



## The role of the 'Socratic method' in the developmental stages of philosophy

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### Abstract

This study aims to uncover man-centered ideas by Socrates through his method (Socratic) in the course of his inquiry, free from the research of the philosophy of nature. The problem with this study is how Socrates was able to make a proper investigation into man and his life, despite the influence of his earlier thinking. What is the meaning of life? Hypotheses such as the practical application of discipline in life are put forward. Information related to this subject is derived from reports, texts, etc. of a previous study, and the study uses descriptive analysis. Greek philosophy, delighted with Ionian thought, led to the next stage of development as the Sophist thinking. It was these Sophists who first proposed the concept of man. Socrates' philosophy, which developed after them, further clarified the study of man and established a new system of philosophy. His method of dialogue, which transcends precedents, revealed the solid foundations of man, and his method was passed on to the next generation by the direct student Plato and others, such as Aristotle. It also had great influence on philosophy. This research paper is set to reveal these issues.

**Keywords:** Philosophy, investigation, sophist, Socrates

### Introduction

Greece is one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Historians believe that Greece was the foundation of Western civilization. BC Around 1100 BCE, the end of the Greek Dark Ages began. The period up to 146 refers to Greek culture. Greek culture had a strong influence on the Roman Empire. That is what spread its culture to many parts of Europe. Greek flourished in language, politics, education, philosophy, science, and the arts. This was the basis for the emergence of new renaissances in Western Europe and in Europe and the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Greeks, especially the Ionians, were more apt to adopt this highly exploratory attitude than any other race. Prior to the advent of science, Greek society had developed various subtleties from Homer's epic content. In particular, the Greek people have been using the method of free discussion, the tendency to explore a particular subject from different angles, as well as the sceptical mind set and the high interest in finding the truth. Looking at these, it is clear that the Greeks held a leading position over all other sections of the population.

Greek thinkers favoured science over mythology and religion. The world hails them as the original lords of Western science. Greek chronology is different from understanding modern science. A special method of study found here is the study of natural phenomena with independent inquiry, both systematically and methodologically. The Greek scholars carried out his research independently, regardless of mythology or religion. Greek scholars sought to bring about a causal harmonization by exploring and clarifying the basics of natural phenomena. Emerging Greek philosophy thus evolved into an inquisitive view of man, free from the study of nature. This initiative, initiated by the Sophists, was followed by the Socratic Method and the new mode of discussion. This research paper is set to explore this mater.

**Purpose of the study:** This study aims to uncover man-centered thinking by Socrates through his method in the course of his investigation (free from the research of the philosophy of nature).

**Research problem:** The problem with this study is how Socrates was able to make a proper inquiry into man and his life, despite the influence of his earlier thinking.

**Research methodology:** Subject matter information depends mainly on secondary data. That is, it is derived from previously published research journals, reports, texts, and web data, and the study uses descriptive analysis.

### Discussion

The Sophists began the process of researching man in the course of his investigation, leaving the cosmological study of nature found in early Greece. Athens did not have a well-integrated education system in the 5th century BC. It was in this context that the entry of a philosopher called the Sophists into the history of Greek knowledge and education took place. The Sophists used their academic expertise in teaching the art of politics and the art of speech. They fascinated young people with modern teaching methods. The general interest in the political, legal, and humanistic notions of ancient Greece in the late 5th century BC is related to the activities of the Sophists. The period just before Socrates can be called the period of the Sophists. Sophist is the Greek word for 'Sophos'. It basically means someone who has fluent knowledge in various fields including crafts, arts, science, and culture. Protagoras was a prominent Sophist at the time. Protagoras later meant sage, genius. The Sophists provided educational training for successful advancement in politics and business. The Sophists also gave young people the teachings they needed to think and practice the art of speech. Protagoras is seen as

prominent among the Sophists. M.S.M. Anes mentions about Sophists as;

“Protagoras became the main leader of the Sophists. It was from him that the main voice of the Sophist movement, “Man is the measure of all things,”<sup>[1]</sup>

Sophists belong to the cultures and customs of different countries. So they also became repositories of information based on different cultural factors. Through their knowledge they created a strong scepticism among the people as to whether a community should follow or avoid any facts necessary to keep itself in order. Moreover, some people were tempted to ask the question of whether their culture is based on mere artificial or natural rules. The Sophists led to an awakening of thought among the people as to whether their religion and moral rules were traditional or changeable or natural.

