# ANALYSIS OF SOCRATES' MORAL PHILOSOPHY

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## ABSTRACT

*Socrates' moral philosophy focuses on people's character and lifestyle, pursues truth and wisdom, and emphasizes that people should pursue moral perfection through self-understanding and exploration. His dialogues lead people to think, discover truth, and improve their behavior through questions and inquiries. Socrates' moral philosophy had a profound influence on later philosophers and ethicists. His thoughts were further developed and improved in the philosophical systems of Plato and Aristotle, which had an important impact on the development of Western philosophy and provided an important example for later generations of moral theories.*

***Key words:*** *Socrates, Moral Philosophy, Ethics, Values, moral perfection.*

## INTRODUCTION

This article's analysis of Socrates' moral philosophy mainly focuses on his exploration of truth, knowledge, virtue and his dialogue method. Focus on the famous statements such as "Know thyself", "Virtue is knowledge", "No one intentionally does evil", "Virtue can be taught" and Socratic dialogue, and analyze his moral philosophy on human inner quality and wisdom. The cultivation of moral integrity through rational thinking and self-understanding.

### Literature review.

Socrates' moral philosophy is extensively expounded and discussed in Plato's Dialogues. Plato conveyed Socrates' moral concepts through works such as Dialogues on the Soul, The Republic, Phaedrus, and Symposium. . In Dialogues on the Soul, Socrates discusses morality and the nature of the soul through dialogues with various characters. The book emphasizes the importance of knowledge and wisdom for moral behavior and believes that people should develop their souls through rational thinking and introspection. In "The Republic", Socrates discussed an ideal political and social order and proposed the concept of "philosopher rulers." It is believed that only people with wisdom and morality can truly achieve justice and good governance. In addition to Plato's works, Aristotle conducted an in-depth study of morality and virtue in his ethical work, the Nicomachean Ethics.

Henry Siddiq's book "Socratic Moral Philosophy" is one of the authoritative studies on Socrates' moral philosophy. The author analyzes and explains Socrates' main ideas and discusses Socrates' ethical views and his pursuit of moral knowledge and truth. French philosopher Pierre Hadot's book The Practice of Greek Philosophical Thought explores Socrates' ethical views and places them within the context of the broader philosophical tradition. The 19th-century British philosopher John Stuart Mill published an essay "Utilitarianism and Socrates" in 1869, which discussed Socrates' ethics and utilitarianism. Compare Socrates' pursuit of moral truth and his concern for personal happiness, and illustrate the influence of Socrates' moral philosophy on utilitarian thought. The book "The Ethics of Socrates" (The Ethics of Socrates) by the British philosopher John Alexander Smith in the early 20th century provides a detailed study of Socrates' moral philosophy and explores Socrates' views on An understanding of virtue and moral knowledge, and Socrates' contribution to personal character and social ethics. Isadore Rosenstock's book The Criterion of Socratic Ethics explores Socratic ethics. He conducted an in-depth study of the moral judgments and standards of moral behavior in Socrates' thought, and proposed a method of interpreting Socratic ethics.

**Research Methodology.** The article uses the methods of Moral language and conceptual analysis methods, inductive methods, empirical methods of ethics, moral reflection and self-criticism methods, analysis, synthesis, dialectical, organismic methods of scientific knowledge.

**Analysis and results.**

**1. Socrates' Ethical and Moral Philosophy.**

Cicero said: "The first person to bring philosophy from heaven to earth was Socrates".[1] This sentence neatly illustrates the changes in the field of Socratic studies. Among the motivations for Socrates to turn to the study of "human beings", questioning his own research ability was an important reason. At the same time, the famous assertion that "human beings are the measure of all things"[2] put forward by the Sophists also promoted the development of ethical research at that time. The transformation of nature's tendency towards humans jointly created Socrates' own theory of studying the ethics of "human beings". The three theories of Socrates' moral ethics made outstanding contributions to the reconstruction of ancient Greek morality, namely, "Know thyself", "Virtue is knowledge" and "spiritual midwifery". These three theories provide a new way of thinking for people's moral and ethical construction, respectively from the individual's own moral inquiry, virtue sublimation to knowledge ethical inquiry and metaphor midwifery to cultivate people's spiritual pursuit of moral and ethical construction. [3] The German classical

philosopher Hegel evaluated Socrates as "not only an extremely important figure in the history of philosophy (the most interesting figure in ancient philosophy), but also a figure of world historical significance."[4] What Socrates pursued and persisted in His philosophical principles changed the development direction of ancient Greek philosophy. He confirmed the individual's subjective consciousness and replaced oracles. Moreover, he incorporated ethics into philosophy and clearly stated "know yourself" and "virtue is knowledge", becoming a Western The founder of "subject knowledge theory" in ethical and moral philosophy.[5]

