

## FORMS OF AGREEMENT IN PLATO'S *CRITO* (Draft)

James Warren, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, CB2 1RH

jiw1001@cam.ac.uk

ABSTRACT: Crito thinks Socrates should agree to leave the prison and escape from Athens. Socrates is also determined that he and Crito should have a 'common plan of action' (*koinē boulē*: 49d3), but he wants Crito to share his preferred plan of remaining and submitting to the court's sentence. Much of the drama of the *Crito* is generated by the interplay of these two old friends, both determined that they should come to an agreement, but differing radically in what they think the two of them should agree to do. I show how agreements of various kinds—including agreements about how to agree—play important roles in the dialogue and how Socrates' commitment to a certain method for determining what to do underpins his own integrity. What is more, attention to that theme helps to explain one of the most pressing questions for any interpretation of the *Crito*: Why does Socrates choose, at the end of the dialogue, to present to Crito a speech in the voice of the personified laws of Athens?

### I

Plato's *Crito* takes place in the Athenian prison where Socrates is being held after being found guilty of charges of impiety and corrupting the youth of the city. Crito arrives at the prison agitated by the news that the sacred ship has already reached Sounion on its return from Delos; once the ship is back in Athens the death sentence passed on Socrates by the Athenian jury can be carried out the next day. Socrates is unmoved by Crito's news and even pre-empts Crito's announcement of the ship's arrival (43c9–d1) because he has had a dream that promised he will die in two days' time ('on the third day', counting inclusively: 44b3).<sup>1</sup> He is similarly unmoved by Crito's attempts to persuade him that it would be just and beneficial

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I would like to thank Lesley Brown, Sarah Fine, Frisbee Sheffield, Katja Vogt, and Ellisif Wasmuth for comments on earlier versions of this paper. Parts of it were previously presented at Columbia University and the University of Brasilia. I first read the *Crito* in my first year at university, in an Intensive Greek class led by Anthony Snodgrass, so it is a pleasure finally to have something to say about it.

<sup>1</sup> Socrates quotes Homer *Iliad* 9.363.

for him to escape from prison. He allows, however, that Crito might have some new and relevant objection to a general argument against committing an injustice, even in retaliation, and more than once asks Crito to produce such a new objection.<sup>2</sup> But in the absence of any such new argument, Socrates remains committed to the conclusion which he says he and Crito have agreed upon on various previous occasions.

The *Crito* is not unique in invoking the notion of agreement and its philosophical importance: Socrates regularly invites his interlocutors to make sure what they say fits what they think and there is a common concern for the proper agreement between a person's words and their actions.<sup>3</sup> But the *Crito* presents a sustained focus on various related forms of agreement both in the discussion between Socrates and Crito and then in the imagined conversation between Socrates and the Laws of Athens. We are encouraged to compare and contrast these different kinds of agreement and to appreciate which are of genuine value and why.

Crito arrives with the aim of getting Socrates to agree to a certain plan of action. He thinks Socrates should leave the prison and escape from Athens to live at least for a while in exile. Socrates too is determined that he and Crito should have a 'shared plan of action' (*koinē boulē*: 49d3) as a result of their conversation, but he wants Crito to share his preferred plan of remaining and submitting to the court's sentence. The dialogue shows the interplay between these two old friends, both determined that they should come to an agreement about what to do but differing radically in what they think the two of them should agree. Socrates' preferred method of determining how he should act in this circumstance demands various kinds of *intrapersonal* agreement while remaining sensitive to new arguments and ideas; in short, his actions must agree with his beliefs and those beliefs in turn ought to agree with what is true. We can express these relationships in rough and ready terms as follows: someone is *sincere* if, when that person reports what they think, what they say is just what

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<sup>2</sup> See 49e1–3 and again at 54d8 even though Socrates there says he is unlikely to be persuaded and Crito will be speaking in vain.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, *Laches* 188c4–189b7; later in that dialogue Socrates introduces the idea that there is a kind of courage involved in intellectual inquiry and, we might presume, in making one's actions fit with what we think is true, no matter the consequences: 193d11–194a5. Cf. Lane (1998, p. 313): 'The central theme of the *Crito* ... is precisely the relation between word and deed, between *logos* and *ergon*.'

they think;<sup>4</sup> someone is *trustworthy* if that person acts in accordance with what they say; and someone shows *integrity* if there is an agreement between what that person thinks and what they do.<sup>5</sup>

There are also diachronic versions of intrapersonal agreements; we can evaluate a person's beliefs, statements, and actions over time and notice whether there is any agreement between what is thought, said, or done at first one time and then at another.<sup>6</sup> What is more, we can combine the diachronic and synchronic versions of intrapersonal agreements when we consider whether a person is consistently sincere or consistently trustworthy. Often, failures of intrapersonal synchronic agreement are considered ethically blameworthy: we think poorly of someone who is insincere, or hypocritical, or untrustworthy.<sup>7</sup> And we also evaluate people according to whether these positive synchronic intrapersonal agreements last over time; someone who cannot be relied upon always to be sincere or trustworthy is again liable to criticism. There are exceptions to this general rule, of course, since there are cases in which we will welcome the diachronic inconsistency; we praise people who change for the better.<sup>8</sup>

Socrates is also committed to the need for *interpersonal* agreement because he wants to decide upon a 'shared plan of action' with Crito. Socrates tries first to encourage Crito to

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<sup>4</sup> 'Sincerity' is rather complicated. See, for example, Chan and Kahane 2011. Sincerity in this sense is doubtless to be contrasted in some ways to what is sometimes called 'Socratic irony'. Precisely what 'irony' is, however, what *eirōneia* is, and the sense in which Socrates is sometimes speaking 'ironically' and/or is an *eirōn* are questions that I will not pursue here. See Lane 2006 and Ferrari 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Socrates is regularly cited as an example a person of integrity (for example: Halfon 1989, p. 13) and the *Crito* in particular is regularly cited as depicting him in this way (for example: Kahn 1996, pp. 125–6; cf. Kateb 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Note that this diachronic intrapersonal agreement can be both future- and past-directed. Much of what I have to say will emphasise the past-directed form of consistency but note that the Greek verb *homologeîn* can be used to mean 'to promise', that is, to declare now something that the agent will do in the future: LSJ s.v. II.3. See also Brown 2018, p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> I say 'often' because sometimes such 'failures' (they can sometimes be deliberate) can be honest errors, amusing, demanded by politeness and so on.

<sup>8</sup> This suggests that some accounts of integrity are insufficient insofar as they fail to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable cases of consistent action or character. (See Halfon 1989, pp. 28–37.) It also suggests that notions of integrity and consistency are, as we might have suspected from the outset, normatively coloured.

engage with the same procedure Socrates uses to determine his own decisions and also by prompting him to agree with relevant conclusions the pair had reached in previous discussions. He tries to re-establish a consensus concerning the truth of a certain ethical principle and then apply that principle to establish an accord about what they are to do. This attempt proves unsuccessful and Crito finds it impossible to agree that Socrates should not escape prison.

