



Crito

YOUR PHILOSOPHICAL SELF-PORTRAIT

Circle what you believe is the correct answer to the questions below and offer evidence supporting your view.

1. T F Because Socrates was unjustly convicted, he had no obligation to remain in prison.

Evidence: _____

2. T F Socrates' obligation to the state to keep his just agreements (even if it leads to his death) is higher than his obligation to remain alive and raise his children.

Evidence: _____

PREVIEW

The *Crito* takes place in the jail where Socrates awaits execution. The dialogue is a debate between Socrates and Crito, his old friend, about whether Socrates should escape.

Annotation Tasks

Background Information In the first few pages, underline the time of day, the personality differences between Socrates and Crito, and Socrates' prophetic dream.

Main Theme In the remaining dialogue look for Crito's reasons in favor of Socrates' escape and the main points in Socrates' argument in favor of remaining in jail.

CRITO

SOCRATES: Why have you come at this hour, Crito? It must be quite early?
CRITO: Yes, it certainly is.
SOC: What time is it?

CR: The dawn is breaking.
SOC: I am surprised the keeper of the prison let you in.
CR: He knows me because I come often, Socrates, and he owes me a favor.
SOC: Did you just get here?
CR: No, I came some time ago.
SOC: Then why did you sit and say nothing, instead of waking me at once?
CR: Why, indeed, Socrates, I myself would rather not have all this sleeplessness and sorrow. I have been wondering at your peaceful slumber and that was the reason why I did not [wake] you. I wanted you to be out of pain. I always thought you fortunate in your calm temperament but I never saw anything like the easy, cheerful way you bear this calamity.
SOC: Crito, when a man reaches my age he should not fear approaching death.
CR: Other men of your age in similar situations fear death.
SOC: That may be. But you have not told me why you come at this early hour.
CR: I bring you a sad and painful message; not sad, as I believe, for you, but to all of us who are your friends, and saddest of all to me.
SOC: Has the ship come from Delos, on the arrival of which I am to die?
CR: No, the ship has not actually arrived, but it will probably be here today because people who came from Sunium tell me they left it there. Therefore, tomorrow, Socrates, will be the last day of your life.
SOC: Very well, Crito. If it is the will of the gods, I am willing, but I believe there will be a delay of a day.
CR: Why do you say that?
SOC: I will tell you. I am to die on the day after the arrival of the ship?
CR: Yes, that is what the authorities say.
SOC: I do not think the ship will be here until tomorrow. I had a dream last night, or rather only just now, when you fortunately allowed me to sleep.
CR: What was your dream?
SOC: I saw the image of a wondrously beautiful woman, clothed in white robes, who called to me and said: "O Socrates, the third day hence to fertile Phthia shalt thou go."
CR: What a strange dream, Socrates!
SOC: I think there can be no doubt about the meaning, Crito.
CR: Perhaps the meaning is clear to you. But, oh my beloved Socrates, let me beg you once more to take my advice and escape! If you die I shall not only lose a friend who can never be replaced, but there is also another evil: People who do not know you and me will believe I might have saved you if I had been willing to spend money, but I did not care to do so. Now, can there be a worse disgrace than this—that I should be thought to value money more than the life of a friend? The many will not be persuaded I wanted you to escape and you refused.
SOC: But why, my dear Crito, should we care about the opinion of the many? Good men, and they are the only persons worth considering, will think of these things as they happened.

A major difference already established between Socrates and

Crito is _____

CR: But do you see, Socrates, the opinion of the many must be regarded, as is clear in your own case, because they can do the very greatest evil to anyone who has lost their good opinion.

SOC: I only wish, Crito, they could. Then they could also do the greatest good and that would be excellent. The truth is, they can do neither good nor evil. They cannot make a man wise or make him foolish, and whatever they do is the result of chance.

