

Socrates view on sophrosyne

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ABSTRACT

Sophrosyne is one of the fundamental values, which were reflected in the Greek classical philosophy. The paper is concentrated to provide image of that virtue in philosophical legacy of Socrates. The

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author points to the search content, structure and location sophrosyne in the context of other Greek areté, and points to the possible intentions sophrosyne in the practical socio-political life, such how it Socrates theory constitutes.

Key words: Sophrosyne, areté, morality, knowledge.

RESUMEN

Sophrosyne es uno de los valores fundamentales, que se reflejaron en la filosofía clásica griega. El artículo se concentra para proporcionar una imagen de esa virtud en el legado filosófico de Sócrates. El autor apunta a la búsqueda del

contenido, la estructura y la ubicación sophrosyne en el contexto de otros areté griego, y apunta a las posibles intenciones sophrosyne en la vida sociopolítica práctica, tal como constituye la teoría de Sócrates.

Palabras claves: Sophrosyne, areté, moralidad, conocimiento.

INTRODUCTION

Reconstruction of Socrates' philosophical thinking is problematic, one who deals with his legacy, must cope with the uniqueness of Socrates' ideas. Philosophical reflection of Socrates was principally focused on the problem of values, problem of areté. During

the period of Socrates living, there was a need to find a solid foundation of human life, its objectives, which was theoretically formulated as a unity of man and the city - the good. Rational reflection of moral is possible by turning men to their own self-knowledge. The highest good - eudaimonia, which was based on the knowledge of human life, was the most important question. Socrates was looking for the ways in which it is possible to achieve the good. Socrates uncovered areté as a value, which is essential for the realization of human life, the virtue has become the centre of his philosophical interest.

Virtue as a problem of knowledge is the central theme of Socratic dialogues. Socrates is looking the identification of notion, content definition and the internal consistency of virtues, which is possible only on the basis of knowledge. An essential element of the theoretical basis of construction of virtues is the rationality, Socrates identifies areté with rational knowledge. Problem sophrosyne represented a challenge in Greek philosophy, and sequentially expand theoretical and ethical reflection, which solved the most famous personalities of the ancient period. Sophrosyne, rationality, was one of the central values of Greek culture, Socrates was the first who attempted a theoretical

reflection this virtue, then his intentions followed Plato. Theoretical grasp sophrosyne was by both philosophers different in the approach to treatment, although the stated value represented the needs of the then socio-political context.

Dialogue as a method

From a methodological aspect, it should be noted, that the nature of the character dialogue, Socrates and Plato differed because the dialogue he served as a formal the assumption of clarifying the substance of philosophical and ethical issues of both philosophers. Reconstruction of his thought, opinions on the issue of values, virtues

theoretical sketch is presented in Plato's of early philosophical works. Dialogues *Charmides*, *Euthyfron*, *Laches* have from a methodological point of view same in nature, concentrated on the essentially philosophical research, towards conceptual terms, definition areté. The starting point is becoming Socrates uncompromising critique of traditional knowledge, which to be substituting true knowledge, knowledge about by good. Uncovering many aspects areté is constructed on the basis of critical rejection of unscientific arguments of opponents of Socrates. Dialogues have the character aporia, methodological approach of Socrates has a negative nature and is styled by as postponing the unclear,

disturbing and mutually exclusive. The role of the aporia was "to crush" putative leadership and "just" the predicted to reveal the true leadership. It was a gradual process of search philosophical content, a sense virtues and the position in the practical virtues of moral and social life. However, this process did not arrive at to his successful completion.

Analysis of Socrates' views on the virtues possible to identify two conditions for success of areté of live in human: (a) no one knowingly does evil; (b) the rationality represents the unity of the rational, beautiful, beneficial and good. Aporia under which the Plato wrote its dialogue, the

signal that the specific defining of the problem will be successful so that the method is used gradual excretion incorrect ditions, which opens the way to true knowledge. Socrates' answer as to who is able to uncover this the right way: it is the one who is able to accept the inadequacy of their knowledge.

The basic difference between so called Socratic works and dialogues of Plato, so called. medium term, consists in the methodological approach: "... You would have diagnosed a different, be higher basis, which would become the best, then you would come to something an appropriate,"²

²Platon: Charmides. In: Dialógy I., p. 777, 101 E.

which critically verifies and justifies the hypothesis. The results, which are based on relevant hypothesis, Plato verifies through the question/task and consequently promotes a higher hypothesis. Philosopher repeats these steps until it finally comes to a presumption which does not require a higher hypothesis.

Socrates' view on sophrosyne

Rationality, moderateness are the most frequent translations of notion - sophrosyne. Sophrosyne is a term which reflects one of the fundamental Greek civic virtues. The term expressed orientation of individuals on self-control, later it has become the starting point for the term

“golden mean”. A man, who rules with healthy mind, Sophron, was seen as an individual, who is able to prioritize his mind before lust, because mind directs man to the behaviour and the action, which is in favour of the individual and the whole. Sophron is represent the moderation, he present generally acceptable views on beauty and goodness.

Socrates' search and theoretical-philosophical understanding of sophrosyne is found in dialogue *Charmides*. Definition of this theme is difficult and is possible in several levels of meaning. The dialogue is philosophical picture, in which the reader reveals the shift of rationality within the

meaning of public understanding, civic understanding and highlight is the philosophical understanding, which is based on adequate knowledge.

"[...] What is rationality and what is this thing?" Socrates asks Charmides, and this question is formulates central problem of dialogue. Problem solution lies in the presentation of several alternatives in understanding sophrosyne. The traditional and historical practise-tested approach is expressed in terms peace, respect, shyness; Critias considering about the rationality as a cognitive activity; and Socrates' opinion is: "sophrosyne is a procedure of good things", which supports

the idea of understanding areté in terms of utility, but which is limited only by practical aspect.

