

The Anthropological Foundations of Akrasia in Socratic and Aristotelian Philosophy

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Abstract

Original Research



"Akrasia," or moral weakness is one of the practical and ancient topics in moral philosophy. The multi-layered and intertwined system of ancient Greek philosophical ethics makes it necessary to discuss the invisible roots of this debate. One of the roots is the anthropological foundations of the discussion. In this research, the views of Socrates and Aristotle will be elucidated in an anthropological way. The early Socrates considers psychological hedonism to be a human characteristic, based on which akrasia appears absurd. In his later view, he introduces three rational, spirited, and appetitive sources for the motivations of the human soul. Accordingly, acting on appetitive motives can lead to akrasia. In the following, Aristotle tries to present a more intuitive understanding of akrasia by proposing new anthropological foundations. He believes that akrasia is realized as a result of ignoring the minor premise of practical syllogism and this is caused by the predominance of animal desire or epithomia. As a result, akrasia, which is a voluntary but non-chosen act, is done by humans. This research shows that the discussion of akrasia is inseparable from its anthropological grounds.

Keywords

Akrasia, practical syllogism, psychological hedonism, philosophical anthropology, moral weakness.

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