

Founders Scholarship Competition
Reading Packet
2023



Abraham's Sacrifice by Rembrandt (Rembrandt van Rijn) Dutch, 1655

Abraham and Isaac
Genesis 18:1-15, 21:1-8, 22:1-19
Revised Standard Version

18 And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. ² He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth, ³ and said, "My lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, ⁵ while I fetch a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." ⁶ And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes." ⁷ And Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. ⁸ Then he took curds, and milk, and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

⁹ They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent." ¹⁰ The LORD said, "I will surely return to you in the spring, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?" ¹³ The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son." ¹⁵ But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh."

21 The LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did to Sarah as he had promised. ² And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. ³ Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. ⁴ And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. ⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶ And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me." ⁷ And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would suckle children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." ⁸ And the child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.

22 After these things God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” ² He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Mori’ah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” ³ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; and he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴ On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the ass; I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.” ⁶ And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. ⁷ And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here am I, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” ⁸ Abraham said, “God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.

⁹ When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham put forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” ¹² He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” ¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called the name of that place The LORD will provide; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”

¹⁵ And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶ and said, “By myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies, ¹⁸ and by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.” ¹⁹ So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.

WILLIAM FAULKNER

(1897–1962)

BARN BURNING

The store in which the Justice of the Peace's court was sitting smelled of cheese. The boy, crouched on his nail keg at the back of the crowded room, knew he smelled cheese, and more: from where he sat he could see the ranked shelves close-packed with the solid, squat, dynamic shapes of tin cans whose labels his stomach read, not from the lettering which meant nothing to his mind but from the scarlet devils and the silver curve of fish—this, the cheese which he knew he smelled and the hermetic meat which his intestines believed he smelled coming in intermittent gusts momentary and brief between the other constant one, the smell and sense just a little of fear because mostly of despair and grief, the old fierce pull of blood. He could not see the table where the Justice sat and before which his father and his father's enemy (*our enemy* he thought in that despair; *ourn! mine and hisn both! He's my father!*) stood, but he could hear them, the two of them that is, because his father had said no word yet:

“But what proof have you, Mr. Harris?”

“I told you. The hog got into my corn. I caught it up and sent it back to him. He had no fence that would hold it. I told him so, warned him. The next time I put the hog in my pen. When he came to get it I gave him enough wire to patch up his pen. The next time I put the hog up and kept it. I rode down to his house and saw the wire I gave him still rolled on to the spool in his yard. I told him he could have the hog when he paid me a dollar

pound fee. That evening a nigger came with the dollar and got the hog. He was a strange nigger. He said, 'He say to tell you wood and hay kin burn.' I said, 'What?' 'That whut he say to tell you,' the nigger said. 'Wood and hay kin burn.' That night my barn burned. I got the stock out but I lost the barn."

"Where is the nigger? Have you got him?"

"He was a strange nigger, I tell you. I don't know what became of him."

"But that's not proof. Don't you see that's not proof?"

"Get that boy up here. He knows." For a moment the boy thought too that the man meant his older brother until Harris said, "Not him. The little one. The boy," and, crouching, small for his age, small and wiry like his father, in patched and faded jeans even too small for him, with straight, uncombed, brown hair and eyes gray and wild as storm scud, he saw the men between himself and the table part and become a lane of grim faces, at the end of which he saw the Justice, a shabby, collarless, graying man in spectacles, beckoning him. He felt no floor under his bare feet; he seemed to walk beneath the palpable weight of the grim turning faces. His father, stiff in his black Sunday coat donned not for the trial but for the moving, did not even look at him. *He aims for me to lie*, he thought, again with that frantic grief and despair. *And I will have to do hit.*

"What's your name, boy?" the Justice said.

"Colonel Sartoris Snopes," the boy whispered.

"Hey?" the Justice said. "Talk louder. Colonel Sartoris? I reckon anybody named for Colonel Sartoris in this country can't help but tell the truth, can they?" The boy said nothing. *Enemy! Enemy!* he thought; for a moment he could not even see, could not see that the Justice's face was kindly nor discern that his voice was troubled when he spoke to the man named Harris: "Do you want me to question this boy?" But he could hear, and during those subsequent long seconds while there was absolutely no sound in the crowded little room save that of quiet and intent breathing it was as if he had swung outward at the end of a grape vine, over a ravine, and at the top of the swing had been caught in a prolonged instant of mesmerized gravity, weightless in time.

"No!" Harris said violently, explosively. "Damnation! Send him out of here!" Now time, the fluid world, rushed beneath him again, the voices coming to him again through the smell of cheese and sealed meat, the fear and despair and the old grief of blood:

"This case is closed. I can't find against you, Snopes, but I can give you advice. Leave this country and don't come back to it."

His father spoke for the first time, his voice cold and harsh, level, without emphasis: "I aim to. I don't figure to stay in a country among people who . . ." he said something unprintable and vile, addressed to no one.

"That'll do," the Justice said. "Take your wagon and get out of this country before dark. Case dismissed."

His father turned, and he followed the stiff black coat, the wiry figure

walking a little stiffly from where a Confederate provost's man's¹ musket ball had taken him in the heel on a stolen horse thirty years ago, followed the two backs now, since his older brother had appeared from somewhere in the crowd, no taller than the father but thicker, chewing tobacco steadily, between the two lines of grim-faced men and out of the store and across the worn gallery and down the sagging steps and among the dogs and half-grown boys in the mild May dust where as he passed a voice hissed:

"Barn burner!"

Again he could not see, whirling; there was a face in a red haze, moon-like, bigger than the full moon, the owner of it half again his size, he leaping in the red haze toward the face, feeling no blow, feeling no shock when his head struck the earth, scrabbling up and leaping again, feeling no blow this time either and tasting no blood, scrabbling up to see the other boy in full flight and himself already leaping into pursuit as his father's hand jerked him back, the harsh, cold voice speaking above him: "Go get in the wagon."

It stood in a grove of locusts and mulberries across the road. His two hulking sisters in their Sunday dresses and his mother and her sister in calico and sunbonnets were already in it, sitting on and among the sorry residue of the dozen and more movings which even the boy could remember—the battered stove, the broken beds and chairs, the clock inlaid with mother-of-pearl, which would not run, stopped at some fourteen minutes past two o'clock of a dead and forgotten day and time, which had been his mother's dowry. She was crying, though when she saw him she drew her sleeve across her face and began to descend from the wagon. "Get back," the father said.

"He's hurt. I got to get some water and wash his . . ."

"Get back in the wagon," his father said. He got in too, over the tailgate. His father mounted to the seat where the older brother already sat and struck the gaunt mules two savage blows with the peeled willow, but without heat. It was not even sadistic; it was exactly that same quality which in later years would cause his descendants to overrun the engine before putting a motor car into motion, striking and reining back in the same movement. The wagon went on, the store with its quiet crowd of grimly watching men dropped behind; a curve in the road hid it. *Forever* he thought. *Maybe he's done satisfied now, now that he has . . .* stopping himself, not to say it aloud even to himself. His mother's hand touched his shoulder.

"Does hit hurt?" she said.

"Naw," he said. "Hit don't hurt. Lemme be."

"Can't you wipe some of the blood off before hit dries?"

"I'll wash to-night," he said. "Lemme be, I tell you."

The wagon went on. He did not know where they were going. None of them ever did or ever asked, because it was always somewhere, always a house of sorts waiting for them a day or two days or even three days away.

1. Provost's man: a military policeman.

Likely his father had already arranged to make a crop on another farm before he . . . Again he had to stop himself. He (the father) always did. There was something about his wolf-like independence and even courage when the advantage was at least neutral which impressed strangers, as if they got from his latent ravening ferocity not so much a sense of dependability as a feeling that his ferocious conviction in the rightness of his own actions would be of advantage to all whose interest lay with his.

That night they camped, in a grove of oaks and beeches where a spring ran. The nights were still cool and they had a fire against it, of a rail lifted from a nearby fence and cut into lengths—a small fire, neat, niggard almost, a shrewd fire; such fires were his father's habit and custom always, even in freezing weather. Older, the boy might have remarked this and wondered why not a big one; why should not a man who had not only seen the waste and extravagance of war, but who had in his blood an inherent voracious prodigality with material not his own, have burned everything in sight? Then he might have gone a step farther and thought that that was the reason: that niggard blaze was the living fruit of nights passed during those four years in the woods hiding from all men, blue or gray, with his strings of horses (captured horses, he called them). And older still, he might have divined the true reason: that the element of fire spoke to some deep main-spring of his father's being, as the element of steel or of powder spoke to other men, as the one weapon for the preservation of integrity, else breath were not worth the breathing, and hence to be regarded with respect and used with discretion.