CR: Well, I will not argue about that. But please tell me, Socrates, if you are acting out of concern for me and your other friends. Are you afraid if you escape we may get into trouble with the informers for having stolen you away and lose either the whole or a great part of our property, or an even worse evil may happen to us? Now, if this is your fear, be at ease. In order to save you we should surely run this, or even a greater, risk. Be persuaded, then, and do as I say.

SOC: Yes, Crito, that is one fear which you mention, but by no means the only one.

CR: Do not be afraid. There are persons who at no great cost are willing to save you and bring you out of prison. As for the informers, they are reasonable in their demands, a little money will satisfy them. My resources, which are ample, are at your service and if you are troubled about spending all mine, there are strangers who will give you theirs. One of them, Simmias the Theban, brought a sum of money for this very purpose. Cebes and many others are willing to spend their money, too. I say, therefore, do not hesitate about making your escape and do not say, as you did in the court, you will have difficulty in knowing what to do with yourself if you escape. Men will love you in other places you may go and not only in Athens. There are friends of mine in Thessaly, if you wish to go to them, who will value and protect you; and no Thessalian will give you any trouble. Nor can I think you are justified, Socrates, in betraying your own life when you might be saved. This is playing into the hands of your enemies and destroyers. Besides, I say you are betraying your children. You should bring them up and educate them; instead you go away and leave them, and they will have to grow up on their own. If they do not meet with the usual fate of orphans, there will be small thanks to you. No man should bring children into the world who is unwilling to continue their nurture and education. You are choosing the easier part, as I think, not the better and manlier, which you should as one who professes virtue in all his actions. Indeed, I am ashamed not only of you, but also of us, your friends, when I think this entire business of yours will be attributed to our lack of courage. The trial need never have started or might have been brought to another conclusion. The end of it all, which is the crowning absurdity, will seem to have been permitted by us, through cowardice and baseness, who might have saved you. You might have saved yourself, if we had been good for anything, for there was no difficulty in escaping, and we did not see how disgraceful, Socrates, and also miserable all this will be to us as well as to you. Make up your mind then. Or rather, have your mind already made up, for the time of deliberation is over. There is only one thing to be done, which must be done if at all this very night, and which any delay will render all but

impossible. I plead with you therefore, Socrates, to be persuaded by me, and do as I say.

SOC: Dear Crito, your zeal is invaluable if right. If wrong, the greater the zeal the greater the evil. Therefore, we must consider whether these things should be done or not. I am, and always have been, someone who must be guided by reason, whatever the reason may be which, upon reflection, appears to me to be the best. Now that this misfortune has come upon me, I cannot put away my old beliefs. The principles I honored and revered I still honor; and unless we can find other and better principles, I will not agree with you. I would not even if the power of the multitude could inflict many more imprisonments, confiscations, and deaths, frightening us like children with foolish terrors.

What will be the best way of considering the question? Shall I return to your old argument about the opinions of men, some of which should be considered, and others, as we were saying, are not to be considered. Now were we right in maintaining this before I was condemned? And has the argument, which was once good, now proved to be talk for the sake of talking—in fact an amusement only and altogether foolish? That is what I want to consider with your help, Crito: whether, under my present circumstances, the argument appears to be in any way different or not and is to be followed by me or abandoned. That argument, I believe, held by many who claim to be authorities, was to the effect that the opinions of some men are to be considered and of other men not to be considered. Now you, Crito, are not going to die tomorrow—at least, there is no probability of this. You are therefore not likely to be deceived by the circumstances in which you are placed. Tell me, then, whether I am right in saying that some opinions are to be valued and other opinions are not to be valued. I ask you whether I was right in believing this?

CR: Certainly.

SOC: The good opinions are to be believed and not the bad?

CR: Yes.

SOC: And the opinions of the wise are good and the opinions of the foolish are evil?

CR: Certainly.

SOC: And what was said about another matter? Is the gymnastics student supposed to attend to the praise and blame and opinion of every man, or of one man only—his physician or trainer, whoever that is?

CR: Of one man only.

