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SHOULD WE CONSENT
TO BE GOVERNED?

A SHORT INTRODUCTION
TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Second Edition

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NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

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they don't," which is the answer of critical citizenship advocates.

Likewise, if we ask whether citizens have a moral duty to obey the law, there is a similar set of possible answers: "Yes, they have a duty always to obey" (as the super patriots say), "No, they never have a duty to obey" (as anarchists and cynics claim), and "Sometimes they have a duty to obey and sometimes not" (as advocates of critical citizenship urge).

So only a small set of basic answers to these questions is possible. Different thinkers will, of course, develop and defend these views in their own individual ways, and I do not want to deny that refinements and variations on these outlooks are possible. Nonetheless, we can be confident that no basic types of options are being omitted because the four views cover the logically possible set of basic answers to the questions we are considering.

Which of them, then, is the strongest and most reasonable view? Which view should you or I adopt? In the following chapters I will examine each of them and try to answer these questions. I will describe each view in some detail and try to present the most important reasons why thoughtful people have found them plausible and attractive. Then, I will consider arguments against each view and try to assess how well it answers our basic questions about the relationship between citizens and governments.



Super Patriotism

I WANT TO BEGIN BY DESCRIBING A VIEW THAT THE GREEK philosopher Plato articulates in a brief but powerful dialogue called the *Crito*. I begin here both because this work is one of the earliest discussions of our problem and because it expresses a strong view about citizenship in a very vivid way.

In this work, Plato describes a conversation between Socrates and his friend Crito. Socrates has been convicted by the Athenian court of preaching false doctrines about the gods and corrupting the minds of the youth. He has been sentenced to die and is awaiting execution in an Athenian jail. As his execution date approaches, Crito urges Socrates to save his own life by escaping. Crito assures

Socrates that he can bribe the right people and help him reach safety. Socrates refuses Crito's offer, insisting that he has a moral duty to remain in jail and accept his punishment.

While the story of Socrates is familiar to many, it is important to see how extreme and shocking Socrates' action is. If Socrates were guilty and knew it, it would still be extraordinary for him to reject the chance to save his life by escaping. Nonetheless, he might believe that he actually deserved the punishment he was to receive. Socrates, however, believes that he is innocent of the charges that have been brought against him. He believes that he has committed no crime and should not have been convicted. So not only is he agreeing to accept a harsh punishment that he could avoid, he is also agreeing to die for a crime he did not commit. He is willing to obey the law in spite of his innocence and the high price—life itself—that obedience will cost him.

This is why I call the view that Socrates expresses “super patriotism.” He is willing to sacrifice his life in order to uphold what he takes to be his duty to obey the laws of Athens. He appears to feel such extreme respect toward the state that he will obey its laws and judgments even when they are mistaken and even when obeying the law requires him to make a very great sacrifice. We can see, then, that Socrates takes his relationship to the state very seriously. He seems to think that he has a strong duty to be a good citizen and that being a good citizen requires him to obey the law.

Readers who know about Socrates' life or have read Plato's *Apology* may be surprised to find Socrates described as a super patriot. After all, Socrates championed critical reflection and the examined life, and he insisted that he would keep engaging in philosophical reflection even if the Athenian jury forbid him to do so. In the *Apology*, then, he sets limits to the laws he would obey and reserves the right to place his own judgment over the judgment of the state. Indeed he relates a previous incident in which he refused to

arrest an innocent person who was likely to be executed and says that his “whole concern is not to do anything unjust or impious,” and that he would not permit the government to frighten me into any wrongdoing.”¹ This makes him seem like a “critical citizen” rather than a super patriot, and indeed, some scholars have denied that Socrates ever defended an absolute obligation to obey the law.²

Nonetheless, the most natural interpretation of the *Crito* (and the one that has traditionally been accepted) sees it as a defense of the super patriotic view. And even though it does not fit well with other views that Socrates expresses, the *Crito* contains a powerful defense of super patriotism and makes it worth considering by itself. So, whether or not Socrates actually held the super patriotic view, others have believed it so it is important for us to examine and evaluate it.

Let us look at the arguments for unconditional obedience to law that appear in the *Crito*. As part of his reply to Crito, Socrates imagines the laws of Athens speaking to him and saying,

[D]o you think it possible for a city not to be destroyed if the verdicts of its courts have no force but are nullified and set at naught by private individuals?³

The point here is that if individuals can always overrule the laws when they disagree with them, then the laws of the state have no real force. If the laws are to have any force, then individuals must obey them even if they think they are mistaken or bad.