But he did not think this now and he had seen those same niggard blazes all his life. He merely ate his supper beside it and was already half asleep over his iron plate when his father called him, and once more he followed the stiff back, the stiff and ruthless limp, up the slope and on to the starlit road where, turning, he could see his father against the stars but without face or depth—a shape black, flat, and bloodless as though cut from tin in the iron folds of the frockcoat which had not been made for him, the voice harsh like tin and without heat like tin:

"You were fixing to tell them. You would have told him." He didn't answer. His father struck him with the flat of his hand on the side of the head, hard but without heat, exactly as he had struck the two mules at the store, exactly as he would strike either of them with any stick in order to kill a horse fly, his voice still without fear or anger: "You're getting to be a man. You got to learn. You got to learn to stick to your own blood or you ain't going to have any blood to stick to you. Do you think either of them, any man there this morning, would? Don't you know all they wanted was a chance to get at me because they knew I had them beat? Eh?" Later, twenty years later, he was to tell himself, "If I had said they wanted only truth, justice, he would have hit me again." But now he said nothing. He was not crying. He just stood there. "Answer me," his father said.

"Yes," he whispered. His father turned.

"Get on to bed. We'll be there tomorrow."

Tomorrow they were there. In the early afternoon the wagon stopped before a paintless two-room house identical almost with the dozen others it had stopped before even in the boy's ten years, and again, as on the other dozen occasions, his mother and aunt got down and began to unload the wagon, although his two sisters and his father and brother had not moved.

"Likely hit ain't fitten for hawgs," one of the sisters said.

"Nevertheless, fit it will and you'll hog it and like it," his father said. "Get out of them chairs and help your Ma unload."

The two sisters got down, big, bovine, in a flutter of cheap ribbons; one of them drew from the jumbled wagon bed a battered lantern, the other a worn broom. His father handed the reins to the older son and began to climb stiffly over the wheel. "When they get unloaded, take the team to the barn and feed them." Then he said, and at first the boy thought he was still speaking to his brother: "Come with me."

"Me?" he said.

"Yes," his father said. "You."

"Abner," his mother said. His father paused and looked back—the harsh level stare beneath the shaggy, graying, irascible brows.

"I reckon I'll have a word with the man that aims to begin tomorrow owning me body and soul for the next eight months."

They went back up the road. A week ago—or before last night, that is—he would have asked where they were going, but not now. His father had struck him before last night but never before had he paused afterward to explain why; it was as if the blow and the following calm, outrageous voice still rang, repercussed, divulging nothing to him save the terrible handicap of being young, the light weight of his few years, just heavy enough to prevent his soaring free of the world as it seemed to be ordered but not heavy enough to keep him footed solid in it, to resist it and try to change the course of its events.

Presently he could see the grove of oaks and cedars and the other flowering trees and shrubs, where the house would be, though not the house yet. They walked beside a fence massed with honeysuckle and Cherokee roses and came to a gate swinging open between two brick pillars, and now, beyond a sweep of drive, he saw the house for the first time and at that instant he forgot his father and the terror and despair both, and even when he remembered his father again (who had not stopped) the terror and despair did not return. Because, for all the twelve movings, they had sojourned until now in a poor country, a land of small farms and fields and houses, and he had never seen a house like this before. *Hit's big as a courthouse* he thought quietly, with a surge of peace and joy whose reason he could not have thought into words, being too young for that: *They are safe from him. People whose lives are a part of this peace and dignity are beyond his touch, he no more to them than a buzzing wasp: capable of stinging for a little moment but that's all; the spell of this peace and dignity rendering even the barns and stable and cribs which belong to it impervious to the puny flames he might contrive . . .* this, the peace and joy, ebbing for an instant as he looked again at

the stiff black back, the stiff and implacable limp of the figure which was not dwarfed by the house, for the reason that it had never looked big anywhere and which now, against the serene columned backdrop, had more than ever that impervious quality of something cut ruthlessly from tin, depthless, as though, sidewise to the sun, it would cast no shadow. Watching him, the boy remarked the absolutely undeviating course which his father held and saw the stiff foot come squarely down in a pile of fresh droppings where a horse had stood in the drive and which his father could have avoided by a simple change of stride. But it ebbed only for a moment, though he could not have thought this into words either, walking on in the spell of the house, which he could even want but without envy, without sorrow, certainly never with that ravening and jealous rage which unknown to him walked in the ironlike black coat before him: *Maybe he will feel it too. Maybe it will even change him now from what maybe he couldn't help but be.*

They crossed the portico. Now he could hear his father's stiff foot as it came down on the boards with clocklike finality, a sound out of all proportion to the displacement of the body it bore and which was not dwarfed either by the white door before it, as though it had attained to a sort of vicious and ravening minimum not to be dwarfed by anything—the flat, wide, black hat, the formal coat of broadcloth which had once been black but which had now that friction-glazed greenish cast of the bodies of old house flies, the lifted sleeve which was too large, the lifted hand like a curled claw. The door opened so promptly that the boy knew the Negro must have been watching them all the time, an old man with neat grizzled hair, in a linen jacket, who stood barring the door with his body, saying, "Wipe yo foots, white man, fo you come in here. Major ain't home nohow."

"Get out of my way, nigger," his father said, without heat too, flinging the door back and the Negro also and entering, his hat still on his head. And now the boy saw the prints of the stiff foot on the doorjamb and saw them appear on the pale rug behind the machinelike deliberation of the foot which seemed to bear (or transmit) twice the weight which the body compassed. The Negro was shouting "Miss Lula! Miss Lula!" somewhere behind them, then the boy, deluged as though by a warm wave by a suave turn of carpeted stair and a pendant glitter of chandeliers and a mute gleam of gold frames, heard the swift feet and saw her too, a lady—perhaps he had never seen her like before either—in a gray, smooth gown with lace at the throat and an apron tied at the waist and the sleeves turned back, wiping cake or biscuit dough from her hands with a towel as she came up the hall, looking not at his father at all but at the tracks on the blond rug with an expression of incredulous amazement.

"I tried," the Negro cried. "I tole him to . . ."

"Will you please go away?" she said in a shaking voice. "Major de Spain is not at home. Will you please go away?"

His father had not spoken again. He did not speak again. He did not even look at her. He just stood stiff in the center of the rug, in his hat, the shaggy iron-gray brows twitching slightly above the pebble-colored eyes as

he appeared to examine the house with brief deliberation. Then with the same deliberation he turned; the boy watched him pivot on the good leg and saw the stiff foot drag round the arc of the turning, leaving a final long and fading smear. His father never looked at it, he never once looked down at the rug. The Negro held the door. It closed behind them, upon the hysteric and indistinguishable woman-wail. His father stopped at the top of the steps and scraped his boot clean on the edge of it. At the gate he stopped again. He stood for a moment, planted stiffly on the stiff foot, looking back at the house. "Pretty and white, ain't it?" he said. "That's sweat. Nigger sweat. Maybe it ain't white enough yet to suit him. Maybe he wants to mix some white sweat with it."

Two hours later the boy was chopping wood behind the house within which his mother and aunt and the two sisters (the mother and aunt, not the two girls, he knew that; even at this distance and muffled by walls the flat loud voices of the two girls emanated an incorrigible idle inertia) were setting up the stove to prepare a meal, when he heard the hooves and saw the linen-clad man on a fine sorrel mare, whom he recognized even before he saw the rolled rug in front of the Negro youth following on a fat bay carriage horse—a suffused, angry face vanishing, still at full gallop, beyond the corner of the house where his father and brother were sitting in the two tilted chairs; and a moment later, almost before he could have put the axe down, he heard the hooves again and watched the sorrel mare go back out of the yard, already galloping again. Then his father began to shout one of the sisters' names, who presently emerged backward from the kitchen door dragging the rolled rug along the ground by one end while the other sister walked behind it.

"If you ain't going to tote, go on and set up the wash pot," the first said.

"You, Sarty!" the second shouted. "Set up the wash pot!" His father appeared at the door, framed against that shabbiness, as he had been against that other bland perfection, impervious to either, the mother's anxious face at his shoulder.

