

# Reading Guide to Plato's *Crito*

Merlin Philosophy Read-In Group  
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In Plato's *Crito*, Socrates is in prison, having been convicted to crimes against the city of Athens and condemned to die. When his friend Crito comes to visit, he tells Socrates that his friends have hatched a plan to get him out of jail, and safely away to another city where he can live out his life. But is this jailbreak really the right thing to do? Or does Socrates (and do we) have a duty to obey the laws even when they seem to harm us, even when the punishments seem harsh or unjust?

First, Crito makes his case. As you read this section, consider:

- What reasons does Crito give, for why Socrates should escape?
  - How persuasive do these seem to us? Which are the strongest?
  - Are there any obvious reasons missing, things Crito should have said but didn't?

Next, Socrates responds, in two ways: He gives a rebuttal of Crito's arguments, followed by stand-alone arguments (spoken by the "Laws of Athens") for why he has a duty to stay in prison and accept his punishment. As you read, ask yourself:

- What are Socrates' arguments?
  - Does he address all of Crito's points, or is anything skipped over, or left out?
- What assumptions is Socrates making?
  - Do you agree with Socrates' assumptions? If not, these will show places where we could get "off the train" of the argument, so to speak.
  - If any of the assumptions seem problematic, what can we say against them? Or can we say anything extra to support them?

Finally, sit back and reflect on the entire dialogue.

- What arguments seem the strongest to you? *Why* do they seem that way?
  - If you were in Socrates's position, *what would you do?*
  - When might we find ourselves in that position? What situations in modern society could be like what Socrates is facing?