

Greek Philosophy

and Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*

Philosophy

- Etymology:
 - Middle English *philosophie*, from Old French, from Latin *philosophia*, from Greek *philosophi*, from **philosophos**
- *philo* = love
- *sophos* = wisdom
- *Philosophos* = Lover of wisdom

'Inventing' Philosophy

- The Greeks invented philosophy as a formal, intellectual discipline.
 - But they were not the first marvel at the world and to ask and answer questions about it.
- Religion also asks the big questions and provides answers for them.
- What is different about the two systems?
 - How would they answer questions about the nature of the world, the nature of ourselves, the nature of God?

Major Areas of Philosophy

- Metaphysics: Concerned with the nature of ultimate reality.
- Epistemology: Regarding the nature of knowledge.
- Axiology: The study of values, including aesthetics, ethics, and political philosophy.
- Logic: Having to do with the laws of thought and forms of arguments.

Greek Philosophy

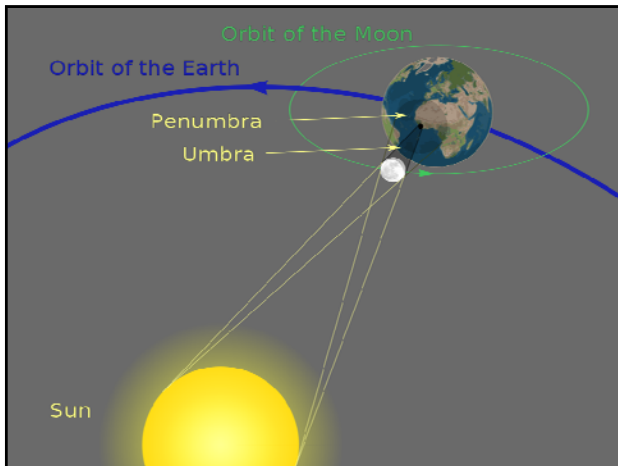
- Archaic Period, Natural Philosophy
 - Thales, Pythagoras
- Hellenic Age
 - Sophists
 - Socrates
 - Plato
 - Aristotle
- Hellenistic Age
 - Skepticism and Stoicism

Natural Philosophy

- The first philosophers conceived of a world where natural causes and effects operate (rather than supernatural ones).
- Natural philosophy encompassed both "science" and "philosophy."
 - This connection persisted for 22 centuries, until the Newtonian revolution, when science stopped speculating about the purpose of nature.

Thales

- Founder of the Milesian school of thought.
- First to predict an eclipse (solar).
- First to propose that natural laws (and human reason) could explain the universe, a belief that was found deplorable by more religious people.
- Reasoned that everything was made of matter (and that the fundamental substance was water), so we say that he was a *materialist*.



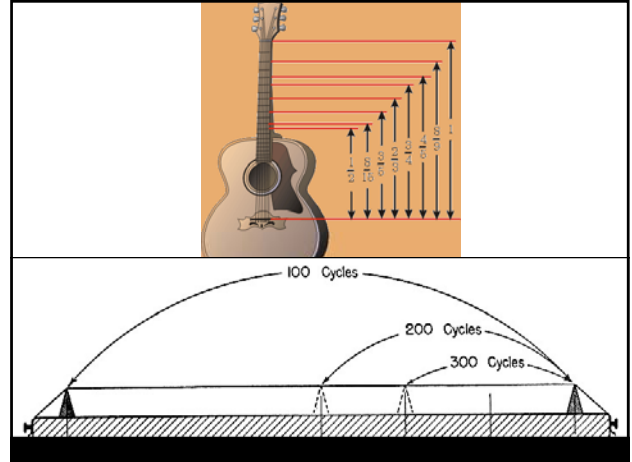
Earth, water, air, fire (and æther)

Group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
1	1 H																				2 He
2	3 Li	4 Be											5 B	6 C	7 N	8 O	9 F	10 Ne			
3	11 Na	12 Mg											13 Al	14 Si	15 P	16 S	17 Cl	18 Ar			
4	19 K	20 Ca	21 Sc	22 Ti	23 V	24 Cr	25 Mn	26 Fe	27 Co	28 Ni	29 Cu	30 Zn	31 Ga	32 Ge	33 As	34 Se	35 Br	36 Kr			
5	27 Rb	28 Sr	39 Y	40 Zr	41 Nb	42 Mo	43 Tc	44 Ru	45 Rh	46 Pd	47 Ag	48 Cd	49 In	50 Sn	51 Sb	52 Te	53 I	54 Xe			
6	55 Cs	56 Ba		72 Hf	73 Ta	74 W	75 Re	76 Os	77 Ir	78 Pt	79 Au	80 Hg	81 Tl	82 Pb	83 Bi	84 Po	85 At	86 Rn			
7	87 Fr	88 Ra		104 Rf	105 Db	106 Sg	107 Bh	108 Hs	109 Mt	110 Ds	111 Rg	112 Cn	113 Nh	114 Fl	115 Mc	116 Lv	117 Ts	118 Og			
Lanthanides																					
	57 La	58 Ce	59 Pr	60 Nd	61 Pm	62 Sm	63 Eu	64 Gd	65 Tb	66 Dy	67 Ho	68 Er	69 Tm	70 Yb	71 Lu						
Actinides																					
	89 Ac	90 Th	91 Pa	92 U	93 Np	94 Pu	95 Am	96 Cm	97 Bk	98 Cf	99 Es	100 Fm	101 Md	102 No	103 Lr						

