

# 3

## CRITO

### PROLOGUE

If we arrange the four dialogues concerning the death of Socrates in their proper order, not historical but logical, we notice in passing from one to the other a typical change of place, situation and mood. The *Euthyphro* takes place in the street, and the conversation arises from the chance meeting of two persons passing on their way. The *Apology* is enacted in a highly official place, before the supreme court of the state, which has to pronounce on the indictment against Socrates. Then, in the *Crito*, scene and action retire into tranquility: Socrates is in prison, and his old friend comes and makes, in private conversation, a last attempt to induce him to escape. Finally the *Phaedo* is enacted in the same place; but now the circle of disciples is gathered round the master and he takes leave of them. The first text gives a kind of exposition of the whole. It displays the man and gives us to feel the conditions under which he will have to support the conflict that lies before him. The second gives the debate itself, and the reader shares the experience of its decision. In the third this decision is taken up again. Once more appears the possibility of evading death; so Socrates has one more opportunity of finally reviewing his decision and deliberately accepting its consequences. The fourth text, lastly, sets the whole in the light of eternity and shows the true issue.

The trial is long over. On that day the priest of Apollo had crowned the state ship which, according to ancient usage, sailed to Delos every year to thank the god there for the rescue of the Minotaur's victims, who had once sailed to Crete with Theseus. From the crowning to the return of the ship there was a truce of God in the city and no condemned person could be put to death. Adverse winds had delayed the voyage, so that Socrates had a long respite. But now travelers had arrived reporting that the homeward bound ship had reached Sunium

and would soon be at Athens.

Meanwhile much had happened in the city. Many citizens had been on Socrates's side from the first. Others, who had voted against him, may in the meantime have seen the injustice of the sentence. In any case there is a strong body of opinion which expects the powerful friends of Socrates to help him to escape. The escape would certainly succeed, so the man would be saved and the tragedy averted. Those friends too have been working for this object and urging the prisoner, but he has always refused. It is now the eleventh hour.

*SOCR. Why have you come at this hour, Crito? Is it not still early?*

*CRITO. Yes, very early.*

*SOCR. About what time is it?*

*CRITO. It is just day-break.*

*SOCR. I wonder that the jailor was willing to let you in.*

*CRITO. He knows me now, Socrates, I come here so often; and besides, I have done him a service.*

*SOCR. Have you been here long?*

*CRITO. Yes; some time.*

The atmosphere is lively and intimate. Socrates sleeps calmly, although he knows that he may be wakened any morning with the news that the ship is approaching. Beside the bed sits Crito, of the same age as Socrates and his faithful friend; a simple warm-hearted character. Socrates now wakes up, and after the foregoing exchange of words asks:

*SOCR. Then why did you sit down without speaking? why did you not wake me at once?*

*CRITO. Indeed, Socrates, I wish that I myself were not so sleepless and sorrowful. But I have been wondering to see how sweetly you sleep. And I purposely did not wake you, for I was anxious not to disturb your repose. Often before, all through your life, I have thought that your temper was a happy one; and I think so more than ever now, when I see how easily and calmly you bear the calamity that has come to you.*

*SOCR. No, Crito, it would be absurd if at my age I were angry at having to die.*

*CRITO. Other men as old are overtaken by similar calamities, Socrates; but their age does not save them from being angry with their fate.*

Crito does not yet understand; so Socrates bids him first say what has brought him here:

*SOCR. But tell me, why are you here so early?*

*CRITO. I am the bearer of bitter news, Socrates; not bitter, it seems, to you; but to me, and to all your friends, both bitter and grievous: and to none of them, I think, is it more grievous than to me.*

*SOCR. What is it? Has the ship come from Delos, at the arrival of which I am to die?*

*CRITO. No, it has not actually arrived: but I think that it will be here today, from the news which certain persons have brought from Sunium, who left it there. It is clear from their news that it will*

*be here to-day; and then, Socrates, to-morrow your life will have to end.*

*SOCR. Well, Crito, may it end fortunately.*

But he thinks that the ship will not arrive at Athens yet. This conviction is the result of a dream which he had at the moment when his friend found him sleeping:

*SOCR. But I do not think that the ship will be here today.*

*CRITO. Why do you suppose not?*

*SOCR. I will tell you. I am to die on the day after the ship arrives, am I not?*

