

SOCRATIC ANTHROPINE SOPHIA AND THE CONCEPT OF *TECHNE*. ANALOGIES AND DIFFERENCES

1. Social crisis and Socratic philosophy. The *Seventh Letter* by Plato outlines the context of the ethical and social crisis occurred in Athens during the fifth century B.C., and it is just in the evocation of this crisis that it is possible to understand the philosophical question faced by Socrates at his time¹. Socrates saw the roots of this social landslide in the inability of moral conscience of his contemporaries to find a consistent and universally available guidance in the ancient pattern of education and in the ethical directions of their culture². Partial cause of this inability should be found in the general conception of moral life showed by ancient Greek tradition, in which human conduct was supposed to have a merely emotional matrix and the function performed by reason was regarded as very secondary³. In this sense, the only possible valid reaction to

1 PLATO, *Seventh Letter*, 323c - 326b.

2. *Op. cit.*, 325d-e. On the social crisis occurred in Athens at Socrates' time, cf. also PLATO, *Apology*, 30a-e; *Gorgias*, 517a-519a; XENOPHON, *Apology*, 20-21; *Memorabilia*, I.2.9-12. On the progressive loss of power suffered by public authorities, cf. XENOPHON, *Memorabilia*, I.2.40; IV.4.10.25.

3. This view is fully expressed in Plato's *Protagoras*, where Socrates explicitly analyses the way in which the so called *hoi polloi* were conceiving the moral act and the human conduct in general. As Socrates points out, there are two main ways in which it is possible to explain the course taken by every moral action: 1) the way sponsored by the *hoi polloi*, and implicitly by Protagoras himself, that ascribes to the different strengths possessed by men's emotional drives the main cause of the actual choice they make; in this way, reason is regarded as a weak factor in moral deliberation, surely weaker than drives and desires (*Protagoras*, 352b-c); 2) the way supported by Socrates, that ascribes to the right usage of reason the main determining factor in moral choice (*Protagoras*, 352c). Reason can accomplish this function by showing a sort of hierarchy between the several alternatives every man usually faces; so, it is possible to evaluate the positive and negative side of each one of them and to choose the most useful and the best alternative for man himself. Such a «measuring art» has to take into account the effective quantity of good and evil showed by every alternative, that has to be considered in its large range and not only on the ground of the immediate emotional echos they are provoking into men (*Protagoras*, 355b-358a). In this sense, Socrates is opposing his own rational approach to ethical choice against the hedonistic approach that makes the pleasure the final end pursued by every moral decision (*Protagoras*, 352d-354b). So the *Protagoras* can be considered the key dialogue as regards the Socratic doctrine of virtue qualified as reasoning and *logos*; in this context we have also to remember the criticism addressed by Socrates and Plato to the emotional kind of *paideia* taught to young people on the ground of traditional education, as we can learn from Plato's *Sophist*, 229e-230e, and *Theaetetus*, 150b-d; on the debate about education at Socrates' lifetime, cf. PLATO, *Laches*, 178a-181d. Regarding this topic, see also XENOPHON, *Memorabilia*, III, 9.14-15; IV.2.15-16.

ethical crisis could lie in a new valorization of the traditional cardinal principles, even though represented in a more universal and necessary way. According to Socrates, this new version of traditional principles could only take place by a promotion of human reason to the *status* of hegemonic factor also in the sphere of moral life⁴. The motivations supporting this philosophical attempt are complex, all depending on the conception of reason supported by Socrates. Traditionally, reason was supposed to accomplish a relevant function basically in the most speculative philosophy and in the *technai*⁵. In this way, reason was regarded as the speculative attitude, that some men are especially fitted with, by which they could have access to the contemplation of pure being and of ideal realities. This view implied a very partial understanding of human reason, so considered as a merely abstract power, totally heterogeneous to the rational government of human acts. On the other side, in Socrates' view the concept of reason displayed by *technai* was looking very narrow too, since its essence was qualified as perfect mastery of their products and of the means able to produce them, but not even as control of the ends these products have to be aimed at⁶.

4. As Plato's *Apology*, 22e, is clearly suggesting, Socrates considered himself as staying in a sort of hermeneutical middle way between the past Greek tradition (still deeply respected by Socrates, as Plato's *Crito*, 50b-54d, singles out), not anymore effectively understood by his fellow citizens, and the need of a general new interpretation of its ethical principles in the light of the actual time. In this way, the position chosen by Socrates led him to the accomplishment of a synthesis, by a new philosophical connotation of the main moral concepts. As to this point, see PLATO, *Apology*, 20c-e; 23a.

5. This general statement can be expressed on the ground of Plato's *Apology*, 17a-22e. In deeds, this first Platonic dialogue seems to be a kind of general review of the main branches of knowledge at Socrates' lifetime, that looks like destined to clarify the essential place vindicated by Socratic philosophy and its necessary presence in this context. The comparison between the epistemic branches of the time takes place because of the Socrates' intention to prove the falsity of Delphic oracle concerning his presumptive wisdom. So, as we learn from Plato's *Apology*, Socrates denies to be acquainted with cosmological research, not because it constitutes a false kind of knowledge, but because it cannot be ethically useful in men's practical life; moreover, he is not a sophist, because sophists are not really able to teach the *euboulia*, but only the way in which is possible to make stronger the weakest argument; the rhetoric itself can be put in the same epistemic field of *technai*, whenever it will accept the essential borders drawn by its mastery of the *logos* in order to produce persuasion, but it can never be considered as true knowledge when it aspires to extend its validity to some other fields of expertise, as Plato's *Gorgias*, 463b-c, drastically points out. Finally, Socrates does not find true knowledge among politicians and poets. So, the only epistemic fields in which he found a true concept of knowledge have been the cosmological philosophy and the *technai*; the first kind did not present any utility; so Socrates confirmed the *technai* as the most privileged reference point in order to clarify his human wisdom's epistemic *status*.

6. This is the fundamental difference put by Socrates between technical knowledge and human wisdom, very clearly expressed by Plato's *Apology*, 25c; *Lysis*, 218e-219d; *Euthydemus*, 280a-289b. This question is clearly examined also in Plato's *Gorgias*, 466d-468c, by underlining the inability of the sophist, as Polus in the case, to act according to his real hope of happiness. In fact, Socrates shows him that the politicians and the sophists do not do what really desire, i.e. they do not possess any kind of true knowledge.

On the contrary of Plato, Socrates believed that men would go better off by trying to answer to the crisis of tradition not postulating an axiologically normative ontological theory, but by finding directly in the true understanding of *phronesis* and *praxis* the ideal of theory, by conceiving it as the rational orientation and meditation performed by men in their own ethical life. In this way, Socrates decided to move from the dimension of *praxis*, indicating in the knowledge implied by *technai*, and not in the one displayed by mathematicians⁷, the paradigmatic kind of knowledge for his reviewed concepts of *phronesis* and *praxis*. So, reason should be regarded as the most prominent factor in moral life, by which it could be possible from time to time to have access to the pure contemplation of the being starting from the ethical reflexion itself⁸. It was a very original position, because, as we have already pointed out, in the classical conception of Greek morality, reason and knowledge, the so called *epistemai*, were supposed to have an effective function only in pure ideal of *theoria*, as it was for example in the cosmological speculation, or in the world of *technai*. On the contrary, in moral action, consistently with the principles of the traditional Greek *paideia*, it was considered more compelling the strength of the irrational drives in making the moral choice between several possible alternatives, so that the emotional part of the soul was regarded as the main factor in ethical life, as the summarize of the sophistic *paideia* in Plato's *Protagoras* testifies⁹. It is just in the weak function attributed to reason by the traditional pattern of education that Socrates indicated the major insufficiency of traditional ethics in helping men to face the

7. See G. VLASTOS, *Socrates, ironist and moral philosopher*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, ch. IV, *Elenchus and Mathematics*.

