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SOCRATES *EUDAIMON* AT THE THRESHOLD OF HADES (PLATO, *PHD*. 58E-59A)

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1. Introduction[1]

In the beginning of Plato's *Phaedo*, Socrates is presented as *eudàimon*, a felicitous man, at the moment he is ready to pass away.[2] 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. He was found guilty of impiety towards the Athenian pantheon, of introduction of new *daimònia* and of corruption of the city's youth.

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

In my paper 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.

[1] I would like to dedicate the present article to my beloved mother, Ευρώπη Παπαδοπούλου, who passed away unexpectedly on the 10th of September 2020, while this text was under preparation.

[2] Pl. *Phd.* 58e-59a. For the works of Plato I used the edition of J. Burnet (1901-1907).

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, one has to take under consideration a whole life, including the way it is completed.[3] 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 *eudàimon* at the end of his life on earth.

2. The divine eudaimonìa

Εὐδαιμονία is, for the ancient Greeks, the condition of absolute, stable and everlasting felicity. It is the ideal life, initially accorded to the divine beings and all those who participated in one way or another in the divine nature. The first component is the adverb εὖ (good) and the second derives from the noun δαίμων, used either to indicate specifically the minor divinities or as a simple synonym of the term θεός (god).[4]

According to the Hesiodic mythology, the representatives of the golden race became, after their death, benevolent δαίμονες for the humans.[5] We may detect there the origin of the belief of a guardian δαίμων for every person since his birth, who takes care of his well-being during this life and guides the soul in Hades.[6] Therefore, *eudaimonìa* could signify also the state of a person who enjoyed the support of a kind *dàimon*.[7]

Of course, the precise content of the divine *eudaimonìa* depended on how each person imagined the divine beings and their perfect life.

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[3] Hdt. I 32. I used the edition of A.D. Godley (1920).

[4] Cf. François 1957, 7-17.

[5] Hes. *Op.*, vv. 122-123 and 252. For the works of Hesiod, I used the edition of G.W. Most (2018).

[6] Cf. Hild 1881, 113-152, and Detienne 1978.

[7] For the discussions concerning the beginning of this concept, see also Stavru 2021, below, 353-367.

For the mythology current at the time, transmitted initially by the epic poems attributed to Homer and Hesiod, the gods enjoyed immortality, everlasting youth, great power, extended knowledge on the past, the present and the future, as well as a life of leisure, full of pleasures. Their anthropomorphism included all human weaknesses and a very flexible morality, to say the least.[8]

The philosophers, starting from Xenophanes,[9] criticized severely these human projections onto the divine nature, judging them inappropriate for the corporeal, ethical and intellectual perfection that, in their opinion, should be incarnated by the gods.

3. The human eudaimonìa

When a man is considered εὐδαίμων (or μακάριος, or ὄλβιος) he is as close as a human can be to the divine condition, achieving actively the best possible life. The terms μακαριότης, εὖ ζῆν and εὖ πράττειν are used as synonyms of εὐδαιμονία and they should all rather be translated as the "best life", or "divine bliss" or "felicity", instead of simply "good life" or "happiness", a usual translation which may very easily lead to many misinterpretations, as indeed it already has.[10]

The main concern of deontological Greek ethical and political theories is to define the εὐδαίμων βίος on earth based on the divine model and according to what would be considered as the true human nature, particularly the human soul.[11]

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle presents as evident for all that the human life has a specific finality, our greatest practical good: εὐδαιμονία.[12]

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[8] For Homer, *Iliad*, I used the edition by A.T. Murray, W.F. Wyatt (1924); for the *Odyssey*, the edition by A.T. Murray, G.E. Dimock (1919).

[9] See Xenophanes, DK 21B11 (Sext. Emp. *Adv. Math.* IX 193), 14 (Clem. *Strom*. V 109), 15 (Clem. *Strom*. V 110), and 16 (Clem. *Strom.* VII 22).