Also, how knowledge is obtained. Sophists also provided opportunities for discussions of human nature, such as how humans regulate their behaviour. Basically Sophists are pragmatists. The Sophists also used their pragmatic skills in Athenian democratic political life. They excelled in prose and grammar. They used definite techniques, especially in the art of speech. Such things were seen as new arrivals in the Greek tradition.

In fact politics had a special place in the lives of the Greek people. Thus the Sophists took all sorts of political and moral issues into their discussion from different angles for the purpose of inquiry. In a way, the results are set to trigger the biggest research triggers. However, there was another side to this. It is true that the Sophists aroused widespread theoretical appetite but they were responsible for the psychological insecurity and tension of the Greek people.

Thus, the Sophists were able to build a society that longed for peace. However, the origins of Greece's famous philosophical tradition date back to the Sophists. It was a pre-Socrates thought that emphasized the ancient philosophical knowledge of Greece in the Socrates period education system. N. Muthumogan mentions about this as;

“In a sense, Socrates was a Sophist and Socrates would have long discussions on various subjects such as beauty, knowledge, heroism, patriotism, truth and justice. They have become famous in philosophical history as the dialogues of Socrates”<sup>[2]</sup>

Socrates was a Greek philosopher whose work is considered so important that all philosophers who lived before he did are now lumped together as one group: the Pre-Socratics. Socrates was born in Athens around 470 BC and was famously sentenced to death in 399 BC on the pretext of corrupting Athens' youths.

Socrates never wrote anything himself. Everything we know about him ultimately derives from the work of two important authors who belonged to his inner circle, namely Plato and Xenophon. Other authors add important details, such as the comic playwright Aristophanes and Plato's student Aristotle. Everything we know about the man – his “Socratic” method, the fact that his father was a sculptor, that his wife was called Xanthippe – derives from these sources (see: Ancient World Magazine).

Socrates instituted a new alternative in philosophy. In other words his thinking in philosophy brought a new twist. He turned the study of the universe and nature, which had

developed in Greece until Anaximander, Anaxagoras, into ‘Man’. M.S.M. Anes mentions this;

“The Sophists had already begun a general human-centered trend. Socrates took the lofty thought of those ideals to even more expansive boundaries”<sup>[3]</sup>

Greek philosophy derives from the tradition of Ionian thought. Although Socrates studied Ionic thought he was not one to go its own way. Socrates pioneered his own way of thinking and pioneered the humanization of the philosophy. There is no denying that the influence of Ionian thought in Greece was a theological movement that also influenced the time of Socrates.

The earliest philosophers busied themselves mainly with speculations about the world around them.<sup>[4]</sup> Later still, the prevailing interest in logical matters raised the question of the origin and validity of knowledge; while, about the same time, the break-down of traditional morality gave rise to Ethics. The period which precedes the rise of Logic and Ethics has thus a distinctive character of its own, and may fitly be treated apart.<sup>[5]</sup>

Socrates was enriched by Greek culture and politics. Socrates' life was a testing ground for new regimes and at the same time reflecting progress. Though man-centered ideas on nature were first carried out by the Sophists, Socrates is seen as shaping it into a system of investigates.

Socrates did not take his belief in the study of nature's knowledge system and the study of external objects as his type of inquiry. According to the descriptions given by Plato and Xenophanes, it is not a study of what nature is, but what Socrates' choice of human life in the world becomes. Since philosophy has so far performed its function and study on nature, its view and direction is shifting to another field. It developed into a thought about the purpose and order of human life. Socrates began with an approach to how each individual or soul and community could achieve the central goals of life.

