easy to bear, still, the doing of injustice is in every circumstance shameful and evil for him who does it. Do we affirm that, or not?

CRITO. We do.

SOCRATES. Then one must never do injustice.

CRITO. Of course not.

SOCRATES. Nor return injustice for injustice, as the multitude think, since one must never do injustice.

CRITO. That follows.

SOCRATES. Then does this? Ought one work injury, Crito?

CRITO. No, surely not, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Then is it just to work injury in return for having suffered it, as the multitude affirms?

CRITO. Not at all.

SOCRATES. No, for surely there is no difference between doing ill to men and doing injustice.

CRITO. True.

SOCRATES. Then one ought not return injustice for injustice or do ill to any man, no matter what one may suffer at their hands. Look to this, Crito. Do not agree against your real opinion, for I know that few men think or will ever think it true. Between those who accept it and those who do not, there is no common basis for decision; when they view each others' counsels, they must necessarily hold each other in contempt. So consider very carefully whether you unite with me in agreeing that it can never be right to do injustice or return it, or to ward off the suffering of evil by doing it in return, or whether you recoil from this starting point. I have long thought it true and do still. If you think otherwise, speak and instruct me. But if you abide by our former agreements, hear what follows.

CRITO. I do abide. Please go on.

SOCRATES. I say next, or rather, I ask, whether one is to do things he agreed with someone to do, given that they are just, or is one to deceive?

CRITO. One is to do them.

SOCRATES. Then observe what follows. If I escape from here without persuading the City, am I not injuring someone, and someone I *least* ought? And am I not failing to abide by agreements that are just?

CRITO. Socrates, I can't answer what you ask, for I don't understand.

The Speech of the Laws of Athens (50a-54d)

SOCRATES. Look at it this way. Suppose I was about to run off from here, or whatever the thing should be called. And suppose the Laws, the common constitution of the City, came and stood before me and said, "Tell us, Socrates, what you intend to do. Do you mean by this to destroy us? To destroy, as far as in you lies, the Laws and the City as a whole? Or do you think that a city can continue to exist and not be overturned, in which legal judgments once rendered are without force, but may be rendered unauthoritative by private citizens and so corrupted?"

How are we to answer that, Crito, and questions like it? A good deal might be said, especially by an orator, in behalf of that law, now to be broken, which requires that judgments judicially rendered be authoritative. Or are we to reply that the City did us an injustice and didn't decide the case correctly. Is that what we're to say?

CRITO. Most emphatically, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Then what if the Laws were to reply, "Socrates, was that really our agreement? Or was it rather to abide by such judgments as the City might render?" And if I were surprised at the question, they might go on, "There's no reason for surprise, Socrates. Answer the question, especially since you're so used to questions and answers. Come then, what charge do you lay against us and the City, that you should undertake to destroy us? We gave you birth. It was through us that your father took your mother to wife and begot you. Tell us, then, those of us who are the Laws of Marriage, do you find some fault in us for being incorrect?"

"No fault," I would say.

"Then what about the Laws governing the rearing of children once born, and their education—the Laws under which you yourself were educated. Did we who are the Laws established for that purpose prescribe incorrectly when we directed your father to educate you in music and gymnastic?"

"Correctly," I'd say.

"Very well, then. We bore you, reared you, educated you. Can you then say, first of all, that you are not our offspring and our slave—you, and your fathers before you? And if that's true, do you think that justice is on a level between you and us—that it is right for you to do in return what we may undertake to do to you? Was there such an equal balance toward your father, or your master if you happened to have one, so that you might return whatever was done to you—strike back when struck, speak ill when spoken ill to, things like that? Does such a possibility then exist toward your Country and its Laws, so that if we should un-

dertake to destroy you, believing it just, you in return will undertake so far as you are able to destroy us, your Country and its Laws? Will you claim that this is right—you, who are so profoundly concerned about virtue? Or are you so wise that you have let it escape your notice that Country is to be honored beyond mother and father or any forebears; that it is more holy, more to be revered, of greater apportionment among both gods and men of understanding; that an angered Country must be revered and obeyed and given way to even more than an angered father; that you must either persuade it to the contrary or do what it bids and suffer quietly what it prescribes, whether blows or bonds, whether you are led to war for wounds or death, still, these things are to be done. The just lies here: never to give way, never to desert, never to leave your post, but in war or court of law or any other place, to do what City and Country command—that, or to persuade it of what is by nature just. It is not holy to use force against a mother or father; and it is far more unholy to use force against your Country.”

What are we to say to that, Crito? Do the Laws speak the truth?

CRITO. Yes, I think they do.

SOCRATES. “Then consider this, Socrates,” the Laws might say. “If we speak the truth, aren’t you attempting to wrong us in what you now undertake? We gave you birth. We nurtured you. We educated you. We gave to you and to every other citizen a share of every good thing we could. Nonetheless, we continue to proclaim, by giving leave to any Athenian who wishes, that when he has been admitted to the rights of manhood and sees things in the City and its Laws which do not please him, he may take what is his and go either to one of our colonies or a foreign land. No law among us stands in the way or forbids it. You may take what is yours and go where you like, if we and the City do not please you. But whoever among you stays, recognizing the way we render judgment and govern the other affairs of the City, to him at that point we say that by his action he has entered agreement with us to do as we bid. And if he does not obey, we say that he commits injustice in three ways: because he disobeys us, and we gave him birth; because he disobeys us, and we nurtured him; because he agreed to obey us and neither obeys nor persuades us that we are doing something incorrect—even though we did not rudely command him to do as we bid, but rather set before him the alternatives of doing it or persuading us to the contrary. Those are the charges, Socrates, which we say will be imputable to you if you do what you’re planning. To you, and to you not least, but more than any other Athenian.