[10] The difference between the meaning of *eudaimonìa* and our actual understanding of the notion "happiness" has already been underlined by many scholars, as, for example, Nussbaum 1986, 6; Annas 1993, 13, and Bodéüs 2004, 6, note 1.

[11] See also, for example, Rowe 1976; Prior 1991; Hadot 1993.

[12] Ar. *EN* I 1094a19-25. For the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I used the edition by H. Rack-

«But what constitutes *eudaimonìa* is a matter of dispute; and the popular account of it is not the same as that given by the philosophers.»[13]

Therefore, the opinions on its content diverge.[14] Some prefer a life of pleasure, others a life of wealth or honour, whereas the "lovers of wisdom" privilege a life of theoretical intellectual activities.[15]

Some representative examples of the most common visions of the "best life" appear also in Plato's works. To cite only one case, in the *Gorgias* Polus claims that *eudàimones* are the tyrants who have absolute power to do whatever they want in a city-state, even if they conquer and exercise their authority in unjust ways.[16]

We may see clearly the difference between the positions of the multitude and the ones of the "wise men" in the story of Croesus and Solon reported by Herodotus.[17] The Lydian king, immensely rich and powerful, asked his Athenian host, famous for his wisdom, his experience of the world and his integrity, who was the most fortunate man he had ever seen (εἴ τινα ἤδη πάντων εἶδες ὀλβιώτατον).

Instead of designating Croesus himself, as it was expected, Solon named other men: Tellus the Athenian and the Argian brothers Cleobis and Biton. In fact, they lead simple lives, possessing the basic material and social goods: a healthy and strong body, financial independence, a family composed by members in good health and of good character.

However, they were distinguished essentially for their ethical excellence, as they showed piety (εὐσέβεια) towards all that was worthy of respect according to the Greeks: the gods, the homeland and the parents, without hesitating to serve them when necessary with courage and self-abnegation.[18] They won the admiration and praise of all, leaving

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ham (1959).

[13] Ivi, I 1095a21-23: περὶ δέ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας, τί ἐστιν, ἀμφισβητοῦσι, καὶ οὐχ ὁμοίως οἱ πολλοὶ τοῖς σοφοῖς ἀποδιδόασιν (transl. H. Rackham, partly modified by the author).

[14] Ivi, I 1095a14-30.

[15] Ivi, I 1095b14-19.

[16] Pl. *Grg.* 470d1-471d2.

[17] Hdt. I 30 ff.

[18] For the definitions and the contents of "piety" and "impiety" for the Greeks, see also Dover 1974, 246-257; Mikalson 1983, 27-30; Burkert 1985, 274-275; Garland 1992, 138-139; Solcan 2009, 13-14 and 48.

behind an immortal reputation as ἄριστοι, when they died thus at the summit of their glory (independently of their age: advanced for Timon or very young for the two brothers).

Solon justified his choice, taking under consideration the great instability of every single day of our life:

> The man who is very rich but unfortunate surpasses the lucky man in only two ways, while the lucky surpasses the rich but unfortunate in many. The rich man is more capable of fulfilling his appetites and of bearing a great disaster that falls upon him, and it is in these ways that he surpasses the other. The lucky man is not so able to support disaster or appetite as is the rich man, but his luck keeps these things away from him, and he is free from deformity and disease, has no experience of evils, and has fine children and good looks.
> If besides all this he ends his life well, then he is the one whom you seek, the one worthy to be called fortunate. But refrain from calling him fortunate (ὄλβιον) before he dies; call him lucky (εὐτυχέα).[19]

Indeed, the opinions of many persons among the other "Sages", as well as among the first philosophers, who lived during the archaic and the classical period, seem to follow an equivalent attitude for the definition of the "best life". They accord elementary importance or none at all to the acquisition of the "external goods". On the contrary, they incite men to detach themselves from these and to try to develop the "internal goods", *i.e.* the moral virtues (piety, courage, temperance, justice, honesty), as well as their capacity of reasoning (wisdom) and to apply them in all their activities and interactions with others, which should be also respectful and egalitarian.

