

The History of Psychology
Part One: The Ancients

Dr. C. George Boeree
Psychology Department
Shippensburg University

E-Text Source:

[<http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboree/historyofpsych.html>]

Index

❖ Index	
❖ Psyche and Eros	3
❖ The Presocratics	5
[<i>The Greeks</i> <i>The Basics</i> <i>The Ionians</i> <i>The Greeks of Italy</i> <i>The Abderans</i>]	
The Alphabet	12
Two Poems by Sappho	15
Timeline: from 600 BC to 200 BC	17
Map: Ancient Mediterranean	17
❖ Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle	18
Plato Selection: Allegory of the Cave	25
❖ Logical Fallacies	28
❖ Epicureans and Stoics	40
[<i>Cynicism</i> <i>Hedonism</i> <i>Skepticism</i> <i>Stoicism</i> <i>Epicureanism</i>]	
A Letter from Epicurus	45
Selections from Epictetus	47
Timeline: From 1 AD to 400 AD	50
Map: Roman Empire 116 AD	50
❖ The Roman Empire	51
[<i>Neo-Platonism</i> <i>Mithraism</i> <i>Christianity</i> <i>Gnosticism</i> <i>Manicheanism</i> <i>St. Augustine</i> <i>The Fall of Rome</i>]	
A Brief History of Judaism	61
Early Christian Heresies	64
Sunnis and Shiites	67
Early History of China and India	68

The Story of Psyche and Eros

The so-called psyche or butterfly is generated from caterpillars which grow on green leaves, chiefly leaves of theraphanus, which some call crambe or cabbage. At first it is less than a grain of millet; it then grows into a small grub; and in three days it is a tiny caterpillar. After this it grows on and on, and becomes quiescent and changes its shape, and is now called a chrysalis. The outer shell is hard, and the chrysalis moves if you touch it. It attaches itself by cobweb-like filaments, and is unfurnished with mouth or any other apparent organ. After a little while the outer covering bursts asunder, and out flies the winged creature that we call the psyche or butterfly.

(From Aristotle's **History of Animals** 551a.1)

Psyche was one of three sisters, princesses in a Grecian kingdom. All three were beautiful, but Psyche was the most beautiful. Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, heard about Psyche and her sisters and was jealous of all the attention people paid to Psyche. So she summoned her son, Eros, and told him to put a spell on Psyche.

Always obedient, Eros flew down to earth with two vials of potions. Invisible, he sprinkled the sleeping Psyche with a potion that would make men avoid her when it came to marriage. Accidentally, he pricked her with one of his arrows (which make someone fall in love instantly) and she startled awake. Her beauty, in turn, startled Eros, and he accidentally pricked himself as well. Feeling bad about what he had done, he then sprinkled her with the other potion, which would provide her with joy in her life.

Sure enough, Psyche, although still beautiful, could find no husband. Her parents, afraid that they had offended the gods somehow, asked an oracle to reveal Psyche's future husband. The oracle said that, while no man would have her, there was a creature on the top of a mountain that would marry her.

Surrendering to the inevitable, she headed for the mountain. When she came within sight, she was lifted by a gentle wind and carried the rest of the way. When she arrived, she saw that her new home was in fact a rich and beautiful palace. Her new husband never permitted her to see him, but he proved to be a true and gentle lover. He was, of course, Eros himself.

After some time, she grew lonely for her family, and she asked to be allowed to have her sisters for a visit. When they saw how beautiful Psyche's new home was, they grew jealous. They went to her and told her not to forget that her husband was some kind of monster, and that, no doubt, he was only fattening her up in order to eat her. They suggested that she hide a lantern and a knife near her bed, so that the next time he visited her, she could look to see if he was indeed a monster, and cut off his head if it was so.

Her sisters convinced her this was best, so the next time her husband came to visit her, she had a lamp and a knife ready. When she raised the lamp, she saw that her husband was not a monster but Eros! Surprised, he ran to the window and flew off. She jumped out after him, but fell the ground and lay there unconscious.

When she awoke, the palace had disappeared, and she found herself in a field near her old home. She went to the temple of Aphrodite and prayed for help. Aphrodite responded by giving her a series of tasks to do – tasks that Aphrodite believed the girl would not be able to accomplish.

The first was a matter of sorting a huge pile of mixed grains into separate piles. Psyche looked at the pile and despaired, but Eros secretly arranged for an army of ants to separate the piles. Aphrodite, returning the following morning, accused Psyche of having had help, as indeed she had.

The next task involved getting a snippet of golden fleece from each one of a special herd of sheep that lived across a nearby river. The god of the river advised Psyche to wait until the sheep sought shade from the midday sun. Then they would be sleepy and not attack her. When Psyche presented Aphrodite with the fleece, the goddess again accused her of having had help.

The third task Aphrodite set before Psyche was to get a cup of water from the river Styx, where it cascades down from an incredible height. Psyche thought it was all over, until an eagle helped her by carrying the cup up the mountain and returning it full. Aphrodite was livid, knowing full well that Psyche could never have done this alone!



Psyche's next task was to go into hell to ask Persephone, wife of Hades, for a box of magic makeup. Thinking that she was doomed, she decided to end it all by jumping off a cliff. But a voice told her not to, and gave her instructions on making her way to hell to get the box. But, the voice warned, do not look inside the box under any circumstances!

Well, Psyche received the box from Persephone and made her way back home. But, true to her nature, she was unable to restrain herself from peeking inside. To her surprise, there was nothing inside but darkness, which put her into a deep sleep. Eros could no longer restrain himself either and wakened her. He told her to bring the box to Aphrodite, and that he would take care of the rest.

Eros went to the heavens and asked Zeus to intervene. He spoke of his love for Psyche so eloquently that Zeus was moved to grant him his wish. Eros brought Psyche to Zeus who gave her a cup of ambrosia, the drink of immortality. Zeus then joined Psyche and Eros in eternal marriage. They later had a daughter, who would be named Pleasure.

The Greek name for a butterfly is Psyche, and the same word means the soul. There is no illustration of the immortality of the soul so striking and beautiful as the butterfly, bursting on brilliant wings from the tomb in which it has lain, after a dull, grovelling, caterpillar existence, to flutter in the blaze of day and feed on the most fragrant and delicate productions of the spring. Psyche, then, is the human soul, which is purified by sufferings and misfortunes, and is thus prepared for the enjoyment of true and pure happiness.

(From **Bulfinch's Mythology: The Age of Fable**, chapter XI)

Image: The Abduction of Psyche, by William Adolphe Bourguereau (1825 - 1905).

The Pre-Socratics

"Know thyself."

– inscribed on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi

Psyche, from the Greek *psu-khê*, possibly derived from a word meaning "warm blooded:" Life, soul, ghost, departed spirit, conscious self, personality, butterfly or moth. Similar words: **Thymos**, meaning breath, life, soul, temper, courage, will; **Pneuma**, meaning breath, mind, spirit, angel; **Noös**, meaning mind, reason, intellect, or the meaning of a word.

The Greeks

Western intellectual history always begins with the ancient Greeks. This is not to say that no one had any deep thoughts prior to the ancient Greeks, or that the philosophies of ancient India and China (and elsewhere) were in any way inferior. In fact, philosophies from all over the world eventually came to influence western thought, but only much later. But it was the Greeks that educated the Romans and, after a long dark age, it was the records of these same Greeks, kept and studied by the Moslem and Jewish scholars as well as Christian monks, that educated Europe once again.

We might also ask, why the Greeks in the first place? Why not the Phoenicians, or the Carthaginians, or the Persians, or the Etruscans? There are a variety of possible reasons.

One has to do with the ability to read and write, which in turn has to do with the alphabet. It is when ideas get recorded that they enter intellectual history. Buddhism, for example, although a very sophisticated philosophy, was an oral tradition for hundreds of years until committed to writing, since the Brahmi alphabet was late in coming. It was only then that Buddhism spread throughout Asia.

The alphabet was invented by the Semites of the Mediterranean coast, including the Hebrews and the Phoenicians, who used simple drawings to represent consonants instead of words. The Phoenicians apparently passed it on to the Greeks. The Greeks improved on the idea by inventing vowels, using some extra letters their language had no use for.

Prior to the invention of the alphabet, reading and writing was the domain of specialized scribes, concerned mostly with keeping government records. Even in the case of the Phoenicians, writing was more a tool of the merchant class, to keep track of trade, than a means of recording ideas. In Greece, at least in certain city-states, reading and writing was something "everyone" did.

By everyone, of course, I mean upper class males. Women, peasants, and slaves were discouraged from picking up the skill, as they would be and still are in many places around the world. If you wonder where all the women philosophers are, well, there were very few indeed! The poet Sappho of Lesbos is the closest we get to a female philosopher on record in the ancient world.

Still, the alphabet does not explain everything. Another thing that made the Greeks a bit more likely to start the intellectual ball rolling was the fact that they got into overseas trading early. Their land and climate was okay for agriculture, but not great, so the idea of trading for what you can't grow or make yourself came naturally. Plus, Greece is practically all coastline and islands, so seafaring came equally naturally.

What sea trading gives you is contact with a great variety of civilizations, including their religions and philosophies and sciences. This gets people to thinking: If this one says x, and that one says y, and the third one says z, what then is the truth? Traders are usually skeptics.