We might wonder why Socrates should be so concerned in this dialogue that he and Crito reach an accord. The absence of interpersonal agreement, in contrast to the intrapersonal kind, is not generally considered to be itself a reason for blame or criticism. We sometimes find fault with one or more individual members of the group because of some reason for their particular failure to join the consensus or accord and we sometimes find it morally praiseworthy for someone to stand apart and decline to join the consensus or accord. Why, in that case, should it matter whether Crito shares Socrates' view of what is to be done, particularly given Socrates' public willingness to dissent from the general assessment of what actions are right and wrong? In this dialogue, Socrates shows a familiar contempt for the views of 'the many' (44c6–d10) and, historically, Socrates more than one took a stand against the consensus of the ruling powers in Athens.<sup>9</sup>

My suggestion is that the contrast between Socrates and Crito highlights precisely the general principles that continue to guide Socrates' method for determining how to act and which, because of the imminent threat to his friend, Crito has for the moment overlooked. It matters that Crito should agree to this shared plan of action not only because whether Socrates lives or dies is something important to Crito but also because Crito now needs to be reminded of what he and Socrates have for some time thought to be the right methods for forming beliefs and guiding actions. In short, we should form a consensus and an accord for further action together with others only on the basis of shared beliefs that best match the truth. As we shall see, given the difficulty of finding the truth, Socrates is quite aware that we may not always believe what is true and we should therefore always be ready to revise and improve our beliefs and then act accordingly.<sup>10</sup> Without a continual commitment to making

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<sup>9</sup> For example, he took a stand against other members of the prytany on the fate of the Athenian generals at Arginusae: Plato *Apol.* 32a4–e1; cf. Xenophon *Memorabilia* 4.4.1–4.

<sup>10</sup> Scherkoske (2013, p. 7), calls this 'integrity-within-reason'.

sure our beliefs are as good as possible, a commitment to mere agreement as such has no value.<sup>11</sup>

## II

While Socrates is concerned throughout to show that he does what he does consistently, the same cannot be said for Crito. Indeed, Crito's predicament is made evident not only by the difficulty he has in applying to the particular case in hand the philosophical principles he swiftly agrees to after only a brief discussion with Socrates (49e5–50a5), but also because we are encouraged to think that Crito has previously, in discussion with Socrates, had no difficulty at all in signing up to these very same principles. Clearly, the most searching examination of the virtues of intrapersonal agreement is found when the person concerned faces directly what might be a personally harmful circumstance or might be tempted by a new and easier option. Then there is an understandable temptation either to think that these circumstances allow for an exception to the general principle or that the general principle must somehow be qualified.<sup>12</sup> Socrates signally feels not the slightest temptation to change his view about what is to be done.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Compare Brown (2006, pp. 75–7), who labels what I call 'consensus' and 'accord' 'cognitive agreement' and 'performative agreement' respectively. She notes that these may be made sincerely or insincerely and are distinct in the sense that performative agreements are public and generate obligations. She also rightly insists that the overall aim of the dialogue is that Socrates and Crito come to an accord. In a later paper she prefers the term 'declarative' agreement to the earlier 'cognitive agreement'. See Brown (2018, 19 n. 3).

<sup>12</sup> Crito initially asserts that Socrates will not be acting justly if he remains and dies although he could be saved by his friends (45c6).

<sup>13</sup> Compare the various 'data points' listed in Scherkoske's discussion of integrity (Scherkoske 2013, pp. 6–8) with the various characteristics highlighted in the contrast between Socrates and Crito. Compare also Scherkoske's list of the core elements of his own account of integrity as an epistemic virtue (Scherkoske 2013, pp. 26–7). It strikes me that Socrates is depicted in the *Crito*—and elsewhere in Plato—as displaying these very traits and Socrates' commitment to acting on the best available understanding of what is required is very like Scherkoske's account of integrity as an epistemic virtue. Compare also what Kekes 1983 calls 'constancy': 'Constancy is to adhere to the deliberate pattern one has adopted in the face of challenges'. For a discussion of the Stoic Cato, a fan of Socrates and someone often said to live with *integritas*, see Warren, forthcoming.

Socrates takes what someone thinks as the determinant of what that person should then say and do. What a person thinks should in turn be determined by the truth. And, therefore, what a person thinks should be subject to critical scrutiny and open to relevant objections and re-examination. Once an opinion has been arrived at in the proper manner then the agent concerned ought to adjust what he says and what he does so that they agree with the critically determined opinion. Most importantly, any adjustment should occur only in the light of a change in his relevant and critically determined opinions. This brief passage sets out the most important methodological principles that underlie Socrates' approach to consistency and integrity and prepares for the contrast that emerges between him and Crito:

We must now therefore examine whether we should act in this way or not (εἴτε ταῦτα πρακτέον εἴτε μή), as not only now but at all times I am the kind of man (οὐ νῦν πρῶτον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀεὶ τοιοῦτος) 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 seem to me much the same. I value and respect the same principles as before, and if we have no better arguments to bring up at this moment, be sure that I shall not agree with you (εὖ ἴσθι ὅτι οὐ μὴ σοὶ συγχωρήσω), not even if the power of the majority were to try to frighten us more, as if we were children, with threats of incarcerations and executions and confiscation of property. (46b3–c6)<sup>14</sup>

Socrates emphasises how he is now the same kind of person he has always been. This is because he has always been committed to a certain method for determining how he should act. It so happens that there is an agreement between what he was prepared to endorse in previous conversations before his current predicament and his current commitments now that he is facing execution, but it is the method that he picks out as the guiding principle that remains constant. All the same, he emphasises that he remains committed to the very same principles as he found most compelling in the past. Even though he is perfectly willing to reconsider his stance in the light of a good argument to the contrary, he has as yet heard nothing that strikes him as a pertinent objection. He is therefore consistent both in his method and also, as it happens, in the view that he has adopted as a result of that method. But it is the former that matters most to him. Never changing one's mind is also not a virtue and

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<sup>14</sup> Translations of the *Crito* are based on those by G. M. A. Grube.

remaining consistent in one's opinion in the face of reasonable objections is sheer obstinacy; being a person of 'integrity' should not, on any reasonable account, require a person to be entirely unreactive to new evidence and good reasons for changing their views.<sup>15</sup> However, Socrates is prepared to assert that he will happily live with at least one kind of disagreement; he will continue to disagree with Crito over the question of whether he should escape his sentence unless, in contrast with the various—and now apparently irrelevant—considerations which Crito has just finished enumerating (44b–46a), Crito can mount a convincing case for reconsidering the arguments to which Socrates is committed and according to which he is now determined to act.

