

# Similarities and differences in sophistry and socrates' philosophies



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Philosophers during the time of Athenian prosperity are concerned and intrigued on the searching and on classifying stuffs or things whether it can be considered as a knowledge or an opinion or a truth or mere interpretation. This debate is unending but necessary to examine for epistemological sakes since it is one of the fundamentals of philosophy. After their victory over the Persians, Athens became a sea power and began to dominate trade and merchandising in the region. From there, Athenian life started to flourish in social, intellectual and cultural aspects.

The increase in the number of intellectuals enticed many Athenians to continue further education to meet the increasing demand for mentors or teachers. Sophists are teacher-travelers who charge money for their service and most of their pupils are of middle-class or of the rich. Sophistical education aims to mold a student in becoming a better human and a leader of society who is proficient in politics and public relations. All Sophists teach ??? rhetoric??? which is defined as the principle and practice of persuasive speaking. Sophists see that it rhetoric is the key to those who want to be a better man and a public icon. It can be concluded here that Sophistical education is concerned on molding not only the minds of people but also the actions and personalities.

Rhetoric suggests that if there are two or more possible perspectives on the debate/issue/argument, a skilled rhetorician should be able to scrutinize and present all the sides/perspectives of the argument. It is necessary to evaluate first all of the sides because only from there a rhetorician could attack each sides??? weaknesses. In a formalized debate these procedure would help a debater to anticipate what his or her opponent will argue and

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thus the chance of winning the debate is large. Therefore, winning the argument is the important one and not on the revelation of truth (Melchert, 2001, p. 42-44). Sophists do not support that there is no one logos (what could be said) or that there is nothing is common to all.

They believe, so as with Democritus??? doctrines, that all classification of things depends on man. Thus, all a man could have is opinion ??? neither truth nor knowledge. They suggest that human beings are restricted on bodily senses and that truth is beyond us, far from the capability of the senses. Man can only gather thoughts from what his or her senses and the idea gathered can only ??? represent some probabilities??? of what is real and true.

The best a man can only arrive at are inaccurate certainties, all beyond the possibilities that senses can not achieve are not to be given attention to (Melchert, 2001, p. 42-44). By way of eminence, it can be concluded this far that Sophists??? perspectives are like of Democritus: empiricists. Protagoras, one of the most famous Sophists, wrote a passage that describes the philosophy of Sophists best. Of all the measure is man: of all existing things, that they exist, of on-existing things, that they do not exist.

Since Sophists assumed that it is impossible for a man to go beyond senses, he or she is thus the final measure or the ??? final judge??? of how or what things are. Man is the standard of all things so what may be true to one can be false to another and then they are to stop arguing for neither of them is true or false. It will be the rhetoric skills which will derive them at a certain decision. Knowledge is not notable from opinion so it is often the ???

majority??? who dictates which will seem to be the best opinion and be the rule of thumb (Melchert, 2001, p. 5-47). On the other hand, Socrates believes that truth and reality is already there when we were born, it is just that we need to gather and interpret them.

He believes that there are universal objective standards which may seem overly beyond human senses but possible to be sought in detail. If Sophists are only concerned on man as the measure of all, Socrates focuses on the arguments themselves or ??? what can be said for or against??? on the merits of the cases. There is something that is absolute it is just that human are not capable of realizing them by using only the senses. When talking about absolute things, it is imperative to argue about whether there really are absolute right and absolute wrong. Socrates is an advocate of insisting that there is a boundary between right and wrong and that it is never right to do wrong, and vice versa. Yet it is an open question whether X is really wrong but if X turns out to be wrong, as for everyone, then it is already never right to do it.

It is neither culture nor punishment that entails when the wrong action is done that tells us that X should be avoided, it is because the negativity of X is absolute. In politics, Sophists insist that the ultimate thing that a leader should have is success but Socrates believe that there should be personal improvements, higher learning and understanding on the society (Sullivan, Socrates and the Sophists). The Socratic method aids us to elicit the truth by asking questions to show that one is ignorant. This state of mind is similar to the tabularasa or ??? empty slate??? concept of learning. From the very

start, the question seeks a rational answer and the rational answer will then be questioned.

In short, the questioning is unending. This is why Socrates was charged with corrupting the youth and dishonoring the gods because young people started to question adults and the existence of gods is being challenged (Benson, 2000, p. 2-6). With the increasing interest and demand for learning, intellectual and educational improvements was taken over Athens. Though there are conflicting differences among the teachings of the mentors, the concern of most is just around the topics of relativity and individualism which are essential fundamentals on explaining other thoughts such as existence of god, morality, ethics, politics and others. References <http://facstaff.elon.edu/sullivan/soc-soph.htm>