Still, the Phoenicians (and their cousins, the Carthaginians) had the alphabet first, and were excellent sea traders as well. Why weren't they the founders of western intellectual history? Perhaps it had to do with centralization. The Phoenicians had an authoritarian government controlled by the most powerful merchants. The Carthaginians had the same. Perhaps being surrounded by powerful authoritarian empires forced them to adopt that style of government to survive.

The Greeks, on the other hand, were divided into many small city-states, each unique, each fiercely independent, always bickering and often fighting. It may seem disadvantageous, but when it comes to ideas, diversity and even conflict can be invigorating! Consider that when Greece was finally united under Macedonian rule, the flurry of intellectual activity slowed. And when the Romans took over, it practically died.

The Basics

The ancient Greek philosophers gave us the basic categories of philosophy, beginning with **metaphysics**. Metaphysics is the part of philosophy that asks questions such as "What is the world made of?" and "What is the ultimate substance of all reality?"

In fact, the ancient Greeks were among the first to suggest that there is a "true" reality (noumenon) under the "apparent" reality (phenomenon), an "unseen real" beneath the "unreal seen." The question is, what is this true reality? Is it matter and energy, i.e. something physical? This is called **materialism**. Or something more spiritual or mental, such as ideas or ideals? This is called **idealism**. Materialism and idealism constitute the two extreme answers. Later, we will explore some other possibilities.

A second aspect of philosophy is **epistemology**. Epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge: How do we know what is true or false, what is real or not? Can we know anything for certain, or is it ultimately hopeless?

Again, the Greeks outlined two opposing approaches to the problem of knowledge. One is called **empiricism**, which says that all knowledge comes through the senses. The other is called **rationalism**, which says that knowledge is a matter of reason, thought. There are other answers in epistemology as well. In fact, empiricism and rationalism have never been entirely exclusive.

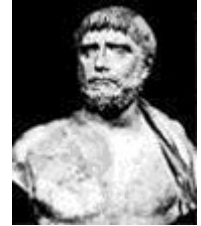
The third aspect of philosophy that we will be concerned with is **ethics**. Ethics is the philosophical understanding of good and bad, right and wrong. It is often called morality, and most consider the two words synonymous. After all, ethics comes from *ethos*, which is Greek for customs, and morality comes from *mores*, which is Latin for customs!

As we shall see, ethics is the most difficult of the three aspects of philosophy. For the present, we might want to differentiate the extremes of **hedonism** and **cynicism**. Hedonism says that good and bad come down to what I like and what I don't like, what gives me pleasure and what gives me pain. Cynicism says that world is essentially evil, and we can only work at distancing ourselves from it and moving towards the ultimate good, which is God.

There are many other aspects of philosophy – logic, for example, and esthetics, the study of beauty. But metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics are sufficient for now.

The Ionians

Greek philosophy didn't begin in Greece (as we know it); It began on the western coast of what is now Turkey, an area known then as Ionia. In Ionia's richest city, Miletus, was a man of Phoenician descent called **Thales** (624-546). He studied in Egypt and other parts of the near east, and learned geometry and astronomy.



His answer to the great question of what the universe is made of was water. Inasmuch as water is a simple molecule, found in gaseous, liquid, and solid forms, and found just about everywhere, especially life, this is hardly a bad answer! It makes Thales not only the nominal first philosopher, but the first materialist as well. Since ultimate nature was known in Greek as *physis*, he could also be considered the first physicist (or, as the Greeks would say, physiologist).

We should note, however, that he also believed that the whole universe of material things is alive, and that animals, plants, and even metals have souls – an idea called panpsychism.

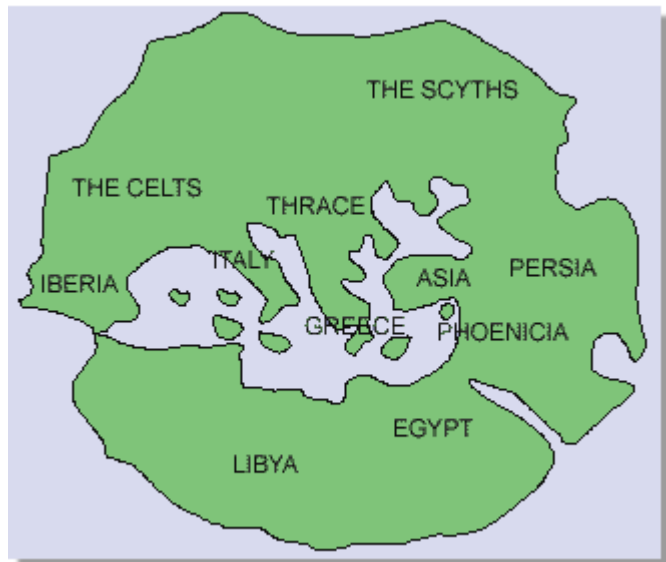


His most famous student was **Anaximander** (611-549), also of Miletus. He is probably best known as having drawn the first known map of the inhabited world, which probably looked something like this:

Anaximander added an evolutionary aspect to Thales' materialism: The universe begins as an unformed, infinite

mass, which develops over time into the many-faceted world we see around us. But, he warns, the world will eventually return to the unformed mass!

Further, the earth began as fluid, some of which dries to become earth and some of which evaporates to become atmosphere. Life also began in the sea, only gradually becoming animals of the land and birds of the air.



Like Thales, **Heraclitus** (540-475) was an Ionian, from Ephesus, a little north of Miletus. And, like Thales, he was searching for the ultimate substance that unifies all reality. He decided on fire, or energy – again, not a bad guess at all.

The multiplicity of reality comes out of fire by condensation, becoming humid air, then water, and finally earth. But this is balanced by rarefaction, and the earth liquifies, then evaporates, and finally returns to pure energy.

Taking fire as his ultimate substance led to a more dynamic view of reality. Change, for Heraclitus, is the only constant. "*Panta rei, ouden menei*" – all things flow, nothing abides – is his most famous saying. He is also known for the saying that we cannot step into the same river twice, because new water is constantly flowing onto us.

Fire is also associated in his theory with mind or spirit. And, just like any other fire, he points out that our individuality eventually dies. There is no personal immortality. Only God – the divine fire – is eternal.

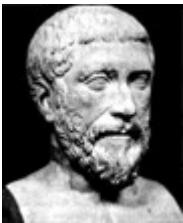
In many ways, Heraclitus reminds me of a Greek Taoist. He believed that, although ultimate reality is One, the world we know is made of up dualities, with each pole requiring the existence of its opposite: Up requires down, white requires black, good requires bad, and so on.

And he sees these oppositions as being the source of harmony, pointing out that, unless you stretch your harp strings in two opposing directions, you cannot play music.

And, again like the Taoists, he believed that the best way to live one's life is in harmony with nature. But he died alone, at the age of 70, due to his intense dislike for human company!

The Greeks of Italy

Another Ionian was **Pythagorus** (582-500). After travelling everywhere from Gaul (modern day France) to Egypt and India, he settled down in Crotona, a sea port of southern Italy. Southern Italy was the greatest settlement of Greeks outside of Greece, to the point that the Romans referred to the area as Magna Grecia ("greater Greece"). There, he set up his famous school.



His school was more like a large commune, and his philosophy more like a religion. Because they believed in reincarnation, all of his followers were vegetarians. They avoided wine, swearing by the gods, sexual misconduct, excesses and frivolity. For the first five years, a new pupil took a vow of silence. Women were treated as equals – a true rarity in the ancient world!

His philosophy was rooted in mathematics, which meant geometry to the ancient Greeks. Pythagorus is credited with a number of geometric proofs, most notably the pythagorean theorem: The sum of the squares of the two sides of a right triangle is equal to the square of the hypotenuse. He discovered the mathematical basis of music, and saw the same patterns in the movements of the planets. He is the first person to realize that the earth, moon, and planets are all spheres (hence, the "music of the spheres!"). He saw the elegant lawfulness of geometry as the foundation of the entire universe.

So, rather than look for an understanding of the universe in the movement of matter and energy, he looked for laws of nature, the form rather than the material. But, since these laws exist only in the mind as ideas, we call Pythagorus an idealist.

Although his life remains mysterious, his school lasted 300 years, and had a profound influence on all who followed, most particularly Plato.

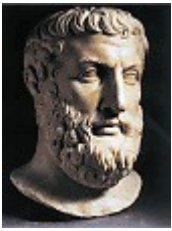
In Elea, another Greek seaport in the south of Italy lived **Xenophanes** (570-475). He is best known for his denial of the existence of the Greek gods.

"Mortals fancy that gods are born, and wear clothes, and have voice and form like themselves. Yet if oxen and lions had hands, and could paint and fashion images as men do, they would make the pictures and images of their gods in their own likenesses; horses would make them like horses, oxen like oxen. Ethiopians make their gods black and snub-nosed; Thracians give theirs blue eyes and red hair."
(from Diogenes Laertes "Xenophanes," iii.)



There is only one God, he said, and that is the universe, Nature. This perspective is known as pantheism. Nevertheless, said Xenophanes, all things, even human beings, evolved from earth and water by means of

natural laws. But things and people remain forever secondary to the ultimate reality that is God-or-Nature.



Parmenides (540-470) of Elea, was a disciple of Xenophanes, and would have a particularly potent influence on Plato. He extended Xenophanes' concept of the one God by saying "*Hen ta panta*," all things are One. Ultimate reality is constant. What we believe to be a world of things and motion and change is just an illusion.