*CRITO. That is what the authorities say.*

*SOCR. Then I do not think that it will come to-day, but to-morrow. I judge from a certain dream which I saw a little while ago in the night: so it seems to be fortunate that you did not wake me.*

*CRITO. And what was this dream?*

*SOCR. A fair and comely woman, clad in white garments seemed to come to me, and call me and say, "O Socrates 'The third day hence shah thou fair Phthia reach' "*

*CRITO. What a strange dream, Socrates!*

*SOCR. But its meaning is clear; at least to me, Crito.*

*CRITO. Yes, too clear, it seems.*

It is high time then. So Crito tries once more, with all his eloquence, to induce his friend to escape. If Socrates dies, his friend is lost to him; people will say too that he has done nothing to save him. And yet it

would all be so easy. Money and helping hands are in readiness. The danger from the authorities is not too great. Abroad he will find helpers everywhere, especially in Thessaly, where Crito has trusty guest-friends. His children too will be benefited, for they will still have their father and will be sure of a good education:

*CRITO. Take care, Socrates, lest these things be not evil only, but also dishonorable to you and to us. Consider then; or rather the time for consideration is past; we must resolve; and there is only one plan possible. Everything must be done tonight. If we delay any longer, we are lost.*

A long speech, full of urgent anxiety; wholly unphilosophical, wholly turned towards the practical, the expression of the true, warm heart of a friend. It compels Socrates to undertake the final review of his position.

The case has already been decided before the civil court. It is now, through the favor of circumstances and the activity of friends, brought up for discussion once more before the inner tribunal, that of conscience. A peculiar solitariness marks the conversation. Socrates conducts it with *Crito* — in truth he is conducting it with himself.

## THE PROBLEM AND ITS DISCUSSION

### *The Theme*

The first sentences go straight to the center of the problem:

*SOCR. My dear Crito, if your anxiety to save me be right, it is most valuable: but if it be not right, its greatness makes it all the more dangerous. We must consider then whether we are to do as you say, or not.*

Two regions are distinguished: the immediate reality with its danger for a friend's life, and the moral standard with its binding validity for conscience. The decision must be taken in the second region; and it must be all the more absolute because Socrates has throughout his life proclaimed the absoluteness of duty.

*SOCR. For I am still what I always have been, a man who will listen to no voice but the voice of the reasoning! which on consid-*

*eration I find to be truest. I cannot cast aside my former arguments because this misfortune has come to me. They seem to me to be as true as ever they were, and I hold exactly the same ones in honor and esteem as I used to: and if we have no better reasoning to substitute for them, I certainly shall not agree to your proposal, not even though the power of the multitude should scare us with fresh terrors, as children are scared with hobgoblins, and inflict upon us new fines and imprisonments, and deaths.*

The discussion is to start from what Crito himself has said; he has spoken indeed of the opinion of people who will reproach him if he has not helped his friend:

*SOCR. How then shall we most fitly examine the question? Shall we go back first to what you say about the opinions of men, and ask if we used to be right in thinking that we ought to pay attention to some opinions, and not to others? Used we to be right in saying so before I was condemned to die, and has it now become apparent that we were talking at random, and arguing for the sake of argument, and that it was really nothing but play and nonsense?*

The question is put very urgently, and Socrates goes on immediately to formulate it a second and yet a third time:

Consider then: do you not think it reasonable to say that we should not esteem all the opinions of men, but only some, nor the opinions of all men, but only of some men? What do you think? Is not this true?

*CRITO. It is.*

*SOCR. And we should esteem the good opinions, and not the worthless ones?*

*CRITO. Yes.*

*SOCR. But the good opinions are those of the wise, and the worthless ones those of the foolish?*

*CRITO. Of course.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Logos means the structure of the spoken words, the “speech” or the “sentence”; at the same time it means also the structure of the thoughts expressed therein, the developed intellectual significance.

