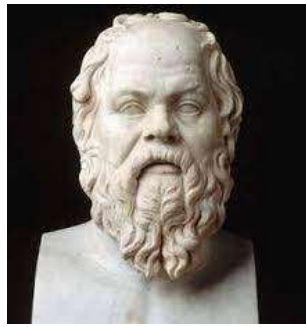

Socrates (470BC-399 BC)



Acted as a “gadfly” or “intellectual midwife ” to Athenian people . While he became very dear to the young men of Athens, he incurred the wrath of the people in power.

He was put on trial on the charges of :-

1. Atheism
2. Leading youth astray
3. Seditious



He was condemned to death by drinking “Hemlock” . Although , he had opportunity to escape but refused to live contrary to his principles, thus became the first **Martyr of philosophy**.

Socrates himself wrote nothing. What we know about him is through dialogues of **Plato, Xenophon and Aristophanes**. Plato wrote numerous dialogues, using Socrates as the main character

Socrates : Ignorance and Irony

In “**Apology**” an event is mentioned which Socrates says, has helped him to shape his approach to philosophy. **Priestess of Delphi**, called him the wisest man. Socrates, set out to prove her wrong. He began questioning people in Athens having reputation of being wise. He discovered that, though claimed to possess wisdom, they knew very little. Socrates concluded that Priestess was right. **He was wiser than others because at least he knew how ignorant he was, whereas others didn't.**

This is the starting point of his philosophy. He started questioning others posing himself to be ignorant showing others about how little they actually know and showing contradictions in their understanding. On the positive side it also led to the understanding of something more true.

“Virtue is knowledge”

Socratic dictum “Virtue is knowledge” and its corollary that **all vice, must be due to ignorance** i.e. **no one willingly or knowingly commits errors**, has been debated in western philosophy for years. The most accepted interpretation is that one who knows what is wrong will do not commit such wrongs. Even persons who commit heinous crimes think that they are doing some good. However, it happens because of lack of knowledge. Socrates does not accept the possibility of “moral weakness” i.e. knowing the good yet doing the evil. This is contrary to what Aristotle suggested.

Virtue as happiness

Socrates believes that life of virtue is always in the best interest of a person.

Definition of Virtue/ arête (moral virtue): Supreme Good

1. Excellence of any kind.
2. Fulfillment of purpose i.e. living up to one’s full potential.
3. Virtue is moral excellence i.e. individual is virtuous if his character is made up of virtuous qualities.

Thus, “virtue is knowledge” means the highest human potential of man can be known as well as achieved through knowledge.

Many people never consciously contemplate how one ought to live. They continue to live according to conventional norms. We should know ourselves i.e. soul, to determine the quality of our life. Devoting oneself to philosophical inquiry help us to secure happiness. Even death is a trivial matter for truly virtuous man. For him, **state of his soul is more important than satisfaction of his body**. By attaining the knowledge of virtue, we make our souls beautiful. Thus, ignorant person commits evil act of amassing wealth even by unfair mean and believe it to be the source of happiness.

Thus, **A.E Taylor** explains Socratic view that “**Evil doing always rests upon a false estimate of good**”.

Thus, the job of the philosopher is to strip away people’s misconceptions, delusions and self-deception in order to help them to achieve “human-flourishing” (**Eudaemonia**).

Thus, for Socrates:-

<i>Self knowledge is sufficient condition for 'Good life'.</i>	<i>Virtue can be learned.</i>	<i>Unexamined life is not worth living.</i>	<i>Our true happiness comes in doing what is right.</i>
<i>Happiness is satisfaction of soul.</i>	<i>Ethics has teleological character.</i>	<i>Take care of soul</i>	<i>Knowledge of virtue is necessary to be virtuous and thus attain happiness.</i>
<i>Evil acts are committed due to ignorance.</i>	<i>Evil is involuntary. If people will know the essence of courage , temperance and justice , they will act accordingly.</i>	<i>The state of our soul determine the quality of our life.</i>	<i>Suffering injustice is better than doing injustice.</i>

*When we commit an injustice we harm our soul. On the other hand, when we suffer injustice we may harm only something which is trivial i.e. wealth, reputation or even body. Hence, we should take care of our soul at all cost. Thus, for Socrates **perpetrator of violence damage his soul more than of his victims***