

Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition

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Detail from "The School of Athens" by Raphael
showing Plato on the left and Aristotle on the right.



The Teaching Company
2000

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Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition

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Louis Markos received his B.A. in English and history from Colgate University (Hamilton, NY) and his M.A. and Ph.D. in English from the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, MI). While at the University of Michigan, he specialized in British romantic poetry (his dissertation was on Wordsworth), literary theory, and the classics. At Houston Baptist University (where he has taught since 1991), he offers courses in all three of these areas, as well as in Victorian poetry and prose, seventeenth-century poetry and prose, mythology, epic, and film.

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He has produced other courses for The Teaching Company, including *Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition* (in collaboration with Dr. Michael Sugrue); *The Search for a Meaningful Past: Philosophies, Theories and Interpretations of Human History*; and *The History of the United States* (in collaboration with Dr. Louis Masur and Dr. James Shenton).

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Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition

Scope:

“Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition” is a comprehensive survey of the history of Western philosophy from its origins in classical Greece to the present. The material is presented through a close examination of the central doctrines in the discourse of Western philosophy, as presented through the thought of critical figures. The course not only presents the broad range of philosophical positions articulated, but it also examines the relationships between various systems and doctrines as they develop over time, along with the relations between those doctrines and their larger historical settings.

Key philosophical doctrines are explained in their historical contexts, although they developed according to their own internal conceptual dynamic. The Western tradition is a blend of two outlooks that are characteristic of the ancient cities that generated them—Athens and Jerusalem. Western monotheism and its philosophical entailments—fideist resignation, mystic ecstasy, and dogmatic scripturalism—along with such assumptions as the equality of all souls in the sight of God, ultimately derive from Jerusalem. Athens is the city of inquiry, hubris, and emancipation. Athens attained the highest kind of human development; it achieved excellence in every department of human aspiration, and the rationalism of Western culture, with its unprecedented control over nature, is a perennial element in Western philosophy. Jerusalem supplies the mythos of the West and its canonical holy text; Athens supplies the critical and self-critical spirit, which animates the Promethean and perhaps Faustian history of Western thought.

The genre of philosophy in the West has been characterized by two basic sets of issues. One set of issues is concerned with the environment in which we find ourselves and our relation to it (metaphysics and epistemology). The other set is concerned with the nature of human experience (ethics, social and political theory, and existentialism). Although these issues have a certain constancy, the ways they are interrogated or the particular formulations that are devised to address them vary dramatically over time. Yet this variation is not always purely random; entire philosophical epochs can be characterized on the basis of shared approaches to or formulations of basic questions, despite a plethora of different solutions. This series of lectures offers an overview of the Western philosophical tradition. Whether in the hylomorphism and eudaemonism of the classical world, the fideism of the Christian age, or the scientism of the Enlightenment, “Great Minds” examines both the shared presuppositions and approaches of an epoch, as well as the different positions at which various thinkers arrived from those shared approaches. The former are highlighted in introductory lectures to each historical section and are then examined in the specific doctrines of individual philosophers in subsequent lectures. The course itself is comprised of seven historical sections.

The first section, Classical Origins, examines the origins of philosophy in the Greco-Roman world. Philosophic speculation in this period was characterized by a hylomorphic approach to metaphysics (a theory of being based on form and content) and a eudaemonic ethic (the morally good is distinguished by its promotion of human happiness and felicity). The first three lectures on the Pre-Socratics and Sophism set the stage for the emergence of the full-blown speculations of Plato and Aristotle, who together comprise roughly half the lectures in this section. These two figures both share a hylomorphic and eudaemonic orientation, but they diverge dramatically in the ways they deploy that orientation. Plato heralds an “idealistic” or otherworldly tradition in Western philosophy, while his student Aristotle is characterized by the naturalism and scientism of his thought and the tradition it would inspire. The final three lectures examine how the Romans handled this precious intellectual inheritance. Although hardly original, Roman philosophical synthesis was marked by a tendency to simplify and “spiritualize” the systematic thought of the great Athenians and, thus, make it accessible and relevant to a larger educated audience. Both Stoicism and Epicureanism demonstrate the Roman propensity to search for the ethical and personal implications of metaphysical and epistemological positions.

The second section, The Christian Age, witnesses the transformation of philosophy from a monothetic search for explanations to a spiritual quest for meaning and understanding informed by a profound fideism. Lectures Fourteen and Fifteen on the Hebrew contribution to post-classical Western thought examine the two critical issues raised for that tradition by the Pentateuch. These issues are the metaphysical and incomprehensible gulf between the profane world of man and the sacred realm of the divine (bridgeable only by an act of religious faith or existential courage) and the historical dimension introduced by the covenanted relation of God and his chosen people across a linear time ruled by divine providence. The next two lectures examine how these issues are reinterpreted in the foundational texts of the Christian tradition. Lectures Nineteen through Twenty-Two are devoted to the development of theology in the so-called Middle Ages, during which time philosophically sophisticated theologians tried to reconcile the fundamental truths of Christian revelation with the theoretical insights and approaches of classical philosophy. The final three lectures represent a sort of Christian revival against the intermixture of “classical pagan” argumentative concerns that had characterized scholasticism, a revival that could take the form of quiescent mysticism, principled reformation, or fundamentalist confessional politics. All three lectures expose the basic tension inherent in medieval Christianity between Jobean prudence and self-abnegation on the one hand and Greco-Roman humanism on the other.

Section three explores the period from the Renaissance to the onset of the Enlightenment in the middle to late seventeenth century. This epoch was characterized by a reaction against the scholastic intellectual inheritance. Particularly objectionable were the role of Christian authority and dogma in

speculative thought, as well as a conception of the role and power of philosophy that relegated it to the handmaid of theology. Lectures Twenty-Six through Twenty-Eight focus on Renaissance thinkers who counterpoise the sterility of medieval scholastic inquiry with the rich erudition of classical speculation and self-consciously embrace the latter over the former as a source of further inquiry. This liberation from the intellectual tyranny of received tradition is carried to its logical conclusion in the next four lectures as Galileo, Bacon, and Descartes all seek to ground their arguments directly in the evidences of nature and a self-evident reason. This rejection of traditional authority (both intellectual and political) in favor of a purely rational and “new modeled” order is one of the central marks of the “modern.” Not surprisingly, it quickly generated critical responses of its own, both in the form of skepticism (Bayle) and fideism (Pascal). The final lecture on Newton serves as a transition from the still-dogmatic rationalism (and mathematicism) of the great seventeenth-century post-Cartesians to the less systematic and largely empirical orientation (Scientism) of the eighteenth century.

Naturally, the Enlightenment is the focus of the fourth section. Lectures Thirty-Eight through Forty-One are meant to lay down the basic outlines of its early “moderate” phase. Locke’s curiously liberal invocation of the social contractual idiom that Hobbes had used as a bulwark of absolute power and his widely influential articulation of empiricism serve as a sort of baseline for the understanding of subsequent thinkers, such as Vico and Montesquieu. Lectures Forty-Two through Forty-Eight examine the controversial sides of the Enlightenment, both in the skeptical, this-worldly, and shockingly irreligious thought of David Hume (and, to a lesser extent, his good friend and fellow-consequentialist Adam Smith) and in the downright hostility of such critics of the Enlightenment as the Anglican Bishop George Berkeley and the proto-Romanticism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Section five, The Age of Ideology, is marked by its eclecticism and the broad and diverse range of issues covered. Yet, these lectures offer an underlying unity, which is centered on the turn from the metaphysical and political to the historical and social (and, in some cases, the personal). This transition marks the age of ideology, an age in which mere “theory” divorced from “real life” and practical considerations was likely to be dismissed as irrelevant, obscurantist, and “utopian.” A pair of lectures on Kant establishes the limits, both temporal and theoretical, of the Enlightenment. Kant’s Copernican revolution and aesthetic standpoint serve both to protect Enlightenment optimism and scientific confidence from the skepticism of Hume and give rational/pragmatic grounds for faith in the traditional concerns of a Christian metaphysic, despite the obvious “pagan” thrust of late-Enlightenment thought. Kant’s thought would supply the materials from which nineteenth-century transcendentalisms and idealisms would be constructed. Lectures Fifty-Two through Fifty-Four all deal with the problem of the proper relation between science, human history, and political authority. From Burke’s curiously modern sociological formulation of the conservative

Lecture One

Introduction

Darren Staloff, Ph.D.

Scope: Philosophy can be described as a historical discipline subject to change over time. The pre-Socratic epoch represents the birth of Western philosophical speculation in the greater Greek *diaspora*. The classical Greek philosophers (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) drew on the pre-Socratic traditions—as well as one another’s teachings—to construct the first full-blown philosophical systems, particularly those of Plato and Aristotle. The Hellenic and Roman worlds inherited these classical doctrines and incorporated them into their own philosophic perspectives.

Outline

- I. What is philosophy? Philosophy can be characterized in a variety of ways.
 - A. Philosophy can be defined as the rational pursuit of truths conceived as answers to perennial questions.
 1. Metaphysics or ontology is the study of being or the ultimate nature and structure of the universe.
 2. Ethics is the study of the nature of the good life and good itself.
 3. Aesthetics examines the nature of the beautiful and its embodiment in art and nature.
 4. Epistemology examines the question of knowledge.
 5. Philosophy of mind, or psychology, examines the workings of the soul or mind, analyzing its functions and mechanisms.
 6. Natural philosophy offers a rational account of the natural world (both organic and inorganic) with an eye to rational explanation.
 - B. Philosophy can be described as a historical discipline subject to change over time.
 1. Different epochs are concerned with different issues. In addition, philosophic questions that prove tractable often cease to remain philosophical. The philosophy of Galileo and Newton later become the foundation of physics.
 2. Different epochs frame issues differently.
 3. Philosophy and its practitioners occupy different cultural and social roles in different epochs—ancient, medieval, and modern.
 - C. Philosophy is also what its name implies, the “love of wisdom.”

- II. The pre-Socratic epoch represents the birth of Western philosophical speculation in the greater Greek *diaspora*.
 - A. The first phase of pre-Socratic thought was devoted to understanding the natural world, or the world of objects.
 1. The Ionians sought to understand the natural world by reducing its multiplicity to a finite number of entities: earth, air, fire, water.
 2. The Pythagoreans sought to reduce material realities to mathematical objects, highlighting the ways in which mathematics helps us model our experience.
 3. Heraclitus and Parmenides addressed the problem of change and continuity. In approaching these questions in an abstract and logical way, they helped give rise to metaphysics as a logical discipline.
 - B. The second phase of pre-Socratic thought turned to an analysis of the human world, or the world of subjects.
 1. Both Heraclitus and the Pythagoreans offered ethical doctrines, though of a radically different nature.
 2. The Sophists represent the first full-blown engagement with the problems of politics, ethics, and human sociability. Their analysis was empirical and realistic, the basis for subsequent philosophy.
- III. The classical Greek philosophers (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) drew on the pre-Socratic traditions—as well as one another’s teachings—to construct the first full-blown philosophical systems, particularly those of Plato and Aristotle.
 - A. The great breakthrough of Socrates was the development of ethical rationalism.
 1. Socrates argued that ethical truth was absolute and demonstrable, much like the truths of geometry.
 2. Socrates taught that ethical truths were not only rational but also teachable.
 3. Socrates also taught that all people act on the basis of their beliefs: “To know the good is to do the good.”
 - B. Plato, Socrates’s student, injected his teacher’s ethical rationalism into an overarching philosophical synthesis.
 1. Plato’s metaphysics addressed the problem of change raised by Heraclitus and the Eleatics. His doctrine of forms divided natural objects into their structures or essential natures (forms) and material contents. In this way, Plato offered the first dualist ontology, or view that there is another realm beyond that of sense and appearance.
 2. Plato’s ethical and political doctrines are informed by his adoption of the ethical rationalism of Socrates. Thus, Plato’s political

Lecture Two

The Pre-Socratics – Physics and Metaphysics

Lou Markos, Ph.D.

Scope: In this lecture, we witness the exciting birth of philosophy in the speculations and systems of the pre-Socratics. We shall explore how these philosophical forerunners shifted the focus of learned thought from religious questions of “who” and “why” to scientific questions of “what” and “how,” and by so doing, “kicked-off” an ongoing dialogue that still continues 2,500 years later. First, we shall consider the attempts of the Milesian physicists and the Pythagoreans to locate the primal origin of all things. Second, we shall see how Heraclitus and the Eleatics argued, respectively, that the true nature of reality is endless change (pluralism) or unchanging being (monism) and how their debate fueled much of the philosophy to come.

