

# [Introduction socrates is seen as a highly](https://assignbuster.com/introduction-socrates-is-seen-as-a-highly/)

## Introduction

Crito’s apology is an essay done by Socrates, a Greek philosopher; where he seeks to express truthfully his beliefs.

His apology, which is rather a statement, is viewed as one full of meaning and truth as he addresses his close friend, Crito. Socrates is a critical thinker who is dedicated to moral character and he questioned the beliefs of the youths in Athens who trusted in opinions which were not necessarily true. Socrates got a death sentence out of his political activities, which apparently corrupted the youth and the religious practices. The apology details how his disciples tried to aid his escape from prison and how Socrates brought up an argument on whether it was a good idea as he worried too much about the repercussions (Kemerling, 2006). Thoreau Civil Disobedience is the work of Henry David Thoreau who was a nature enthusiast.

He wrote the essay titled ‘ civil disobedience’, which won many politicians hearts. This essay seeks to find out why people of a state will subscribe to unjust governance without complaining. Thoreau exercised disobedience when he refused to pay poll tax whose returns offered support to the slave trade and the Mexican war, which he so detested and this led to his imprisonment (McElroy, 2005). This case study seeks also to compare and contrast between the essay for Critos apology and Thoreau civil disobedience and stage a personal argument.

## Similarities between the Critos apology and Thoreau’s civil disobedience

Both essays are associated with the way their governments of the day used to function and they also seek to change the mindsets of the people though at different levels.

Socrates wants the people to be submissive to the government while Thoreau warns the people who follow the laws of the state blindly even if they are infringing on their own rights and they do not reflect what is right in their own view. Thoreau and Crito’s essays believe in morality of human beings. They feel that human beings have the moral authority to be just if given the chance. They feel that no human being would want to default knowingly and it is sad that people still commit injustices even armed with a moral conviction.

(Term papers, 2005). The other striking similarity with these two essays is their writing while these history makers were in jail. Thoreau’s incarceration resulted from disobeying the laws of the land and it was while in jail that he wrote the ‘ civil disobedience’ essay. Socrates was also in jail serving a term awaiting the death penalty for corrupting the youth and discrediting the state preferred religion when he wrote the apology (Term paper, 2005). In both essays, we have philosophers who sought to bring change through defiance.

In the apology, Socrates is seen as a highly ethical man who sought to interrogate and discuss the laws before subscribing to them and he questions them and engages youths in discussions where they dissect the stated laws (SparkNotes Editors, 2010) (a). In Thoreau’s civil disobedience essay, the same concerns surface as Thoreau seeks to disobey the laws he does not believe in. He does not find sense when he is supposed to subscribe to laws that do not appeal to him just because the government passed them. His defiance when it comes to paying tax strikes a similarity with Socrates questioning of the laws, which is appealing to the high officials (SparkNotes Editors, 2010) (b).

In both the essays, Socrates and Thoreau find themselves on the wrong side of the law for failure to conform to the later. Socrates incarceration emanates from crimes of corrupting the youth among other crimes against religion. Thoreau’s incarceration on the other hand comes from failing to pay tax, which he believes goes into fueling wars and slave trades, things he campaigns against strongly (SparkNotes Editors, 2010) (b).

## Contrast between the Crito’s apology and Thoreau civil disobedience essays

Thoreau’s civil disobedience essay is against the government whereas Socrates’ Critio’s apology is for the government. Thoreau felt that the government was an evil that the people did not need whereas Socrates felt that the government deserved obedience and this called for the people to be submissive to it.

Thoreau even came up with a motto that stated that the best government was the one that governed the least. He also added that people were ought to embrace a government that respected their freedoms. This he drove at showing that the absence of the government was what people needed to become successful. The striking difference in these two essays is that Thoreau is more rebellious when it comes to the government and he feels that the government is wrong and it must be subjected to criticism to review the laws that infringe on the people’s rights. On the other hand, Socrates shows devotion to the government of the day and is ready to give up everything to side with its decisions. (Term papers, 2005). While Socrates exercises compassion for the government and seems ready to do anything for it, Thoreau loathes the government and this hatred exceeds when he is jailed for an offence he considers minor. After release from jail, Thoreau does not reform and spreads the word on disobedience influencing the masses to revolt against the government.