The correct method for determining how they might arrive at an accord is clearly the principal item on their agenda. The two participants share the view that they ought to agree; they implicitly agree that agreement is important. Crito is desperate for Socrates to agree to the plan he has in mind and concluded both of his previous contributions to the discussion with the repeated plea that Socrates should be persuaded of the correctness of his recommendation.<sup>16</sup> Socrates is similarly eager to persuade Crito and sets out to make sure that his eventual choice not to escape is not contrary to Crito's wishes.<sup>17</sup> That Socrates is concerned about securing Crito's agreement is worth noting since Socrates is certainly not interested in securing everyone's agreement with his preferred course of action. For example, the fact that the other citizens of Athens would not be willing to allow him to escape is noted even before the personified Laws of Athens make their case (48e3) but Socrates does not think it at all important whether the majority of Athenian citizens agree with his choice. Crito too values agreement between the two of them as to what Socrates should do since he has come to the prison precisely to try to persuade Socrates to accept his aid in escaping. Both of them are therefore committed to coming to an agreement and this is sufficient to allow Socrates to begin a more general discussion about the principles of just and unjust action and retaliation.

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<sup>15</sup> See Calhoun (1995, pp. 259–60). Calhoun also regards 'integrity' as having an important social dimension (p. 260): '[A]cknowledging others as deliberators who must themselves abide by their best judgment seems part of, not exterior to, acting with integrity.'

<sup>16</sup> 44b6: νῦν ἐμοὶ πιθοῦ καὶ σώθητι; 45a4: ἀλλ' ἐμοὶ πείθου καὶ μὴ ἄλλως ποίει; 46a8–9: ἀλλὰ παντὶ τρόπῳ, ὃ Σώκρατες, πείθου μοι καὶ μηδαμῶς ἄλλως ποίει.

<sup>17</sup> 48e3–5: ὡς ἐγὼ περὶ πολλοῦ ποιοῦμαι πείσας σε ταῦτα πράττειν, ἀλλὰ μὴ ἄκοντος. Here μὴ ἄκοντος contrasts with ἀκόντων Ἀθηναίων in the previous phrase. If Socrates does escape it will be contrary to the Athenians' wishes; whatever he does, he does not want it to be contrary to Crito's wishes.

The procedure Socrates outlines can offer a method that evades some of the problems in understanding the deliberative structure of joint decision-making and 'shared' intentions. For example, for any pair of deliberators, it seems impossible for either partner individually to determine what the two of them are going to do in a way that avoids the assumption of one individual's authority over what should be a *shared* intention. Nor does it seem possible that both members of the pair can assume authority simultaneously since that too would not produce an intention that is properly shared. Any number of people may each have one and the same goal in mind, of course, and each may independently have an intention to produce that goal. But that too seems to fall short of being what we mean by a properly shared intention.<sup>18</sup> Here, Socrates first asks Crito to agree to a method by which they should come to a decision about the right thing to do. That method involves resolving first to come to see as best they can what the general principles are that should regulate any person's actions and therefore are formulated without any direct reference to the particular matter and circumstances at hand. Once they have decided on some general principle or set of principles and have agreed that these are the principles that should govern any person's actions, then they should attempt to apply those principles to the present case. Agreement about the principles, coupled with agreement about the relevant facts in the case at hand, ought then to determine what they should do in such a way that there is no further difficulty in generating a shared intention or, at the very least, it will reveal the range of acceptable courses of action that are still open to them. Any remaining disagreement within this range of choices should be accepted as legitimate. In all such cases, nevertheless, they will be said to have a shared intention because they have a shared conception of the principles relevant to these circumstances and a shared conception of the relevant facts. The intention they go on to form is a shared intention because it derives from a shared set of action-guiding principles that have been agreed upon through cooperative inquiry combined with a shared understanding of the facts relevant to the decision at hand. We might say that Socrates' procedure devolves the authority for forming the intention to these general principles so that if and when they are

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<sup>18</sup> See Bratman 1993; Velleman (2000, p. 205): '[I]nsofar as either participant thus purports to settle what both will do, he would seem to leave no discretion to the other. The model of first-person-plural intentions requires each of us to intend that we will do something, as if he were in fact settling the issue for both of us. Yet how can I frame the intention that "we" are going to act, if I simultaneously regard the matter as being partly up to you? And how can I continue to regard the matter as partly up to you, if I have already decided that we really *are* going to act? The model seems to require the exercise of more discretion than there is to go round'.



agreed upon then there is little room left for either of the pair to exercise any further discretion once the principles are brought to bear on the particular situation at hand. The two of them will resolve to act as the principles recommend because they have both been party to the shared inquiry into and formulation of those principles.<sup>19</sup>

Just after Socrates' statement that he values Crito's agreement to his plans, he reminds Crito of one of the most important requirements for any successful inquiry. Of the various types of agreement that we have distinguished, perhaps the most familiar from other examples of Socratic dialectic is the insistence on sincerity: an agreement between what an interlocutor says and what he really thinks. Interlocutors are regularly reminded that they should offer up to Socrates their genuine opinions on the matter at hand.<sup>20</sup> Socrates reminds Crito of this requirement more than once. He mentions it first at the very beginning of the discussion of the permissibility or otherwise of committing an injustice:

See whether the start of our inquiry is adequately stated and try to answer what I ask you in the way you think best (καὶ πειρῶ ἀποκρίνεσθαι τὸ ἐρωτώμενον ἢ ἂν μάλιστα οἴη). (48e5–49a2)

Socrates then reminds Crito of the importance of sincere engagement with the line of inquiry when they have concluded that no one should ever harm another, no matter what has been suffered at the other's hands. At this stage, the request for sincerity is coupled with a further reminder of the importance of the shared enterprise:

And Crito, see that in assenting to this point you do not agree to this contrary to your belief (ταῦτα καθομολογῶν, ὅπως μὴ παρὰ δόξαν

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<sup>19</sup> For this sense of κοινή βουλή, compare *Alcibiades I* 119b1 and 124b10–c2: ἀλλὰ γὰρ κοινή βουλή ᾧτινι τρόπῳ ἂν ὅτι βέλτιστοι γενοίμεθα. In both cases, Socrates and Alcibiades are describing an accord concerning which ethically improving actions they might take based on a better knowledge of themselves. Cf. Scherkoske (2013, p. 108): 'That is, integrity is an essentially shared goal of achieving correct views about the practical question of what is worth doing'.

<sup>20</sup> See Vlastos (1994, pp. 7–11), on what he calls the "'say what you believe" requirement' of a Socratic *elenchus*. Here in the *Crito* Socrates is interested not only in having Crito answer sincerely—that is, say things with which Crito agrees—but also in having Crito revisit those things that he and Socrates together had previously agreed, that is had both sincerely affirmed as a result of discussion between them. See also Brown (2018, pp. 23–6).