“Now their vision is directed to another field the order and purposes of human life – and, at the centre of that field, to the nature of the individual soul. Pre – Socratic philosophy begins with the discovery of Nature; Socratic philosophy begins with the discovery of man's soul”<sup>[6]</sup> Inquiries into human life were the main theme of his conversation. He questioned what makes a man good.

The most important thing in Socrates' view is the knowledge of man and the proper human life. This is useful in his opinion. Socrates, however, undoubtedly made the notion of man a priority of philosophical study. What is the end of life? What makes life worth living? What is the moral life? Such questions were central to his thinking. Socrates asked such questions to businessmen, city dignitaries, and politicians. They were embarrassed by these questions. The key questions he continued to raise were what should be the decisions we should make if we take life as a whole.

Usually such questions and inquiries about them are frequently encountered in ancient Greek philosophy. Money is the end of a business. It makes him happy. In the same vein a physician considers that health is the most valuable thing that can lead to pleasure. Yet what is happiness or pleasure? Following the teachings of Socrates, Greek thinkers raised such questions.

<sup>1</sup> Anes. M. S. M, Philosophy, Greek to the present day, 2006, p – 31.

<sup>2</sup> Muthumogan., N., European Philosophy, 2000, p – 3.

<sup>3</sup> Anes. M. S. M., Philosophy, Greek to the present day, 2006, p – 34.

<sup>4</sup> John Burnet., Early Greek Philosophy, 1908, p - 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pp. 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Cornford, F. M., Before and after Socrates, 1966, p - 4.

According to Socrates the perfection of the soul is impossible without knowledge. That is, knowledge is important in obtaining the right solution and explanation of the options for things we think are valuable. This is the connection between the knowledge and benefit discovered by Socrates. This is his basic principle. This is the source of Socrates' theory of 'morality is knowledge' echoed in his moral thought. In another sense, it is the central idea of Socrates' philosophy of self-knowledge.

### **Socratic Method**

Socrates' philosophical ideas are expressed through his method. In his youth, Socrates enthusiastically admired Athens' constant conversational style. It was not just a pleasurable act. According to him, dialogue is a research activity of a special nature. Socrates had a very close involvement in the art of speech. The narrow expanse of Athens and the open-air life of the city provided excellent opportunities for continuous conversation.

The Socratic method (also known as method of Elenchus, elenctic method, or Socratic debate) is a form of cooperative argumentative dialogue between individuals, based on asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking and to draw out ideas and underlying presuppositions (See: Wikipedia).

Issues such as philosophy, politics, morality, and knowledge were taken up in these conversations. Socrates engaged in endless conversations at the Athenian city market. Opinions and comments were thereby tested. Duplicates found. The facts were highlighted. His method expanded the scope of his knowledge.

The objects or topics that Socrates took in his conversations; It does not depend only on philosophy. His topics of conversation were how to find friends, how to treat children, how to be supportive in relationships with women in difficult times, how to explain the pride of his country, what are the proofs that emphasize the existence of God, what is knowledge, and what is beneficial. That is, the purpose of his discourse may be to examine human life (See: R.W. Livingstone, Portrait of Socrates, 1939).

Socratic Method is a method of discussion in the form of 'Conversationalism' or dialectic. One or more people will participate in his conversation. Socrates allows interlocutors to be involved in the conversation. The main questioner was Socrates, and the speakers also took part in the conversations.

This is how Socrates' discourse is to be viewed in the light of the explanations given by Plato and Xenophon. Through his dialogue, Socrates revealed the moral thoughts and moral issues that are ingrained in the hearts of his fellow citizens. Plato is proud to say that these are qualities that must be present in any good philosophical system.

