

The Crito - between public and private discourse

In the *Apology* Socrates seeks to defend his actions as a citizen of Athens - in particular he must justify his pursuit of wisdom as a public profession which has stirred up questions regarding the accepted ways and aims of life. He must address the specific charges of the impiety of “introducing new Gods to the city” and of the corruption of the youths who were influenced by his practice of philosophic questioning.

The trial before a jury of 500 citizens, drawn by lot from those who volunteered to stand as jurymen, gave Socrates a further opportunity to exhort his fellow citizens to the pursuit of truth and virtue, so that what might been a passive defence of his actions becomes an examination of the collective assumptions and aims of the citizens of Athens. He says:

Perhaps, however, someone will say, Are you not ashamed, Socrates, to have applied yourself to a study, through which you are now in danger of being put to death? To this person I shall justly reply, That you do not speak well, O man, if you think that life or death ought to be regarded by the man who is capable of being useful though but in a small degree; and that he ought not to consider this alone when he acts, whether he acts justly, or unjustly, and like a good or a bad man. 28b

He reminds them of the story of Achilles who, warned that if he should revenge his friend's death and kill Hector he would himself shortly thereafter die, gladly chose to act justly and die rather than act the coward, and be a “burden to the earth.” He continues:

I therefore, O Athenians, should have acted in a dire manner, if, when those rulers which you had placed over me had assigned me a rank at [the Battle of] Potidea, at Amphipolis, and at Delium, I should then have remained where they stationed me, like any other person, and should have encountered the danger of death; but that, when Divinity has ordered, as I think and apprehend, that I ought to live philosophizing, and exploring myself and others, I should here through fear of death or any other thing desert my rank. For this would be dire: and then in reality any one might justly bring me to a court of justice, and accuse me of not believing in the Gods, in consequence of not obeying the oracle, fearing death, and thinking myself to be wise when I am not. For to dread death, O Athenians, is nothing else than to appear to be wise, without being so: since it is for a man to appear to know that which he does not know. For no one knows but that death may be to man the greatest of goods; but they dread it, as if they well knew that it is the greatest of evils. And how is it possible that this should not be a most disgraceful ignorance, I mean for a man to suspect that he has a knowledge of that of which he is ignorant? But I, O Athenians, differ perhaps in this from the multitude of men; and if I should say that I am wiser than someone in anything, it would be in this, that not having a sufficient knowledge of the things in Hades, I also think that I have not this knowledge. But I know that to act unjustly, and to be disobedient to one more excellent, whether God or man, is evil and base. I shall never, therefore, fear and avoid things which for all I know may be good, before those evils which I know to be evils. 28e
29a
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We should notice how careful Socrates is to avoid claiming certainty regarding the results of a human being dying - he is speaking to a jury formed from men largely unversed in philosophic learning, and who rely of the evidence of their senses and the appearance of things. In such circumstances a case is supported by probability rather than certainty, since the effects of death upon the unseen soul - if such exists - are hidden from mortal eyes. Nevertheless he is sure that even in this life the benefits of questioning accepted opinions and ways of life are clear, as is one's alignment with justice:

O best of men, since you are an Athenian, of a city the greatest and the most celebrated for wisdom and strength, are you not ashamed of being attentive to the means of acquiring riches, glory and honour, in great abundance, but to bestow no care nor any consideration upon prudence¹ and truth, nor how your soul may subsist in the most excellent condition?. . . . Be well assured then, if you put me to death, being such a man as I say I am, you will not injure me more than yourselves. For neither [my accusers] Melitus nor Anytus injures me; for neither can they. Indeed, I think it is not lawful for a better to be injured by a worse man. He may indeed perhaps condemn me to death, or exile, or disgrace; and he or some other may consider these as mighty evils. I however do not think so; but, in my opinion, it is much more an evil to act as he now acts, who endeavours to put a man to death unjustly. Now, therefore, O Athenians, it is far from my intention to defend myself, (as someone may think,) but I thus speak for your sake, lest in condemning me you should sin against the gift of Divinity. For, if you should put me to death, you will not easily find such another (though the comparison is ridiculous) whom Divinity has united to this city as to a great and generous horse, but sluggish through his magnitude, and requiring to be excited by a gadfly. In like manner Divinity appears to have united such a one as I am to the city, that I might not cease exciting, persuading and reproving each of you, and everywhere sitting among you through the whole day. Such another man, therefore, will not easily arise among you. And if you will be persuaded by me, you will spare me. Perhaps, however, you, being indignant, like those who are awakened from sleep, will slap me, and, being persuaded by Anytus, will inconsiderately put me to death. Should this be the case, you will pass the rest of your time in sleep, unless Divinity should send some other person to take care of you.