We can get a sense of the extreme reverence for the state that the dialogue seems to recommend as appropriate for citizens by looking further at the speech that Socrates imagines the laws addressing to him. (For those who think that these are not Socrates' own views, it is significant that Socrates imagines the laws to be expressing these views, rather than stating them in his own voice.) The laws say:

Is your wisdom such as not to realize that your country is to be honoured more than your mother, your father and all your ancestors, that it is more to be revered and more sacred, and that it counts for more among the gods and sensible men, that you must worship it, yield to it and placate its anger more than your father's? You must either persuade it or obey its orders, and endure in silence whatever it instructs you to endure, whether blows or bonds, and if it leads you into war to be wounded or killed, you must obey. . . . [I]n war and in courts and everywhere else, one must obey the commands of one's city and country, or persuade it as to the nature of justice.⁴

Here we have a powerful statement of the idea that the state is much more important than a single individual and that individuals must be prepared to give their lives for their country, whether in battle or in obedience to the judgment of a court. They may try to persuade the state to adopt a particular law, but if they fail, then they must obey whatever law or policy the state has adopted. They must do this even when they believe that the government's policy is a mistake.

The Case for Super Patriotism

What arguments could one use to justify this very demanding view? In the *Crito*, the laws present Socrates with three main arguments in its defense. At the end of their long speech to Socrates, they summarize their main points as follows:

We have given you birth, nurtured you, educated you, we have given you and all other citizens a share of all the good things we could. . . . We say, however, that whoever of you remains . . . [has] an agreement with us to obey our instructions. We say that the one who disobeys does wrong in three ways, first because in us he disobeys his parents, also those who brought him up [his benefactors], and because, in spite of his

agreement, he neither obeys us nor, if we do something wrong, does he try to persuade us to do better.⁵

Each of these three arguments is supposed to support the conclusion that it would be morally wrong for Socrates to disobey the law.

In analyzing these arguments, we can see that each one begins with a relevant fact about Socrates. The first argument highlights the fact that the state is Socrates' parent, the second that the state is Socrates' educator or benefactor, and the third that Socrates has made an agreement to obey the law. In addition, each argument implicitly assumes some general principle about what people are morally obligated to do. The first assumes that all people ought to obey their parents, the second that everyone ought to obey their benefactors, and the third that everyone ought to keep their agreements.

If we set out the total argument in a way that makes each of the three parts fully explicit, we get the following results:

The Parent Argument

1. The state is Socrates' parent.
2. Everyone ought to obey his or her parents.
3. If Socrates escapes, he will disobey his parent.
4. Therefore, Socrates ought not to escape.

The Benefactor Argument

1. The state is Socrates' benefactor.
2. Everyone ought to obey his or her benefactors.
3. If Socrates escapes, he will disobey his benefactor.
4. Therefore, Socrates ought not to escape.

The Agreement Argument

1. Socrates made an agreement to obey the state.
2. Everyone ought to keep his or her agreements.
3. If Socrates escapes, he will violate an agreement.
4. Therefore, Socrates ought not to escape.

Each of these arguments has the same form, but they differ because each one focuses on a different relationship that exists between Socrates and the state, and each one appeals to a different moral principle. Each one is supposed to demonstrate that it would be wrong for Socrates to escape from prison because doing so would violate his obligation to obey the law.

Do these arguments prove that Socrates is morally obligated not to escape from prison?

The Parent Argument

The idea that the state is Socrates' parent may strike us as strange or even absurd. The state is not a living organism, and so it cannot either conceive or bear children. For this reason, it makes no sense to think of the relationship between citizens and the state as a biological one.

In spite of this apparent foolishness, the idea that Socrates asserts here is a powerful one. Most of us, after all, are citizens of states that we are born into. We did not choose the society to which we belong. Indeed, the fact that we are born in one place rather than another determines many fundamental facts about ourselves and our lives. It determines what language we speak and even, to some extent, what facial or bodily gestures we use to express our feelings. It determines many of our attitudes about food and health, about what goals are worth pursuing and what actions are legitimate to perform. So while the state may not be our biological parent, it is not merely metaphorical to say that our nature as people is at least partly created by the society into which we are born.