In the context of rationality Socrates presents the problem of man's relationship to oneself, its essence is in knowledge, therefore important part of the construction of sophrosyne is rational knowledge. When Plato, through the Critias, expresses: the essence of rationality is cognition oneself, in cognition about oneself,³ he understands knowledge as the meaning of individual mental abilities, that can be used for "cultivating of a soul". Analysis of rationality and particularly detection of its

³Platon: Charmides. In: Platon: Dialógy I., p. 80, 164-165.

philosophical nature caused, that Socrates stood before problem of knowledge on several levels.

The first level: a view of the relationship cognition to the object cognitive process. The real knowledge, knowledge at the level notion of things, is knowledge in the soul of man; as far as the term equals the essence of the thing, and is located outside man, it is the essence of the cognitive thing. Differentiation of the subject and knowledge of its in the context of virtues: knowledge of a term, for example rationality, relates to the practical action; practical work isn't exist outside man, but it is a part of man because areté can't exist

outside of it. Thus, if the notion is understood as cognition of the essence of some virtues, then on that basis can a person implement own actions. Socrates was convinced that Sophroni - wise man - will act properly, because knows what is the essence of rationality. Incorrect behaviour should always be excluded, because the essence of rationality is valid in general and it is independent of the arbitrary individual awareness.

The second level is the interest of Socrates to determine the relationship between general knowledge and individual knowledge. Knowledge that deals with the medicine or mathematics is the special

knowledge and an object of this knowledge has the individual character. According to Socrates the character of that knowledge does not admit the identity of sophrosyne as a general knowledge with an individual knowledge particular because: "... it is the only the knowledge of all areas of knowledge and also about himself."⁴ Image of sophrosyne within the meaning of general knowledge was probably exceptional during the life of Socrates; sophrosyne was understood along the lines of knowledge about the man himself.

Sophrosyne is the knowledge about the nature and essence of human life, without

⁴ Platon: Charmides. In: Dialógy I., p. 80, 166 C.

it, man cannot fill up the meaning of life. It is interesting that sophrosyne is understood as knowledge about what we do not know. A man, who reviews the content of their knowledge from a general aspect, he concludes that some knowledge does not have at the general level which means that knowledge have the individual character.

Unearthing nature of sophrosyne is according Socrates uncovering knowledge. Mentioned knowledge is not contained in essence an analyzed virtues, but at the same by virtue could have the its completion, if a man does not have special knowledge. The essence of special knowledge is to direct person to the correct

practical action by knowing the specific cases. However, if a person has only special knowledge, so according to Socrates, one cannot act virtuously in every case and in all specific situations, because man doesn't know criterion, which would in all cases determine the right direction.

Socrates defines the next level of sophrosyne, which lies in the conviction that the person who will act based on knowledge, will fill the ambition after the good, which means that the person will do the good. Philosopher in the dialogue Charmides does not explain what is good and what is evil, we can assume that the rationality represents a general knowledge

about good and evil. According to Socrates, the correct action which is based on adequate rational knowledge and is perceived as activity based on the sophrosyne. That activity is understood as proportionate to the objective, which is a human life.

A significant part of Socrates' definition of virtue sophrosyne is that understands it as a necessary condition for achieving the highest goal of life – eudaimonia. In this connection, it is possible to identify two approaches, which have a common denominator: it is morally appropriate action. Rationality is the knowledge which may obtain almost every human. Socrates

gives a picture of overlapping general and theoretical and rational knowledge through which man can detect good, because the good is common to all the people and directs people to fulfilling eudaimonia. There isn't possible to achieve happiness outside the practical knowledge which leads a person to a beneficial action.

Socrates provides a relatively broad picture of sophrosyne, he analyzed individual levels structure of areté, in aim to define the content analysis of the concept. The character of dialogue *Charmides*, the low level of theoretical confrontations had the effect insufficient theoretical definition of sophrosyne

Socrates, who was probably aware of this, at the end of the dialogue expresses its conviction: rationality is knowledge and while is unknowledge, the possibility of knowledge in general; rationality is a great good that leads to happiness and eudaimonia.

Conclusion

From all of the examined virtues is sophrosyne the clearest expression of Socrates' belief that morality is linked with knowledge. For this reason, rationality is understood as the most important areté, which man has to acquire and properly act according to it.

Nodal points of Socrates' philosophical and ethical reflection on the virtues of rationality can be considered for the most important. This nodal points are: (a) the pursuit of autonomous creation of man, and (b) knowledge of man, which leads to practical activities, in conduct that and fills the desire for good.

Aristotle as well as Socrates cogitates about rationality in his philosophical and ethical project. Aristotle understands sophrosyne as one of the most important intellectual virtues, which significantly contributes to the creation of an autonomous moral virtues of each individual citizen.

Plato's views are different, related to the presentation of rationality as a virtue, which is the most dominant for the lowest social class of the polis. Development of Plato's thought meant a turning point in understanding sophrosyne, which presents in dialogue *Republic*. Rationality here is designed as harmony. Sophrosyne also represents harmony, through which a person tends to self-control, based on accepted the fact, that a better component of the soul controls the worse component of the human soul. Plato's opinion has exceeded traditional understanding of rationality and also the theoretical understanding sophrosyne his teacher Socrates. Plato

understands sophrosyne not only within the meaning of control yourself but also enriches the understanding of sophrosyne by philosophical intentions: self-knowledge is perfect when we realize whether the human action is or isn't good which means that a person is aware of his relationship to the highest Good.

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