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The Concept of “Kalokagathia”

It is crucial to note that “kalokagathia” is a collection of terms that are extremely important to Greek society. Firstly, it is derived from two words, namely kalos, which means external beauty, and agathos, which implies honesty, representing doctrine and social status (Tomecka 11). Therefore, “kalokagathia” can be explained as the human endeavor to achieve excellence in these three areas. These three concepts together constitute a holistic philosophy, which can also be observed in modern society in a modified form (Tomecka 12). Thus, it is essential to observe the changes in the concept and description of “kalokagathia” in the works of Socrates, Homer, and Euripides.

Socrates' Concept

One of the first Greek philosophers to consider the term “kalokagathia” was Socrates. In Plato's *Symposium*, Socrates does not support the understanding of the world that Plato offers. It is because Plato proposes that the beautiful is good and vice versa. This idea is based on the fact that the concepts of beauty and goodness have a common nature and, accordingly, should be related to each other (Plato 28c1-2). Instead, Socrates, having studied the works of Plato, realizes that beauty does not necessarily have to come from goodness because there are different properties and forms. While researching the *Symposium*, Socrates gives an example of erotic desire, which is beautiful by design, and therefore comes from the good. In fact, Socrates argues that erotic desire is not necessarily good but is related to beauty, which is physical (Plato 93c5-7). Thus, according to the philosopher, distinguishing physical properties characteristic of people, such as lust, is worthwhile. Therefore, Socrates

does not support Plato's claim that beauty is related to the good but explains the need to expand it.

Moreover, Socrates needs clarification on the fact that Plato connects beauty with the good. In order to explain the incorrectness of this point of view, Socrates again gives an example of people's erotic desires. Accordingly, from an erotic point of view, what is beautiful does not necessarily have to look good from an ethical perspective (Plato 93c5-7). Especially certain erotic moments and actions that may seem beautiful, according to the subjective opinion of some people, do not necessarily come from the concept of goodness. As a result, Socrates concludes that beauty is a concept of attractive appearance, but it is not an indicator of goodness or virtue.

Socrates also focused on social status and argued that high social status is not directly related to goodness and virtue. According to ancient Greek concepts, people who achieve certain achievements do not necessarily perform good actions and look beautiful. Accordingly, in contrast to Plato, Socrates' view of "kalokagathia" is characterized by different properties of goodness, beauty, and social status (Plato 143c 8-9). To this end, Socrates argues that "kalos" can inspire individuals of different social statuses to want to achieve great fortune at the same time without considering the risks, and such actions cannot be unambiguously good in nature. Therefore, the main lesson, as emphasized by Socrates, is that what appears to be beautiful is not necessarily considered good.

Homer's Perspective

Homer also used the concept of beauty, which is based on three main areas of goodness, physical beauty, and high social status. In Homer's *Iliad*, the concept of beauty is best represented by the characters of Helen and Paris. For example, Helen is described by Homer as beautiful in appearance but with a complex character (Homer 7. 127). Accordingly, it is clear from the description that the external beauty of the body in Homer is not connected

with inner goodness, just as in Socrates. Meanwhile, such a description contradicts Plato's idea that goodness is always beautiful and vice versa. It is also worth noting that Homer described Paris as a young, intelligent, and handsome man from the upper ruling class (Homer 7. 127). Accordingly, at first, Paris corresponds to all parts of the concept of “kalokagathia,” but the investigation of the *Iliad* demonstrates the opposite.

Correspondingly, Helen and Paris in the *Iliad* are initially presented as virtuous characters and can embody the meaning of kalokagathia. Although, when Helen falls in love with Paris and leaves her husband, fleeing to Troy, it provokes the Trojan Wars and the final fall of Troy (Homer 6. 119). As a result, this episode explains that Homer shares the point of view of Socrates, not Plato. For beautiful and intelligent characters do not necessarily have to be guided by logic and good intentions. In the story of Helen and Paris' escape, Homer shows that kalon and virtue are not the same things. Thus, regardless of their high social status, origin, and external beauty, both characters chose their own desires over preserving peace and tranquility in the state. Their actions cannot be considered good and virtuous because Helena betrayed her husband to satisfy her desires, and Paris neglected the negative consequences for the state (Homer 6. 119). Hence, the desire to fulfill the personal desires of the heroes led to the destruction of Troy.