These facts are reflected in our language. The word *patriotism* derives from *pater*, the Latin word for father. In addition, we are all familiar with expressions like *fatherland*, *motherland*, and *mother tongue*, even if they are no longer part of our common speech. In addition, for many people, the family provides an important model for how a

society should operate. Societies are seen as analogous to very large families, and rulers are thought to play a role that is analogous to parents.⁶

Let us grant, then, that Socrates is saying something significant when he asserts that the state is his parent, even if this is false in a literal, biological sense. Even if we grant Socrates this point, however, his argument fails to prove that we should always obey the state's commands. There are two important reasons why the argument fails.

First, if Socrates' idea is that people ought to obey whatever parents they are born to, this does not seem plausible. Suppose that my biological parents abandoned me at birth and never took care of me. It is implausible to suggest that I would have any obligation to them whatsoever. My birth seems to have been a mere accident, and the fact that certain people are my parents does not indicate that they have any concern for my well-being. Suppose further that someone other than my biological parents raised and cared for me. In such a case, whatever obligations exist would be owed to the adoptive parents and not the biological ones.

Or suppose that parents do raise a child but treat the child very badly, abusing it and making use of it only as a source of income or other benefits for themselves. Here again, the parent/child relationship would not give rise to any obligations or duties on the part of the child.

The parent argument presupposes what we normally take for granted, that people who have children will love them and provide for them. This does not always happen, however, and when it does not, it is hard to see why the child has any obligations toward the biological parents. Whatever obligations we owe to parents is *conditional* on how they treat us. Our duties to our parents depend on how they carried out their duties as parents. So it is wrong to believe that the state's being our parent makes us obligated to obey it.

There is a second problem. Even if we assume that parents have done their best in raising and caring for a child

and that the child does have obligations to the parents, it does not follow that the child has an *unlimited* obligation to obey. Suppose that a parent commands a child to kill or injure an innocent person. The mere fact that the parent commands this action does not make it right and does not make it an obligation. There are limits to what parents may legitimately command. These limits derive both from the rights of the child (beyond a certain age) to determine his or her own actions and from the rights of other people, which may be violated by the action commanded. Whether we have an obligation to obey a command depends not only on *who* issues the command but also on *what* the command tells us to do.

For both of these reasons, then, it appears to be false that there is an absolute obligation to do what one's parents command.

Both of the objections I have raised against the parent argument are, in a sense, abstract; they are general objections to the idea that children have an unconditional, unlimited obligation to obey their parents. In addition, however, these problems are directly relevant to Socrates' situation, since it is plausible to argue that his false conviction and his harsh sentence represent a form of bad treatment by the state. Even if the state has benefited him in the past, it is about to take his life for committing crimes, even though he is innocent. He is like the child who is facing an overly harsh and unjust parent.

Likewise, even if Socrates has some obligation to obey the state, it is plausible to believe that he also has a right to protect his own life. If he does have this right and if he can only act on it by disobeying the state, then he is not obligated to obey the law and accept the death penalty for a crime he did not commit.

The first argument presented by the laws to Socrates, then, is not a strong one, even if we accept the premise that the relationship between people and the state is similar to the relationship between people and their parents.

The Benefactor Argument

The second argument against escape appeals to the fact that the state has done many good things for Socrates, providing him with an education and other goods necessary for him to develop and live a satisfactory life. Because he has benefited from his relation to the state, the laws tell Socrates that he has an obligation to obey it.

This is a plausible argument. We often feel indebted to people who have been kind or generous to us or to people who have made it possible for us to enjoy significant goods. In my discussion of the parent argument, I claimed that it was more plausible to think that a child is obligated to the people who raised her than to biological parents who neglected her. Many people believe that political obligations arise from this kind of relationship. Since we have benefited from the state, we should be grateful to it and willing to give it our obedience, respect, and support.

While this argument has a great deal of plausibility, it is not without its problems. First, it is not clear that receiving benefits always generates obligations. Suppose that when I was born, a wealthy person began making annual deposits in a bank account for me. After doing this for many years, the person comes to me and commands that I work for his company. Surely I am not obligated to do so. I might feel grateful for the goods I've received, but I did not ask for them and did not know that they came with strings attached. Moreover, since the benefits began when I was an infant, I was in no position to ask if something would be expected of me in return, and I was in no position to make a rational judgment about whether to accept these benefits.