Towards the end of his speech, after he has been condemned to death Socrates makes this closing remark:

You, therefore, O my judges, ought to entertain good hopes with respect to death, and to be firmly persuaded of this one thing, that to a good man nothing is evil, neither while living nor when dead, and that his concerns are never neglected by the Gods. . . . But it is now time to depart hence, - for me indeed to die, but for you to live. Which of us however will arrive at a better thing, is profoundly hidden except to Divinity.

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The question of life and death is much more thoroughly considered in the *Phaedo* in a philosophic conversation which Plato requires us to view as a second trial:

Simmias: . . . And Cebes appears to me to direct his discourse to you, because you so easily endure to leave us, and those beneficent rulers the Gods, as you yourself confess.

Socrates: You speak justly; for I think you mean that I ought to make my defence as if I was upon my trial.

Simmias: By all means.

Socrates: Be it so then: and I shall endeavour that this my apology may appear more reasonable to you than it did to my judges.

¹ Meaning *intellectual prudence*, which is the contemplation of the forms contained in intellect. - Taylor.

The character of this defence is very different from his first one: Damascius says, “His [second] defence will carry more conviction with his disciples than with the judges, because here he will be able to use *instruction* to convince them, while with the first he had to rely on *persuasion*.” And Olympiodorus further points out, “... before the judges, the point under discussion was a particular life, and particular points can be proved only by inquiry; here [in the *Phaedo*], on the contrary, it is life in general” - and the general is more easily referred to principles from which certainty stems. 2, 16

The *Apology* shows the wise and brave Socrates playing his part in the world - in terms of the scale of virtues as understood by the Platonic tradition, unfolding the political or civic virtues in which the soul reasons as best she can in relation to her non-rational externals. But the *Phaedo* takes us into the internal ordering of the soul herself and the exercise of the cathartic virtues. We can see the change of focus in the following words of Socrates which come at a point at which the reasoning followed by the assembled company seems to have failed:

In the first place, therefore, we should be very careful against admitting an opinion, that no reasoning appears to be valid; but we should much rather think that we are not yet in a healthy condition, and that we ought vigorously and cheerfully to study how to be well. And this indeed ought to be the case with you and others, for the sake of the whole remainder of your life, but with me, for the sake of death itself; as there is danger at the present time, lest I should not behave philosophically, but, like those who are perfectly unskilled, contentiously. For such as these, when they controvert any particular, are not at all concerned how that *truly subsists* about which they dispute; but are alone anxious, that what they have established may *appear* to the persons present to be true. And I seem to myself at present to differ alone in this respect from such as these: for I am not solicitous that my discourse may appear true to those who are present (except just as it may happen in passing), but that it may appear to be so in the most eminent degree to me myself. 90e
91a

During the central part of the dialogue Socrates leads his fellow philosophers through a complex series of proofs of the immortality of the soul and arrives at a conclusion with a degree of certainty far beyond that of the *Apology*. Socrates himself is sufficiently convinced to say,

But it is just, my friends, to think that if the soul is immortal, it requires our care and attention, not only for the present time, in which we say it lives, but likewise with a view to the whole of time: and it will now appear, that he who neglects it must subject himself to a most dreadful danger. For, if death were the liberation of the whole man, it would be an unexpected gain to the wicked to be liberated at the same time from the body, and from their vices together with their soul: but now, since the soul appears to be immortal, no other flight from evils, and no other safety remains for it, than in becoming the best and most prudent possible. For when the soul arrives at Hades, it will possess nothing but discipline and education, which are said to be of the greatest advantage or detriment to the dead, in the very beginning of their progression thither. For thus it is said: that the daemon² of each person, which was allotted to him while living, endeavours to lead each to a certain place, where it is necessary that all of them, being collected together, after they have been judged, should proceed to Hades, together with their leader, who is ordered to conduct them from hence thither. But there receiving the allotments proper to their condition, and abiding for a necessary time, another leader brings them back hither again, in many and long periods of time 107c
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² Or the guardian daemon who guides the soul through the life and death it has chosen before its descent into the earthly body.

THE CRITO

The Crito is a short dialogue set between the *Apology* (where Socrates is tried and condemned by the Athenian jury of 500) and the *Phaedo* (in which its sentence of death is carried out). Naturally, then, there are references to what was said by Socrates at his trial – that he was unwilling to stop philosophizing and asking awkward questions, that he doubted the understanding of those who did not examine issues carefully, and so on. The dialogue is rarely studied but throws up two very important questions for us to consider: Firstly, if opinion is useful, from whence does its usefulness arise? We will look at this question in the first session having read the first half of the dialogue. Secondly, what is the relation of the individual to society and its laws? Socrates conjures up for us personifications of Athens and Athenian Law in order that he can be cross-examined by them and thereby show Crito the necessity of due reverence to their dispensations. No doubt Socrates' assertions will stimulate our discussion of them in the second evening after we have read the second half of the dialogue.

Persons of the dialogue: Socrates and Crito; scene - The Prison of Socrates

43a Soc. Why came you at this early hour, Crito? Or is it not yet morning?

Cri. It is.

Soc. But what time of the morning is it?

