

When asked if Socrates was correct in his decision to go through with drinking hemlock, thus ending his own life, we must first consider several variables. Those are, of course, the ideas of political authority, why the government has authority over its citizens, what rights the citizens have, and how the government can justify its punishment. Most importantly, however, we must analyze Socrates' core argument and how we define political authority to begin with. At its most basic definition, political authority is the idea that the government has a right to maintain power over its citizens, even if coercion is necessary. Those citizens in turn have an obligation to follow the laws of the government because of the power that is imposed over them. Furthermore, Socrates argued that because of the idea of political authority, and because he had never once thought one of the laws of Athens' was unjust before he was sentenced to death, he should therefore believe that the law sentencing him to death is just, and it would be unjust to go against it and flee his fate. At its core, this argument is sound, even if the punishment itself is unjust. Speaking strictly from the aspect of rationality, Socrates is correct. Furthermore, Socrates is correct under the definition of political authority and his actions can be justified through the idea of the social contract that we have from Locke, Hobbes, and Huemer.

In order to understand how Socrates is correct in his decision, we must first analyze the ideas of what political authority is, as defined by our three philosophers, and what justifies that authority. However, we must also first understand what life exactly is before we give ourselves into a society and adhere to the rules of government. That is, we must understand the Law of Nature, the laws that govern life for all living things

before they enter a civilized lifestyle. For Hobbes, the Law of Nature is very simple: he believes that life under the Law of Nature is “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short”; life under the Law of Nature is war of all against all. It is important to note that under this Law, all men are equal, and all men are obliged by the Law to preserve themselves from danger and harm and do what’s in their best interest. Therefore, we can conclude that if all men are equal, and life is simply a war of all against all, then men will act violently, irrationally, and will actively seek war against their neighbors. They do this for three main reasons: competition (for gain), diffidence (or the idea that we do not trust one another and therefore will strike preemptively for safety of ourselves), and for glory (for reputation). It is under this assumption that men will seek peace and unity to escape a violent death to benefit from a commodious living that we will give up all of our rights to a governing body in order to secure this safety. Furthermore, to Hobbes, we join a civilized society to ensure justice, as life under the state of nature is without justice as the ideas of right and wrong cannot exist in a state of war, but only in a state of peace. To Locke, the Law of Nature is slightly different: rather than war of all against all, he sees life under the Law of Nature as a series of inconveniences where all men are equal in power in jurisdiction. Locke sees that men live in a state of liberty wherein they act in their best interest and seek only life, liberty, and property, but not in a state of license; essentially, men are entitled to their rights to life, liberty and property but men are not entitled to seek to destroy or abuse their fellow man. We can therefore conclude that men enter into a society in order to protect not only their own rights to life, liberty and property (henceforth referred to as LLP), but to also ensure the rights of their fellow

man to LLP. Justice can be found in the state of nature, however, through the idea that punishment for wrongdoings against a transgressor is perfectly justified. To Locke, we join society to empower the whole body and to secure our rights, but give up all power except our rights to LLP. This brings us to the idea of political authority as laid out by Locke, Hobbes, and Huemer, and their justifications for it.

Each philosopher has varying ideas on the ideas of political authority and its justifications, and thus the people's obligations to follow said authority. To begin, Hobbes sees that we essentially join a society and form a government to protect us from a violent death, from being destitute, in order to protect our own lives from each other and escape the constant war of all against all that exists in the state of nature. Hobbes believes that we transfer *all* of our rights to the government when we join into it, so therefore the government is absolute in its power, lest its people fall victim to itself or to its enemies. Hobbes sees the idea of a social contract as justified through express consent; through expressly and verbally agreeing to be a part of a community, we have agreed to follow the will of the ruler and his or her rules; we cannot absolve this government unless the rules have violated the safety of the population as a whole. Locke, comparatively, defines political authority as the right to make laws that best protect the people and best regulate our rights to LLP, which can be justified through the idea of the social contract and through the wills of the community; to Locke, as long as it is the will of the community, then it is the obligation of the people to follow the laws set forth by the government. Furthermore, Locke defines the social contract not through express consent, but through tacit consent; that is, if a man is to give up all the rights he

