

For Andrew's lecture  
October 17, 2005  
*Crito* argument

Argument: Socrates should not flee the prison, but should submit to the death sentence.

**I. If it is just for Socrates to escape, he should do so; if not, he should not. (48b-d)**

A. Other considerations besides the justice of the action, e.g. money, reputation, children's upbringing, even the risk of death, are not decisive factors in the deliberation. (48c-d)

1. Majority opinion is not decisive. (48c)

a. One must value the opinion of one who knows, not that of one who is ignorant. (47d)

1) One must value the opinions of some, not others. (47a)

2) One must value good opinions, not bad ones. (47a)

3) The opinions of the one who knows are good; those of the ignorant are bad.

a) The opinions of the ignorant, if accepted, lead one to harm the soul as well as the body. (47c-d)

--This is argued by the analogy between a trainer and his opinion, which is good for the body, and the moral expert and his opinion, which is good for the soul, and the inexpert many, whose opinions harm the body and soul. (47c-d)

b. The many tend to be the ignorant, while the ones who know tend to be few. (47c-d)

2. The risk of death is not a decisive consideration. (48d)

a. The most important consideration is the good life (= the beautiful and just life), not (merely) life. (48b)

b. Acting justly (= having the just life) is more important than (merely) living. (48d)

**II. Socrates, by escaping, would be acting unjustly (implicit in what follows).**

A. Acting justly requires (at least) that one must not mistreat another and that one abide by one's just agreements (implicit in what follows).

1. One must never mistreat another. (49b-c)

a. One must never do wrong. (49b)

b. Mistreating someone is the same as doing wrong. (49c)

2. One must abide by one's just agreements. (49e)

B. Socrates, if he were to disobey the laws (as embodied in the court's verdict against him) by escaping, would be mistreating another, that is, the city. (50b)

1. A city cannot survive if individuals do not abide by the decisions of its courts. (50b)

2. Socrates, by fleeing, would not be abiding by the court's decision, and so would be effecting the city's destruction (presumably = harming it). (50b)

[Objection: The city wronged Socrates first through a bad decision. (50c)

Response: Athens and Socrates do not have an equal obligation to one another. (50e-52a)

1. A city is analogous to a parent or master; the individual to a child or servant, and the parent and master do not have the same obligation to the child and servant, respectively, as the child and servant have to them. (50e-51c)

2. An individual must obey the city or persuade it that its commands are unjust. (51b-c)

3. Socrates has not so persuaded Athens, so he must obey. (52a)

C. Socrates, if he were to disobey the laws, would be violating a just agreement. (52d-e)

1. Socrates has a just agreement with Athens that he will obey its laws. (51e-52d)

a. A citizen is always free to leave the city if he or she does not find the laws acceptable. (51d)

b. Socrates has not done so. (52b)

QED Socrates should not flee the prison, but should submit to the death sentence.

Additional arguments:

- 1) Socrates, by fleeing, would put his friends in danger. (Violation of principle IIA?) (53a-b)
- 2) Socrates, by fleeing, would confirm the jury's view that they were right to condemn him. (53b-c)
- 3) Socrates, by fleeing, would end up in a poorly governed country like Thessaly. (Ignores IA2a?)
- 4) Socrates, by fleeing, would do harm to his children. (Violation of IIA?) (54a)
- 5) Socrates, by fleeing, would anger the laws of the Underworld, so that he would suffer in death. (Violation of IIA?) (54c)
- 6) God is leading Socrates in the decision not to flee. (Is God one of the wise few?) (54d-e)