SOC: And he should fear the blame and welcome praise of that one only, and not of the many?

CR: That is clear.

SOC: He should live and train, eat and drink in the way which seems good to his single teacher who has understanding, rather than according to the opinion of all other men put together?

CR: True.

SOC: And if he disobeys and rejects the opinion and approval of the one, and accepts the opinion of the many who have no understanding, will he not suffer evil?

Now, go back and put a star by the best reasons, according to you, for escaping.

On the following pages, underline each of the main points in Socrates' answer to Crito.

CR: Certainly he will.
 SOC: And how will the evil affect the disobedient student?
 CR: Clearly, it will affect his body; that is what is destroyed by the evil.
 SOC: Very good. Is this not true, Crito, of other things which we need not separately consider? In the matter of the just and unjust, the fair and foul, the good and evil, which are the subjects of our present discussion, should we follow the opinion of the many and fear them, or the opinion of the one man who has understanding? Is he the one we ought to fear and honor more than all the rest of the world? If we leave him, we shall destroy and injure that principle in us which may be assumed to be improved by justice and deteriorated by injustice? Is there not such a principle?
 CR: Certainly there is, Socrates.
 SOC: Take a similar case. If, acting under the advice of men who have no understanding, we ruined what is improved by health and destroyed by disease—would life be worth having? You understand I mean the body?
 CR: Yes.
 SOC: Could we live having an evil and corrupted body?
 CR: Certainly not.
 SOC: And will life be worth having, if the soul is crippled, which is improved by justice and harmed by injustice? Do we suppose the soul to be inferior to the body?
 CR: Certainly not.
 SOC: More important, then?
 CR: Far more important.
 SOC: Then, my friend, we must not consider what the many say of us, but what he, the one man who has understanding of the just and unjust will say, and what the truth will say. Therefore you begin in error when you suggest we should consider the opinion of the many about the just and unjust, the good and evil, the honorable and dishonorable, but what if someone says, "But the many can kill us."
 CR: Yes, Socrates, that will clearly be the answer.
 SOC: Still I believe our old argument is unshaken. I would like to know whether I may say the same of another proposition—that not life, but a good life, is to be chiefly valued?
 CR: Yes, that is also true.
 SOC: And a good life is equivalent to a just and honorable one—that is also true?
 CR: Yes, that is true.
 SOC: From these beliefs I am ready to consider whether I should or should not try to escape without the consent of the Athenians. If I am clearly right in escaping, then I will make the attempt, but if not, I will remain here. The other considerations which you mention, of money and loss of reputation and the duty of educating children, are, I fear, only the beliefs of the many, who would be as ready to bring people to life, if they were able, as they are to put them to death. The only question remaining to be considered is whether we shall do right escaping or allowing others to aid our escape and paying them money and thanks or whether we shall not do right. If the latter, then neither