has under the state of nature to secure the rights to LLP, then they have agreed to follow the laws of that government. Finally, Huemer defines political authority as the right on the government's behalf to make laws and enforce them via coercion (which can be something as trivial as a fine to something as extreme as death) against its citizens. Huemer's definition can simply be described as the right to rule. Therefore, authority should follow five general principles: generality (laws applying to all citizens), particularity (laws specific to only its citizens), content-independence (the state's authority and the contents of its laws are separate), comprehensiveness (laws must cover a broad range of topics), and supremacy (the state is the highest human authority). Under Huemer's definition of political authority, the citizens are obligated to follow these laws through the ideas of moral obligations (the idea that certain crimes, such as murder, don't necessarily need a law in place against it because it is morally wrong) as well as through political obligations (the idea that we follow laws expressly because the law states it to be so). To Huemer, as long as the obligation to follow is present and as long as the government has political legitimacy, then the government has a right to rule. Because of these ideas, Huemer does not follow the same idea of a social contract as Locke and Hobbes. Rather, to Huemer, the idea of a social contract is the idea that as long as the justification for coercion can be found and understood, then we by default have agreed to live under the law of the government because we understand the consequences of breaking those laws. These three radically different views on authority explained above can all be used to justify the actions of Socrates as "correct".

As we know, in the *Crito*, Socrates justifies his actions of choosing the, punishment of death by drinking hemlock because he had lived in Athens for his whole life, had never once left for other cities even when he had said that he admired their laws, and had always seen the laws as just when he was innocent; therefore, the punishment of death was just because he could have left Athens at any time to another city where they also had just laws, but he chose to stay. Furthermore, if the laws were just when he was innocent, then the laws were just when he was guilty, and should he leave his sentence, his actions would be considered unjust. Hobbes sees these actions as correct because to him, the government's power and choices are absolute; all of Socrates' rights were sacrificed when he joined Athens, and because he had agreed to the punishment of death that was laid out by the Athenian court (the will of the populace), then he was obligated to follow that law. Locke sees this decision as correct for many of the same reasons. One could counter argue that laws are unjust and should not be followed if they threaten the life of the citizens, but I argue that laws under Hobbes' ideas are only unjust if they threaten the lives of *all* citizens and not just a single one; if the Athenians had instead told the entire city to kill themselves, then they are acting unjustly. Lockes' argument supporting this decision is also similar. Because the decision to die came from the will of the people, and is therefore seen as what is best for the people, Socrates' should die. Furthermore, because he never left Athens for other cities and saw the laws as always just before he was guilty, he has tacitly consented to the laws of Athens, and is therefore further justified to die. Again, a counter argument could be made that the decision to die violates Socrates' right to LLP

but I believe that the decision of the people and what the people think is best for the society as a whole outweighs Socrates' right to LLP under Lockes' idea of political authority. Finally, Huemer can justify Socrates' actions because the state does have political authority (that is the state has both political legitimacy and political obligation rests with the people), because the state follows with the five principles of political authority, and also because Socrates understood the possible ramifications of his actions in violating the law of Athens, he is therefore obligated to follow the law set forth by the government of Athens, therefore, his death is justified. An argument against Humer could be made that all political authority is, inherently, an illusion; the only reason society functions the way it does is because the citizens believe in that illusion and grant that power to the government. However, in this situation, we can agree that, at least for Athens, Socrates and all its other citizens fully believed in that illusion and they all understood the consequences for breaking the law. Therefore, Socrates has to submit to the authority of the government through Huemer's idea of tacit consent.

Whether we agree morally that Socrates should kill himself for his rather minor crime is irrelevant. What is relevant is that his actions and justifications are correct in the ideas of political authority. Locke, Hobbes, and Huemer all three provide clear ideas about how governments have political authority, why they are justified for doing so, and why the people are obligated to recognize that authority and each philosopher can explain why Socrates was correct in his decision to die. Speaking strictly in terms of authority, Socrates made the correct decision when he chose to obey the law of Athens and go through with his own death.

Appendix

I reviewed the review left on my essay and was, admittedly, pretty frustrated. What I was hoping to see was tips on how to fix the conclusion paragraph, which was my weakest of the paper, but I received a couple grammatical suggestions instead. The current state of the paper reflects removing uses of the word “and” as much; I addressed the final counterargument to my points (the one about Huemer in the next-to-last paragraph) and, in general, tried to tighten up my vocabulary. I personally felt like the review was rather unhelpful, as the reviewer suggested strengthening arguments by adding “simply more convincing statements” which is vague and demeaning as it does not specify what is a convincing statement to begin with and implies that I don’t understand what I’m talking about. Furthermore, the reviewer suggested that I explore “why [it is] important that we deem this the right decision?” and “what [the implications are of saying it was the correct decision]”, which does not relate to the topic at hand, nor does it help to strengthen my thesis, as it was as clear and narrowed down as it could be. The final thing the reviewer suggested that I felt I had done already was “dig more deeply into the ideas of authority” which the majority of the body paragraphs are dedicated to. As of the completion of this revision, the essay is as revised as I could make it with the little relevant suggestions that the reviewer left me to use. It seemed like the reviewer ignored the part of the instructions where you specified to carefully read the submissions, because most issues are addressed in the original version of the draft.

