
UNIT 4 SOCRATES

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we explain the basic philosophy of Socrates: Socratic problem, Socratic Method, his epistemology and his ethics, and Socratic School such as Cynicism, Cyrenaic School, The School of Megara and the Elia and Eretrian Schools.

By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- Heighten your critical thinking
- Develop your own personal investigation and reasoned argument for answering life questions
- Comprehend Socratic Method
- Apply his ethical principles in one's life

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Socrates was born in Athens in 469 and lived over a span of seventy years filling entirely the second half of fifth century B.C Athens' cultural life. He died at the age of 70 in 399. He was the son of a sculptor and a midwife. He used to say that his art, like his mother's, was midwifery, the art of delivering children in the name of truth. The voice of Socrates was taken to be the voice of one's conscience. This indicates that he was considered a man of God and, to some extent, a mystic. He was also a devoted citizen of Athens. He lived his adult life in Athens engaging in open philosophical discussion which often included questions of ethics, religion, and politics. Socrates went against the traditional way of accepting the authorities of respected poets such as Homer, Hesiod and others as the proper foundations for answering questions about the aforementioned topics. He insisted, instead, that personal investigation and reasoned argument alone could constitute a proper basis for answering these

questions. He believed that he had been given a divine mission for acquiring knowledge by questioning every so-called wise man or in other words the authority and traditions. His divine mission of search for knowledge by questioning wise men brought him into trouble. His search for knowledge led to him to the acceptance of one supreme God, which was not consistent with the then Greek notions of God. Social authorities and considered this as destructive because, according to them, it involved subverting accepted beliefs. As a consequence he had to face trial before the popular court for the following three charges:

1. For denying the national gods
2. For setting up of new gods
3. For corrupting the youths.

Although he denied all these charges in defense, he was condemned to death in 399. The last words of this great Athenian Master were: "Now it is time that we were going, I to die and you to live, but which of us has the happier prospect is unknown to anyone but God."

4.2 SOCRATIC PROBLEM

Although his opposition to the blind acceptance of tradition and authority allied him with Sophists such as Protagoras, Gorgias and Prodicus, he was far more committed to know the inner man than the Sophists. Unlike the Sophists, he was in search for the truth and knowledge about the universal validity of the moral laws. For Socrates, this search was intimately connected with the chief problem of knowing what man is. The inscription at Delphi, "man, know thyself" haunted him constantly.

"I can't as yet 'know myself', as the inscription at Delphi enjoins, and so long as that ignorance remains it seems to me ridiculous to inquire into extraneous matters. Consequently I don't bother about such things, but accept the current beliefs about them, and direct my inquiries, as I have just said, rather to myself." *Phaedrus* 230a.

Although for the Sophists *homo mensura* (man is the measure) was the maxim as to the acquisition of knowledge, the testimonies of Protagoras and Gorgias proved that no valid knowledge about the truth of the universal validity of moral laws was possible. Socrates was dissatisfied with this sophistic position. For Socrates knowing one's own self implied an extensive analysis of knowledge.

This analysis aims at determining three things.

1. The universal validity of moral principle;
2. The laws of the State;
3. The nature of religious faith.

With regard to these points Socrates did not accept any previous philosophical positions, predominantly that of the Sophists. Socrates accused the Sophists that instead of giving importance to reason, they gave importance to perception. He again charged that they did not distinguish between reason and perception and reason and feeling. Consequently, Sophists ended up in skepticism and nihilism as regards epistemology and conventionalism in morality and politics. Hence, Socrates task was to present a far more universally valid knowledge as well as universally valid

moral and political laws. The inquiry into the possibility of universal knowledge as well as universal moral and political laws led him to believe that that virtue is the knowledge of the good through concepts. Concepts are formed by reason which is one and the same for all people. Thus, he concludes that if virtue is the knowledge through concepts and if concepts are formed by reason which is one and same in all, then knowledge is universal; so are moral and political laws. But how do we attain this? In what follows we discuss his method of attaining universally valid knowledge.

4.3 SOCRATIC METHOD

Socrates insisted that personal investigations and reasoned arguments alone could constitute a proper basis for answering questions about the universality of knowledge as well as the universality of moral and political laws. In Socrates' case this personal investigations and reasoned arguments assume a conversational form i.e., a form of dialogue. This dialogue, however, was limited to ethical subject-matter alone, therefore it included the justice, virtue, knowledge, temperance etc. The principal aim of such a dialogue was to know his own self.

