

# Socrates, wake up!

## An analysis and exegesis of the “preface” in Plato’s *Crito* (43a1-b9)

**Yosef Z. Liebersohn**

Bar-Ilan University

yosef.liebersohn@biu.ac.il

### ABSTRACT

In this paper I offer a close analysis of the first scene in Plato’s *Crito* (43a1-b9). Understanding a Platonic dialogue as a philosophical drama turns apparent scene-setting into an integral and essential part of the philosophical discussion. The two apparently innocent questions Socrates asks at the beginning of the *Crito* anticipate Crito’s two problems, namely how he regards his friendship with Socrates as opposed to his complicated relations with the polis and its sovereignty. These two questions are an integral part of the philosophical discussion presented throughout the dialogue.

Keywords : Plato, Crito, Drama

[http://dx.doi.org/10.14195/2183-4105\\_15\\_2](http://dx.doi.org/10.14195/2183-4105_15_2)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Prefaces in general are no more than introductions. The very terms ‘preface’, ‘prologue’, ‘foreword’ and the like indicate that the treatise itself has not yet been reached. The apparently unimportant passages at the beginnings of Platonic dialogues are often treated as prefaces. Plato chose to present his philosophy in the form of dramatic conversations, and it is becoming widely accepted that the dramatic form is so important that it should be taken seriously in any attempt to uncover Plato’s views. Even so, many sentences and passages assumed to be merely a part of the dramatic background are still often passed over as philosophically irrelevant. If the dialogue is a philosophical drama from beginning to end, then it follows that every part of the dialogue should be considered pertinent to an understanding of the philosophical import of the work as a whole. This paper presents an example of this premise by examining a section that tends to suffer the most from being overlooked, the opening scene, in this case, of Plato’s *Crito*, 43a1-b2. With few exceptions<sup>1</sup>, Plato’s dialogues usually open with what might be taken as a preface aimed at presenting the characters and the general scene. This impression is far from the actual case, as I shall demonstrate here. An analysis of these twelve lines will show how this ‘preface’ is actually an integral part of the philosophical argument of the dialogue as a whole, and not only a kind of a dramatic setting, an anticipation of the main themes of the dialogue and the like. Since the preface itself *is* a philosophical discussion - it contains philosophical arguments and statements - the very distinction between ‘preface’ and ‘philosophical part’ should be called into question.

## 2. PLATO, SOCRATES, AND PLATONIC DIALOGUES: A WORD ON METHODOLOGY

My analysis in this paper assumes the Platonic dialogue to be a philosophical drama, but focuses only on its prologue, and both points need to be explained at the outset.

When we read a Platonic dialogue we listen to the words not of the dramatist (Plato) but of his characters, among whom is to be included Socrates. The characters are usually based on historical figures, but are adapted to the needs of the fictional conversation in which they are placed. Thus, all but the most general information concerning the characters is to be sought within the specific dialogue being analyzed, rather than lifted in from other dialogues which are dramas in their own right with their own emphases.

Plato’s dialogues so analyzed turn out to be well organized; the whole work is organic and its various levels interrelated. Apparently insignificant or redundant details appearing in an early stage of the dialogue are often found to be significant only at a later stage of the dialogue or of the analysis. The dramatist does not make the dialogues follow one single pattern. He may, for example, present his characters either as knowing many things in advance about their interlocutors or at first knowing only one or two things about them, but learning more as the conversation proceeds. It is usually a good idea for the reader to observe the moves made by Socrates in those dialogues where Socrates is a main speaker. When his moves are explicable only were he to know how his interlocutor would react indicates that he is presented by Plato as actually knowing in advance how his interlocutor would react.

Hence in the analysis of the text I shall jump to sections which appear later in the text in

order to detect Crito's world-view in terms of purposes and intentions. These findings will then be used in my interpretation of an earlier place in the text. It might seem reasonable to suppose that Socrates knows his interlocutor's world, at least to some extent, even before the conversation with him begins, yet this is not necessarily the case, and only a meticulous analysis of the text may decide the issue. So far as the Socrates-Crito conversation is concerned, I contend that a close reading of the text reveals that some of Socrates' moves may be explained only if he had prior knowledge. In other words, that which the reader discovers only at a later stage of the dialogue is already known to Socrates in advance. This is not arbitrariness, nor is it a pre-textual claim. It is nothing more than a meticulous dramatic analysis of the text.

