

In Plato's *Crito*, Plato presents a dialogue between Crito and the death-sentenced Socrates wherein Crito tries to persuade Socrates to escape from prison. Crito coerces Socrates to use his help without any apprehension. He is worried not only for Socrates' well-being but also for the people's opinion of himself, as he thinks that they would assume he could have aided Socrates' path to freedom with his extensive resources but was unwilling. In turn, Socrates presents counterarguments explaining how a social contract refrains him from being unjust. Socrates also uses the voice of the Law to insinuate that being just puts him on a pedestal in the afterlife regardless of what happens to him in the abode of mortals: "Socrates, don't put a higher value on children, on life, or anything else than on what's just, so that when you reach Hades you may have all this to offer as your defence before the authorities there." (*Crito*, 54b). I argue that he was right in choosing to uphold his legal obligation to justice to remain in line with his virtues even if it required the ultimate sacrifice of his life.

Socrates' moral stance of not trying to escape from prison remains unaffected throughout his dissension with Crito. He is rather trying to show Crito how his perception of virtue is fallible. Crito starts by insisting that he should be concerned about the public majority's opinion as they bear decisive power. This is displayed by Socrates' tragic situation as his death sentence was a direct result of the majority's influence. In response, Socrates asserts that since the majority cannot make someone wise or unwise, it would be futile to be wary of their views (*Crito*, 44b). He mentions that "We should not give so much thought to what the majority of people will say about us, but think instead of what the person who understands just and unjust things will say—the

one man and the truth itself." (*Crito*,48a). The consequence of the majority's participation in his trial's adverse result was purely incidental.

Socrates declines to give any weight to the voice of the majority regardless of whether it favours him, and rightly so. He does not associate the tag of being wise with anyone without proper examination. This includes his friend Crito, who was hoping that he would reverse his public image and reconsider his choice. While Crito may not fall under the "majority" class of people, being true to his principles, he does not hold any bias for Crito's arguments. There is no doubt that when regarding a particular interest, we take suggestions from only those people who are more experienced and have a better understanding of that interest. So why must one not do the same when the interest in question is the satisfaction of the soul? Being unjust keeps Socrates stay physically alive but his soul would be tormented by the violation of righteousness, something he values above all. Hence, it would be naïve to indulge in the consensus of the same majority that readily put him to death without thinking.

Crito subsequently attempts to change Socrates' mind by accusing him of choosing an easy way out and betraying his children. He believes that "Either one shouldn't have children at all, or one ought to see their upbringing and education through to the end." (*Crito* 44d). He continues his accusations by questioning Socrates' ideals implying that he is being a coward. While it may seem that he is overly critical of Socrates' choice, his intentions are noble. Socrates understands this and applauds his enthusiasm. He constructs plausible scenes that would happen in the future once he escapes. Since he would be considered an outlaw in Athens, he and his family would have to flee to another city. There he would have to raise his children as foreigners, and they would have to live with fear and resentment from all those who associate them with

their father. Now, if he decided to leave Athens alone, it would be expected that his friends raise his children. But would they not be expected to do the same should he die? Surely, if they were truly worthy of being his friends, he could trust them to do it (*Crito*,54b).

It is hard to find Socrates' arguments convincing in this instance as they could be construed as excuses to escape the title of a bad father. However, if the logical relevance of his points is given higher precedence, it is easier to identify his selflessness. Had he indeed escaped from prison to care for his children and flee to another city with them, not only would they have to live with a sword hanging over their heads, but they would also be subjected to an undignified standard of living. Would they enjoy and flourish in such conditions? If he fled alone leaving them in the care of his friends back in Athens, would it not be the same as deserting his kids and making it wearying for them to hold him in higher regard as he would still be a criminal? Thus, while it may seem like a credible short-term approach, in the long run, his being a fugitive would be detrimental to the quality of his children's life. On the other hand, if he went through with his death sentence, his children would still be raised by his close friends in the city they consider their home. His sons would be honoured with a father who never went against the judicial system, even when he had the opportunity to do so. The majority's opinion on his character might still be divided long after his death but why should his children be swayed by the very crowd that condemned their father to an unnatural end without any well-founded reasons?

The fundamental structure of Socrates' case building revolves around his belief system regarding justice. Socrates questions Crito and asks him if, "It's never right to do injustice, or to do injustice in return, or to retaliate with bad treatment when one has been treated badly."

(*Crito*,49d). He then uses personification of the Laws of Athens and the city community to illuminate the reasoning behind his choice in a way that would prevent Crito from having disagreements. He includes how the Law would question him if he were to go ahead with the escape plan: “You went abroad less often than the handicapped people. Hence it’s clear that you, more than any other Athenian, have been consistently satisfied with your city and with us Laws—for who would be satisfied by a city but not by its laws? Won’t you, then, stand by your agreements now?” (*Crito*, 53a). Also, he would be returning injustice for injustice in a shameful way, breaking agreements and commitments with the law and doing bad things to those he should least of all treat in that way (*Crito*,54c). Crito falls for this rigorous method of questioning. He finally accepts the inaccuracies of his thinking and decides to put an end to his pressing of Socrates as it would be in vain.

The Socratic questioning can be seen in its purest form in the conclusion as Socrates slowly brings Crito onto the same path of reasoning as his. Socrates had resided in Athens all his life, never once casting any doubt of integrity on its laws. If he were to leave the city now, he would have wronged the laws and the men that stood behind the decision of his death sentence. Socrates has already clearly stated his attitude toward the majority’s perception, so truly, he would only be waging a declaration of injustice against the laws alone. Thence, this would go directly against his stubborn yet consistent standing on being right, and he would end up being an undiluted hypocrite, something he resents. I would also add that if Crito, a very dear and concerned friend, accepted Socrates’ choice to have a meeting with Hades, it should make it much more compelling for a person with no attachment to him to be more than convinced by it.

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