# Socrates View that Virtue is Knowledge

Socrates philosophy has been disseminated by his followers and their collective writings to what constituted the beliefs and principles of Socrates. Socrates is not known to have ever reduced his thoughts and convictions in writing and one of the hallmarks of Socrates philosophy is what he propagated to be “Virtue is knowledge” (Pangle, 214). Virtue can be defined in various terms:

1. Great upright standards behavior
2. A wise and uprightly behavior in a person.
3. A quality of a thing that is useful.
4. Especially of a woman’s virginity or chastity
5. The seventh-greatest order of the nine folds celestial hierarchy in an ancient Christian study of Angels. (Battaly, 2015).

In other definitions of the term virtue, The Merriam-Webster gives the definition of virtue as:-

1. A standard of right conformity :[morality](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/morality)
2. A certain excellent moral
3. An advantageous power or quality of a thing
4. Strength or courage that is associated to man :[valor](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/valor)
5. A quality or trait that is commendable :[merit](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/merit)
6. An acting capacity :[potency](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/potency)
7. A woman’s [Chastity](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/chastity) virtues: an order of angels (Battaly, 2015).

From a lay man’s definition, virtue means higher calling, excellence, good thing to have and such. The common denominator or deduction from the definitions is that virtue is an adjective that describes a state of being. Knowledge on the other hand refers to a state of awareness or familiarity that one gains through experiencing a fact or a situation or through education. This essay will discuss virtue as meaning Knowledge from Socrates point of view.

With regard therefore to Socrates philosophy, it should be understood that by equating virtue to knowledge, he was simply putting to summary the fact that in order to acquire a state of excellence, it had to be the sum total of the quality of decisions that one is called to make through a process. This process had to be informed from an awareness of what is wrong and or right. It would be safe to say then that from Socrates’ perspective, knowledge or having knowledge was something that resulted from a deliberate effort to acquire that aspiration and as such elevated one to a state of virtue. This state of being calls for one to engage in a process that includes a check of one’s morality, a deliberate effort to wipe away ignorance thus investing in enlightening oneself on choices, interrogating the said choices, to subscribing to a divinity. It is to say that this process may be in form of self-awareness through which knowledge becomes, after revelations of virtue (encompassing the concrete values that are deemed as such). Thus information is power and that which gives rise to ability to make quality decisions one way or the other. Knowledge is thus the end result while virtue is the process of creating that knowledge (Pangle, 2014).

Socrates philosophy of what is sometimes referred to as “unity of virtue” or the description that all virtue is knowledge may sometimes appear as the proverbial edict of pulling the cart before the horse in that virtue can very easily be interpreted to be the end result of acquiring the knowledge thus knowledge is a constituent of virtue. Socrates in fashioning virtue as knowledge thus creates the impression that one’s environment, background, family lineage and relativity of experiences are not critical factors in shaping the destiny of acquiring knowledge and thus propounds a universal standard of allocating value to factors leading to knowledge and thus virtues which might seem unrealistic. The quality of one’s knowledge has to be influenced by their experiences which form or create diverse perspective and thus speak to the quality of knowledge as a virtue (Cormack, 2006).

It was also Socrates argument that a person could not answer to the merits of a virtue without first understanding what virtue is. This would seem to pre-suppose that at any given point an individual had to know succinctly the substance of their desired state of being and not just any state of being but what could be considered “good” or positive to their outlook in life and harmony (Lelbowitz, 2010). This is a very high level of synthesizing what I would call a “living chart” or active guideline of acquiring knowledge; yet it is in knowledge and taking on what it professes that would yield the outcome of a virtue.

We can surmise then that, knowledge and adoption of that which is knowledge is what becomes a virtue; and to achieve this coveted status meant subrogating ones private interests to seek excellence thus knowledge.

## References

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