And if I were to ask, “Why is that?” they might justly assail me with the claim that, as it happened, I more than most Athenians had ratified this agreement. They might say, “Socrates, we have ample in-

dication that we and the City pleased you. You would not have stayed home in it to a degree surpassing all other Athenians, unless it pleased you in surpassing degree. You never left to go on a festival, except once to the Isthmian Games. You never went anywhere else except on military service. You never journeyed abroad as other men do, nor had you any desire to gain knowledge of other cities and their laws—we and this our City sufficed for you. So eagerly did you choose us, so eagerly did you agree to live as a citizen under us, that you even founded a family here. So much did the City please you. Even at your very trial, you could have proposed exile as a penalty, and done with the City's knowledge and permission what you're now attempting to do against her will. But at the time, you made a fine pretence of not being distressed at having to die. You'd choose death before exile—so you said. But now you feel no shame at those words, nor any concern for us, who are the Laws. You attempt to destroy us by trying to run off like the meanest of slaves, contrary to the compacts and agreements you entered with us to live as a citizen. First of all, then, tell us this: do we or do we not speak the truth when we say that by your actions, if not your words, you have agreed to live as a citizen under us?"

What am I to say to that, Crito? Must I not agree?

CRITO. Necessarily, Socrates.

SOCRATES. "Very well then," they might say. "Aren't you trespassing against your compacts and agreements with us? You didn't agree under constraint, you weren't misled or deceived, nor were you forced to decide in too little time. You had seventy years, during which time you could have gone abroad if we did not please you, or your agreement came to seem to you unjust. But you preferred neither Sparta nor Crete, which you often used to say were well-governed, or any other city, Greek or barbarian. Quite the contrary; you traveled abroad less often than the halt, the lame, and the blind. So the City pleased you, to a degree surpassing all other Athenians. Therefore, we pleased you, too, for to whom would a city be pleasing without laws? Are you, then, now not to abide by your agreements? If you are persuaded by us, Socrates, you will. You will not make yourself a butt of mockery by escaping.

"Consider too what good you will accomplish for yourself or your friends if you transgress or offend in this way. That your friends risk prosecution themselves, with deprivation of city and confiscation of estate, could hardly be more clear. But you first. If you were to go to any of the cities nearest Athens, Thebes, say, or Megara, for both are well-governed, you would go as an enemy to their polity. Those concerned for their own cities would eye you with suspicion, believing you to be a corrupter of laws. Again, you would confirm the opinion of your judges and lead them to think they rendered judgment justly, for a corrupter

of laws may surely also be thought, and emphatically, a corrupter of young and ignorant men. Will you then shun well-governed cities, and men of the more estimable sort? Or will you associate with them and without sense of shame discuss—What will you discuss, Socrates? What arguments? The ones you used to offer here, about how virtue and justice are of highest worth for men, along with prescriptive custom and the Laws? ‘The affair of Socrates’—don’t you think it will look indecent? Surely you must. Then will you keep clear of such places and go to Thessaly among Crito’s friends? There is plenty of license and unchastened disorder in Thessaly, and no doubt they’d delight in hearing you tell your absurd story about how you ran off from prison dressed up in disguise—a peasant’s leather coat, perhaps? Disguised like a runaway slave, just to change your looks! That you are an old man with probably only a little time to live, and yet cling boldly to life with such greedy desire that you will transgress the highest laws—will there be no one to say it? Perhaps not, if you give no offense. But otherwise, Socrates, you will hear many a contemptible thing said of yourself. Will you then live like a slave, fawning on every man you meet? And what will you do in Thessaly when you get there, besides eat, as if you’d exiled yourself for a banquet. But as for those arguments of yours about justice and the other virtues—what will they mean to us then?

“Still, you want to live for your children’s sake, so you can raise and educate them. Really? Will you take them to Thessaly and raise and educate them there, and make foreigners out of them so they can enjoy that advantage too? If you don’t, will they be better reared for your being alive but not with them? Your friends will look after them. Will they look after them if you go to Thessaly, but not if you go to the Place of the Dead? If those who call themselves your friends are really worth anything, you cannot believe that.

“Socrates, be persuaded by us, for we nurtured you. Put not life nor children nor anything else ahead of what is just, so that when you come to the Place of the Dead you may have all this to say in your defense to those who rule there. It will not appear better here, more virtuous, more just, more holy, for you or any of those around you to do this kind of thing here. And it will not be better for you on your arrival there. You now depart, if you depart, the victim of injustice at the hands of men, not at the hands of we who are the Laws. But if you escape, if you thus shamefully return injustice for injustice and injury for injury, if you trespass against your compacts and agreements with us, and work evil on those you least ought—yourself, your friends, your Country and its laws—we shall be angered at you while you live, and those our brothers who are the Laws in the Place of the Dead will not receive you kindly, knowing that you undertook so far as in you lay to

destroy us. Do not be persuaded to do what Crito bids. Be persuaded by us."

Crito, my dear and faithful friend, I think I hear these things as the Corybants think they hear the pipes, and the droning murmur of the words sounds within me and makes me incapable of hearing aught else. Be assured that if you speak against the things I now think true, you will speak in vain. Still, if you suppose you can accomplish anything, please speak.

CRITO. Socrates, I cannot speak.

SOCRATES. Very well, Crito. Let us so act, since so the God leads.