

Taking care of one's soul according to socrates

Profession, Philosophers



Do you agree with Socrates that taking care of one's soul is more important than acquiring wealth or taking care of our bodies? Why or why not?

While awaiting the Athenian court's sentence to either life or death, Socrates toys with the notion of avoiding death if he promises to stop practicing philosophy. Of course, he claims to choose death over that life. This argument is one that I agree with, because I believe that the quality of one's soul surpasses importance of wealth or one's body.

Socrates claims, " It is not weath...that produces goodness; rather, it is from goodness that wealth, and all other benefits for human beings, accrue to them in their private and public life." I think that if one is spiritually and mentally sound, earthy possessions and the quality of physical life will not be of importance. Some of the most content humans are those with the fewest material possessions, living in squalor. Conversely, greed, deceit, and scandal runs rampant among the wealthiest people. One that places value on money or success above all is never satisfied because their goal is not quantifiable, and can continue on forever. This is not to say that money is the root of corruption and evil, though this is a common belief. Rather, that contentment is a mental state, not a physical body to be gained through acquisition of an outside influence. I believe that one must achieve personal contentment through intrinsic peace.

The practice of meditation follows the belief that humans have attachments that provide them with pleasure and pain, such as money, friends, and family. We continue to pursue the pleasures that come with the pain in

search of final contentment that will never come alone. However, meditation teaches one to not react to the ups and downs and avoid these attachments. The only true way to avoid the pain is to also sacrifice the pleasure. Although an extreme example, this belief aligns with Socrates' mentality that the only important condition in life is that of the soul. I believe in the benefits of meditation, and thus I support the idea that taking care of the soul is most important task of a human.

There are two options in the afterlife, either nothing exists, or there is some sort of host for our soul. Either way, the body and soul separate. If we do cease to exist with no afterlife, no worldly matters are of importance. One might as well focus on the soul, because of the two outcomes after death, the soul is the only thing that has the possibility of living on. Either way, one day the sun will explode and all life as we know it will be destroyed. While a pessimist viewpoint, this idea begs the question: with no body to host it, can thought still exist? In this hypothetical world, there is either nothing-ness, or an alternate reality where only our souls exist. I believe that Socrates' idea that only the well being of the soul matters is a philosophy that focuses on the longest term of reality, as we know it.

Turning to a more tangible, smaller-scale focus, the quest for wealth and physical health is an elusive goal with no true endpoint. Of course there are levels within these goals that one can strive for, but these are external journeys that one can chase forever. On the other hand, the quality of the soul is an intrinsic focus that one can attain by purely their own means. It does not require an outside source or "thing" to be gained. Thus, one could

forever chase happiness through wealth and bodily health without ever feeling content.

The search for alignment of one's soul over the acquisition of wealth is a phenomenon pursued by many today. Of course, this is a rarity, as I would claim a majority of people do not think this way, or think this and do not act accordingly. Nonetheless, it is a common idea that people do attempt to incorporate in their lives. The idea that the alignment of one's soul is more important than bettering one's body is one that is less common. Many see the two as intertwined, and improving the body does better the mind as well. However, according to dualism, these two are distinct, and should be treated as such. Many do not realize the separation, and focus only on the body in order to improve the mind, rather than focusing equally on both. For example, someone recovering from an eating disorder would be much more likely to recover through physical change, like eating balanced meals, combined with therapy for their mental state.

The famous photo of the self-burning of the Vietnamese Buddhist monk conveys just how powerful the mind, and perception is. According to Descartes, it is the only reality that we can fully trust. I believe that Socrates was correct in claiming that taking care of one's soul presides over acquiring wealth or taking care of our bodies.