### *The Opinions of Men*

When a man wants to give his body proper care and exercise, he will not “pay attention to every man’s praise and blame and opinion”, but to that of “one man only, namely one who is a doctor or teacher of physical culture”. If he does not do that, he suffers injury in the matter in question, namely the health and fitness of his body. One must act in the same way when “it is a question of justice and injustice, the base and the noble, the good and the bad, all of which is the subject of our present talk”. Here, too, we must not “follow the opinion of the crowd and fear it”, but “only that of the one man, if there is one, who is skilled in the matter, and whom we must fear and beware of more than all others put together”. If we do not do this, we suffer injury in that part of us which “is benefited by justice, but ruined by injustice” namely the soul, which lives on the good, just as the body lives on the things which make it grow. And it is pointed out with all emphasis that this is a question of life and death (47a-d).

*SOCR. Now, if, by listening to the opinions of those who do not understand, we disable that part of us which is improved by health and crippled by disease, is our life worth living, when it is crippled? It is the body, is it not?*

*CRITO. Yes.*

*SOCR. Is life worth living with the body crippled and in a bad state?*

*CRITO. No, certainly not.*

*SOCR. Then is life worth living when that part of us which is maimed by wrong and benefited by right is crippled?*

“No” is the answer to be supplied. And it is just as serious as in the case of the body

*SOCR. Or do we consider that part of us, whatever it is, which has to do with right and wrong to be of less consequence than our body?*

*CRITO. No, certainly not.*

*SOCR. But more valuable?*

*CRITO. Yes, much more so.*

*SOCR. Then, my excellent friend, we must not think so much of what the many will say of us; we must think of what the one man, who understands right and wrong, and of what Truth herself will*

*say of us. And so you are mistaken to begin with, when you invite us to regard the opinion of the multitude concerning the right and the honourable and the good, and their opposites. But, it may be said, the multitude can put us to death?*

CRITO. Yes, that is evident. That may be said, Socrates.

The decision, then, lies not in what is quantitative — power and success — but in what is qualitative — truth, justice, the good and the noble. But in order to make clear the essential differences between the two orders — that of the immediately real and powerful on the one hand, and that of the valid and right on the other the many, who can compel and destroy, are set up as supporters of the first, and of the second the few, nay “the one”: the actual extreme case, where it is defenseless and stands only on principle.

What follows takes the thought further:

SOCR. *True. But, my excellent friend, to me it appears that the conclusion which we have just reached, is the same as our conclusion of former times. Now consider whether we still hold to the belief, that we should set the highest value, not on living, but on living well?*

CRITO. Yes, we do.

SOCR. *And living well and honorably and rightly mean the same thing: do we hold to that or not?*

CRITO. We do.

From this appears the conclusion for Socrates’s own case:

SOCR. *Then, starting from these premises, we have to consider whether it is right or not right for me to try to escape from prison, without the consent of the Athenians. If we find that it is right, we will try: if not, we will let it alone.*

This is underlined by the proud sentences:

SOCR. *I am afraid that considerations of expense, and of reputation, and of bringing up my children, of which you talk, Crito, are only the reflections of our friends, the many, who lightly put men to death, and who would, if they could, as lightly bring them to life again, without a thought. But reason, which is our guide, shows us that we can have nothing to consider but the question which I asked just now: namely, shall we be doing right if we give*

*money and thanks to the men who are to aid me in escaping, and if we ourselves take our respective parts in my escape? Or shall we in truth be doing wrong, if we do all this? And if we find that we should be doing wrong, then we must not take any account either of death, or of any other evil that may be the consequence of remaining quietly here, but only of doing wrong.*

### ***The Absoluteness of the Claim***

And now the unconditional nature of the claim of the true, the just, the good, the beautiful — in a word, of that which is valid by virtue of its meaning — is worked out. The maxim that no injustice may be done is valid, in whatever situation a man may be, and whatever consequences may result for him:

*SOCR. Ought we never to do wrong intentionally at all; or may we do wrong in some ways, and not in others? Of, as we have often agreed in former times, is it never either good or honorable to do wrong? Have all our former conclusions been forgotten in these few days? Old men as we were, Crito, did we not see, in days gone by, when we were gravely conversing with each other, that we were no better than children? Or is not what we used to say most assuredly the truth, whether the world agrees with us or not? Is not wrong-doing an evil and a shame to the wrong-doer in every case, whether we incur a heavier or a lighter punishment than death as the consequence of doing right? Do we believe that?*

*CRITO. We do.*

The maxim admits of no restriction, even when one's neighbour does not acknowledge it.