"Go on," the father said. "Pick it up." The two sisters stooped, broad, lethargic; stooping, they presented an incredible expanse of pale cloth and a flutter of tawdry ribbons.

"If I thought enough of a rug to have to git hit all the way from France I wouldn't keep hit where folks coming in would have to tromp on hit," the first said. They raised the rug.

"Abner," the mother said. "Let me do it."

"You go back and git dinner," his father said. "I'll tend to this."

From the woodpile through the rest of the afternoon the boy watched them, the rug spread flat in the dust beside the bubbling wash-pot, the two sisters stooping over it with that profound and lethargic reluctance, while the father stood over them in turn, implacable and grim, driving them though never raising his voice again. He could smell the harsh homemade lye they were using; he saw his mother come to the door once and look

toward them with an expression not anxious now but very like despair; he saw his father turn, and he fell to with the axe and saw from the corner of his eye his father raise from the ground a flattish fragment of field stone and examine it and return to the pot, and this time his mother actually spoke: "Abner. Abner. Please don't. Please, Abner."

Then he was done too. It was dusk; the whippoorwills had already begun. He could smell coffee from the room where they would presently eat the cold food remaining from the mid-afternoon meal, though when he entered the house he realized they were having coffee again probably because there was a fire on the hearth, before which the rug now lay spread over the backs of the two chairs. The tracks of his father's foot were gone. Where they had been were now long, water-cloudy scoriations resembling the sporadic course of a Lilliputian mowing machine.

It still hung there while they ate the cold food and then went to bed, scattered without order or claim up and down the two rooms, his mother in one bed, where his father would later lie, the older brother in the other, himself, the aunt, and the two sisters on pallets on the floor. But his father was not in bed yet. The last thing the boy remembered was the depthless, harsh silhouette of the hat and coat bending over the rug and it seemed to him that he had not even closed his eyes when the silhouette was standing over him, the fire almost dead behind it, the stiff foot prodding him awake. "Catch up the mule," his father said.

When he returned with the mule his father was standing in the black door, the rolled rug over his shoulder. "Ain't you going to ride?" he said.

"No. Give me your foot."

He bent his knee into his father's hand, the wiry, surprising power flowed smoothly, rising, he rising with it, on to the mule's bare back (they had owned a saddle once; the boy could remember it though not when or where) and with the same effortlessness his father swung the rug up in front of him. Now in the starlight they retraced the afternoon's path, up the dusty road rife with honeysuckle, through the gate and up the black tunnel to the drive to the lightless house, where he sat on the mule and felt the rough warp of the rug drag across his thighs and vanish.

"Don't you want me to help?" he whispered. His father did not answer and now he heard again that stiff foot striking the hollow portico with that wooden and clocklike deliberation, that outrageous overstatement of the weight it carried. The rug, hunched, not flung (the boy could tell that even in the darkness) from his father's shoulder struck the angle of wall and floor with a sound unbelievably loud, thunderous, then the foot again, unhurried and enormous; a light came on in the house and the boy sat, tense, breathing steadily and quietly and just a little fast, though the foot itself did not increase its beat at all, descending the steps now; now the boy could see him.

"Don't you want to ride now?" he whispered. "We kin both ride now," the light within the house altering now, flaring up and sinking. *He's coming down the stairs now*, he thought. He had already ridden the mule up

beside the horse block; presently his father was up behind him and he doubled the reins over and slashed the mule across the neck, but before the animal could begin to trot the hard, thin arm came round him, the hard, knotted hand jerking the mule back to a walk.

In the first red rays of the sun they were in the lot, putting plow gear on the mules. This time the sorrel mare was in the lot before he heard it at all, the rider collarless and even bareheaded, trembling, speaking in a shaking voice as the woman in the house had done, his father merely looking up once before stooping again to the hame he was buckling, so that the man on the mare spoke to his stooping back:

"You must realize you have ruined that rug. Wasn't there anybody here, any of your women . . ." he ceased, shaking, the boy watching him, the older brother leaning now in the stable door, chewing, blinking slowly and steadily at nothing apparently. "It cost a hundred dollars. But you never had a hundred dollars. You never will. So I'm going to charge you twenty bushels of corn against your crop. I'll add it in your contract and when you come to the commissary you can sign it. That won't keep Mrs. de Spain quiet but maybe it will teach you to wipe your feet off before you enter her house again."

Then he was gone. The boy looked at his father, who still had not spoken or even looked up again, who was now adjusting the logger-head in the hame.

"Pap," he said. His father looked at him—the inscrutable face, the shaggy brows beneath which the gray eyes glinted coldly. Suddenly the boy went toward him, fast, stopping as suddenly. "You done the best you could!" he cried. "If he wanted hit done different why didn't he wait and tell you how? He won't git no twenty bushels! He won't git none! We'll gether hit and hide hit! I kin watch . . ."

"Did you put the cutter back in that straight stock like I told you?"

"No, sir," he said.

"Then go do it."

That was Wednesday. During the rest of that week he worked steadily, at what was within his scope and some which was beyond it, with an industry that did not need to be driven nor even commanded twice; he had this from his mother, with the difference that some at least of what he did he liked to do, such as splitting wood with the half-size axe which his mother and aunt had earned, or saved money somehow, to present him with at Christmas. In company with the two older women (and on one afternoon, even one of the sisters), he built pens for the shoat and the cow which were a part of his father's contract with the landlord, and one afternoon, his father being absent, gone somewhere on one of the mules, he went to the field.

They were running a middle buster now, his brother holding the plow straight while he handled the reins, and walking beside the straining mule, the rich black soil shearing cool and damp against his bare ankles, he thought *Maybe this is the end of it. Maybe even that twenty bushels that seems hard to have to pay for just a rug will be a cheap price for him to stop forever and always*

from being what he used to be; thinking, dreaming now, so that his brother had to speak sharply to him to mind the mule: Maybe he even won't collect the twenty bushels. Maybe it will all add up and balance and vanish—corn, rug, fire; the terror and grief, the being pulled two ways like between two teams of horses—gone, done with for ever and ever.

Then it was Saturday; he looked up from beneath the mule he was harnessing and saw his father in the black coat and hat. "Not that," his father said. "The wagon gear." And then, two hours later, sitting in the wagon bed behind his father and brother on the seat, the wagon accomplished a final curve, and he saw the weathered paintless store with its tattered tobacco- and patent-medicine posters and the tethered wagons and saddle animals below the gallery. He mounted the gnawed steps behind his father and brother, and there again was the lane of quiet, watching faces for the three of them to walk through. He saw the man in spectacles sitting at the plank table and he did not need to be told this was a Justice of the Peace; he sent one glare of fierce, exultant, partisan defiance at the man in collar and cravat now, whom he had seen but twice before in his life, and that on a galloping horse, who now wore on his face an expression not of rage but of amazed unbelief which the boy could not have known was at the incredible circumstance of being sued by one of his own tenants, and came and stood against his father and cried at the Justice: "He ain't done it! He ain't burnt . . ."

"Go back to the wagon," his father said.

"Burnt?" the Justice said. "Do I understand this rug was burned too?"

"Does anybody here claim it was?" his father said. "Go back to the wagon." But he did not, he merely retreated to the rear of the room, crowded as that other had been, but not to sit down this time, instead, to stand pressing among the motionless bodies, listening to the voices:

"And you claim twenty bushels of corn is too high for the damage you did to the rug?"

"He brought the rug to me and said he wanted the tracks washed out of it. I washed the tracks out and took the rug back to him."

"But you didn't carry the rug back to him in the same condition it was in before you made the tracks on it."

His father did not answer, and now for perhaps half a minute there was no sound at all save that of breathing, the faint, steady suspiration of complete and intent listening.

"You decline to answer that, Mr. Snopes?" Again his father did not answer. "I'm going to find against you, Mr. Snopes. I'm going to find that you were responsible for the injury to Major de Spain's rug and hold you liable for it. But twenty bushels of corn seems a little high for a man in your circumstances to have to pay. Major de Spain claims it cost a hundred dollars. October corn will be worth about fifty cents. I figure that if Major de Spain can stand a ninety-five dollar loss on something he paid cash for, you can stand a five-dollar loss you haven't earned yet. I hold you in damages to

Major de Spain to the amount of ten bushels of corn over and above your contract with him, to be paid to him out of your crop at gathering time. Court adjourned."

