The Research and Critical Analysis of the Socratic Dialectics

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Abstract

Socratic dialectics has always been a very important topic. As an ancient and enduring dialectical method, there are a lot of studies on Socratic dialectics in contemporary times, and there are also some voices criticizing it. This paper will first elaborate Socratic dialectics, and discuss and define the characteristics of Socratic dialectics, and then put forward some critical opinions on Socratic dialectics. This paper holds that Socratic dialectics is an excellent philosophical dialectical thinking, but it still has some limitations and shortcomings, which deserve to be viewed critically.

Keywords

Socratic dialectics; Critical analysis; Classical philosophy.

1. Introduction

Socrates is a famous philosopher in ancient Greece and the originator of Socratic dialectics. Of course, dialectics, as a philosophical term and a concept still in use today, first appeared in his disciple Plato’s Phaedo, and Plato carried it forward [1]. The essence of Socratic dialectics is the use of logical reasoning to seek truth while discussing an argument in the form of dialogue. It is one of the qualities of Socratic dialectics to be persuasive in the course of argument, to reveal the contradictions in the opponent’s words, and thereby to refute the others arguments [2]. There is no denying that Socratic dialectics has an important position in the world and has been studied and used since ancient times. It is an indispensable academic research goal. This paper will first explore the ideological origin of Socratic dialectics, then explore the specific definition and argumentation characteristics of Socratic dialectics, and finally discuss and analyze the rationality of some researchers’ criticism of Socratic dialectics.

2. The Overview

According to Aristotle, dialectics needs to raise the essence of questions and answers and reveal contradictions, explore and realize the existence of contradictions. And Socrates’ dialectics explains well what Aristotle thought the real dialectics should be: Socrates’ dialectics is different from that of the wise men in ancient Greece. The latter only aims to win the argument and refute the opponent as the ultimate goal of the dialectics, believing that there is no right or wrong between the two opposing arguments and the truth is not absolute. Socrates’ dialectical law regards the search for the essence of things and the pursuit of universal truth as the ultimate goal. Socrates believed that debate should pursue dialectics instead of the so-called relativism, while truth is universal and there is absolute truth [3]. In the process of debate, both sides should step by step in the debate to guide the discovery of the contradiction in the others words and explore the truth in the debate. Socrates’ pursuit of absolute truth had a great influence on the thought of his disciple Plato, and also indirectly influenced the definition of truth in the scholasticism of later ages.
3. The Main Points of Socratic Dialectics

At the same time, Socrates’ dialectical thought has several other characteristics. First of all, Socrates’ dialectics seeks for a universal definition mainly through dialogue, which requires both sides of the dialogue to express with relatively strict logical norms and clear linguistic meaning. This has formed his dialectics with logical thinking as the main content, emphasizing on people’s rational thinking and using rational thinking to reflect on viewpoints. Socrates dialectic is always required in the process of the same mind, concepts must be kept the same, determine the significance of each concept and judgment must keep its identity, meaning that the same things at the same time can not be both "yes" and "no", Socrates also think in the same syndrome differentiation in the process of two contradictory judgment can’t all is false, at the same time there is a true, reveal the other logic errors in this paper, no other topics to explore general definition, is the Socratic method is often used. At the same time, Socrates believed that definitions were essential tools for the search for knowledge and truth, but that they were simply different from everyday experience or opinion, and should explain the nature or cause of things [4]. The definition Socrates seeks is not a literal definition of words, but rather the common nature or essence of a class of things. Based on the understanding of the function and nature of the definition of the concept of things, Socrates' discussion on the definition of something has the following characteristics: The first one is the use of the investigation of specific things and induction, the characteristics of things generalized to the general concept. Socrates held that the object to be defined should not be merely the name or the concept itself, but rather the common nature of a class of things, and that the definition of the concept should correspond to the things covered. Another point is to analyze the concept logically by discussing the logical relationship between concepts, verify the correctness of the definition by judging the true and false value of the logic is also an important point [5]. Socrates uses two methods: one is to use inductive facts to prove the truth of a definition or to falsify it by presenting contrary facts, and the other is to use logical analysis to verify whether a definition is inconsistent with a true statement.