*SOCR. Neither, if we ought never to do wrong at all, ought we to repay wrong with wrong, as the world thinks we may?*

*CRITO. Clearly not.*

The validity and binding force of the good does not depend on how the other man — we may conclude further, how any man at all — behaves in practice. It does not derive from contingent resources and eventualities, but from the nature of the good itself, regardless of what is done or omitted anywhere. A tremendous perception: and one feels the excitement that accompanies it. With it ancient thought



touches the limit of its possibilities.

The inference is fraught with peril. The man who reasons thus leaves behind the safeguard that lies in regard for consequences. He acknowledges that which is valid in itself, the order of which by no means coincides with that of concrete events. He places himself under the claim of the absolute, while he continues to live on in the realm of the factual and relative, which does not necessarily conform to that claim. Thereby he exposes himself to the consequences which arise from the conflict — and indeed Socrates warns his friend:

*SOCR. Then we ought not to repay wrong with wrong or do harm to any man, no matter what we may have suffered from him. And in conceding this, Crito, be careful that you do not concede more than you mean.*

This is where the ways part:

*For I know that only a few men hold, or ever will hold this opinion. And those who so hold it, and those who do not, have no common ground of argument; they can of necessity only look with contempt on each other's belief.*

So it is a momentous decision:

*Do you therefore consider very carefully whether you agree with me and share my opinion. Are we to start in our inquiry from the doctrine that it is never right either to do wrong, or to repay wrong with wrong, or to avenge ourselves on any man who harms us, by harming him in return? Or do you disagree with me and dissent from my principle? I myself have believed in it for a long time, and I believe in it still. But if you differ in any way, explain to me how. If you still hold to our former opinion, listen to my next point.*

The last phase of the conversation is important for the problem of the whole inquiry. In it comes out the primal philosophical experience of validity, according to which the valid — here taken as an ethical norm — is self-subsistent, independent of all empirical conditions, and can be recognized as such. It is experienced in its extreme case, where it endangers the life of the percipient, and he acknowledges it in the sacrifice of that life.

But there is something else too in these sentences. The manner in

which Socrates makes clear the absoluteness of this validity is more than a mere matter of demonstrating and teaching ; it is rather a penetration of this validity, an embracing of it, taking stand on it and taking root in it. It is an existential process, and one of the most real events of the Socratic-Platonic world: the process by which the mind ascertains the absolute which appears in truth. And not merely so as to say "It is so", but rather: "In that I perceive and say that it is so, something happens to me who say it. In perceiving that it not only is so, but cannot be otherwise, I am myself freed from the changeable and contingent and secured in what is definitive." To perceive the absolute means not only to contemplate the worthiest object, but oneself, in virtue of one's being, to share in the absoluteness of this object. The inquiry here hurries ahead; for it is not until we come to interpret the *Phaedo* that it will become quite clear that this is Plato's view. But the situation which will unfold there in its full significance is already present in its rudiments here. Socrates knows that he must die if he affirms the absoluteness of the moral norm. But the fervour with which he makes the affirmation, and which breaks out at the close of the dialogue in the phrases about the sound of flutes and the Cory-bantic ecstasy, shows how closely related in him are the affirmation of the absolute and readiness to die — so closely, indeed, that death is overcome in that affirmation.

### *The Final Inference*

The reader feels a kind of caesura: what has been said before is brought out in all its significance, so that, being fully acknowledged, it may afford a groundwork for the decisive logical steps which are coming.

*CRITO. Yes, I hold to it, and I agree with you. Go on.*

*SOCR. Then, my next point, or rather my next question, is this: Ought a man to perform his just agreements, or may he shuffle out of them?*

*CRITO. He ought to perform them.*

The good, which must be done under all circumstances, is conceived here in a special way, namely as fulfilment of an agreed contractual obligation. This leads on to the following passage, in which is expressed the relation of the Platonic man to the State which is the polis, the city, a community of limited dimensions and therefore capable of being vividly present to the consciousness. This passage tells

the story of the meeting with the Laws.