Discussions concerning the introductory part of Plato's dialogues are not new.<sup>2</sup> The first to pay special attention to the sentences opening a Platonic dialogue seem to be some of the middle Platonists, but none of them has survived except for a few reminiscences in later writers. One of those writers is Proclus,<sup>3</sup> the Neoplatonic philosopher of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD in his commentaries on Plato. At the end of the introduction to his commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* he discusses the place and significance of Plato's προοίμια in general.<sup>4</sup> Proclus enumerates three basic attitudes which he relates to οἱ παλαιοί. There were those who did not pay any attention to the προοίμιον, while others took it to be concerned with a presentation of moral attitude and tried to connect it to the central problems discussed in the dialogue. The third group demand that the interpreter bring the matter of the prologue into relation with the nature of the dialogue's subject, and it is this last option that Proclus himself adopts, without ignoring the moral aspect raised in

the second option.<sup>5</sup> He thus goes on to assert that he will begin by showing how the subject of the dialogue relates to the matter in the introduction. The nature of the relationship is explained one line later when he says that in studying any Platonic dialogue we must look especially at the matters that are its subject and see how the details of the prologue prefigure them. For Proclus each Platonic dialogue is a miniature cosmos (including analogies to the Good, Nous, the Soul and Nature) and this is symbolized in the prologue. In other words the content of the relationship between the subject matter and the prologue for Proclus is mainly of symbolic and allegorical significance.

As far as I can see, every scholar since Proclus and down to the present day who takes Plato's prologues as an inseparable part of the dialogue endorses Proclus' third option but gives the 'relation' between the prologue and the subject matter of the dialogue a different content. Here are a few examples.

Myles Burnyeat in a famous paper entitled "First Words"<sup>6</sup> basically follows Proclus and takes the opening scenes of Plato's dialogues to be of great significance for the main philosophical topic. Yet this significance amounts to viewing these scenes "as images or emblems of the substantive philosophical content to follow" (p. 14). By singling out isolated words occurring in those 'preludes' (in some cases the very first word of the dialogue) and finding later in the dialogue another word reflecting that word, Burnyeat attempts to supply the function and purpose of the 'preludes'. Thus the verb κατέβην which opens the *Republic* as Socrates begins to tell how he went down to Piraeus is, according to Burnyeat, the image of the gerundive καταβατέον which appears in book 7 (520c) during a description of the duty of the philosopher to go back down into the cave to rule those who are still there.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the

word θεός which opens the *Laws* hints at Plato’s main message there, that “the second-best state described in the *Laws* is a theocracy from beginning to end” (p. 9). The word αὐτός which opens the *Phaedo* “is crucial to the formulation of two of the *Phaedo*’s most substantive philosophical themes - on the one hand, the Theory of Forms; on the other, the identification of oneself with the immortal soul in opposition to the body” (ibid) and the like.<sup>8</sup>

A different content for the ‘relation’ between the prologue and the subject matter of the dialogue is to be found with Trivigno 2011. By taking Plato’s *Lysis* as a case study Trivigno claims “that the significance is pedagogical and metaphilosophical, and that this significance is tied to human *self-knowledge*” (pp. 62-63). For Trivigno the prologue is indeed different from the philosophical discussion *qua* philosophical discussion but still connected to it in terms of pedagogical and metaphilosophical significance. On p. 76 he writes: “In my view, by giving his dialogues an ordinary setting (=prologue) and showing philosophical conversation emerge from it, Plato attempts to achieve two aims. First, he aims to get his audience to see the relevance of the philosophical conversation to their own ordinary lives and to provide the motivation for them to turn toward philosophical inquiry and the philosophical life”. Indeed, Trivigno’s interesting analysis of Plato’s *Lysis*’s prologue (what he calls an ‘ordinary’) reveals it to be part of Plato’s *protreptic* pedagogical strategy.<sup>9</sup>

I turn finally in this survey to Gonzalez 2003. In his brilliant analysis of the prologue in Plato’s *Lysis*, Gonzalez more than any other scholar presents the very close relationship between the prologue and the philosophical discussion. As he writes: “the Platonic prologue provides the foundation for the subsequent investigation by drawing our attention to spe-

cific *problems* without a reference to which this investigation can be neither fully understood nor made fruitful. The prologue does this by introducing different themes or motifs that have a bearing on the main subject of the dialogue” (p. 16). For Gonzalez, so it seems, the prologue is much more tied to the philosophical discussion than just pointing to a setting or even images, not to mention allegorical and symbolic emblems. But we must conclude that even Gonzalez treats the openings of Plato’s dialogues as merely prologues, that is, not an integral part of the philosophical discussion: the prologue itself does *not* present any argument. It must be understood that the “foundation for the subsequent investigation” is other than the investigation itself.<sup>10</sup>

The various views concerning the relationship between the prologue and the philosophical discussion in the dialogue seem to me reducible to five views. The relationship is either moral (Porphyry and to some extent Proclus himself), symbolic-allegorical (Proclus), pedagogical and metaphilosophical (Trivigno), imagery reflecting what will appear later (Burnyeat), or different motifs which have a bearing on the main subject to be discussed later (Gonzalez). What is common to all the views mentioned in this survey is the notion that while the prologue is indeed inseparable from the dialogue, it is still separable from the philosophical discussion *qua* philosophical discussion. I claim on the contrary, without denying symbolic, moral, pedagogical or metaphilosophical connections between the prologue and the philosophical discussion, that the prologue, at least in the *Crito*,<sup>11</sup> is actually an integral part of the philosophical discussion itself. Socrates begins his attempts to educate his interlocutors concerning the specific issue discussed in the conversation from the very beginning of the dialogue. Some of Plato’s

dialogues may start with an apparently mundane unphilosophically colloquial conversation,<sup>12</sup> but the various characters are already beginning to reveal their motives and ways of thinking, and hence what they represent in their particular dialogue; while Socrates, in addition, is already fully active in his attempt to educate his interlocutors.<sup>13</sup> Plato, who composed the dialogues, might well allow a word or phrase to foreshadow the philosophical content to come, but even when this is the case, it would not be the word's or phrase's only function. Let us now exemplify these general methodological issues through an analysis of the opening of the *Crito*.