ὁμολογῆς). For I know that only a few people hold this view or will hold it, and there is no common ground between those who hold this view and those who do not (τούτοις οὐκ ἔστι κοινή βουλή), but they inevitably despise each other's views. So then consider very carefully whether we have this view in common, and whether you agree (κοινωνεῖς καὶ συνδοκεῖ σοι), and let this be the basis of our deliberation, that neither to do wrong or to return a wrong is ever right, not even to injure in return for an injury received. Or do you disagree and do not share this view as a basis for discussion? I have held it for a long time and still hold it now (ἐμοὶ μὲν γὰρ καὶ πάλαι οὕτω καὶ νῦν ἔτι δοκεῖ), but if you think otherwise, tell me now. If, however, you stick to your former opinions (ἐμμένεις τοῖς πρόσθε), then listen to the next point. (49c11–e3)

Socrates wants to ensure that Crito is committed to the general injunction against causing harm, even in retaliation, before he can move on to the next item of business, which is the crucial question whether, in escaping from prison as Crito urges, they would be harming those whom they ought to harm least (49e9–50a3). We shall return to that question shortly, since it is not obvious just what Socrates is asking. But, for now, we should notice that the long and carefully-phrased intervention just quoted (49c11–e3) stands at a transitional point in the discussion at which Socrates wishes to move from a statement of a general principle to the question whether their particular action in running away would conform to or breach that principle. Since that is so, prior agreement of a clear and sincere kind to that principle is essential.

And yet, having noted the importance that Socrates places on agreement between him and Crito, we should also pause again to remark how relaxed he is about the fact that the view that currently seems to him to be the more reasonable is a minority view and is likely always to be so. Few people will ever agree to the notion that it is always wrong to cause harm, even in retaliation, but the fact that this is so should not in the least sway Crito's evaluation of the truth of that claim.<sup>21</sup> Socrates is not interested in gathering a general consensus about this matter since he has no faith whatsoever in the critical faculties of the majority of the Athenian citizens. It is Crito, in fact, who introduces the theme of acting contrary to the popular consensus when in his opening pleas he notes that the majority of

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<sup>21</sup> For Socrates' rejection of retaliation see Vlastos 1991.

people will not be persuaded that Socrates did not want to escape and will instead take the view that Socrates' friends were somehow at fault (44c3: οὐ γὰρ πείσονται οἱ πολλοὶ...)

Socrates is checking whether Crito agrees with the principle being invoked because, first, Crito is now advocating that Socrates should run away. And second, Crito and Socrates discussed these matters in the past and on those occasions did agree to the principle that Socrates thinks is relevant now. A little earlier, at 46d7–47a5, after stressing once more that he wants to embark on a shared inquiry (46d5–6: κοινῇ μετὰ σοῦ) Socrates reminds Crito that when they have discussed the matter in the past and thought they had reached a conclusion, they had agreed that only some opinions are worth any attention. He asks whether they should stick by that previous thought (which is itself yet another request for consistency) and Crito agrees to this claim about whose agreement will matter. In short, Socrates and Crito now reaffirm their previous agreement that consensus is not always valuable since there are those whose opinions we need not accommodate or accept. Agreement matters first of all when it is a consensus between the right people and the right people are either those who possess expertise in the subject in hand (the *phronimoi* of 47a9) or, failing that, those who at least value the search for the truth, are prepared to submit their opinions to rational and critical appraisal, and will act only on the basis of what appear to be the most compelling principles for action.

In the absence of an expert, the next best thing will be to agree with the view that seems at the moment to have the best chance of being true, having been carefully and rationally scrutinised in a frank and sincere discussion. Since most people, Socrates believes, neither have submitted nor will submit their opinions about justice to any such critical appraisal then the fact that they do not agree with his and Crito's preferred view is irrelevant. This is a not-so-gentle reminder to Crito not to be influenced by majority opinion since in his opening address to Socrates he had seemed overly concerned about what kind of public reputation Socrates and his friends might acquire were they not to attempt an escape (45e5–46a3).<sup>22</sup>

In the critical passage from 49c, we find Socrates reminding Crito of their shared previous commitment to valuing what is true over what most people happen to think. Indeed, he reminds Crito that they had come to their previous conclusions on more than one occasion and it would be very peculiar if only the few days since the court's judgement these earlier carefully-won commitments should be thrown away (49a4–9). When he tells Crito to

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<sup>22</sup> On Crito's concern for public reputation see also Woozley (1979, pp. 11–18).

make sure ‘that in assenting to this point you do not agree to this contrary to your belief’, he is not only asking for a sincere answer. He is also reminding Crito of the belief that was the result of that earlier reasoning and asking him to make sure that it is not discarded for the wrong reasons. Socrates thinks that if they were now to overturn those earlier agreements then it would be as if, although they are both serious grown men, they had up until now been talking like mere boys (49a9–b1).<sup>23</sup> The comparison points to another general notion about diachronic consistency: no one should be expected to stand committed to conclusions reached in their youth about matters of value and principle. Mature reflection and experience should be expected to alter and improve what a person holds to be important in such matters and it is no grounds for criticism that someone has changed his mind from what they thought important as a child.<sup>24</sup> But Socrates and Crito have no such reason to change their commitments now. Those commitments were reached on more than one occasion and as a result of committed serious inquiry by mature and reflective people.

Socrates now asserts that he can himself see no reason to reject the view of the matter that he and Crito had agreed upon prior to his incarceration. His assessment of the likely truth, in other words, is consistent with his previous view. Crito is reminded that, if he does indeed want to alter his position then he ought to do so only on the proper grounds. And if there are serious and appropriate considerations that Socrates ought to take into account then it is entirely open for the matter to be freshly appraised; Crito should simply state his new argument and they will consider it or else he must see what follows from their prior commitment.<sup>25</sup> A consistency of method should be privileged over a consistency of the conclusion adopted since it is always possible that a previous conclusion should be revised in

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. 46d3–4: νῦν δὲ κατάδηλος ἄρα ἐγένετο ὅτι ἄλλως ἔνεκα λόγου ἐλέγετο, ἦν δὲ παιδιὰ καὶ φλυαρία ὡς ἀληθῶς;

<sup>24</sup> It is not always obvious that the values we acquire later in life should be preferred to those of our youth, regardless of any particular view we may have of the metaphysics of personal continuity or identity. Compare here Parfit’s (1984, pp. 327–9) example of the Russian who takes steps to guard against his older self reneging on his current commitments to socialist ideals.