The laws are the way in which justice is realized in the State. The meaning of “justice” in the Platonic sense will only be fully developed in the Republic: it is the right ordering of life, as resulting from the nature of things, the Ideas. The concrete formula for the relation of the individual State to the Idea is expressed by its laws. They indicate the extent to which the Idea permeates it. They embody the will of the community to realize the Idea. With respect to the individual, therefore, they are the advocates of right order, the representatives of the Idea. Socrates says now:

*SOCR. Consider it in this way. Suppose the laws and the commonwealth<sup>1</sup> were to come and appear to me as I was preparing to run away (if that is the right phrase to describe my escape) and were to ask, “Tell us, Socrates, what have you in your mind to do?”*

The story is more than a mere allegory, for these “shapes of Law” have a lifelike quality, present and powerful, so that something like a breath of mysticism pervades the words. They reveal the citizen’s relation to his native *polis* — the emotional element, and also the categorical element, if one may call it so, which is contained in it. And the Laws in fact accost the man at the moment when he is about to leave the city: that is, at the critical moment of final decision, when the possibility of negation brings into consciousness the entire energy of the positive sense. They come before him as objective beings, almost as the tutelary deities of the State; and they are answered from the depths of conscience.

These Laws ask:

*“What do you mean by trying to escape, but to destroy us the laws, and the whole city, so far as in you lies? Do you think that a state can exist and not be overthrown, in which the decisions of law are of no force, and are disregarded and set at nought by private individuals?”*

What answer will Socrates have?

---

<sup>1</sup> “*To koinon*” that which is in common; perhaps even that which belongs to the entirety.

*SOCR.* Shall I reply, "But the state has injured me: it has decided my cause wrongly." Shall we say that?

*CRITO.* Certainly we will, Socrates.

The sentences are characteristic of the two interlocutors. Even Crito, the practical man, living entirely by the feeling of the moment, has a relation to *polis* and *nomos*; but he takes them in a thoroughly realistic fashion, from the point of view of *do ut des*. He has just admitted that one may not do injustice to any man, even when one has suffered injustice from him; but he has already forgotten that — for the reason that it never amounted to real understanding for him. He now speaks according to his real sentiments, taking the State and its laws as powers which the individual will-to-live confronts as an equal. Socrates feels differently. The laws do not merely exist, but are valid, and that puts them into an order quite different from that of the individual will. They say that the sentence which has been legally passed must be carried out, and that this is "justice". The possibility that the law itself may be at fault and require to be tested by the appropriate standard, namely the Idea of law; that consequently the individual derives hence a true right to criticism and resistance, in which lies indeed the antecedent condition both for human freedom and for the progress of the juridical order as such — this possibility is simply not taken into consideration. Law derives from the authority of the State. It is clear that the individual may not on his own authority annul a penalty which follows from the application of the law. The question here, however, is whether he may withdraw from the consequences of an unreasonable and unjust sentence; and it is very characteristic of the general tendency of the fate of Socrates and its presentation by Plato that this question is not seriously raised, although it could easily have been raised from the Platonic starting point. We meet once again with that peculiar radicalizing tendency which has already shown itself in the *Apology*: the inward determination that the outcome shall be a tragic one. There is something in Socrates making for death, regardless of whether that involves fastening the burden of injustice on the State, which he nevertheless champions so wholeheartedly. Not to see this is to take the whole thing in a merely aesthetic way and to place the fascination of tragic sequence above the truth. This means coming into conflict with Plato himself, and perhaps even more so with Socrates; for they are concerned not with the unfolding of a great character or a tragic situation, but with the question: What is true, and what ought one to do?

Then begins the actual dialogue between the "Laws" and the man who is about to evade their claim. They say:

*“Socrates, wonder not at our words, but answer us; you yourself are accustomed to ask questions and to answer them. What complaint have you against us and the city, that you are trying to destroy us? Are we not, first, your parents? Through us your father took your mother and begat you. Tell us, have you any fault to find with those of us that are the laws of marriage?” “I have none” I should reply. “Or have you any fault to find with those of us that regulate the nurture and education of the child, which you, like others, received? Did we not do well in bidding your father educate you in music and gymnastic?” “You did,” I should say.*

There is a close relation between the laws and the individual. Socrates has affirmed this relation at many decisive junctures of his life. He has recognized it as the guarantor of his own well-being ; this involves consequences.

*“Well then, since you were brought into the world and nurtured and educated by us, how, in the first place, can you deny that you are our child and our slave, as your fathers were before you?”*

By so doing, he has entered into a relation of dependence and subjection to them. So he stands before them, not on equal terms, but as before superior authorities and higher powers. He cannot, therefore, oppose his judgment to them as equal to equal, but must submit, even if he thinks he is suffering injustice.