Socrates goes ahead to loose his life through a death penalty as the government is adamant to see things go its way. Thoreau’s civil disobedience essay is more realistic as compared to Crito’s apology in that it was rebellious and this set up a revolution to implement the changes that people wanted to see. Crito’s apology on the other hand is more unrealistic in that its primary goal was to ensure that the same views on the government were shared. It did not leave room for an argumentative debate where people would stand on their own ground voicing their own views (Term paper, 2005). Another contrast presents itself from these essays where the Crito apology insinuates that the people of a country are in an agreement with their government. The kill here is that they abide by the laws set by the government and the government in turn protects them. Thoreau’s essay on civil disobedience tends to differ by saying that the people of a country do not have to agree with what the government has laid down for them if it is unjust.

He feels that rebellion to bad laws is important and people do not have to put up with bad governance as this makes them hypocrites (Term paper, 2005). Socrates and Thoreau are two people with the same concerns about their governments but they bring out their concerns in a disparate way. This is dictated by their beliefs and social standing which makes them trend in different paths.

Greece, which is Socrates origin, matches great men with honor and lesser men with shame. This limits Socrates’ ambitions no matter how much he advocated for truth as depicted in the Crito’s apology and he fears to come out of the person he is, as he fears the repercussions of doing so. His friends even organize his escape but his worry about what people will say stops him in his tracks. He is also worried that he will loose his social standing by doing such a thing and sees himself being treated as an outcast (123helpme, 2010). On the other hand, Thoreau is a strong man who is not afraid to voice his opinions and embrace the repercussions that emanate from it. Thoreau believes in self-conviction rather than social conviction and this shows why he is not moved by the masses but by what he feels and believes is right.

He feels that individuals have a right to choose what is wrong and right and act accordingly regardless of what the law says about it. He does not believe in the public’s opinion of his actions and therefore discards things such as honor, punishment, and shame as ridiculous (123helpme, 2010)

## Case study argument

Both Socrates and Thoreau were justified in their concerns about the government. However, in my opinion, I feel that Thoreau’s stand in his philosophies would have brought about a lot of harm than good.

It would have opened up to a permissive society where there is no order and no one cares what people do. When he talks of the people not needing a government, I feel that he is loosing practicality since for a government to run smoothly, there has to be set rules and repercussions for the lawbreakers. Socrates takes sides with the government and gives us a picture of a state where the government takes center stage. According to Socrates, the government must be obeyed and the laws have to be followed to the later whether they are good or bad. Thoreau seeks to differ with Socrates saying that people do not have to submit to bad governance and they have every right to abscond what is not right.

In his personal experience, Thoreau refused to pay poll tax as he personally felt that the government used the revenue to support the Mexican war and slave trade, which he was opposed to. For this reason, he was incarcerated though he was released a day later as family members bailed him out. I feel that Socrates was more rational in his judgment about his government and all it needed was for the people to obey the laws it had laid down for them. In his views, Socrates felt that the government brought order and this in the long run translated to better and civilized lives for its people. Thoreau was more bent on individual success and advocated for individuality and in my view this philosophy would not have augured well with many loyal citizens of the state. He kept seeing the government as a block to the success of its citizens through laws, which he termed, as infringements. For him to advocate that people do what is right is immoral in the sense that not all what seems right to us is right for everyone. For instance, someone would feel that acts of terrorism are okay and go ahead to implement it because it is what he wants to do and believes that it is right to him.

In my opinion, this is utterly ridiculous because we live in a diverse world which has become a melting pot for all cultures. We therefore have to be governed by laws that dictate how we conduct ourselves to avert such commotions, which would result from a permissive society. I therefore feel that Thoreau’s philosophies were wrong and they should not have seen the light of day.

## Conclusion

Both Socrates and Thoreau had strong thesis on what an ideal people-government relationship should be like. They however had their shortcomings in either way, as some were too extreme and other just ridiculous. Their contrast brings about an interesting factor of civil obedience on the part of the Crito’s apology done by Socrates and civil disobedience as portrayed by Thoreau. We see that Socrates worst fear was what the society would say and he could not stand shame and dishonor.

The rebellious Thoreau feared no societal criticism and all he cared about was what he felt was right for him. They both ended up in jail as punishment for their misdeeds and the irony is overwhelming. Socrates was however more practical as compared to Thoreau who gave ideas of a lawless society which would have caused more harm than good.

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