<sup>25</sup> 49e1–3: ἐμοὶ μὲν γὰρ καὶ πάλαι οὕτω καὶ νῦν ἔτι δοκεῖ, σοὶ δὲ εἴ πῃ ἄλλη δέδοκται, λέγε καὶ δίδασκε. εἰ δ’ ἐμμένεις τοῖς πρόσθε, τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο ἄκουε.

the light of new considerations.<sup>26</sup> But it is just this consistency of method that Crito seems to have overlooked in his appeal to what Socrates considers to be either irrelevant or at best trivial considerations. When Crito urges Socrates to think over what is to be done it is evident that he is particularly moved by the urgency of the situation. He says: ‘But consider—in fact, this is not the time to consider; rather, it’s time to have already made up your mind—this single course of action’ (46a4–5).<sup>27</sup> The insistence that there is no time for further reflection since they must now simply act contrasts both with the fact that it is Socrates who is committed to what they have previously made up their mind to do and also with Socrates’ present willingness to take the time to listen to any new points Crito has to offer. In this way, Socrates is both doxastically conservative, at least for those of his beliefs which he thinks have been investigated appropriately in the past, and also prepared for the reflective reconsideration of any and all of the beliefs he currently holds, provided the reconsideration is itself of an appropriate kind.<sup>28</sup>

When Socrates asks just a little later what Crito’s attitude is to their earlier discussions, Crito, perhaps surprisingly, says both that he remains committed to those prior conclusions and also that he shares Socrates’ view (49e4: ἀλλ’ ἐμμένω τε καὶ συνδοκεῖ μοι; the form συνδοκεῖ is an important marker of the fact that this is a *consensus*). These are two distinct points, of course, and they are both important for Socrates to secure the eventual shared accord about what they should do. He wants Crito to agree with his plan and he is keen for him and Crito to reach that decision for the same reasons as he has. He also wants Crito to notice that the agreement is in fact consistent with what Crito previously thought and

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<sup>26</sup> See Halfon (1989, pp. 61–100), for his distinction between ‘compromise’ and ‘reassessment’. He notes that the reassessment of one’s moral commitments is entirely compatible with being a person of moral integrity while compromise is not. Socrates here in the *Crito* insists that the willingness to reassess one’s commitments appropriately is an essential aspect of his unwavering commitment to a certain method of moral inquiry. It is not necessary to think, however, that Crito has merely compromised his own commitments; he may instead have mistakenly and hastily reassessed his stance on the basis of various values, for example the importance of public reputation, that Socrates does not think relevant.

<sup>27</sup> ἀλλὰ βουλευέου – μάλλον δὲ οὐδὲ βουλευέσθαι ἔτι ὥρα ἀλλὰ βεβουλευῆσθαι – μία δὲ βουλή. Contrast Crito’s insistence on the *single* course of action they must follow (μία βουλή) with Socrates’ emphasis on the importance of a *shared* course of action: περὶ ὧν νῦν ἡ βουλή ἡμῖν ἐστίν (47c10–11).

<sup>28</sup> Compare Haack (1976, especially pp. 58–9) on the ‘genuine inquirer’ who is a ‘person of intellectual integrity’.

what they had previously agreed; Crito's current opinion that Socrates should escape is revealed in that light as an unjustified anomaly.

Up to this point in the conversation, Socrates' method appears to have been entirely successful. Provided Crito has indeed been answering sincerely it ought to be possible to move on from his general principle to a focus on the specific case in hand.<sup>29</sup> But that is not in fact how things proceed since Crito nevertheless refuses to say how his earlier commitment to it being wrong to commit an injustice should determine his attitude to Socrates' possible escape. Now we can look again at the turning point of the argument and of the dialogue as a whole (49e4–50a5):

Crito: I stick to it and agree with you (ἐμμένω τε καὶ συνδοκεῖ μοι). So say on.

Socrates: Then I state the next point, or rather I ask you: when one has come to an agreement that is just with someone (ὁμολογήσῃ τῷ δίκαια ὄντα), should one fulfil it or cheat on it?

Crito: One should fulfil it.

Socrates: See what follows from this: if we leave here without the city's permission, are we harming those whom we should least do harm to? And are we sticking to what we have agreed are just (καὶ ἐμμένομεν οἷς ὁμολογήσαμεν δίκαιοις οὖσιν), or not?

Crito: I cannot answer your question, Socrates. I do not know.

It is not difficult to see why Crito finds it hard to answer. First, it is not obvious what the connection is between the two questions. Socrates has not made clear what relationship, if any, there is between the fact that the city has not granted permission for Socrates to leave and the possibility that they might not be respecting previous agreements. We ought to resist the temptation to import the notion introduced later in the dialogue of an agreement between Socrates and the city as constitutive of what is just. The verbs are emphatically first-person—so the agreement is between Socrates and Crito—and are much more likely to mean that Socrates is asking about what they have agreed is just in their previous arguments. They have

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<sup>29</sup> Lane (1998, p. 315 and pp. 321–22), agrees that this is the pivotal moment of the dialogue and interprets the argument at this point in the form of a practical syllogism, arguing that Crito assents to the major general premise but not to the minor particular premise. Cf. Brown (2006, pp. 76–7).

certainly not yet agreed either that Socrates should stay or that he should run away and so it is hard to see that Socrates can be asking Crito simply to abide by such a previous promise to perform a certain act, provided it is just.<sup>30</sup>

Second, the language used by Socrates in posing the crucial questions is evasive. 'Those whom we should harm least' in the first question is a curious periphrasis if, as seems likely, he simply means that doing an injustice causes harm to the agent himself. Socrates had referred just a little earlier to 'that which injustice harms and justice benefits'; this is also, apparently, some part of us, 'the one about which justice and injustice are concerned' (47e7–48a1). Since the analogue for the harm envisaged here is the damage an athlete may do to his body by acting in accordance with bad advice from an inexperienced trainer, then a reasonable inference is that Socrates means something like the agent's soul (which may, in fact, be what the agent really is) and it is not hard to imagine that he is invoking, albeit obliquely, the familiar Socratic notion that committing an injustice is harmful to the agent and not the victim of the injustice. Socrates does not explicitly refer to the soul here since there is no need at this point for his argument to deal with these metaphysical and psychological complications. Perhaps Crito has in the past heard enough from Socrates about these subjects too.

In any event, Crito fails to draw the conclusion that Socrates thinks follows (49e9: ἐκ τούτων δὴ ἄθροει. Cf. 50a4–5). Crito has previously assented to the claim that one ought never to commit an injustice because it is harmful to oneself. If it is next established that the plan he proposes is unjust then it should follow that he and Socrates will be in accord that Socrates should not escape.<sup>31</sup> Now, however, he is unable to answer. Perhaps he knows perfectly well

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<sup>30</sup> Contrast: Brown (2006, pp. 76–7). Cf. Lane (1998, pp. 320–21), (321): 'However, up to this point in the dialogue [49e–50a], words for 'agreement' have referred exclusively to agreement in argument. In the context of that preceding argument, the most natural way to read the point about agreement – imagine reading the dialogue for the first time – is roughly 'we must do what we've just agreed, not merely assent to it verbally'.'