Meanwhile, Homer also demonstrates that virtue is not mandatory for beautiful people. For instance, when Helen realized the consequences of her desires, she blamed Aphrodite (Homer 24. 451). Helen did not recognize that her decision with Paris had led to the war, which shows that Homer supports the Socratic understanding of “kalokagathia”. This is due to the fact that the beauty of the main characters of the *Iliad* does not correlate with virtue, as is commonly believed according to Plato. Also, Homer, unlike Plato and Socrates, provides “kalokagathia” with new features; Homer indicates that beauty is associated with passion. Accordingly, Homer considers passion and beauty as the same thing as achieving

personal desires. Moreover, Homer supports Socrates' view that beauty is not related to virtue. Thus, in the *Iliad*, Homer often supported Socrates' assertion and introduced a new syllable for passion.

Nevertheless, although the word *kalos* in ancient Greek expressed beauty and *agathos*, which means goodness, the meanings of these concepts were different for all Greeks. Homer demonstrates in the *Iliad* that goodness and beauty are not basic categories. The social component of the knightly *ethnos*, a social group that was less mentioned by Socrates and Plato, should also be added (Homer 9. 189). This can be explained by the fact that “the *Iliad* is an epos telling the story of mostly bravery, devotion and gallantry of the knightly elite, in which each of the knights is presented together with his noble ancestors” (Tomecka 12). Accordingly, the concepts of virtue and beauty in the *Iliad* can be seen in the knights who fought to preserve their state and performed the function assigned to their class with integrity. Thus, according to Homer, not only people with high social status can be decent and beautiful people, Socrates did not consider this option. This is because knights, unlike Paris, fit the standard description of “*kalokagathia*.”

Euripides' Perspective

Euripides, like Socrates, Plato, and Homer, try to operate with the term and properties of “*kalokagathia*” when describing the characters in the *Bacchae*. Accordingly, Euripides depicts the Greek god Dionysus, who has high social status as the god of wine, animals, and fertility (Euripides 18-1). Nevertheless, Dionysus is also characterized by human virtues and passions, and Euripides describes the god as beautiful but not morally unambiguous. In this way, Dionysus has the property of beauty and social status, but the virtue of Dionysus is constantly changing.

As a result, Euripides supports Socrates' view that virtue does not necessarily correlate with beauty. The fact that Dionysus succumbed to the zeal and desire to prove his true divine

nature. As a result, he punished ordinary people and committed violence (Euripides 120-23). Hence, Dionysus's actions cannot be viewed as virtuous and fall under Plato's category of "kalokagathia". Instead, Euripides supports the opinion of Homer and Socrates but introduces the concept of loss of virtue. That is, at the beginning of the *Bacchae*, Dionysus possessed beauty, high social status, and virtue, but under the influence of passion and the desire to demonstrate his power, he lost his goodness (Euripides 120-24). Therefore, Euripides supports Plato's views but considers the possibility of identifying beauty and virtue if the hero is not influenced by passion and personal desires.

Conclusion

In summary, the writings of Plato, Homer, and Euripides explain that at least beauty and virtue are not interdependent concepts. The common thread in their works is that virtue can be neglected even by beautiful and high-social-status people for their passions and desires. However, Euripides admits the possibility of the existence of "kalokagathia", according to Plato, only in the absence of a person's special wishes. Moreover, Homer gives the example of knights as beautiful and virtuous people but not with high social status. Accordingly, certain parts of the concept of "kalokagathia" may vary. However, Socrates' main lesson that beauty gives rise to irrational passions that are not based on virtue is correct and familiar to all authors.

Works Cited

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