He called it the method of "elenchus," the Greek for 'putting to the test' or 'refutation.' This dialogue consisted in skillfully questioning others who claim to be wise men and drawing out their views with regards to virtue, justice, and so on. The objective of such dialogue was to show the inadequacies of their views which would in turn reveal that those who claimed to know really did not know. Thus, Socrates believed that by such a method he could show that he was wiser than others inasmuch as he knew that he did not know. Socratic method has two particular dimensions. First, regarding its *modus operandi*, it is dialectical; second, regarding its aim, it is *maieutiké* or midwifery method.

DIALECTICAL METHOD

The dialectical method is an art of argument by skilful questions and answer, the aim of which is to arrive at answers with the fewest possible words which should be precise and to the point. The first stage of such a method usually started with a generally accepted statement with regard to the subject-matter. This generally accepted statement is called hypothesis. This is followed by an anti-thesis, which might show the absurd consequences of the hypothesis. At the second stage the dialectic method is supposed to lead to the contradiction of the hypothesis and its possible rejection. The rejection of one hypothesis, might lead to the acceptance of another hypothesis which contains less contradictions. Thus, by the dialectical method the investigator is led on to newer hypotheses with fewer and fewer contradictions. Socrates himself never found any absolutely correct answer to the questions about ethics and conduct of life. But it did not mean that the dialectical method was a fruitless one. For Socrates it was a passionate love of the philosopher of reaching absolute knowledge. For, according to Socrates, absolute knowledge lies in constant search and not in reaching and grasping one. Thus, it seems that the aim of the dialectical method was to show that philosophy for Socrates is a search for wisdom and not to arrive at the absolute knowledge.

MIDWIFERY METHOD

Although he followed and advocated dialectical method, he called his method "midwifery". Although it has allusions to his mother whose profession was midwifery, what he meant by this was his intention of getting others to produce true ideas in

their mind, so that they might do right action. “He wanted to give birth to true ideas in the clear form of definition, not for a speculative but for a practical end.”

4.4 EPISTEMOLOGY

As we have seen, Socrates was dissatisfied with all branches of previous philosophy, particularly philosophy of knowledge. For him previous conceptions of knowledge were presumptive, relative and conventional. He opposed them and directed his capabilities to proving the emptiness of the previous scheme of knowledge. As we have seen already the Socratic problem was about to find out universal valid knowledge. At the same time his philosophical enquiry was ethical in character, which aims at the discovery of his own self. Hence, one could easily conclude that by knowledge Socrates meant the knowledge of justice, virtue and eternal or religious ideas. Socrates believed that real knowledge of justice, virtue and eternal ideas are already present in man. This knowledge is dormant and waiting to be recalled by skilful questioning. How this knowledge is present in man? This question led Socrates to believe in the immortality of the soul. For, he seemed to have believed that the immortality of the soul would enable man to have real knowledge about justices, virtue and eternal ideas. Since soul is immortal it “has seen all things both here and in the other world, has learned everything that is. So we need not be surprised if it can recall the knowledge of virtue or anything else which, as we see, it once possessed.” But, how do we become aware of this already present knowledge in us? Here we find the structure of Socratic epistemology. Aristotle categorically states in *Metaphysics* that we owe two things to Socrates: “inductive reasoning and universal definition.” Here we find the structure of Socratic epistemology: knowledge is achieved through inductive reasoning and universal definition. Thus, according to Socrates, both universal definition and inductive reasoning are the means of reawakening knowledge which is dormant in all human beings.

DEFINITION

We have seen that Socratic Method is conversational in which questions are put forward to get appropriate answers. When Socrates asks a question, he asks *What is*, for example justice. He is asking for a definition rather than a mere answer. To define a thing is to state what it is, its *essence*. Thus, definition leads to *essence*. Since definition leads to *essence*, knowing to define a thing means knowing that thing. It was a new approach to knowledge, which leads one to say what things are, to discover their *essence*. Such an approach was absent among previous thinkers, namely the Sophists, although the Eleatic philosophy held it be their prime concern. “From this point originates all the fertility of Socrates’ thinking, turning toward the quest of truth, centered . . . in the view point of being, from which the Sophists had turned away.” It is, thus, argued that in Socrates there is an attempt to return to study what realities really are.