This is rather like the position of individual citizens. If we live in a good society, we begin to receive benefits from the society from the time we are born. Even if others agree that there are obligations that arise from benefiting in this way, we ourselves are not free to determine whether we

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approve of this sort of arrangement. So it seems unfair to say, "You took these benefits, and now you owe us your obedience." All of us, for at least part of our lives, receive benefits through no choice of our own and with no understanding of whether obligations arise from our acceptance.

Furthermore, even if benefiting from the state does generate some obligation, it is hard to accept that it is an unlimited obligation. It is hard to believe that we are obligated to obey the state that has benefited us, no matter what it commands us. If a benefactor commands me to kill an innocent person or to submit to torture, complying would violate my rights or the rights of the intended victim. In these cases, I ought not to obey because what is being commanded is immoral. So even if there is a general obligation to obey benefactors, it is false that this is an unlimited obligation.

In addition to this general point, the facts of Socrates' case are relevant as well. At the time of his decision, he is awaiting what he believes to be an unjust punishment. The state, which had been his benefactor, is now threatening his life. Surely this change is relevant. Our duties to people depend not just on what has happened in the past but also on what is happening in the present. Since the state has ceased to be a benefactor to Socrates and now constitutes a threat to his life, it is plausible to claim that the state's present behavior frees Socrates from the obligations he previously might have had to it.

The Agreement Argument

The agreement argument is likely to strike us as the strongest of the arguments presented to Socrates by the laws. There are good reasons for this, for it is immune to some of the weaknesses of the parent argument and the benefactor argument.

While we cannot choose our parents or decide during childhood whether to accept benefits, we do have control over the agreements we enter into. Agreements

are voluntary in a way that receiving benefits from someone may not be and that being born to someone never is. Moreover, in making an agreement, we usually understand what the conditions of the agreement are. (If we don't understand them, then we are not really agreeing to them.) We know what we are getting into, what we can expect of others, and what they can expect of us. If we know all these things and enter into the agreement, then it seems fair to say that we are morally obligated to carry it out. So if Socrates has agreed to obey the laws, then he may well have a genuine obligation to do so.

Before considering this argument directly, we need to look at the kind of agreement that Socrates made. Agreements are often classified as either explicit or tacit. An explicit agreement is made when a person signs on the dotted line, says "I do," or in some other way explicitly accepts the terms of an agreement. A tacit agreement is one that a person makes implicitly by virtue of taking part in activities or not openly objecting to something. Someone who enters a golf tournament, for example, tacitly agrees to count every shot and to refrain from actions like moving the ball to give herself an easier shot to the green. Similarly, in most circumstances, a person who does not object when the chair of a meeting says "Is this okay with everyone?" has tacitly accepted whatever was being proposed.

Although the laws state that Socrates has an agreement to obey, his agreement is in fact a tacit one. For the main indicator of agreement was his remaining in Athens throughout his life rather than choosing to go elsewhere. Thus the laws tell him:

[B]y giving every Athenian the opportunity, after he has reached manhood and observed the affairs of the city and us the laws, we proclaim that if we do not please him, he can take his possessions and go wherever he pleases. . . . We say, however, that whoever of you remains, when he sees how we conduct our trials and manage the city in other ways, has in fact come to an agreement with us to obey our instructions.⁷

Socrates not only remained in Athens when entering manhood; he spent his whole life there, never leaving except for military service. He never went off to attend festivals or to see what other cities were like. Moreover, even at his trial, when he could have proposed exile instead of death as a punishment, he did not do so. So, the laws tell him, "You have had seventy years during which you could have gone away if you did not like us, and if you thought our agreements unjust."⁸ In his case, staying in Athens was clearly a matter of personal choice, and it was not a hasty decision, since he continued to affirm it over a long period of years.

Criticizing the Agreement Argument

In spite of its plausibility, we need to ask several questions about the agreement argument:

- First, does remaining in a place constitute a tacit agreement to obey its laws?
- Second, if remaining in a place does constitute an agreement to obey the laws, does it obligate one to do whatever the state commands?
- Finally, if remaining in a place does constitute an agreement to obey the laws, does it obligate one to obey under all conditions?

For the agreement argument to work, all of these questions must be answered affirmatively. If we decide to answer "no" to any one of them, then the argument will be undermined. In fact, I believe that the right answer to all of these questions is "no," and I will try to show why this is so.