One of Parmenides' disciples was **Zeno of Elea** (490-430, not to be confused with Zeno of Citium, whom we will look at in a later chapter). Zeno wrote a book of famous paradoxes, including the story of Achilles and the tortoise: Let's give the tortoise a head start. By the time Achilles gets to where the tortoise started, the tortoise will have moved a little further. By the time Achilles gets to where the tortoise had moved, the tortoise will have moved a little further still, and so on. Hence, Achilles can never catch up with the tortoise. The point of the story, and all the stories, is that motion is an illusion.

In making his point, he invented the form of argument known as "reduction to absurdity." Note, however, that his arguments don't hold up in the long run, because he mistakenly takes motion, time, and space as made up of an infinite number of points, rather than being continuous.

The Abderans

Leucippus (fl. c. 440) was from Miletus in Ionia, home of Thales and Anaximander. He studied with Zeno at Elea, then started teaching in Abdera, an Ionian Greek colony on the southern shore of Thrace (northeastern Greece).

Although only one sentence of his actual teachings remains, Leucippus will always be remembered as the man who invented the ideas of the atom, empty space, and cause-and-effect. Even the soul, he said, is made up of atoms!

It was Leucippus' student, **Democritus** (460-370) of Abdera, who would take these ideas and develop them into a full-bodied philosophy. He travelled extensively, wrote books on every subject, and was considered the equal of the great Plato and Aristotle. But he never founded a school, and so his ideas never had quite the same impact as Plato's and Aristotle's on later civilization.



Democritus was quite skeptical of sense data, and introduced the idea of secondary qualities: Things like color and sound and taste are more in your mind than in the thing itself. Further, he said that sensations are a matter of atoms falling on the sense organs, and that all the senses are essentially forms of touch.

He also introduced the idea that we identify qualities by convention – i.e. we call sweet things "sweet," and that is what leads us to group them together, not some quality of the things themselves. This is called the nominalism, from the Latin word for name. This way of thinking doesn't show up again till the late Middle Ages.

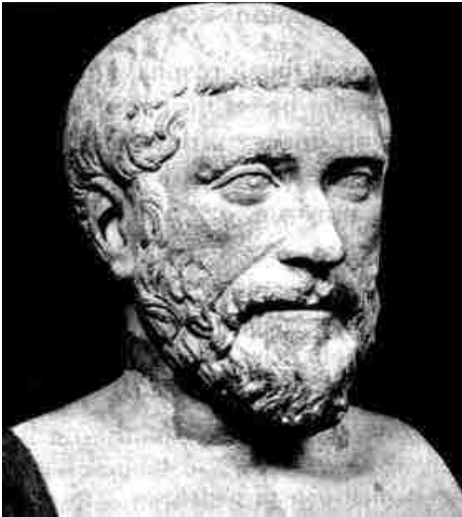
The soul or mind, he said, is composed of small, smooth, round atoms, a lot like fire or energy atoms, and can be found throughout the bodies of both humans and animals, and even the rest of the world.

Happiness comes from acquiring knowledge and ultimately wisdom. Sensual pleasure is way too short-lived and fickle to depend on. Instead, the wise man or woman should seek peace of mind (**ataraxia**) through cheerfulness, moderation, and orderly living. His moral theory is based on the sense of integrity: "A man

should feel more shame in doing evil before himself than before all the world."

Democritus did not believe in gods nor an afterlife. In fact, he formed an atheist organization called the *Kakodaimoniotai* – "the devils club." He is sometimes called the laughing philosopher, because he found life much more cheerful without what he considered to be the depressing superstitions of religion.

He took Leucippus' materialism very seriously, noting that matter can never be created nor destroyed, that there were an infinity of worlds like our own, and that there was no such thing as chance – only causation. It would be many centuries before these ideas would again become popular.



A little older than Democrates was **Protagoras** (480-411), also of Abdera. He is the most famous of the group of philosophers known as the **sophists**. The word comes from the Greek *sophistai*, which means teachers of wisdom – i.e. professor. Because some of these professors taught little more than how to win arguments in court, and did so for exorbitant fees, the name has become somewhat derogatory. Sophistry now means argument for argument's sake, or for the sake of personal gain. But then, it is also the root of the word sophisticated!

Protagoras, although his teaching fees were in fact high, was a serious philosopher. He can be credited with founding the science of grammar, being the first to distinguish the various conjugations of verbs and declensions of nouns. He was also a major contributor to logic and was using the Socratic method (teaching by question and answer) before Socrates.



He was a *skeptic*, and believed that there were no ultimate truths, that truth is a relative, subjective thing. "Man is the measure of all things," is his most famous quote, meaning that things are what we say they are.



Applying this skepticism to the gods, he scared the Athenian powers-that-be, and he was ordered to leave Athens. Apparently, he drowned on his way to Sicily.



Into this idea-rich environment would come the three Athenians that would come to dominate philosophy for the next 2000 years: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.



The Origin of the Alphabet



The original alphabet was developed by a Semitic people living in or near Egypt.* They based it on the idea developed by the Egyptians, but used their own specific symbols. It was quickly adopted by their neighbors and relatives to the east and north, the Canaanites, the Hebrews, and the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians spread their alphabet to other people of the Near East and Asia Minor, as well as to the Arabs, the Greeks, and the Etruscans, and as far west as present day Spain. The letters and names on the left are the ones used by the Phoenicians. The letters on the right are possible earlier versions. If you don't recognize the letters, keep in mind that they have since been reversed (since the Phoenicians wrote from right to left) and often turned on their sides!



 **'aleph**, the ox, began as the image of an ox's head. It represents a glottal stop before a vowel. The Greeks, needing vowel symbols, used it for **alpha** (A). The Romans used it as **A**. 

 **Beth**, the house, may have derived from a more rectangular Egyptian alphabetic glyph of a reed shelter (but which stood for the sound h). The Greeks called it **beta** (B), and it was passed on to the Romans as **B**. 



 **Gimel**, the camel, may have originally been the image of a boomerang-like throwing stick. The Greeks called it **gamma** (Γ). The Etruscans – who had no g sound – used it for the k sound, and passed it on to the Romans as **C**. They in turn added a short bar to it to make it do double duty as **G**. 



 **Daleth**, the door, may have originally been a fish! The Greeks turned it into **delta** (Δ), and passed it on to the Romans as **D**. 



 **He** may have meant window, but originally represented a man, facing us with raised arms, calling out or praying. The Greeks used it for the vowel **epsilon** (E, "simple E"). The Romans used it as **E**. 



 **Waw**, the hook, may originally have represented a mace. The Greeks used one version of waw which looked like our F, which they called digamma, for the number 6. This was used by the Etruscans for v, and they passed it on to the Romans as **F**. The Greeks had a second version – **upsilon** (Υ) – which they moved to to the back of their alphabet. The Romans used a version of upsilon for **V**, which later would be written **U** as well, then adopted the Greek form as **Y**. In 7th century England, the **W** – "double-u" – was created. 



* Until recently, it was believed that these people lived in the Sinai desert and began using their alphabet in the 1700's bc. In 1998, archeologist John Darnell discovered rock carvings in southern Egypt's "Valley of Horrors" that push back the origin of the alphabet to the 1900's bc or even earlier. Details suggest that the inventors were Semitic people working in Egypt, who thereafter passed the idea on to their relatives further east.



 **Zayin** may have meant sword or some other kind of weapon. The Greeks used it for **zeta** (Ζ). The Romans only adopted it later as **Z**, and put it at the end of their alphabet. 



 **Heth**, the fence, was a "deep throat" (pharyngeal) consonant. The Greeks used it for the vowel **eta** (Η), but the Romans used it for **H**. 



 **Teth** may have originally represented a spindle. The Greeks used it for **theta** (Θ), but the Romans, who did not have the th sound, dropped it. 



 **Yodh**, the hand, began as a representation of the entire arm. The Greeks used a highly simplified version of it for **iota** (Ι). The Romans used it as **I**, and later added a variation for **J**. 



 **Kaph**, the hollow or palm of the hand, was adopted by the Greeks for **kappa** (Κ) and passed it on to the Romans as **K**. 



 **Lamedh** began as a picture of an ox stick or goad. The Greeks used it for **lambda** (Λ). The Romans turned it into **L**. 



 **Mem**, the water, became the Greek **mu** (Μ). The Romans kept it as **M**. 



 **Nun**, the fish, was originally a snake or eel. The Greeks used it for **nu** (Ν), and the Romans for **N**. 



 **Samekh**, which also meant fish, is of uncertain origin. It may have originally represented a tent peg or some kind of support. It bears a strong resemblance to the Egyptian djed pillar seen in many sacred carvings. The Greeks used it for **xi** (Ξ) and a simplified variation of it for **chi** (Χ). The Romans kept only the variation as **X**. 



 **'ayin**, the eye, was another "deep throat" consonant. The Greeks used it for **omicron** (Ο, "little O"). They developed a variation of it for **omega** (Ω, "big O"), and put it at the end of their alphabet. The Romans kept the original for **O**. 



 **Pe**, the mouth, may have originally been a symbol for a corner. The Greeks used it for **pi** (Π). The Romans closed up one side and turned it into **P**. 