It had taken no time hardly, the morning was but half begun. He thought they would return home and perhaps back to the field, since they were late, far behind all other farmers. But instead his father passed on behind the wagon, merely indicating with his hand for the older brother to follow with it, and crossed the road toward the blacksmith shop opposite, pressing on after his father, overtaking him, speaking, whispering up at the harsh, calm face beneath the weathered hat: "He won't git no ten bushels neither. He won't git one. We'll . . ." until his father glanced for an instant down at him, the face absolutely calm, the grizzled eyebrows tangled above the cold eyes, the voice almost pleasant, almost gentle:

"You think so? Well, we'll wait till October anyway."

The matter of the wagon—the setting of a spoke or two and the tightening of the tires—did not take long either, the business of the tires accomplished by driving the wagon into the spring branch behind the shop and letting it stand there, the mules nuzzling into the water from time to time, and the boy on the seat with the idle reins, looking up the slope and through the sooty tunnel of the shed where the slow hammer rang and where his father sat on an upended cypress bolt, easily, either talking or listening, still sitting there when the boy brought the dripping wagon up out of the branch and halted it before the door.

"Take them on to the shade and hitch," his father said. He did so and returned. His father and the smith and a third man squatting on his heels inside the door were talking, about crops and animals; the boy, squatting too in the ammoniac dust and hoof-parings and scales of rust, heard his father tell a long and unhurried story out of the time before the birth of the older brother even when he had been a professional horsetrader. And then his father came up beside him where he stood before a tattered last year's circus poster on the other side of the store, gazing rapt and quiet at the scarlet horses, the incredible poisonings and convolutions of tulle and tights and the painted leers of comedians, and said, "It's time to eat."

But not at home. Squatting beside his brother against the front wall, he watched his father emerge from the store and produce from a paper sack a segment of cheese and divide it carefully and deliberately into three with his pocket knife and produce crackers from the same sack. They all three squatted on the gallery and ate, slowly, without talking; then in the store again, they drank from a tin dipper tepid water smelling of the cedar bucket and of living beech trees. And still they did not go home. It was a horse lot this time, a tall rail fence upon and along which men stood and sat and out of which one by one horses were led, to be walked and trotted and then cantered back and forth along the road while the slow swapping and buying went on and the sun began to slant westward, they—the three of them—watching and listening, the older brother with his muddy eyes and his steady, inevitable tobacco, the father commenting now and then on certain of the animals, to no one in particular.

It was after sundown when they reached home. They ate supper by lamplight, then, sitting on the doorstep, the boy watched the night fully accomplish, listening to the whippoorwills and the frogs, when he heard his mother's voice: "Abner! No! No! Oh, God. Oh, God. Abner!" and he rose, whirled, and saw the altered light through the door where a candle stub now burned in a bottle neck on the table and his father, still in the hat and coat, at once formal and burlesque as though dressed carefully for some shabby and ceremonial violence, emptying the reservoir of the lamp back into the five-gallon kerosene can from which it had been filled, while the mother tugged at his arm until he shifted the lamp to the other hand and flung her back, not savagely or viciously, just hard, into the wall, her hands flung out against the wall for balance, her mouth open and in her face the same quality of hopeless despair as had been in her voice. Then his father saw him standing in the door.

"Go to the barn and get that can of oil we were oiling the wagon with," he said. The boy did not move. Then he could speak.

"What . . ." he cried. "What are you . . ."

"Go get that oil," his father said. "Go."

Then he was moving, running, outside the house, toward the stable: this the old habit, the old blood which he had not been permitted to choose for himself, which had been bequeathed him willy nilly and which had run for so long (and who knew where, battenning on what of outrage and savagery and lust) before it came to him. *I could keep on*, he thought. *I could run on and on and never look back, never need to see his face again. Only I can't. I can't*, the rusted can in his hand now, the liquid sploshing in it as he ran back to the house and into it, into the sound of his mother's weeping in the next room, and handed the can to his father.

"Ain't you going to even send a nigger?" he cried. "At least you sent a nigger before!"

This time his father didn't strike him. The hand came even faster than the blow had, the same hand which had set the can on the table with almost excruciating care flashing from the can toward him too quick for him to follow it, gripping him by the back of his shirt and on to tiptoe before he had seen it quit the can, the face stooping at him in breathless and frozen ferocity, the cold, dead voice speaking over him to the older brother who leaned against the table, chewing with that steady, curious, sidewise motion of cows:

"Empty the can into the big one and go on. I'll catch up with you."

"Better tie him up to the bedpost," the brother said.

"Do like I told you," the father said. Then the boy was moving, his bunched shirt and the hard, bony hand between his shoulder-blades, his toes just touching the floor, across the room and into the other one, past the sisters sitting with spread heavy thighs in the two chairs over the cold hearth, and to where his mother and aunt sat side by side on the bed, the aunt's arms about his mother's shoulders.

"Hold him," the father said. The aunt made a startled movement. "Not you," the father said. "Lennie. Take hold of him. I want to see you

do it." His mother took him by the wrist. "You'll hold him better than that. If he gets loose don't you know what he is going to do? He will go up yonder." He jerked his head toward the road. "Maybe I'd better tie him."

"I'll hold him," his mother whispered.

"See you do then." Then his father was gone, the stiff foot heavy and measured upon the boards, ceasing at last.

Then he began to struggle. His mother caught him in both arms, he jerking and wrenching at them. He would be stronger in the end, he knew that. But he had no time to wait for it. "Lemme go!" he cried. "I don't want to have to hit you!"

"Let him go!" the aunt said. "If he don't go, before God, I am going up there myself!"

"Don't you see I can't?" his mother cried. "Sarty! Sarty! No! No! Help me, Lizzie!"

Then he was free. His aunt grasped at him but it was too late. He whirled, running, his mother stumbled forward on to her knees behind him, crying to the nearer sister: "Catch him, Net! Catch him!" But that was too late too, the sister (the sisters were twins, born at the same time, yet either of them now gave the impression of being, encompassing as much living meat and volume and weight as any other two of the family) not yet having begun to rise from the chair, her head, face, alone merely turned, presenting to him in the flying instant an astonishing expanse of young female features untroubled by any surprise even, wearing only an expression of bovine interest. Then he was out of the room, out of the house, in the mild dust of the starlit road and the heavy ripeness of honeysuckle, the pale ribbon unspooling with terrific slowness under his running feet, reaching the gate at last and turning in, running, his heart and lungs drumming, on up the drive toward the lighted house, the lighted door. He did not knock, he burst in, sobbing for breath, incapable for the moment of speech; he saw the astonished face of the Negro in the linen jacket without knowing when the Negro had appeared.

"De Spain!" he cried, panted. "Where's . . ." then he saw the white man too emerging from a white door down the hall. "Barn!" he cried. "Barn!"

"What?" the white man said. "Barn?"

"Yes!" the boy cried. "Barn!"

"Catch him!" the white man shouted.

But it was too late this time too. The Negro grasped his shirt, but the entire sleeve, rotten with washing, carried away, and he was out that door too and in the drive again, and had actually never ceased to run even while he was screaming into the white man's face.

Behind him the white man was shouting, "My horse! Fetch my horse!" and he thought for an instant of cutting across the park and climbing the fence into the road, but he did not know the park nor how high the vine-massed fence might be and he dared not risk it. So he ran on down the drive, blood and breath roaring; presently he was in the road again though

he could not see it. He could not hear either: the galloping mare was almost upon him before he heard her, and even then he held his course, as if the very urgency of his wild grief and need must in a moment more find him wings, waiting until the ultimate instant to hurl himself aside and into the weed-choked roadside ditch as the horse thundered past and on, for an instant in furious silhouette against the stars, the tranquil early summer night sky which, even before the shape of the horse and rider vanished, stained abruptly and violently upward: a long, swirling roar incredible and soundless, blotting the stars, and he springing up and into the road again, running again, knowing it was too late yet still running even after he heard the shot and, an instant later, two shots, pausing now without knowing he had ceased to run, crying "Pap! Pap!", running again before he knew he had begun to run, stumbling, tripping over something and scrabbling up again without ceasing to run, looking backward over his shoulder at the glare as he got up, running on among the invisible trees, panting, sobbing, "Father! Father!"