To cite some representative examples, two of the well-known "Delphic precepts", dedicated to Apollo's temple by the Sages and addressed to the visitors of the oracle at Delphi were: first, «Know thyself» (γνῶθι σεαυτόν), usually attributed to Thales (also considered as the founder of Greek philosophy), who added that this was the most difficult thing

[19] Hdt. I 32, 6-7.

to accomplish.[20] Secondly, «Do nothing in excess» (μηδὲν ἄγαν), which insists on the notion of harmony and of the "golden measure". Indeed, one shouldn't lose one's calm and self-control in any circumstances: «Govern your emotions» is also Chilon's advice.[21]

Contrary to the high importance that Greeks generally accorded to good looks, Thales counsels: «You should not embellish your external aspect, but try to accomplish fine actions».[22] «Pleasures are mortal, while virtues immortal», says Periandrus.[23] Heraclitus believes that «the character of a man is his divinity» (ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων).[24] Democritus agrees: «Beatitude doesn't reside in flocks, nor in gold; the soul is the dwelling of the divinity».[25] «The best thing for a human being is to spend his life in the happiest possible way and the least distressed one. He will arrive at this, if he doesn't consider that pleasures are found in mortal things».[26]

They also underline the necessity to study and to use one's intellect: «Study the most important things», declares Solon[27] and Bias adds: «Reflect on what you are doing».[28] Heraclitus also considers «Thinking the greatest virtue, and wisdom to tell the truth and acting according to nature, being conscious».[29] For Democritus, too: «It isn't bodies, nor wealth that make people happy, but right thinking and large knowledge».[30]

As we saw above, the relations with family members and friends are a primordial part of the human life. «Remember your friends, pres-

[20] Thales DK 10, 3, d, 9 (Stob. *Anth.* III 1, 172, citing Dem. Phal. *The Apophthegms of the Seven Sages*). The translation of the fragments cited from now on is my own, except when another translator is mentioned.
[21] Chilon, DK 10, 3, c, 15 (*The Apophthegms of the Seven Sages*).
[22] Thales, DK 10, 3, d, 3 (ivi).
[23] Periandrus, DK 10, 3, g, 7 (ivi).
[24] Heraclitus, DK 22B119 (Stob. *Anth.* I 5, XL, 23).
[25] Democritus DK 68B171 (Stob. *Ecl. Eth.* II, VII, 3 i).
[26] Democritus DK 68B189 (Stob. *Anth.* III 1, 47).
[27] Solon, DK 10, 3, b, 7 (Stob. *Anth.* III 1, 172, citing Dem. Phal. *The Apophthegms of the Seven Sages*).
[28] Bias, DK 10, 3, f, 9 (ivi).
[29] Heraclitus DK 22B112 (Stob. *Anth.* III 1, 178).
[30] Democritus, DK 68B40 (*Democrates' Maxims*, 15 N.).

ent and absent», says Thales;[31] and Periandrus: «Be the same towards your friends, whether they are happy or unhappy».[32] The Pythagoreans claimed that «What belongs to friends is common property» (κοινὰ τὰ τῶν φίλων).[33]

The individual and the common good are inextricably interwoven for the Greek society, as it becomes evident also by Aristotle's remark that ethics is a part of politics.[34] The Sages and the first philosophers mark generally a preference for the democratic regime, and the mutual respect of the liberty of the citizens. Periandrus declares that «Democracy is better than tyranny».[35] «Respect the laws» and «Do not threaten free men, because it is not just», warns Chilon.[36] Solon believes that «By being governed, you'll learn to govern»,[37] according to the democratic principle of periodic change of those who exercise public functions. He also insists: «Give the citizens not the most agreeable, but the best advice»,[38] as he did himself. Democritus underlines the primordial responsibility of every citizen to create and maintain a well-governed city, where its members live in concord, trying to achieve the common good in respect of equity, and avoiding to quarrel in view of acquiring excessive power as individuals.[39]

This thinker shows also a truly cosmopolitan spirit that isn't limited to the current rather exclusive attachment to one's city-state: «For the wise man the whole earth is open; because the entire world is the fatherland of an excellent soul».[40]

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[31] Thales, DK 10, 3, d, 2 (Stob. *Anth.* III, 1, 172, citing Dem. Phal. *The Apophthegms of the Seven Sages*).