Cri. It is now the break of day.

Soc. I wonder how the keeper of the prison came to admit you.

Cri. He is accustomed to me, Socrates, in consequence of my frequently coming hither; and he is also in a certain respect under obligations to me.

Soc. Did you come just now, or some time ago?

Cri. It is a considerable time since I came.

b Soc. But why did you not immediately call me, and not sit down in silence?

Cri. Not so, by Zeus, Socrates; nor should I myself be willing to be for so long a time awake and in sorrow. But I have for some time admired you, on perceiving how sweetly you slept. And I designedly did not call you, that you might continue in that pleasant condition. Indeed I have often and formerly through the whole of your life considered you as happy on account of your manners, but far more so in the present calamity, because you bear it so easily and mildly.

c Soc. But it would be absurd, Crito, if a man of my age were to be indignant when it is necessary for him to die.

Cri. And yet others, Socrates, equally old, when they have been involved in such-like calamities, have despite their age been indignant with their present fortune.

Soc. It is so. But why did you come to me so early?

Cri. I come, Socrates, bearing a message not unpleasant to you, as it appears to me, but bitter and weighty to me and to all your associates; and which I indeed shall bear most heavily.

- d Soc. What is it? Is it the ship come from Delos,¹ on the arrival of which it is necessary I should die?

Cri. Not yet; but it appears to me, from what certain persons coming from Sunium have announced, and who left it there, that it will arrive today. From these messengers, therefore, it is evident that it will be here today; and consequently it will be necessary for you, Socrates, to die tomorrow.

- 44a Soc. But with good fortune, Crito: and if it please the Gods, be it so. Yet I do not think that it will arrive here today.

Cri. Whence do you infer this?

Soc. I will tell you. For on the day after, or on the very day in which the ship arrives, it is necessary that I should die.

Cri. Those that have power over these things say so.

Soc. I do not, therefore, think it will come this, but the next day. But I infer this from a certain dream which I saw this night a little before you came; and you appear very opportunely not to have disturbed me.

Cri. But what was that dream?

- b Soc. A certain woman, beautiful, of a pleasing aspect and in white raiment, seemed to approach, and calling me to say, The third day hence, O Socrates, you will arrive at the fertile Phthia.²

Cri. What a strange dream, Socrates!

Soc. Manifest however, as it appears to me, O Crito.

Cri. Very much so, as it seems. But, O blessed Socrates, be now persuaded by me, and save yourself. For, if you die, not one calamity only will befall me; but, apart from being deprived of you, an associate so necessary as I never have found any other to be, those who do not well know me and you, will think that I might have

¹ See the *Phædo* 58a-c – Socrates was condemned to death during the festival which celebrated the journey of Theseus to save the sacrificial youths and maidens from the Minotaur. Theseus' old ship was sent from Athens to Delos every year as part of the festival which ended only when the ship returned. During this time the state was forbidden to execute anyone and thus it was that Socrates spent much time in prison awaiting his execution.

² What this woman said to Socrates in a dream is taken from the ninth book of the *Iliad*, and belongs to the speech of Achilles on the embassy to him from Agamemnon. As Socrates applied what is here said in the dream to a returning to his true country, the intelligible world, he confirms the explanation of the Trojan war which we have given from Proclus in the Notes on the *Phædrus*. [That the war symbolised the descent of the soul into the material world and its attempt to recover true beauty in her re-ascent to the eternal regions]. TT

saved you if I had been willing to spend my money, but that I neglected to do so.
 c Though what can be more base than such an opinion, by which I should appear to value riches more than my friends? For the multitude will not be persuaded that you were unwilling to depart hence, though we endeavoured to effect your escape.

Soc. But why, O blessed Crito, should we so much respect the opinion of the multitude? For the most worthy men, whose opinion ought rather to be regarded, will think these things to have been so transacted as they were.

d Cri. Nevertheless you see, Socrates, that it is necessary to pay attention to the opinion of the multitude. For the present circumstances now evince that the multitude can effect not the smallest of evils, but nearly the greatest, if anyone is defamed by them.

Soc. I wish, O Crito, the multitude could effect the greatest evils, that they might also accomplish the greatest good: for then it would be well. But now they can do neither of these. For they can neither make a man wise, not destitute of wisdom; but they do whatever casually takes place.

e Cri. Let these things be so. But answer me, Socrates, whether your concern for me and the rest of your associates prevents you from escaping hence, lest we should be molested by malicious persons, as having fraudulently taken you from hence, and be forced either to lose all our property, or a great sum of money, or to suffer something
 45a else beside this? For, if you fear any such thing, bid farewell to it. For we shall be just in saving you from this danger, and, if it were requisite, from one even greater than this. But be persuaded by me, and do not act otherwise.