### 3. A GENERAL SYNOPSIS<sup>14</sup>

Crito is portrayed in our dialogue as facing a serious problem<sup>15</sup> and the only thing which can make him overcome it is success in making Socrates escape from jail. Crito's problem is an amalgam of three problems, or rather is a problem with three layers of increasing significance. Crito reveals two of the layers almost immediately (44b6-c5):<sup>16</sup>

ὡς ἐμοί, ἐὰν σὺ ἀποθάνῃς, οὐ μία συμφορά ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ χωρὶς μὲν τοῦ ἐστερηθῆσαι τοιούτου ἐπιτηδείου οἶον ἐγὼ οὐδένα μή ποτε εὐρήσω, ἔτι δὲ καὶ πολλοῖς δόξω, οἳ ἐμὲ καὶ σὲ μὴ σαφῶς ἴσασιν, ὡς οἷός τ' ὦν σε σῶζειν εἰ ἦθελον ἀναλίσκειν χρήματα, ἀμελήσαι. καίτοι τίς ἂν αἰσχίων εἶη ταύτης δόξα ἢ δοκεῖν χρήματα περὶ πλείονος ποιεῖσθαι ἢ φίλους; (44b7-c3).

Since, if you die, it will be no mere single misfortune to me, but I shall lose a friend such as I can never find again, and besides, many persons who do not know you

and me well will think I could have saved you if I had been willing to spend money, but that I would not take the trouble. And yet what reputation could be more disgraceful than that of considering one's money of more importance than one's friends?

In terms of the dialogue, there is no reason to doubt what the character Crito says. The first layer is his friendship with Socrates contrasted with the concern he has for his reputation among the Many.<sup>17</sup> Which of these two considerations - his friendship and his reputation - primarily motivates Crito is a question leading to the second layer.

Socrates guesses which consideration motivates Crito, but wanting to be sure, his response is subtle: he refers only to the second reason, while simply ignoring the first one entirely: Ἀλλὰ τί ἡμῖν, ὦ μακάριε Κρίτων, οὔτω τῆς τῶν πολλῶν δόξης μέλει; (“But, my dear Crito, why do we care so much for what the Many think?”) (44c6-7). Were Crito's friendship with Socrates one of the prime motives, Crito would have protested at the omission.<sup>18</sup> Since Crito does nothing of the sort, Socrates now knows for sure that what motivates Crito is his fear of gaining a bad reputation among the Many.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, we should also consider the relation between Crito's statements about the care for one's reputation among the Many and about helping one's friends, since Crito does not lie. There is no reason, indeed no hint throughout the whole dialogue, that Crito lies or even that he is being manipulative.

This brings us to the third layer, which, unlike the first two, is not only unconscious to Crito: it is something Crito has no chance of detecting without Socrates' help, since uncovering it would necessitate a serious philosophical analysis, without which he would unk-

nowingly continue to live a self-contradictory life. The two criteria of friendship and the opinion of the Many are mutually exclusive; trying to hold on to both will necessarily lead to self-contradiction and the result that neither will be held. A true friendship requires understanding, evaluating and judging one’s friend from the friend’s point of view. This does not mean accepting or agree with the friend’s ideas, but it does mean taking into account the friend’s world-view. While it is very difficult for anyone to penetrate a friend’s mind, it is impossible for anyone enslaved<sup>20</sup> to the opinion of the Many to achieve this. Crito repeatedly turns to the opinion of the Many. It does not even matter to him that the Many do not necessarily know him or Socrates well, as he even states explicitly (44b10); despite this, he feels that their opinion should be taken seriously. Thus, in his second speech (44e1-46a9),<sup>21</sup> the reasons Crito thinks might deter Socrates from escaping from jail are actually what would appear to be reasonable deterrents to the Many. We find him dwelling on the fear of the *sykophantai*, the concern for one’s friends, the fear that there would be no other place to live in, and the like. Someone enslaved to good repute among the Many assumes this criterion will work on others as well. Even ‘friendship’ itself, understood as it commonly is as doing good to one’s friends, serves this criterion by enhancing one’s reputation among the Many.<sup>22</sup> Crito at the beginning of this discussion appeared to have two criteria, but it is now clear that his friendship is a function of his one and only criterion, a good reputation among the Many - whether Crito is aware of this or not. Socrates who knows all these problems of Crito right at the beginning of the dialogue<sup>23</sup> addresses them with a series of ‘moves’. I shall now demonstrate this with the opening sections of the *Crito*.