[32] Periandrus DK 10, 3, g, 12 (ivi).

[33] Timaeus fr. 13 a Jacoby, Schol. *In Plat.* Phaedr., 279c. Reference and translation by G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, M. Schofield (1983), 227.

[34] Ar. *EN* I 1094a9-b12.

[35] Periandrus, DK 10, 3, g, 6 (Stob. *Anth.* III 1, 172, citing Dem. Phal. *The Apophthegms of the Seven Sages*).

[36] Chilon DK. 10, 3, c, 19 and 3 (ivi).

[37] Solon DK. 10, 3, b, 10 (ivi).

[38] Solon, DK 10, 3, b, 12 (ivi).

[39] Democritus, DK 68B252 (Stob. *Anth*. IV 1, 43).

[40] Democritus, DK 68B257 (Stob. *Anth*., III, XL, 7). For more information about the interest of the Presocratic thinkers in ethical and political theories (contrary to the

4. Socrates' eudaimonìa

If one takes under consideration the common opinion, Socrates should have no reason to be contented with his life when he arrives at its end at the age of 70 – which is very advanced for his times. He lived in poverty,[41] going around usually barefoot;[42] according to the ancient sources he even had often trouble with his wife's complaints about the lack of elementary needs in their household, like clothing.[43] Also, he will leave Xanthippe a widow with three young orphans to raise.[44] Socrates never assumed any glorious political functions,[45] nor did he create any manifestly important artistic or intellectual works. He was even of a legendary ugliness,[46] which was particularly repulsive for the Greek aesthetic sensitivity. In addition, he was judged guilty of impiety towards the Athenian pantheon, of the introduction of new *daimònia* and of corruption of the city's youth,[47] and therefore condemned to a dishonourable death by drinking hemlock.[48]

In spite of all this, Phaedo, in the dialogue of Plato bearing his name, depicts Socrates as an *eudàimon*, a felicitous man when he stands at the threshold of Hades.[49] I think that it is possible to understand better this paradox if we consider some elements of Socrates' life and death that

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indifference that many modern historians of philosophy have attributed to them), see, for example, Vlastos 1991, 183; Boudouris 1989, and Boudouris 1990; Lefka 2018.

[41] See Pl. *Ap.* 3b9-c1 and 31b5-c3. Of course, as Socrates didn't write anything, we are limited to the indirect information on his life and ideas transmitted essentially by his pupils and friends, Plato, Xenophon, and Aeschines of Sphettus (we have only fragments of his dialogues, cited by later writers), with the caution that these sources impose.

[42] See Pl. *Smp.* 174a3-4.

[43] See for example Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, ed. R.D. Hicks (1925), Book II, 5, "Socrates", 36-37.

[44] See Pl. *Phd.* 59e8-60b1, 116a-b5.

[45] See Pl. *Ap.* 23b7-9.

[46] See Pl. *Smp.* 215a6-b6.

[47] See Pl. *Ap.* 26b2-7, and Xenophon, *Apology of Socrates*, transl. by E.C. Marchant & O.G. Todd, revised by J. Henderson (2013), 10.

[48] See Pl. *Phd.* 116b8-14. For the various questions about Socrates' trial and death sentence, see for example: Derenne 1930, 71-184; Brickhouse & Smith 1989; Reeve 1989; Stone 1989; Bodéüs 1989; Garland 1992.