 **Sade**, a sound between s and sh, is of uncertain origin. It may have originally been a symbol for a plant, but later looks more like a fish hook. The Greeks did not use it, although an odd variation does show up as **sampi**, a symbol for 900. The Etruscans used it in the shape of an **M** for their sh sound, but the Romans had no need for it. 

 **Qoph**, the monkey, may have originally represented a knot. It was used for a sound similar to k but further back in the mouth. The Greeks only used it for the number 90 (Ϟ), but the Etruscans and Romans kept it for **Q**. 

 **Resh**, the head, was used by the Greeks for **rho** (Ρ). The Romans added a line to differentiate it from their P and made it **R**. 

 **Shin**, the tooth, may have originally represented a bow. Although it was first pronounced sh, the Greeks used it sideways for **sigma** (Σ). The Romans rounded it to make **S**. 

 **Taw**, the mark, was used by the Greeks for **tau** (Τ). The Romans used it for **T**. 

The Greek letter phi (Φ) was already common among the Anatolians in what is now Turkey. Psi (Ψ) appears to have been invented by the Greeks themselves, perhaps based on Poseidon's trident. For comparison, here is the complete Greek alphabet:

Α Β Γ Δ Ε Ζ Η Θ Ι Κ Λ Μ Ν Ξ Ο Π Ϛ Ρ Σ Τ Υ Φ Χ Ψ Ω

Two Poems by Sappho

Sappho was born somewhere around 630 bc on the Greek island Lesbos. She wrote many volumes of poetry that were admired throughout the ancient Greek world. Plato once suggested that she should be added to the list of muses said to inspire artists. Her home island even minted a coin with her likeness in her lifetime. Sappho had both male and female lovers, and it is her island which gave its name to the love between women. She is said to have committed suicide by leaping off of a high cliff, because of a broken heart.

Her poetry usually concerned love, and often refers to the goddess of love, Aphrodite. It was accompanied by simple music, played on the lyre, the small harp you see her holding in the painting below. Because her poetry only survives in fragments, modern translators have the difficult task of reconstructing her poetry on the basis of the bits and pieces.

Below are two such poems. The first is Sappho remembering a lost love; the second is an ode to her daughter, Cleis.



I have not had one word from her
Frankly I wish I were dead
When she left, she wept
a great deal; she said to me, "This parting must be
endured, Sappho. I go unwillingly."

I said, "Go, and be happy
but remember (you know
well) whom you leave shackled by love

"If you forget me, think
of our gifts to Aphrodite
and all the loveliness that we shared

"all the violet tiaras,
braided rosebuds, dill and
crocus twined around your young neck

"myrrh poured on your head
and on soft mats girls with
all that they most wished for beside them

"while no voices chanted
choruses without ours,
no woodlot bloomed in spring without song..."

—Translated by Mary Barnard

Source: <http://www.sappho.com/poetry/historical/sappho.html>

Sappho [an 1877 painting by Charles-August Mengin (1853-1933)]

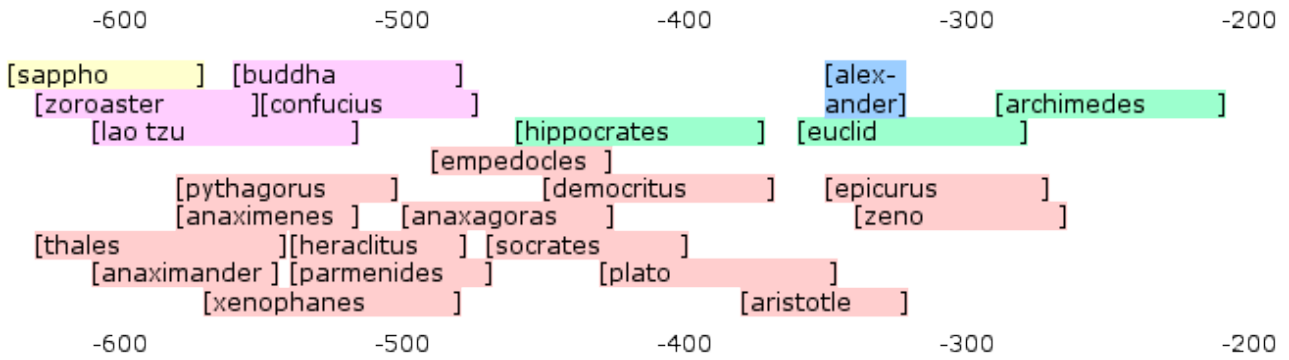
Sleep, darling

I have a small
daughter called
Cleis, who is
like a golden
flower
I wouldn't
take all Croesus'
kingdom with love
thrown in, for her
Don't ask me what to wear
I have no embroidered
headband from Sardis to
give you, Cleis, such as
I wore
and my mother
always said that in her
day a purple ribbon
looped in the hair was thought
to be high style indeed
but we were dark:
a girl
whose hair is yellower than
torchlight should wear no
headdress but fresh flowers

—Translated by Mary Barnard

Source: gopher://gopher.OCF.Berkeley.EDU:70/00/Library/Poetry/Sappho/sappho.Cleis

Timeline: 600 bc to 200 bc



Map: Ancient Mediterranean



Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle

"The unexamined life is not worth living."

Socrates

The Athenians

When we think of ancient Greece, we think right away of Athens. Several of the philosophers we have already discussed considered it the pinnacle of their careers to come and teach in this great city.

But Athens wasn't always great. It began as a collection of villages in some of the poorest agricultural land in Greece. Only carefully tended grapes and olives provided early Athens with a livelihood, that and trade.

The distance between the haves – the ruling aristocratic trading families – and the have nots – peasants working the land – and the accompanying feudal oppression, grew so great that it looked like the city and its surrounding area would collapse under the weight.

In 594 bc, the leaders of the middle class recruited a merchant named Solon to accept leadership of the city and restore some peace and prosperity. He began by canceling all debts and freeing all who had been enslaved on account of debt. Then he proceeded to draft a constitution in which the population was divided into four classes based entirely on economic worth, with the highest retaining the greatest power, but the lowest being exempt from taxes.

After a difficult transition, the world's first democracy was established under the leadership of Cleisthenes in 507 bc, when he decreed that all free men would be permitted to vote. This, of course, falls short of a complete democracy, but don't judge them too harshly: Slavery would not be outlawed until 1814, when Mexico would become the very first sovereign nation to permanently ban slavery. The US wouldn't free its slaves until 1865 with the 13th amendment. And women didn't get to vote until New Zealand gave them the vote in 1893. It would take the US until 1919 and the 19th amendment.

Unfortunately, at about the same time the democratic experiment began, the great Persian empire to the east decided to expand into, first, Ionia, and then Greece itself. But in 490, 20,000 Greeks defeated 100,000 Persian troops at Marathon, north of Athens. (A messenger named Pheidippides ran the 26 miles – 42.195 km – to Athens to give them the good news, hence the sport of *marathon* running!)

In 481, the Persian emperor Xerxes sent an army of over two million men, assisted by a fleet of 1200 ships, to attack Greece again. The army ravaged the north of Greece and prepared to attack Athens. They found the city deserted. The Persian navy, however, found the Greek fleet waiting for it in the Bay of Salamis. The Greeks won the day against enormous odds. By 479, the Persians were forced back into Asia Minor.

If this seems like just a little piece of history, consider: This victory allowed the Greek adventure to continue to produce the kind of thinking that would set the tone for the next two millennia in Europe and the Mediterranean.

During the time period we are looking at in this chapter, Athens had as many as 300,000 people, making it one of the largest cities in the world. About half were free, one third were slaves, and one sixth were foreigners (**metics**). The free adult males who could vote numbered about 50,000.

Socrates

Socrates (470-399) was the son of a sculptor and a midwife, and served with distinction in the Athenian army during Athens' clash with Sparta. He married, but had a tendency to fall in love with handsome young men, in particular a young soldier named Alcibiades. He was, by all accounts, short and stout, not given to good

grooming, and a lover of wine and conversation. His famous student, Plato, called him "the wisest, and justest, and best of all men whom I have ever known" (**Phaedo**).



He was irritated by the Sophists and their tendency to teach logic as a means of achieving self-centered ends, and even more their promotion of the idea that all things are relative. It was the truth that he loved, desired, and believed in.

Philosophy, the love of wisdom, was for Socrates itself a sacred path, a holy quest – not a game to be taken lightly. He believed – or at least said he did in the dialog **Meno** – in the reincarnation of an eternal soul which contained all knowledge. We unfortunately lose touch with that knowledge at every birth, and so we need to be reminded of what we already know (rather than learning something new).

He said that he did not teach, but rather served, like his mother, as a midwife to truth that is already in us! Making use of questions and answers to remind his students of knowledge is called maieutics (midwifery), or the Socratic method.

One example of his effect on philosophy is found in the dialog **Euthyphro**. He suggests that what is to be considered a good act is not good because gods say it is, but is good because it is useful to us in our efforts to be better and happier people. This means that ethics is no longer a matter of surveying the gods or scripture for what is good or bad, but rather thinking about life. He even placed individual conscience above the law – quite a dangerous position to take!

Socrates himself never wrote any of his ideas down, but rather engaged his students – wealthy young men of Athens – in endless conversations. In exchange for his teaching, they in turn made sure that he was taken care of. Since he claimed to have few needs, he took very little, much to his wife Xanthippe's distress.

Plato reconstructed these discussions in a great set of writings known as the Dialogs. It is difficult to distinguish what is Socrates and what is Plato in these dialogs, so we will simply discuss them together.