INDUCTION

By Socratic induction is not meant what later logicians, such as Francis Bacon and John Stuart Mill, understood as induction. As has been already seen, in contrast to the Sophists, Socrates did not depend on perception alone as source of knowledge. Perceptive knowledge may lead to relative knowledge, according Socrates. His inquiry aims at the absolute knowledge and not relative one. Since for Socrates knowledge is achieved through concept, he made sharp distinction between

perception and conception. By concept is meant the universal idea of a class, for example, cowness for the class of cows. But, mere observation of a number of particular things cannot yield the conception of cowness. Then, how do we form a concept of it?

A concept is formed by a recollection or intuition of the universal which may happen quite suddenly. In Plato's *Phaedo* Socrates seems to suggest that this recollection takes place as if re-discovering a long-forgotten thing rather suddenly. Recollection is something like an intuition of a mystic. Socrates was really a mystic and for him knowledge is to be found in mystic intuition of universals. Although, perception plays the role of the prompting agent, he warns that senses are really more of hindrance than a help in the realization of universal idea.

"Surely the soul can best reflect when it is free of all distractions such as hearing or sight or pain or pleasure of any kind- that is, when it ignores the body and becomes as far as possible independent, avoiding all contacts and associations as much as it can, in its search for reality."

He even held that only after leaving the body, a seeker of knowledge will have wisdom in its fullness and purity. Nevertheless, in this life one can attain true knowledge provided he leads a life of mortification of the body. Thus, Socrates even proposes a kind of asceticism for the attainment of true knowledge which enables one to conduct his life in the light of moral, religious and political laws.

4.5 SOCRATIC ETHICS

Socrates ethics is principally concerned with man. Although this concern was not new in the early Greek philosophical traditions, Socrates considered man from a different point of view. The core of Socrates' ethics is the concept of virtue. Virtue, according to Socrates, is the deepest and most basic propensity of man. This virtue is *knowledge*.

"... if there exists any good thing different, and not associated with knowledge, virtue will not necessarily be any form of knowledge. If on the other hand knowledge embraces everything that is good, we shall be right to suspect that virtue is knowledge."

If virtue is knowledge it can be known and consequently taught. This is the meaning of the imperative "know yourself." Know yourself means bring your inner self to light. Through knowledge man gains possession of himself whereby he becomes his own master.

VIRTUE IS KNOWLEDGE

According to Socrates virtue is the highest aim and greatest good one has to seek in the life. He also insisted that if it is to be highest aim and the greatest good it must have universal consistence and be the same for all. Now, what is universally consistent and the same for all is knowledge which is obtained through concept by the use of reason which is common in all. The relation between virtue and knowledge is inseparable. For Socrates thinks that health, wealth, beauty, courage, temperance etc., which are customarily considered to be various forms of good, are good only if they are guided by wisdom; if guided by folly they could be considered forms of evil.

As has been already seen, concepts are given by reason and not by perception of particular facts. Since concepts are already in human mind, they need to be enkindled by questioning. If morality is the knowledge of the idea of good through concepts, then who can obtain this? Socrates held that the Sophists did not obtain it, because they depended on perception rather than reason. He believed that the seeker who follows the dictates of reason rather than perception attains it. One who follows the dictates of the reason recollects the concepts of good already present in the mind. For, as in his epistemology, the real concept of good is always a matter of recollection by means of reflection on the idea of good.

VIRTUE IS ONE OR THE UNITY OF VIRTUE

Ethics, according to Socrates, has yet another dimension. It does not stop at mere acquisition of the knowledge of the ideas of good. The knowledge of the idea of the good aims at controlling all other ideas and ultimately guides the whole man, including his will and feeling, and necessarily leads him to good actions. Hence ethical knowledge tends to culture the soul which ultimately leads the soul towards regaining its pure, pristine glory. For Socrates this is for this reason for believing that “no one does wrong knowingly” and “that knowledge is virtue.”

Socrates says that virtue or goodness is one, although practices differently in different forms of good. In Plato's *Protagoras* Socrates says that although wisdom, temperance, courage, justice and holiness are the principal forms of virtue, there is one single reality which underlies them all. Yet on another occasion, in Plato's *Meno*, we find Socrates looking for one virtue which permeates all other virtues.