[49] *Phd*. 58e-59a.

can be in accordance with the ideas expressed by the Sages and the first philosophers mentioned above concerning the *eu zên* for a human being.

In Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, the accused defends himself against the charge of impiety and of corruption of the youth by identifying his whole philosophical activity with a conscientious effort to follow Apollo's orders, expressed by a Delphic oracle indicating that he was the wisest of men. Socrates tried to understand the meaning of this divine message and started questioning the persons currently considered "wise", as he couldn't see anything more in himself than his own ignorance.[50] He started thus to examine by the dialectical method the opinions expressed by others, finding them often deprived of solid rational arguments and therefore unacceptable. His interlocutors believed they possessed a knowledge that in fact escaped them. The philosopher's *èlenchos* aims ultimately perhaps, as he says, to prove that only god is wise and among men the wisest should be the one who acknowledges the limits of his knowledge, like Socrates.[51]

Therefore, Socrates is a wise man after all, presenting also piety at the highest degree,[52] as his research for the truth constitutes a divine mission. Of course, this is his personal interpretation of the initial oracle and thus he assumes the entire responsibility, when he decides to lead his own life in the way he thinks best, as the «unexamined life is not worth living» (ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ).[53]

His particular and privileged relations with the divinities are also evidenced by his experience of the «divine sign» (τὸ δαιμόνιον σημεῖον),[54]

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[50] Scholars still disagree about the sincerity or the "irony" of Socrates' ignorance. See, for example: Festugière 1966, 92-93; Vlastos 1985; Vlastos 1987, and Vlastos 1991; Scolnicov 1991; Gomez-Lobo 1996, 32-35.

[51] Pl. *Ap.* 20e6-23b4. For the Socratic *elenchus* and dialectics see, for example, Robinson 1941, 15 ff.; Vlastos 1983, 27-58; Rossetti 2011.

[52] For Socrates' piety (more personal and profound than the common one of his times) compared also to Plato's, see for example: Moulinier 1952, 330 ff.; Babut 1974, 59-74 and 75-104; Brisson 1997, 52-56, and Brisson 2011; Lefka 2005a; Solcan 2009; Engels 2009.

[53] Pl. *Ap.* 38a5-6.

[54] Dorion 2003, 180 and note 33, believes that we should not necessarily *always* suppose the term *semèion* after *daimònion* (like Vlastos did). Moreover, we should consider that for Xenophon's texts the Socratic *daimònion* is identified with the "divinity" in general (170-180), as if it were equivalent to the terms *dàimon* or *theòs*. Dorion

the internal voice that he alone hears from his early youth onward, which advises him what to do or not to do in critical moments (according to Plato, the *daimònion*'s function was always negative; according to Xenophon, it could be positive as well as negative).[55] This particularity would offer one of the reasons for jealousy and misunderstanding that lead to Socrates' being accused of introducing new δαιμόνια in Athens (and not θεούς as was the usual formulation of such legal texts).[56]

In Plato's *Apology* we see that when Socrates goes around practicing his philosophical mission, he isn't simply testing if the arguments of his interlocutors are valid or not. His activity has a protreptic aim. He incites the interlocutors to take care of the most important goods. In his opinion, these are the excellent qualities of their soul and not material wealth. The effort to define the various ethical notions by dialectics, even when it doesn't give immediate and definitive results, should bring them closer to the necessary knowledge of these principles and consequently to their practical application.[57] They can thus become excellent persons,[58] as, according to Socrates, no one is evil willingly, but only because of his ignorance of the good.[59] This is also the best way to attain *eudaimonìa* in the private and the public domain.[60]

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interprets the three passages of the Platonic dialogues where the term *daimònion* appears alone as a noun (181-184) in this way.