Soc. I pay attention to these things, Crito, and also to many others.

b Cri. Do not, therefore, dread these things. For those who have agreed to save you, and to take you from hence, demand no great sum for this purpose. And, in the next place, do you not see how poor your persecutors are, and that on this account your liberty may be purchased at a small expense? My property too, which I think is sufficient, is at your service. And if, out of regard to me, you do not think fit to accept my offer, these guests here are readily disposed to pay what may be necessary. One also among them, Simmias the Theban, has bought with him a sum of money sufficient for this purpose. Cebes, too, and very many others are ready to do the same: so that, as I said, neither fearing these things, should you hesitate to save yourself, not should you be troubled on leaving the city (as in court you said you should) from not knowing how to conduct yourself. For in many other places,
 c wherever you may go, you will be beloved. And if you are disposed to go to Thessaly, you will there find my guests, who will pay you every attention, and will render your abode there so secure, that no one in Thessaly will molest you. Besides this, Socrates, neither do you appear to me to attempt a just thing, in betraying when you might save yourself; and in endeavouring to promote the earnest wishes of your enemies, who strive to destroy you. To this I may also add, that you appear to me to betray your own children, who are dependent on you to maintain and educate; and, as far as pertains to you, leave them to the guidance of chance; though

- d it is likely that such things will happen to them as orphans are wont to experience. However, either it is not proper to beget children, or it is requisite to labour in rearing and instructing them when begotten. But you appear to me to have chosen the most indolent mode of conduct; though it is proper that you should choose such things as a good and brave man would adopt, especially as you profess to have
- e made virtue the object of your attention through the whole of life. I am, therefore, ashamed both for you, and those familiars who are our associates as well as yours, lest the whole affair concerning you should appear to have been accomplished through a certain cowardice on our part. And in the first place, your standing a trial which might have been prevented; in the next place, your defence; and, in the last
- 46a place, the extremity to which you are now brought, will be placed to the account of our viciousness and cowardice, and will be considered as so many ridiculous circumstances which might have been avoided, if we had exerted ourselves even in a trifling degree. See, therefore, O Socrates, whether these things, besides being evil, will not also be disgraceful both to you and us. Advise then with yourself quickly, though indeed there is no time for consultation; for on the following night all this must be done. But, if we delay, it will be impossible to effect your escape. By all means, therefore, be persuaded by me, Socrates, and do not in any respect otherwise.
- b Soc. My dear Crito, your eagerness is very commendable, if it is rightly directed; but if not, by how much the greater it is, by so much is it the more blameable. It is necessary, therefore, to consider whether these things ought to be done or not. For I am a man of that kind, not only now but always, who acts in obedience to that reason which appears to me on mature deliberation to be the best. And the reasons which I have formerly adopted, I am not able now to reject in my present fortune,
- c but they nearly appear to me to be similar: and I venerate and honour the same principles as formerly; so that, unless we have anything better to adduce at present than these, be well assured that I shall not comply with your request, not though the power of the multitude should endeavour to terrify us like children, by threatening more bonds and deaths, and ablations of property.

Cri. How, therefore, may we consider these things in the best manner?

- Soc. If, in the first place, we examine that which you said concerning opinions, considering whether it was well said by us or not, that to some opinions we ought to
- d pay attention, and to others not; or rather indeed, before it was necessary that I should die, it was well said, but now it becomes evident that it was asserted for the sake of discussion, though in reality it was merely a jest and a trifle. I desire, however, O Crito, to consider, in common with you, whether that assertion appears to me in my present condition to be different, or the same, and whether that assertion appears to me in my present condition to be different, or the same, and whether we shall bid farewell to or be persuaded by it. But thus I think it is every
- e where said by those who appear to say any thing pertinently, that, as I just now asserted of the opinions which men opine, some ought to be very much attended to, and others not. By the Gods, Crito, does not this appear to you to be well said? For you, so far as relates to human power, are out of danger of dying tomorrow, and

such a calamity as the present will not seduce you into a false decision. Consider then: does it not appear to you to have been asserted correctly, that it is not fit to reverence all the opinions of men, but that some should be honoured and others not? Nor yet the opinions of all men, but those of some and not those of others? What do you say? Are not these things well said?

Cri. Well.

Soc. Are not worthy opinions, therefore, to be honoured, but base opinions not?

Cri. They are.

Soc. And are not worthy opinions those of wise men; but base opinions those of the unwise?

Cri. Undoubtedly.

b Soc. Come then, let us again consider how things of this kind were asserted. Whether does he who is conversant in gymnastic exercises pay attention to the praise and blame and opinion of every man, or of that one man alone who is a physician or trainer of gymnasts?

Cri. Of that one alone.

Soc. Is it not, therefore, proper that he should fear the blame and embrace the praise of that one, but not the praise and blame of the multitude?

Cri. Evidently.

Soc. In this manner, therefore, he ought to act and exercise himself, and also to eat and drink, which appears fit to the one who presides and knows, rather than in that which may appear to be proper to all others.

