

Greek philosophical thinking

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Protagoras' law - the person is a measure of all things - better than anything characterizes the changes in people's interests. New issues have been first of all appeared in the minds of persons, which acted mainly in Athens as teachers of all sciences and arts, which are required for active participation in public life, in the minds of sophists. The last is already not independent thinkers separated from each other, trying to understand the world and its development. They represent a new estate, which is engaged in training to eloquence and using logical arguments as arts, naturally in this business was supervised not with a pure aspiration to get the truth, but aspiration to shine and win in a verbal dispute. Characteristic for this philosophy, dictated to sophists by conditions surrounding them and their position in life, are empiric-skeptical (with respect to questions of theoretical value) and utilitarian-egoistical (with respect to questions of practical actions) points of view. The content and volume of our knowledge are entirely defined by our own sensual perceptions. Such perceptions, being subjectively changeable, cannot make valid knowledge at all. Also, our activity is always defined by minute needs. Therefore truth is what seems true to an individual; everything is good that serves a person's benefit.

Against this doctrine of sophists acts Socrates. Being engaged in training, not as favorable employment favorable, but similarly to thinkers of the previous time, investigating questions on sense and value of things from pure aspiration to knowledge and collecting around him pupils by means of excitation a free interest to these questions, he, first of all, has entered the struggle against the egoistic-utilitarian tendency of sophists, as completely harmful. But certainly, Socrates also was a person of his time. A person for him, as well as for sophists, a measure of things, and a discussion of

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separate questions of practical life, he also recognizes natural motives following from individual interests. But for his world outlook are characteristic not these private interests, but organic laws, which he considers significant for all human acts, and owing to which the specified concrete reasons of utility get other meaning. The contrast between Socrates and sophists lays not in the fact that Socrates does not consider utility as a motive for acts: human will by its nature already is directed to some purpose, and this purpose, as well to Socrates opinion, not concerning whether it is useful to others, in any case, it is useful to the acting person, as this person aspires to its realization.

One of the basic distinctions of Socrates from sophists consists of the fact that as a criterion at an estimation of people's acts for Socrates serves the question, by what motives is defined the decision made by an individual answering the question of what is useful and that is harmful.

Under the theory of sophists these motives, as well as human knowledge, are subjectively changeable; their scale is an individual desire and consequently in the general, is just a time egoistical benefit. As opposed to it, Socrates proclaims, that there is some objective knowledge, and therefore also objective norms for human acts. Not a person as an individual, but a person as kin is a measure of things. The good is not something that seems good to an individual in some particular moment, but something that under any circumstances and by everyone on the basis of his correct discretion is accepted as good. That is the sense of 'Socratic maieutics'. Moreover, Socrates for those, whose own mind cannot serve as a reliable head, directs to written laws of the state and on unwritten laws of gods, hence, on external legal order and on a voice of conscience. Both of them are for him witnesses

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of objectivity of moral norms. Therefore for Socrates self-knowledge is a prime target of human aspiration, not just because a person most of all raises his interest, but because the self-knowledge is at the same time, a source of all properties, beneficial for an individual and for society. In this statement also lays the sense of Socratic statement about the identity of virtues and knowledge, and the statement that everyone may be evil only because of ignorance. On the basis of these positions lays understanding, which, going far outside the limits of usual practical prudence, assumes the full and common true, filling all essence of a person, as he has already become involved in it.