Outline

- I. The pre-Socratics are so named because they precede Socrates chronologically and because they laid down a philosophical framework that Socrates (and later, Plato and Aristotle) both developed and countered.
 - A. The pre-Socratics flourished from the late sixth to the mid-fifth centuries BCE.
 - B. They did not (like Socrates) call Athens their home; they hailed, first, from the Ionian coast (Asia Minor) and, later, from the coasts of Italy and Sicily.
 1. This geographical fact is vital, because it places the pre-Socratics along major trade routes, thus exposing them to a plethora of foreign ideas and cults.
 2. Geography was particularly important for the founders of pre-Socraticism (Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes), who lived in the Ionian city of Miletus.
 3. Perhaps these three men were inspired by growing up in the bustling markets of Miletus, where every conceivable religious system was advocated, to search for answers that were more pluralistic, less tied to cultural norms.
 - C. To guide their search, they formulated a new set of questions.
 1. Previously, Greek poets, such as Hesiod, attempted to account for the present state of man and nature by tracing the origins and actions of the gods.
 2. In *Theogony*, Hesiod presents himself as called by the muses to explain why things are as they are and by what divine agency they came into being.

thought is prescriptive rather than descriptive and is the source for the subsequent idealist tradition in political speculation.

3. Plato’s psychology draws on his metaphysics, in that it is based on a dualism of soul (form) and body (material content). Plato further analyzes the psyche or soul/mind into three distinct faculties or functions: the rational, the spirited, and the appetitive, roughly comparable to the later mental structure proposed by Freud.
- C. Aristotle, Plato’s student, adopted the overall approach of his mentor but criticized some of his central doctrines on realistic grounds.
1. Aristotle rejected the metaphysical separation of form and content, arguing that forms exist only in their “participation” in actual things. Aristotle resolved the problem of change with his doctrine of entelechy. This doctrine held that natural objects have natural ends or “potentials” toward which they tend. For Aristotle, the soul is the final cause of motion in organic matter, and he identifies four forms of souls. The ultimate form is the Pure Actuality of God, the prime mover who sits atop the chain of being.
 2. Aristotle also criticized the conclusions of Plato’s political and ethical philosophy on realistic grounds.
- IV. The Hellenic and Roman worlds inherited these classical doctrines and incorporated them into their own philosophic perspectives.
- A. The Stoics and Epicureans tried to give meaning and direction to ethical and spiritual life without recourse to traditional mythologies.
 - B. Cicero, like Polybius, practiced a philosophical eclecticism, whereby he selectively drew on different elements of different philosophies to construct his own worldview.
 - C. Skepticism emerged as a result of the profusion of metaphysical and philosophical doctrines in the late Hellenic era.

Essential Reading:

Bertrand Russell, *Introduction to the Problems of Philosophy* (New York: 1959).

Supplementary Reading:

Frederick Copleston, S. J., *A History of Philosophy*, Book I, Vol. I., pp. 1–12 (New York: 1985).

Questions to Consider:

1. How did Plato’s metaphysics shape the development of Western philosophy?
2. What was the basis of Aristotle’s critique of Platonic philosophy?

3. The Milesian “physicists” (from *phusis*, the Greek word for nature) rejected this supernatural, religious orientation with its questions of “why” and “who” in favor of a more naturalistic and scientific approach.
 4. Their interest was not in *who* created the world but *what* the universe was made of, not *why* but *how* things came into being and passed away in terms of physical processes.
 5. Although the pre-Socratics were not necessarily anti-religious, God or the gods play no significant role in their materialistic systems.
 6. The pre-Socratic view was unlike Genesis (“In the beginning, God”) or the Gospel of John (“In the beginning was the Logos”). These philosophers posited that the origin of all life is “stuff” (matter); even if the gods do exist, they are as much outgrowths of this primal stuff as is man, nature, or the universe itself.
 7. Indeed, the pre-Socratics are, arguably, the true founders of evolution.
- D.** All the pre-Socratics shared a common belief that the material building blocks of life are composed of and/or expressed through four elements.
1. These four elements are, in ascending order, earth, water, air, and fire.
 2. Around these elements, the Greeks posited a long series of qualitative pairs: hot and cold, dry and moist, rare and dense, light and dark, and so on.
 3. The first two pairs were often directly linked to the elements: i.e., earth is cold and dry, water is cold and moist, air is hot and moist, fire is hot and dry.
- II.** The Milesians and the Pythagoreans sought to posit a first principle (Greek: *archê*), a single, originary substance that could account for the cosmos.
- A.** Thales, with whom all ancient accounts of the history of science and philosophy begin, was a keen observer of the natural world.
1. He accurately foretold an eclipse in 585 BCE, measured the pyramids, and cornered the market on olive presses by predicting a large olive crop.
 2. Although he learned the techniques for these deeds from Egypt, Thales is unique in that he borrowed knowledge that, in Egypt, was practical in nature and put it in new terms that were abstract and scientific.
 3. In the same way, Pythagoras, noting that the Egyptians used the ratio of 3:4:5 to determine, practically, if an angle was 90 degrees, converted this knowledge into the abstract-scientific-philosophical Pythagorean theorem: in *any* right triangle the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides.
4. Turning his keen analytical mind to the nature of the universe, Thales proposed that the first principle of all things is water.
 5. Thales is the first philosopher, not because he chose water as the origin of all things, but because, in so doing, he asserted both that an origin exists and that that origin could be determined through observation.
- B.** His pupil Anaximander did Thales one better by pushing the origin back, not to water but to something deeper and more primal than the four elements.
1. If one of the elements (say, water) and its physical qualities (cold and moist) were to dominate, it would eliminate both the other elements (earth, air, and fire) and their corresponding and opposing qualities (hot and dry).
 2. This original “something,” Anaximander called the unlimited (or boundless), a sort of cosmic soup out of which the four elements (and all of nature) separated.
- C.** Anaximenes, the third Milesian, took a step backward from Anaximander to Thales to posit that the first principle was, in fact, an element: air.
1. This philosophical/scientific lapse, however, is surely due to the fact that his real interest was not in the “what” question but in the “how” question.
 2. The real contribution of Anaximenes was to offer an explanation, not for *what* the source was, but for *how* all the elements could be generated out of it.
 3. He calculated that, by an upward process known as rarefaction, air became fire and that, by the opposing process of condensation, it transformed downward from wind to cloud to water to earth to stone.
 4. Hindsight suggests that Anaximenes would have done better to stick with water as his first principle, because water not only shifts between three “elements” (ice, water, steam) but also exists as three substances (solid, liquid, gas).
- D.** Pythagoras, and the school/cult he started, offered a more elaborate, quasi-religious solution to the problem of origin: all is number.
1. Noting that a direct relationship exists between numerical ratios and the harmonies of music, Pythagoras reasoned that just as numbers undergird music, so are they the very stuff and pattern of the universe.
 2. Indeed, so firm was his faith that all the natural world must display numerical order, Pythagoras would often indulge in great leaps of logic to accommodate his “conspiracy theory” view of numbers and nature.

3. For example, although Pythagoras observed nine heavenly spheres, he unscientifically posited a tenth (the “counter-earth”) to harmonize the heavens with the Pythagoreans’ near-worship of the number ten.
4. Pythagoras believed that the numerically based movements of these spheres produced a heavenly music that could be heard only by the initiate who had purified his body, mind, and soul.
5. Pythagoras believed that the soul was immortal and that, until the soul achieved an inner harmony or attunement to the greater harmonies of the cosmos, it would return to earth in a series of incarnations.
6. Pythagoreanism has had a profound impact on philosophy, religion, and science: it paved the way for Plato’s theories of the transmigration of the soul, the Middle-Age obsession with numerology, and Galileo’s claim that math is the “language of the universe.”

III. Out of the early speculations of Pythagoras and the Milesians arose a related question: is the true nature of reality singular or plural, fixed or changing?

- A. Heraclitus ascribed to the latter, arguing that all nature is in constant flux.
 1. Heraclitus possessed one of the richest, most enigmatic intellects of the ancient world. All his speculations were recorded in cryptic aphorisms that have influenced such thinkers as Blake, Nietzsche, and T. S. Eliot.
 2. Still, his basic theory is clear and is best expressed in his well-known saying: you can never step in the same river twice.
 3. The only constant in the universe is change itself. A perpetual yet creative strife exists between the elements and their qualitative pairs.
 4. Heraclitus used the twin images of the bow and the lyre to express how harmony can arise out of opposing (seemingly destructive) forces.
- B. Parmenides of Elea, on the other hand, held that reality is one and unchanging.
 1. In what may be a parody of Hesiod, he presents himself as called by the goddess of truth to discern between true knowledge, which rests on nature (*phusis*) and is apprehended by speculative reason, and mere opinion, which rests on custom (*nomos*) and is perceived by the senses.
 2. Although opinion tells us that things (being) change and move (pluralism), reason dictates that this change is an illusion: Being is perfect and complete and, therefore, cannot change; non-being does not exist and, therefore, there can be no empty space for being to move around in (monism). Heraclitus believed in pluralism.

3. Further, being is eternal. If, at a certain point, being came into existence, then it could only have sprung out of not-being and not-being does not exist.
4. That is to say, nothing can come from nothing: being simply is.

- C. Parmenides’s pupil Zeno defended monism from ridicule by demonstrating (in a series of paradoxes) that a belief in change, when taken to its logical end point, yields results that are *more* ridiculous.
 1. This method of attacking philosophical positions by exposing their latent absurdities is known as *reductio ad absurdum*.
 2. In his most well-known paradox, Zeno exposes the self-contradictory nature of movement by “proving” that Achilles, though twice as swift, could never catch an opponent that was given even a ten-foot head start.
 3. When Achilles had run ten feet, his opponent would have moved forward by five; when Achilles runs the five, the opponent is still ahead by two-and-a-half; and so forth, *reductio ad absurdum*.
- D. The philosophical impasse between the theories of Heraclitus and the Eleatics (Parmenides and Zeno hailed from Elea, Italy) made it incumbent on all future philosophers to try to reconcile change and continuity.
 1. Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and the atomists Democritus and Leucippus (all pre-Socratics) devised ingenious schemes for reconciling the two.
 2. Plato, who posited a non-physical world of being, populated by eternal forms that can only be apprehended by reason, and a physical world of becoming, populated by fluctuating matter perceived by the senses, offered the fullest solution to the pre-Socratic riddle.

Essential Reading:

Philip Wheelwright, *The Presocratics* (New York: 1966).

Supplementary Reading:

G. S. Kirk, and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge: 1984).

Questions to Consider:

1. What is the true nature of reality? Is it one (monist) or many (pluralist)? If logic tells us it is one and our senses tell us it is many, which should we trust?
2. Which question is more vital: *what* is the nature of reality or *who* created it; *how* did things come into being or *why* (for what purpose) did they come into being?

Lecture Three

The Sophists and Social Science

Jeremy Adams, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture discusses the impact of the Sophists on public policy and private morality in the fourth century BCE. Some see Sophistic analysis of conventional law (and hence, ethics) based on their premises about nature as the beginning of political science, or at least as a forerunner to that science. Beginning with a discussion of pre-Socratic Ionian science, this lecture considers typical Sophist attitudes to questions of power, morality, and religion. The lecture concludes with a case study: the Melian dialogue, a famous passage from Thucydides, the Sophist-influenced fifth-century historian whose highly influential book on the Peloponnesian War (460–445, 431–404) is hailed by many as the first work of social science.

