

Philosophy 101: Introduction to Philosophy, Queens College, Fall 2004
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Lecture Notes, December 14

I. Finishing the discussion of the Apology

Socrates seems to think he is a good man.

This means that he is some sort of wise man, since wisdom and goodness are linked, for him.

But he knows that he is ignorant, 21b.

In order to be virtuous, we must constantly examine ourselves, 38a.

This applies to our community, our city, as well, 29d-30a.

Note Socrates' assertion that virtue is self-interested, will create wealth and other things.

(Though Chikodi argued that we can parse the sentence differently, and take Socrates to mean that virtue is what makes wealth and other things good. This is a Kantian claim, but I think my interpretation is more consistent with Socrates' other claims.)

Is Socrates arguing that he wants to improve the city, by increasing wealth of the powerful?

Or is he a kind of revolutionary, attempting to overthrow the powerful?

Remember, he's a smart guy.

He's annoying and condescending.

But is he a threat?

II. Crito

A religious observance (ship to Delos and back) postpones Socrates' punishment.

Friends attempt to help him escape.

But he refuses to go.

Crito pleads with Socrates to leave.

For money, since his friends have plenty of it.

For Socrates' children, 48d.

For the reputation of his friends, 48a-b.

Socrates argues that only the good life is worth living.

Remember Apology 38a, and 39a-b.

The only important question is whether it is right or wrong to do so, 48c-d.

We should follow the one (the right one) rather than the many (who may be wrong).

III. Socrates' argument for not escaping

1. One should never do wrong, even when one is wronged.

2. To injure people would be to do wrong.

3. So one must never injure people.

4. Violating a just agreement causes injury to people.

5. Escape would be a violation of a just agreement.

6. Escape is wrong.

So, Socrates should not escape.

This argument is probably weakest in step 5.

Is the agreement just?

Socrates has the laws speak.

Leaving injures the laws, is an attempt to destroy them.

The city birthed him, and educated him, 50d.

One's country should be honored, more than one's parents, 51a.

If you don't like the laws, you can work to change them, 51b.

Socrates could have left, if he wanted to leave, 51d.

By disobeying, Socrates would do three wrongs:

1. Disobey the laws in their role as his parents, as authorities.

2. Disobey the laws as they nurtured him.

3. Breaking the laws to which he agreed, at least tacitly, 52b-d.

This last claim foreshadows Locke's social contract and the claim of tacit consent: we are constrained to obey the laws because of a hypothetical contract to which we consent by accepting the benefits of the society.

Crito is convinced, it seems.

Or is he just silenced?