#### 4. FIRST MOVE (43A1-4)

The dialogue starts with a question:<sup>24</sup> Τί τῆνικάδε ἀφίξαι, ὦ Κρίτων; ἢ οὐ πρῶ ἔτι ἐστίν; (“Why have you come at this hour, Crito? Isn’t it still early?”)(43a1).<sup>25</sup> On a simple reading, there seems to be nothing strange here: Socrates is responding as one naturally would when waking up and finding one’s friend sitting nearby.<sup>26</sup> Yet if we assume that Socrates already knows something about Crito, and aims to deal with Crito’s problem (of which he knows something, even if perhaps not everything), this question begins to appear not so innocent.

The first point to notice is the double question. The first is Τί τῆνικάδε ἀφίξαι, ὦ Κρίτων; (“Why have you come at this hour, Crito?”), and the second is ἢ οὐ πρῶ ἔτι ἐστίν; (“Isn’t it still early?”). Socrates could have waited for an answer to his first question before moving on to the second, but he does not. I suggest that the double question is a Socratic stratagem aimed at finding out how his interlocutor is thinking. The answer Crito would have given to the first question had Socrates waited for it would have been that the ship from Delos was about to arrive that day, providing Crito with an immediate opportunity to attempt to persuade Socrates to accept his offer to escape. Socrates, however, does not wait for an answer, but adds a second question which seems to be of little significance: ἢ οὐ πρῶ ἔτι ἐστίν; (“Isn’t it still early?”). Socrates wants to find out which of the two questions Crito will answer. In fact Crito responds to the second question, agreeing that it is indeed very early.<sup>27</sup> While this might not be strange in normal circumstances, during an attempt to rescue his friend from what he considered a terrible fate,<sup>28</sup> namely certain death, Crito might have been expected to react to the first question while ignoring the second, or at the very least, respond to both,

by agreeing that it was indeed early, but that he was at the prison because of the imminent arrival of the ship, after which he could immediately have launched into his attempt to persuade Socrates to escape.<sup>29</sup> With little time in which to act, Crito nevertheless answers the second question, entirely ignoring the first. This is Socrates' first test. Crito's agreement that it is indeed very early hints at the reason for his sudden lack of urgency.<sup>30</sup> He is allowing Socrates to appreciate his ability to get into jail before the official opening.<sup>31</sup> Being quite a bit earlier than the official opening will emphasize Crito's influence with the authorities, and his first answer - Πάνυ μὲν οὖν ("It certainly is") - seems intended to cause Socrates to ask what time it is exactly. Socrates, indeed, cooperates with Πηνίκα μάλιστα; ("About what time?"), allowing Crito to reply proudly Ὅρθρος βαθύς ("Just before dawn").

Thus the first stage ends with Crito's first failure. Crito arrived at the jail very early apparently to help Socrates escape, but when asked why he had come so early chooses to answer the accompanying question about the actual time since this draws attention to himself. The fact that Socrates puts Crito to the test with his double question confirms that Socrates already knows about, or suspects, Crito's two motives for coming to the prison: his friendship with Socrates; and his concern for a good reputation among the Many. Crito may not be so aware as Socrates now is, following the double question, of his preference for reputation over his friendship with Socrates. It is now time for Socrates' first veiled criticism.

## 5. SECOND MOVE (43A5-8)

Θαυμάζω ὅπως ἠθέλησέ σοι ὁ τοῦ δεσμοτηρίου φύλαξ ὑπακοῦσαι ("I am sur-

prised that the watchman of the prison was willing to let you in")(43a5-6). This first criticism concerns Crito the citizen of a democratic polis.<sup>32</sup> Socrates, aware that Crito has succeeded in getting into jail only by an illegal act, attacks exactly this point. His apparent surprise might have made Crito consider the point that his act is illegal, but it would be too much to suppose that Crito would have immediately considered the point that the law he was breaking was, in one way or another, the decision of the Many, the body whose opinion he esteems above all others. Another criticism, implied, but not yet expressed, concerns Crito's opposition to a more significant decision of the Many, their sentencing of Socrates to death.<sup>33</sup> Crito, of course, does not understand Socrates' thrust, seeing merely another opportunity for self-congratulation: Συνήθης ἤδη μοί ἐστιν, ὦ Σώκρατης, διὰ τὸ πολλάκις δεῦρο φοιτᾶν, καί τι καὶ εὐεργέτηται ὑπ' ἐμοῦ. ("I come here so often, and besides I have done something for him")(43a7-8). Thus Socrates' second move also ends in failure.