Outline

- I. The Sophists of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE have been given a bad name by Plato (427–347 BCE), because his mentor, Socrates, considered them immoral, intellectually and sometimes otherwise. This insult survives in the current English usage of the word, but it is a misnomer. The Sophists were professional teachers who tried to meet the educational needs of citizens of the Greek *polis* (city-states) of their time, a moment of social change and economic and cultural expansion. They are in many ways the forerunners of the modern professional intellectual, scientist or humanist.
 - A. The Sophists both carried on and disagreed with the learning of the Wise Men of Ionia (the eastern shore of the Aegean Sea, now western Turkey).
 1. One aspect of Ionian scientific teaching was the conviction that the ethical laws deeply revered by traditional Greek religion and lawmakers had some basis in natural science. The Sophists partly disagreed. To them, most if not all myth-based laws were artificial, merely conventional agreements. Some laws about human behavior, the Sophists felt, did inhere in nature, but once rationally analyzed, they turned out to be pretty shocking.
 2. This Sophist conviction, which they taught openly, is an instance of their maintaining the Ionian scientific tradition.
 - B. An instance of the Sophists' fundamental disagreement with Ionian thought was their abandonment of the objective analysis of nature for the subjective analysis of the human being and human society.
 1. Thales of Miletus (615?–546? BCE), for instance, decided that the primal element of the world was water and explained many things

- by deduction from that premise; his pupil Anaximander thought that the primal element must be even simpler and inaccessible to us; his pupil Anaximenes thought it must be air; and so on.
 2. By contrast, the Sophists of the fifth and fourth centuries preferred to speculate analytically about the inner motives of human individual and group behavior.
- II. Some examples of Sophist analysis, radically challenging traditional opinions, include those outlined below.
 - A. Gorgias (483–375), a native of the *polis* of Leontini in Sicily who lived much of his adult life in Athens, wrote a book entitled *On Non-Being and Nature* in which he argued—and seemed to demonstrate logically—that nothing really exists.
 1. We don't know whether Gorgias really meant this doctrine (later known as nihilism) or was using it to prove the absurdity of logical argument. He then abandoned philosophy to teach rhetoric, the art of persuasion.
 2. Gorgias also argued that it was better to succumb to the emotions of tragic drama than to show that you have no literary sensitivity.
 - B. Protagoras (500?/481–411 BCE) can be considered the founder of linguistics and the social sciences.
 1. When challenged concerning his belief in the gods, Protagoras replied that he knew nothing about them; he preferred to study the laws and customs of men and the language used to convey them.
 2. Protagoras especially enjoyed contrasting law and nature, an intellectual exercise that led him to an ever sharper sense of the absurdity of most human tradition. (Socrates reacted strongly against him.)
 - C. Callicles, of whom little is known, argued that might is right and that it is natural for human beings to be driven by the will of power.
 - D. Thrasymachus, who is presented at considerable length in Plato's dialogue *The Republic*, argued that what men call "justice" is simply the will of the strongest man or party. Socrates dismantles him through the use of logic.
- III. This kind of Sophistry had a corrosive effect on the patriotic and moral myths that sustained the social cohesion of the *polis*. Once the sacred stories were dismissed as nonsense, a crisis of legitimation arose that disturbed the moral equilibrium of Athens and, eventually, all of the Greek political world.

IV. The Sophists coincided with the Greek invention of history, first by Herodotus (484–428, author of *The Histories*, a large and broadly speculative book that sought to explain the Persian Wars ending in 479 BCE), then by Thucydides (465?–400?), author of *The Peloponnesian War*.

- A. Herodotus offers a psychological interpretation of the rulers of Asia, perhaps the beginning of political science or anthropology.
- B. Thucydides’s account of his native Athens’ eventual defeat by Sparta after a generation of struggle is a masterpiece of institutional and psychological analysis.
 1. It is difficult to single out a central or final message of this masterpiece of history writing. Thucydides clearly believed that human behavior was complex and hard to predict, but the systematic analysis of past events seemed to him the most fascinating exercise of human reason, possibly of use to the more prudent conduct of political affairs in the future. He seems to avoid a formal theory of history.
 2. One of the most strikingly dramatic moments in *The Peloponnesian War* is Thucydides’s account of a debate between the officers of an Athenian invasion force and the leading citizens of the oligarchic *polis* of Melos, a small and strategically insignificant island in the Aegean, in the sixteenth year of the war. Militarily, this event was minor, but it exemplified for the author much of Athenian behavior and serves as a prime example of Sophistic political reasoning.
 3. The basic conflict in the dialogue is that between the Melian leaders’ appeal to justice, honor, and the tradition of liberty their *polis* had guarded for seven centuries and the Athenian representatives’ argument that Athens could not afford to leave Melos out of their maritime empire. A neutral Melos would be proof of Athenian weakness and a source of danger to the empire, because it is a law of nature that power must expand to its limits or start retracting.
 4. Neither side persuades the other, as reported by Thucydides. The Athenians isolate the town of Melos with a land wall and blockade the port; eventually Melos surrenders, all the men of military age are killed, and all the women and children sold into slavery.
 5. One can’t help wondering how many of the Athenian officers had been pupils of Protagoras, Callicles, or Thrasymachus. The Sophistic distinction between nature and law is evident here.

Supplementary Reading:

Mary Fitt and Kathleen Freeman, trans. and intro., *Ancilla to the Presocratic Philosophers* (Harvard, 1962).

Drew A. Hyland, *The Origins of Philosophy* (New York: 1973).

Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, chapters 2–13.

Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. by Rex Warner (Penguin, 1972).

Questions to Consider:

1. How far can a democracy go in using “Sophistic” analyses of political self-interest?
2. How much does modern social science differ from the premises, methods, and conclusions of its Sophistic forebears?

Lecture Four

Plato--Metaphysics

Phillip Cary, Ph.D.

Scope: Plato is the most influential philosopher in the West, in large part because he invented what came to be called metaphysics, the study of true being. He aligns himself with the practice of his teacher and hero, Socrates, who drew people into critical dialogue on such issues as “What is virtue?” Plato theorized that the proper answer to this question refers to an eternal and invisible essence of virtue, which he called a form or idea. This famous Platonic theory of forms is the basis for Plato’s picture of the ascent of the soul to a vision of the world above.

Outline

- I. Who was Plato?
 - A. Philosopher of Athens, fourth century BCE, student and follower of Socrates.
 - B. In many ways, Plato was the founding figure of Western philosophy; although there were philosophers before him (the “pre-Socratics”), his writings were the first that founded a lasting Western philosophy.
- II. When postmodern philosophers look back at the history of Western thought, they often see it as dominated by the philosophical tradition originating with Plato: the project of metaphysics or the philosophy of true being.
 - A. Metaphysics means roughly: the quest for true being beneath, behind, above, or within the world of appearance—the quest for deep truths or higher realities to be grasped by the inquiring or contemplative mind.
 - B. Although the *word* “metaphysics” was invented by Plato’s student Aristotle, the project of metaphysical thought can be said to have begun with Plato.
 - C. Plato invented metaphysics as a form of inquiry in the process of writing dialogues (in effect, philosophical dramas) in which his teacher, Socrates, was the main character and (eventually) the mouthpiece for Plato’s own thought.
- III. The Athens in which Plato grew up was undergoing dramatic changes in many areas, including education.
 - A. The old practice was for the sons of gentlemen to be educated for citizenship by their fathers.
 - B. The Sophists (from the Greek *sophia* = wisdom), on the other hand, were teachers from other city-states who would come to Athens offering education for a fee—promising, typically, to equip young men for a life

of public service and power by training them to speak well on all topics. (Eloquence was a primary form of political power in a democracy before the electronic age.)

- C. To speak persuasively in an ancient political setting, one had to be able to discuss justice and injustice, and virtue and vice (i.e., what makes a course of action or a person good or bad).
 - D. In Plato’s presentation, Socrates is not pretending to be wrong but rather insisting on asking the prior question. In other words, before learning to speak about virtue (or a specific virtue, such as justice or courage or piety), one must ask what it is.
- IV. In the early (“Socratic”) dialogues, Socrates was content to ask critical questions that led to a conclusion of perplexity and a mutual recognition of ignorance (neither Socrates nor his interlocutor knew the answers).
 - A. Socrates’s way of asking critical questions has since been dubbed “the Socratic method,” and his conclusion that we must recognize our own ignorance has been called “Socratic wisdom.”
 - B. Many later philosophers, including some in Plato’s own school, the Academy, interpreted Socrates’s message to be one of skepticism; that is, we cannot really know what virtue, justice, and so on, are.
 - C. Plato became the inventor of metaphysics when he started to think that perhaps a way of answering these questions was through critical thinking and dialectic.
 - D. Plato’s way of answering these questions was his famous doctrine of the forms (also termed “Platonic ideas”).
 - V. The notion of true being is the birth of Western metaphysics.
 - A. Platonic answers to Socratic questions:
 1. For Plato, a question such as “What is virtue?” was asking for the essence or true being of virtue.
 2. He wanted this essence to be universal, equally valid for all particular instances of virtue (a *one* that governs a *many*).
 3. He also wanted this essence to be stable and unchanging, not subject to the historical changes of our notions of virtue.
 4. Plato called the answer to this kind of question “virtue itself” (or “justice itself,” “the good itself,” and so on) and labeled it a “form.”
 5. He also called it an “idea” (which is Greek for “something you see,” i.e., with the mind’s eye).
 6. Platonic “ideas” or forms are thus unchanging essences that we can “see” or understand with the eye of the mind—in contrast to the many changing things of the visible world that we literally see with our eyes.
 - B. A mathematical analogy is instructive.

1. Plato may have been thinking of the essence or form of virtue by analogy with mathematical figures.
 2. Imagine a math class in which you are thinking about the properties of a triangle drawn on a chalkboard (e.g., you are proving the Pythagorean theorem).
 3. Imagine now that the chalk triangle is erased. Has the triangle you've been thinking about been destroyed?
 4. Plato clearly thought not. The true triangle is not made of chalk but is an unchanging form whose "ideal" being is unchanging and permanent and, therefore, *more real* than the being of the chalk triangle.
 5. This idea takes some getting used to. For Plato, the ideal triangle (which most of us today tend to think of as a mere abstraction) was more real than the triangle we can see and touch.
- C. Consider Plato's thoughts on the nature of the forms.
1. Our contemplation of the true triangle (the form or ideal triangle) deserves the name "knowledge," while our thinking about the chalk triangle, which changes and is destroyed, is mere "opinion."
 2. The chalk triangle is at best an imitation of the true triangle (its lines not perfectly straight, and so on). The Pythagorean theorem is true of the ideal triangle, not of the chalk triangle. The true triangle belongs in the world of being, while the chalk triangle belongs to the world of becoming.
 3. Hence, a key Platonic distinction: the chalk triangle is *sensible* (an object perceived by the senses), whereas the real triangle is *intelligible* (perceptible to the intellect or mind—visible, as it were, to the *mind's* eye).
 4. All this (the distinction between knowledge and opinion, intelligible and sensible) applies to virtue and justice, as well as to triangles, Plato believed.
- D. The "Allegory of the Cave" illustrates the vision of the forms.
1. In this crucial and immensely influential passage from *The Republic*, Plato imagined souls chained up in a dark cave, representing the "visible" world of bodily things, and the "shadows" in the cave, representing what we mistakenly call "real things."
 2. Then he imagined souls liberated from their chains (a "conversion") and climbing out of the cave to the world above, where they see real things in the light of day in a kind of "Platonic heaven" called "the intelligible world."
 3. This represents the ascent of the soul to the vision of true being, the forms.

4. The highest form of all is the "sun" shining in that world—too bright to look at, at first—which Plato called the good (and which many Christians would later call "the Supreme Good" or God).
5. Once one has become educated to seeing in the light, it is difficult to see in the dark. (That's why such philosophers as Socrates seem impractical, even comical, as if they were stumbling around in broad daylight.)
6. But the soul that has seen should be required to go back and rule the Republic; the man who has seen and understood the essence of justice and virtue is the philosopher we should make king.
7. Knowledge of true being is essential to the truly good life.

Essential Reading:

Plato, *Apology of Socrates*, from *Complete Works*, J. Cooper, ed. (Indianapolis: 1997). Because there are so many different editions and translations of the dialogues, passages from Plato's works are usually indicated by referring to the marginal page numbers (e.g., "*Phaedo* 57a–84c"), which are the same in all editions.

———, "Allegory of the Cave" (= *Republic* 507b–521b).

Supplementary Reading:

D. Melling, *Understanding Plato* (New York: Oxford, 1987).

Questions to Consider:

1. What do you think young people need to learn to become wise, and is it possible for anyone to teach it to them?
2. Do you think such things as Plato's forms exist: the invisible and eternal essence of things, their true being that we might see with our "mind's eye?" (Would this idea make more sense for mathematical objects, such as triangles, than for ethical concepts, such as "virtue"?)

Lecture Five
Plato--Politics
Dennis Dalton, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture begins with the question that Plato poses throughout *The Republic*: what is the meaning of justice? The definitions offered by the main characters in this dialogue begin with the assertion of Polemarchus that justice means “giving each man his due,” or “an eye for an eye.” After Socrates refutes this by arguing that justice or right conduct must never involve harming another, Thrasymachus enters the discussion. He contends that justice denotes superior power, and “might is right.” Socrates refutes this, as well as Glaucon’s argument that just conduct means acting only in one’s selfish interest.

Socrates then asserts that for the just society or Republic to be attained, three major reforms or “waves” of social and political change must first occur: equality of male and female rulers; abolition of the nuclear family and private property; and the institution of philosophers as rulers. The last of these, especially, suggests Plato’s strong criticism of democracy, as illustrated by his parable of the “Ship of State.”