Socrates explained this by means of an example of a healthy body. According to him all kinds of bodily excellence follow from one single health of the body, similarly, all kinds of virtue follow from the health of the soul. What is meant by the health of the soul? The soul has different functions. The health of the soul follows from orderly arrangement of these different functions. In Plato's *Gorgias*, we see Socrates saying that the functions of the soul are reasoning, temper, and desire. The function of reasoning aims at attaining wisdom, temper means the courage, and desire is the soberness. The health of the souls depends on the organized relation that these functions hold to each other. An orderly arrangement of these functions is something like the following. Wisdom commands and temper assists in the execution of these commands, while desire furnishes the material basis for the actualization of these commands. The aim of the oneness or unity of the virtue is the ultimate happiness of the individual. “A successful functioning of the harmonious activities under the regulation of reason yields happiness.” Thus the Socratic notion of virtue as one means “the self of a good man is an organic unity of all its functions.”

The Socratic notion of virtue as one leads us finally to conclude that there is one Idea of the Good which underlies all the ethical activities of man which are intrinsically good. Socrates speaks in the *Republic* Plato that

...in the region of the known the last thing to be seen and hardly seen is the idea of good, and that when seen must need point us to the conclusion that this is indeed the cause for all things of all that is right and beautiful, giving birth in the visible world to light, and author of light and itself in the intelligible world being the authentic source of truth and reason, and that anyone who is to act wisely in private or public must have caught sight of this.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Discuss briefly on Socratic method.

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2) Write a short note on the Epistemology of Socrates.

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3) Explain the Socrates' philosophy of ethics.

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4.6 SOCRATIC SCHOOLS

Socrates' dream was to enlighten the minds of men so that they might be able to follow the dictates of their inner self through self-investigation and questioning all sources of knowledge. But he did not found any school nor did he write a single word so that his dream might be perpetuated either through institutions or through words. "But various thinkers, who had been disciples of Socrates to a greater or lesser extent, emphasized one or other point in his teachings, combining it also with elements culled from other sources" founded various schools in the name of Socrates. Although he did not found any school, he left behind a Socratic circle, among them his famous pupil Plato, who founded the Academy. If we leave aside Plato, the members of the Socratic circle who left a succession behind them are Antisthenes, Aristippus of Cyrene, Euclides of Megara and Phaedo of Elis. They are considered respectively as the founders of Cynicism, Cyrenaic School, Megarian School, and Elian School. It is these groups that are traditionally known as the Socratic schools. In what follows, a brief sketch of each of these schools is given.

CYNICISM

Cynicism originated in the mid-fourth century BC and it was arguably the most original and influential branch of the Socratic tradition in antiquity. Antisthenes, a pupil of Socrates, and Diogenes of Sinope were considered to be founding fathers

of Cynicism. Cynicism is noted for its radical re-examination of the animal nature of the human being. Cynics, which is a nickname self-imposed on the founders of Cynicism, literally means 'doglike' or 'disciples of the dog.'

Cynicism made use of innovative and influential literary tradition of satire, parody and aphorism in order to spoil the dominant ideologies of the time. It proposed a new morality mainly based on two things: first, by minimizing creaturely needs in pursuit of self-sufficiency and second, by maximizing both freedom of speech and freedom of action. The former is achieved by physical training and the later by open defiance of the well-established social taboos. They followed an anti-politics which sees existing governments as a betrayal of human nature. Cynics considered traditional culture as an obstacle to happiness. Cynics advocated an immediate relationship to nature and proposed that man is the 'citizen of the cosmos'.

The Cynics made concerted attempt to demonstrate that happiness does not depend on society or on any other circumstances, but wholly on the autonomous self which is achieved by Cynics' discipline based on exemplary acts and corporeal training. The Cynics defaced the value which philosophers attached to theoretical disciplines as well as the conventional value which society attached to such externals as money, status, family and political power.

If cynics had a different conception of morality and conditions for happiness, it was because they differed in their conception of the human being. Diogenes of Sinope gave a different picture of man than that had been traditionally held to be the ideal. Diogenes held an extreme version of cynicism. He believed that human beings are animals who have much to learn about freedom and self-sufficiency from their fellow creatures. It is argued that the use of animals as examples served to illustrate the intrinsic superiority of nature to culture. Diogenes even preferred to live like dogs. It was to demonstrate that this would enable man to test the limits of his species by living like a dog and to realize the unlimitedness of freedom that animals are enjoying.

THE CYRENAIC SCHOOL

Aristippus of Cyrene founded the Cyrenaic School. He was born about 435 B.C. In Cyrene he seems to have become acquainted with the teaching of Protagoras and afterward, while he was in Athens, he was in relation with Socrates.