## 6. THIRD MOVE (43A9-B9):

Ἄρτι δὲ ἦκεις ἢ πάλαι; ("Have you just come, or some time ago?")(43a9). This question, as opposed to the first two (43a1, 43a3), focuses not on *when* Crito arrived but on *how long* he has been there. The earlier Crito managed to get into jail, the more he offended against the law;<sup>34</sup> but now, the longer he has been sitting near Socrates without waking him up, the more he proves himself to be a bad friend.<sup>35</sup> Crito, of course, only sees here yet another opportunity for showing his power and connections: Ἐπιεικῶς πάλαι. ("For quite some time")(43a10). Crito does not see here anything strange, and Socrates tries again: Εἶτα πῶς οὐκ

εὐθὺς ἐπήγειράς με, ἀλλὰ σιγῇ παρακάθησαι; (“Then why did you not wake me up at once, instead of sitting by me in silence?”)(43b1-2). The criticism should be obvious:<sup>36</sup> if Crito were a true friend and this were to be shown by helping Socrates escape from jail, why did he sit near his bed rather than wake him up immediately upon arrival? There was no reason for not waking Socrates up, such as a fear of being overheard (the guard has been bribed). Nor one can claim that Crito thought he has still time for a conversation or a discussion. The urgency and lack of time is well attested by Crito’s own words at the end of his second speech at 46a4-7: ἀλλὰ βουλευού – μᾶλλον δὲ οὐδὲ βουλευέσθαι ἔτι ὥρα ἀλλὰ βεβουλευέσθαι – μία δὲ βουλή· τῆς γὰρ ἐπιούσης νυκτὸς πάντα ταῦτα δεῖ πεπραχθῆναι, εἰ δ’ ἔτι περιμενοῦμεν, ἀδύνατον καὶ οὐκέτι οἶόν τε. (“Just consider, or rather it is time not to consider any longer, but to have finished considering. And there is just one possible plan; for all this must be done in the coming night. And if we delay it can no longer be done.”). One cannot escape the conclusion that Crito seems simply to have forgotten the reason for arriving so early, and sits quietly<sup>37</sup> near Socrates’ bed because, as he says explicitly at 43b5-6, he wished to let Socrates go on sleeping. This is hardly the way to help a friend escape death, and Crito’s second motive — that of helping his friend — therefore seems not to have been uppermost when he came to the prison.

The connection between the two criticisms is obvious. They expose Crito’s confusion of motives existing ever since Socrates’ trial: is he motivated by the opinion of the Many or by helping friends, in a case where his friend has been sentenced to death by the Many?<sup>38</sup>

It is precisely because of his concern for his reputation that Crito does not understand Socrates’ hints, but attempts to explain his own

situation to his audience of one. His reply is a passionate outbreak about himself and his great trouble: Οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐδ’ ἂν αὐτὸς ἤθελον ἐν τοσαύτῃ τε ἀγρυπνίᾳ καὶ λύπῃ εἶναι (“No, no, by Zeus, Socrates, I only wish I myself were not so sleepless and sorrowful.”) (43b3-4). We do not know yet, and Crito has not yet told Socrates, what his trouble is. We can, however, guess that his trouble has to do with his possible disrepute among the Many, rather than with losing his best friend.<sup>39</sup> This is not to say that he is not troubled by the prospect of losing a friend. He says that he is (44b8-9), and we should believe him. Yet Socrates realizes that this is subordinate to his concern for his good name among the Many. What - one may ask - is so bad about using the opinion of the Many as a criterion? The answer is to be found in Crito’s words, and with them I shall end this paper.

The content of Crito’s outbreak at 43b3-9 focuses on a double comparison. (1) Crito’s ἀγρυπνία καὶ λύπη (“sleeplessness and sorrow”) as against Socrates’ τὸ ἡδέως καθεύδειν (“sleeping sweetly”). (2) Socrates’ life before the trial as against his behavior during the trial and its consequences. These, of course, are interrelated. What is common to both comparisons is consistency. Let us check carefully what is explicitly mentioned by Crito and what can be inferred. First we are told that Crito cannot sleep well because of the present situation, while Socrates often sleeps well.<sup>40</sup> Does this mean that Crito, apart from this particular case, sleeps well? This is not explicitly mentioned, but I think that the inference is clear. Crito very often does not sleep well.<sup>41</sup> Secondly, Crito is amazed not only at the nature but also at the consistency of Socrates’ behavior throughout his life. Such behavior is not influenced by changing circumstances. He contrasts πρότερον ἐν παντί τῷ βίῳ (“throughout



your life hitherto”) with ἐν τῇ νῦν παρεστῶσιν συμφορᾷ (“in this present misfortune”).<sup>42</sup> The reason why one life is consistent and the other inconsistent, why one allows good sleep and the other sleeplessness, will become clear as the dialogue proceeds; it is the different criteria by which each of them lives — justice as opposed to the opinion of the Many. Socrates is always at peace, and especially in this situation, while Crito is hardly at peace, and especially in this situation. The opinion of the Many leads to sleeplessness since it is an amalgam of many different, often contradictory, opinions, leading to inconsistency and a failure to satisfy all opinions all of the time.<sup>43</sup> Thus Crito is doomed to live his life in fear and disquiet.<sup>44</sup>

