

Any Topic (Writer's Choice)

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Socrates' Philosophies and Rejection of the Offer to Escape Prison and Death

Sentence

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No human being is perfect. As such, each one of us has been accused of something at some point in our lives. Some of these accusations might be true while others are terribly

mistaken hence making the subject hard to fix it. Socrates was a wonderful philosopher since he had many beliefs and ideas. Throughout his life, Socrates believed and advocated for justice to all. He willingly accepted his unjust execution even though Crito would help him escape. It would take few bribes for Socrates to escape. However, his rationality and way of thinking made him reject Crito's offer of opportunity to escape. He gave various reasons for his decision. The reasons given by Socrates have generated a heated debate on whether they obligate citizens to abide by unjust sentence.

Crito was known by the public as a close friend of Socrates hence he did everything possible to help him escape. However, Socrates rejected his proposal citing many reasons. One of the main reasons why he did not want to escape the death sentence was the persuasion of the code of Athens. He believed that it is wrong and immoral for him to escape death sentence since the ruling had been made using city laws, which he had accepted in his life. Socrates had lived in the city more than seventy years and he showed respect on how the city was being run. Socrates rejected to escape the death sentence because he needed to honor the "obey of code" that has been established by the city. Citizens of Athens have been enjoying the fruits of city's laws which have contributed immensely towards freedom. Hence everyone living here is persuaded to obey what has been decided by the city. Therefore, escaping death sentence would mean that Socrates felt that the decision against him had been made unjustly. Socrates disagreed to escape prison on the grounds that he would be breaking the laws that he had defended and agreed with for seventy years. This would amount to setting a bad example, which can be replicated by the rest of the population in the society (Smith & Brickhouse, 1989). Socrates also believed that escaping the death sentence would amount to paying the injustice done to him with another injustice. He argued that if he escaped he would be going against the will and decisions of the Athenians, and this would become evil to him. He was always focused on respecting the laws and decisions made by the public and this is evil to

him. Socrates had a philosophy which holds that it is never good for a human being to do evil to himself and to others. Socrates also rejected Crito's offer of escaping on the grounds that doing that means that he would not be defending his philosophy since he would be going against it (Smith & Brickhouse, 1989).

Having understood the reasons given by Socrates for not escaping death sentencing that was evidently subjected to unjustly, it is important to understand whether citizens have the obligations of abiding by unjust sentence. Martin Luther King, Jr. is widely known for his powerful voice in favor of justice in the society. At some point, the King argued that just laws are laws that are moral. In his "letter from Birmingham jail" to fellow clergymen, King further added that just laws should be in accordance with God's laws or natural laws. One of the King's criteria of just laws is that it should promote or uplift human personality, and that any law which undermines human personality is not just. King argues that a just law is made by man but adheres to the law of God or moral law. Unjust law is one which does not conform to moral law. Based on these criteria, it is explicit that Socrates death sentence was unjust. He is known as a champion of justice across the city. In reference to King's argument, it is critical to point out the fact that every person has certain unalienable rights. Freedom of speech is one of the key rights that ought to be observed and respected in the society. Socrates was unjustly arrested on the allegations that he corrupted youth (Luther, 1994). Everyone knows that he was unjustly given death sentence. He abides by unjust sentence for reasons discussed in the preceding paragraph. In the society, it is not practical for people to abide by unjust citizens simply because they have been controlled by the stated laws that were used to make such a ruling. This is because of the fact that abiding by unjust sentence degrades human personality. It does not make sense to accept unjust sentence at the expense of pleasing someone in the society as Socrates did. In addition, Socrates's reasons for accepting unjust sentence do not hold water since it amounts to propagating injustice in

the society. It is a form of silencing the voices of the less powerful people in the society. The reasons given by Socrates for accepting unjust sentence contradicts the criteria of Martin Luther King, Jr.

In conclusion, Socrates is a wonderful philosopher who fought dearly for justice in the society. His ideas and beliefs is what led him to jail and subsequent death sentence. When offered the chance to escape the death sentence, he rejected. His arguments for not escaping are opposite the King's criteria of just and unjust laws. King's criteria of law seem to be fundamental hence the reasons given by Socrates for accepting unjust sentence are invalid.

#### References

Luther, M. (1994). *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*. Toronto: HarperCollins Canada Limited.

Smith, D. & Brickhouse, T. (1989). *Socrates on Trial*. Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press Livingstone.