Democritus coined the term *átomos*, which means "uncuttable" or "the smallest indivisible particle of matter". (450 BC)

Pythagoras

- Most famous pre-Socratic philosopher.
- From the island of Samos, but lived and worked in *Magna Graecia*.
- Led a group (or brotherhood, or cult) of followers, known as *Pythagoreans*.
- He was an *idealist*. Rejecting the materialist outlook, he believed “Everything is made of numbers.”



The Sophists

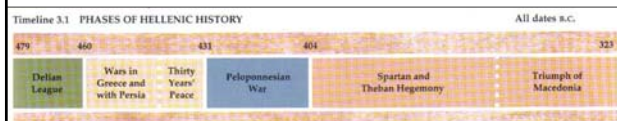
- Scorned pre-Socratic speculation about atoms and elements as irrelevant.
- They were teachers who emphasized practical skills, such as public speaking, the art of rhetoric.

“Man is the measure of all things.”

-- Protagoras

Hellenic Philosophers: The Big Three

1. Socrates (470-399 BC.)
2. Plato (427-347 BC.)
3. Aristotle (384-322 BC.)



Socrates (470-399 B.C.)

- A ‘gadfly’.
- Opposed the Sophist tendency to undermine traditional values without offering new ones in their place.
- Like them, he didn’t think about nature, and focused instead on human issues and empowering individuals to make their own moral choices.
- Unlike them, he believed that an enduring moral order existed in the universe.

The Wisest Man in Athens

- One of Socrates' students went to the Oracle at Delphi and asked, "Is Socrates the wisest man in Athens?"
- The answer was an unambiguous, "Yes."
- Socrates set out to prove that answer wrong, but ended up concluding that the oracle was correct because he at least knew what he didn't know.



"Virtue is knowledge."
--Socrates

- The *Socratic method*
- Taught that a person who acquires truth through personal struggle to self-enlightenment will not commit evil deeds.
- His belief in the essential goodness of human nature became a central tenet of Western thought.

What is justice?

Just: consistent with what is morally right; righteous

- How would the sophists determine what is just?
 - How does this relate to Athenian democracy?
- How would Socrates determine what is just?
- Do you want to live in a just society?
 - How should society determine what is morally correct?

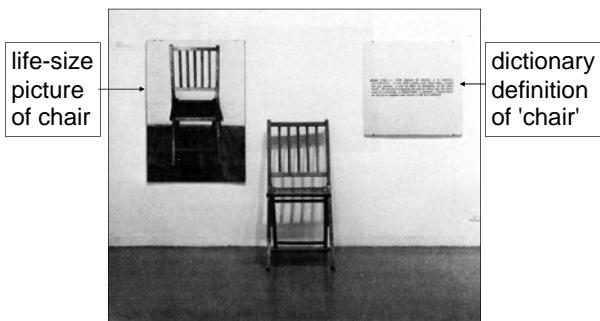


Plato (427-347 B.C.)

- Disciple of Socrates
- Author of the *Socratic Dialogues*
 - Socrates never wrote anything. Are Socrates' words in the *Dialogues* his own? or Plato's?
- Platonism was premised on the belief that there exists the physical world, but also the world of Forms, or Ideas.
 - Everything in our world is an imperfect copy of its original form in the world of Ideas.



How is this work of conceptual art related to Plato's philosophy of forms? Which one is the real chair?

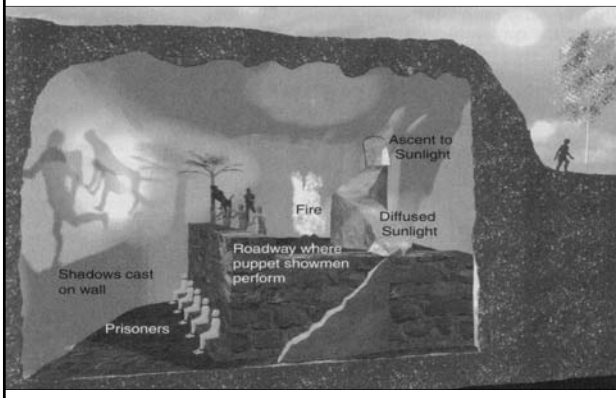


http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_and_Three_Chairs

The Allegory of the Cave

- Allegory: a story, poem, or picture with an underlying meaning as well as the literal one.
- The Allegory is found in Plato's *Republic*, one of his later Socratic Dialogues.
- In the Allegory, Plato describes the journey from experiencing the world that our senses tell us is real, into the world of Forms that one sees with the 'mind's eye'.
- By doing so, he is also showing what he believes to be the philosopher's proper place in society.