Cri. Certainly.

c Soc. Be it so. But if he is disobedient to that one, and disregards his opinion and his praise, but honours the opinion and praise of the multitude, who know nothing, will he not suffer some evil?

Cri. How is it possible he should not?

Soc. But what is this evil, whether does it tend, and to which of the things pertaining to him who is disobedient?

Cri. Evidently to his body, for this it corrupts.

d Soc. You speak well. We must form the same conclusion, therefore, Crito, in other things, that we may not run though all of them. With respect, therefore, to things just and unjust, base and beautiful, good and evil, and which are now the subjects of our consultation, whether ought we to follow the opinion of the multitude, and to dread it, or that of one man if there is anyone knowing in these things, whom we ought to reverence and fear rather than all others; to whom if we are not obedient, we shall corrupt and injure that which becomes better by the just, but is destroyed by the unjust? Or is this nothing?

Cri. I think, Socrates, we ought to follow the opinion of that one.

- e Soc. Come then, if not being persuaded by the opinion of those that are judges, we destroy that which becomes better by health, but is corrupted by disease, can we live after this destruction? But is not this very thing of which we are speaking the body?

Cri. Yes.

Soc. Can we, therefore, live after the body is depraved and corrupted?

Cri. By no means.

- 48a Soc. But can we live when that is corrupted which is injured by injustice, but benefited by justice? Or shall we think that part of us, whatever it may be, about which justice and injustice subsist, is less important than the body?

Cri. By no means.

Soc. It is, therefore, more honourable.

Cri. By far.

Soc. We should not, therefore, O best of men, be so very much concerned about what the multitude say of us, but what that one man who knows what is just and unjust, and what truth itself is, asserts respecting us. So that you did not act rightly at first, in introducing the opinion of the multitude concerning things just, beautiful and good, and the contraries of these, as that to which we ought to pay attention. Though someone may say that the multitude are able to destroy us.

Cri. Someone, Socrates, may indeed say so.

- b Soc. True. But, O wonderful man, the argument we have just finished seems to me still much the same as before: and again consider whether this is still granted by us, that we are not to admit the merely living, but living well, to be a thing of the greatest consequence.

Cri. It is granted.

Soc. And is this also granted, or not, that it is the same thing to live well, beautifully, and justly?

Cri. It is.

- c Soc. From what has been assented to, therefore, this must be considered, whether it is just for me to endeavour to depart hence, the Athenians not dismissing me, or whether it is not just. And if it should appear to be just indeed, we should endeavour to accomplish it; but if not, we must bid farewell to the attempt. For as to the considerations which you adduce concerning money, opinion, and the education of children, see, Crito, whether these are not in reality the reflections of the vulgar, who rashly put men to death, and if it were in their power would recall them to life, and this without being at all guided by intellect. But by us, since reason requires it, nothing else is to be considered than as we just now said, whether we shall act justly in giving money and thanks to those who may lead me hence; or whether in reality, both we that are led from hence and those that lead us, shall not in all these things

d act unjustly. And if it should appear that we in so doing shall act unjustly, we must by no means pay attention to these things, rather than to the consideration whether we shall do anything unjustly, not even if it should be necessary for us to die, staying here and being quiet, or to suffer anything else whatever.

Cri. You appear to me, Socrates, to speak well; but see what is to be done.

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e Soc. Let us consider, O good man, in common; and if you can in any respect contradict what I say, contradict me, and I will assent to you; but if you cannot, cease, O blessed man, to repeat often to me the same thing, that I ought to depart hence, though the Athenians are unwilling. For I shall think it a great thing if you can persuade me thus to act, but not if you attempt this contrary to my will. See then, whether the beginning of this consideration satisfies you, and endeavour to answer the interrogation in such a way as you especially think it proper.

Cri. I will endeavour.

49a Soc. Shall we say then, that we should by no means willingly act unjustly? Or may we in a certain respect act unjustly, and in a certain respect not? Or is to act unjustly by no means neither good nor beautiful, as we have often confessed before, and as we just now said? Or are all those things which we formerly assented to dissipated in these few days; and has it for some time been concealed from us, that though we are so old, yet in seriously discoursing with each other, we have in no respect differed from children? Or is what we used to say most true, whether the multitude admit it or not? And whether it be necessary that we should suffer things still more grievous, or such as are milder than these, at the same time shall we say that to act unjustly is evil and base to him who thus acts?

Cri. We shall say so.

Soc. By no means, therefore, ought we to act unjustly.

Cri. We ought not.

Soc. Neither, therefore, ought he who is injured to return the injury, as the multitude think, since it is by no means proper to act unjustly.

c Cri. So it appears.

Soc. But what then? Is it proper to do evil to any one, O Crito, or not?

Cri. It is not proper, Socrates.

Soc. But what? Is it just to repay evil with evil, as the multitude say, or is it not just?

Cri. By no means.

Soc. For he who does evil to men, differs in no respect from him who acts unjustly.

Cri. Your assertion is true.