Crito had so far succeeded in keeping a respectable façade, coming very early after arranging everything for the escape; but now he breaks down. He can no longer endure the pressure under which he finds himself. His two contradictory acts of friendship — arranging an escape on the one hand, but allowing Socrates to sleep as long as possible on the other — allow us to learn an important point about Crito. While appearing to be a good friend he turns out to be quite untrustworthy. The reason for his contradictory behavior is his concern for the opinion of the Many. This criterion will be Socrates’ target from now on in the dialogue.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The title of chapter 5 in Stokes’ book 2005 is “Socrates’ attack: first move”. For Stokes — and this is only one example out of many — Socrates starts to attack Crito’s position only after Crito’s second speech at 46b1. According to what has been argued here, Socrates starts his “attack”<sup>45</sup> at the very beginning of the conversation. His aim is not to come to know Crito, but

rather to help Crito know himself. One failed move leads to the next. At each step, Crito remains uncritical and fully focused on his own reputation. Socrates moves from a veiled criticism of Crito the loyal citizen in a democratic city to Crito the loyal friend who came to save Socrates. From this, the very beginning of the dialogue, Socrates will proceed to other ways and strategies in an attempt to make Crito understand his confusion of motives.

Can the analysis of the *Crito*’s prologue presented here be generalized to all of Plato’s dialogues? The answer is neither negative nor positive. What I have shown here should not be taken as a proof or an argument concerning other Platonic dialogues. It is rather an invitation to return and pay closer attention to other prologues of Plato’s dialogues.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adam 1888: J. Adam (ed.) *Plato: Crito*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1888.
- Burnyeat 1997: M. Burnyeat, ‘First Words: A Valedictory Lecture’, «Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society» 43 (1997) 1-20.
- Congleton 1974: A. Congleton, ‘Two Kinds of Lawlessness: Plato’s *Crito*’ «Political Theory» 2 (1974) 432-46.
- Dyer 1885: L. Dyer (ed.), *Plato: Apology of Socrates and Crito*, rev. T. Seymour, Blaisdell, Waltham, Mass. 1885.
- Gonzalez 1995: F. Gonzalez, F. ‘Introduction’, in *The Third Way: New Directions in Platonic Studies*, London 1995, 1-22.
- 2003: F. Gonzalez, ‘How to Read a Platonic Prologue: *Lysis* 203a-270d’, in A. Michelini (ed.), *Plato as Author: The Rhetoric of Philosophy*, Leiden 2003, 15-44.
- Liebersohn 2015: Y. Liebersohn, ‘Crito’s Character in Plato’s *Crito*’, «Harvard Studies in Classical Philology» 108 (2015) 103-118.
- 2015a: Y. Liebersohn, ‘Persuasion, Justice and Democracy in Plato’s *Crito*’, «Peitho. Examina Antiqua» 6 (2015) 147-166.

- Morrow – Dillon 1987: G. Morrow – J. Dillon, *Proclus’ Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, Princeton 1987.
- Planeax 2001: C. Planeax, ‘Socrates, an Unreliable Narrator? The Dramatic Setting of the “Lysis”’, «Classical Philology» 96/1 (2001) 60-68.
- Rowe 2007: C. Rowe, *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing*, Cambridge 2007.
- Ryle 1966: G. Ryle, *Plato’s Progress*, Cambridge 1966.
- Schmid 1998: W. Schmid, *Plato’s Charmides and the Socratic Ideal of Rationality*, State University of New York Press, Albany 1998.
- Stokes 2005: M. Stokes, *Dialectic in Action: An Examination of Plato’s Crito*, The Classical Press of Wales, Swansea 2005.
- Tarrant 2000: H. Tarrant, *Plato’s First Interpreters*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2000.
- Trivigno 2011: F. Trivigno, ‘Philosophy and the Ordinary: On the Setting of Plato’s Lysis’, «Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies» 51 (2011) 61-85.
- Unruh 2000: P. Unruh, *Sokrates und die Pflicht zum Rechtsgehorsam*, Baden-Baden 2000.
- Weiss 1998: R. Weiss, *Socrates Dissatisfied*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1998.
- Woozley 1979: A. Woozley, *Law and Obedience: The Argument of Plato’s Crito*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 1979.
- (Tarrant 2000, 39)
- 4 Procl. In *Prm.* 658-659.
- 5 See Morrow & Dillon 1987, 47 n. 40, who try to assign a certain source for each view. The third view they assign to Iamblichus.
- 6 Burnyeat 1997. Its origin is his valedictory lecture in the Faculty of Classics at Cambridge University on Friday, 31 May 1996.
- 7 Burnyeat goes into this topic more deeply and compares the verb θεάσασθαι which appears both in the ‘prelude’ and in book 7 and even compares the κατάβασις to the cave with the sensible world and Hades.
- 8 For examples from the *Gorgias*, *Meno* and *Timaeus* see pp. 11, 12-13, 14-16 respectively.
- 9 Another example of the ‘relationship’ is found in Planeaux 2001. In showing the setting of Plato’s *Lysis* with all its anomalies and inconsistencies he wants to show that Socrates planned his encounter with *Lysis*, and by placing the meeting at the *Hermaia* “the setting of the *Lysis* is a most colorful and compelling stage” (p. 65).
- 10 The first theme Gonzalez uses to prove his argument is that from competition. By showing the theme of competition as emphasized in the prologue, Gonzalez argues that friendship, which is the subject of discussion in the philosophical part of the conversation, is actually a result of a competition for wisdom. Yet, one can reach this idea (whether it is true or false) by analyzing the discussion itself. The same goes for his second theme – *eros*. Again the relation between *philia* and *eros* in terms of reciprocal as against unilateral relations may be inferred by analyzing the philosophical discussion itself, and the fact that the prologue shows us two relationships (one between Hippothales and Lysis and the other between Lysis and Menexenus) is indeed helpful and supplies us with “the foundation for the subsequent investigation” but this foundation and the investigation which follows are still regarded as different.
- 11 Restricting my claim to the *Crito* is appropriate. Gonzalez’ conclusion on p. 44 wants to give the reader a kind of guidelines of how to treat a Platonic dialogue (“It is important, first of all, to look for general themes introduced by the prologue ... Secondly, we must determine what *problems* the prologue introduces ... Thirdly, we need to read the main discussion from the perspective of these problems ...”). Although he later qualifies it by noting that “Plato’s dialogues are too diverse to conform to any interpretative template” I think that each dialogue needs to be analyzed individually before general claims can be made.
- 12 But see n. 1 above.
- 13 Socrates is obliged to use devious methods in his attempts to educate.
- 14 In this article I am concerned with *Crito* as he is presented in the *Crito*. For a focus on Socrates in this dialogue, see Adam 8, vi; Woozley 1979, 4.
- 15 This is emphasized at 43b3-9. *Crito* speaks of Socrates’ συμφορά (“misfortune”)(43b8-9), and is jealous of the way Socrates bears it; *Crito* himself is also facing a great συμφορά, but unlike Socrates, is in a state