First, the laws argue that simply by staying in Athens when he could have left, Socrates thereby made an agreement to obey its laws. In considering this, it is important to remember that this is not because of any special facts about Socrates. Rather, as the speech by the laws makes clear, it depends on the general principle that anyone who

may leave a place but chooses to remain there tacitly agrees to obey its laws. Is this true?

Imagine a person who lives in a country with repressive laws and a corrupt regime. As she comes of age, she realizes the nature of the regime but decides not to leave the country. Why? Because her family and friends live there, because the language, customs, and traditions are familiar, because it is a place of great natural beauty. To go elsewhere would require leaving family and friends, learning a new and unfamiliar language, adapting to new customs, and cutting herself off from favorite places and natural beauties.

So she stays, but she does so in spite of the laws and the government and perhaps with a feeling of bitterness that she and her fellow citizens must live under such a regime. The reason she remains in her country and does not take advantage of the right to leave it is that the personal costs of leaving are extremely high. Her remaining does not indicate her approval or acceptance of the laws or government. She would be willing to agree to a just system, but she neither supports nor agrees to the one in power. In this sort of case, remaining in a country does not constitute a tacit agreement to obey them. Similarly, if a person does not object to a proposal at a meeting because he fears that he will be attacked for doing so, then his silence is coerced and does not constitute tacit approval.

Of course, Socrates' situation was not like the one I have described. His personal relationship to Athens was by and large positive. He had great affection for the city, though in fact he did not always approve of the actions and policies of those who governed it. In any case, whether Socrates' relationship to his city was positive or negative, what my example shows is that it is wrong to assume that by choosing to remain in a place, a person tacitly agrees to obey its laws and government.

A second problem concerns the assumption that agreeing to obey the laws is the same as agreeing to do whatever the state tells us to do. These need not be the

same. A person might be willing to do her fair share as a citizen and to accept the burdens of limiting her actions to those that are legal. Part of her expectation in making this agreement is that as long as she obeys the laws, she will not be deprived of her rights by the state. Suppose, however, that she obeys the laws conscientiously, but, either through error or the malice of officials, she is convicted of a crime and sentenced to a harsh punishment. It is hard to believe that her prior agreement to obey the laws obligates her to accept an unwarranted punishment. It is one thing to agree to play by the rules in the expectation that one will enjoy the immunities of innocence and quite another thing to think that one has a duty to accept another punishment when these are commanded by the state. To require this is to go beyond what can reasonably be expected of a person. Even if the first obligation—to obey the laws—grows out of remaining in a country, the second—to do whatever the state says—does not.

Finally, the laws tell Socrates that the agreement a citizen makes obligates him to obey under all conditions. Suppose, however, that we view the state's unjust conviction and punishment as violations of the agreement made with him. If we do, then it is plausible to argue that under these conditions, citizens are freed of their obligation to uphold their part of the contract. In general, when one party to an agreement breaks the agreement, the other party is relieved of the obligation it had. If, for example, a company agrees to deliver equipment to another company on a particular date for a certain amount of money and if the money is not paid, then the amount of money relieved of its duty to deliver the equipment. Similarly, if Socrates' conviction constitutes a violation of the agreement he made with the state, then he may no longer be bound to obey it.

In spite of its plausibility, then, Socrates' appeal to a tacit agreement with the state does not prove that he is morally bound to accept the punishment that awaits him. As we have seen, a plausible case can be made for thinking,

first, that remaining in a place does not constitute a tacit agreement; second, that even if it did, the agreement to obey the laws does not mean that one is also bound to accept unjust punishments; and third, that unjust treatment of a citizen by the state can be seen as a violation of the agreement that relieves the citizen of his obligation to continue holding to the agreement.

There is one final and important point about the tacit agreement argument. A serious problem with tacit agreements is that they are vague. In an explicit agreement, there is at least the possibility of stating exactly what is being agreed to. A well-written contract will make clear just what each of the parties is bound to do and under what conditions the contract is no longer binding. A tacit agreement of the sort Socrates made is entirely unclear. Unless there were strong prior understandings that were widely understood, then even if we regard remaining in a country as a tacit agreement, it will be unclear just what is being agreed to. Indeed, different citizens might have different understandings of their duty to the state and if their obligations are in part determined by how they interpret the implied contract, then different citizens might actually be agreeing to different things and have different obligations. So even if we accept the general form of the agreement argument, we need not accept the specific content that he believed was part of the contract between the state and its citizens.