8. Cf. PLATO, *Charmides*, 164c-167e; *Laches*, 159d; *Protagoras*, 352b-356c. In Socrates' concern, *praxis* should be not anymore regarded as a simple association of ethical *habiti*, transmitted to men by virtue of a merely emotional kind of *paideia*, but the *praxis* should be considered as the lucid rational consciousness, displayed by men, of the moral value present in all choices they make. As we have already underlined, this conception is well expressed in Plato's *Protagoras*. So, *praxis* should be regarded, in Socrates' view, as the rational attendance of ethical choices that men make counting on their full comprehension of traditional moral principles. Those intuitions are better defined as ethical axioms, that Socrates and his interlocutors usually agree upon without argument. Moreover, when a thesis contrasts one of them, it is usually abandoned by its author whenever their mutual inconsistency is singled out. It shows the deep connection that the interlocutor was realizing between those axioms and his moral *Weltanschauung*. On these moral axioms, cf. PLATO, *Crito*, 49d; *Laches*, 193c; *Charmides*, 159c-160d; 163a6; 165b9; 171d2; *Protagoras*, 339d; 361b; *Gorgias*, 454e; *Meno*, 83d; *Republic* I, 368. In particular, on the axiom that postulates the equation *areté/kalon*, cf. *Laches*, 175b; 192c5-7; *Charmides*, 159e1; 160b6-13; 169b; 175b; *Protagoras*, 349e3-8; 359e4-5; on the definition of virtue as something good and useful, cf. *Charmides*, 160b6-13; *Protagoras*, 360b3; *Euthydemus*, 279b4-c1. For further textual evidences, cf. F. FILIPPI, *op. cit.*, pp. 308-309.

9. IDEM, *Protagoras*, 324e-326b. It is the greatest manifesto of the classical Greek *paideia*.

moral crisis occurred in the 5th century. Roughly speaking, in Socrates' doctrine theory has been transferred from the abstractedness of cosmological inquiries into the sphere of *praxis*, as the famous sentence by Cicero pictorially pointed out¹⁰. For this reason, as Gigon, claimed, the idea of the pure theoretician is so incompatible with Socrates' life and it has been diminished in its epistemic pretensions by Socrates' speech as reported by Plato's *Apology*¹¹.

The roots of the philosophical adjustment performed by Socrates of some essential concepts, as knowledge and method applied to moral action, lay in the notion of *anthropine sophia* itself¹². In order to express the core of this new kind of wisdom, that Socrates explicitly vindicates to himself and that is basically coinciding with his revised concept of *phronesis*, it is important to take into account the qualification of this knowledge as we can find it expressed in Plato's *Apology*. It is just in the sharp contrast with the remaining branches of knowledge that we can have access to the philosophical core of the Socratic doctrines, since the human wisdom professed by our philosopher and its method, the *elenchus*, constitute the perfect synthesis of the positive value showed by the cosmic philosophy's *theoria* and by the practical dimension of the technical knowledge displayed by craftsmen.

2. Plato's *Apology* and the *Anthropine Sophia* professed by Socrates. In reporting the episode of Delphic oracle¹³, Socrates distinguished and qualified the main branches of the knowledge of his time, in order to give a sharp polemical prominence to the new kind of wisdom he was trying to promote in connection with his renewed conception of the *praxis*. In this way, he started to analyse the two main kinds of *epistemai*, in which knowledge was supposed to accomplish a very fundamental function. In order to defend himself from the first accusation, Socrates has already denied to be concerned with cosmological inquiries and to teach, as well as sophists, how to make stronger the weakest argument¹⁴. The Socratic denial to be interested with cosmic philosophy was based on different reasons, partially supported by sophists too¹⁵. The cosmic inquirers could induce a misleading consideration of the philosophers and especially a dangerous idea about the *episteme* and the rational approach to

10. CICERO, *Tusculanes Disputationes*, V.4.10, who wrote that Socrates «e caelo et in urbibus collocavit [philosophiam], et in domus etiam introduxit e coegit de vita et moribus rebusque bonis et malis quaerere».

11. O. GIGON, *La teoria e i suoi problemi in Platone e Aristotele*, Naples, Bibliopolis 1989, p. 48.

12. PLATO, *Apology*, 20c-e; cf. 23a.

13. *Op. cit.*, 21a-e.

14. *Op. cit.*, 19b-d.

15. Cf. J. KUBE, TEXNH und APETH. *Sophistisches und platonisches Tugendwissen*, Berlin 1969, pp. 76-114.

reality used by them that was supposed to be something heterogeneous and not aimed at daily practical life. This dangerous reduction of the essence of reason only to the intellectual faculty destined to grasp the aitiological principles of the whole universe was generally discrediting the philosophical conception and use of reason. The accusation that Callicles addressed to Socrates and his philosophical conception of moral act and moral life was just depending on the kind of philosophy cultivated by cosmic thinkers¹⁶. On the contrary, Socrates was proposing a kind of philosophy that represented the only form that reason can assume in order to be an effective guidance of men's moral choices, i.e. the only chance that men could really have in order to be happy, according to their nature of rational beings¹⁷. In this sense, philosophy was regarded as the perfect form displayed by the virtue of *phronesis*, as well as the *elenchus* constituted the paradigmatic way of reasoning proper of the philosopher. As Gregory Vlastos pointed out, the peculiarity of Socrates' *anthropine sophia* appears just by contrast with the knowledge searched by Parmenides¹⁸ and Democritus¹⁹. Besides the epistemic optimism of the first thinker and the pessimistic approach towards this goal expressed by the second one, both philosophers thought

16. PLATO, *Gorgias*, 487b. On the state of separation in which those first philosophers were thought to live, it is very explanatory Callicles' denounce of their unjustifiable seclusion from the world of the *praxis*. It is meaningful that Callicles was not contrary to the cultivation of philosophy, but he was conceiving its practice only for educational sake (*Gorgias*, 484c-485a). The reputation of secluded man, devoted only to the solitary contemplation of cosmic realities is as well confirmed by Plato's *Teaetetus*, 172c-d; 175b. So, in both Platonic dialogues, the philosopher is sometimes object of people's derision, and in turn he is sometimes laughing at people's base way of thinking. In this sense, Plato testifies the existence of a stereotyped image of philosopher, that was straining till the extreme consequences the contrast between political *praxis* and philosophical *theoria* (intended as cosmology), regarding them as incompatible. The portrait of the philosopher sketched by Plato is showing a man totally distant from social activities; first of all, because the philosopher is always looking for what is far and he is ignoring what is close (*Teaetetus*, 174a1-2); second, according to Plato, true philosopher is primarily concerned with the generality and the universality; for this reason, he is not interested with the individuality, so that cosmological and ontological distance finally coincide. Consistently, we cannot be surprised if in Plato's view justice was considered as an autonomous idea, that exists besides his insertion in the historical reality and that pleasures fitting to men are the only ones deriving from pure contemplation, as *Philebus* (50e-53c; 59d-64b; 65a-66a) points out. The serious danger of this reputation of abstractedness proper of the philosophers at Socrates' time is pictorially showed by Aristophanes' *Clouds* and, partially by his *Birds* (vv. 1554-1564b ff). Aristophanes represents Socrates as the perfect embodiment of all possible categories of thinkers, from the basest sophist (*Clouds*, vvg. 94-100), to the most ascetic cosmic philosopher (*Clouds*, vv. 227-233) all classified as thieves (*Clouds*, vv. 175; 179; 497), useless and dangerous parasites of athenian society (*Clouds*, vv. 316; 334). In Aristophanes' view their speculation, indiscriminately diffused for the sake of lucre, gave a great contribution to the crisis of ancient Greek tradition.

