Dialogues Conclusive and Inconclusive

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The problem with the Crito

- David Hume (1748) : Socrates “builds a Tory consequence of passive obedience on a Whig foundation of the original contract”
  - “Tory”: the foundation of society is authority as represented by Crown, Church and Law.
  - “Whig”: society exists because citizens freely enter into a contract for mutual protection; law is the means of their agreement.

- Socrates seems to be saying both that we enter freely into a contract to be citizens, and that our obligation is total and blind.
Let's think about dialogue
Ongoing Dialogue
Ongoing = Dialogue
Refusing dialogue

• With whom?
• Under what conditions?
• With what justifications?
• Did it ever happen to you?
Ideal dialogue

• Never concludes
• Never excludes

-- how about Socratic dialogue?
  Inclusive? Egalitarian?
  When does it stop?

Compare with the dialogue of the law courts
You had your chance

• “If we leave this place without first persuading the State to let us go, are we or are we not doing an injury?” (89)

• The Laws say: “Do you not realize… that you must either persuade your country or do whatever it orders?”
The laws / the Laws

• Dialogue in the law court (of which we have one side represented in the Apology)
  – Limited in time and scope
  – Concludes, necessarily, with acquittal or conviction

• Fictive dialogue with the Laws (Crito)
  – Not a discussion between equals
Freedom vs. equality

• Can Socrates be a destroyer of the laws?
  – Threat of disobedience equal and opposite to the laws’ power: as if Socrates’ power to do harm were indeed infinite (and so a sign of his power to do good?)

• The laws command total obedience because the citizen is not a slave (91, 93)
Immortality

• The Laws: “When you enter the next world, you may plead this in your defence before the authorities there”

• Fixing the bounds of dialogue / referring the issue to a further authority
The waffling many

• “the concerns of the ordinary public, who think nothing of putting people to death, and would bring them back to life if they could, with equal indifference to reason” (87)