Socrates wasn't loved by everyone by any means. His unorthodox religious views (that there was only one god behind the variety of Greek gods) gave the leading citizens of Athens the excuse they needed to sentence him to death for corrupting the morals of the youth of the city. In 399, he was ordered to drink hemlock, which he did in the company of his students.

Plato

Plato (427-347) was Socrates' prized student. From a wealthy and powerful family, his actual name was Aristocles – Plato was a nickname, referring to his broad physique. When he was about twenty, he came under Socrates' spell and decided to devote himself to philosophy. Devastated by Socrates' death, he wandered around Greece and the Mediterranean and was taken by pirates. His friends raised money to ransom him from slavery, but when he was released without it, they bought him a small property called Academus to start a school – the Academy, founded in 386.



The Academy was more like Pythagoras' community – a sort of quasi-religious fraternity, where rich young men studied mathematics, astronomy, law, and, of course, philosophy. It was free, depending entirely on donations. True to his ideals, Plato also permitted women to attend! The Academy would become the center of Greek learning for almost a millennium.

Plato can be understood as idealistic and rationalistic, much like Pythagoras but much less mystical. He divides reality into two: On the one hand we have ontos, idea or ideal. This is ultimate reality, permanent, eternal, spiritual. On the other hand, there's phenomena, which is a manifestation of the ideal. Phenomena are appearances – things as they seem to us – and are associated with matter, time, and space.

Phenomena are illusions which decay and die. Ideals are unchanging, perfect. Phenomena are definitely inferior to Ideals! The idea of a triangle – the defining mathematics of it, the form or essence of it – is eternal. Any individual triangle, the triangles of the day-to-day experiential world, are never quite perfect: They may be a little crooked, or the lines a little thick, or the angles not quite right.... They only approximate that perfect triangle, the ideal triangle.

If it seems strange to talk about ideas or ideals as somehow more real than the world of our experiences, consider science. The law of gravity, $1+1=2$, "magnets attract iron," $E=mc^2$, and so on – these are universals, not true for one day in one small location, but true forever and everywhere! If you believe that there is order in the universe, that nature has laws, you believe in ideas!

Ideas are available to us through thought, while phenomena are available to us through our senses. So, naturally, thought is a vastly superior means to get to the truth. This is what makes Plato a rationalist, as opposed to an empiricist, in epistemology.

Senses can only give you information about the ever-changing and imperfect world of phenomena, and so can only provide you with implications about ultimate reality, not reality itself. Reason goes straight to the idea. You "remember," or intuitively recognize the truth, as Socrates suggested in the dialog **Meno**.

According to Plato, the phenomenal world strives to become ideal, perfect, complete. Ideals are, in that sense, a motivating force. In fact, he identifies the ideal with God and perfect goodness. God creates the world out of materia (raw material, matter) and shapes it according to his "plan" or "blueprint" – ideas or the ideal. If the world is not perfect, it is not because of God or the ideals, but because the raw materials were not perfect. I think you can see why the early Christian church made Plato an honorary Christian, even though he died three and a half centuries before Christ!

Plato applies the same dichotomy to human beings: There's the body, which is material, mortal, and "moved" (a victim of causation). Then there's the soul, which is ideal, immortal, and "unmoved" (enjoying free will).

The soul includes reason, of course, as well as self-awareness and moral sense. Plato says the soul will always choose to do good, if it recognizes what is good. This is a similar conception of good and bad as the Buddhists have: Rather than bad being sin, it is considered a matter of ignorance. So, someone who does something bad requires education, not punishment.

The soul is drawn to the good, the ideal, and so is drawn to God. We gradually move closer and closer to God through reincarnation as well as in our individual lives. Our ethical goal in life is resemblance to God, to come closer to the pure world of ideas and ideal, to liberate ourselves from matter, time, and space, and to become more real in this deeper sense. Our goal is, in other words, self-realization.

Plato talks about three levels of pleasure. First is sensual or physical pleasure, of which sex is a great example. A second level is sensuous or esthetic pleasure, such as admiring someone's beauty, or enjoying one's relationship in marriage. But the highest level is ideal pleasure, the pleasures of the mind. Here the example would be Platonic love, intellectual love for another person unsullied by physical involvement.

Paralleling these three levels of pleasure are three souls. We have one soul called appetite, which is mortal and comes from the gut. The second soul is called spirit or courage. It is also mortal, and lives in the heart. The third soul is reason. It is immortal and resides in the brain. The three are strung together by the cerebrospinal canal.

Plato is fond of analogies. Appetite, he says, is like a wild horse, very powerful, but likes to go its own way. Spirit is like a thoroughbred, refined, well trained, directed power. And reason is the charioteer, goal-directed, steering both horses according to his will.

Other analogies abound, especially in Plato's greatest work, **The Republic**. In **The Republic**, he designs (through Socrates) a society in order to discover the meaning of justice. Along the way, he compares elements of his society (a utopia, Greek for "no place") to the three souls: The peasants are the foundation of the society. They till the soil and produce goods, i.e. take care of society's basic appetites. The warriors

represent the spirit and courage of the society. And the philosopher kings guide the society, as reason guides our lives.

Before you assume that we are just looking at a Greek version of the Indian caste system, please note: Everyone's children are raised together and membership in one of the three levels of society is based on talents, not on one's birth parents! And Plato includes women as men's equals in this system. I leave you with a few quotes:

"Wonder is the feeling of a philosopher, and philosophy begins in wonder."

"...(I)f you ask what is the good of education in general, the answer is easy; that education makes good men, and that good men act nobly."

"(I) do to others as I would they should do to me."

"Our object in the construction of the State is the greatest happiness of the whole, and not that of any one class."

Aristotle

Aristotle (384-322) was born in a small Greek colony in Thrace called Stagira. His father was a physician and served the grandfather of Alexander the Great. Presumably, it was his father who taught him to take an interest in the details of natural life.



He was Plato's prize student, even though he disagreed with him on many points. When Plato died, Aristotle stayed for a while with another student of Plato, who had made himself a dictator in northern Asia Minor. He married the dictator's daughter, Pythias. They moved to Lesbos, where Pythias died giving birth to their only child, a daughter. Although he married again, his love for Pythias never died, and he requested that they be buried side by side.

For four years, Aristotle served as the teacher of a thirteen year old Alexander, son of Philip of Macedon. In 334, he returned to Athens and established his school of philosophy in a set of buildings called the Lyceum (from a name for Apollo, "the shepherd"). The beautiful grounds and covered walkways were conducive to leisurely walking discussions, so the students were known as peripatōi ("covered walkways").

First, we must point out that Aristotle was as much a scientist as a philosopher. He was endlessly fascinated with nature, and went a long way towards classifying the plants and animals of Greece. He was equally interested in studying the anatomies of animals and their behavior in the wild.

Aristotle also pretty much invented modern logic. Except for its symbolic form, it is essentially the same today.

Let's begin with metaphysics: While Plato separates the ever-changing phenomenal world from the true and eternal ideal reality, Aristotle suggests that the ideal is found "inside" the phenomena, the universals "inside" the particulars.

What Plato called idea or ideal, Aristotle called essence, and its opposite, he referred to as matter. Matter is without shape or form or purpose. It is just "stuff." pure potential, no actuality. Essence is what provides the shape or form or purpose to matter. Essence is "perfect," "complete," but it has no substance, no solidity. Essence and matter need each other!

Essence realizes ("makes real") matter. This process, the movement from formless stuff to complete being, is

called entelechy, which some translate as actualization.

There are four causes that contribute to the movement of entelechy. They are answers to the question "why?" or "what is the explanation of this?"

1. The material cause: what something is made of.
 2. The efficient cause: the motion or energy that changes matter.
 3. The formal cause: the thing's shape, form, or essence; its definition.
 4. The final cause: its reason, its purpose, the intention behind it.
-
1. The material cause: The thing's matter or substance. Why a bronze statue? The metal it is made of. Today, we find an emphasis on material causation in reductionism, explaining, for example, thoughts in terms of neural activity, feelings in terms of hormones, etc. We often go down a "level" because we can't explain something at the level it's at.
 2. The efficient cause: The motion or energy that changes matter. Why the statue? The forces necessary to work the bronze, the hammer, the heat, the energy.... This is what modern science focuses on, to the point where this is what cause now tends to mean, exclusively. Note that modern psychology usually relies on reductionism in order to find efficient causes. But it isn't always so: Freud, for example, talked about psychosexual energy and Skinner talked about stimulus and response.
 3. The formal cause: The thing's shape, form, definition, or essence. Why the statue? Because of the plan the sculptor had for the bronze, it's shape or form, the non-random ordering of it's matter. In psychology, we see some theorists focus on structure – Piaget and his schema, for example. Others talk about the structure inherent in the genetic code, or about cognitive scripts.
 4. The final cause: The end, the purpose, the teleology of the thing. Why the statue? The purpose of it, the intention behind making it. This was popular with medieval scholars: They searched for the ultimate final cause, the ultimate purpose of all existence, which they of course labeled God! Note that, outside of the hard sciences, this is often the kind of cause we are most interested in: Why did he do it, what was his purpose or intention? E.g. in law, the bullet may have been the "efficient" cause of death, but the intent of the person pulling the trigger is what we are concerned with. When we talk about intentions, goals, values, and so on, we are talking about final causes.