Socrates used induction and deduction in his dialogues and debates, and exposed various logical errors of sophistry in his dialogues and debates. The rhetoric and argumentation of the wise have played a positive role in training people’s thinking ability and expression ability. But because it is not to explain the nature and contradictions of the objective object, the pursuit of truth, which makes their debate and proof with a lot of subjective arbitrariness, their thinking form also lack of strict logical norms. Socrates, on the other hand, sees dialogue and argument as a means to the pursuit of truth and to the perfection of the soul. This method always adheres to the principle of reason and is a dialectics seeking to determine knowledge in the contradictory movement of thinking. For Socrates, casuistry is illogical and not really dialectic. Dialectics is consistent with the correct form of logical thinking. It requires strict logical norms to be followed in the formal structure of thinking, so as to ensure that one-sided and wrong arguments can be eliminated in the thinking movement of argumentation, and that people can move from ignorance to knowledge, from one-sided to comprehensive, and from phenomenon to essence of things [6]. Hence the Socratic dialectic was called "midwifery," and the name is aptly given.

4. The Critique of Socrates’ Dialectics

However, even though Socratic dialectics has many positive features and advantages, and has made indelible contributions to the argumentation and critical thinking research, Socratic dialectics still has some critical points in the academic world. For example, his critics argue that Socrates confuses the notion of concrete knowledge with general knowledge, which is contrary
to logical reasoning. Socrates, for example, argues that because no one desires an outcome that is impossible, no one in the world does evil voluntarily, but people do it out of ignorance, so long as they realize what good is, they will do good voluntarily. In a way, this tends to be a good nature-based argument [7]. The argument contained in Socratic dialectics is in fact one that advocates the conjunction of human cognition and action. Aristotle once pointed out that "unity of knowledge and action" is applicable to theoretical knowledge, but not to practical knowledge. A man with pure theoretical knowledge may become a scholar of the theory, but a man who knows what justice is will not be immediately just. Socrates says that he who does not know what good is, does not know how to do good; He who does not know courage will never act bravely. This actually confuses the relationship between general knowledge and specific special knowledge. As far as the development of human cognition is concerned, the cognition of any historical stage is concrete and historical, and it is the cognition of the essence of things within a certain range and at a certain level. Socrates ignored that the development of cognition was concrete and restricted by history. Socratic dialectics hoped that the "ultimate truth" could be obtained only through conversation and constant questioning, which could only be an Utopian dream. The development of knowledge is gradual. The midwifery can help to strip away the negative and non-essential things, but its role will be greatly reduced without human practice and historical development.

Another criticism of Socratic dialectics, on the other hand, is that in Socratic dialectics the positions of the speakers are not equal, and the conversation is more like a monologue. In the unique question- and-answer debate of Socratic Dialectics, Socrates raises questions and waits for an answer. The dialectical form is unitary, and the result of the question, or the result of the question, is determined [8]. As Socrates considered universal truth, is the "right" answer in the debate is are identified, however, the correct answer or correct "morality" is in the midst of what Socrates' own subjective definition, the tendency of the same and the lack of conversation of divergent thinking, may be lack of the dialectical and the attitude of seeking common ground while putting aside differences.

5. Conclusion

All in all, this article mainly analyzes the content of Socratic dialectics. First of all, this article discusses the definition of Socratic dialectics and its historical origin and influence. Secondly, this paper demonstrates in detail the characteristics and advantages of Socratic dialectics, as well as its application in debate. Finally, this paper introduces the critical opinion of Socratic dialectics and describes the reasons why it was criticized. In general, Socrates' dialectics has great research value and discussion value, and popularized speculation and argumentation, which has a far-reaching influence on later generations. Even though Socratic dialectics has its limitations and shortcomings, its status, contribution and research value are still great in today's society.

References