17. IDEM, *Crito*, 46b-c; *Euthydemus*, 277a-282d; 288d-292c.

18. PARMENIDES, B1 29, in H. Diels-W. Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin, 1952⁶.

19. DEMOCRITUS, B9; B 117, in H. Diels-W. Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin 1952⁶.

philosophical knowledge and truth as systematic, dogmatic and exhaustive; roughly speaking, philosophical doctrine was called to constitute a definitive epistemic possess acquired by men²⁰. Moreover, it is important to say that at Socrates' lifetime, philosophy of nature was still having a strong influence on the athenian *intelligentia*. Xenophanes, Heraclitus and Parmenides, by their sparkling and colossal speculations, tried to give an aitiological explanation of whole universe, indicating in their discoveries and in their philosophical conclusions the eternal laws, which are governing the world. In Plato's *Apology*²¹, Socrates denies to make cosmological inquiries by claiming that he never sought for it and taught such a matter²²; but elsewhere, he expresses his sincere admiration for this branch of philosophical speculation²³, referring by this statement both to the doctrines elaborated by philosophers of nature and to poets' compositions. There is no contradiction between those two affirmations, because the sceptical approach Socrates had towards cosmic philosophy did not lead him to state the necessity to abandon this kind of philosophical inquiries; so the Socratic waring to avoid to loose oneself in sophisticated cosmological debates cannot be interpreted as a sharp condemnation of this research. Socrates simply expected of a rational knowledge to have the same features presented by *technai*, first of all the specific expertise that every craft is forced to display by its own definition. Well aware of the general necessity to have access and to use a competent knowledge in every field and in all practicable activities in human life, Socrates saw the best starting point for his rational qualification of *phronesis* and *praxis*²⁴ in technical knowledge, obliged by its own essence to test its theoretical hypotheses in the concreteness of the application and in the particularity of every determined situation. Notoriously, Socrates was not the first thinker to single out the paradigmatic value showed by *technai* in respect of the political and ethical reflexion; he has been preceeded by the sophists who were already sponsoring a practical knowledge available in the heart of society against the solipsistic and abstract inquiry pursued by cosmological thinkers or expressed by poets²⁵.

In this sense, Socratic position implies the refusal both of the object of cosmological speculations, i.e. the colossal complexity of the whole cosmos, and of the method those cosmic philosophers were using in order to pursue their epistemic goal, reputed by Socrates vainly systematic, dogmatic, exhaustive.

20. Cf. G. VLASTOS, *Socratic Studies*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 56-57.

21. PLATO, *Apology*, 19c.

22. XENOPHON, *Memorabilia*, I.1.11-15; cf. *Mem.*, IV7.

23. *Op. cit.*, I.6.14; cf. *Mem.*, IV.2.1-8.

24. Cf. PLATO, *Laches*, 189e sgg.

25. Cf. J. KUBE, *TEXNH und APETH. Sophistisches und platonisches Tugendwissen*, Berlin 1969, pp. 76-114.

The object of these epistemic aspirations is unattainable. In the interesting page of his *Memorabilia*, Xenophon ascribes to Socrates the same position about cosmological inquiries reported by Plato's *Apology*. In Xenophon's writing Socrates denounced the incapacity showed by the philosophers of the nature for finding a unique solution to their question about the unitary principle designed to explain the essence of the cosmos²⁶. The philosophical work *Peri tou méontos* by Gorgias put itself just in this kind of polemical reaction against cosmological speculation²⁷. As far as he was concerned, Socrates was primarily interested in underlining that the concept of *theoria*, regarded as comprehension and contemplation of the being could really take place only in the *praxis* itself, whenever the most conceptual moments of moral reflexions allow a pure comprehension of the being as *physis* and *aletheia*²⁸.

Therefore, Socrates defines his human wisdom in the light of the epistemic and practical structure of the *technai*. In Plato's *Apology*, every real aspiration to possess true knowledge has been denied to politicians and to poets²⁹. Clearly, Socrates was not revoking into doubt that poetry as authentically wise, but he was primarily interested in underlining the fact that the poets were not really acquainted with their wisdom because their speeches were inspired by gods, and by this fact they could not have at their disposal and use their presumptive wisdom. By these reasons, properly speaking only god can be said wise and only the content of poets' compositions can be considered true wisdom. So, poets are not wise of their wisdom. They are diviners, deprived of their intellectual personality, when they lend their lips to god³⁰. The strict criticism addressed to poets by Socrates shows how strong was his awareness of two necessary features that always should qualify true knowledge: first, the general availability to men and the universal application to concrete situation thanks to its basic tie to existential dimension of human life; second, the essential rationality, since the authenticity and availability of true knowledge necessarily demands the full consciousness of the man who possesses it; otherwise, it cannot be applied, but it will leave men without a moral guidance for their

26. XENOPHON, *Memorabilia*, I.I.10-15.

27. Cf. what G. REALE says about the philosophical value of this Gorgias' writing in his *Storia della filosofia antica*, ed. cit., vol. I, pp. 243-255.

28. As to the *praxis* regarded as the necessary background of every possible theoretical speculation, cf. PLATO, *Laches*, 199d; *Protagoras*, 352d-356c; cf. also XENOPHON, *Memorabilia*, III.9.4; IV.5.1-2; IV.5.11. Finally, cf. H.-G. GADAMER, *Elogio della teoria*, ed. cit., p. 32.

29. PLATO, *Apology*, 21b-22c.

30. As regards the epistemic *status* proper of poets, cf. XENOPHON, *Symposium*, III.6. Cf. also J. KUBE, *op. cit.*, p. 127: «Nachdem so erst einmal festgestellt ist, daß Ions Tätigkeit sich nicht unter den sokratisch-platonischen τέχνη-Begriff subsumieren läßt, weist Sokrates der Rhapsodik das Gebiet der θεία μοῖρα zu. Er geht dabei lediglich vom Vortag, nicht von der Interpretation der Dichtung aus, was eine Verschiebung des Aspekts gegenüber dem bisherigen Verlauf des Dialogs ist».

ethical choices. If Socrates did not find the wisdom he was looking for in the poetry, it means that there is not real knowledge, when its taking place a loss of consciousness³¹. Then, in Plato's *Apology*, Socrates reproaches to Sophists their inability to keep the promises they make to teach young people where lies the virtue of the private and of the citizen³². The only exception we can find in this general criticism addressed to the main branches of his time's knowledge is made by Socrates in favour of the technicians, to whom is effectively recognized the knowledge of the craft they claim to be expert of. The *technai* represent the paradigmatic kind of rational knowledge, fully acquainted with the principles and the final product they aim at, so to make possible to find in their mastery of specific rules and procedures the guarantee of their universal availability. Every *techné* is effectively identified and specified by the object it produces and by the particular kind of techniques it uses to produce it. This sharp specification is at the same time a guarantee of its exclusive and unmatched expertise in respect of any other kind of *techné*, and it constitutes the drastic stop-signal of its aspirations of validity in some other fields of application. The type of object it produces and the techniques it uses draw the strict borders of its validity; if it will go behind them it will get *trivé* and *empeiria*, a kind of irrational practise, *status* that Socrates, in Plato's *Gorgias*, attributes to rhetoric whenever it aspires to promote itself to the high *status* of knowledge of the ends, i.e. knowledge of good and evil, in deeds exclusively mastered by *phronesis*³³. The same warning is addressed by Socrates to all kinds of technicians, as we can see in Plato's *Apology*, when they start to believe that the expertise they have in their well bordered fields allows them to vindicate the same authority and mastery also in a different craft or even in a more elevated and complex kind of knowledge, as it is the knowledge of the ends, i.e. the Socratic *metatechné*, the *anthropine sophia*³⁴.

3. Socrates' *techné* analogy and his idea of praxis. The analogy put by Socrates between his human wisdom and the *technai* deserves a much more detailed analysis, because it is just in this analogy that lies the key for understanding the peculiarity of Socratic philosophy. Very differently from the

31. It is just because of the reasons that allow the Socratic distinction between his human wisdom and the art of poets, that in no way the kind of comparison Socrates was standing with god can be regarded as mystic. In deeds, the mystic knows by revelation, when the Socratic wisdom has to be daily conquered by his elenctic cross-examination of the wrong ethical views supported by his fellow citizens.