Aristotle wrote the first book on psychology (as a separate topic from the rest of philosophy). It was called, appropriately, **Para Psyche**, Greek for "about the mind or soul." It is better known in the Latin form, **De Anima**. In this book, we find the first mentions of many ideas that are basic to psychology today, such as the laws of association.

In it, he says the mind or soul is the "first entelechy" of the body, the "cause and principle" of the body, the realization of the body. We might put it like this: The mind is the purposeful functioning of the nervous system.

Like Plato, he postulates three kinds of souls, although slightly differently defined. There is a plant soul, the essence of which is nutrition. Then there is an animal soul, which contains the basic sensations, desire, pain and pleasure, and the ability to cause motion. Last, but not least, is the human soul. The essence of the human soul is, of course, reason. He suggests that, perhaps, this last soul is capable of existence apart from the body.

He foreshadowed many of the concepts that would become popular only two thousand years later. Libido, for example: "In all animals... it is the most natural function to beget another being similar to itself... in order that they attain as far as possible, the immortal and divine.... This is the final cause of every creature's natural life."

And the struggle of the id and ego: "There are two powers in the soul which appear to be moving forces – desire and reason. But desire prompts actions in violation of reason... desire... may be wrong."

And the pleasure principle and reality principle: "Although desires arise which are opposed to each other, as is the case when reason and appetite are opposed, it happens only in creatures endowed with a sense of time. For reason, on account of the future, bids us resist, while desire regards the present; the momentarily pleasant appears to it as the absolutely pleasant and the absolutely good, because it does not see the future."

And finally, self-actualization: We begin as unformed matter in the womb, and through years of development and learning, we become mature adults, always reaching for perfection. "So the good has been well explained as that at which all things aim."

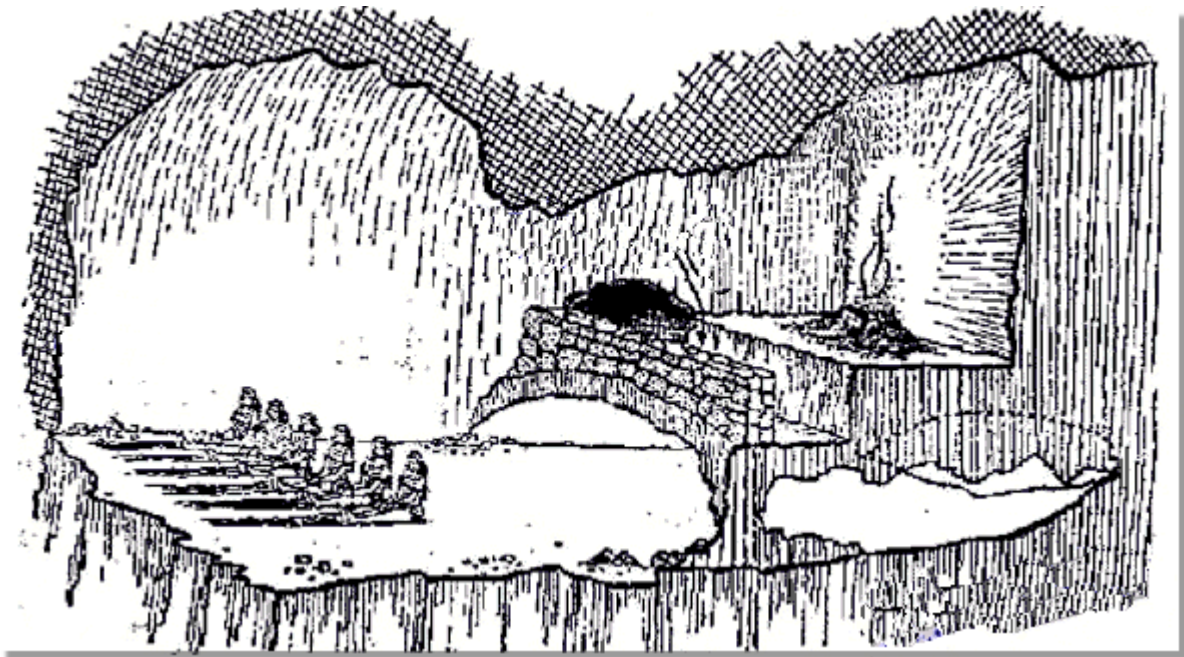
Plato: Book VII of The Republic: The Allegory of the Cave*

Here's a little story from Plato's most famous book, **The Republic**. Socrates is talking to a young follower of his named Glaucon, and is telling him this fable to illustrate what it's like to be a philosopher – a lover of wisdom: Most people, including ourselves, live in a world of relative ignorance. We are even comfortable with that ignorance, because it is all we know. When we first start facing truth, the process may be frightening, and many people run back to their old lives. But if you continue to seek truth, you will eventually be able to handle it better. In fact, you want more! It's true that many people around you now may think you are weird or even a danger to society, but you don't care. Once you've tasted the truth, you won't ever want to go back to being ignorant!

[Socrates is speaking with **Glaucon**]

[Socrates:] And now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened: – Behold! human beings living in a underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.

[**Glaucon:**] I see.



And do you see, I said, men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall? Some of them are talking, others silent.

You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.

* From <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html>

Like ourselves, I replied; and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?

True, he said; how could they see anything but the shadows if they were never allowed to move their heads?

And of the objects which are being carried in like manner they would only see the shadows?

Yes, he said.

And if they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?

Very true.

And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?

No question, he replied.

To them, I said, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images.

That is certain.

And now look again, and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive some one saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision, -what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them, - will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?

Far truer.

And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take and take in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?

True, he said.

And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he 's forced into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be pained and irritated? When he approaches the light his eyes will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all of what are now called realities.

Not all in a moment, he said.

He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. And first he will see the shadows best, next the reflections of men and other objects in the water, and then the objects themselves; then he will gaze upon the light of the moon and the stars and the spangled heaven; and he will see the sky and the stars by night better than the sun or the light of the sun by day?

Certainly.

Last of he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is.

Certainly.

He will then proceed to argue that this is he who gives the season and the years, and is the guardian of all that is in the visible world, and in a certain way the cause of all things which he and his fellows have been

accustomed to behold?

Clearly, he said, he would first see the sun and then reason about him.

And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow-prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them?

Certainly, he would.

And if they were in the habit of conferring honours among themselves on those who were quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honours and glories, or envy the possessors of them? Would he not say with Homer,

Better to be the poor servant of a poor master, and to endure anything, rather than think as they do and live after their manner?

Yes, he said, I think that he would rather suffer anything than entertain these false notions and live in this miserable manner.

Imagine once more, I said, such an one coming suddenly out of the sun to be replaced in his old situation; would he not be certain to have his eyes full of darkness?

To be sure, he said.

And if there were a contest, and he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak, and before his eyes had become steady (and the time which would be needed to acquire this new habit of sight might be very considerable) would he not be ridiculous? Men would say of him that up he went and down he came without his eyes; and that it was better not even to think of ascending; and if any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would put him to death.

No question, he said.

This entire allegory, I said, you may now append, dear Glaucon, to the previous argument; the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world according to my poor belief, which, at your desire, I have expressed whether rightly or wrongly God knows. But, whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally, either in public or private life must have his eye fixed.

Logical Fallacies

Fallacies are arguments that may sound logical, but are not. When you look at some of the examples below, you may see some with conclusions you agree with and some you don't. But the truth, in the empirical sense, is not what is at issue: What these examples are all about is logical argument. All these examples are illogical and based in fallacious thinking.

For example, one fallacy is called "sweeping generalization." Someone may argue: "That is the richest sorority on campus; so Sue, who belongs to that sorority must be one of the richest women on campus." Well, Sue may be one of the richest; or she may be one of the poorest. It doesn't matter whether the conclusion is true or not in the literal sense. The argument is illogical. It means nothing at all to say that, if a group has a certain quality, then a member of the group must have that quality, too.

Probably everyone has been guilty of inadvertently using them. Most of us fall for them even if we know better. And there are some people (propogandists, advertisers, and many politicians) who use them all the time. It would be wise to become familiar with the fallacies in order to protect ourselves from the unscrupulous. But by no means is this list meant to encourage the use of fallacies!

Affirmation of the consequent: "A implies B, B is true, therefore A is true"

"If the universe had been created by a supernatural being, we would see order and organization everywhere. And we do see order, not randomness – so it's clear that the universe had a creator." (No: The order could have some other origin.)

"If there is indeed a collective unconscious, then we will find that the mythologies of all the world's cultures have profound commonalities. And indeed they do – therefore, there must be a collective unconscious!" (No: There may be all sorts of other reasons for mythologies to have commonalities.)

This is the converse of denial of the antecedent (below).

A slight variation of affirming the consequent is **converting a conditional:** "If A then B, therefore if B then A".

"When educational standards are lowered, the quality of shows on television worsens. So if we see television getting worse over the next few years, we'll know that our educational standards are still falling." (No: The worsening of television could have other causes.)

"If the latest drugs work well, we will see a great improvement n mental health. So, if mental health improves, we will know that these drugs were effective!" (No again! Mental health may improve for other reasons.)

This fallacy is similar to the affirmation of the consequent, but phrased as a conditional statement.