At midnight he was sitting on the crest of a hill. He did not know it was midnight and he did not know how far he had come. But there was no glare behind him now and he sat now, his back toward what he had called home for four days anyhow, his face toward the dark woods which he would enter when breath was strong again, small, shaking steadily in the chill darkness, hugging himself into the remainder of his thin, rotten shirt, the grief and despair now no longer terror and fear but just grief and despair. *Father. My father*, he thought. "He was brave!" he cried suddenly, aloud but not loud, no more than a whisper: "He was! He was in the war! He was in Colonel Sartoris' cav'ry!" not knowing that his father had gone to that war a private in the fine old European sense, wearing no uniform, admitting the authority of and giving fidelity to no man or army or flag, going to war as Malbrouck himself did: for booty—it meant nothing and less than nothing to him if it were enemy booty or his own.

The slow constellations wheeled on. It would be dawn and then sun-up after a while and he would be hungry. But that would be tomorrow and now he was only cold, and walking would cure that. His breathing was easier now and he decided to get up and go on, and then he found that he had been asleep because he knew it was almost dawn, the night almost over. He could tell that from the whippoorwills. They were everywhere now among the dark trees below him, constant and inflectioned and ceaseless, so that, as the instant for giving over to the day birds drew nearer and nearer, there was no interval at all between them. He got up. He was a little stiff, but walking would cure that too as it would the cold, and soon there would be the sun. He went on down the hill, toward the dark woods within which the liquid silver voices of the birds called unceasing—the rapid and urgent beating of the urgent and quiring heart of the late spring night. He did not look back.

Plato's *Crito*

[*Or, On What Is to Be Done*]¹

SOCRATES. Why have you arrived at this hour, Crito?² Or isn't it still early? 43a

CRITO. It certainly is.

SOCRATES. What is the hour?

CRITO. Just before daybreak.

SOCRATES. I wonder how it is that the guard of the prison was willing to let you in.

CRITO. He is accustomed to me by now, Socrates, because of my frequent visits here; and besides, he has been done a certain benefaction by me.

SOCRATES. Have you just come, or have you been here long?

CRITO. Fairly long.

SOCRATES. Then why didn't you wake me up right away, instead of sitting beside me in silence? b

CRITO. No, by Zeus, Socrates, nor would I myself willingly be in such great sleeplessness and pain! But I have long been wondering at you, perceiving how pleasantly you sleep. And I kept from waking you on purpose, so that you would pass the time as pleasantly as possible. And though I have of course often previously regarded you through your whole life as happy in your temperament, I do so especially in the present calamity now, so easily and mildly do you bear it.

¹"Or, On What Is to Be Done" may be Plato's subtitle or, more likely, may have been added by a later Greek editor.

²On the man Crito, see *Apology* n. 61. The name Crito comes from a Greek word that means "discern" or "judge."

SOCRATES. That's because it would be discordant, Crito, for someone of my age to be vexed if he now must meet his end. 43b

CRITO. Others of your age, Socrates, are also caught in such calamities, but their age does not release them from being vexed at their present fortune. c

SOCRATES. This is so. But why *have* you arrived so early?

CRITO. To bear a message, Socrates, that is hard—not hard for you, as it appears to me, but for me and for all your companions it is a hard and grave one. And I, as it seems to me, would bear it the most gravely of all.

SOCRATES. What is it? Or has the ship arrived from Delos, after whose arrival I must die?³ d

CRITO. It hasn't arrived yet, but it does seem to me that it will come today, from the report of some men who have come from Sunium and left it there.⁴ So it is clear from these messengers that it will come today, and tomorrow it will be necessary, Socrates, for you to end your life.

SOCRATES. Well, may it be with good fortune, Crito; if such is dear to the gods, such let it be. However, I don't suppose it will come today.

CRITO. From what do you infer this? 44a

SOCRATES. I will tell you. Surely I must die on the day after the ship comes.

CRITO. That's at least what those having authority over these things say.

SOCRATES. Then I do not suppose it will come on the day that is upon us, but on the next. I infer it from a certain dream I had a little earlier tonight. And there's probably something opportune in your not having awakened me.

CRITO. But what *was* the dream?

³See Plato, *Phaedo* 58a–c: “This is the ship, as the Athenians say, in which Theseus once went to Crete leading the ‘twice seven’ and saved them and was saved himself. [According to tradition the Athenians had been obliged to send Crete a periodic tribute of seven youths and seven maidens. Theseus, the founder of Athens, went to Crete and, by some accounts, saved himself and the others by defeating the Minotaur.] They made a vow to Apollo then, as is said, that if they were saved, they would send a mission each year to Delos [the Aegean island sacred to Apollo], and because of that they always send it annually to the god and still do now. Now whenever they begin the mission, it is their law to purify the city during this time and to conduct no public executions until the ship arrives at Delos and comes back here again. This occasionally takes a long time, whenever the winds happen to hold them back. The beginning of the mission is whenever the priest of Apollo crowns the stern of the ship. This happened, as I say, on the day before the trial. Because of this Socrates was in jail a long time between his trial and his death.”

⁴Sunium is the cape of the Athenian territory of Attica, and a ship returning from Delos would pass by it and might be detained there if the winds were unfavorable.

SOCRATES. It seemed that a certain woman approached me, beautiful and well formed, dressed in white, and that she called me by name and said: "Socrates, on the third day thou would'st arrive in fertile Phthia."⁵ 44a b

CRITO. The dream is strange, Socrates.

SOCRATES. No, quite manifest, at least as it seems to me, Crito.

CRITO. Too much so, as is likely. But, daimonic⁶ Socrates, even now obey⁷ me and save yourself, since if you die, for me it is not just one calamity: apart from being deprived of such a companion⁸ as I will never discover again, I will also seem to many, those who don't know you and me plainly, to have been able to save you if I had been willing to spend money, but not to have cared. And yet what reputation would be more shameful than to seem⁹ to regard money as more important than friends? For the many will not be persuaded that you yourself were not willing to go away from here although we were eager for it. c

SOCRATES. But why do we care in this way, blessed Crito, about the opinion of the many? For the most decent men, whom it is more worthy to give thought to, will hold that these things have been done in just the way they were done.

CRITO. But surely you see that it is necessary, Socrates, to care also about the opinion of the many. The present situation now d

⁵In the *Iliad* (IX.363) Achilles says to Odysseus, "And if the famous Earth-shaker grants me a good sailing, on the third day I would arrive in fertile Phthia." Achilles is refusing Odysseus' request that he be reconciled with Agamemnon, his ruler. He is threatening to leave the army at Troy and go home to Phthia, an area of Thessaly. But Socrates also dreamed that he was addressed by a beautiful woman, which may be an allusion to a later event in the *Iliad* (XVIII.94ff.): "In a central passage of the *Apology of Socrates* (28c2-d5) where Socrates presents Achilleus as a model of noble conduct, he speaks of a beautiful woman, the goddess Thetis, saying to her son Achilleus that he will die straightway after Hektor; Achilleus chose to die nobly rather than to live in disgrace—which he would surely do by returning to Phthia. In Socrates' dream the two Homeric passages are combined with the result that a beautiful woman prophesies to him that he would come to Phthia, or advises him to go to Phthia, i.e., to Thessaly. . . . But Phthia being Achilleus' fatherland, the dream could as well mean that Socrates will come on the third day to his true fatherland, i.e., to Hades." Quoted from Leo Strauss, "On Plato's *Apology of Socrates and Crito*," in Strauss, *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 55. A pun may also be intended: "Phthia" suggests the verb *phthein*, "waste away, decay, die."

⁶As an address, "daimonic" usually conveys a sense of ironic reproach, meaning something like "you marvellous fellow," "strange sir." On the literal meaning of daimon and the daimonic, see *Apology* n. 37.

⁷Here and throughout, the word "obey" (*peithesthai*) may also mean "be persuaded."

⁸"Companion" is *epitēdeios*; this word which Crito uses for "friend" connotes someone "useful" or "serviceable."

⁹Here and elsewhere, "seem" (*dokein*) may also be translated "be reputed." The word "opinion" (*doxa*) in Socrates' reply is formed from the same root as *dokein*. On *doxa*, see *Apology* n. 29.

makes it clear that the many can produce not the smallest of evils but almost the greatest, if someone is slandered among them. 44d

SOCRATES. Would that the many *could* produce the greatest evils, Crito, so that they could also produce the greatest goods! That would indeed be noble. But as it is, they can do neither. For they aren't capable of making someone either prudent or imprudent,¹⁰ but do whatever they happen to do by chance.