Finally, Plato’s theories of justice, power, and leadership are expressed in his “Allegory of the Cave.” This vision asserts that the just state or *polis* cannot emerge until philosophers rule and political power is, thus, wielded wisely.

Outline

- I. Plato, born in 428 BCE, founded the Academy at the age of forty. He seeks in *The Republic* to define right conduct, both for the individual and the city.
- II. *The Republic* takes the form of a dialogue between Socrates and a series of interlocutors, each of whom offers a definition of right conduct, or justice. Three main responses come forth:
 - A. Polemarchus asserts the traditional definition of right conduct.
 1. He argues that right conduct, or justice, means “giving each man his due.” His assertion is a form of retributive justice based on the ethic of “an eye for an eye.”
 2. Socrates responds that harming another person can never be just—although it might be expedient. He introduces the concept of *arete*—the idea of individual excellence or virtue—and calls for treatment in a humane manner.
 - B. Thrasymachus, a cynic, offers a definition of right conduct as the rule of the stronger.

1. He argues that might makes right; the stronger party defines as “just” what is in that party’s interest. “Injustice” brings happiness, at least to those who practice it.
 2. Socrates responds by drawing an analogy between the ruler and a physician. Just as the physician *qua* physician seeks to benefit not himself but his patients, so does the ruler *qua* ruler seek to benefit his subjects. The ruler, like the physician, must possess the scientific knowledge that is proper to his craft. We need a kind of Hippocratic oath for politics. The ideal ruler thinks of the common interest, not his personal interest. Justice, for Socrates, is a relationship that is notable for its human concern.
- C. Glaucon, an older brother of Plato, presses Socrates to offer a more convincing refutation of Thrasymachus’s argument.
1. Glaucon argues that justice arises not from a moral imperative of eternal truth but from expedience. Justice has its origins in the desire of the weaker for security against the stronger. Given the opportunity, all people will pursue their own self-interests regardless of law or justice. Glaucon cites the “myth of Gyges,” from Herodotus, to support the social-contract theory of justice. He challenges Socrates to defend justice as a good in itself, apart from its practical benefits.
 2. Socrates offers his philosophy of the state. In reply to both Thrasymachus and Glaucon, he dismisses such a cynical view of human society. Justice consists of the right ordering of reason, spirit, and desire, with reason ruling over all.

- III. Socrates argues that people can be led through education to gain real knowledge rather than mere opinion and to live according to reason. The rule of reason requires three “waves” of revolutionary change in Athens.
- A. Qualified women must be allowed to hold political power.
 - B. The nuclear family and private property among the ruling class, or “guardians,” must be abolished to reinforce its adherence to the common interest. In this extended family, the guardians won’t be tempted by nepotism or the accumulation of wealth.
 - C. Finally, philosophers, or “guardians,” should rule with absolute power. Reason will rule in the *polis*.
- IV. Plato offers the parable of the “Ship of State” to describe the deficiencies of democracy and the need for meritocratic rule.
- A. The ship’s master (representing the *demos*) is physically imposing but somewhat ignorant, shortsighted, and deaf.
 - B. The master is subdued by the crew (representing the corrupt politicians who manipulate and dominate the *demos*). Asserting that navigation requires no special skill, the crew members seize control of the ship and

operate it in their own interest. Both they and the master are guided by opinion rather than knowledge.

- C. Only the navigator (representing the philosopher) understands the science of how to sail the ship correctly, but he is ignored by the crew. He is not corrupted by power, because he understands that only knowledge of this science will ensure that the ship reaches its destination. The parable teaches that the ship of state should be guided by those who possess real knowledge, not mere opinion.
 - D. In short, we want a ship run by a navigator, not the crew.
- V. Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" illustrates his theory of cognition in depicting intellectual development as a journey from the darkness of opinion to the limit of real knowledge.
- A. The people in the underground cavern cannot see the light.
 - B. After the philosopher discovers the highest truths outside the cave, he must return to the cave and assume political leadership, even at the risk of his own life. In just this way, Socrates tried to bring the truth to Athens.
 - C. Apprehension of the truth brings freedom from illusion and, thus, from fear.
 - D. One must not lust for power but accept it as a responsibility on behalf of a common interest.
 - E. Power can be wielded wisely, but only by those who have reached the ultimate level of knowledge. People must enter politics as a noble profession, much as they undertake medicine. They alone cannot be corrupted by petty disputes over power, and only they can guide the state to justice.
 - F. Plato is the first philosopher to set forth power as a noble enterprise.

Essential Reading:

Plato, *The Republic*, F. M. Cornford, trans. (London: 1945), Books I–X.

Supplementary Reading:

Julia Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: 1981).

George Klosko, *The Development of Plato's Political Theory* (New York: 1986), esp. parts I–III.

Andrew Hacker, *Political Theory* (New York: 1961).

Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision* (Boston: 1960).

Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates* (London, New York: 1993).

Leo Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?* (Glencoe, IL: 1959).

Questions to Consider:

1. How valid is Socrates's analogy of the ruler to a physician? Is the profession of politics comparable to that of medicine? If we accept Socrates's premise to consider the ideal form of each undertaking, in what basic ways are they different?
2. Socrates demands that three sweeping reforms, or "waves" of change, must occur to usher in his ideal state. Assess his argument for the abolition of the nuclear family and private property: how can this be defended or justified?
3. How is Plato's critique of democracy demonstrated through his "Ship of State" parable?
4. In what ways does Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" express his theories of leadership and power?

Lecture Six
Plato--Psychology
Phillip Cary, Ph.D.

Scope: Connected with the metaphysical notion of a deep truth about being is the psychological notion of a deep truth about ourselves. Plato called the true self “the soul” and was the first thinker to posit a soul-body dualism, teaching that every human being is composed of two distinct parts, an immortal soul and a material body. In the *Phaedo*, he argued that the soul is immortal, because it is akin to the forms and will return to be with them if it is pure when it separates from the body at death. The soul came to be in the body because of a fall from its original heavenly state of disembodied purity. Erotic love is ultimately the desire to see the eternal beauty of the forms once more, reminded by the sight of temporal beauty here on earth. Thus, Plato is the source of the “otherworldly” spirituality that is so important in the Western tradition.

Outline

I. Plato was the inventor of the soul/body dualism.

- A. The original meaning of *psychology* is “discussion about the soul.” By this definition, Plato was the most influential psychologist of all time.
- B. Plato was the first thinker to divide the human self cleanly in half, insisting that everything is either body or soul (and nothing is both, because body and soul are two fundamentally different kinds of being).
- C. In previous writers (e.g., both Homer and the Hebrew Bible), “soul” and “body” were only two of a multitude of terms (including “heart,” “spirit” or “breath,” “liver,” “kidneys”—as we might now say, “guts”) that designated a variety of overlapping aspects of the self, including bodily, emotional, and cognitive functions. The basic document for the invention of the soul/body dualism is Plato’s *Phaedo*.

II. Consider the soul and body in *Phaedo*.

- A. At issue is the immortality of the soul.
 1. On the day he was to be executed for impiety, Socrates held a long question-and-answer session with his students in which he tried to convince them that the soul is immortal—that all they would see perish was his body, not his soul.
 2. Some aspects of this setting (perhaps including Socrates’s death scene at the end) are historical, but the theories presented by “Socrates” in this dialogue are actually Plato’s, not those of the historical Socrates.

3. What his students were afraid of was depicted in Homer: the soul is exhaled with a dying man’s last breath and is scattered on the wind.
4. “Socrates” thus needed to supply an alternative conception of the soul’s nature (not made of material stuff like breath) and destiny (where does the soul go after death?).
5. Both conceptions are provided by relating the soul to the forms, which are eternal and nonmaterial.

B. The soul is related to the forms.

1. The key claim in *Phaedo* is that the soul is “akin” to the forms, being deathless and stable like them, not mortal and changing like the body.
2. Because the soul is kin to the forms, its desire and destiny is to return to them (not to some shadowy “existence,” such as that in Hades) once it is freed from the body.
3. Hence, for “Socrates” (i.e., Plato) to philosophize is to practice dying, when the soul will be released from the body as from a prison (like escaping from the cave for good).
4. Thus, Plato stands at the beginning of a long Western tradition of “otherworldliness” and rejection of the body.
5. For Plato, the philosopher who practices dying is *purifying* the soul of attachment to the body and material things. The body is not only confining but also dirty.

C. Recollection and transmigration play a part in the immortality of the soul.

1. An essential step in Plato’s argument for the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo* was his doctrine of recollection or *anamnesis*.
2. Plato thought that souls come into the world bringing knowledge of the forms with them, which they forget upon entering the body but can recollect through study.
3. The key example is mathematical insight; that moment when you say, “Aha, I get it” is a moment of recognition. You’re seeing something that’s always been there for you to see, and it feels more like recalling something you’d forgotten than learning something new (*Meno* 80a–86b).
4. Plato originally explained this possibility of “recollecting” the forms by referring to myths of transmigration (or “reincarnation”). The idea was that the soul was recollecting things it had learned in a previous life.

III. The recollection presupposes a fall of the soul.

- A. Transmigration isn’t a successful explanation of recollection, because it doesn’t show how it was possible to learn the forms the first time. (If I recollect the forms from a previous life, then how did I learn them then? By recollecting them from the life before that, *ad infinitum*?)

- B. In the *Phaedrus* (a later work), Plato tried a different (equally mythic) explanation: the soul learned the forms in a previous disembodied life, when it lived in heaven and was nourished by contemplating the forms.
- C. This notion means the soul first entered the body by a kind of fall—descending against its will from a state of heavenly contemplation to a state of embodiment on earth (the original myth of the Fall).

IV. Why do we fall in love?

- A. The mythic story of the fall in *Phaedrus* is set in the context of trying to explain the nature of love. Falling in love is like a divine madness or mania that comes over us when we see something beautiful on earth that reminds us (helps us recollect) the eternal beauty we saw in heaven.
- B. In *The Symposium*, Socrates (i.e., Plato) proposed a ladder of ascent in which our love rises from physical beauty to the beauty of virtuous souls to the eternal beauty of the highest of the forms, the supreme good (beauty as the essential object of love). This is the meaning of the Platonic Cave.
- C. Thus, in addition to explaining the deep truth about the soul, Plato's psychology offers us an explanation of its deepest motivation, the desire to behold eternal beauty, a type of eros.

V. The soul has three parts.

- A. The *Phaedo* embodies a simple contrast between body and soul, but in the *Phaedrus*, Plato proposed that the soul itself is complex, consisting of lower and higher parts.
- B. Plato compared the disembodied soul in heaven to a chariot, in which the mind (or reason), or the highest part of the soul, is the charioteer trying to keep control of two horses, one of which is more unruly than the other.
- C. This analogy corresponds to the three parts of the soul identified in the *Republic*: the highest or rational part, the middle or spirited part (equivalent to the more obedient horse), and the appetitive part (the unruly horse).
- D. These three parts of the soul are analogous to the three basic classes of society in Plato's *Republic*: the rulers (philosopher-kings), the guardians (soldiers), and "the many" (*hoi polloi*).
- E. In both soul and city, the point is that the rational should rule the less rational.
- F. The important point of contrast with the *Phaedo* (with which we began) is that unruly desire is not blamed on the body but on the lower part of the soul: as he thought about it, Plato was getting less simplistic and less otherworldly.

Essential Reading:

Plato, *Phaedo* 57a–84b (the immortality of the soul).
 ———, *Phaedrus* 244a–257a (the fall of the soul).

Supplementary Reading:

Plato, *Symposium* 199c–223d (Platonic love).
 ———, *Meno* 80a–86b (Plato's doctrine of recollection).
 ———, *Republic* 9:588b–e (the three-part soul).
 G. M. A. Grube, *Plato's Thought* (Indianapolis: 1980).

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think we have such a thing as an immortal soul in us? Why or why not? (What do you think of Plato's version of this concept?)
2. Is there, in our erotic longings, some wild desire for something more ultimate than any of the beauties of this world?

Lecture Seven

Aristotle--Metaphysics

Phillip Cary, Ph.D.

Scope: Aristotle, the second most influential philosopher in the West after Plato, was also Plato's student. He criticized Plato's theory of forms, because it so completely separated the essence of things and the things of this world. Aristotle modified Plato's notion of form to create a science of nature or physics. His key idea was to explain the nature of change by reference to four different types of causes: form ("formal cause"), matter ("material cause"), goal ("final cause"), and cause of motion ("efficient cause").