32. As we read in PLATO, *Apology*, 20c; *Protagoras*, 319a.

33. PLATO, *Gorgias*, 464c-465a.

34. Cf. IDEM, *Apology*, 22d-e. On the *anthropine sophia* as knowledge of the ends, cf. *infra*, nn. 62-76.

cosmological investigations, *technē* possesses a knowledge immediately and necessarily designed to the concrete application. The concept of *technē* represents the useful knowledge *par excellence*, that presupposes the whole society in its concept, since it is basically destined to make universally available and usable the object that it has to produce. Its performance consists in the application of the abstract principles that rule out its process of production to the unique particularity of the building material that has to be ordered and adjusted according to these principles. In this way, every *technē* implies a universally available knowledge, based on a codified system of principles and rules. We can be led to the core of this analogy by a very topical and complex page of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. In this writing, Socrates starts to expose his view about the question of the respective fields of jurisdiction controlled by divine knowledge and human knowledge. For this sake, he starts from a general distinction between things that are depending on our will and power and other things that are not depending on us, which can be rightly said jurisdiction of gods. In this sense, Socrates affirms the existence of two kinds of actions; the first ones can be qualified as «necessary» and the second ones can be called «indifferent»; the actions of the first kind are to be done as best as possible, while the actions of the second kind are designed to receive, before being decided and accomplished, the *placet* of the oracle and of god just because of their «indifference»³⁵. The most important things in men's life, as the household management and the government of the State, are to be performed under the gods' guidance, whose will and desires will be revealed to men by divination, since those questions require a far-sighted vision that men counting only on their own rational power will never possess. The other necessary things, that must be done as best as possible, will be accomplished by using the *technai* that is possible to learn by study³⁶. However, as Xenophon underlines, the most valuable activities that it is possible to find in the sphere of the *technai* are also to be accomplished under god's guidance. Those important things consist just in the right usage of the products made by *technai*, whose mastery

35. XENOPHON, *Memorabilia*, I, 1.7-10: καὶ τοὺς μέλλοντας οἴκους τε καὶ πόλεις καλῶς οἰκῆσαι μαντικῆς ἔφη προσδεῖσθαι· τεκτονικὸν μὲν γὰρ ἢ χαλκευτικὸν ἢ γεωργικὸν ἢ ἀνθρώπων ἀρχικὸν ἢ τῶν τοιούτων ἔργων ἐξεταστικὸν ἢ λογιστικὸν ἢ οἰκονομικὸν ἢ στρατηγικὸν γενέσθαι, πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα μαθήματα καὶ ἀνθρώπου γνώμη αἰρετὰ ἐνόμιζεν εἶναι· τὰ δὲ μέγιστα τῶν ἐν τούτοις ἔφη τοὺς θεοὺς ἑαυτοῖς καταλείπεσθαι, ὧν οὐδὲν δῆλον εἶναι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις. οὔτε γὰρ τῷ καλῶς ἀγρὸν φυτευσαμένῳ δῆλον ὅστις καρπώσεται, οὔτε τῷ καλῶς οἰκίαν οἰκοδομησαμένῳ δῆλον ὅστις ἐνοικήσει, τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐστί, πειρᾶσθαι διὰ μαντικῆς παρὰ τῶν θεῶν πυνθάνεσθαι· τοὺς θεοὺς γὰρ οἷς ἂν ὧσιν ἰλεῶ σημαίνειν. Ἀλλὰ μὲν ἐκεῖνός γε αἰεὶ μὲν ἦν ἐν τῷ φανερῷ· πρῶ τε γὰρ εἰς τοὺς περιπάτους καὶ τὰ γυμνάσια ἦει καὶ πληθούσης ἀγορᾶς ἐκεῖ φανερός ἦν, καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν αἰεὶ τῆς ἡμέρας ἦν ὅπου πλείστοις μέλλοι συνέσεσθαι· καὶ ἔλεγε μὲν ὡς τὸ πολὺ, τοῖς δὲ βουλομένοις ἐξῆν ἀκούειν.

36. *Op. cit.*, I.1.18.

transcends the power of direction and prevision possessed by the *homo faber*. So, in this page by Xenophon, Socrates makes an explicit distinction between good and man just on the ground of their respective spheres of influence, in which each one of them in proportion to the knowledge-power possessed, vindicates his control. It will pertain to the sphere of human influence the field of the *technai*, but not also the mastery of the ultimate ends to what their products are theoretically designed; on the contrary, to gods, who have a far-sighted vision of actions, will belong the jurisdiction of the most important human activities such as the household management and the government of the State, as well as the knowledge of the furthest consequences deriving from the *technai*'s activities. So, the ultimate ends will always be jurisdiction of gods, but it will be duty of men the management of the *factum hic et nunc*. Therefore, men will be said foolish and profane if they will ask gods for help regarding what they could do counting on their own power and study, as much as foolish will be regarded those men who will think to be able to manage some activities that demand the far-sighted knowledge of gods. This is the position of the problem as we find it expressed in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*³⁷.

In summary, we can say that in the light of the parameters that human wisdom has to satisfy, in order to help men to live according to their nature and their hope of happiness, it is confirmed that neither the cosmological speculation nor the divine mania of poets can aspire to this *status*. But, as we have just learned, very different is the epistemic *status* proper of the *technai*. Each *techne* distinguishes itself from the others by the object it produces, the means it uses for the sake of this production and the end it has to pursue³⁸. The perfect knowledge and mastery of each of these moments will guarantee the qualification of expert to the man capable to possess them in a specific craft³⁹. As we said, *techne*

37. These statements by Xenophon aim to show the essential limitations that affect the *homo faber*, regarded as opposite to the kind of philosopher such as Socrates, who is all the time realizing his finitude and his need to make a constant reference to the ancient Greek tradition. Naturally, the tradition, metaphorically expressed by gods' image, has to be regarded according to Socrates' view as a kind of rational interlocutor that the men, by their *common sense*, have to appeal to.

38. J. KUBE, *op. cit.*, p. 128: «Jeder τέχνη ist ein besonderer gegenstand als Bezug eigen, dessen genaue Kenntnis sowie die der Möglichkeiten des Vorgehens kein Mensch gleichzeitig von allen τέχναι, besitzen kann. Die τέχναι sind damit isoliert und existieren selbständig nebeneinander, wobei sie Aufgaben erfüllen, deren Sinn aus ihnen selbst nicht ohne weiteres hervorgeht». Questa radicale distinzione esistente tra le varie τέχναι specialistiche costituisce un'ulteriore garanzia della vera competenza dell'esperto in ognuna di esse.

39. P. WOODRUFF, *Plato's Early Theory of Knowledge*, in Benson H., *Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates*, Oxford University Press, New York-Oxford, 1992, pp. 93-95, shows the following qualifications as the main parameters on the ground of which it is possible to evaluate the level of expertise possessed by a craftsman in a specific *techne*: 1) the teaching received about this field of knowledge (*Euthyphro*, 16a; *Laches*, 185b; *Gorgias*, 514a-c; *Meno*, 90b); 2) the ability to reach the end which the *techne* aims at (*Laches*, 185e9 sgg.); c) the capacity to teach this *techne* to somebody

implies the immediate projection on the government and dominion of the thing. On one side, *techne* is mastery of what is going to be produced, that has to be adjusted according to a particular order determined by strict application of specific rules and procedural techniques. On the other side, *techne* is a knowledge that works as a guidance able to specify which are the right means to reach its specific end; finally, it is the knowledge that aims at the application just for the sake of its own perfection. In this way, *techne* implies the knowledge that is not specified by an *a priori* object and method, but that is structuring itself in connection with the most fundamental needs of human existence; for this reason, *techne* can rightly aim at acquiring its proper perfection. Finally, *techne* is a knowledge that is analogous and different depending on the several crafts and skills, in which all the time a particular ability and power get aware of themselves in a complex of well determined and mutually connected rules. In this way *techne* looks like something radically different from the simple practice, ἐμπειρία, and from the mere ability, τριβή⁴⁰.