CRITO. Let these things be so. But, Socrates, tell me this. Surely you aren't worrying, are you, on behalf of me and the rest of your companions, over the prospect that if you leave here, the informers¹¹ will make trouble for us on the ground that we stole you away from here, and we will be compelled to lose either our whole substance¹² or a lot of money, or even to suffer something else besides this? If you fear some such thing, leave it aside. For surely it is just for us to save you and run this risk, and one still greater than this, if need be. But obey me and do not do otherwise. 45a

SOCRATES. I am worrying over the prospect of these things, Crito, and of many others.

CRITO. Then do not fear these things. For in fact it is not even much money that certain people are willing to take to save you and lead you out of here. Furthermore, don't you see how easily these informers are bought, and that they wouldn't need much money? My money is available to you, and is, as I suppose, sufficient. Furthermore, even if out of some concern for me you suppose I shouldn't spend mine, these foreigners who are here are ready to spend theirs. And one of them has brought sufficient money for this very thing, Simmias of Thebes; and Cebes¹³ is ready too, and very many others. b

So as I say, don't hesitate to save yourself because you fear these things, and don't let it be hard for you to accept, as you were saying in the court, because you wouldn't know what to do with yourself¹⁴ if you left. For there are many places where they will greet you with affection when you arrive. And if you wish to go to Thessaly, I have guest-friends there who will regard you as impor- c

¹⁰"Prudent or imprudent": see *Apology* n. 33.

¹¹"Informers" (*sykophantes*) were private citizens who personally profited from their honest or dishonest prosecutions, especially of the wealthy.

¹²"Substance" is *ousia*, literally "beinghood" or "beingness," but used to refer to a man's monetary estate or "real estate."

¹³Simmias and Cebes from Thebes were companions and admirers of Socrates in Athens at this time; they are Socrates' two leading interlocutors in the *Phaedo*.

¹⁴Literally, "you wouldn't have [any notion of] whatever you would use yourself [for]."

tant and offer you safety, so that no one throughout Thessaly will cause you pain.¹⁵ 45c

Besides, Socrates, you seem to me to be attempting a thing that isn't even just: you are betraying yourself, although it is possible to be saved. And you are hastening the coming to pass of the very things concerning yourself which your very enemies would hasten on, and did hasten on in their wish to ruin¹⁶ you. In addition to these things, you seem to me at least to be betraying your own sons, too, whom you will leave and abandon, although it is possible for you to nurture and educate them. As far as it lies in you, they will do whatever they happen to do by chance, and chance will bring them, as is likely, just the sorts of things that usually happen to orphans when they are orphaned. Now one either should not have children or should endure the hardship of nurturing and educating them. But you seem to me to be choosing the most easygoing course. d

Instead, one should choose just what a good and manly¹⁷ man would choose, particularly if one has claimed to care for virtue through his whole life. For my part I am ashamed for you and for us, your companions, that the whole affair concerning you will seem to have been conducted with a certain lack of manliness on our part: the way the lawsuit was introduced into the law court, even though it was possible for it not to be introduced; the way the judicial contest itself took place; and now this, the ridiculous conclusion of the affair, will seem to have escaped us completely because of a certain badness and lack of manliness on our part, since we didn't save you, nor did you save yourself, although it was possible and feasible if we had been of even a slight benefit. So see to it, Socrates, that these things be not shameful as well as bad both for you and for us. e 46a

But take counsel—rather, there is no longer time to take counsel, but to have taken counsel. And there is only one counsel. For all these things must be done during the coming night. If we wait any longer, it will be impossible and can no longer be done. But in every way, Socrates, obey me and in no way do otherwise.

¹⁵Thessaly is an area of Greece north of Thermopylae, about 100 miles northwest of Athens. Being relatively isolated from the rest of Greece, it was somewhat rude and uncivilized.

¹⁶*Diaphtheirein* ("ruin") is elsewhere translated as "corrupt," as in the expression, "corrupt the youth."

¹⁷The word translated "manly" (*andreios*) may also mean "courageous." The word derives from *anēr*, "man" (*Apology* n. 49).

SOCRATES. Dear Crito, your eagerness is worth much if some correctness be with it. If not, the greater it is, the harder it is to deal with. So we should consider whether these things are to be done or not, since I, not only now but always, am such as to obey nothing else of what is mine than that argument which appears best to me upon reasoning. The arguments that I spoke in the past I am not able to throw out now that this fortune has come to pass for me. Instead, they appear rather alike to me, and I venerate and honor the same ones I did before. If we have no better argument to say at present, know well that I will certainly not yield to you, not even if the power of the many scares us like children with more hobgoblins than those now present, sending against us imprisonments and executions and confiscations of money. 46b

How then would we consider this with all due measure? By taking up first this argument you are making about opinions. Was it said nobly on each occasion or not, that one should pay mind to some opinions, but not others? Or was it said nobly before I had to die, while now it has become very clear that it was said pointlessly just for the sake of argument, and that in truth it was child's play and drivel? I desire to consider in common with you, Crito, whether the argument appears at all different to me, now that I am in this position, or the same; and whether we shall leave it aside or obey it. c

On each occasion, as I suppose, those who supposed that they had something to say somehow used to speak as I was speaking just now: of the opinions which human beings opine, some must be regarded as important, others not. Before the gods, Crito, does this not seem to you to be nobly spoken? For you, humanly speaking, are not about to die tomorrow, and the present calamity wouldn't lead you astray. Consider, then. Doesn't it seem to you adequately spoken, that one should not honor all the opinions of human beings, but some and not others? What do you say? Isn't this nobly spoken? d

CRITO. Nobly.¹⁸

SOCRATES. To honor the upright opinions, but not the villainous?

CRITO. Yes.

SOCRATES. Aren't the upright ones those of the prudent, and the villainous ones those of the imprudent? e

CRITO. Of course. 47a

¹⁸*Kalon* is translated "noble" or "beautiful" throughout the *Crito*. When *kalon* is applied to speech, as here, it may mean merely "well" spoken, or it may have the stronger sense of "honorably." See *Apology* n. 16 on *kalon*.

SOCRATES. Come then, again, how were such things spoken of? Does a man who is exercising and practicing gymnastics pay mind to the praise and blame and opinion of every man, or of one only, who happens to be a doctor or trainer? 47a b

CRITO. Of one only.

SOCRATES. Therefore he should fear the blame and welcome the praises of the one, but not those of the many.

CRITO. Clearly.

SOCRATES. He is to practice and exercise, then, and to eat and drink as seems fitting to the one—the overseer and expert—rather than to all the others.

CRITO. This is so.

SOCRATES. Well, then. If he disobeys the one and dishonors his opinion and praises, while honoring those of the many who have no expertise, won't he suffer evil? c

CRITO. Of course.

SOCRATES. What is this evil? And where and at what does it aim among the things belonging to him who disobeys?

CRITO. Clearly at his body, for this is what it destroys.

SOCRATES. Nobly spoken. Aren't the other things also like this (so that we don't have to go through all of them)? And in particular, concerning the just and unjust and shameful and noble and good and bad things, about which we are now taking counsel, must we follow the opinion of the many and fear it rather than that of the one—if there is such an expert—whom we must be ashamed before and fear more than all the others? And if we don't follow him, we will corrupt and maim that thing which, as we used to say, becomes better by the just and is destroyed by the unjust.¹⁹ Or isn't there anything to this? d

CRITO. I, at least, suppose that there is, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Come then, if we destroy that which becomes better by the healthful and is corrupted by the diseaseful, because we don't obey the opinion of the experts, is life worth living for us when it has been corrupted? Surely this is the body, isn't it? e

CRITO. Yes.

SOCRATES. So is life worth living for us with a wretched and corrupted body?

CRITO. In no way.

¹⁹Words exactly corresponding to "as we used to say" are not in the Greek, but they are implied by Socrates' use of the imperfect tense (literally, "used to become better by the just and used to be destroyed by the unjust").

SOCRATES. But is life worth living for us with that thing corrupted which the unjust maims and the just profits? Or do we hold that thing to be more paltry than the body—whatever it is of the things that belong to us which both injustice and justice concern? 47e 48a

CRITO. In no way.

SOCRATES. But more honorable?