[55] The Socratic *daimònion* is mentioned in the following passages: Pl. *Ap.* 31c7-d6; *Euthphr.* 3b5-7; *Euthd.* 272e3-4; *R.* VI 496c3-4; *Phdr.* 242b8-9; *Tht.* 151a4; Xen. *Ap.* 4-5, 12-13; *Smp.* 8.5; *Mem.* I 1, 2-4, IV 8, 1 and 5 (and indirectly in *Ap.* 8; *Mem.* IV 3, 12). For the various interpretations of the nature and function of the "divine sign" of Socrates see, for example: Burnet 1924, 16-17; Gundert 1954; Guthrie 1971, 82-85; Brickhouse & Smith 1989, 242-245; De Strycker & Slings 1994, 153-154; Gomez-Lobo 1996, 75-80; Destrée & Smith 2011; Timotin 2011. I think that Stavru 2021 (below, 353-367) proposes also an interesting role that the *daimònion* of Socrates could play for the definition of his *eudaimonìa.*

[56] Mikalson 1983, 66.

[57] See also Lefka 2005b.

[58] See Pl. *Ap.* 29d4-30b4.

[59] See Pl. *Prt.* 352c2-7, and 358a6-d4. On Socrates' and Plato's "intellectualism" see also, for example, Gulley 1965; North 1966, 152-196; Vlastos 1969, and Vlastos 1991; Dodds 1971; Shorey 1971; Kahn 1987, 77-103, and Kahn 2002; Irwin 1977, 11 and 30-98; Gerson 1997; Morrison 2003; Seel 2008, 261; Bossi 2003; Lefka 2014b.

[60] See also Périllié 2015, 131-172.

Socrates himself is presented by Plato and Xenophon as an exceptionally virtuous man.[61] Not only is he pious and wise, but he showed heroic courage when he participated in the Athenian military expedition in Potidaea, where he even saved others' lives, being ready to sacrifice his own, without trying to receive any official recognition.[62] He endured his trial and the resulting death sentence while remaining perfectly calm, without of any sign of fear, till the end.[63]

Applying his notion of justice, he respected the decision of the jury, even if he believed it was unjust, and didn't accept to escape, as his friends proposed.[64] He also considered that, if one had to choose, «it would be better to be the victim rather than the author of an injustice».[65]

His temperance and detachment from the material pleasures was evident from the simplicity and the sobriety of his everyday life. In spite of these habits, he showed an equally remarkable resistance to all kinds of occasional excess (like drinking) or hardship (like a sleepless night, a lack of nutrition or walking on ice without any warm clothes or shoes).[66] The portrait that his students and friends transmitted to us shows him also as a man who is never overcome by anger or irritation in his communication with others. He remains respectful, polite, often adopting a light playful mood, even when he is confronted with interlocutors that seem particularly vain, cynical, offending or aggressive.[67]

In his social life he enjoys the admiring company of many friends, some of which weren't the most recommendable (like Alcibiades or Critias); a fact that eventually contributed to the creation of a negative and

[61] For the different ways to define the relation between virtue and *eudaimonìa*, see for example: Rudebusch 1999, 123-128; Annas 2002 (identity thesis); Vlastos 1991, 224-231; Irwin 1995, 58-60; Brickhouse & Smith 1994, 118 (sufficiency thesis); Reshotko 2013 (necessity thesis); Lefka 2009. Bobonich 2011 makes an interesting overview of the various interpretations, as well as Pentassuglio 2021 (above, 135-157).

[62] See Pl. *Smp.* 219e5-221c1.

[63] See Pl. *Cri.* 43b6-9, and *Phd.* 216e-218a14.

[64] See Pl. *Cri.* 44b5-54e2.

[65] See Pl. *Grg.* 469c1-2.

[66] See Pl. *Smp.* 219e1-220d5.

[67] See, for example, in Plato's works: Euthyphro (*Euthph.* 4 e 4 ff.), Hippias (*Hp. Ma.* 281), Polus (*Grg.* 461b3 ff.), Callicles (*Grg.* 481b6 ff.) and Thrasymachus (*R.* I 336b1 ff.).

harmful reputation for himself.[68] However, if we have inherited an echo of his life and philosophical activity today, about 2500 years later, we owe it initially to the affectionate devotion of some of his companions.