Now, let us come back to the page by Xenophon we have just analysed, that is concerned with the epistemic mastery essentially belonging to men and that also in Plato's *Apology* is ascribed to the world of *technai*. Xenophon puts a genuinely Socratic border to this kind of knowledge, underlining that the product of *technai* cannot be mastered by its producer. This is the limitation *par excellence* showed by every *techne*. In this way, while indicating in the concept of *techne* the paradigmatic reference term of every knowledge that aspires to be practical, at the same time, by underlining its important limitation, Socrates is clearly putting the *anthropine sophia* on a superior level in comparison with the world of the crafts. The intrinsic insufficiency of the concept of *techne* consists in its ability to produce its own object, but inflicted by its inability to guarantee that the usage that will be done of it will be the best and the most convenient; in other words, it cannot control the achievement of the end for the sake of that that object has been produced. So, *techne* does not exist for its own sake, because it does not possess the reason of its own existence nor the reason of the object it produces. The *technikos* produces an object for the sake of an usage that he is totally unable to control and to guarantee. In this way, in order to perform the right usage of the products of a *techne*, it will be necessary a sort of *supreme techne designed* «to produce» the right usage of the things, i.e. the application of the right means to the right ends⁴¹. For this reason, as Socrates says in Plato's *Apology*, if the craftsmen,

else (*Protagora, passim*); d) the exclusive expertise in a specific *techne* (*Ion*, 541e; *Gorgias*, 447c; 448e; 450b; 455b; 456a); finally, e) the perfect knowledge of the object the *techne* refers to.

40. Cf. J. KUBE, *op. cit.*, p. 112. Cf. PLATO, *Gorgias*, 463b.

41. As to this kind of supreme *Techne* that should manage the right usage of the subordinate *technai*'s products in order to fulfill men's material needs, cf. P. WOODRUFF, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

because they possess the knowledge of their own *technai*, will think to be wise even concerning the most important matters a man is called to face, like the question regarding the way in which men ought to live, this foolish aspiration will disqualify even their real technical knowledge⁴². The same limitations of the *techne* are discussed in Plato's *Charmides*. In this dialogue the meaningful object of the philosophical quest is the definition of *sophrosyne*. First of all, when Critias was very close to discover the correct definition of this virtue, by saying that the *sophrosyne* is the «knowledge of good and evil», Socrates answered that it was since quite long time that the discussion was going on without results, just waiting for his statement; in deeds it is not the life guided by whatever kind of knowledge that can help men to be happy, nor is the good luck, but it is prerogative of only one kind of knowledge to accomplish this basic function, i.e. that one really concerned with the knowledge of good and evil, of just and unjust, of beautiful and ugly⁴³. The knowledge of good and evil

42. PLATO, *Apology*, 22d-e.

43. IDEM, *Charmides*, 174b. According to H. GUNDERT, *Didaktik und Dialog. Zur Struktur des platonischen Dialogs*, Amsterdam, Verlag B.R., 1971, pp. 22-23, the analogy put between Socratic human wisdom and the *techne* is the main cause of the aporetic issue of Socrates' encounter with Critias. On one side, this superior *Techne*, destined to produce the right usage of goods, will never constitute a kind of perfect *summa* of the specialistic knowledge proper of all *technai*, that would be logically absurd and humanly impossible. But this human wisdom cannot be a «knowledge of knowledge», regarded as an empty reflexivity, because by its own definition it has to possess, as every other kind of *techne*, its peculiar object, a method and the adequate means for producing it. The same definition that has been proposed of it as «knowledge of good and evil» has been criticized because unable to grasp the true essence of Socratic human wisdom: knowledge of good and evil cannot exhaust its concept in an empty reflexion on what the subordinate *technai* already presuppose, but it has to be on the contrary a kind of hermeneutical dialectics, i.e. the concrete knowledge of good and evil always inserted in the peculiarity of the existential situation in which men have to live. Those pages by Gundert are so explanatory as regards this difficult passage of *Charmides*, that we think useful to report some part of them (*Ibidem*, p. 26): «Eben diese Aporie ihres Wovon (τίνος) verweist aber zugleich auf die andere: wozu sie gut ist (171d ff.). Selbst wenn sie möglich wäre, würde sie, wie jede *Techne*, auf ihre Sache beschränkt, nämlich das Erkennen von Wissen und Nichtwissen, nur technische Fehlerlosigkeit bewirken, aber nicht darüber befinden können, ob das, was jede *Techne* macht, gut und förderlich ist. Das könnte nur die Wissenschaft vom Guten und Schlechten. Wie im *Laches* wird zwar an der früheren Position festgehalten, daß die «Selbsterkenntnis» ohne eigenen Gegenstand, also auch nicht Wissen des Guten, und darum ohne Nutzen sei; in Wahrheit widerspricht das der Grundhypothese (2) und erweist sich damit implizit die Einzeltugend *Sophrosyne* ebenso als «Wissen des Guten und Schlimmen» überhaupt wie im *Laches* die Tapferkeit. Was hier auf dem Niveau der *Elenktik* nach der Analogie partieller *Technai* künstlich getrennt wird, reflexiv-kritische Universalwissenschaft und Wissen des Guten, sind in Wirklichkeit ein und dasselbe: die Dialektik. Zu verstehen ist das freilich nur mit Hilfe der Aufklärung, die die *Politeia* im 6. Und 7. Buch gibt: nur die Dialektik kann das Seiende, vom dem die einzelnen *Technai* je einen Sachbereich erfassen, im ganzen erkennen und damit zugleich in kritischer Reflexivität ihr eigenes und jedes partielle Wissen prüfen, weil sie allein vom dem Grund ausgeht, in dem das seiende und das Erkennen selbst bergündet sind und von dem aus alles Sein, Erkennen und Tun seinen Rang und Sinn erhält». In this way, in Socrates'

is not to be conceived as an epistemic expertise between the others; its *differentia specifica* cannot lay in a kind of empty reflexivity, as Critias would like to state, because such a kind of knowledge would not have any utility for men who possess it, while *sophrosyne* is the useful knowledge *par excellence*. The knowledge of good and evil has a peculiar object, just the good and evil, considered not as abstracts ideas, but as general principles whose content has all the times to be found in their applications to the particularity of the moral situation, so to produce the best moral choice. This knowledge does not lay in opposition to the world of *technai*; on the contrary, it constitutes the most original and radical knowledge, designed to justify and to find all other kinds of knowledge, guaranteeing the correct usage of their products and the justice of the ends that they are designed to reach. The necessity of this knowledge is underlined by Plato's *Lysis*, where Socrates, in the attempt to define the concept of *philia*, says that a friend is friend of this friend for the sake of a further friendly thing, as it happens in emblematic way in the field of medicine, where the sick man is friend of the physician because of his sickness and for the sake of this health⁴⁴. Medicine is defined a friendly thing for the sake of the health that it is able to produce, since its being friend depends on its ability to be friend for the sake of a friendly something else. Socrates asks if, in turn, the health itself is friend for the sake of something else; having received a positive answer, Socrates asks if it is still possible to continue this infinite regression or we have finally to arrive to a principle that will not be anymore friend for the sake of something else, but it will be a kind a *proton philon* for the sake of what we say that all friend things are friend⁴⁵. Denying in this way the possibility of an infinite ontological regression, Socrates shows that in order to make the *technes* products used as correctly as possible, it is necessary to have a clear knowledge of the ultimate end that it is just and worthy pursuing, in respect of what the products of every *techne* will always constitute the intermediate ends. In this way, the ultimate end will be the proper object of the knowledge of good and evil, that *Charmides* was discussing about. Therefore, the *technai* will be morally *neuter* if regarded as simple productive crafts, even though they could receive a negative connotation if the products of their abilities would be used without the guidance of a moral expert knowledge⁴⁶. In Plato's *Euthydemus*

view the concept of virtue will imply the knowledge of good and evil, the essence of what is basically dialectical and finds its ground in the Socratic *docta ignorantia*.