CRITO. Much more so.

SOCRATES. Then we ought not at all, O best of men, to give so much thought to what the many will say of us, but rather to what the expert concerning the just and unjust things—to what the one, and truth itself—will say. So first, it's not correct for you to introduce the claim that we must give thought to the opinion of the many concerning things just and noble and good and their opposites.

"But the fact is," someone might say, "the many are able to kill us."

CRITO. Yes, clearly this is so. For it might be said, Socrates. What you say is true. b

SOCRATES. But, you wondrous man, the argument that we have gone through still seems to me, at least, like it did before. Consider, again, whether the following also still stays so for us or not: not living, but living well, is to be regarded as most important.

CRITO. It does stay so.

SOCRATES. And that living well and nobly and justly are the same. Does it stay so or does it not stay?

CRITO. It stays so.

SOCRATES. Therefore from the things agreed upon, it must be considered whether it is just for me to try to go out of here although the Athenians are not permitting me to go, or not just. And if it appears just, let us try, but if not, let's leave it aside. As for the considerations that you speak of concerning spending of money and reputation and nurture of children, I suspect that in truth, Crito, these are considerations of those who easily kill and, if they could, would bring back to life again, acting mindlessly: namely, the many. Since this is how the argument holds, nothing else is to be considered by us except what we were saying just now: whether we will do just things by paying money and gratitude to those who will lead me out of here, or whether in truth we will do injustice by doing all these things—those of us who are leading out as well as those of us who are being led out. And if it is apparent that these deeds of ours are unjust, we must take nothing into account com- c d

pared to the doing of injustice, even if we must die by staying here and keeping quiet or must suffer anything else whatever. 48d

CRITO. You seem to me to speak nobly, Socrates; but see what we are to do.

SOCRATES. Let us consider in common, my good man, and if there is some way you can contradict my argument, contradict it and I will obey you. But if not, blessed man, then stop telling me the same argument again and again, that I ought to go away from here although the Athenians are unwilling. For I regard it as important to act after persuading you, not while you are unwilling. Now see if this beginning of the consideration is stated adequately for you, and try to answer what is asked in whatever way you most suppose it to be. 49a

CRITO. I will try.

SOCRATES. Do we assert that in no way ought injustice to be done voluntarily, or that in one way injustice ought to be done, but in another way not? Or is doing injustice in no way good or noble, as we have often agreed in the past, and which was also said just now? Or have all those former agreements of ours been poured away in these few days? And although at our age, Crito, we old men have long been seriously conversing with each other, were we unaware, then, that we ourselves are no different from children? Or is it so for us now more than ever just as it was spoken then? Whether the many say so or not, and whether we must suffer things still harder than these or maybe milder, does doing injustice nevertheless happen to be bad and shameful in every way for the one who does injustice? Do we affirm it or not? b

CRITO. We affirm it.

SOCRATES. Then one must in no way do injustice.

CRITO. Of course not.

SOCRATES. And even he who has been done injustice, then, must not do injustice in return, as the many suppose, since one must in no way do injustice.

CRITO. Apparently not. c

SOCRATES. What then? Should one do evil or not, Crito?

CRITO. Doubtless one must not, Socrates.

SOCRATES. What then? Is it just or not just for the one to whom evil is done to do evil in return, as the many say?

CRITO. In no way.

SOCRATES. For surely there is no difference between human beings doing evil and doing injustice.

CRITO. What you say is true.

49C

SOCRATES. Then no human being should do injustice in return or do evil, whatever he suffers from others. And see to it, Crito, that by agreeing to this, you aren't agreeing contrary to your opinion. For I know that this seems and will seem so only to a certain few. So there is no common counsel for those who hold this opinion and those who do not: it is necessary that they will have contempt for each other when they see each others' counsels. So you too consider very well whether you share this opinion in common with me and whether we should begin taking counsel from here: that it is never correct to do injustice, or to do injustice in return, or for someone to whom evil is done to defend himself by doing evil in return. Or do you stand aloof and not share this beginning? For to me it has long seemed so and still does now, but if it has seemed some other way to you, speak and teach me. But if you abide by the things from before, hear what comes after this.

d

e

CRITO. I do abide by them and it does seem so to me as well. But speak.

SOCRATES. Again, I'll say what comes after this, or rather ask. Ought someone to do the things he agrees upon with someone—if they are just—or ought he to evade them by deception?

CRITO. He ought to do them.

SOCRATES. Observe what follows from these things. If we go away from here without persuading the city, do we do evil to some—indeed to those whom it should least be done to—or not? And do we abide by the things we agreed to—if they are just—or not?

50a

CRITO. I have no answer to what you ask, Socrates. For I don't understand.

SOCRATES. Consider it as follows. What if the laws and the community of the city should come and stand before²⁰ us who are about to run away (or whatever name we should give it) from here and ask: "Tell me, Socrates, what do you have in mind to do? By this deed that you are attempting, what do you think you're doing, if not destroying us laws and the whole city, as far as it lies in you? Or does it seem possible to you for a city to continue to exist, and not to be overturned, in which the judgments²¹ that are reached have no strength, but are rendered ineffective and are corrupted by private men?"

b

²⁰Dreams were frequently said to "stand before" (*epistēnai*) the person dreaming.

²¹The words "judgments" and "trials" in this speech render the Greek *dikai*, the plural of *dikē*, "justice." See also *Apology* n. 73 on *dikē*.

What shall we say, Crito, to these and other such things? For someone, especially an orator, would have many things to say on behalf of this law if it were destroyed—the law that orders that the judgments reached in trials be authoritative. Or shall we tell them, “The city was doing us injustice and did not pass judgment correctly”? Shall we say this, or what? 50b c

CRITO. Yes, this, by Zeus, Socrates!

SOCRATES. Then what if the laws should say, “Socrates, has it been agreed to by us and by you to do this, or to abide by whatever judgments the city reaches in trials?”

If, then, we should wonder at their saying this, perhaps they would say, “Socrates, do not wonder at what is said, but answer, since you have been accustomed to make use of questioning and answering. Come now, what charge are you bringing against us and the city that you are attempting to destroy us? First, didn’t we beget you, and didn’t your father take your mother and bring you forth through us? Tell us, then, do you in some way blame those of us laws that concern marriages, for not being noble?” d

“I do not blame them,” I would say.

“What about those that concern the nurture and education (in which you too were educated) of the one born? Or didn’t those laws among us which have been ordered for this end order your father nobly when they passed along the command to him to educate you in music and gymnastic?”²² e

“Nobly,” I would say.

“Well, then. Since you were born and nurtured, and educated, too, could you say, first, that you are not ours, both our offspring and slave, you yourself as well as your forebears? And if this is so, do you suppose that justice is equal for you and for us? And do you suppose that it is just for you to do in return whatever we attempt to do to you? Now with regard to your father (or a master, if you happened to have one), justice was not equal for you, so that you didn’t also do in return whatever you suffered: you didn’t contradict him when he spoke badly of you, nor did you beat him in return when you were beaten, or do any other such thing. So is it then permitted to you to do so with regard to the fatherland and the laws, so that if we, believing it to be just, attempt to destroy you, then you too, to the extent that you can, will attempt to 51a

²²“Music and gymnastic” are the elements of the education of a free man. For the Greeks “music” (*mousikē*, that which concerns the Muses) meant especially poetry. Compare *Republic* Books II–III and VI–VII.

destroy us laws and the fatherland in return? And will you say that in doing this you are acting justly, you who in truth care for virtue? Or are you so wise that you have been unaware that fatherland is something more honorable than mother and father and all the other forebears, and more venerable, and more holy, and more highly esteemed among gods and among human beings who are intelligent? And that you must revere and give way to and fawn upon a fatherland more than a father when it is angry with you, and either persuade it or do whatever it bids, and keep quiet and suffer if it orders you to suffer anything, whether to be beaten or to be bound? Or that if it leads you into war to be wounded or killed, this must be done? And that this is just and that you are not to give way or retreat or leave your station, but that in war and in court and everywhere, you must do whatever the city and fatherland bid, or else persuade it what the just is by nature?²³ And that it is not pious to do violence to mother or father, and still less by far to the fatherland than to them?"

51a

b

What shall we say in reply to these things, Crito? That what the laws say is true or not?

CRITO. It seems so to me, at least.