Outline

I. Who was Aristotle?

- A. Aristotle was perhaps the greatest mind that ever lived. In addition to being the second most important philosopher of the Western tradition (after Plato), he also invented the sciences of logic, physics, zoology, and botany and coined the term for metaphysics.
- B. He was a student in Plato's Academy, which was the first school called an academy. Evidently, the Academy was a place of open discussion, because the evidence is that Plato had to modify his theory of forms, probably in response to criticism by someone close to him, most likely Aristotle.
- C. Aristotle criticized Plato's theory of the forms.
 1. The son of a physician, Aristotle wanted a science of nature, i.e., of the world of things that grow and change and move.
 2. He argued that Plato's theory of unchanging forms that are separated from the material world could not provide knowledge of how things change.

II. Aristotle invented the term "physics" for his science of nature.

- A. It comes from the word *physis*, Greek for "nature."
- B. A "nature," or *physis*, means a *kind* of thing.
- C. Because the root verb (*phuo*) means "to grow," nature for Aristotle meant a thing that moves, changes, or (especially) grows.
- D. Hence, a science of nature is about how things move, grow, and change "according to their own nature." For example, stones fall, plants grow, animals move around, and human beings reason.

- E. Because the Greek term for "science" simply means "knowledge," the meaning of the phrase "science of physics" for Aristotle's original students would be "knowledge of growing things."
- F. For Aristotle, "movement" was a general term that included growth and any process of change. (Movement in space is "loco-motion," i.e., local motion, movement with respect to place.)
- G. Given this conception of movement, we can say that physics, for Aristotle, was the science of movement, i.e., knowledge of the processes of change in the natural world.
- H. "Physics" is thus precisely the kind of knowledge Aristotle wanted but that Plato's theory of forms couldn't give him.

III. Aristotle's thinking addressed the issues of form and matter.

A. Embodied form.

1. Aristotle "corrected" Plato's theory of forms by insisting that forms in nature are not separate from matter. (Form is, as it were, "embodied" in matter.)
2. Matter means "material," the stuff out of which a thing is made (as a house is made out of wood, which is its material).
3. Hence, a natural thing, for Aristotle, was a "composite" of form and matter.
4. "House" is what it is (form) and "wood" is what it's made of (matter).
5. For Aristotle, "form" was the essence or nature of a thing, corresponding to its definition.

B. Art and nature.

1. In Aristotle (and all classical thinkers), art is to nature as artificial is to natural—hence, a carpenter building a house is an "artist."
2. Thus, "art" (*technē* in Greek) for Aristotle did not mean only "fine arts" but also the useful arts; carpentry is an art, as is any skill by which humans make something.
3. Artificial things, too, are composites of form and matter (e.g., a *house made of wood*)
4. Artificial things are distinguished from natural things in that they do not grow according to their own nature but according to the form in the mind of an artist (e.g., the "blueprint" of the house that the carpenter has in mind as he builds it).

C. Form as essence.

1. For Aristotle, a thing is defined by its form, not its matter; the form of a house is "house," not "wood."
2. Hence, the essence of a thing is its form.
3. Aristotle would also say that the essence or form is the definition of a thing, the "what it is."

4. The essence or form of an artificial thing can exist separate from matter, in the mind of the artist.
- D. Form as soul.
1. The matter of a living thing is its flesh, whereas the form or essence is its soul.
 2. The soul is the nature of a living thing, its principle of life, growth, and movement.
 3. In ancient biology, all living things (including plants) had souls, because “soul” was synonymous with life. (A body without soul is a corpse.)
 4. For Aristotle, the soul of a living thing was both its principle of life and its principle of movement, because different things have different kinds of souls or natures, depending on the different ways they move and grow.
 5. What every human has that plants and animals don’t have is a *rational* soul, capable of reasoning.
 6. Nonrational animals (“brutes” in the ancient terminology) by nature cannot reason but can move around; hence, they have “locomotive” souls, those that are capable of local motion (what we would simply call “movement”).
 7. Plants, which are incapable of local motion, have nutritive souls: the kind of “movement” natural to plants is nutrition and growth.
- IV. Aristotle’s physics, or science of moving things, was organized around four different kinds of “causes,” i.e., four different ways of answering the question “why is this so?” Only the first one is what we now would call a “cause.”
- A. “Efficient cause”: the cause of being and movement.
1. The artist causes the being (and “growth”) of a house.
 2. A living thing is brought into being (and, thus, caused to grow) by its parent through the process of “generation,” or begetting.
 3. As the carpenter causes the house to grow according to a form in his or her mind, so does the natural thing grow according to its own form, imparted to it by its parent.
 4. Thus, a parent animal imparts to its offspring a soul corresponding to its nature or species (human nature, horse nature, dog nature, and so on).
 5. This form, soul, or nature makes the animal what it is (human, horse, dog) and makes it grow into that *kind* of thing (human, horse, dog).
 6. That which gives form to something is its cause of being or cause of movement, called (not by Aristotle but by the later Aristotelian tradition) its “efficient” cause. The word “efficient” has its old meaning of “bringing about an *effect*.”
 7. Hence, “efficient cause” means “cause that has an effect”—the sort of thing we nowadays just call a “cause.” Aristotelian philosophy has three other kinds of cause, or in Aristotle’s terms, “modes of explanation.”
- B. “Final cause”: the end or goal of a process.
1. The end of a process of growth is its purpose or goal (*telos* in Greek).
 2. The later Aristotelian tradition called this goal the “final cause,” i.e., the end of a process taken as explaining why it happened this way.
 3. In Aristotle’s own terms, the end was “that for the sake of which” a process occurs.
 4. Thus, the adult form of an animal is the end of its process of growth, that for the sake of which the child is growing.
- C. “Material cause” is the matter “out of which” something is made.
- D. “Formal cause” is form or essence, the “what it is.”
- V. For Aristotle, all movement was a process of change from potential to actual, (e.g., from child to adult).
- A. The actual is the end; the potential is the power of the form at work at the beginning of the process; and movement is how the form gets from one to the other.
- B. All natural movement, for Aristotle, is a process by which something becomes what it is (attains its actual form), as a child becomes human by growing to adulthood.
1. Even natural locomotion (sheer physical movement) is a process aimed at an end: each element moves naturally toward its place of rest (stones gravitate downward; fire, upward).
 2. In contrast to modern physics, in Aristotelian physics, all natural motion is for an end; it is *teleological* (from the Greek word *telos*).

Essential Reading:

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book 1, from *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, R. McKeon, ed. (New York: 1941).

———, *Physics*, Book 2.

Supplementary Reading:

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book 12, chapters 6–10 (Aristotle’s theology).

Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand* (Cambridge: 1988).

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think a fundamental difference exists between what a thing *is* (form or essence) and what it is *made of* (matter)? How would you explain the difference?
2. Do things by nature have a built-in goal or purpose? Is this true for human beings? Biological organisms? Inanimate objects?

Lecture Eight

Aristotle—Politics

Dennis Dalton, Ph.D.

Scope: The most significant critique of Plato's *Republic* comes from his student and critic, Aristotle, who focused his criticisms on the three great reforms or "waves" of change discussed in Lecture Five. Aristotle argued against the desirability of the proposed reforms with the logic characteristic of his philosophy of moderation. First, Aristotle asserted that Plato was wrong to contend that women could or should be rulers of a state or *polis*. Women, by their nature, lack the capacity to reason effectively and, without this rational ability, they cannot qualify as good rulers. Second, Plato is judged wrong in his attack on the institutions of family and private property. These are both natural and desirable, contributing to the happiness of citizens. Third, Plato's suggestion that philosophers must rule would lead to an abuse of power that could be tyrannical. Even the philosophers would be unhappy in such a state, because they would be deprived of the pleasure of family and property.

Outline

- I. We turn now to Aristotle, who was both Plato's greatest student and one of his most trenchant critics.
 - A. He was born in 384 BCE in Macedonia and came to Athens at age seventeen to study Plato. He later founded his own school, the Lyceum.
 - B. Aristotle criticized Plato's political recommendations primarily on empirical and practical grounds.
 1. The word "observation" is crucial to Aristotle's method. He rejected Plato's proposals for revolutionary change by observing that they are impracticable—they do not comport with human nature as we know and observe it.
 2. Aristotle attempted to correct Plato's excesses by taking the "golden mean," not a utopia, as his touchstone for evaluating political arrangements.
- II. Aristotle's critique of Plato's first wave of revolutionary change (i.e., access of qualified women to political rule) is part of a vital philosophical exchange.
 - A. According to Aristotle, observation shows that nature dictates a union of naturally ruling and ruled elements for the preservation of both.
 1. The naturally ruling element has superior reason and forethought.
 2. The naturally ruled element should obey the ruling element. That hierarchy is evident throughout nature, and it applies to political organization as well as to family.

3. Women deserved respect and honor, but they were bound by nature and suited to a dependent status.
- B.** The human soul (*psyche*) has two elements, one that rules (i.e., reason) and one that is ruled. Nature dictates that order in the soul to allow for right behavior to follow.
1. Some humans are slaves by nature, because they lack the capacity to reason.
 2. Women must not be allowed to rule, because they lack rational capacity. In men, the rational element naturally rules, while in women it is present but usually ineffective. Women's natural role is to serve the family as good wives and mothers, to serve and be silent, and to stay out of the public sphere.
- III.** Aristotle's critique of Plato's second wave (i.e., the abolition of the nuclear family and private property and their replacement with communal forms of extended family and common property among the rulers).
- A.** Aristotle rejects those reforms as impracticable and undesirable.
1. The institutions of the family and private property are rooted in nature.
 2. Observation shows that men pay most attention to what is their own and neglect what is not their own. The sense of possession is natural and brings duty and obligation.
- B.** Aristotle sees the family as a natural institution that promotes civic virtue, as well as mutual care among loved ones. Parents' feelings of special attachment to their children are natural, but the extended family destroys these natural bonds.
- C.** Aristotle also sees private property as a natural institution.
1. The same logic applies as with families. The impulse to own and cherish objects is natural, and efforts to eradicate private property are wrong and futile.
 2. The project to abolish private property is characteristic of Plato's extremism.
 3. Aristotle suggests that property should be possessed in moderation and should be put to public use whenever possible. Charity is possible only under a regime of private property. Plato's requirements are unnatural.
- IV.** Aristotle's critique of Plato's third wave (i.e., the permanent rule of philosophers, which unites political power with wisdom) is just as vigorous.
- A.** Aristotle believes that concentrating power in the hands of an elite is dangerous; that concentration will breed discontent and dissension. Civil war will result, the powerless against the empowered. Not only will the majority be dissatisfied, but even the guardians will be miserable without property or families.

- B.** The best practical constitution for most states is rule by the middle class.
1. The middle class embodies moderation, because it constitutes the mean between rich and poor. Because it possesses a stake in the property system, the middle class is likely to follow moderation and eschew radical change.
 2. Because it practices moderation and avoids extremes, the middle class is more likely than either the rich or the poor to be guided by reason. Neither oligarchy nor democracy is sought, but a "polity."
- C.** Those qualified to rule must, therefore, be male, own property, and be literate (or at least have modest education). The middle-class rule will confer stability and rational control.
- D.** For Aristotle, Plato's plan will end in despotism and corruption. The rational critique of Plato is a realistic assessment of power. Aristotle is a philosopher, primarily, of moderation.

Essential Reading:

Aristotle, *The Politics*, Ernest Baker, trans. (London: 1958).

Supplementary Reading:

Aristotle, *The Ethics* (London, New York: 1981).

Ernest Barker, *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle* (New York: 1959).

George Sabine, *A History of Political Theory* (Fort Worth, TX: 1973).

Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, eds., *A History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: 1987).

William T. Bluhm, *Theories of the Political System* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: 1978).

Mulford Q. Sibley, *Political Ideas and Ideologies: A History of Political Thought* (New York: 1970).

Questions to Consider:

1. Explain the contrasting views of Plato and Aristotle on the role of women in the *polis*, or state.
2. What is the best defense of Aristotle's position on the institutions of family and private property? In which ways do you agree with him or disagree?
3. Aristotle distrusts Plato's theoretical concentration of power in an elite of philosopher-rulers. Do you share this distrust? Must absolute power corrupt rulers, or are safeguards possible, in theory, to prevent or discourage abuse of power?

Lecture Nine

Aristotle—Ethics

Phillip Cary, Ph.D.

Scope: Aristotle's ethics are an attempt to answer the question "What is the good or ultimate goal of human life?" You could rephrase the question as "What is happiness, really?" Aristotle's answer is that happiness is the life lived by a certain kind of person: the virtuous person. Virtue means a good state of the soul, as health is a good state of the body. Aristotle compares it to the good state of an artist whose skill makes him excellent at his art—virtue is excellence at being human. Among the human excellences Aristotle discusses are the four "cardinal virtues": courage, temperance, justice, and practical wisdom. Aristotle concludes his discussion of ethics with a treatment of social and political life: the virtuous life of friends and the moral aim of legislation.

