Lecture On line

University of Belgrade

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**Socrates’ *Eudaimonia***

**Abstract**

In the beginning of Plato’s *Phaedo* (58 e-59 a), Socrates is presented as “*eudaimon”,* a felicitous man, at the moment he is ready to pass away. This claim, extremely difficult to attribute to any human being, becomes even more astonishing if we consider that, in this particular case, Socrates always kept away from wealth and glorious political functions; he also was in constant conflict with his wife and is going to leave behind three young orphans, as moreover he was condemned to a dishonouring death by drinking hemlock, because he was found guilty of impiety towards the Athenian pantheon, of introduction of new *daimonia* and of corruption of the city’s youth.

How can someone be considered happy under these conditions? What does the Socratic *eudaimonia* at the threshold of Hades consist of?

In my lecture I shall try to shed some light on this complex question. I propose first to present some essential characteristics of the notion of *eudaimonìa*, which initially defined the eternal and perfect way of being of divinities and privileged heroes’ fate in the afterlife. Of course each person could imagine in a different way the excellent existence of the divine beings.

When it comes to simple mortals, we observe an even greater variety of ways to conceive this ideal of the “best life”. In any case, as the wise legislator Solon explained to the arrogant king Croesus, according to Herodotus (*The Histories,* I, 32), one has to take under consideration a whole life, including the way it is completed. In the second part of this work I shall refer briefly to different visions of the human *eudaimonìa* in Greek thought, up to Socrates*.*

Finally, in the third part I shall analyse some aspects of the way of living, the philosophical activity and the death of Socrates, centred especially on his relations to himself, to his social environment and to the divinities. These elements may give a clearer idea on the reasons that could justify Socrates’ being “*eudaìmon”* at the end of his life on earth.

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