*“And if this be so, do you think that your rights are on a level with ours? Do you think that you have a right to retaliate upon us if we should try to do anything to you? You had not the same rights that your father had, or that your master would have had, if you had been a slave. You had no right to retaliate upon them if they ill-treated you, or to answer them if they reviled you, or to strike them back if they struck you, or to repay them evil with evil in any way. And do you think that you may retaliate on your country and its laws? If we try to destroy you, because we think it right, will you in return do all that you can to destroy us, the laws, and your country, and say that in so doing you are doing right, you, the man, who in truth thinks so much of virtue?”*

Indeed the authority of the State is even greater than that of father or mother:

*“Or are you too wise to see that your country is worthier, and more august, and more sacred, and holier, and held in higher honour both by the gods and by all men of understanding, than your father and your mother and all your other ancestors; and that is your bounden duty to reverence it, and to submit to it, and to approach it more humbly than you would approach your father, when it is angry with you; and either to do whatever it bids you to do or to persuade it to excuse you; and to obey in silence if it orders you to endure stripes or imprisonment, or if it send you to battle to be wounded or to die? That is what is your duty. You must not give way, nor retreat, nor desert your post. In war, and in the court of justice, and everywhere, you must do whatever your city and your country bid you do, or you must convince them that their commands are unjust. But it is against the law of God to use violence to your father or to your mother; and much more so is it against the law of God to use violence to your country.”<sup>1</sup>*

After forgoing criticism of the law itself — not from any individual or casual opinion, from a *doxa*, but from genuine *noesis*, from insight into the Idea the result cannot run otherwise than it does:

*SOCR.* What answer shall we make, Crito? Shall we say that the laws speak truly, or not?

*CRITO.* I think that they do.

He assents; how far he is convinced and not merely in his understanding, which has probably long been accustomed to bow to the superior dialectic of his philosophical friend, but in his honest heart's feeling for reality and sense is undecided. We for our part cannot but think that the question of the relation between law and the individual, authority and conscience, is not pushed to the ultimate reaches of the problem. The dialogue however — just as the *Apology* — is concerned not with this problem, but with the existential sense of the great and unique man Socrates. He has, in an understanding with the deity which is in the end clear to him alone, acknowledged the laws

---

<sup>1</sup> When Euthyphro says at the beginning of the dialogue that he is going to sue his father, Socrates is horrified and sees in this an impiety. The words of the “Laws” make clear the ideas and sentiments that lie behind this attitude.

of Athens as the executive agents of his fate. For him therefore it is a matter of more than mere moral duty. He stands for something new, which imperils the traditional; he is therefore bound all the more strictly to all that is valid, in a kind of atoning justice which at the same time preserves him from arbitrariness. It cannot forbid him to tell the truth; in this, as expressly declared in the *Apology*, he must obey the divine voice, even if he transgresses the laws in so doing. But in all that does not concern this ultimate, they bind him more strictly than others, precisely because he is the servant of such a revolution. And perhaps, over and above this, there is caught a hint of that other "law" according to which the revelation of that which is higher must be paid for by him who brings it, and this higher good is incorporated into history in the same measure in which the price is paid. The Laws can adduce even more reasons.

Socrates continues:

*"Then consider, Socrates," perhaps they "would say, "if we are right in saying that by attempting to escape you are attempting to injure us. We brought you into the world, we nurtured you, we educated you, we gave you and every other citizen a share of all the good things we could. Yet we proclaim that if any man of the Athenians is dissatisfied with us, he may take his goods and go away whithersoever he pleases: we give that permission to every man who chooses to avail himself of it, so soon as he has reached man's estate, and sees us, the laws, and the administration of our city. No one of us stands in his way or forbids him to take his goods and go wherever he likes, whether it be to an Athenian colony, or to any foreign country, if he is dissatisfied with us and with the city. But we say that every man of you who remains here, seeing how we administer justice, and how we govern the city in other matters, has agreed, by the very fact of remaining here, to do whatsoever we bid him. And, we say, he who disobeys us does a threefold wrong: he disobeys us who are his parents, and he disobeys us who fostered him, and he disobeys us after he has agreed to obey us, without persuading us that we are wrong."*

Then a kind of smiling humanity plays over all this seriousness, when Socrates says that the Laws would catch him above all others with these arguments. For they would say that he, even more than others, had declared himself in agreement with them.