44. PLATO, *Lysis*, 218e.

45. *Op. cit.*, 219c-d.

46. In the ability free of moral guidance we can find the suggestive concept of *deindēs*. *Deindēs* in the man who possesses a smart intelligence, i.e. ability to choose the most effective means in order to achieve a determined end, but his ability is not guided by any moral knowledge, so in Greek language *deinos* literally means «terrible», very dangerous kind of person. Cf. PLATO, *Gorgias*, 463b-c; 451a-d.

those concepts find a clear formulation just in the words Socrates addresses to the young Clinias. Talking about all kinds of good which are able to make men's life pleasant, one says that good luck is the main issue of knowledge, because is bringing men good luck all the time, since knowledge cannot be mistaken, but by definition it is destined to work all the time effectively⁴⁷. Therefore, who really wants to be happy does not have simply to possess all these goods, but he has also to be able to use them, otherwise he will not reach any benefit from possessing them; anyway, it will be worse, if one will use something not justly, than if he will not use it at all: the first kind of usage is evil, the second case is neither a good nor a evil⁴⁸. Finally, regarding the usage of goods like wealth, health and beauty, their correct usage will demand a knowledge able to guide and direct the action⁴⁹; such a knowledge gives men not only good luck, but also the possibility to accomplish the good usage of every ability and action⁵⁰. Therefore, it does not exist any benefit in possessing goods without intelligence and wisdom⁵¹. In this way, there are not goods in themselves⁵², but they could be as such only by their right usage determined by the guidance of the knowledge of the ends. Finally, Socrates and his respondents claim that it is necessary philosophizing, because philosophy implies the acquisition of knowledge⁵³ that is useful *par excellence*, just because it knows the primary sense of the useful, by virtue of what it is able to make useful all other kind of goods. According to Socrates, even if we were able to know how to get gold from stones, such a knowledge would be superfluous, because we would not be able to use the gold so to benefit ourselves. No knowledge that is able to produce something can be useful, if it is not at the same time able to use well its products⁵⁴. So, the knowledge that Socrates is looking for is that particular kind of wisdom that is not only able to produce, but even able to use in right and useful way all its products⁵⁵. In the

47. PLATO, *Euthydemus*, 280a.

48. *Op. cit.*, 281a: πρὸς Διός, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὄφελός τι τῶν ἄλλων κτημάτων ἄνευ φρονήσεως καὶ σοφίας; ἄρά γε ἂν ὄναιτο ἄνθρωπος πολλὰ κεκτημένος καὶ πολλὰ πράττων νοῦν μὴ ἔχων, ἢ μᾶλλον ὀλίγα νοῦν ἔχων; ὥδε δὲ σκόπει· οὐκ ἐλάττω πράττων ἐλάττω ἂν ἐξαμαρτάνοι, ἐλάττω δὲ ἁμαρτάνων ἦττον ἂν κακῶς πράττοι, ἦττον δὲ κακῶς πράττων ἄθλιος ἦττον ἂν εἴη;

49. *Ibid.*, 281b.

50. *Ibid.*, 281b.

51. *Ibid.*, 281b.

52. *Ibid.*, 281d.

53. *Ibid.*, 281d.

54. *Ibid.*, 289a-b.

55. *Ibid.*, 289b. Cf. H. GUNDERT, *op. cit.*, p. 33: «Die erste Aufgabe ist, die führende *Episteme* von den untergeordneten partiellen *Technai* zu scheiden, und das geschieht hier nicht implizit-aporetisch, sondern explizit-positiv in zwei Schritten. Erstens von ihrer Funktion her: alle andern *Epistemai* dienen dazu, etwas herzustellen oder Hergestelltes zu gebrauchen, in dieser leitenden

case of *technai*, he says, the craft that produces and the craft that uses the product are sharply distinguished, even though referring to the same object⁵⁶. At the end of the dialogue, we see definitively clarified the *status* of this Socratic knowledge that is not to be substituted to another kind of knowledge, as it was a specific knowledge among the others, and it cannot simply be added or joined to the other kinds of expertises, but it is designed to be *superposed* to all kinds of technical masteries by virtue of its radicality and originality⁵⁷. Besides this difference, technical knowledge is anyway the main *analogon* in respect of the Socratic *anthropine sophia*⁵⁸; even though the human wisdom presents a peculiar originality that founds the possibility itself of the world of the *technai*, we can see that something similar happens to the craftsman, who is going to apply his knowledge to the building material, and to the man who is going to make an ethical decision. The last one also possesses a general knowledge and he is going to apply it to a determined moral situation. The general knowledge that he is going to apply is the one he has acquired by *paidéia*, the spiritual formation that every man receives during his youth and by which he possesses a general knowledge about the just and correct way of acting and living⁵⁹. The formation of man finds its main and original agents of education in the tradition and in the language themselves, by virtue of what men know *ab ovo* the general moral coordinates destined to orient him in the world⁶⁰. In this sense, the ethical decision consists in finding what is right in a peculiar situation, holding as general moral view just this kind of ethical

Episteme aber müssen Machen und Gerbrauchen zusammenfallen (298b). Was das bedeutet, wird erst nachher deutlich. Die zweite Abhebung von den sonstigen *Technai* geschieht in einer architektonischen Stufung (289b6 sgg.), bei der eine *Episteme* ihren Gebrauch jeweils einer höheren übergibt, bis als leitende Kunst des richtigen Gebrauchs die «königliche Kunst» herauskommt, in der, nach einem Wink des Dialogs, Dialektik und Politik sich zu vereinigen scheinen».

56. PLATO, *Euthydemus*, 289c.

57. *Op. cit.*, 291a-292e. Cf. H. GUNDERT, *op. cit.*, p. 33: «Diese Zirkel ist die zentrale, höchste Aporie, in die die Frage nach der Tugend als dem Wissen des Guten auf dem Niveau der Frühdialoge mündet. Was sie erschließt, ist zweierlei: erstens jene Reflexivität der Dialektik als Wissen des Guten (*ἐπιστήμη ἀγαθοῦ*), auf das schon der Charmides geführt hatte und das hier damit gekennzeichnet wird, daß darin Machen und Gebrauchen zusammenfallen; daran zeigt sich, daß das Werk dieser Kunst nicht ein Etwas ist, das sie erkennt, herstellt oder gebraucht, sondern der Mensch selbst, die Seele, ihr Denken und Handeln: im Denken und Wissen macht sie einen besser und das heißt zugleich, daß sein wissendes Handeln wieder andere im Lernen besser macht».

58. On the recurrent analogy with the *technai* in Socratic arguments, cf. XENOPHON, *Mem.*, I.2.37-38: εἰ δὲ μή, φυλάττου ὅπως μή καὶ τὸ ἐλάττους τὰς βούς ποιήσης ἔνθα καὶ ὁῦλον ἐγένετο ὅτι ἀπαγγελθέντος αὐτοῖς τοῦ περὶ τῶν βούων λόγου ὠργίζοντο τῷ Σωκράτει.

59. On the meaningful concept of *Bildung*, cf. H.-G. GADAMER, *Elogio della teoria*, ed. cit., pp. 47-48, and F. Filippi, *op. cit.*, p. 288 n. 4, and pp. 312-313.

60. In Socrates' view, man is deeply tied to the historical situation in which he lives, as much as to the tradition he belongs to, as we learn from PLATO, *Apology*, 28e-30e; 33b-c; 34d, and from the famous prosopopoeia of the Laws in PLATO, *Crito*, 50c-54c.

intuitions reached by tradition through the language and the *praxis* itself, designed to be applied to the concrete existential situation⁶¹. This situation will constitute the material to interpret and to order in the light of general knowledge that every man is more or less gifted with.

Those are the main considerations that make highly explicative the analogy put by Socrates between his human wisdom and the *techne*. However, even though both of them are regarded as forms of applied knowledge, three further differences distinguishes human wisdom, the *phronesis*, from the technical knowledge⁶², so to make impossible to state a total identity between them.