## NOTES

1 One of these exceptions, perhaps the best known, is the *Meno* which starts immediately with a ‘philosophical’ question. Yet see Gonzalez 2003, 44: “Not all have prologues as rich and complex as that of the *Lysis*, and some seem to have no prologue whatsoever: the *Meno* is the notorious example (though its abrupt beginning is itself a kind of prologue that needs to be explained).” On Gonzalez’ approach to Plato’s prologues see p. 32 below.

2 The survey I shall present here concerning Plato’s prologues in scholarly literature will enable me to locate my own attitude within the rich and various opinions prevailed in scholarly literature. It will also emphasize the difference between my method and that of others and make my argument clearer. On the debate concerning the significance of the prologue in Plato’s dialogues in antiquity see also Tarrant 2000, 38-41 (“Which parts of a dialogue should I be concerned with?”).

3 “It is Proclus who provides us with the clearest insights into ancient debates about Plato’s prologues.”

of ἀγρυπνία and λύπη (“sleeplessness and sorrow”). His misfortune lies in his soul, while the misfortune of Socrates is merely external. At 46e3-47a2, Socrates suggests that Crito, free from the necessity of dying the next day, would be able to think more clearly and without distraction, but my analysis will show that this is far from the case. Crito’s misfortune is one of the main subjects of the dialogue.

16 It is important to take into account the way one speaks. In our case Plato the dramatist took care in giving Crito’s speech a great sense of credibility by presenting Crito as someone who is emotionally distracted and therefore unable to be manipulative (*pace* Stokes 2005, 27-29). On jumping to a later stage in the text in order to understand an earlier one see pp. 30-31 above.

17 Crito has only spoken of πολλοί. It is Socrates who turns them into οἱ πολλοί (44c6, 44d6 *passim*). But since even when they are introduced by Crito they are people who do not know either Socrates or Crito, this transition makes sense.

18 *Pace* Woozley 1979, 7: “It is natural to ask why Plato, in composing the dialogue, had Crito raise the point {sc. loss of a friend} and Socrates ignore it; the most natural answer seems to be that it is his way of expressing to the reader the kind of muddleheadedness in argument which he wishes Crito to represent.”

19 In the secondary literature the debate concerning which of these reasons dominates Crito is conducted by means of examining Crito’s words alone (see for example Weiss 1998, 40 and n. 2). No one, so far as I can see, has noticed that it is Socrates himself who finds out – as an integral part of the drama – which of these two reasons is the dominant one, and that he does it by putting Crito to the test.

20 I use this word deliberately. It is exactly because of this relationship between Crito and the Many (=the polis and its laws in a democratic polis) that the Laws use the term for their relationship with Socrates (e.g. 50e2-4).

21 In the *Crito* there are two speeches by Crito which reveal to us – and to Socrates – his character, opinions and general world-view. The first is at 44b6-c5 and the second at 44e1-46a9. Most of our information concerning Crito as a character in this dialogue is to be taken from these speeches.