<sup>31</sup> Brown (2006, p. 76; cf. Brown 2018, pp. 28–9) is concerned to determine whether 49e4–6 is a request for what I call consensus (agreement that p) or accord (agreement to do X). She prefers to understand Socrates' question as 'Should one do the things he has promised to another, provided they are just, or should one play false?', emphasising the sense of 'agreement' as 'promising' and introducing the possibility that such promises may not be kept if the action promised turns out to be unjust. I agree that Socrates is asking whether Crito thinks that he is bound by a previous agreement. But I think that the commitment in question is to do something agreed to be just (roughly: 'Should we do those things that we agree are just?'). Having secured this general principle, Socrates then asks whether running away from prison

the conclusion he should draw but cannot bear to say. Or perhaps, at this point of the conversation, he is so concerned with his earlier considerations about public reputation and friendship that he is incapable of seeing how this familiar argument—an argument he has been through before and even now has assented to up to this point—should command his assent to the conclusion Socrates is set upon because he is genuinely confused about whether what Socrates is proposing would be unjust. At this stage, Crito is unable to heed the best and most authoritative advice available, namely the advice provided by a set of principles that have been agreed as a result of critically evaluated argument aimed at the truth and has instead fallen back on advice and considerations provided by common opinions about reputation and the like. Crito begins by asserting clearly that he sticks to their earlier conclusion and agrees with Socrates (49e4: ἐμμένω τε καὶ συνδοκεῖ μοι) but just a few lines later is failing to remain consistent with what they have previously agreed is the just thing to do (50a2–3: καὶ ἐμμένομεν οἷς ὡμολογήσαμεν δικαίοις οὕσιν). This is not because Crito is an idiot.<sup>32</sup> Rather, Crito is here unable to remain fixed on the agreed and principled method of deciding what to do.<sup>33</sup> He is still arguing that Socrates should do ‘what is just’ but, in the face of the present situation, he has moved away from their earlier criteria for determining what is and is not just and has now decided that what justice requires is that Socrates should escape since he is prepared to think that justice is determined by the possibility that remaining would damage his and Socrates’ reputation, Socrates’ children’s prospects and so on. He lacks a certain kind of resolve in the face of the potential personal costs of his acting in the manner recommended by the previous argument and has instead formed the belief that the opposite course of action is the better and is just.<sup>34</sup>

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would be a just or an unjust act and therefore whether it is sanctioned or prohibited by the general commitment. Crito has not promised Socrates to perform or refrain from performing some particular (type of) action so that they now need to check to make sure that action is just. Rather, Crito and Socrates have agreed and committed themselves once again to the principle that they should not do anything unjust (49d5–4) and now need to determine together whether Crito’s current proposal for action is consistent with that commitment.

<sup>32</sup> *Pace* Weiss (1998, pp. 43–51).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Taylor (1981, p. 146).

<sup>34</sup> On the relevant kind of lack of resolve see Scherkoske (2013, 94–8). Compare Holton 2004 on ‘judgement shift’ (the phenomenon in which agents who succumb to temptation also come to believe that they are following the best path after all) and his (2009, ch. 4) account of ‘weakness of will’ as the ‘unreasonable revision of a resolution’.



### III

I turn now to the most widely discussed example of agreement in the dialogue. This is the argument proposed by the Laws of Athens that Socrates is obliged to stay and be executed because his past behaviour shows that he has entered into an implicit agreement to be bound by the city's laws. I think that there is good reason to doubt that the Laws' arguments here in the *Crito* are to be attributed wholesale to Socrates himself and I think that some of these reasons are themselves based on ideas of consistency and agreement of the kind I hope to have shown are highlighted by the dialogue itself.<sup>35</sup> Other interpretations disagree and see the speech of the Laws as integral to Socrates' own case but, no matter which view is taken about the argumentative structure of the dialogue as a whole, we can take the agreement that the Laws invoke and compare it with the other kinds of agreement explored so far. No matter which opinion we adopt about Socrates' endorsement of what they say, the speech of the Laws encourages the reader to think carefully again about what are and what are not sensible grounds for demanding obedience and accord between people, both in cases when the parties

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<sup>35</sup> This is also, but for differing reasons, the view of Weiss 1998 and Harte 1999; Brickhouse and Smith (1984, p. 16 n.3) list some earlier interpretations in a similar vein. Brown 2006 disagrees (74 n.4): 'I do not find a satisfactory account, in either Harte or Weiss, of Socrates' repeated assertions, in his own voice, that he did make an agreement.' The passages Brown has in mind are 52a6–8 and 52d3–6. In neither case, however, does Socrates assent directly to the claim that he has agreed. At 52a6–8 he simply raises the possibility (ἰσως) that the Laws would be right to object that he above all Athenians had entered into an agreement with them. At 52d3–6 the Laws ask Socrates to say whether it is true that he had agreed by his actions (ἔργῳ) to live according to them and then Socrates asks Crito whether they should answer that he has. Crito says they must. In this case it seems open whether Socrates himself genuinely believes that he has entered into such an agreement, particularly if the purpose of the Laws' speech in general is to persuade Crito of the correctness of the decision to remain. What matters is that he presents Crito with an argument that Crito finds compelling in the present circumstances. (On whether the end of the dialogue and its reference to Corybantic rites is a further sign that Socrates does not endorse the Laws' arguments see Harte (1999, pp. 230–31), and the critical comments in Wasmuth 2015.) Wasmuth (2020, esp. pp. 393–5), offers reasons for thinking that Socrates does endorse the Laws' reasoning at least in the case of his present situation and that their speech provides the otherwise missing account of why in running away Socrates would be acting unjustly.

to the accord are equals and may make voluntary agreements with one another and also when they are relevantly unequal and one is subject to the other's authority and command.

Early in the dialogue, Socrates voiced his scepticism about the power of the democratic majority in Athens to cause him any harm because they act haphazardly (44d6–10). Now the invocation of the Laws moves the discussion more explicitly into the realm of political agreement and reintroduces a role for Athens in determining what Socrates should do. In some ways, the Laws function in this part of the dialogue not as principles or constraints to which discussants may refer in order to guide their decision-making but as discussants themselves. They set out to persuade Socrates to agree to a certain course of action and claim to be open to being persuaded in turn to adopt Socrates' point of view. They and Socrates seem to be setting out to form an accord just as Crito and Socrates did. However, in other ways the Laws also stress how they and Socrates do not stand to one another in a relationship just like that between Socrates and Crito. As their account proceeds, it highlights ways in which they command obedience from Socrates in virtue of their superiority to him. In sum, in this part of the dialogue, the Laws of Athens sometimes switch their roles. They sometimes assume the role of action-guiding principles or sources of commands and sometimes they offer themselves as partners in a discussion aimed at forming an accord.