SOCRATES. "Then consider, Socrates," the laws would perhaps say, "that if what we say is true, the things you are attempting to do to us are not just. For although we begat, nourished, and educated you, and gave you and all the other citizens a share in all the noble things we could, nevertheless we proclaim, by making it possible for any Athenian who wishes, once he has been admitted to adulthood and has seen the affairs in the city and us laws, that if we do not satisfy him, he is allowed to take his own things and go away wherever he wishes. And none of us laws is an obstacle or forbids anyone from going wherever he wishes, keeping his own things, whether one of you wishes to go to a colony (if we and the city are not satisfactory) or to go and settle in another home somewhere. But to whoever of you stays here and sees the way that we reach judgments and otherwise manage the city, we say that he has already agreed with us in deed to do whatever we bid. And when he does not obey, we say that he does injustice in three ways: in that he does not obey us who begat him; nor us who nurtured him; and in that although he agreed to obey us, he neither obeys nor persuades us if we do something ignobly, although we put forward an alternative to him and do not order him crudely

d

e

52a

²³"Is by nature" translates *pephyka*, the perfect tense of *phyein*, "to grow."

to do whatever we bid, but permit either of two things—either to persuade us or to do it—but he does neither of these. 52a

"To these charges, Socrates, we say that you too will be liable if you do what you have in mind, and you not least of the Athenians, but more than anyone among them."

If then I should say, "Because of what?" perhaps they would accost me justly and say that more than anyone among the Athenians I happen to have agreed to this agreement. They would say, "Socrates, we have great proofs that both we and the city were satisfactory to you. For you would never have exceeded all the other Athenians in staying at home in it unless it had satisfied you exceedingly. You never went out of the city to see the sights except once to the Isthmus, nor did you ever go anywhere else except when you were with the army on campaign somewhere.²⁴ Nor did you ever make any other journey, as other human beings do, nor did a desire ever take hold of you to know another city or other laws: we and our city were sufficient for you. So vehemently were you choosing us and agreeing to be governed in accordance with us that among other things you also had children in it, as though the city was satisfactory to you. Furthermore, in the trial itself you could have proposed exile as your penalty if you had wished, and what you are attempting now when the city is unwilling, you could have done then when it was willing. But you were then pluming yourself on not being vexed if you should have to die, and you chose death, as you said, before exile; while now you are not ashamed of those speeches, nor do you heed us laws, since you are attempting to corrupt us. And you are doing just what the paltriest slave would do: attempting to run away contrary to the contracts and agreements according to which you contracted with us to be governed. b c d

"So first, answer us this very thing: whether what we say is true or not true when we claim that you have agreed in deed, but not in speech, to be governed in accordance with us?"

What are we to say in reply to this Crito? Shall we not agree? CRITO. Necessarily, Socrates.

SOCRATES. "So are you not transgressing," they would say, "your contracts and agreements with us, although you did not e

²⁴"To see the sights" translates *epi theorian*, literally, "for contemplation." A *theoria* may also be a religious or other festival, and the reference to "the Isthmus" is probably to the Isthmian games, athletic contests held periodically at Corinth. (The phrase "except once to the Isthmus" is missing from some manuscripts, and it may be an interpolation.) Socrates' military campaigns are mentioned in *Apology* 28e.

agree to them under necessity and were not deceived? Nor were you compelled to take counsel in a short time, but during seventy years in which you could have gone away if we were not satisfactory or if the agreements did not appear to be just to you. But you chose instead neither Lacedaemon nor Crete—and you yourself on occasion say that *they* have good laws²⁵—nor any other of the Greek cities or the barbarian ones. Rather, you took fewer journeys away from the city than the lame and blind and the other cripples, so exceedingly did it and we laws satisfy you more than the other Athenians, clearly. For whom would a city satisfy without laws? But will you in fact not abide now by what you have agreed to? You will, if you obey us, Socrates; and you will not become ridiculous by going out from the city.

“For consider, if you transgress these things and commit any of these wrongs, what good will you produce for yourself or your own companions? For it is rather clear that your companions will themselves risk being exiled and being deprived of their city or losing their substance. And as for yourself, first, if you go to one of the nearest cities, to Thebes or Megara²⁶ (for both have good laws), you will come as an enemy, Socrates, to their political regime, and those very ones among them who are concerned for their own cities will look askance at you, believing that you are a corrupter of the laws. And you will confirm the judges in their opinion, so that they will seem to have judged the lawsuit correctly. For whoever is a corrupter of laws would surely seem very much to be a corrupter of young and mindless human beings. So will you flee the cities with good laws and the most decorous men? And if you do this, will life be worth living for you? Or will you consort with these men and shamelessly converse with them? With what speeches, Socrates? The ones that you speak here, that virtue and justice are of the most worth to human beings, and customs and laws? And do you not suppose the affair of Socrates²⁷ will appear unseemly? One must suppose so.

²⁵In *Republic* Book VIII Socrates calls the Spartan and Cretan political order “timocracy,” and he appears to rank this order as the best of the political regimes not ruled by philosophers (544c, 547b–548d). Aristotle describes Sparta and Crete in detail in his *Politics* Book II. *Eunomeisthai*, here translated “have good laws,” could also mean “are law abiding.”

²⁶Thebes and Megara, which had been enemies of Athens during the Peloponnesian War, apparently were governed at the time of Socrates’ incarceration by narrowly oligarchical constitutions; the regime at Thebes was overthrown with great popular rejoicing several years later.

²⁷“The affair (*pragma*) of Socrates”; compare *Apology* 20c and n. 25.

"But will you depart from these places and come to the guest-friends of Crito in Thessaly? There, of course, is very much disorder and lack of restraint, and perhaps they would be pleased to hear from you how laughably you ran away from the prison by covering yourself with some disguise—putting on either a leather skin or other disguises such as those who run away usually use—and by altering your own figure. Is there no one who will say that you, an old man with only a little time left in his life, as is likely, dared so greedily to desire to live by transgressing the greatest laws? Perhaps not, if you don't cause pain to anyone. Otherwise, Socrates, you will hear many things unworthy of yourself. You will live by fawning upon all human beings and being their slave. And what else will you be doing but feasting well in Thessaly, as though you had journeyed to Thessaly for dinner? Where will those speeches concerning justice and the rest of virtue be for us then? 53d e 54a

"Is it rather that you wish to live for your children's sake, so that you may nurture and educate them? What then? Will you take them to Thessaly to nurture and educate them, making them foreigners, so that they will have this advantage too? Or if not this, if they are nurtured here, will they be better nurtured and educated because you are alive when you won't be with them? No, for your companions will take care of them for you. Will they take care of them if you journey to Thessaly but not take care of them if you journey to Hades? If in fact those who claim to you to be your companions are of any benefit at all, one must suppose, at least, that they will. b

"But, Socrates, obey us, your nurturers, and do not regard children or living or anything else as more important than justice, so that when you go to Hades you will have all these things to say in your defense before those who rule there. For if you do these things, it does not appear to be better or more just or more pious here, either for you or for anyone else of those who are yours, nor will it be better for you when you arrive there. If you depart²⁸ now, you will depart having been done injustice not by us laws, but by human beings. But if you go away so shamefully doing injustice in return and doing evil in return, transgressing your own agreements and contracts with us and doing evil deeds to those to c

²⁸"If you depart": that is, to Hades. In the next sentence, "But if you go away" means into exile.

whom they should least be done—yourself and friends and father-land and us—then we will be angry with you while you live, and our brothers, the laws in Hades, will not receive you favorably there, knowing that you even attempted to destroy us as far as it lay in you. But let not Crito persuade you to do what he says rather than what we say.” 54c d

Know well, my dear comrade Crito, that these things are what *I* seem to hear, just as the Corybantes seem to hear the flutes,²⁹ and this echo of these speeches is booming within me and makes me unable to hear the others. Know that insofar as these things seem so to me now, if you speak against them, you will speak in vain. Nevertheless, if you suppose that you will accomplish anything, speak.

CRITO. But, Socrates, I have nothing to say.

SOCRATES. Then let it go, Crito, and let us act in this way, since in this way the god is leading. e

²⁹In connection with worship of the goddess Cybele a rite was developed to cure nervousness and hysteria by means of dancing to frenzied music played on the flute and kettledrum. Participants in this psychiatric exercise were called Corybantes. The present passage suggests that the music echoes, probably with a calming effect, in the memory of those who have undergone the cure.