In fact, as I noted earlier, Plato's *Apology* describes Socrates' views on these matters differently. There, while expressing his devotion to Athens and describing his attempt to benefit it through his discussions with people, he affirms his right to disobey unjust laws and commands. Perhaps it was that understanding of the agreement that he had assumed. Or, was it the more restrictive understanding that is expressed in the *Crito*? Because the agreement is a tacit one, there is no way to answer this question. The agreement is inherently vague and thus cannot provide grounds for an unlimited duty to obey the laws.

The Super Patriotic Attitude

As we have seen, Socrates does not always affirm the super patriotic position, but in the *Crito*, he does nothing to rebut the arguments of the laws, and he goes to his death rather than disobeying what the state has commanded. For these reasons, his actions can be seen to exemplify the super patriotic position.

What is central to super patriotism is the belief in an unconditional and unlimited obligation to do what the state says. I have tried to show that the arguments presented by the laws to Socrates do not justify this view and that it is implausible to believe in such a powerful obligation to the state.

One might think that even if I have refuted these arguments, this does not matter because so much has changed in the more than two thousand years since they were put forward in Plato's dialogue. What is remarkable about these arguments, however, is that they are basically the same ones we hear from people today when they try to justify their belief that citizens have very powerful obligations to their governments.

We have all heard people justifying their loyalty by saying, "I was born here, and this is my country." This is essentially the parent argument: just as being born to certain parents makes for special duties to them, so being born in a particular country makes for special duties to it.

Likewise, we have all heard people say, "I owe so much to my country; it has done so much for me. I am indebted to it for my education or the freedom to pursue my own goals." This is essentially the benefactor argument that the laws present to Socrates in the *Crito*.

Finally, when people reply to protesters and critics of government policy with the slogan "Love it or leave it," they are claiming that a person who remains in a country must accept its policies and that someone who does not like the policies should leave the country. What the slogan implies is that remaining in a country tacitly commits one to supporting its policies or, as the laws told Socrates, to

doing whatever it commands. Those who refuse to agree to this must leave.

Since these familiar views are simply versions of the same arguments presented by Socrates and since we have seen that his arguments fail to justify unconditional and unlimited obedience to government, we can conclude that these contemporary expressions of super patriotism also fail to justify it. It is not an appropriate attitude for us to take toward government.

This is not to say that we have no obligation to obey the law and no obligation to support our government. Such obligations may well exist, but they do not exist in the very powerful form that super patriots defend.

Some people believe that in rejecting super patriotism, we automatically commit ourselves to denying that any political obligations exist. Even if they are right, however, this does not support super patriotism. It may only show that indeed there are no political obligations, that no one has any obligations to governments or to the law. The next three chapters will examine political cynicism and anarchism, two views that explicitly call into question whether there are any political obligations at all.



Notes

1. *Apology* 32d in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1980), 35.
2. For criticisms of the view that Socrates defends super patriotism in the *Crito* see Richard Kraut, *Socrates and the State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) and David Gallop, "Socrates, Injustice, and the Law: A Response to Plato's *Crito*," *Ancient Philosophy* 18 (1998), 251-64. Even Kraut admits, however, that "It is difficult, when reading the *Crito* to resist the interpretation that its political philosophy is offensively authoritarian. It seems to exaggerate the need for law and order, and it leaves too little room or

- perhaps none at all for dissent and disobedience." (5) Kraut also cites the many noted scholars who have accepted this traditional authoritarian interpretation. (See page 5, note 3.)
3. Plato, *Crito* 50b, in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, trans. G.M.A Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1980), 50.
 4. *Ibid.*, 51 (51a-b).
 5. *Ibid.*, 52 (51d-e).
 6. For an interesting account that shows the continuing influence of the family as a model for the state, see George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know That Liberals Don't* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
 7. *Crito*, 52 (51d-e).
 8. *Ibid.*, 53 (52e).



Political Cynicism

POLITICAL CYNICS VIEW GOVERNMENT WITH A KNOWING AND scornful attitude. While others take patriotism, political obligations, and ideals of citizenship at face value, cynics claim to see the true situation. The real function of government, they say, is to benefit the people who govern and to use those who are governed to promote the interests of the governing elite.

Some people may be inspired by words like those of President John F. Kennedy when he said, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." For cynics, this statement expresses an important truth but not the noble one that others hear. Cynics