The combination of roles assumed by the Laws brings with it an inconsistency in the nature of the arguments they propose. On the one hand, the Laws make a claim on Socrates' obedience simply on the basis that he owes them his loyalty since he was born and raised according to their rules. They are his superiors, perhaps more so than a father is superior to a child or a master to a slave. The general message of a large portion of the speech, running from 50e1 to 51c4 is that the Laws and Socrates are not equals and Socrates must submit to the dictates of the Laws as he would to a father or master. There is no reference in this section to Socrates' obedience being dependent on any agreement and, in fact, the Laws begin to invoke the notion that Socrates might obey them because of the good that they have done for him only later in their speech at 51c8–d1, so they are not likely at this point to be relying on the idea that Socrates owes them a debt of obedience in return for the benefits they have provided. There may be an implicit reliance here on the idea that Laws, like a parent or a master, or even an athletic trainer, know better than Socrates what the correct course of action may be. For the most part the argument rests less on a paternalist conception of the Laws' relationship to Socrates than on a simple assertion of authority, based on the idea that this

order of ruler and ruled is buttressed by some kind of theological support or that disobedience will lead to a general destruction of political order.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, the Laws also argue that they and Socrates have come to some kind of voluntary agreement. Socrates was perfectly able to choose whether to submit to the rule of Athenian law and, in deed if not in word, has given his agreement to be bound by them although it was perfectly possible for him to do otherwise. It is not clear how these two arguments can be simultaneously maintained. The first makes Socrates obliged to obey the Laws by birth and position, as it were, regardless of any assent on his part; a slave cannot choose to move away from his master and thereby avoid the obligations of his position. The second rests precisely on his having the option to choose whether to enter a compact with the Laws and voluntarily placing himself under an obligation to obey. Perhaps there are ways to smooth over the problem but, if there are, the Laws make no effort to point them out. This omission is perfectly fine in a piece of persuasive rhetoric, of course, even though it would never pass muster in a concerted dialectical exchange and I take this to be further reason to be suspicious of making Socrates endorse what the Laws say on behalf of his preferred course of action. Instead, their speech presents a set of appeals to agreement, consistency, and obedience that are instructively different from Socrates' own insistence on a consistent approach to forming consensus and accord and on obedience to expertise and the authority of the truth.

If I may build on the proposal that the *Crito* presents to us various kinds of agreement and encourages us to consider and compare them, then the general picture I propose for the structure of the dialogue is as follows. Socrates starts with the intention that he and Crito should come to share in a plan of action. It is important for Socrates that they are genuine partners first in the examination and formulation of the shared intention and then in carrying out whatever they decide. Over the course of the first half of the dialogue, however, Socrates comes to realise that Crito is not able to form the desired accord on the basis of what Socrates continues to think are compelling principles—principles to which Crito too was previously committed—combined with the relevant facts. The crucial exchange at 50a1–5 shows that Crito is no longer able to complete the argument in the way that Socrates insists he should. In that case—and here I recognise that I am moving into more controversial territory—Socrates takes a second-best route designed to ensure at least that Crito is content for Socrates not to

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<sup>36</sup> Athens is something not only 'more worthy of honour' but also due more reverence (σεμνότερον) and more sacred (ἀγιώτερον) than one's mother and father: 51a7–b2; Socrates is accused of destroying the laws by disobeying them: 51a3–7, 52c9, 55b3–c3.

escape and this is the form of persuasion that the speech of the Laws, as a piece of oratory, is best able to produce (50b5–c1). It would have been better, in other words, for Crito to be reminded of those principles of action that had seemed to the two of them to be so compelling in their previous discussions and to have come to an accord with Socrates on the basis of a shared agreement about the grounds for Socrates' actions. But Crito is so agitated at the thought of his friend's imminent death that this better form of accord is not possible. Instead, Socrates uses the Laws to combat the various considerations that Crito had raised in his opening arguments as a means of quieting those obstacles and preventing discord. Whereas Socrates had previously ruled as irrelevant Crito's concerns for public reputation and the like, here the Laws are allowed to use those considerations as part of their own case.<sup>37</sup>

This interpretation of the use of the speech of the Laws may appear to commit Socrates to breaking one of his own methodological principles, namely the insistence on sincerity. If, as I have suggested, the speech of the Laws contains arguments and considerations that Socrates himself would not endorse, then it is odd to think that he would be happy to use it as a means of winning Crito's agreement to his plan. This would make Socrates a manipulative and insincere interlocutor. Even if this is so, Socrates' insincerity is qualified in important ways. First of all, Socrates is quite clear in attributing the speech to the Laws and does not invite the inference that he himself endorses everything they have to say. He and Crito are the addressees of their speech. As others have noticed, the speech of the Laws is introduced by Socrates' remark that an orator would have many things to say on the subject of law-breaking (50b6–c1). This is only a passing reference, but recall the less than wholehearted approval of oratory that is expressed by Socrates in other works. Oratorical skill and the ability to win over a listener are objects of suspicion precisely because the power

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<sup>37</sup> The closing lines of the Laws' speech at 54c8–d1 show that they intend to counterbalance Crito's initial arguments: ἀλλὰ μή σε πείση Κρίτων ποιεῖν ἃ λέγει μάλλον ἢ ἡμεῖς. And there are signs that their speech does indeed answer Crito's initial argument. For example, Crito says that his and his friends' reputation will be damaged by Socrates' death (44b7–c5); the Laws reply that neither Socrates nor his friends will benefit from his escaping the sentence and Socrates in particular will acquire a bad reputation that will be a hindrance in any well-governed city he might want to live in (53b3–c3). Crito says that Socrates will be welcomed in Thessaly and can live a happy life there (45c1–5); the Laws reply at 53d1–54b2 by pointing out how life in Thessaly would not fit Socrates' picture of a good life. Crito says that Socrates' sons will fare badly if he dies (45c10–d7); the Laws reply that they will not fare well either if Socrates leaves them in Athens or if he takes them with him into exile (54a2–b2).

of an orator seems to be entirely independent of the genuine merits of the case being made.

