

Philosophical views comparison



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Assignment: Philosophical Views Comparison I chose to write about Plato and Socrates and compare their philosophical views on love, methods of acquiring knowledge, and existence.

In the fifth century B. C. E., the center of Western civilization was Athens, a city-state and a democracy. This period of time was some three centuries after the first Olympic Games and the start of alphabetic writing, and approximately one century before Alexander the Great demonstrated that it is possible to conquer the world or what passed for it then.

Fifty thousand citizens of Athens governed the city and the city's empire. Athenians did not settle disputes by brawling but rather by discussion and debate. Power was not achieved through wealth or physical strength or skill with weapons; it was achieved through words.

Rhetoricians, men and women with superior skill in debate, created plausible arguments for almost any assertion and, for a fee, taught others to do it too. At the same time in the fifth century B. C. E., there also lived a stonemason with a muscular build and a keen mind, Socrates. He wrote nothing, but we know quite a bit about him from Plato's famous dialogues, in which Socrates almost always stars. Socrates did not merely engage in sophistry he was not interested in arguing simply for the sake of arguing he wanted to discover something important, namely, the essential nature of knowledge, justice, beauty, goodness, and, especially, traits of good character such as courage.

The method of discovery he followed bears his name, the Socratic Method. To this day, more than twenty centuries after his death, many philosophers

equate proficiency within their own field with skill in the Socratic (or dialectic) method. The method goes like this: Suppose you and Socrates wish to find out what knowledge is.

You propose, tentatively, that knowledge is strong belief. Socrates then asks if that means that people who have a strong belief in, say, monsters must be said to know there are monsters. Seeing your mistake, you reconsider and offer a revised thesis: knowledge is not belief that is strong but belief that is true. Socrates then says, ??? Suppose the true belief, which you say is knowledge, is based on a lucky guess.

For instance, suppose I, Socrates, ask you to guess what kind of car I own, and you guess a Corvette. Even if your guess turns out to be right, would you call that knowledge??? By saying this, Socrates has made us see that knowledge cannot be equated with true belief either. You must therefore attempt a better analysis. Eventually you may find a definition of knowledge that Socrates cannot refute.

In many cases the process may not actually disclose the essence of the thing in question, and if Plato's dialogues are an indication, Socrates himself did not have at hand many final, satisfactory definitions. Still, the technique will bring those who practice it closer to this final understanding. Plato was the nickname of an Athenian whose true name was Aristocles. The nickname, which means ??? broad shoulders,??? stuck, and so did this man's philosophy. Few individuals, if any, have had more influence on Western thought than Plato. Plato initially studied with Cratylus, who was a follower of Heraclitus, and then with Socrates. He was also influenced by the

Pythagoreans, from whom he may have derived his great respect for mathematics. Plato thought that the study of mathematics was a necessary introduction to philosophy.

The first comprehensive theory of knowledge in philosophy was Plato's. Certainly many of his predecessors had implicit theories of knowledge, and some of them spoke explicitly on epistemological subjects. Some were quite skeptical. A skeptic is a doubter, a person who doubts that knowledge is possible. True knowledge, Plato was positive, must be concerned with what is truly real. As mentioned earlier, knowledge is true ultimately because it is knowledge of what is.

Plato believed that it is not enough to know the truth; rather, a person must also become that truth. This is where Plato's epistemology, or theory of truth, becomes a metaphysics, or theory of being. To know, for Plato, is to be. The more you know, the more you are and the better you are. To remember the Forms is to know the absolute truth and simultaneously to become just and wise. Plato postulated the notion of love as the way in which a person can go from the state of imperfection and ignorance to the state of perfection and true knowledge.

He defined love as a longing for and a striving to attain the object of longing. Love is that which seeks to possess the beautiful and to recreate in beauty. Human beings love to love: they truly come alive only in seeking a beloved, whether that beloved is another human being or an idea or health or money. For Plato, love is meant to be the force that brings all things together and

makes them beautiful. It is the way by which all beings, but especially human beings, can ascend to higher stages of self realization and perfection.

I could not find Socrates position on love in any of the chapters and therefore have not included what he has said about love.