Denial of the antecedent: "A implies B, A is false, therefore B is false"

"If the God of the Bible appeared to me, personally, that would certainly prove that Christianity was true. But God has never appeared to me, so the Bible must be a work of fiction." (Nope: God may not appear to you even if the Bible were true.)

"If there were such a thing as penis envy, we would expect women to be easier on their sons than on their daughters. But penis envy is, of course, not real – so naturally women do not treat their sons better than their daughters." (No: They may still do so, just for other reasons.)

This is the converse of the fallacy of affirmation of the consequent.

There is also a version that says "if A, then B, therefore, if not A, then not B."

"If you have a PhD in psychology, you must be pretty knowledgeable in the field. Therefore, if you don't have the PhD, you must be abysmally ignorant of psychology." (No: Having that PhD may mean you have knowledge, but knowledge hardly depends on a degree.)

Fallacy of composition: the idea that a property shared by a number of individual items, is also shared by a collection of those items; or that a property of the parts of an object, must also be a property of the whole thing.

"This new truck is made entirely of lightweight aluminum components, and is therefore very lightweight." In fact, a truck is composed of so many "lightweight" parts, it is bound to be far from lightweight itself!

Note that ton of feathers does NOT weigh less than a ton of lead!

"Since neurons are either excitatory or inhibitory, the brain itself must have basically excitatory or inhibitory states."

A variation of composition is the **genetic fallacy:** Drawing a conclusion about the goodness or badness of something on the basis of the goodness or badness of the thing's origin. E.g. "The medicine made from that plant must be poisonous, because that plant is poisonous." (not actually ad hominem – see below – but often listed there)

"The humanitarian work we do may well come out of our need to look good in front of our fellow man. So humanitarian work is basically egotistical!"

The opposite of the fallacy of composition is the **fallacy of division:** assuming that a property of some thing must apply to its parts; or that a property of a collection of items is shared by each item.

"Humans are conscious and are made of cells; therefore, each cell has consciousness"

"You are studying at a rich college. Therefore you must be rich."

"Since the team could solve the problem so easily, I assume that each member of the team could do it just as well alone."

And a fallacy that totally confuses parts and wholes: the **fallacy of the undistributed middle:** Suggesting that things are in some way similar, but not actually specifying how. A is a kind of C, B is a kind of C, therefore, A is B

"Cats are a form of animal based on carbon chemistry, dogs are a form of animal based on carbon chemistry, so aren't dogs and cats basically identical?"

"They're both students, so I can expect the same from both."

"Since they are both schizophrenics, they should both have the same reaction to this new medication."

Sweeping generalization (The fallacy of accident, dicto simpliciter): Applying a general rule to special case; A general rule is applied to a particular situation, but the features of that particular situation mean the rule is inapplicable.

"Christians generally dislike atheists. You are a Christian, so you must dislike atheists."

Sweeping generalization includes a common **misunderstanding the nature of statistics:**

"The majority of people in the United States die in hospitals, so stay out of them."

"Men are statistically more aggressive than women. Therefore, I, a male, must be more aggressive than you, a female."

Hasty generalization is the converse of sweeping generalization: A special case is used as the basis of a general rule. A general rule is created by examining only a few specific cases which aren't representative of all possible cases.

"I know a union representative and he's a terrible person. I wouldn't trust *any* of them."

"Jim Bakker was an insincere Christian. Therefore *all* Christians are insincere."

"This schizophrenic has paranoid delusions. It stands to reason that they all do."

Hasty generalization includes another common misunderstanding of statistics called the **statistics of small numbers**:

"My parents smoked all their lives and *they* never got cancer."

"The five subjects in our experiment responded well to our intervention. We can therefore recommend the procedure to everyone."

Another version is called **observational selection**: pointing out favorable circumstances while ignoring the unfavorable. For example, at any gambling institution, a great deal of fuss is paid to those who win, while those who lose are quietly encouraged to sneak out the back. This way, winning seems much more likely that it is!

"All of these people who prayed for a cure survived their disease. Prayer is clearly to be recommended!"

And observational selection includes **anecdotal evidence**:

"Just last week I read about a girl who was dying of cancer. Her whole family went to church and prayed for her, and she was cured. That only proves the power of prayer!"

"Uncle Joe got over his rheumatism by drinking his own urine!"

"Urban myths" are usually good examples!

Bifurcation ("black or white," excluded middle, false dichotomy): Presuming an either-or distinction. Suggesting that there are only two alternatives, where in fact other alternatives exist or can exist. Instead of black or white, we can have shades of gray... or even rainbows of colors!

"We must choose between safety and freedom. And it is in the nature of good Americans to take the risk of freedom." Must we choose? Can't we have both?

"A patient either gets better or they don't."

"Come on now— is he or isn't he bipolar?"

Considering only the extremes:

"He's either guilty or not guilty."

Begging the question (*petitio principii*). Assuming as a premise the conclusion which you wish to reach. Instead of offering real proof, we can just restate the conclusion we are supposed to come to, and hope the listener doesn't notice.

"Government ownership of public utilities is dangerous, because it is socialistic." But government ownership of public utilities *is* socialism. You've just been told that it's dangerous because it is what it is.

"We must encourage our youth to worship God to instill moral behavior." But does religion and worship actually produce moral behavior? Of course not!

"Qualitative methods are essentially worthless because they don't involve measurement or statistics."

The most obvious form of begging the question is the **circular argument** (vicious cycle, *circulus in demonstrando*): Stating in one's proof that which one is supposed to be proving.

"We know that God exists because the Bible tells us so. And we know that the Bible is true because it is the word of God."

"Your arguments against Freud are due to your unresolved unconscious conflicts."

"Your arguments against Skinner are due to your conditioning."

"Your arguments against existentialism are indicative of your inauthenticity."

There's also the **appeal to faith**: Faith, by definition, relies on a belief that does not rest on logic or evidence. Faith depends on irrational thought.

"If you accept the Lord, you will understand!"

"If you would only take Maslow at his word, you would finally get it!"

And the most common way to use begging the question is **question-begging epithets** (loaded words, emotive language, etc.). Restating the conclusion in "hot" language: "This criminal is charged with the most vicious crime known to man." Does it prove something, or just get the blood flowing?

Often hard to identify (and so very dangerous) is the **ad hoc argument**: Giving an after-the-fact explanation which doesn't apply to other situations.

"I see that John's cancer is in remission."

"Yes, our prayers have been answered!"

"But didn't you pray for Susan, too, and look what happened to her."

"I'm sure God had a special reason for taking her."

"Those people who don't follow the expected pattern of strong-mother/weak-father leading to homosexuality are no doubt hiding their true orientation!"

Look out when people say "everything has a reason" or "God has a purpose for all of us."

Complex question (loaded question, trick question, leading question, fallacy of interrogation, fallacy of presupposition): Interrogative form of begging the question (above). Ask a question that leads others to believe that a previous question has been answered in a certain way.

"Answer yes or no: Did you ever give up your evil ways?" If you say yes, that tells us you had evil ways; if you say no, that tells us you still have them. What if you never had them?

"Have you stopped beating your wife yet?"

"So, are you gay, or just in denial?"

"And when will you come out of the closet?"

A variation on the complex question is the **fallacy of many questions** (*plurium interrogationum*): This fallacy occurs when someone demands a simple (or simplistic) answer to a complex question.

"Yes or no: Is democracy ultimately the best system of government?"

Another form of this fallacy is to ask for an explanation of something which is untrue or not yet established.

False cause (non causa pro causa, non sequitur): Something is identified as the cause of an event, but it has not actually been shown to be the cause. For example:

"I took an aspirin and prayed to God, and my headache disappeared. So God cured me of the headache."

"Artists often suffered from depression as adolescents. So, if you want your child to be a great artist, don't put them on Prozac!"

The most common form of false cause is called **post hoc ergo propter hoc**: An inference or conclusion that does not follow from established premises or evidence. Assuming causal connections that haven't been demonstrated. The Latin phrase means "after this, therefore because of this."

"You should go to Harvard, because Harvard graduates make more money." Or could it be that they had more money before they went?

"She got sick after she visited China, so something in China caused her sickness." Or could it be that she was sick prior to leaving for China?

"There was an increase of births during the full moon. Therefore, full moons cause birth rates to rise."

A slight variation is **cum hoc ergo propter hoc**: Saying that, because two events occur together, they must be causally related. It's a fallacy because it ignores all the other possible causes of the events.

"Literacy rates have steadily declined since the advent of television. Clearly television viewing impedes learning."

"He started using drugs just about the time he started seeing that girl. I knew she was a bad influence!"

A common statistical version of this is **confusion of correlation and causation**: correlation cannot tell you anything about the direction of causality. If X is powerfully correlated with Y, X could be the cause of Y, Y could be the cause of X, or (most likely) something else is the cause of both. Possibly, the relationship is accidental!

"More chess players are men, therefore, men make better chess players than women."

"Far more women than men suffer from depression. We can assume that there is something about a woman's physiology that leads to depression."

(Often followed by an **ad hoc** argument: The men with depression must in some way be effeminate!)

Missing the point (irrelevant thesis, ignoratio elenchi, irrelevant conclusion, ignoring the issue, befogging the issue, diversion, red herring, etc.). Demonstrating a point other than the one at issue. Diverting attention by changing the subject. Escaped convicts in Elizabethan England would smear themselves with rotten (red) herring to throw the dogs off the scent.