This is the correct point, I think, to consider the notorious principle introduced by the Laws that Socrates should either ‘persuade or obey’ them, a principle that has caused considerable difficulty for commentators who try to find in the speech of the Laws a position to which Socrates can sincerely be committed.<sup>38</sup> Just as Socrates had earlier insisted that he and Crito should remain committed to the principles determined earlier and to the general injunctions against unjust action that derived from those principles, so too the Laws begin by insisting that Socrates should stand by the supposed agreement that he should obey their commands. In both cases, we should note, there is a proviso attached. Crito and Socrates should stick by their previous commitments—the commitments that Socrates still thinks are the most reasonable—but there is nevertheless the opportunity for Crito to offer new arguments and new considerations that may demand that those principles be revised based on a new and improved understanding. Similarly, the Laws continue to allow Socrates the opportunity to revise their relationship. Provided he can persuade them to change their mind, then they will be ready to allow Socrates to act contrary to the current agreement. The two positions are also importantly different, however, since Socrates is clear about the standards which will be used to evaluate any new consideration Crito has to offer. He will take the time to consider and reflect on these arguments and subject them to rational scrutiny. The Laws, in contrast, say merely that Socrates should persuade them. There is no further elaboration of the standards for appropriate or successful persuasion and the impression is that there are in fact no determinate criteria that can be applied. Although being persuasive in a law court or in a popular assembly is indeed the Athenian way of determining what the ‘shared plan’ of the *dēmos* should be, we have been strongly encouraged already by Socrates to think that it is no way to decide matters of this ethical importance.

Second, early in the dialogue Socrates outlines a situation that differs from the way in which he intends Crito and himself to come to an accord but which turns out, in fact, to be rather like the reality he has to face by the impasse of 50a4–5. At 47a2–c8, Socrates tries to

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<sup>38</sup> 51c9–e1: πανταχοῦ ποιητέον ἂν κελεύῃ ἡ πόλις καὶ ἡ πατρις, ἢ πείθειν αὐτήν ἢ τὸ δίκαιον πέφυκε; 51 e6–7: καὶ ὅτι ὁμολογήσας ἡμῖν πείσεσθαι οὔτε πείθεται οὔτε πείθει ἡμᾶς, εἰ μὴ καλῶς τι ποιῶμεν; 52a2–3:... ἢ πείθειν ἡμᾶς ἢ ποιεῖν; Kraut (1984, pp. 54–90), famously resorts to interpreting πείθειν here conatively as ‘try to persuade’, in part to avoid making the criterion for success in this venture dependent on whether the particular addressee of the argument or speech does in fact happen to be persuaded. For an argument against Kraut’s view, see Bostock (1990, pp. 13–16).

counter Crito's concerns about what 'the many' will think if Socrates does not run away.<sup>39</sup> Here, Socrates points out that what matters in many cases is the opinion of the wise (*phronimoi*). In cases in which we do not ourselves have the capacity for determining the truth about what should and should not be done, we ought to align our beliefs and actions with what we are told by the experts because their expertise just is their having true opinions about the matter at hand. The pupil or the athlete is benefitted by acting in accord with expert advice just because the expert knows the truth about what should and should not be done.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps there is a certain kind of pedagogical and persuasive skill that makes some experts more effective than others in this regard. And some forms of persuasion on the part of such experts may be harmful or coercive in other ways. But importantly, the expertise and the persuasive techniques are independent of one another; that independence is in part why we need to be on our guard against those people who are merely good persuaders and possess no expert knowledge of the matter at hand.

My final observation is that, on this reading of the function of the speech of the Laws, any accord that Socrates and Crito reach at this time will not, unfortunately, be on the basis of their both recognising and sharing a commitment to some critically examined claim about what is or is not just. Instead, Socrates turns to the persuasive tools of rhetoric to generate a shared intention to act as he thinks is best. Nevertheless, through this manoeuvre, he can draw our attention one more time to the different ways in which accord might be reached and the relative value of those different methods. The speech of the Laws, on this view, is an example of the kind of persuasive means that anyone sufficiently skilled might use to

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<sup>39</sup> Lott 2015 reads the *Crito* with a keen eye on the notion of 'practical authority' which, she notes, requires the ability to deliberate well on practical matters (2015, p. 6). In that case, given Socrates' view about the likely competence of 'the many', there is no reason to think that the democratic institutions of Athens should be granted any practical authority in Socrates' eyes, however persuasive they may be. And there may also be people who are indeed authorities in this sense but who fail to be regarded as such and therefore are not able to persuade anyone of the correct action.

<sup>40</sup> This is perhaps the right place to mention the importance of 'frankness of speech' (*parrhēsia*). There is an extensive literature exploring this notion in ancient texts so I will note here only that frank speech is of course related to forms of sincerity I have introduced so far but, in most cases, differs insofar as frank speech is generally taken to involve speaking honestly about someone else. It is a form of honesty in the second or third person, so to speak, distinct from the first-personal forms such as 'sincerity' as I have used that term here and that is why 'frank speech' is crucial in educational and political contexts.

generate accord in an audience, independent of any knowledge of or ability to determine correctly what is and is not to be done. In this case, Socrates is using these means to persuade Crito to act in a way that Socrates also regards to be the right thing to do on the grounds that it best accords with what he currently takes to be a rationally justified belief about what is and is not just. In that sense, Socrates stands now to Crito as a gymnastic trainer stands to an athlete in training except that it is 'that part that injustice harms and justice benefits' (47e7) that is being safeguarded rather than Crito's physical condition. What matters for athletic success is ultimately that the athlete trains as he ought and the trainer's job is to make sure that happens by whatever means are effective.

This manoeuvre points towards elements in Plato's other political works which have regularly been identified as paternalistic and anti-egalitarian. Consider, for example, the relationship between the ruling and ruled classes in the ideal city of the *Republic*. There, the desired outcome for the good of everyone in the city is a harmony of purpose in line with what is truly good. The community is just if it is led by a class of people whose thoughts are guided by reason and are empowered to use all necessary means of ensuring the accord of those who are not similarly blessed. Or we might even look to the very end of Plato's career and see in the various laws and preludes to laws in his final dialogue—the *Laws*—a return to an interest in how best to harness the power of persuasive rhetoric to secure the accord and the ethical improvement of people who are not themselves capable of coming to a full understanding of the required ethical principles. In the *Crito*, Socrates makes no bold claims to possess an unshakable knowledge of what is good since he repeatedly says that he is open to new arguments, but he is nevertheless determined to act in accordance with the best he can manage and also to try his best to make sure that his friend agrees, through a rehearsal of their shared history of dialectical conversations if possible but through other means if necessary.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> By time of the events of the *Phaedo* just a couple of days later, Crito appears to be reconciled to Socrates' death and even asks Socrates about what to do with Socrates' children and affairs after the execution. Socrates replies: 'Nothing new, Crito, said Socrates, but what I am always saying, that you will please me and mine and yourselves by taking good care of your own selves in whatever you do, even if you do not agree with me now (κἂν μὴ νῦν ὁμολογήσητε), but if you neglect your own selves, and are unwilling to live following the tracks, as it were, of what we have said now and on previous occasions, you will achieve nothing even if you strongly agree with me at this moment (οὐδὲ ἐὰν πολλὰ ὁμολογήσητε ἐν τῷ παρόντι καὶ σφόδρα)' (*Phaedo* 115b5–c1, trans. G. M. A. Grube). Socrates again takes the opportunity to

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stress both the consistency over time of his views and also the importance for *Crito* and the other friends of putting into practice their previous commitments.



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