

Crito 2 – college essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Socrates has been accused of corrupting the youth by Meletus and has been sentenced to death. He has thoroughly justified his own decision to obey the opinions of the majority and serve out the sentence that his own city has deemed appropriate for his crimes. At the beginning of this piece, Socrates has presented a period of questions and answers through dialogue with Crito. Throughout the dialogue Socrates is explaining his reasoning for not evading the government. Crito does not understand the madness of Socrates, and would like nothing more than to help his dear friend escape to freedom. "...I do not think that what you are doing is right, to give up your life when you can save it, and to hasten your fate as your enemies would hasten it, and indeed have hastened it in their wish to destroy you." (Crito p. 48d)

Plato introduces several pivotal ideas through the dialogue between Crito and Socrates. The first being that a person must decide whether the society in which he lives has a just reasoning behind its' own standards of right and wrong. The second being that a person must have pride in the life that he leads. In establishing basic questions of these two concepts, Socrates has precluded his own circumstance and attempted to prove to his companion Crito, that the choice that he has made is just. "...I am the kind of man who listens only to the argument that on reflection seems best to me. I cannot, now that this fate has come upon me, discard the arguments I used; they seen to me much the same." (Crito p. 48b)

The introduction of this work has also provided the concept that it is our society or majority that has dictated what is considered virtuous action. According to Socrates we have been given every opportunity to reject our

society and renounce what it has stood for and against. “ Not one of our laws raises any obstacle or forbids him, if he is not satisfied with us or the city, if one of you wants to go and live in a colony or wants to go anywhere else, and keep his property.” (Crito p. 54d) Socrates states that making a conscious choice or effort to remain under the influence of a society is an unconscious agreement with that society to live your life by its’ standards and virtues.

Socrates states after establishing his own agreement with his city’s virtues that he believes in the validity of the decision imposed upon himself. He states that his decision is justified by the fact that the laws and governing agents of the society must command a certain degree of respect. Any person who would unjustly disobey these laws creates a deliberate attempt to destroy them, as well as, the society that has imposed them. For example, “...However, that whoever of you remains when he sees how we conduct our trials and manage the city in other ways, has in fact come to an agreement with us to obey our instructions.” (Crito p. 54e)

If the decisions of the city’s governing agents are not thoroughly respected as just and cohesive parts of society, the very structure by which the society stands is subject to collapse. If a person is found to be in violation of what his society stands for and does not accept the consequences for his actions, then there can not be a system of law in place to create order. “ You must either persuade it or obey its orders, and endure in silence whatever it instructs you to endure, whether blows or bonds, and if it leads you into war or be wounded or killed you must obey.”(Crito p. 53b) The society in which a

person lives creates a mutual relationship in which every person in that society is indebted to, if he willingly accepts that society for his own.

Following along these basic concepts, Socrates then adapts them to his own circumstances, which have presented to Socrates by his companion Crito, that being the option to escape from his captors and renounce their decision on his fate. Socrates concludes that if he were to follow Crito's advice he would be committing several wrong actions against a society in which he calls his own. To disobey your own society, according to Socrates, is to betray what you were taught to be right by the virtues of your own parents and what they held to be true, as they brought you into a society that they believed to be profound and just. "Is your wisdom such as not to realize that your country is to be honored more than your mother, your father, and all your ancestors, that is more to be revered and more sacred, and that it counts for more among the gods and sensible men, that you must worship it, yield to it and placate its anger." (Crito p. 53b) To renounce these virtues would be a disgrace. "Do you think you have the right to retaliation against your country and its laws? That if we undertake to destroy you and think it right to do so, you can undertake to destroy us... you who truly cares for virtue." (Crito p. 53b) This would be a disgrace against your own family's legacy and the dreams that they hold for you, and your future.

Society, in the day of Socrates requested only for two things in return for the fulfillment and prophesizing of morally correct virtue, the choice has been made very clear, to either persuade society that it has acted unjustly, or to do as society has asked without hindrance or complaint. The person who has disobeyed according to Socrates has done neither one. "We say that the one

who disobeys does wrong in three ways, first because in us he disobeys his parents, also those who brought him up, and because, in spite of his agreement, he neither obeys us nor, if we do something wrong, does he try to persuade us to do better.” (Crito p. 54e) This person only serves to justify their own decisions, actions, and foregoes the utterances of those who gave them the life they have renounced.

Socrates then states that by remaining a member of your society, you have in fact accepted the society as your own. To disobey his society in its decision against himself would be to renounce what his city has accomplished both for himself and its other residents. Socrates needs and must hold his head up with pride in knowing that he was not hypocritical in his decision. The agreement that he made within his city to obey the laws to live as a good citizen makes the thought of exile shameful and therefore unacceptable. Upon establishing the basic concept of right and wrong at the introduction to the piece Socrates has created an argument that he cannot consider being unjust.

Running away from the decision that his own society has made would be an affirmation of his own guilt in the eyes of his family and peers. Even though he may have been wrongly imprisoned and sentenced to death, he holds very little value in the belief that two wrongs can achieve a justifiable pardon in society. He has firmly stood before his own value system and society's beliefs, and has presented his own opinions on how he believes he has been right in his actions. Socrates has very carefully and thoughtfully consented to what his own city has deemed to be righteous and justified. His thoughts on his destiny were completely unselfish, as his only wish were to preserve the

society around him, which had accepted him and his family for so many years. He has indignantly renounced the idea of self-preservation and any attempt to escape because of the potential harm and damage that it ultimately will cause. The disgrace of thought as he being guilty would force all that he has forged to hide in exile from the wrath of the society that he has protected.

Socrates has succeeded in justifying his actions by showing how devastating his disobedience could possibly be. In considering all of the points that he has made in the defense of his decision. Socrates can maintain his own pride, and sense of right and wrong. He has shown others, such as Crito, that there is a certain satisfaction in maintaining one's own innocence rather than accepting a hollow victory, and as a result compromising one's integrity.

By maintaining a harmony between what is right and the expression of a person's own opinion he has made possible the ultimate truth, the belief in what has worked and staying within the boundaries of decent and god-fearing society. The laws of the society in which Socrates lived condemned him to die for his own conviction and the reasons for Socrates to remain and accept the punishments of that society have proved to be wise and justified.

In consideration of those beliefs, I feel it is safe to conclude that Socrates would be no more in favor of "civil disobedience" than he was in disobeying the judgement that was brought down against him. Socrates holds incredible respect for the laws which govern him and no deviance, be it great or small, would he permit. Socrates would probably wrestle with the nature of the particular situation and debate the meaningfulness with friends, such as

Crito perhaps, but ultimately would decide that even a peaceful opposition to his government would be inappropriate.