

Socrates contribution to ethics philosophy essay



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According to Nehamas (1999), Socrates is accredited as one of the main pioneer of western philosophy and an enigma mostly recognized in the accounts of later writers of classical, especially the writings of his learners Xenophon and Plato, and through Aristophanes. Initially, it is known that Socrates utilized his time learning the nature of reality (cosmology) but later dropped the study so that he could entirely focus on ethics. Socrates has emerged as a recognizable figure due to his contribution to the area of ethics through his depiction in dialogue of Plato. He was later convicted for corrupting minds of youth by educating them to question anything and for being atheist. On the other hand, ethics as a field starts with the efforts of Aristotle. As a Greek philosopher, Aristotle is also a vital pioneer in western philosophy where his initial writings developed a system of comprehensive western philosophy covering morality, politics, science, logic, aesthetics, and metaphysics. Ethics of Aristotle are founded on ancient thought of Greek, specifically that of teacher Plato of Aristotle and teach of Plato, Socrates (Gottlieb, 2009).

The major goal of philosophical method of Socrates is at all times ethical. Socrates held the belief that the appropriate way for individuals to live was to point on self-development instead of material wealth. At all times he welcomed others to attempt to focus more on sense of true community and friendships because he had a feeling that it was the appropriate way for individuals to develop together as a population. He lived up to this and it was revealed when he was condemned for corrupting youth and atheism. Even though his death sentence was procrastinated for a month and this presented a good chance to escape, Socrates did not escape since he felt it

would be opposite to his principles (Nehamas, 1999). The concept that individuals have particular virtues created a common thread in teachings of Socrates. According to Socrates, the virtues represented the paramount qualities for an individual to possess, firstly of which were the intellectual or philosophical virtues. Socrates maintained that the greatest of all valuable possessions is virtue and the ultimate life was used up looking for the good. Socrates accepted as true that if an individual knows what the good is, one will all the time do what is pleasant. Hence, if a person justly comprehends the meaning of justice, self-control, or courage, one will act in a just, self-controlled, and courageous way. The consequence about this would be that every vice must be as a result of ignorance. Ozden and Elcioglu (2004) argued that Socrates believe is that no one does wrong knowingly but most of the times they think what they are doing is right. This means that even the individual who commit the most atrocious deeds always have a thought that he is acting for some good cause. This resulted to Socrates not to buy the idea of Aristotle called moral weakness where good is recognized and yet committing the evil. The one committing evil acts does not recognize what is good and he doesn't choose the evil intentionally. In addition, Socrates had a belief that the virtue life was all the time in best interest of a person and no one could be leading happy life if he was not good morally.

Aristotle held the perception that virtues of moral are conditions of character placed at the middle of extremes of deficiency and excess (Gottlieb, 2009). He suggested that intellectual virtues and moral virtues are distinguishable entities. Moral virtues are related with choosing, acting, and feeling good. The moral virtues are developed via practice and every individual is capable

of nurturing these virtues via habit. From Aristotle, intellectual virtues are superiorities of the mind like judgment, understanding, and wisdom. He also argues that an individual is born with these virtues and they can only be cultivated but not taught. Also Aristotle believed that virtue is a thing that a person can attain and not a thing which is present when person is born. Various persons are not initially bad or good but result to be bad or good via habits they nurture in them. Therefore, virtue can only be attained by acting it. He also indicated that doing virtuous things is not enough and an individual must have the appropriate motive to act in a manner that a virtuous individual would. Aristotle indicated that the appropriate method to learn virtues is to follow the illustration of a virtuous person. He also suggested that a virtuous person could be a perfect type by tracking the example of how a virtuous man would act. These kinds of persons are Martin Luther King, Socrates, Mandela, and Jesus and by tracking such persons and continuously learning habit to handle our feelings we might start to contain these feeling at appropriate periods, towards the appropriate persons, on the appropriate grounds, in the right way and for the right motive (Gottlieb, 2009).

Aristotle view is more plausible because he shows that moral virtues are developed via practice and every individual is capable of nurturing these virtues via habit. He has also indicated that virtue is an entity that an individual can achieve and not an entity that is hereditary. It is also appropriate for an individual to learn virtues by emulating persons with virtues. Socrates view would fall short in the society because he suggest that individual who commit the most atrocious deeds always have a thought that

he is acting for some good cause. Aristotle accepts that there is moral weakness where a person knows the good but still commit the evil.

Therefore, the Socrates' view that the person doing evil doesn't know what is good and he doesn't choose evil intentionally cannot hold in moral of the society especially when searching for justice.