22 The Many will despise Crito for not helping his friend (44c2-5).

23 This can be proved by explicit hints in the dialogue to previous conversations Socrates and Crito had (e.g. 44b6-7; 44c3-5). Furthermore, otherwise inexplicable or redundant sentences or passages in the text become explicable and necessary only if Socrates is understood to have been aware already before the present dialogue of Crito’s condition. See my discussion on pp. 30-31 above.

24 I divide our section into three parts: A. 43a1-4; B. 43a5-8; C. 43a9-b9. The analysis will account for my reasons for this division.

25 Here I follow Stokes’ 2005 translation.

26 Cf. “The dramatic urgency of the problem is

highlighted by the opening lines ...” (Woozley 1979, 6). See also Stokes 2005, 24: “This seemingly simple, but in truth artful introduction reveals the general situation in which the ensuing conversation takes place”. In a way the present paper challenges Stokes’ view stated at the end of the above paragraph, referring to the opening lines of the dialogue: “But attempts to read more into the text seem to fail.” (ibid).

27 Stokes translates simply ‘Yes’. Stokes, who does not see any real importance in this section, is at least coherent. Yet the emphasis which is captured in Fowler’s translation, an emphasis which appears in the Greek, teaches Socrates a very essential thing. See immediately below.

28 As we shall see, in Socrates’ eyes this might not appear to be the case, but for Crito Socrates’ death is the most terrible thing one could think of.

29 We see just a little later that Crito, even when under pressure, can keep his mind on what is most urgent and not be diverted for very long by something Socrates says. At 44b6, after Socrates’ dream and his comment that what he has just dreamed is ἐναργές (“a clear one”), Crito remarks λίαν γε, ὡς ἔοικεν (“too clear, apparently”), and immediately produces a long speech trying to persuade Socrates to escape.

30 At 43b6 Crito will assert that he deliberately did not awaken Socrates for some time, but we should bear in mind that he says this only *after* Socrates asks him why he did not wake him up immediately.

31 One could give an alternative explanation, namely that Crito, who knows and guesses Socrates’ refusal to escape, thinks – mistakenly of course – that Socrates is afraid for his reputation would the escape fail (good reputation is what motivates Crito and as such he ascribes it also to Socrates). Yet Crito, as he is represented in our dialogue, is far from being sophisticated and manipulative.

32 Many scholars have noticed the dilemma presented in the *Crito* between one’s moral codes and the duty to obey the laws, but totally overlook the significance of the democratic context: see e.g. Adam 8, v: “because in both {sc. the *Crito* and the *Phaedo*} we are introduced to problems of more universal interest, in the *Crito* to the relation between the individual and the state...” And a few lines later: “... but what really stands arraigned before him is the principle that alone renders possible the existence of any kind of State, aristocracy, no less than democracy, the *nomos* ... (xi); Woozley 1979, 5: “The issues which it raises about what it is to live in society subject to law are immense.” It is only in a democratic regime that every law and custom is to be referred to the Many. It is also the democratic context that helps to explain the dominant place of the speeches in our dialogue. On this issue see Liebersohn 2015a.

33 There is also a third criticism only indirectly to do with Crito: the Many *themselves* actually expect Crito to break the law they *themselves* have enacted. Perhaps the Many (of whom Crito is a representative member) are also one of the *Crito*’s object. By extension, since the

Many hold their power only in a democratic regime, it may be seen that democracy itself is the ultimate target of Plato’s *Crito*.

34 I do not break the speed limit ‘more’ in driving at 80 rather than at 70 miles per hour. I break the law in both cases. But I will be punished ‘more’ in driving at 80 than at 70.

35 In other words, 43a1-8 criticize Crito with regard to his being a loyal citizen, whereas 43a9 starts a new criticism concerning Crito as a good friend. A loyal citizen and a good friend, however, are closely connected. See immediately below.

36 See also Dyer 1885, 115: “εἶτα refers to ἐπιεικῶς πάλαι in a vein of slight wonder or perhaps of gentle reproof” (emphasis mine).

37 Note the emphasis on σιγῇ (“in silence”).

38 The confusion is exacerbated by one motive being subordinated to the other: helping one’s friends is expected by the Many, and they will appreciate Crito’s helping his friend at the expense of breaking the law they themselves have enacted. The Many contradict themselves. See also n. 33 above.

39 Pace Weiss 1998, 39 who sees in Crito’s wakening of Socrates a reflection of his friendship and care for his friend.

40 This is emphasized by the words πολλάκις and especially πρότερον (“often” and “hitherto” respectively).

41 This by itself could devalue Crito’s arrival at jail so early. He was not asleep at all and thus did not have to get out of bed.

42 In another article I emphasized and developed this theme which I have called “Crito’s ‘then and now’ character”. See Liebersohn 2015.

43 In a deeper sense, justice is a consistent object of knowledge while apparent justice may be an inconsistent object of opinion.

44 This, of course, does not mean that he walks around all day shivering with fear, but the apprehensive uneasiness is always lurking in the background.

45 I use the term ‘attack’ because of Stokes, but we may consider Socrates’ moves here more as criticisms.