They would say,

*“Socrates, we have very strong evidence that you were satisfied with us and with the city. You would not have been content to stay at home in it more than other Athenians, unless you had been satisfied with it more than they. You never went away from Athens to the festivals, save once to the Isthmian games, nor elsewhere except on military service; you never made other journeys like other men; you had no desire to see other cities or other laws; you were contented with us and our city. So strongly did you prefer us, and agree to be governed by us: and what is more, you begat children in this city, you found it so pleasant.”*

We seem to see him before us in the flesh, living in the city, in spirit raised above what is earthly, and yet so intimately conversant with it. We see him pledged to the highest, but knowing too the ins and outs of everything, and interesting himself in the most ordinary affairs of life; assuredly well-informed about everything that goes on in country and city and street, and perhaps not even averse from a bit of gossip — this man “truly touched of Dionysus”, in whose heart the Daimonion speaks, and who yet at the same time has about him such a funny bourgeois air of pedantic rationalism that one often wonders how his disciple Plato, the aristocrat and great artist, could have put up with his constant company.

*SOCR. Then they would say, “Are you not breaking your covenants and agreements with us? And you were not led to make them by force or by fraud: you had not to make up your mind in a hurry. You had seventy years in which you might have gone away, if you had been dissatisfied with us, or if the agreement had seemed to you unjust. But you preferred neither Lacedaemon nor Crete, though you are fond of saying that they are well governed, nor any other state, either of the Hellenes, or the Barbarians. You went away from Athens less than the lame and the blind and the cripple. Clearly you, far more than other Athenians, were satisfied with the city, and also with us who are its laws: for who would be satisfied with a city which had no laws?”*

If Socrates really goes away, he will find himself in an impossible situation:

*“For yourself, you might go to one of the neighboring cities, to Thebes or to Megara for instance for — both of them are well governed — but, Socrates, you will come as an enemy to these*



*commonwealths; and all who care for their city will look askance at you, and think that you are a subverter of law. And you will confirm the judges in their opinion, and make it seem that their verdict was a just one. For a man who is a subverter of law, may well be supposed to be a corrupter of the young and thoughtless. Then will you avoid well-governed states and civilised men? Will life be worth having, if you do? Or will you consort with such men, and converse without shame — about what, Socrates? About the things which you talk of here? Will you tell them that virtue, and justice, and institutions, and law are the most precious things that men can have? And do you not think that that will be a shameful thing in Socrates?”*

Finally the deduction from this:

*“No, Socrates, be advised by us who have fostered you. Think neither of children, nor of life, nor of any other thing before justice, that when you come to the other world you may be able to make your defence before the rulers who sit in judgment there.”*

And the last grand proof:

*“Now you will go away wronged, not by us, the laws, but by men. But if you repay evil with evil, and wrong with wrong in this shameful way, and break your agreements and covenants with us, and injure those whom you should least injure, yourself, and your friends, and your country, and us, and so escape, then we shall be angry with you while you live, and when you die our brethren, the laws in Hades, will not receive you kindly; for they will know that on earth you did all that you could to destroy us. Listen then to us, and let not Crito persuade you to do as he says.”*

The *Apology* has already combined an earthly activity with one beyond the grave — in the passage where Socrates says that part of the happiness of the next life will consist in raising what he has done here to its eternal significance. Something similar happens here: the laws which must be obeyed on earth are conceived as parallel with those of the next world. Valid action is eternal action; and eternal not only in meaning, but also in being.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the whole is short and sublime:

*SOCR.* Know well, my dear friend Crito, that this is what I seem to hear, as the worshippers of Cybele seem, in their frenzy, to hear the music of flutes: and the sound of these words rings loudly in my ears, and drowns all other words. And I feel sure that if you try to change my mind you will speak in vain; nevertheless, if you think that you will succeed, say on.

*CRITO.* I can say no more, Socrates.

*SOCR.* Then let it be, Crito: and let us do as I say, seeing that God so directs us.

