Upon examining Socrates’ decision in Crito, the most important part we must examine is whether he is being consistent with his own beliefs, that being that the good or just person never does harm. The circumstances of Socrates’ situation make this quandary into a very controversial question. Some may say that Socrates did not do right by his friends, family, and the countless other beneficiaries that would have benefitted through his survival. Even so, it is clear, both to me and to Socrates that he acted rightly and justly. Regardless of the impact of his decision, he held true to the principals that guided his life, and did not stray from his own ethical code. This consistency is what should be focused on when considering his actions, and whether his arguments in Crito arguments hold weight.

One inconsistency Crito tries to find in Socrates’ decision to stay in prison is the fact that his reputation would be hurt by the very fact that he would not save his friend from execution when all it would take is a simple bribe to free him. This would lend people to believe that Crito values money more than he values his own friends. Socrates responds by leading Crito through a series of questions. For example, if one were to be taking advice on how to treat their body, it would be far wiser to listen to a doctor rather than the general opinion of the public. This leads Socrates to the conclusion that only the opinions of the wise matter, something that Socrates holds throughout Plato’s dialogues. He asserts that “We should not think so much of what the majority will say about us, but what he will say who understands justice and injustice” (48a). Throughout this section of dialogue, Socrates leads Crito to the conclusion that the opinions of those who are not experts on justice hold no relevance in the matters of justice, and therefore it is useless to fret over one’s public reputation.

Crito also makes the point that Socrates is betraying his sons by allowing himself to be executed. This is one of Crito’s main points when he addresses Socrates by saying, “I think you are betraying your sons by going away and leaving them” (45c-d). This is an argument Socrates is well prepared to refute. Socrates first addresses the issue stating, “the only valid considerations, as we were saying just now, is whether we should be acting rightly in giving money and gratitude to those who will lead me out of here” (48c-d). What Socrates is essentially saying to Crito is that everything is irrelevant which does not directly pertain to whether they are acting rightly in paying off the guards. Unlike Crito, Socrates examines his situation in a vacuum. Socrates believes that all of the consequences of his actions are meaningless if his actions are wrong or unjust.

While this point is valid, it may seem Socrates is dodging his responsibility of raising his sons. This is addressed later in a mock dialogue with Crito. Socrates creates two hypothetical scenarios where he is able to survive and raise his sons. First, Socrates asks himself, “will you bring them up and educate them by taking them to Thessaly and making strangers of them?” (54a). This question is rhetorical for Socrates, as he regards Thessaly as a place of great license and disorder. This is clearly not a place where Socrates would want to live, and by extension it is not a place where he would wish his sons to be brought up. The next question posed is whether “they will be better brought up here, while you were alive, though absent” (54a). This is another alternative that Socrates regards as ridiculous, for if he escapes for the benefit of his sons, but moves on to Thessaly while they remain in Athens, he would be just as absent from their lives as if he had stayed and faced punishment.

While there still lies the opportunity to criticize Socrates and suggest he committed a wrongdoing in committing to his sentence, it is impossible to deny the consistency that Socrates holds throughout his arguments. He stuck strictly to his guiding principles of justice, and that alone is enough to indicate that he acted rightly. Socrates was nothing if not committed to justice, something that is made most clear in the Crito than in any of his other works. Even when faced with an impossible choice, one that would clearly hurt people and the justice system in Athens whichever way he swayed, he stuck to the principles that he preached to others. This clear consistency, above all else, is what guides me to believe that he made the right decision by staying in prison and choosing to be executed.