Following Martin Heidegger⁶³, a serious limitation of this analogy could be found in the impossible similarity between what a man does of himself in relation to the type of person he is called to become and the craftsman who decides according to his desires and expectations, consistently with a previously conceived plan, what he has to do of his building material. Human wisdom cannot be reduced to technical knowledge because a man cannot have himself at his full disposal as well as the technician can use his material⁶⁴. Moreover, it is possible to learn a craft as well as to forget it. This possibility to which every *techne* is open underlines its accidental *status* in comparison with the human wisdom, that is the essential knowledge that every man since always possesses and uses, because of his being all the time in the necessity to act and to make a moral decision. Roughly speaking, not every man needs to know how to make some products, but everybody has to know how they ought to live in order to be happy, i.e. everybody needs to know in what the ultimate end consists in order to make the just moral choices concerning the intermediate goods they are going to acquire⁶⁵.

Another difference designed to distinguish technical knowledge from ethical

61. On this strong connection between the best way of living and the philosophical formation received, cf. PLATO, *Crito*, 46b-c; *Euthyphro*, 7d; *Laches*, 187e-188c; *Gorgias*, 500c.

62. On the impossible reduction of *phronesis* to a mere technical knowledge, cf. also H.-G. GADAMER, *The Idea of the Good*, ed. cit., pp. 34-40.

63. H.-G. GADAMER, *Martin Heidegger e la teologia di Marburg*, in *Ermeneutica e metodica universale*, italian edition by Umberto Margiotta, Genoa, Marietti, 1973, pp. 241-258.

64. On this awareness depends the disapproval of *paideia* professed by Socrates; in deeds, he was conceiving his philosophical teaching as a maieutic help (PLATO, *Teatetus*, 148e-151d; cf. *Meno*, 81e-85d) to bring to the light of consciousness a knowledge already possessed by men; on the Socratic elenctic dialogue regarded as spiritual formation of man, cf. PLATO, *Sophist*, 229e-230e; on the Socratic disapproval of *paideia*, at least in respect of the educational training as it was regarded at his time, cf. PLATO, *Apology*, 33a-33c; *Laches*, 186d-e; XENOPHON, *Mem.* I.2.3; IV.1.3-5. As to that, cf. also G. VLASTOS, *Socratic Studies*, ed. cit., p. 317. On Socratic conception of his philosophical *paideia*, cf. PLATO, *Euthyphro*, 3d-e. Finally, cf. F.M. BURNYEAT, *Socratic Midwifery. Platonic Inspiration*, in *Knowledge*, in Benson H., *Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates*, Oxford University Press, New York-Oxford, 1992, pp. 53-59.

65. Cf. PLATO, *Euthydemus*, 277a-282d; 288d-292c.

wisdom is concerned with the differences existing between the respective concepts of application. First of all, we have to underline that it is possible to apply only the knowledge that one possesses. In this sense, the craftsman applies the *eidos* of the object he wants to produce to the building material that he uses; in analogical way, man should apply the *eidos* of the type of person he wants to become and that he should be according to what laws prescribe and to what social customs and education are exhorting him to become. If the craftsman possesses a previous knowledge, already completed, that has simply to be mechanically transferred and applied to the building material, according to the project that the craftsman has elaborated and exactly as it was conceived, the technical production will not be perfectly accomplished whenever its object will not present all the qualities previewed by the craftman, i.e. whenever the process of production will undergo to some modifications that will inflict the original conception of the product because of some disturbing factors, e.g. the inadequacy of the building material or the inadequate working conditions, etc.; in this way, the craftsman will have the less valuable product. On the contrary, ethical knowledge will just find in its altered and deviated application in respect of the previous moral knowledge, already possessed by the agent, the increase of its conceptual richness and the progression towards the perfection of its theoretical knowledge. The more concrete the moral situation to which has to be applied the possessed ethical wisdom will demand a wider articulation in order to fit the complexity of the existential *hic et nunc*, the more this knowledge will enrich itself by trying to elaborate a more comprehensive moral knowledge able to understand and to guide the men whatever moral choice they have to make. Moreover, we can say that the end pursued by every craft always consists in a modification of the external nature in order to fulfill human needs; its *eidos*, the *agathon* pursued by *techne*, is clearly evident and well determined since the beginning of its productive process. On the contrary, in the field of ethics, behind the provisional end that every man accomplishes by his specific daily choices, there is always a further end still pressing for being accomplished, that will lead him to his final end consisting in the particular kind of happiness that men are designed to acquire. So the *agathon* pursued by ethics cannot be so clear, i.e. it will not be so intelligible and determinable as much as the one pursued by craft, since ethical *agathon* always consists in the attempt to overcome the natural resistance of men's basic inclinations; so its production, the morally just action, it is not so ostensible and available to public demonstration⁶⁶. Finally, as Aristotle claims in his *Nichomachean Ethics*⁶⁷, we are simply used to demand the crafts that their products have to be consistent

66. O. GIGON, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.

67. ARISTOTE, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1105 a 26-b 9.

with the original project as it was planned by the craftsman and that they have to be functional. On the contrary, concerning the ethical conduct we ask much more; in fact, a man has always to be fully conscient of what is doing; second, he has to perform his moral action according to his free will; finally, he has to be totally sure of the ethical values implied by his choices. In summary, the means used by a craft are conceived only on the ground of their instrumental efficacy, when the means used by moral wisdom in order to accomplish the chosen actions by moral deliberation are all the time analysed and adjusted again so to make them fitting to the particular situation in which a man is designed to act. Therefore, in the case of *technai*, the agent is simply an expert who masters the production of its peculiar objects, so that he has the ability to use certain means in order to produce a certain good; in the case of the ethical knowledge, justice of whole life is demanded and also the justice of the means used to pursue the moral end, conceived as the intermediate steps that work for the achievement of the ultimate end. In this constant obligation to choose the just means to the right and consists the freedom and the responsibility of moral conscience. The core of the question regarding the difference between *techne* and *phronesis* fundamentally lay in the fact that we do not have anticipatively knowledge of the just means adequate to pursue our moral ends, because the ends themselves are not clearly determined since the beginning by our moral reflexion⁶⁸.

In this sense, the analogy drawn by Socrates between *techne* and *anthropine sophia* aims at showing the core of moral knowledge as a universally available practical wisdom, the useful knowledge *par excellence*, universal as only the knowledge of ultimate ends can aspire to be. From *techne* it borrowed the universal rationality and the constant availability in whatever controverted moral situation a man can happen to act; from *techne* human wisdom differs because of its more original and radical nature that guides the use of the products made by the several *technai*.

Francesca FILIPPI
(FREIBURG)

68. H.-G. GADAMER, *Il problema ermeneutico e l'etica di Aristotele*, in *Il problema della coscienza storica*, Guida Naples, 1969, p. 71.

Η ΣΩΚΡΑΤΙΚΗ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΝΗ ΣΟΦΙΑ ΚΑΙ Η ΕΝΝΟΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΤΕΧΝΗΣ.
ΟΜΟΙΟΤΗΤΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΔΙΑΦΟΡΕΣ.

Π ε ρ ί λ η ψ η

Ἡ προσωπικότητα τοῦ Σωκράτη ἐπισφραγίζει τὴν πολιτιστικὴ καὶ πολιτικὴ κίνηση ποὺ τάραξε τὴν κοινωνικο-οικονομικὴ ἰσορροπία τῆς Ἀθήνας κατὰ τὸν 5ο αἰ. π.Χ. Τὰ θέματα ποὺ σηματοδοτοῦν τὴν ἐποχὴ τοῦ εἶναι πρακτικά καὶ πολιτικά, ἐνῶ καὶ ὁ ἴδιος προσπάθησε νὰ ἀλλάξει τὴ ζωὴ τῶν πολιτῶν. Ὁ Σωκράτης θεώρησε ἀπαραίτητο νὰ καλλιεργήσῃ μίαν νέα θεώρηση τοῦ κόσμου σὲ σχέση μὲ μίαν νέα ἀντίληψη γιὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπο, περισσότερο συμβατὴ μὲ τὴν πνευματικὴ ἀλλαγὴ τῆς ἐποχῆς. Ἡ δημιουργία αὐτῆς τῆς νέας *Weltanschauung*, δὲν ἦταν δυνατόν νὰ τελειοποιηθεῖ μὲ τοὺς φιλοσόφους τῆς φύσεως, οἱ ὅποιοι εἶχαν βρεθεῖ σὲ κατάσταση ἀδιεξόδου καὶ ἀπέρριπταν ἀλληλοαμφισβητούμενοι τὶς ὑποθέσεις περὶ κόσμου. Ὁ Σωκράτης, ὑπῆρξε ἐρμηνευτὴς τῆς πνευματικῆς ἀναρχίας καὶ τῆς προοδευτικῆς ἀποσύνθεσης τῶν ἀρχέγονων θέσεων περὶ ἠθικῆς συμπεριφορᾶς στὴν ὁποία εἶχε περιέλθει ἡ Ἀθήνα, στὴν ὁποία νόμοι, παράδοση καὶ θρησκεία, εἶχαν ἐμφανῶς ἀμφισβητηθεῖ ἀπὸ τὴ σοφιστικὴ. Διότι ἡ «τεχνοκρατικὴ» θεώρηση τοῦ κοινωνικοῦ βίου, ἐνέδιδε σὲ ἓνα ὄραμα ἰσχυρὰ ὀργανωτικὸ τοῦ ἐταιρικοῦ βίου καί, ἰδιαίτερα, σὲ ἓναν ἐμφανὲ ἀτομικισμό στὸ πεδίο τῆς ἠθικῆς, ἐπικυρώνοντας, διὰ τῆς πρωταγορικῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ *μέτρον ἄνθρωπος*, κάθε εἶδους πράξη, τῆς ὁποίας τελικὸ ζητούμενο ἦταν ἡ νομιμοποίηση ὁποιασδήποτε ἐπιθυμίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

Σὲ ἀντίθεση μὲ τὰ παραπάνω, ὁ Σωκράτης εἶχε τὴν πεποίθηση ὅτι ἡ παραγωγικὴ δύναμη τοῦ ἀνθρώπου-τεχνίτη (*homo faber*), δὲν ἦταν δυνατόν ν' ἀποτελέσει ἀπάντηση στὶς ἀνασφάλειες ποὺ δημιουργοῦνταν στοὺς συμπολίτες τοῦ ἀπὸ αὐτὲς τὶς νέες ἠθικὲς συμπεριφορές. Ἐκεῖνος πίστευε ὅτι οἱ πράξεις τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὀφείλαν, νὰ ἀνάγονται σὲ ἓνα εἶδος σοφίας, βασισμένης στὸ μέτρο ἀνάμεσα στὶς ἐπιταγὲς τῆς παραδεδομένης ἠθικῆς, ἡ ὁποία ἀπὸ μόνη της δὲν ἔμοιαζε πλέον νὰ βρῖσκεται σὲ σημεῖο ὥστε νὰ κατευθύνει τὸν ἄνθρωπο στοὺς καθημερινοὺς ἠθικοὺς προβληματισμοὺς του, καὶ στὶς νέες ἀπαιτήσεις τῶν καιρῶν, ποὺ ἔθεταν σὲ πρῶτο ἐπίπεδο τὴν αὐτονομία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατὰ τὶς πρακτικὲς τοῦ ἐπιλογές. Συνδέοντας τὴν σωκρατικὴ προβληματικὴ ὑπὸ τὸ φῶς τῶν δεδομένων τῆς ἐρμηνευτικῆς ὄντολογίας τοῦ H.-G. Gadamer, παρατηρεῖται ἡ διαρκὴς προσπάθεια τοῦ Σωκράτη νὰ βρεῖ ἓναν τύπο σοφίας ὥστε νὰ ὑποδείξῃ στὸν ἄνθρωπο τὸν τρόπο μὲ τὸν ὁποῖο θὰ ἦταν καλλίτερα νὰ ζήσει. Ἡ προσπάθεια αὕτὴ δέχεται τὶς δονήσεις τοῦ ἰδίου τοῦ *τεχνικοῦ βίου*, ὁ ὁποῖος διὰ τῆς γνώσεως τῆς αἰτίας καὶ διὰ τῆς σημαντικῆς ροπῆς πρὸς συγκεκριμένη ἐφαρμογή, θὰ πρέπει νὰ δημιουργεῖ τὸ πρότυπο ἀναφορᾶς κάθε πρακτικῆς γνώσεως. Παρατηροῦμε ὅμως ὅτι ὁ Σωκράτης καταγγέλλει τὰ τεράστια ὅρια τῆς τέχνης ἡ ὁποία σὲ πείσμα τῆς παραγωγικῆς δύναμης ποὺ εἶναι σὲ θέση νὰ ἀναπτύξῃ,

δέν μπορεί νά οικειοποιηθεῖ τόν ρόλο τῆς πραγματικῆς γνώσης πού προσανατολίζει τίς πράξεις τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Ἡ τέχνη, ἐν τέλει, δέν διαθέτει ὅρια μέσα στά ὁποῖα πρέπει νά τοποθετοῦνται τὰ πράγματα πού παράγει. Ἡ τέχνη εἶναι μόνο γνώση πράξης ὄχι ὁμως καί καθοδήγησης. Ἀντίθετα, ἡ φιλοσοφική γνώση τοῦ Σωκράτη, δηλαδή ἡ δική του ἀνθρώπινη σοφία, παρουσιάζει ὅλα τὰ χαρακτηριστικά τῆς ἀληθοῦς ἠθικῆς ἐπιστήμης. Πράγματι, ἀφ' ἐνός προϋποθέτει ὡς βασικό της σημεῖο, τήν ἐφαρμογή τῶν δικῶν του ἀντιλήψεων περὶ ἠθικῆς, τὰ ὁποῖα κάθε ἄνθρωπος καλεῖται νά ἐπιλέξει. Ἀφ' ἐτέρου ὁμως, ἀντίθετα ἀπὸ τὴν τέχνη πού κατέχει μόνο τὴ γνώση τῶν μέσων καὶ τοῦ εἶδους τὸ ὁποῖο παράγει, ἡ ἀνθρώπινη σοφία γνωρίζει καὶ τὸν σκοπὸ γιὰ τὸν ὁποῖο τὰ ὀργανικὰ ἀγαθὰ τῶν τεχνῶν ὀφείλουν νά δημιουργοῦνται, οὕτως ὥστε μία δεδομένη πράξη νά ἀποβεῖ πράγματι χρήσιμη στὸν ἄνθρωπο. Ἡ ἐπιστήμη τοῦ τέλους, εἶναι δηλαδή, ἡ μόνη ἱκανὴ νά κατευθύνει τὸν ἄνθρωπο στὶς ἠθικὲς ἐπιλογές του, ἀκριβῶς διότι, στὸ μέτρο πού εἶναι τέχνη μετρητική, εἶναι σὲ θέση νά ἀποφανθεῖ ἐὰν τὰ ἀποτελέσματα μίας δεδομένης πράξεως εἰς βάθος χρόνου, θὰ εἶναι συμβατὰ μὲ τίς πραγματικὲς ἐπιδιώξεις τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ὁ ὁποῖος ἐξ ὀρισμοῦ εἶναι ὄν λογικόν, τὸ ὁποῖο μέσα ἀπὸ τὴν ἀνάπτυξη τοῦ νοῦ καὶ τοῦ λόγου, βρίσκει τὴ δική του ἀληθὴ εὐδαιμονία.

F. FILIPPI

(μτφρ. Μ. Πρωτοπαπα-Μαρνελή)