- d Soc. Neither, therefore, is it proper to return an injury, nor to do evil to any man, however you may be injured by him. But be careful, Crito, while you acknowledge these things, that you do not assent to them contrary to your opinion. For I know that these things appear to and are opined by very few. But those to whom these things appear, and those to whom they do not, disagree with each other in their decisions; and it is necessary that these should despise each other, while they look to each other's deliberations. Do you therefore consider, and very diligently, whether it thus appears to you in common with me, and whether deliberating we should begin from this starting point - that it is never right either to do an injury, or to return an injury, or when suffering evil to revenge it by doing evil in return; or, whether you
- e will depart and not agree with us in this principle. For it thus appears to me both formerly and now; but if it in any respect appears otherwise to you, speak and inform me. And if you agree with what has been said above, hear what follows.

Cri. But I do agree and accord with you. Speak, therefore.

Soc. I will say then that which is consequent to this, or rather I will ask you, whether when a man has promised to do things that are just, he ought to do them, or break his promise.

Cri. He ought to do them.

- 50a Soc. From these things then thus consider. If we should depart hence without the consent of the city, shall we do evil to certain persons, and those such as we ought not in the smallest degree to injure, or shall we not? And shall we acquiesce in those things which we assented to as being just, or shall we not?

Cri. I cannot reply to your question, Socrates: for I do not understand it.

- Soc. But thus consider. If to us, intending to escape from hence (or however we may call it) the Laws and the Republic should present themselves in a body, and thus address us, - Tell us, O Socrates, what is it you intend to do? Do you conceive that by this thing which you attempt, you will destroy anything else than, as far as you
- b are able, us the Laws, and the whole city? Or does it appear to you to be possible for that city to subsist and not be subverted, in which Justice is not only without strength, but is likewise divested of its authority and corrupted by private persons? - What should we say, Crito, to these things, and to others of a similar kind? For much might be said, and particularly by orators, on the subversion of that law which
- c provides that sentences once passed shall not be infringed. Shall we say to them that the city has not passed an equitable sentence upon us? Shall we say this, or something else?

Cri. This, by Zeus, Socrates.

Soc. Will not the Laws then thus address us? O Socrates, has it not been admitted by us and you, that you should acquiesce in the sentence which the city has passed? If, therefore, we should wonder at the Laws thus speaking, perhaps they would say, Be not surprised, O Socrates, at what we have asserted, but answer, since you are accustomed both to interrogate and reply. For what is the charge against us and the

d city, for which you endeavour to destroy us? Did we not first beget you? And was it not through us that your father married your mother, and planted you? Tell us, therefore, whether you blame these laws of ours concerning marriage as improper? I should say I do not blame them. But do you blame those laws concerning the nurture and education of children in which you were yourself instructed? Or did not the laws framed for this purpose order in a becoming manner when they commanded your father to instruct you in music and gymnastic? I should say they

e ordered well. Since then we begot and nourished and educated you, can you deny that both you and your progenitors are our offspring and servants? And if this be the case, do you think that there is an equality of justice between us and you,³ and that it is just for you to attempt to do those things to us which we endeavour to do to you? Or will you admit that there is no equality of justice between you and your father, or master, if you happen to have either of them, so that you are not to return

51a to these any evil you may suffer from them, nor, when they reproach you, contradict them, nor, when they strike you, strike them again, nor do many other things of a similar nature; but that against your country and the Laws it is lawful for you to act in this manner, so that if we endeavour to destroy you, thinking it to be just, you also should endeavour, as far as you are able, to destroy in return, us the Laws and your country, and should say that in so doing you act justly, - you who in reality make virtue the object of your care? Or, are you so wise as to be ignorant that your country is more honourable, venerable and holy, than your mother and father, and

b all the rest of your progenitors, and ranks higher both among the Gods and among men endowed with intellect? That it is also more necessary for a man to venerate, obey and assent to his country, when conducting itself with severity, than to his father? Likewise that he should be persuaded by it, and do what it orders? That he should quietly suffer, if it orders him to suffer? And that, if it commands him to be beaten, or confined in bonds, or sends him to battle to be wounded or slain, he should do these things, and that it is just to comply? And that he should neither

e decline nor recede from nor desert his rank; but in war, in a court of justice, and everywhere, the commands of the city and his country should be obeyed; or he should persuade his country to that which is naturally just; but that it is not holy to offer violence either to a mother or a father, and much less to one's country? - What shall we say to these things, Crito? Shall we acknowledge that the Laws speak the truth or not?

Cri. To me it appears that they do.