Concerning his contribution to the social and political welfare, Socrates accomplished what would be usually considered as his duty: he created a family and gave three sons to the city; he fought bravely in the battles he was sent by his city's generals as we saw above, and he carried out the role of the *prýtanis*, when he was allotted to it as one of the representatives of his tribe, in the way he believed the most just, even against the reactions of many others.[69]

But even if he didn't seek to undertake important public functions, he considered his philosophical activity as a means of educating many others to become better persons and citizens in this democratic regime[70] and the greatest present the divinity could offer to his city. He justified this claim by the fact that he was keeping the Athenians' consciences awake, like a gadfly stinging an imposing but sluggish horse.[71] Therefore, when his judges voted that he was guilty, he dared propose as an alternative "penalty" that he should be nourished at the expenses of the city as a great benefactor, so that he could continue his dialogues in the streets of Athens.[72] In any case, he declared that he wouldn't stop philosophizing, even if he could go away freely only on this condition, as this was how he thought he should obey to Apollo's command.[73]

Even if the judges perceived Socrates' words as a provocation that turned a greater number among them against him, I think that we may take seriously the philosopher's firm belief that his action contributes at the highest point to the city's welfare in the long run.

Moreover, as Socrates discussed also with many foreigners that were visiting or living in Athens, his concern for the well-being of the other human beings surpasses the limits of his city-state, bestowing to his philosophical activity a universal character. Socrates as a philos-

[68] See for example Brickhouse & Smith 1989, 70-71 and note 29.
[69] See Pl. *Ap.* 30a4-7, and 32a9-c4.
[70] See Xen. *Mem.* I 7, 15.
[71] See Pl. *Ap.* 30d5-31c3.
[72] Ivi, 36b3-37a1.
[73] Ivi, 29c5-30a7.

opher is also a citizen of the world, open to a respectful intercultural dialogue, under the guidance of reason.[74] I may say also that he follows in this way as much as he can the divine model of εὐδαιμονία, by taking care of all human beings, as the gods do.[75]

5. Conclusions

I think that it was sufficiently demonstrated here that by the astonishing qualification *eudàimon* at the end of his life, Socrates is certainly in agreement with the vision of the best life and an honourable death offered already by the "wise men", while in total opposition with the multitude. Indeed, in Plato's dialogue that initially retained our attention, Phaedo, after completing the narration of Socrates' final moments, considers the philosopher the «best», the «wisest» and the «most just» of all the persons of his time (τῶν τότε ὧν ἐπειράθημεν ἀρίστου καὶ ἄλλως φρονιμωτάτου καὶ δικαιοτάτου).[76] Therefore, Socrates isn't original in adopting this ethical position. He is however the first thinker who dedicated his whole life essentially to the dialectical research aiming at its theoretical foundation, as he believed that «this is the greatest good for a man, to discuss every day about virtue» (μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν ὅν ἀνθρώπῳ τοῦτο, ἑκάστης ἡμέρας περὶ ἀρετῆς τοὺς λόγους ποιεῖσθαι).[77] He thus confirms his freedom, by daring to distinguish himself from the common opinion, at the price of his death. I believe that this is another element that should be added to the reasons for his *eudaimonìa*.

According an equal importance to the *pràxis*, Socrates insists on the conscious and conscientious application of the knowledge discovered in this way. To be *eudàimon*, a man should achieve an internal harmony among all the parts of his being and his different activities: thoughts, discourse, actions.

Concerning the discussion about an eventual opposition and a nec-

[74] See also Lefka 2002.

[75] I agree therefore with the ideas advanced by D.R. Morrison, in the Workshop on Socratic *eudaimonìa*; for an equivalent interpretation of the equally surprising *eudaimonìa* of the guardians-philosophers in Plato's *Kallìpolis*, see Lefka 2011.