Aristippus held that our sensation alone gives us certain knowledge. This is in sharp contrast to the Socratic notion that it is concepts of universals and not perceptions of particulars which provides us with certain knowledge. If sensation alone gives us certain knowledge, then the purpose of such knowledge should be to obtain pleasure.

Aristippus taught that sensation consists in movement. When the movement is gentle, the sensation is pleasurable; when it is rough, there is pain; when movement is imperceptible or when there is no movement at all, there is neither pleasure nor pain. The rough movement cannot be the ethical end. Ethical end cannot consist in the neutrality of the absence of movement. It consists in the gentle movement which produces pleasure. Thus, pleasure become the ethical end of human conduct.

Pleasure, then, according to Aristippus, is the end of life. What kind of pleasure constitutes the end of life? Aristippus says that positive and present pleasure is the end of life. The Cyrenaics believed that the bodily pleasure alone is the positive and present pleasure. If the Cyrenaics held that bodily pleasure alone is the end of life, then could they not be considered and pure hedonists? Indeed, as it seems from the

earliest traditions, they were aware of this charge. Hence, Aristippus, admonishes his followers that “the wise man take cognizance of the future.” The wise man, in order to preserve cheerfulness and contentment, will limit his desires. This precautionary attitude of Aristippus points to the fact that although the pleasure is the ethical end of life, “wise man needs the judgment in order to enable him evaluate the different pleasures of life.”

Thus, we can find an apparent contradiction the teaching of Aristippus; a contradiction between the principle of pleasure and the principle of judgment. This contradiction led to a divergence of views among his disciples such as *Thoedorus the Atheist*, *Hegesias*, and *Anniceris*. All of them held different views and different interpretations of the original teaching of their master.

THE SCHOOL OF MEGARA

The Megarian school was founded by Euclides of Megara. He was intimate associate of Socrates, but prior to his association with Socrates he had been influenced by the Eleatic philosophy. Thus, the main doctrines of this school were both ethical and metaphysical. Their main ethical doctrine was the unity of good. Euclides held that “the good is one thing, called by many names: sometimes wisdom, sometimes god, and at other times intellect etc.” He denied the existence of its supposed opposites. It is argued that Euclides built this upon the Socratic ethical conception that virtue is one and Parmenidean “metaphysical thesis that all names, even those supposedly opposite to each other, in reality refer to a single being.”

THE ELIAN AND ERETRIAN SCHOOLS

According to reliable traditions, these schools were founded by one of Socrates’s associates, Phaedo of Elis and an Eretrian called Menedemus of Eretria. Hence the name the Elian and Eretrian School. Phaedo of Elis seems to have been influenced by the Megarian School in his use of dialectics, whereas Menedemus was primarily interested in the Socratic-Megarian ethics, holding the unity of virtue and knowledge.

For Socrates virtue is knowledge and knowledge is based of the Idea of Good. Thus, for Socrates “morality is the universal knowledge of the Good. For good is advantageous for man and contributes to his happiness.” What is happiness then? We are told that Socrates never said anything definite about Good and happiness. This ambiguity that Socrates had left behind led to various interpretations. We have already seen some of them. Yet, there are some traditions that bear remote affinity to Socrates, but in an extremely exaggerated manner. We mention two of them, namely, Stoicism and Epicureanism. The philosophers of Stoic school are intrinsically related to the earlier ethical philosophers in the Socratic tradition, especially to the Cynics. The centre of Stoic concern is man, the wise man. Epicureanism, on the other hand, is an extreme exaggeration of Socrates view of happiness as the end of ethics. They developed this notion in the hedonistic line.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Write a short note on Cynicism.

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2) What is the basic teaching of the Cyrenaic school?

4.7 LET US SUM UP

As we have seen, Socrates was a Classical Greek philosopher. Credited as one of the founders of Western philosophy, he is an enigmatic figure known only through the classical accounts of his students. Plato's dialogues are the most comprehensive accounts of Socrates to survive from antiquity. Through his portrayal in Plato's dialogues, Socrates has become renowned for his contribution to the field of ethics, and it is this Platonic Socrates who also lends his name to the concepts of Socratic irony and the Socratic method, or *elenchus*. The latter remains a commonly used tool in a wide range of discussions, and is a type of pedagogy in which a series of questions are asked not only to draw individual answers, but to encourage fundamental insight into the issue at hand. It is Plato's Socrates that also made important and lasting contributions to the fields of epistemology and logic, and the influence of his ideas and approach remains strong in providing a foundation for much western philosophy that followed.