Outline

- I. Aristotle was the first philosopher to define the field of ethics and write a treatise on it (though Plato had dealt with most of the issues already).
 - A. The good as the end.
 1. Ethics is concerned with the good as metaphysics is concerned with being.
 2. In contrast to Plato's idea of the good, Aristotle's ethics are concerned with the good *for human beings*, the good that can be obtained by human action. Once again, Aristotle is bringing Platonic idealism down to earth.
 3. The good has the character of an end or final cause, because the end or goal of any process is always the good toward which it aims. (A house is the good achieved by carpentry, healthy adulthood is the good achieved by physical growth, and so on.)
 4. Hence, the question "What is the good for a human being?" is equivalent to "What is the end or final cause for a human being?" (Do we have a purpose *qua* human?)
 - B. Happiness as the goal of human life.
 1. The end of the growth process is healthy adulthood.
 2. What is the end of the soul, of our essence as *rational* animals?
 3. At one level, the answer to this question is easy: as Aristotle says in one of his early works, "Don't we all want to be happy?"
 4. In fact, widespread agreement existed among ancient philosophers that the end of human life was happiness.

5. But the real philosophical disagreements begin when we ask, "What is happiness?"
- C. The meaning of happiness (*eudaimonia*).
 1. The term translated "happiness" in Greek (*eudaimonia*) did not designate a feeling but a state of life (similar to our term "success" or the medieval term "blessedness").
 2. The question "What is happiness?" did not have an easy answer. Although some people thought that happiness was a feeling (i.e., pleasure), no one thought that that answer was obvious, as it would seem to many people today.
 3. In fact, the philosophers who thought happiness was a feeling were a minority, known technically as "hedonists" (from the Greek word *hedone*, "pleasure"). Hedonists were not "party animals" but members of any philosophical school that thought that happiness was a good feeling (e.g., Epicureans, whose picture of human happiness was a certain kind of tranquility and enjoyment of life).
- D. Happiness as virtuous living.
 1. For Aristotle (as for other non-hedonists), human beings have a goal simply by virtue of being human (objectively, whatever goals they may actually choose).
 2. This goal comes from the idea that humans have a function or task, what is analogous to an artist, especially one whose goal is not a product but an activity (e.g., a flute player).
 3. In performing one's function or task, the aim is always to do it *well*—hence, the good of a flute player is not just to play the flute but to play it well.
 4. To do this, a flute player needs skill—she must be "good at" playing the flute.
 5. Likewise, the good for a human being consists in being "good at" being human.
 6. The term for this in Greek is *arete*, "human excellence," commonly translated as "virtue."
 7. Aristotle's definition of happiness is "activity of the (rational) soul in accordance with virtue." By the same token, the good for a flute player would be the activity of flute playing in accordance with great flute-playing skill.
- II. Aristotle defines the concept of virtue.
 - A. Virtue as habit.
 1. For Aristotle, a virtue is a good state of the soul (as health is a good state of the body).
 2. He classifies virtue as a habit in the sense of a learned capacity to do certain things well. (Such skills as playing the flute are also habits in this sense.)

3. Virtues, like skills, are learned by habituation and practice. You perform the good actions until they become second nature (as you acquire skill at flute playing by playing the flute, even before you are skilled at it).
4. Once you have acquired a habit, the corresponding activity becomes easier and more pleasant (as a skilled flute player finds it easier and more enjoyable to play than a beginner does).
5. Capacities must be distinguished from their use or activity: knowledge, skill, and virtue are capacities or habits we possess even when we are not exercising them (as a sleeping flute player possesses her skill at flute playing as a permanent aspect of herself, even though she is not currently playing).
6. Habits must also be distinguished from natural capacities, talents, and so on, because habits are acquired, not inborn.
7. Virtue is “natural” in another sense: it is a good state of our souls that befits our nature as human beings.

B. Virtue and decision making.

1. Virtue is a habit of action that involves making good decisions, “getting it right” in particular situations (and all situations are particular).
2. This habit requires the right emotional relation to pleasures and pains: enjoying doing the right thing and finding the wrong thing disagreeable. These emotional relations include not being tempted by pleasure to do the wrong thing, nor scared off by pain from doing the right thing.
3. Virtue also requires intelligent judgment, understanding the particular situation, and recognizing what it calls for.
4. Hence, virtue always has both an emotional and an intellectual component working harmoniously together.
5. Virtue helps us find the right action by finding the mean between two extremes. For example, generosity is a mean between wastefulness and stinginess.

III. Aristotle identifies a number of virtues, describing them as means between two extremes, but we shall focus on the four “cardinal” virtues (a term applied after Aristotle).

A. Courage.

1. Courage is concerned with the right relation to pain and other fearful things.
2. It is the mean between the extremes of rashness and cowardice.

B. Temperance.

1. Temperance is concerned with the right relation to pleasures, especially bodily pleasures.
2. It is the mean between self-indulgence and insensitivity.

C. Justice.

1. Justice is the fundamental social and political virtue, concerned not primarily with the best state of the individual soul but with the best state of society.
2. There is, however, a virtue of justice, as there are just men and women who do the right (i.e., the just) thing.
3. For Aristotle, justice is primarily concerned with how goods are distributed in society (distributive justice). Roughly, the idea is that everyone should get what he deserves (or “to each his due”).

D. Practical wisdom.

1. Practical wisdom is one of the intellectual virtues (in contrast to the preceding, which were *moral* virtues in the strict sense, i.e., virtues of character rather than of mind).
2. Practical wisdom is basically the opposite of someone being “stupid” or foolish, in the morally loaded sense of the term.
3. Practical wisdom is a habit of good judgment, without which no other virtues are possible. Good judgment is required to find the mean in particular situations.
4. The old translation for this term was “prudence,” but unfortunately that word has changed meaning so that it now refers only to intelligent pursuit of self-interest.
5. By contrast, Aristotelian practical wisdom (“prudence” in the original sense) may lead courageous people to risk their lives in battle—intelligently, not stupidly or rashly. (Think of Tom Hanks in *Saving Private Ryan*.)
6. Practical wisdom is the skill of making the right judgment in particular situations. (Because all situations are particular and unique, rule following is insufficient here.) As the situation-ethics people pointed out, one can’t just apply a rule, because no rule applies (the dumb form of situation ethics). In fact, too many possible rules apply, and one has to decide not by calculating but “instinctively,” similar to a basketball player deciding whether to pass or shoot.
7. Hence, the standard of judgment for particular situations is not any general rule, but “What would the good person, the person with practical wisdom, decide to do?” In judging a good sentence, the good user of English is the proper judge, not the grammar book.

IV. Oddly enough—for us moderns—the topic Aristotle spends the most time on in his treatise on ethics is friendship. What does friendship have to do with moral life?

A. Why does the virtuous person need friends?

1. No one would choose to be without friends (i.e., happiness requires it).
2. True friendship is built on virtue and stimulates virtue.

3. Thus, a virtuous life will inevitably be a life with friends.
 4. A friend is one who wishes and does what is good for his friend, one who wishes his friend to exist and live, as a mother does with her children and as a good person does with his own self (*NE* 9:4).
 5. From this idea comes the famous formula a friend is a second self or “another I” (*alter ego* in Latin).
 6. Clearly, human beings are by nature social and political animals (“one whose nature is to live with others”), because “no one would choose the whole world on condition of being alone” (9:9).
- B.** Politics (not ethics) is the overarching science of the human good.
1. But politics is based on ethics, because its prime concern is to make laws that will form virtuous citizens.
 2. In other words, for Aristotle, politics is all about legislating morality—not so much by telling people the right thing to do as by helping them to become the right sort of people (i.e., virtuous people).
 3. This focus on person rather than act (i.e., ethical habits rather than particular actions) is characteristic of the ancient ethics of virtue.

Essential Reading:

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Supplementary Reading:

R. Rorty, ed., *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley: 1980).

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think there is such a thing as *the* goal for human life—a goal we have simply because we are humans (and not because we choose to have it), an objective goal of human nature?
2. What is it, do you think, that makes someone a good person? And now the philosophical question: *why* is this good?

Lecture Ten

Stoicism and Epicureanism

Jeremy Adams, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture discusses two philosophical traditions that emerged from the legacy of Plato and Aristotle in a time of cultural, political, and military change. Epicureanism was the more elite of the two; Stoicism was more readily adaptable to the needs of ordinary people and to traditional Roman values. After an introduction to the thought of Epicurus himself, we take a brief look at his most famous Roman follower, Lucretius. We then encounter Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, and four later Roman Stoics: the successful gentlemen Cicero and Seneca, the slave Epictetus, and the philosopher-king Marcus Aurelius, who ruled with resolute virtue as emperor for fourteen difficult years—eventually dying, it is thought, from bubonic plague.

Outline

- I.** Epicureanism and Stoicism arose in Athens in the fourth century BCE as reasonable responses to the geopolitical condition of that city-state, formerly the seat of an apparently invincible, confident (indeed, arrogant), and rich empire that was also the world capital of philosophic speculation.
 - A.** By 338 BCE, Athens had been twice defeated in major, consequence-laden conflicts.
 1. By 400 BCE, after a generation-long, exhausting war (generally known as the Peloponnesian War), Athens had been defeated by the rival city-state of Sparta, its former ally against the Persian Empire.
 2. Then, in 338 BCE, Athens and its allies had to admit defeat by the large and expanding kingdom of Macedonia, led by its hereditary king, Philip II. Although Philip allowed Athens to retain its independence out of his respect for its cultural preeminence, Athens had to accept a subordinate position *vis-à-vis* this new type of more powerful state.
 3. Philip's son Alexander the Great established a huge empire in southeastern Europe, western Asia, and northeastern Africa, which broke up after his death in 323 BCE into three very large polyglot empires: the day of the Athens-sized city-state was clearly over.
 - B.** When the Romans brought the eastern Mediterranean Basin under their imperial control, they enthusiastically adopted both Epicureanism and Stoicism.

II. Epicureanism grew out of these events in Athens.

- A. This school of philosophy was named for its founder, Epicurus (341–270 BCE), a prolific writer and an Athenian citizen of elevated social status.
1. Epicurus’s largest book was a discussion of nature, but happiness and ethical salvation were the primary concerns of the school he founded.
 2. Following the fifth-century philosopher Democritus, Epicurus taught that the world is eternal and composed of atoms that produce everything by their infinitely variable combinations. Each human being is so composed and, hence, dissolves entirely after the death of the body: there is no afterlife in any sense.
 3. Epicurus was not an atheist; he believed that there were gods, long-lived beings of such distant refinement that human lives could mean nothing to them.
 4. Human happiness must be found, therefore, in this life. To achieve it, Epicurus recommended withdrawal from public life (Plato would have been horrified; Aristotle, more so), from sexual involvement, from desire for fame or for material objects. In such a condition of disciplined withdrawal, *ataraxia*, one might find maximum pleasure and minimum pain.
 5. Epicurus’s elevated doctrines appealed to idealistic, cultivated men and women of a world ruled by frantically competitive tyrants. Epicurean societies were founded in many Hellenistic (and, later, Roman) cities; their adherents treasured letters of advice (*Epistolai*) from Epicurus himself, who came to be seen as a sort of savior.
 6. Needless to say, many Epicureans settled for a less ascetic version of the master’s doctrine, cultivating lives of refined intellectual and sensual pleasure and avoiding politics as far as possible. In the late Roman Empire, one found the kind of Epicureanism that is widespread in American culture today.
- B. Lucretius (99–55 BCE) was the leading Roman Epicurean thinker and writer.
1. Lucretius’s surviving work is a long (six-book) didactic poem, *De rerum natura* (*On the nature of things*). It devised a new philosophical vocabulary for the Latin language—a work completed by Lucretius’s contemporary Cicero (d. 44 BCE).
 2. Lucretius repeats and to some extent reinterprets Epicurus’s scientific, theological, and ethical doctrines. His appeal to the innate goodness of mortal man, vitiated by ignorance and the savage atrocities of religion, did not convince all of its numerous readers, who admired its style if not its content. Some think even Augustine was influenced by Lucretius.