## 2. "Know thyself"

Socrates discovered the germ of truth in the philosophy of Anaxagoras and was deeply inspired. Anaxagoras not only proposed that seeds are the origin of everything in the world, but also proposed that the driving force behind seeds forming everything in the world is the mind. Although Anaxagoras still did not completely get rid of the relics of natural philosophy when explaining the generation and existence of all things in the world, his philosophical significance lies in proposing the mind and investigating the thought itself. In Anaxagoras, "thought is represented as an omnipotent concept, as a negative power that governs all specific things and beings; its movement is the dissolution of all consciousness."[6] Socrates adopted Anaxagoras' principle that the mind is a ruling, real and self-determining universal. To this end, Socrates gave up some senses and turned to the soul, where he sought the truth of existence. In his view, when people pursue the true cause and truth of things, they cannot seek external verification based on the senses, but should reflect within themselves to reach the truth of existence. Socrates believed that the reason why philosophers in the past did not grasp the truth of existence was that the former philosophers looked outward and always tried to obtain the truth from the existence of external things. In fact, the basic principle of philosophy is to know oneself and return to oneself. Man's vocation and purpose, the ultimate goal and truth of the world, and everything that exists in and of itself must be achieved through man himself. Therefore, truth is "knowing you" Own". For Socrates, returning to oneself and knowing yourself means that everything or nature that appears to people is manifested by human consciousness. In the teachings of Socrates, the subjectivity of self-consciousness is identified. The subjectivity of self-consciousness and the certainty of thinking are regarded as a self-contained ontology and are defined as the truth of objective things. The truth of objective things is attributed to the subjectivity of self-consciousness and the thinking of the subject. This requires Human understanding returns to oneself, and self-reflection seeks within. Socrates believed that among the "common nature" of all things, the highest regulation is human ethical

regulation. Because the highest link among all things is human beings, the unified "common nature" of all things is an absolute good. This view begins to have a teleology different from that of natural philosophy. In the development of ancient Greek philosophy, because Socrates first noticed goodness through his own awareness and reflection, he established a new concept-ethics.

### 3. "Virtue is knowledge"

The core of moral philosophy is cognition and knowledge, that is, cognition and knowledge of good are overriding. "Virtue is knowledge" succinctly highlights the ethical and moral thought of Socrates' epistemology. Socrates was not concerned with nature but with human affairs. In his opinion, all kinds of science are of no benefit to human life, so what he should care about is things related to human moral nature, so that people can do the greatest good and know the truest things. Therefore, he neither always debates about the nature of things like natural philosophers do, nor does he explore how things in the world are created and what laws are responsible for things in the sky like wise men.[7] The essence and goal of his philosophy is not to establish a natural philosophy system, but to inspire people to love truth and virtue in order to transform personal behavior into a behavior of universal significance. Through conversations, he guides people to think about their responsibilities, helps people care about their own ethics, awakens people's moral consciousness, and makes people think about and understand what is right, what is universal principle, and what is the truth and beauty of being self-contained; People are aware and convinced that they possess truth and goodness in their own thoughts, and have the potential to produce moral behavior and understand the truth, so that they can live a legitimate life. For Socrates, possessing virtue and living a right life lies first in knowing virtue. During the Socratic period, four virtues were popular in Greece, namely courage, justice, temperance and wisdom. Socrates clearly realized that the so-called four virtues can be reduced to a unity or moral stipulation, which is human self-awareness and knowledge. According to Socrates' principles, goodness and morality are not imposed on people from the outside. Goodness and morality are inherent in human nature and are included in human spiritual nature. In his opinion, although everything starts from the outside and people just seem to be learning everything, in fact, the outside things are just a driving force for spiritual development. Goodness and virtue, as well as everything that is valuable and valid to people, are included in people themselves and must be developed from people themselves. This is "just as the Bible says, 'Flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones,' which I hold to be truth and right, the spirit of my spirit." In this regard, Hegel commented: "Socrates awakened this true conscience,

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because he not only announced that man is the measure of all things, but also announced that man as a thinker is the measure of all things."[8]

Socrates attributed the good and evil of human behavior to a matter of knowledge. Then, completely equating virtue with knowledge will logically lead to the fact that the essence of human morality lies in using human cognitive ability to understand oneself. We must understand the truth that we are going against, and recognize that this is good and that is unwholesome. When people know virtue, they will naturally do good rather than evil. Therefore, the essential issue of morality is knowing virtue, and knowledge is the highest good. This reveals the bud of self-realization in the history of Western philosophy and also highlights the principle of subject freedom. In summary, Socratic moral philosophy believes that morality is not a skill, it involves the principle issue of why people are human, that is, the principle issue of whether human will is reasonable or not, and whether it should or should not be done. Morality is inherent in people, and the standard of good and evil lies in people themselves; he believes that the source of morality lies in people themselves, because goodness is intrinsic rather than external, and at the same time goodness is knowable and teachable. The significance of moral philosophy is that provisions such as goodness, ethics, and justice are freely established by the subject himself through cognition.