4.8 KEY WORDS

- Enigma** : An enigma is a puzzle, something mysterious or inexplicable, or a riddle or difficult problem. The word can also be used to describe a mysterious or secretive person.
- Cynicism** : Cynicism originally comprised the various philosophies of a group of ancient Greeks called the Cynics, founded by Antisthenes in about the 4th century BC. The Cynics rejected all conventions, whether of religion, manners, housing, dress, or decency, advocating the pursuit of virtue in a simple and unmaterialistic lifestyle.

4.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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4.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Socratic method was called method of dialogue. He called it the method of "elenchus," the Greek for 'putting to the test' or 'refutation.' This dialogue consisted in skillfully questioning others who claim to be wise men and drawing out their views. The objective of such dialogue was to show the inadequacies of their views which would in turn reveal that those who claimed to know really did not know. It has two particular dimensions. First, regarding its modus operandi; it is dialectical; second, regarding its aim it is Maieutiké or midwifery method.

The dialectical method is an art of argument by skilful questions and answer, the aim of which is to arrive at answers with the fewest possible words which should be precise and to the point. The first stage of such a method usually started with a generally accepted statement (hypothesis) with regard to the subject-matter. This is followed by an anti-thesis, which might show the absurd consequences of the hypothesis. At the second stage the dialectic method is supposed to lead to the contradiction of the hypothesis and its possible rejection. The rejection of one hypothesis, might lead to the acceptance of another hypothesis which contains less contradictions. Thus, by the dialectical method the investigator is led on to newer hypotheses with fewer and fewer contradictions.

- 2) Socratic problem was to find out universal valid knowledge. At the same time his philosophical enquiry was ethical in character, which aims at the discovery of his own self. Hence, one could easily conclude that by knowledge Socrates meant the knowledge of justice, virtue and eternal or religious ideas.

According to Socrates human soul is immortal and, therefore, it possesses knowledge of things of this world and the other world. The soul in its pristine glory knew concepts of goodness, justice, happiness, truth, beauty, and concepts about the essence of reality or being. Most of what the soul knew remain idle or in a dormant state. These concepts which the soul knew in its pristine purity are resurrected by the prompting of perceptual knowledge about the particular things. Thus, conceptual knowledge is a kind of recollection of ideas already existing in the immortal soul. "...what we learn is really just

recollection.” This recollection takes place as if re-discovering a long-forgotten thing rather suddenly. Recollection is something like an intuition of a mystic. Only after leaving the body, a seeker of knowledge will have wisdom in its fullness and purity. Nevertheless, in this life one can attain true knowledge provided he leads a life of mortification of the body.

- 3) Socrates held the universality of morality. Socrates argument is that as reason is one and the same in all, so moral laws are universally valid. Moral laws are not based on one’s feeling and desires, but they are based on rational thought. Hence, there is an intrinsic connection between knowledge and ethics.

Socrates ethics is principally concerned with human. Its core is the concept of virtue. This virtue is *knowledge*. If virtue is knowledge it can be known and consequently taught. This is the meaning of the imperative “know yourself.” Know yourself means bring your inner self to light. Through knowledge man gains possession of himself whereby he becomes his own master.

The knowledge of the idea of the good aims at controlling all other ideas and ultimately guides the whole man, including his will and feeling, and necessarily leads him to good actions. Hence ethical knowledge tends to culture the soul which ultimately leads the soul towards regaining its pure, pristine glory.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) Cynicism made use of innovative and influential literary tradition of satire, parody and aphorism in order to spoil the dominant ideologies of the time. It proposed a new morality mainly based on two things: first, by minimizing creaturely needs in pursuit of self-sufficiency and second, by maximizing both freedom of speech and freedom of action. The former is achieved by physical training and the later by open defiance of the well-established social taboos. They followed an anti-politics which sees existing governments as a betrayal of human nature. Cynics considered traditional culture as an obstacle to happiness.
- 2) Aristippus held that our sensation alone gives us certain knowledge. If sensation alone gives us certain knowledge, then the purpose of such knowledge should be to obtain pleasure. Pleasure is the end of life. Positive and present pleasure is the end of life. The Cyrenaics believed that the bodily pleasure alone is the positive and present pleasure. Hence, Aristippus, admonishes his followers that although the pleasure is the ethical end of life, “wise man needs the judgment in order to enable him evaluate the different pleasures of life.”