3. A moderate Epicureanism may well have become the favorite philosophy of the Roman Empire’s upper classes.

- C. Epicureanism in one form or another had its medieval “Christian” adherents (such as Chaucer’s Franklin), and Lucretius remained favorite reading for gentlemen of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Many of its tenets were studied and revived by the Utilitarian philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

III. Stoicism arose as a critical response to Epicureanism—and to Skepticism, another contemporary philosophical movement

- A. Zeno (320?–250? BCE) was the founder of Stoicism. His “school” took its name from the *Stoa Poikile* (Painted Porch) in the *agora* (public meeting-place) in Athens, where Zeno taught in a series of unstructured, Socrates-like dialogues. He constantly attacked dominant schools of thought by confronting them with moral and logical paradoxes.
1. Although in his personal style Zeno advocated a return to Socrates, he shared the Epicureans’ assumption that reality was essentially material. Zeno was a master of paradox.
 2. Nevertheless, Zeno and his followers were committed primarily to finding useful answers to the everyday moral problems of ordinary people. Instead of the elite Epicurean *ataraxia*, the Stoics proposed the ideal of *apatheia*, freedom from suffering or passion achieved by discipline; in its social consequences, it was anything but “apathy.”
 3. The Stoics insisted on duty to one’s community and fellow men. Zeno wrote a *Republic* (only fragments exist) more radical (though much less original) than Plato’s. In that visionary work, Zeno declared that all who recognize the spark of divine, natural reason within themselves must acknowledge the sway of natural virtue that everywhere obeys the dictates of universal justice.
 4. If enough people ever do so, then the human race may be able to advance to the government of a worldwide city-state, a *cosmopolis* ruled by natural law. In such a polity, all men will be brothers, enjoying a form of civic happiness that is free of the divisions falsely introduced by family bonds, schools, temples dedicated to particular gods, law courts, military ambition, or money.
- B. Cicero (106–43 BCE), though an eclectic in philosophy, was strongly influenced by Stoicism.
1. Many Romans found Stoicism the most acceptable current Greek philosophy, at least partly because of its respect for disciplined military valor and its sense of a worldwide law.
 2. Cicero, not a scion of the old Roman nobility, a lawyer who rose to be consul, was especially interested in the Stoic conception of natural law, which his works transmitted to medieval and modern Western thought.

- C. Seneca (4 BCE–CE/AD 65), a native of the patrician Roman colony of Cordoba in Spain, lived most of his adult life in Rome, where he became very rich from tax speculation.
1. Appointed tutor to the young Nero, Seneca wrote moralizing tragic dramas and philosophical prose treatises on such Stoic virtues as clemency, tranquillity, and the ability to endure misfortune in a cruel world, disguised as formal letters. Both types of works circulated throughout the Empire in his lifetime and remained favorite assignments for school reading for eighteen centuries.
 2. As his pupil, Nero turned against his advice. Seneca stoically endured the danger, then committed suicide with dignity.
- D. Marcus Aurelius (AD/CE 121–180; emperor 166–180) was a committed Stoic. Trained to rule an orderly *cosmopolis* as a philosopher-king in the Platonic style, he spent most of his reign campaigning (successfully) against German barbarians on the Danube frontier (he died in camp near the modern Vienna).
1. Marcus Aurelius’s personal book of *Meditations* is utterly Stoic in its idealism and its sense of unflinching adherence to private and public virtue, the only form of real happiness. Virtue is its own reward.
 2. Composed in Greek, the *Meditations* has been read in Latin and modern-language translations ever since; the work enjoyed special favor among eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European gentlemen struggling with the demands of imperial rule.
- E. Some think that Epicureanism appealed to most upper-class Romans of any philosophical inclinations, but Stoicism was by far the most publicly favored school. It was also remarkably egalitarian.
1. The Phrygian slave Epictetus (CE/AD 55–135?) became a respected teacher of Stoic ethics; his *Manual*, an anthology of his lectures, greatly influenced Marcus Aurelius.
 2. Epictetus taught that the only things always in our power are our will (always in fact free) and our body; we must keep both of them untainted, enduring all losses and all pain, which are merely external to us.

Supplementary Reading:

Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. I, part II, chapters 36, 37, 39, 47.

Lucretius, *The Nature of Things*, Frank O. Copley, trans. (Norton, 1977).

Marcus Aurelius, *The Meditations*, Maxwell Staniforth, trans. and intro. (Penguin, 1964).

Marcia Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1985).

Questions to Consider:

1. Why did Epicureanism appeal to elite groups rather than to lower classes?
2. Although most Stoics believed that the world and everything in it was material, they supported ethical values that were very spiritual. Explain.
3. Why did Roman society approve (publicly, at least) of Stoicism rather than Epicureanism (or any other Greek philosophical tradition)?

Lecture Eleven

Roman Eclecticism: Cicero and Polybius

Jeremy Adams, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture addresses the distinctive Roman style of philosophizing: not the integral revival of older traditions or schools, but the combination of several schools' traditions in a new, synthesized blend. The most successful synthesizer and the most influential Roman thinker in the long run was Cicero; his syncretic eclecticism is evident in his ethical and his political thought. Until the twentieth century, Cicero's influence was never eclipsed by that of any other Roman—and perhaps by any Greek—philosopher.

Outline

- I. The Roman style of philosophizing was *syncretic* rather than original.
 - A. Taking elements from various Greek schools' traditions—the *eclectic* process—Roman thinkers *synthesized* those elements, blending them together in a new system with its own internal coherence. If anything, Roman thinkers preferred broadly eclectic synthesis to revivals of single philosophical traditions.
 - B. They also popularized these syncretic doctrines, reaching a far wider audience than most Greek philosophers ever approved of or thought possible.
- II. The most influential Roman syncretic philosopher was Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BCE).
 - A. Cicero's philosophical eclecticism suited his social circumstances and his historical moment.
 1. He was a *novus homo*—a “new man” of a distinguished provincial (Volscian) family but not of old Roman stock. His rich parents sent him to study rhetoric and politics in Rome, then to Athens and Rhodes, each the center of clashing schools of rhetoric. When he returned to Rome, he attached himself to the aristocratic party, especially to the faction descended from the Scipionic Circle of the second century BCE, which favored Stoicism and old native Roman political traditions.
 2. In Greece, Cicero had also developed an interest in Skeptic and Epicurean philosophy; in political life back home, he showed more sympathy for popular concerns than the reactionary wing of his party liked. Picking and choosing what seemed to be good ideas and wise attitudes became his habit.
 3. No doubt Cicero's inclination toward eclecticism was heightened by the fact that during his lifetime, the Roman republic was passing through its terminal phases of internal dissension, with escalating violence. Intolerant attachment to any line of thought seemed to him, as to many reasonable, moderate Roman citizens, morally and intellectually wrong, as well as impractical.
 - B. Cicero's synthesizing eclecticism is most evident in his ethical doctrine. It is entirely typical that he “splits the difference” between Epicurean and Stoic ethics.
 1. From Stoicism, Cicero drew the principle that virtue is sufficient for happiness—indeed *is* happiness, whatever atrocities the external world inflicts on us. Appropriately enough, Cicero felt very ill treated by the Roman political class after he reached the pinnacle of legitimate political power during his term as consul in 63 BCE. He retired from public life for several years, then reentered the political arena against Marcus Antonius, who had him killed and caused his tongue and hands to be nailed to the rostrum (speakers' platform) in the Roman Forum.
 2. From Epicureanism, Cicero drew the principle that the cultivation of refined and disciplined pleasure is not inconsistent with virtue and is a valid source of happiness. Rejection of such pleasure seemed to that tradition excessive: discipline for the Epicureans did not involve asceticism, which they saw as irrational and unnatural. Cicero seems to have lived a life consistent with this principle, avoiding both asceticism and self-indulgence.
 - C. A similar combination, in fact a thoroughgoing synthesis, occurs in the realm of political philosophy.
 1. From Stoicism, Cicero drew a deep commitment to duty (sometimes called deontology). For him, civic virtue was simply obedience to duty, whatever the consequences. (And, in fact, he faced severe consequences several times, especially at the end.)
 2. From Aristotelian political thought, Cicero drew a more practical set of principles. This was not for him an unprincipled pragmatism, but a more or less consistent blending of principles commonly dignified by the name empiricism—what experience shows us actually works in a consistent manner.
 3. One major influence on Cicero's practical empiricism was the Greek diplomat, historian, and philosopher Polybius (200?–118? BCE). He became a respected member of the Scipionic Circle, a group of the close advisers of Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Numantinus (185–129BCE), whose name alone suggests his eminence in Roman social and political life and who was among the first major Roman converts to Stoicism.

4. Polybius wrote a *History* recounting and analyzing the rise of Rome to dominance over the entire Mediterranean Basin. In Book 6, Polybius explains Rome's success by its constitution, which Polybius saw as a perfect example of the mixed government Aristotle had recommended: a properly synthesized blend of monarchy (in the consulate), aristocracy (in the Senate), and democracy (in election to office by the whole body of the citizens, whose interests were protected by the tribunes). Cicero agreed entirely and stated (in his dialogue *On the Republic*) that the Roman state was the most perfect civil society in human history in the days of that Scipio and his even greater adoptive grandfather.

- D. Cicero's influence on later periods of Western thought has been immense.
1. From the eighth to the twelfth centuries, he was the most respected, studied, and imitated classical thinker in Western Europe.
 2. After taking back seat for a century and a half to Plato and Aristotle in philosophy—but not as a model of prose style—Cicero's dominant influence returned in the Renaissance and lasted throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He was seen as the perfect model for the cultivated gentleman, both in his forensic oratory and prose style and as a spokesman for an enlightened and polite personal ethic.

Supplementary Reading:

Cicero, *On the Good Life* (selections), Michael Grant, trans. and intro. (Penguin, 1971).

Cicero, *On the Republic*, George H. Sabine and Stanley B. Smith, trans. and intro. (Bobbs-Merrill, 1960).

Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire* (esp. Book 6), Ian Scott-Kilvert, trans., W. A. Walbank, sel. and intro. (Penguin, 1979).

Questions to Consider:

1. *Eclecticism, syncretism, synthesis*: These three terms are close in meaning but not really synonymous. What are distinctions among them? Think of some examples.
2. What is specifically and distinctively Roman about Cicero's style of philosophizing? Why did it appeal so strongly to Enlightenment gentlemen?
3. Do you find Cicero, finally, more Stoic or more Epicurean (in his thought; in his life)?

Lecture Twelve

Roman Skepticism—Sextus Empiricus

Jeremy Adams, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture discusses the tradition of Skepticism. This tradition, like Epicureanism and Stoicism, arose in Greece in the fourth century BCE, spread throughout the Hellenistic world, and survived to influence post-Renaissance Western thought despite the tendency of proper, practical Romans to disapprove of its relentless criticism of human claims to knowledge and its tendency to atheism. In the modern lexicon of thoughtful terminology, it is very good to be “empirical” in method, “skeptical” in mental reflex.

Outline

- I. Skepticism was a philosophical tradition, sometimes organized into schools, that arose in the generation of drastic cultural change in the Greek world after the death of Aristotle (322 BCE). Looked at somewhat askance by Roman culture, it continued to thrive under Roman rule nonetheless, especially in the eastern, Greek-speaking half of the Roman Empire. It was revived in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Enlightenment and remains a powerful stream of modern Western thought.
- II. The apparent founder of skepticism was Pyrrho of Elis (365?–275 BCE), a soldier attached to the staff of Alexander the Great on the long march to India and later returned to his small *polis* (city-state) of Elis in the mountainous Peloponnesus. Taking absolute skepticism to its logical conclusions, Pyrrho wrote nothing and taught that one must neither trust nor reject sense impressions nor any other apparent knowledge; a life of tranquil withdrawal was his ethical ideal. (It seems to have worked for him: he probably lived to the then-prodigious age of ninety.)
- III. Pyrrho's followers spread his oral teachings. A sign of their appeal to the Greek mentality was the fact that Plato's school of advanced study, the Academy at Athens, was dominated by fairly extreme forms of skeptical philosophy from the early third century to the early first century BCE.
 - A. Arcesilaus (314–241 BCE), who became the director of the Academy, is generally described as the “founder” of the Second or Middle Academy. He is supposed to have said that he was not even certain that he was uncertain—thus, going Socrates one better, because Socrates knew that he knew nothing. Arcesilaus was particularly critical of Stoic thought.

