Crito
Characters and Setting

The dialogue takes place between Socrates trial and his execution.

Socrates cannot be put to death until a certain ship returns to Athens.

The ship is expected to arrive in a few days.

Crito has arrived to speak with Socrates. He wants to convince Socrates of something--what?
Crito has bribed the prison guards and they have assured him that Socrates can escape the city. If he does so, no one in Athens will care very much. They mostly just want him gone.

The dialogue takes place in Socrates prison cell.

The question: Should Socrates escape prison?
What do you think? Should he escape?
What do you think? Should he escape?

What side of the argument does Socrates take?

What side does Crito take?
Crito's four arguments

- Lost friend argument
- Lost father argument
- Reputation argument
- Shamefulness argument
Reputation Argument

What's the reputation argument that Crito offers?
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If Socrates does not escape, people will think poorly of his friends because they will not believe Socrates chose to die.
Reputation Argument

What do you think Socrates will say to the reputation argument?
Reputation Argument

What do you think Socrates will say to the reputation argument?

Does Socrates think that no opinions count?

Does he think that no person's opinions are special?
Do all opinions count?

No, only those of the wise.
Shamefulness Argument

What is the shamefulness argument?
Shamefulness Argument

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Crtio says that it is shameful to allow one's enemies to do what they want against you without retaliation.

What does Socrates say?
Shamefulness Argument

Socrates responds...

- You harm yourself when you do wrong.
- When you intentionally harm another, you are doing wrong, even if that person has wronged you.
- Hence, when you intentionally harm someone else, you harm yourself.

- It is better to be harmed than to harm another.
Socrates and the Law

Socrates says that the only thing that matters is whether he would do wrong by escaping, and he sets out to show that he would.

Three main arguments:
- Laws as Parents
- Laws and Agreements
- Harms the City
Laws as Parents

What is the argument?
Laws as Parents

What is the argument?

● We will always owe our parents a debt of obedience for what they have done for us.
● The laws are like our parents in having done a tremendous amount for us.
● Therefore, we owe the laws a debt of obedience.
Laws as Parents

How should we respond?

Can you say something to Socrates about the Laws and parents that Crito does not that might convince Socrates to escape?
Laws as Parents

How should we respond?

Can you say something to Socrates about the Laws and parents that Crito does not that might convince Socrates to escape?
Socrates says he has an agreement with the city to obey its laws.

(Socrates acts as though he's having a conversation with the laws, but the most reasonable way to understand this would seem to be as having an agreement to obey the laws of the city.)

When a person has made an agreement, it is unjust not to uphold that agreement. Therefore, it would be unjust for Socrates to break the law.
Laws and Agreement

Sometimes when I agree to something, I don't have to follow through. For example, coerced agreements don't give me obligations.
Laws and Agreement

Is there evidence that Socrates freely agreed?
Is there evidence that Socrates freely agreed?
● He never tried to move away.
● Except for military service, he never even left for a short while.
● He had children in the city.
● He participated in the trial.
Laws and Contractual Obligation

Indeed, it seems at though Socrates positively endorsed the laws, because he could have left and received many benefits from them. That seems a little stronger than simply agreeing.

This has lead some people to see Socrates as offering the argument that Socrates has made a contract with the laws.
Laws and Contractual Obligation

Suppose Socrates has a contract with the laws.

What are some general features of contracts?

A contract involves...
- two (or more) parties
- an agreement to exchange certain things or to perform certain actions.
- an obligation to complete the terms of the contract, i.e., it would be unjust not to complete the contract.
Laws and Contractual Obligation

More precisely, Socrates argument:

1. If one freely agrees to a contract with another party and the other party upholds its end, then one is obligated to live by the contract.
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2. Socrates freely agreed to a contract with the laws whereby he would receive certain benefits in exchange for obedience.
3. The laws upheld their end of the bargain.
4. Therefore, Socrates has an obligation to obey the laws.
Laws and Contractual Obligation

Indeed, it seems at though Socrates positively endorsed the laws, because he could have left and received many benefits from them. That seems a little stronger than simply agreeing.

Is there evidence that Socrates benefited from the laws?

- Education
- Nurturing
- Protection
- and other good things
Harming the City

Socrates seems to offer one final idea that suggests that it is wrong to break the laws.

According to that view, when he breaks the laws he destroys them and this would harm the city. "With this action you are attempting [escape], do you intend anything short of destroying us, the Laws and the city as a whole, to the best of your ability? Do you think that a city can still exist without being overturned, if the legal judgments rendered within it possess no force, but are nullified or invalidated by individuals?" (50b)
Harming the City

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It's wrong to harm another, even in response to harm.

So, it is wrong to break the law.
Socrates on Escape

1. It is always wrong to act unjustly, even in response to injustice.
2. Therefore, if the city is unjustly punishing Socrates, it doesn't matter; all that matters is whether it would be just to escape, and he should never do something unjust.
3. If Socrates escapes, he is breaking the law.
4. Breaking the law is unjust.
5. If Socrates escapes, he does something unjust.
6. Therefore, he should not escape.
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   1. Laws as parents.
   2. Laws and agreement
   3. Harm the city
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