Soc. Consider, therefore, O Socrates, perhaps the Law will say, whether our assertion is true, that your present attempt against us is unjust. For we are the authors of your

³ Thomas Taylor notes here, "wholes in the order of nature are more excellent than parts; and in consequence of this, as being more honourable, there is no reciprocity of obligation between the two." That is to say that the part exists for the sake of the whole, but the whole does not exist for the sake of the part: thus the body willingly sacrifices particular tissues when infected in order that the whole may survive – but the reverse is not so. Likewise in nature individual animals expose themselves to danger and death to ensure the species survives.

birth, we nourished, we educated you, imparting both to you and all the other
 d citizens all the good in our power, at the same time proclaiming, that every Athenian
 who is willing has the liberty of departing wherever he pleases, with all his property,
 if after having explored and seen the affairs of the city, and us the Laws, we should
 not be constituted according to his wishes. Nor does any one of us the Laws impede
 or forbid any one of you from migrating into some colony, or any other place, with
 e all his property, if we and the city do not please him. But, on the other hand, if any
 one of you continues to live here after he has seen the manner in which we
 administer justice, and govern the city in other particulars, we now say, that he in
 reality acknowledges to us, that he will do such things as we may command. We
 also say, that he who is not obedient is triply unjust, because he is disobedient to his
 begetters, and to those by whom he was educated; and because, having promised to
 be persuaded by us, he is neither persuaded, nor does he persuade us, if we do
 anything improperly; though at the same time we only propose, and do not fiercely
 52a command him to do what we order, but leave to his choice one of two things, either
 to persuade us, or to obey our mandates; and yet he does neither of these.

And we say that you also, O Socrates, will be obnoxious to these crimes if you
 execute what you intend to do; nor will you be the least, but the most obnoxious of
 all the Athenians. If, therefore, I should ask them the reason of this, they would
 perhaps justly reproach me by saying, that I promised to submit to all these
 b conditions beyond the rest of the Athenians. For they would say, This, O Socrates, is
 a great argument with us, that both we and the city were pleasing to you; that you
 especially of all the Athenians would never have dwelt in it, if it had not been
 particularly agreeable to you. For you never left the city for any of the public
 spectacles except once, when you went to the Isthmian games, nor did you ever go
 elsewhere, except in your military expeditions. You never went any other journey
 like other men; nor had you ever any desire of seeing any other city, or becoming
 c acquainted with any other laws; but we and our city were sufficient for you, so
 exceedingly were you attached to us, and so much did you consent to be governed
 by our mandates. Besides, you have procreated children in this city, in consequence
 of being pleased with it. Further still, in this very judicial process, you might have
 been condemned to exile, if you had been willing, and might then have executed
 with the consent of the city what you now attempt without it.⁴ Then however you
 carried yourself loftily, as one who would not be indignant, if it were requisite that
 you should die; but you preferred, as you said, death to exile. But now you are
 d neither ashamed of those assertions, nor do you revere us the Laws, since you

⁴ In the legal system of Athens at the time, a person conducted a defence in an attempt to show that he was not guilty of the crime of which he had been accused. If this failed and he was found guilty, a second stage began in which his prosecutors would put forward what they thought was a suitable punishment; he would then put forward an alternative punishment and the jury would vote to decide which of the two sentences was considered the most suitable. Having been found guilty in the first stage his prosecutors asked for the death penalty: Socrates then explicitly rejected the possibility of exile as one of the possible alternatives he could put forward.

endeavour to destroy us. You also do that which the most vile slave would do, by endeavouring to make your escape contrary to the compacts and agreements according to which you consented to become a member of this community. In the first place, therefore, answer us this very thing, whether we speak the truth in asserting, that you consented to be governed by us in reality, and not merely in words? Do we in asserting this speak the truth? What shall we say to these things, Crito? Can we say anything else than that we assent to them?

Cri. It is necessary so to do, Socrates.

- e Soc. Do you not then, they will say, violate these compacts and agreements between us; which you consented to neither from necessity nor through deception, nor in consequence of being compelled to deliberate in a short time; but during the space of seventy years, in which you might have departed if you had been dissatisfied with us, and the compacts had appeared to you to be unjust? You however neither preferred Sparta nor Crete, which you are perpetually saying are governed by good laws, nor any other city of the Greeks or Barbarians; but you have been less out of
- 53a Athens than the lame and the blind, and other mutilated persons. So much did the city and we the Laws please you beyond the rest of the Athenians. For who can be pleased with a city without the laws? But now you do not abide by the compacts. You will however abide by them if you are persuaded by us, Socrates, and do not become ridiculous by escaping from the city.
- b For consider what advantage can be derived either to yourself or your friends by violating those compacts. For in consequence of your escaping from hence, it is nearly evident that your friends will be exposed to the danger either of banishment, or of the loss of their property. And as for yourself, if you retire to any neighbouring city, whether Thebes or Megara (for both are governed by good laws), you will be considered, Socrates, as an enemy to their polity. And such as have any regard for their country will look upon you as a corrupter of the laws. You will also confirm them in their good opinion of your judges, who will appear to have very properly
- c condemned you. For he who is a corrupter of the laws will very much appear to be a corrupter of youth and of stupid men. Will you then avoid these well-governed cities, and men of the most elegant manners? Supposing you should, will it, therefore, be worthwhile for you to live? Or, should you go to these cities, will you not blush, Socrates, to discourse about the same things as you did here, *viz.* that virtue and justice, legal institutes, and the laws, should be objects of the greatest attention to men? And do you not think that this conduct of Socrates would be very
- d indecorous? You must necessarily think so. But perhaps, avoiding these cities, you will go to Thessaly, to the guests of Crito. For there there is the greatest disorder and intemperance. And perhaps they will willingly hear you relating how ridiculously you escaped from prison, investing yourself with a certain apparatus, such as a skin, or something else which those that make their escape are accustomed to provide, and thus altering your usual appearance.