- B.** The so-called Third or New Academy (actually they were phases of the continuing history of the same institution) was founded by Carneades (213–128 BCE).
1. Carneades taught that knowledge is impossible; humans have no criterion of proof. Any proof rests on assumptions that must be proved in turn.
 2. Because the conduct of human life makes complete suspension of judgment impossible, Carneades developed standards of probability that allow us to act in the world. Although we can never attain scientific truth (not to mention ethical truth), we should keep trying.
 3. The Skeptics tended to atheism: if there is any kind of divine providence, how can we explain, for example, such (apparent) facts as poisonous snakes? He was especially critical of Stoic ideas such as natural law. Cicero (106–43 BCE) disapproved especially of this Skeptical critique.
- IV.** The most complete and most durably influential of Skepticism’s teachers was a medical doctor known as Sextus Empiricus.
- A.** Sextus Empiricus probably lived around CE/AD 200. He practiced medicine at Rome; three of his books survive, written in Greek.
- B.** The epithet *Empiricus* was given to him because he believed that the closest we can come to a criterion of truth is experience (*empeireia* in Greek). Any science based on reason or logic is not to be trusted; widely attested experience is our surest guide to probability.
1. Sextus’s *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* dedicates the first of its three books to presenting the case for Skepticism; in the other two, Sextus attacks other schools of thought, which he calls “dogmatic.”
 2. Sextus’s second book breaks down dogmatic philosophy by categories rather than schools, into issues supposedly resolved by logic, by physical science, or by ethics. In the first part of this book, he attacks Stoic logic with particular force.
 3. In his third book, *Against the Professors*, Sextus criticizes teachers of grammar, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astrology, and music. This critique is not very encouraging about the value of traditional education!
- V.** The central issue endlessly raised by Skepticism is also central to any thinking person: how do we know?
- A.** Logic is always culture bound, despite strenuous efforts on the part of Aristotle and others to free it of such assumptions; hence, logic is not a sufficiently reliable method for ascertaining truth. What can we trust? Practical experience is the Skeptics’ answer.

- B.** For many centuries, intellectuals who were interested in science hoped that if the scientific inquiry of physical nature could become sufficiently empirical, it could be our best guide to certitude or, at least, probability.
1. From this view came the early modern effort to establish an empirical “scientific method.”
 2. This cast of mind had great influence on the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century and continues to affect the attitude of laboratory science to the present day. This is the core of the contemporary dispute between creationists and evolutionists.
 3. Unfortunately, starting with that very movement, human experience has been having a hard time of it for the last four centuries. Modern science has shown that little of our experience is accurate. Why has empiricism seemed such an attractive mental habit to the modern West?
 4. One could argue that the deconstructionists of the late twentieth century are the Skeptics of our age and represent a third, or fourth—or even fifth—rebirth of the Pyrrhonic tradition.

Supplementary Reading:

Bertrand Russell, *Wisdom of the West*, “Hellenism.” (Doubleday, 1959).

Giorgio di Santillana and Edgar Zibel, *The Development of Rationalism and Empiricism* (Chicago: 1941).

James Kern Feibleman, *Foundations of Empiricism* (The Hague: Martin Nijhoff, 1962).

Questions to Consider:

1. If reason and logic are insufficient guides to certitude because different people reason differently, why is individual experience a better guide to certitude?
2. Experience has had a hard time since the scientific revolution, which showed that little of our experience is accurate (e.g., the sun does not rise to the east of a flat earth and set to the west). Why has “empiricism” seemed such an attractive mental habit to the modern Western mentality?
3. Could any religion—ancient pagan or Jewish or Christian—be acceptable to empirical skeptics? How?

Glossary

Aesthetics: The study of the nature of the beautiful and its embodiment in both nature and works of art.

Allegory of the Cave: name given by scholars to a particularly important passage from Plato's *Republic*, book 7.

Anamnesis: Recollection.

Apatheia: Freedom from pathos and suffering.

Archi: GK, "beginning, origin."

Arete: GK, "virtue or excellence."

Artaraxia: A condition of disciplined withdrawal.

Cardinal virtues (Aristotle): Courage, justice, temperance, practical wisdom.

Contemplation: from a Greek word for "beholding", this is a technical term in Plato and Aristotle for the act of intellectual vision or seeing the Forms (i.e. actually looking at them with our mind's eye, not just having them in our knowledge or memory). Medieval writers contrast the contemplative life of monastic prayer (which leads to vision of God) and the active life of bishops and others who must run things (for the good of one's neighbors).

Distributive justice: Giving people that which they deserve. To each, his own.

Dualism: this term has many philosophical meanings, but with regard to Plato it refers specifically to soul/body dualism, the theory that the human self consists in two distinct parts, the material body and the non-material, immortal soul.

Empiricism: What experience shows us actually works in a consistent manner.

Entelechy: Holds that natural objects have natural ends or natural potentials toward which they tend if not interrupted.

Epistemology: Examines the question of knowledge. Attempts to characterize the nature of truth, science, and rational inquiry and endeavors to offer criteria for each.

Epistolai: Letters of advice.

Essence: a word that can have many meanings (the root sense of the original Greek term is "being") but in Platonic and Aristotelian usage it is typically identified with Form.

Form: for Plato, the eternal essence of things, separate from this world (also called *idea*); for Aristotle, the essence of a material thing (also called "nature") which is inseparable from the thing--embodied in it, so to speak. Hence for

Plato the Form or essence of a horse exists separate from physical horses, while for Aristotle it does not.

Ethics: The study of the nature of the good life and the nature of good itself.

Eudaimonia: Happiness, success.

Hedonist: A philosopher who thinks the goal of human life is to feel good.

Hylomorphism: The relation of form or structure to matter or content.

Idea: originally a Greek word meaning "something seen"; Plato uses it to mean something seen *with the mind's eye*--hence the equivalent of *Form* (q.v.). In Plotinus and in Christian Platonism, Ideas are located in the divine Mind. Descartes introduced the modern habit of talking about ideas as belonging within the *human* mind.

Intellect: in the Platonist and Aristotelian traditions, this refers to the highest function of the soul, its *understanding* of Form (in Greek, "understand," *noein*, is the verb cognate to the noun "intellect," *nous*).

Intelligible: adjective designating the sort of thing which is perceived by the intellect (as "sensible" designates the sort of thing perceived by the senses).

Metaphysics: The study of being. The study of the ultimate nature and structure of the universe.

Natural philosophy: Attempts to offer a rational account of the natural world, both organic and inorganic.

Philosophy: Literally, the love of wisdom (GK, *philo* + *sophia*). The rational pursuit of truths, which are perceived as answers to perennial and eternal questions; also, a historical study of intractable problems--as these problems become tractable, they cease to be philosophical.

Philosophy of mind (psychology): The study of the workings of the soul/mind.

Phusis: GK, "nature."

Physics: For Aristotle, the science of movement.

Platonic forms: The unchanging essence or form of things in this world.

Psyche: Soul, life.

Psychology: in reference to ancient philosophy, this term means specifically, theories about the nature of the soul (which is *psyche* in Greek).

Reductio ad absurdum: A method of attacking philosophical positions by exposing their latent absurdities.

Sophia: GK, "wisdom."

Biographical Notes

Substance: key term in Aristotle's metaphysics, meaning a thing not dependent on other things for its existence (e.g. "horse" designates a substance, but "brown" does not, for "brown" can only exist in other things such as horses).

Teleology: from the Greek word *telos*, meaning "end" or "goal," this technical term describes Aristotle's notion that all natural motion tends toward some appropriate end or purpose.

Virtue: the key term in ancient ethics (especially Aristotle), from a Greek word whose root meaning is "excellence;" in Aristotle human virtue is a good state of the soul, a habit.

Anaximander of Miletus (c. 610–c.547/6 BCE). The first Greek philosopher whose thought we know in any detail. He held that the ultimate reality is the *apeiron*—the boundless, limitless, imperishable, and eternal surrounding. Anaximander went beyond Thales in perceiving that the ultimate matter of the universe must be independent of the structure and form of particular kinds of matter.

Anaximenes of Miletus (fl. c. 546 BCE). The junior member of the Milesian school and probably Anaximander's pupil. He held that one primary substance—air—produces all the others, either through rarefaction or condensation. He offers the first physical account in Western philosophy of particular substances as modifications of one primary substance.

Aristotle (384–322 BCE). Born in Stagira in northern Greece, the son of Nicomachus, a physician in the Macedonian court. Aristotle studied at Plato's Academy in Athens between 367 and 347 BCE. From 342 until 339, he tutored the young heir to the Macedonian throne, later known as Alexander the Great. Aristotle later returned to Athens, where in 355, he opened his own school—the Lyceum. He engaged in wide-ranging intellectual pursuits while in Athens, lecturing or writing on physics, metaphysics, logic, ethics, biology, politics, rhetoric, and the arts. An upsurge in anti-Macedonian sentiment following Alexander's death in 323 forced Aristotle to flee to Chalcis in Euboea, where he died in 322.

Cicero (106–43 BCE). Roman orator, philosopher, and politician. He suffered personal exile, served in the Roman Senate, and was a bitter opponent of Julius Caesar and Marc Antony. Among his oeuvre are philosophical works, famous orations, a handbook on oratory, and personal letters that reveal an enormous amount about ancient Roman life.

Democritus of Abdera (c. 460–c. 370 BCE). Along with Leucippus, the founder of classical atomism. Democritus held that ultimate reality consists of atoms—indivisible, homogeneous, solid, and unchanging units. These atoms are in eternal motion and combine in various ways to form all material things.

Heraclitus of Ephesus (d. after 480 BCE). Held that *logos* governs all things and is somehow associated with fire, which is preeminent among the four elements. Heraclitus is principally remembered for the doctrine of the "flux" of all things.

Marcus Aurelius (121–180 CE). Roman emperor of the late second century AD, Stoic philosopher, and author of *The Meditations*. He was adopted at age seventeen by his uncle, the Roman emperor Antonius Pius, and married Antonius's daughter, Faustina. Marcus became emperor on his uncle's death in 161 and voluntarily shared rule with his adoptive brother Lucius Aurelius Verus. Marcus spent much of his time defending the empire against Britons, Parthians,

and Germans—considered by the cultivated Romans to be barbarians. He wrote *The Meditations* while commanding Roman troops north of the Danube. He curbed the gladiatorial games, mitigated some of the worst injustices against slaves, and placed the security and welfare of the Empire before his own. He nevertheless persecuted Christians, fearing that they would weaken the Empire.

Parmenides of Elea (b. c. 515 BCE). Probably the most important pre-Socratic philosopher, he held that what is real must be ungenerated, imperishable, indivisible, perfect, and motionless.

Plato (428 – 348 B.C.E.) was born of distinguished aristocratic parents in ancient Athens. At age 18, he became closely attached to Socrates, and for the next decade, until Socrates's execution, accepted him as teacher and friend. Plato's youth was also spent under the shadow of the great civil war between Athens and Sparta that ended in 404 B.C.E. with the total defeat of the former. Plato saw this as a judgment on the weakness of Athenian democracy and the need for a new political system, the meritocracy suggested in his key text, *The Republic*. Both Plato and Aristotle spent the crucial formative years of their youthful intellectual development (ages 18-28) with inspired teachers of philosophy: Plato with Socrates and Aristotle with Plato himself (for a full 20 years, from 367-347 B.C.E.). As we have noted, Plato's study with Socrates ended in the trauma of Socrates's execution by Athenian democrats. Aristotle, who eventually founded his own school in Athens (called the Lyceum, next to Plato's Academy), could observe his teacher lead a long and productive life as a creative and influential figure, another proof for Aristotle that the political life of Greece was not quite as desperate and deplorable as Plato portrayed it.

Polybius (203?–120 BCE). A Greek historian and exponent of Thucydidean history. His greatest work, charting the rise of Rome in the context of a universal history, exists only in fragments.

Pythagoras (b. c. 570 BCE). Founder of a quasi-religious society in Crotona in southern Italy. He taught the doctrine of reincarnation and held that the *cosmos* is explicable in terms of harmony or number.

Sextus Empiricus (fl., third century AD). A Greek Skeptic philosopher, medical doctor, and historian. He was opposed to syllogistic proofs but was a proponent of Pyrrhonic “suspension of judgment,” whose philosophy anticipated many of the philosophical disputes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Socrates (469–399 BCE). Late-fifth-century Athenian philosopher and teacher of Plato. In his youth, he probably practiced stone sculpture. Socrates fought as a hoplite for Athens during the Peloponnesian War. Famous for his view that “the unexamined life is not worth living,” Socrates combined skepticism and logic in his resolute pursuit of wisdom. His technique of questioning others in pursuit of the consequences of statements is often referred to as the “dialectical” or

Socratic method. Socrates was tried, found guilty, and executed for corrupting the youth of Athens and not believing in the gods of the city.

Thales of Miletus (fl. 585 BCE). The first Greek to search for the ultimate substance of things, which he identified with water.

Zeno of Citium (c. 334–c. 262 BCE). Founder of Stoicism. After turning from Cynicism to Socratic philosophy, he gradually developed the metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics that compose the Stoical system.