“We say that the one who disobeys us acts unjustly in three ways: because we begat him and he disobeys, because we nurtured him, and because he agreed to obey us, but neither obeys nor persuades us.”

— Plato, The Crito, [51e4–213]

“The laws allow to every citizen full liberty of trying to persuade the assembled public, but the citizen who fails in persuading must obey the public when they enact a law adverse to his views.”

— George Grote, Plato, Volume I, p. 300

“The choice before the individual was either to obey the laws or to get them changed by peaceful persuasion, or else to emigrate.”


“Suppose an individual to have decided that some law or policy is not for the common good, how ought he or she act in regard to it? The answer of common sense is simple and sufficient. A person should do all a person can by legal means to get the law or policy changed, but till it is changed, he or she should conform to it.”

— T. H. Green, Lectures on Political Obligation

“If you were to say to me, “Socrates, this time we will not listen to Anytus. We will let you go, but on this condition that you give up this investigation of yours and philosophy. If you are found following these pursuits again, you shall die.’ I say . . . I shall not change my way of life.”

— Plato, Apology

“Arguments raised in defense of individual conscience, that is, moral imperatives and appeals to a ‘higher law,’ be it secular or transcendent, are inadequate when applied to civil disobedience; on this level, it will not only be difficult, but impossible to keep civil disobedience from being a philosophy of subjectivity . . . intensely and exclusively personal, so that any individual, for whatever reason, can disobey.”

— Nicholas Puner, New York University Law Review

Charges against Socrates: (1) Refusing to recognize the gods and religious practices that the state honors and celebrates and introducing new and unfamiliar religious practices and (2) Corrupting the youth