[76] Pl. *Phd.* 118a16-17.

[77] Pl. *Ap.* 38a2-3.

essary choice between what one may call an "individualistic", or even an "egoistic", and an "altruistic" *eudaimonìa*,[78] in fact I do not find such a dilemma pertinent. On the contrary, it seems to me that for Socrates these two levels of the "best life" are inevitably and strongly interconnected. We may even add to them another dimension, concerning man's relation to the divinity.[79]

I think that the human being presents already a great complexity. Moreover, he enters in multiple relations (that we may even call "dialectic", as they constitute constant mutual exchanges of vital importance for the evolution of all parties concerned) with greater and even more elaborate systems – like the family, the group of friends, the city, humankind, all the other living beings, the *kòsmos*. Consequently, the question of the "best life", covering all the years of an earthly existence, from its beginning till its completion, couldn't receive a simple and unidimensional answer. I believe that the personality and the life of Socrates, paradigmatic for many of his contemporaries and even of the following generations, puts forward the multiple aspects of a hard-won excellence composing his vision of *eudaimonìa*, underlining also the delicate harmonious coexistence among them, which is even harder to achieve.

At the threshold of Hades, Socrates is εὐδαίμων as he completed a long life where his actions were in coherence with the principles for his own wellbeing that he adopted after an exhaustive rational reflection. At the same time his activity is in harmony with what he considered as a primordial contribution to the public welfare – for his city but also for humankind in general – and a respectful attitude towards the divinity.[80] His death comes as a result of the philosopher's free choice of this

[78] See, for example, Vlastos 1991; Morrison 2003; Bobonich 2011; Ahbel-Rappe 2012; Smith 2016. See also Stavru 2021 (below 353-367), and Jones & Sharma 2021 (above, 233-242).

[79] Cf., for example, Pl. *Grg.* 506b5-508b3. F. de Luise, in the article included in the present volume (above, 63-90), comments also on this passage insisting on Socrates' opinion that the inner order of the virtuous man contributes to the better functioning of the human world and to its harmonious relation with the gods, expanding to the cosmic realm.

[80] For a detailed analysis of the multiple relations of Socrates to the gods, see Lefka (2013), Chap. V: *Les Divinités et le philosophe: questions de vie et de mort*, 276-326.

kind of life and Socrates accepts it also with the luminous serenity that characterises in all circumstances a wise, pious, courageous, just and moderate man.

Therefore we may also understand better even the doubts expressed in the final words of Plato's *Apology*: Socrates wonders if his departure after his condemnation to drink the hemlock is an evil, as his *daimòn-ion* didn't seem to react negatively to his coming to his trial: «For no one knows which one of us goes for the best, but the divinity (ὁπότεροι δὲ ἡμῶν ἔρχονται ἐπὶ ἄμεινον πρᾶγμα, ἄδηλον παντὶ πλὴν ἢ τῷ θεῷ)».[81]

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[81] Pl. *Ap.* 42a3-5.

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Keywords

Socrates; Plato; Xenophon; Presocratics; Sages; Hades; gods; *eudaimonìa*; *eudàimon*; *eu zên*; *daimònion*; dialectic; liberty; responsibility; virtues; piety; wisdom; courage; temperance; justice; ethics; politics; education; religion

Abstract

In the beginning of Plato's *Phaedo*, Socrates is presented as *eudàimon*, 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 was going to leave behind three young orphans. 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 *daimònia* and of corruption of the city's youth.

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

In my paper 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 the divinities and the privileged he-

roes' 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, Solon explained to the arrogant Croesus, according to Herodotus, that one has to take under consideration their whole life, including the way it is completed (Herodotus, *The Histories*, I 32). In the second part 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, centered especially on his relation to himself, to his social environment and to the divinities. These elements may give a clearer idea about the reasons that could justify Socrates' being "*eudàimon*" at the end of his life on earth.

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