### **Contradiction (Eristic) method**

The 'conversational system', which conducts scholarly argument as one affirmation against another affirmation, developed into a popular system in Athens in the 5th century AD. It was especially during this period that the Sophists became professional teachers. The Sophists also used this method of debate. The Sophists were well aware of the usefulness of this argument and used it to develop their naïve skills. The Sophists used this argument to support a theory or to reject a theory.

Plato calls this method of argument by the Sophists the Nullification or Eristic method. In Plato's view, the term meant 'misuse'. The real meaning of the 'Contradiction argument' is to try to win his argument at any cost; The main goal is to establish success in the argument rather than finding the truth through the argument.

There was another type of argumentative system. This method, recognized by Plato and Aristotle, has a question-and-answer technique. Socrates was keenly aware of this argument, which was popular in his time. He considered it a destructive argument. Protagoras, who is considered to be the source of this argument, used this argument as the logical basis for his internal ideas. Sophists in general have consistently used the technique of 'counter-destruction' through this argument. They used the questioning method to stun the respondent. Or tried to bring him into self-contradiction.

This situation was also created by making a confusing game about the meaning of words. Small types of questions were designed to be answered in such a way as to either accept or reject the questions posed, which were designed to confuse the respondent. For example, do you know this or not? The questions were either yes or no. There is no room in this game for the respondent to ask the question again. This can be said to be an argument that can trap the respondent into a web of contradiction and win. This argument is not intended to seek the truth. This can be cited as an important critique of the rhetoric of the Sophists.

The popularity of the Sophists' Contradiction method in Athens was often met with criticism. Opportunistically, many compared Socrates and his rhetoric to that of the Sophists and considered him a Sophist.

### **New mode of discussion**

Protagoras used this type of argument many years before Socrates used his cross-examination method. Protagoras is said to be the forerunner of the technique of debating by argument. Socrates' expansion of his argument was influenced by the techniques of the argument of the professional sophist Protagoras. Part of Socrates' art of cross-examination was the method of acknowledging the errors and irregularities in the ideas presented by the participants in the discussion. Socrates designed the question-and-answer format of argument developed by Protagoras as a new argument consistent with his own.

What progression did Socrates' method of argument make than the previous method? Also, of the Sophists; How is the Socrates argument different from the Argumentative system? These are important questions. The method of the Sophists can be referred to as the paradoxical argument, and Socrates' method as the dynamic argument. Plato called the question-and-answer Socrates system a dynamic system and boasted of being the best philosophical method for analysis. Plato believes that the dynamic method of question and answer used by Socrates serves two purposes. The first is that the basic purpose of this method is to find the truth. The second purpose is to impart to others the knowledge necessary to discover the truth. According to Plato, the Socratic dynamic system is the best tool for achieving both of these goals.

In addition, Plato refers to the Socratic Method as a system by which philosophical realities can be better articulated. This is because the desire for knowledge is an important aspect of both the purposes stated here. According to Plato,

the paranoid allusions of the critics of this process were completely substantiated. Arguably there are no scientific motives. Plato also considers the educational objectives that can be put forward to be of no value. And in Plato's view the Contradiction method of the Sophists has no philosophical value.

### Conclusion

Ancient Greeks and philosophers were active in the search for the universe, rejecting ignorant, mythological ideas and discovering new facts through intellect. The Sophists subsequently turned this quest for thought into nature into research on man and began a new method of argumentative inquiry. Thus Socrates' philosophical system developed in the context of the hereditary influences of Sophist thought. Socrates was absorbing the treasuries of Sophism thought and experimenting with new systems. The Socratic method adopted a number of important systems, such as the Contradiction method and the new mode of discussion, which moved philosophy to a new angle. He created a generation of great disciples and a generation of youth who questioned everything in the style of conversation. He did so without false pretences by saying, "One thing only I know, and that is that I know nothing." He explored issues such as morality, justice, truth and beauty through his methods of inquiry and was the basis for the development of new thinking in philosophy. This research paper is based on the study of these issues.

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