Crito has been wrong because _____

Several of Crito's arguments are dismissed here because _____

death nor any other calamity which may result from my remaining here must be allowed to influence us.
 CR: I think you are right, Socrates. But, how shall we proceed?
 SOC: Let us consider the matter together and either refute me if you can and I will be convinced; or else cease, my dear friend, from repeating to me that I ought to escape against the wishes of the Athenians. I am extremely eager to be persuaded by you, but not against my own better judgment. And now please consider my first position and do your best to answer me.
 CR: I will do my best.
 SOC: Are we to say we are never intentionally to do wrong, or that in one way we should and in another way we should not do wrong? Or is doing wrong always evil and dishonorable, as I was just now saying? Are all our former admissions to be thrown away because of these last few days? Have we, at our age, been earnestly discoursing with one another all our life long only to discover we are no better than children? Or, are we convinced in spite of the opinion of the many and in spite of consequences of the truth of what we said, that injustice is always an evil and dishonor to him who acts unjustly? Shall we agree to that?
 CR: Yes.
 SOC: Then we must do no wrong?
 CR: Certainly not.
 SOC: Nor when injured should we injure in return, as the many imagine. We must injure no one at all?
 CR: Clearly not.
 SOC: Again, Crito, can we do evil?
 CR: Surely not, Socrates.
 SOC: And what of doing evil in return for evil, which is the morality of the many—is that just or not?
 CR: Not just.
 SOC: For doing evil to another is the same as injuring him.
 CR: Very true.
 SOC: Then we ought not to retaliate or render evil for evil to any one, whatever evil we may have suffered from him. But I would have you consider, Crito, whether you really mean what you are saying. For this opinion has never been held, and never will be held, by many people. Those who are agreed and those who are not agreed upon this point have no common ground, and can only despise one another when they see how widely they differ. Tell me, then, whether you agree with my first principle, that neither injury nor retaliation nor returning evil for evil is ever right. Shall that be the premise of our argument? Or do you disagree? For this has been and still is my opinion; but, if you are of another opinion, let me hear what you have to say. If, however, you remain of the same mind as formerly, I will go to the next step.
 CR: You may proceed, for I have not changed my mind.
 SOC: The next step may be put in the form of a question: Ought a man to do what he admits to be right, or ought he to betray the right?
 CR: He ought to do what he thinks right.

A similar Christian belief is _____

At this point, Socrates ends his review of his past beliefs and begins a long, internal dialogue. The major points established thus far are:

From this page until the end, number and underline each new reason Socrates gives Crito for not escaping.

The comparison Socrates makes is between _____ and _____ His point is _____

SOC: But if this is true, what is the application? In leaving the prison against the will of the Athenians, do I wrong anyone? Or do I wrong those whom I ought least to wrong? Do I abandon the principles which were acknowledged by us to be just? What do you say?

CR: I cannot tell, Socrates, because I do not know.

SOC: Then consider the matter in this way—imagine I am about to escape, and the Laws and the State come and interrogate me: "Tell us, Socrates," they say, "what are you doing? Are you going to overturn us—the Laws and the State, as far as you are able? Do you imagine that a State can continue and not be overthrown, in which the decisions of Law have no power, but are set aside and overthrown by individuals?"

What will be our answer, Crito, to these and similar words? Anyone, and especially a clever orator, will have a good deal to say about the evil of setting aside the Law which requires a sentence to be carried out. We might reply, "Yes, but the State has injured us and given an unjust sentence." Suppose I say that?

CR: Very good, Socrates.

SOC: "And was that our agreement with you?" the Law would say, "Or were you to abide by the sentence of the State?" And if I were surprised at their saying this, the Law would probably add: "Answer, Socrates, instead of opening your eyes: you are in the habit of asking and answering questions. Tell us what complaint you have against us which justifies you in attempting to destroy us and the State? In the first place did we not bring you into existence? Your father married your mother by our aid and conceived you. Say whether you have any objection against those of us who regulate marriage?" None, I should reply. "Or against those of us who regulate the system of care and education of children in which you were trained? Were not the Laws, who have the charge of this, right in commanding your father to train you in the arts and exercise?" Yes, I should reply.

"Well then, since you were brought into the world, nurtured and educated by us, can you deny in the first place that you are our child and slave, as your fathers were before you? And if this is true you are not on equal terms with us. Nor can you think you have a right to do to us what we are doing to you. Would you have any right to strike or do any other evil to a father or to your master, if you had one, when you have been struck or received some other evil at his hands? And because we think it is right to destroy you, do you think that you have any right to destroy us in return, and your country so far as you are able? And will you, O expounder of virtue, say you are justified in this? Has a philosopher like you failed to discover your country is more to be valued and higher and holier by far than mother and father or any ancestor, and more regarded in the eyes of the gods and of men of understanding? It should be soothed and gently and reverently entreated when angry, even more than a father, and if not persuaded, it should be obeyed. And when we are punished by the State, whether with imprisonment or whipping, the punishment is to be endured in silence. If the State leads us to wounds or death in battle, we follow as is right; no one can yield or leave his rank, but whether in battle or in a court of law, or in any other place, he must do what

his city and his country order him. Or, he must change their view of what is just. If he may do no violence to his father or mother, much less may he do violence to his country." What answer shall we make to this, Crito? Do the Laws speak truly, or do they not?