Plato's Cave



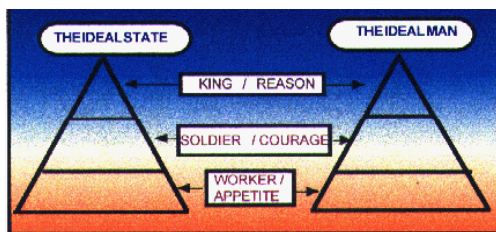
Excerpt from *The Republic*, Book 7

... the [cave] is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and ... the journey upward [is] the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world...

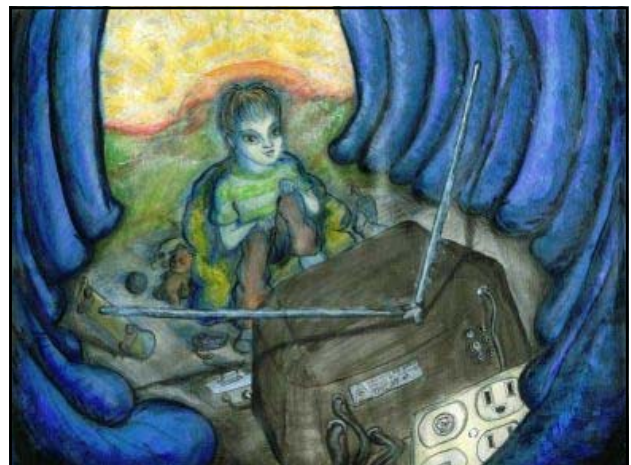
... in the world of knowledge [outside the cave] **the idea of good** appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort;

... he who would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed [on the idea of good].

In *The Republic*, Plato described what he believed was the ideal state.



Who did Plato think was an ideal man?
Who did Plato think should be King?



Aristotle (384-322 B.C.)



- Student of Plato, tutor of Alexander.
- Believed the natural world was the only world; nature could be studied via the empirical method.
- Over time, his books became the final word on the subjects he wrote about:
 - *Metaphysics, Biology, Poetics, Rhetoric*
 - Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is an ancient Greek treatise on the art of persuasion.

Rhetoric - Syllogisms

- A syllogism is a form of reasoning consisting of two premises and a conclusion.
 - All men are mortal; Aristotle is a man; therefore Aristotle is mortal.
- Aristotle classified 256 kinds of syllogisms, but found only 24 of them valid.
 - An invalid syllogism is an example of a fallacy of reasoning.

Fallacies of Reasoning (just a few examples)

- *Ad Hominem* Argument
- Argument from Authority
- Arguing in a Circle
- Argument from Ignorance
- False Dilemma
- Slippery Slope
- Straw Man Argument
- Genetic Fallacy



Isra News in February 2010:

Regarding the controversial GT200 bomb detector, Dr Pomtip insists that the device will still be used in the deep South even if it is proven ineffective.

"I do not feel embarrassed if the bomb detector is proven ineffective. Personally, I have never handled the device myself. But my people have used it and it is accurate every time. Long long time ago, people believed that the Earth is flat and anyone who said otherwise faced execution. Things which are not visible does not necessarily mean they do not exist."

"The devices (GT200) are there and no one has the right to ban their use. I will continue to use it," she announced apparently unperturbed by the tests which are to be undertaken on the detector.



Plato founded one of the earliest known organized schools in Western civilization, the Academy. Aristotle later founded his own school, the Lyceum.



The School of Athens, fresco by Raphael, 1511.



Plato and Aristotle:
Who is pointing up? Who is pointing down? Why?

What does this quote mean?

The [person] who has no tincture of philosophy goes through life imprisoned in the prejudices derived from common sense, from the habitual beliefs of his age or his nation, and from convictions which have grown up in his mind without the cooperation or consent of his deliberate reason. . .

- Bertrand Russell

Philosophy in the Hellenistic Age

- Skepticism
- Epicureanism *Autarky & Ataraxia*
- Cynicism
- Stoicism

Although contradictory of each other, these schools of thought had a common appeal: the promise of a stable belief system and inner peace in the face of a hostile and chaotic environment.

The Legacy of Hellenic Greece

- The Classical Aesthetic:
 - Their appreciation of beauty in the arts, especially with regard to sculpture and architecture.
 - The principles of Classicism – balance, simplicity, harmonious proportion, restraint, and order.
- Greek mythology and religion.
- The study of history: esp. Herodotus and Thucydides.
- Greek theater: drama, tragedy, and comedy.
- Philosophy: esp. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.
- Democracy and the individual, skeptical spirit that was rooted in it.