Do you think no one will say, that you, though an old man, and likely to live but a little longer, have dared to desire life with such sordid avidity, and to transgress the

e greatest laws? Perhaps this will be the case, though you should not have offended any one. But if you should, you will hear, Socrates, many things unworthy of you. You will however live obnoxious, and in subjection to all men. But what will you do in Thessaly besides feasting? having come to Thessaly as to a supper. And where
 54a shall we find those discourses concerning justice, and the other virtues? - But do you wish to live for the sake of your children, that you may nurture and instruct them? What then? Bringing them to Thessaly, will you there educate them, making them to be stranger guests, that they may also derive this advantage from you? Or, if you should not do this, but should leave them here, will they be better nurtured and educated in your absence? for your friends will take care of them. Do you suppose
 b then that your children will be taken care of by your friends if you go to Thessaly, and that they will be neglected by them if you depart to Hades? If indeed any advantage is to be derived from those that call themselves your friends, it is proper to think that they will not.

But, O Socrates, being persuaded by us your nurses, neither pay more attention to your children, nor to life, not to anything else than to justice, that, when you arrive at Hades, you may be able to defend all these particulars to the rulers there. For if, transgressing the laws, you should thus act, it will neither be better, nor more just, nor more holy to yourself, nor to any one of your friends; nor will it be more advantageous to you when you arrive at Hades. But you will depart, if you do
 c depart, not injured by us the Laws, but by men. If however you should so disgracefully escape, returning injury for injury, and evil for evil, transgressing your agreements and compacts with us, and injuring those whom you ought not to injure in the smallest degree, *viz.* yourself, your friends, your country, and us; - in this case, we shall be indignant with you as long as you live; and in another life, our brothers the Laws who reside in Hades will not benevolently receive you; knowing that you attempted, as far as you were able, to destroy us. Let not Crito, therefore, rather
 d than us, persuade you to do what he says.

Be well assured, my dear friend Crito, that I seem to hear these things, just as those who are agitated with Corybantic fury⁵ appear to hear the melody of pipes. And the sound of these words, like the humming of bees, in my ears, renders me incapable of hearing anything else. You see then what appears to me at present; and if you should say anything contrary to these things, you will speak in vain. At the same time, if you think that anything more should be done, tell me.

Cri. But, Socrates, I have nothing further to say.

d Soc. Desist, therefore, Crito, and let us adopt this conduct, since Divinity persuades us thus to act.

⁵ The Corybantes in Greek mythology were the offspring of Apollo and the muse Thalia – they were the divine attendants upon the Great Mother Goddess, Cybele, and particularly noted for inspiring their worshippers with an ecstasy in dance.

“Since then it appears that a self-motive nature is immortal, he who asserts that this is **the very essence and definition of soul**, will have no occasion to blush. For every body to which motion externally accedes, is inanimate. But that to which motion is inherent from itself, is animated; as if this was the very nature of soul. *And if there is nothing else which moves itself except soul*, soul is necessarily without generation, and immortal.”

Socrates, in the *Phaedrus*

To sum up, choice is a rational appetitive faculty that strives for some good, either true or apparent, and leads the soul towards both. Through this faculty the soul ascends and descends, does wrong and does right. Considering the activity of this faculty authors have called its ambivalent inclination '**the crossroad**' in us. Hence the elective faculty and 'what depends on us' seem to be identical. Due to this faculty we differ both from divine and from mortal beings, since neither of them is subject to this ambivalent inclination: divine beings, because of their excellence, are established only among true goods, and mortal beings, because of their deficiency, only among apparent goods....

Therefore, the faculty that depends on us belongs neither to the first order of things nor to the last, but to the middle....

For what is outside the soul does not depend on us. Therefore, our life is a mixture of what does not depend on us and what depends on us. And virtuous people have much that depends on them, for due to their virtue they also make moderate use of all things that do not depend on them, colouring even those things and making them as it were in their power, insofar as they always bring order to what is presently given. In the case of the many, however, there is much more that does not depend on them; for they follow external things, not having an internal life powerful enough to assimilate those externals. Hence the virtuous are said to be free and are indeed free, because their activity depends upon them and is not the slave of what does not depend on them. The other people, however, cry out necessity, burying that which depends on them together with that which does not, and so have nothing which depends on them.

Proclus *on Providence*