### 4. "Spiritual midwifery"

According to Socrates' views of "know yourself" and "virtue is virtue", to create a group of citizens with good quality, we must pay attention to the self-esteem of citizens. Reshaping must be supplemented by a guiding method, because good moral character is formed through subtle influence and is definitely not achieved through coercive means. Socrates believed that human knowledge is generated innately and is highly subjective.[9] The human conscience is like a fetus in the mother's womb. It already exists and can be awakened through intervention. Thus, the dialogue questioning method created by Socrates leads to the pursuit of universal "good" and the enhancement and improvement of the entire human morality. The method of "spiritual midwifery" is simply a method of dialogue, or it can be called a "questioning" method. Generally speaking, this method is mainly divided into four links, namely satire, delivery, induction, and summary.[10] Sarcasm means asking questions, directly hitting the most vulnerable part of the soul, making it the most primitive state of "ignorance", thereby removing the dross and mixture. Midwifery, also called "midwifery," is about renewing one's knowledge. Constantly ask questions to guide them to update their old knowledge, so that the other party can understand the principles of life through this kind of questioning, instead of the

questioner actively instilling these things into him and telling him what you should and should not do. All are undesirable. Learning is about understanding existing knowledge, not instilling new knowledge. Induction, that is, in the modern sense, is to summarize something universal from individual things, which is also the later "ideology theory". To summarize is to form a conclusion after cross-examination. This conclusion can only be generated spontaneously. Every time the cross-examination is completed, a conclusion must be drawn. Although the conclusion may not always be reached, this is the perfection of "spiritual midwifery". A complete and indispensable link.[11]

**Result and discussions.**

Socrates' moral philosophy principles changed the course of the entire world history. This turning point is reflected in: the proof of personal spirit replaced the oracle, and the decisiveness of the subject replaced the reality of ethics and the sanctity of the oracle. The certainty and directness of etiquette, customs and laws have been shaken in the subjective view. Socrates took such a new moral principle as his way of life and mission, bringing moral philosophy from heaven to earth and into people's daily lives. Hegel commented that "his philosophy and his way of studying philosophy are part of his way of life. His life and his philosophy are one and the same; his philosophical activities are by no means divorced from reality and retreat to the purity of freedom, into the realm of thought".[12] The consistency between this philosophical pursuit and lifestyle made Socrates' unique personality. Virtues such as wisdom, humility, frugality, moderation, justice, courage, perseverance, insistence on justice, and not pursuing fame and fortune are his living characters and principles, creating an admirable and noble moral image. But we must also see that Socrates' "spiritual midwifery" pursues an absolutely universal "ultimate truth", but blindly seeks conclusions through so-called "questioning". However, it cannot always be obtained. The commonly used conclusions inevitably make mistakes and do not look at the specific actual situation. Only when we see the essence of things can we make a definition, that is, the two steps of induction and conclusion, otherwise we will fall into the "abortion technique" and Not "midwifery".[13]

**CONCLUSION.**

Socrates' moral philosophy classifies the world into a knowable "good". "Know thyself" is the new direction of philosophical research proposed by Socrates, and it is also the basic proposition of Socrates' moral philosophy. In summary, understanding the goodness in human affairs and the goodness of the soul is the prototype of Socrates' virtue theory and methodology. Judging from the development of Socrates' entire moral philosophy, he started from the philosophical proposition "virtue is

knowledge" and further clarified that realistic and specific moral behavior is contradictory, relativistic and dual-sided, that is, there is both good and evil. As for morality as knowledge, it is absolute, relatively fixed, and eternal. Because the concept of goodness itself does not change and is absolute. Therefore, only when people truly understand the meaning of morality and understand morality and kindness can they make realistic and moral behaviors. His statement that "no one intentionally does evil" was also put forward on this basis. He attached great importance to moral education and advocated that "morality can be taught." Since morality is knowledge, it can be obtained through education. Knowledge and wisdom themselves are the results of education. Therefore, he advocated that through education, people should master moral knowledge, understand the difference between good and evil, and make people's minds possess Wisdom, be a moral and wise person.

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