CR: I think that they do.

SOC: Then the Laws will say: "Consider, Socrates, if this is true, that in your present attempt you are going to do us wrong. For, after having brought you into the world, nurtured and educated you, and given you and every other citizen a share in every good we had to give, we further give the right to every Athenian, if he does not like us when he has come of age and has seen the ways of the city, he may go wherever else he pleases and take his goods with him. None of us Laws will forbid or interfere with him. Any of you who does not like us and the city, and who wants to go to a colony or to any other city, may go where he likes, and take his possessions with him. But he who has experience of the way we order justice and administer the State, and still remains, has entered into an implied contract to do as we command him. He who disobeys us is, as we maintain, triply wrong; first, because in disobeying us he is disobeying his parents; second, because we are the authors of his education; third, because he has made an agreement with us that he will duly obey our commands. He neither obeys them nor convinces us our commands are wrong. We do not rudely impose our commands but give each person the alternative of obeying or convincing us. That is what we offer and he does neither. These are the sort of accusations to which, as we were saying, Socrates, you will be exposed if you do as you were intending; you, above all other Athenians."

Suppose I ask, why is this? They will justly answer that I above all other men have acknowledged the agreement.

"There is clear proof," they will say, "Socrates, that we and the city were not displeasing to you. Of all Athenians you have been the most constant resident in the city, which, as you never leave, you appear to love. You never went out of the city either to see the games, except once when you went to the Isthmus, or to any other place unless you were on military service; nor did you travel as other men do. Nor had you any curiosity to know other States or their Laws: Your affections did not go beyond us and our State; we were your special favorites and you agreed in our government of you. This is the State in which you conceived your children, which is a proof of your satisfaction. Moreover, you might, if you wished, have fixed the penalty at banishment in the course of the trial—the State which refuses to let you go now would have let you go then. You pretended you preferred death to exile and that you were not grieved at death. And now you have forgotten these fine sentiments and pay no respect to us, the Laws, whom you destroy. You are doing what only a miserable slave would do, running away and turning your back upon the agreements which you made as a citizen. First of all, answer this very question: Are we right in saying you agreed to be governed according to us in deed, and not in word only? Is that true or not?"

How shall we answer that, Crito? Must we not agree?

Find and underline the sentence with three reasons for not escaping.

Continue underlining each new reason for not escaping.

CR: We must, Socrates.

SOC: Then will the Laws say: "You, Socrates, are breaking the agreements which you made with us at your leisure, not in any haste or under any compulsion or deception, but having had 70 years to think of them, during which time you were at liberty to leave the city, if we were not to your liking or if our covenants appeared to you to be unfair. You might have gone either to Lacedaemon or Crete, which you often praise for their good government, or to some other Hellenic or foreign state. You, above all other Athenians, seemed to be so fond of the State and of us, her Laws, that you never left her. The lame, the blind, the maimed were not more stationary in the State than you were. Now you run away and forsake your agreements. Not, Socrates, if you will take our advice; do not make yourself ridiculous by escaping out of the city.

"Just consider, if you do evil in this way, what good will you do either yourself or your friends? That your friends will be driven into exile and lose their citizenship, or will lose their property, is reasonably certain. You yourself, if you fly to one of the neighboring cities, like Thebes or Megara, both of which are well-governed cities, will come to them as an enemy, Socrates. Their government will be against you and all patriotic citizens will cast suspicious eye upon you as a destroyer of the Laws. You will confirm in the minds of the judges the justice of their own condemnation of you. For he who is a corruptor of the Laws is more than likely to be corruptor of the young. Will you then flee from well-ordered cities and virtuous men? Is existence worth having on these terms? Or will you go to these cities without shame and talk to them, Socrates? And what will you say to them? Will you say what you say here about virtue, justice, institutions, and laws being the best things among men. Would that be decent of you? Surely not.