The decision which had been expressed in the great speeches before the court has now, in face of the possibility of evading it, once more been reviewed in quiet conversation with the old friend of Socrates's youth. Except at the beginning, where Crito announces the news of the ship's approach and explains how urgent the situation has become, he hardly takes part in a real conversation, but merely adds his "Yes" and "Of course" to the monologue which Socrates is conducting with himself — or rather to that dialogue which is going on between the inexorable inspector of human opinions and "the Laws"

The voyage of the festal ship has been delayed; so Socrates has spent a very long time in prison. The confinement is not rigorous, his disciples and friends have easy access to him, and the days will have passed for the most part in their customary conversation. Socrates, however, is not only the philosopher of the absolute demand of the true and the good, but also a man of strong and, despite his advanced age, unbroken vitality. So he will have had times in which life has raised its voice, and he has had to withstand it. From this point of view the duologue of the *Crito* seems like the uttering aloud of previous reflections in private.

The demand of the good has now attained the incontrovertibility of rational evidence — and at the same time the peace-giving power which religious experience has over the mind. The divinity which presides over Socrates's life is, as the *Apology* has shown, and the *Phaedo* will show again, Apollo. It is he who speaks in the *Dai-moniori's* warning as well as in the Pythian oracle. But with the words about the sound of flutes and the ecstasy of Corybants the experience passes for a moment from the realm of his brightness into that of Dionysiac enthusiasm — with regard to which we must not forget, of course,

that Apollo and Dionysus are in reality nearer to one another than the usual antithesis supposes.

Like the *Apology*, the *Crito* shows the connection that exists between the problem of death and that of conscience. To overcome death is to discover in it a meaning which inserts it into the significant whole of life. This meaning lies for the Platonic Socrates in the mind's relation to the true and good, in the relation of the conscience to that which ought to be. In spite of the last sentences of the dialogue, the victory has not a Dionysiac character. That would be the case if death were understood as the ebbing of life's wave, followed by a new surge from the great stream; or as the culmination of life, in which the whole, shattering the individual form, breaks triumphantly through. Rather, death is overcome by the spiritually awakening man's becoming aware of an absolute which stands on the other side of life's stream and its rhythms, of birth as of death: by his becoming aware of the Just, the True, the Holy or Good. In its presence he experiences a peculiar obligation, proceeding from the nature of validity itself but also, necessarily connected with this, something ultimate inside himself which has the faculty of responding to that validity and being bound by it: conscience. It is specifically related to that indestructible validity.

By this experience all that is transient is deprived of its power, and a security won which can no more be shaken. In the *Euthyphro* it is still latent. It shows itself more in that which fails and is found wanting than in what is positively gained. Euthyphro is completely wrapped up in what is transitory, and breaks down before all Socrates's demands; it is clear from this very fact that the latter's existence is differently based, even though this difference does not attain expression. In the *Apology* the Socratic consciousness of being bound by the valid breaks out forcibly. Not as an overpowering by something numinous, nor as an inundation by some kind of mysterious life, which might equally well be sublimated vitality; but as a commitment in full insight and freedom. What is grasped thereby is conscience. The same experience of conscience recurs in the *Crito*, only more inward and tranquil. The broad publicity of the law-court, with its passions and strifes, has disappeared; Socrates stands before his friend only. But this friend is not capable of actually conducting the dialogue; it takes place in Socrates himself, between the will-to-live of his strong, rich nature and his conscience. In the heart of this dialogue an almost uncanny scene is enacted. On the road which leads from Athens abroad a fleeing Socrates is met and addressed by the Laws of his native city, the embodiment of what the present hour demands; and it is

wonderful with what sincerity their claim is answered by conscience that most inward and at the same time most remote thing in man, which can discern the voice of validity through all the bustle of life. It is intimated here that there is something in man himself which is correlated to the laws and comprised in their fulfillment. The *Phaedo* finally lifts the whole relation to its ultimate clarity. It understands conscience as the organ for the significance and majesty of the valid in general — not only for the morally good, but also for the true. That the morally good and the true are severally and together anchored in the Good of holiness, and that conscience is the inmost response of living man to the eternal claim, constitutes the breadth of the Platonic spirit. With these thoughts the *Phaedo*, which of course belongs to the mature period of Plato's work, rises above the foregoing dialogues; but it adds nothing foreign to them, it only brings their basic principle to its final fulfillment.