"If you go away from well-governed states to Crito's friends in Thessaly, where there is a great disorder and immorality, they will be charmed to have the tale of your escape from prison, set off with ludicrous particulars of the manner in which you were wrapped in a goatskin or some other disguise and metamorphosed as the fashion of runaways is—that is very likely. But will there be no one to remind you in your old age you violated the most sacred laws from a miserable desire of a little more life? Perhaps not, if you keep them in a good temper. But if they are angry you will hear many degrading things; you will live, but how? As the flatterer of all men and the servant of all men. And doing what? Eating and drinking in Thessaly, having gone abroad in order that you may get a dinner. Where will your fine sentiments about justice and virtue be then? Say that you wish to live for the sake of your children, that you may bring them up and educate them—will you take them into Thessaly and deprive them of Athenian citizenship? Is that the benefit which you would confer upon them? Or are you under the impression that they will be better cared for and educated here if you are still alive, although absent from them because your friends will take care of them? Do you think if you are an inhabitant of Thessaly they will take care of them,

and if you are an inhabitant of the other world they will not take care of them? No, if they who call themselves friends are truly friends, they surely will.

Socrates' most convincing arguments for not escaping were:

"Listen, then, Socrates, to us who have brought you up. Think not of life and children first, and of justice afterwards, but of justice first, that you may be justified before the rulers of the other world. For neither will you nor your children be happier or holier in this life, or happier in another, if you do as Crito bids. Now you depart in innocence, a sufferer and not a doer of evil; a victim, not of the Laws, but of men. But if you escape, returning evil for evil and injury for injury, breaking the agreements which you have made with us, and wronging those whom you ought least to wrong, that is to say, yourself, your friends, your country, and us, we shall be angry with you while you live. Our brethren, the Laws in the other world, will receive you as an enemy because they will know you have done your best to destroy us. Listen, then, to us and not to Crito."

This is the voice which I seem to hear murmuring in my ears, like the sound of a divine flute in the ears of the mystic. That voice, I say, is humming in my ears and prevents me from hearing any other. I know anything more which you may say will be useless. Yet speak, if you have anything to say.

CR: I have nothing to say, Socrates.

SOC: Then let me follow what seems to be the will of the god.

THINKING ABOUT THE CRITO

1. Think of the *Crito* as falling into three large parts. The first part introduces the two main characters and states Crito's arguments for escaping. The second part reviews some of Socrates' past philosophical principles. The last part applies these principles to his present situation and presents arguments for not escaping.

Looking back at the notes in the margin, I see the first part ends on about page _____.

What we learn about the differences between Socrates and Crito is _____

_____. Crito's main arguments for escaping are _____

_____. What many of these arguments have in common is _____

_____. Thus, we see Crito is a person who _____

_____. The principles Socrates states in the second part of the dialogue are his beliefs that _____

_____. In the third section he speaks to himself in the voice of the Laws. The points he makes against escaping are _____

2. Socrates asks, "When injured should we injure in return . . . ?" To what two injuries does he refer?

The injury that has already occurred is _____

_____. The other injury will be _____

3. Assume you are Crito. Offer your best single argument to Socrates for escaping. Remember, you will not be successful if you try to get him to violate his principles.

I would say that there is at least one more argument in favor of your escape. I will state it briefly and then expand it.

In essence, my argument is _____

_____. My reasons for saying this are _____

_____. What you have not realized is _____

_____. If you escape, you would not be returning an injury for an injury because _____

_____. Nor would you be harming your soul as you fear because _____

_____. Even though the Laws are, in some sense, your guardians and parents, what you should have replied to them is _____

_____. I can even find evidence for my view from your own life. When I look at what you said in the *Apology*, I see _____