"I fail to see why hunting should be considered cruel when it gives tremendous pleasure to many people and employment to even more." So we should stop talking about cruelty and start talking about pleasure and employment?

"Christianity is the only true religion: It has clearly been of great help to many people." No matter how well he argues how much it has helped people, he will not have shown that Christian teachings are true.

"It is very clear that we prescribe psychoactive medications to people who don't really need them. We should outlaw these drugs altogether!"

One example is the **straw man**: Creating a false scenario and then attacking it. Misrepresenting someone else's position so that it can be attacked more easily.

"Evolutionists think that everything came about by random chance. How could that be?" Most evolutionists

think in terms of natural selection which may involve incidental elements, but does not depend entirely on random chance. Painting your opponent with false colors only deflects the purpose of the argument.

"To summarize Freud, he believed that it all boils down to sex. Let me show you why Freud is therefore full of crap!"

Another example is **reification** (hypostatization): when people treat an abstract concept or hypothetical construct as if it represented a concrete event or physical entity.

IQ tests are often presented as actual measures of intelligence, for example.

"What is consciousness? You can't find it anywhere in the human brain, so we must reject the concept."

And another example, the **meaningless question**:

"How high is up?" "Up" describes a direction, not a measurable entity.

"Does anything really exist?"

"How can we experience the collective unconscious directly?"

A really tricky version of missing the point is the **appeal to logic** (argumentum ad logicam): This is the "fallacy fallacy" of arguing that a proposition is false because it has been presented as the conclusion of a fallacious argument. Remember that fallacious arguments can arrive at true conclusions.

"Take the fraction 16/64. Now, cancelling a six on top and a six on the bottom, we get that $16/64 = 1/4$."

"Wait a second! You can't just cancel the six! Your math is wrong: 16/64 does *not* equal 1/4!"

Yes it does, even though the math is wrong.

Very common are **half truths** (suppressed evidence): An statement usually intended to deceive that omits some of the facts necessary for an accurate description.

And one of the worst versions of missing the point is **false analogy**: An analogy or metaphor illustrates or elaborates; it doesn't prove anything: "The American Indian had to make way for Western civilization; after all, you can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs." Are the lives and cultures of millions comparable to eggs? What does making omelettes have to do with history and morality?

"Since the mind is essentially a wet computer, our task is to figure out how we can best program it!"

There are many fallacies that involve the **misuse of words**.

Very common is **special pleading**: Here, we use a double-standard of words.

"The ruthless tactics of the enemy, his fanatical, suicidal attacks have been foiled by the stern measures of our commanders and the devoted self-sacrifice of our troops." Are ruthless tactics different from stern measures? Fanatical, suicidal attacks from devoted self-sacrifice?

"Ellis's therapy is authoritarian and aggressive!"

"Rogers's therapy is laissez faire, even lazy!"

This is not far from the **fallacy of equivocation**: Use of ambiguous words. A key word is used with two or more different meanings in the same argument. Shifting the meaning of the words.

"What could be more affordable than free software? But to make sure that it remains free, that users can do what they like with it, we must place a license on it to make sure that will always be freely redistributable."

One way to avoid this fallacy is to choose your terminology carefully before beginning the argument, and avoid words like "free" which have many meanings.

The **"no true Scotsman..." fallacy**: Suppose I assert that no Scotsman puts sugar on his porridge. You

counter this by pointing out that your friend Angus likes sugar with his porridge. I then say "Ah, yes, but no *true* Scotsman puts sugar on his porridge. I basically limit the meaning of the word "Scotsman."

"How can he do that to her if he loves her?"

"Ah, but that's not *true* love, see?"

"No caring therapist would use methods like that!"

"No well-trained scientist would come to those conclusions!"

"Christians turn the other cheek."

"But I've seen many Christians strike others."

"Yes, but those aren't *good* Christians. They aren't even real Christians at all!"

The previous example includes the use of **accent** – changing oral stress within a sentence to alter the meaning.

"All *men* are created equal..." implies that women are not.

"All men are *created* equal..." suggests that they don't end up equal.

An amusing misuse of words is **amphiboly** – use of ambiguous sentences.

"Two pizzas for one special price." Two for one? Or both at the same "special" price?

Personal attack (argumentum ad hominem): Attacks the person instead of the argument. In personal attack, we ask the listener not to consider the argument, but to consider where it is coming from:

"This theory about a new cure for cancer has been introduced by a man known for his Marxist sympathies. I don't see why we should extend him the courtesy of our attention."

"You can't trust Freud – he used cocaine!"

"You can't trust Adler – he was a socialist!"

"You can't trust Horney – she suffered from depression!"

But Marxists, cocaine users, socialists, and depressed people can be *right*!

Then there's the **abusive form** of the personal attack:

"You claim that atheists can be moral – yet I happen to know that you abandoned your wife and children."

"You don't agree with experimentation? I've read that you were never able to get any of your own research published!"

A little more clever is the **circumstantial form** of the personal attack:

"It is perfectly acceptable to kill animals for food. Since you are wearing leather shoes, I am sure you won't argue with that."

"You don't agree with Rogers – yet I notice you use reflection in your own practice!"

Very damaging is **poisoning the well**: The personal attack can also be used as an excuse to reject a particular conclusion such as when you allege that someone is rationalizing a conclusion for selfish reasons. You've "poisoned the well" in that, from now on, people will tend to doubt his arguments.

"Of course you'd argue that affirmative action is a bad thing. You're *white*."

Note that if someone is a known perjurer or liar, that fact will reduce their credibility as a witness. It won't, however, prove that their testimony is false in this case. Liars can tell the truth!

"Don't listen to her criticisms of existentialism – she's an experimentalist!"

And every teenagers favorite argument is called **tu quoque** (two wrongs make a right): Latin for "you, too!" or "look who's talking!"

"If you think communal living is such a great idea, why aren't *you* living in a commune?"

"If psychology is so great, how come YOU have so many problems?"

"If smoking is so bad for you, why do *you* smoke?"

But even a smoker can know that it isn't good for you!

Appeal to the masses (argumentum ad populum, appealing to the people, mob appeal, appealing to the gallery, appeal to popular pieties). This involves theatrical appeals to our lowest instincts, such as selfishness, greed, jealousy, or vanity rather than facts and reasons. "Because you are a college audience, I know I can speak to you about difficult matters seriously." Oh, well, thank you very much; please do go on!

"The enormous popularity of books on dream analysis alone suggests its validity!"

One example of appeal to the masses is the **bandwagon fallacy** (consensus gentium, argumentum ad numerum): concluding that an idea has merit simply because many people believe it or practice it.

"Most people believe in a god; therefore, it must be true." Simply because many people may believe something says nothing about the fact of that something. Once upon a time, everyone thought the earth was flat!

"All I'm saying is that millions of people believe in astrology, so there must be *something* to it."

"Everyone is moving into cognitive style research – there must be something to it!"

Argument from omniscience: The "everybody" version of the preceding.

"Everyone knows that men and women are psychologically the same!"

"People need to believe in something. *Everyone* knows that." Beware of words like "all," "everyone," "everything."

Appeal to authority (argumentum ad verecundiam): This is where we bring up famous people, reference groups, science, tradition, religion, universality....

"Professor Boeree says behaviorism is dead." Simply because an authority says something does not necessarily mean it's correct.

The great philosopher Santayana said "Those who remain ignorant of history are doomed to repeat it." But Henry Ford said "History is bunk!" So who is right?

"Freud said.... – and who are we to argue with a genius of his caliber?"

This includes the famous technique called **snob appeal**: "Camel filters. They're not for everybody!"

"All those who can afford it prefer Freudian therapy!"

Variations include **appeal to tradition** (argumentum ad antiquitatem): This is the fallacy of asserting that something is right or good simply because it's old, or because "that's the way it's always been."

Just because people practice a tradition, says nothing about whether it is true. See, for example, astrology, slavery, superstition, human sacrifice....

"Psychologists have always agreed that...."

The opposite is called **appeal to novelty** (argumentum ad novitatem): The fallacy of asserting that something is better or more correct simply because it is new, or newer than something else.

"It's the latest!"

"Windows 99 is much better than Windows 95. How could it not be, coming after so many years of experience!"

"The most recent studies show that...."

Appeal to riches (argumentum ad crumenam): The fallacy of believing that money is a criterion of correctness; that those with more money are more likely to be right, or that something that costs more is intrinsically better.

"Microsoft software is undoubtedly superior; why else would Bill Gates have gotten so rich?"

"It costs twice as much – it must be twice as good!" "Indeed. You get what you pay for!" *Do* you?

"I'll have to side with the psychiatrists. After all, they make more money than the PhD psychologists!"

The opposite is **appeal to poverty** (argumentum ad lazarum): The fallacy of assuming that someone poor is sounder or more virtuous than someone who's wealthier, or that something inexpensive or plain is somehow naturally better. For example:

"Monks are more likely to possess insight into the meaning of life, as they have given up the distractions of wealth."

"A simple loaf of bread, made lovingly by hand – what could be better?"

"Since John does so much of his work pro bono, he must be a much more honest therapist."

Appeal to nature (the natural law fallacy): Arguing that, because human beings are products of the natural world, we must mimic behavior seen in the natural world, and that to do otherwise is 'unnatural'. A common fallacy in political arguments.

"The natural world is characterized by competition; animals struggle against each other for ownership of limited natural resources. Capitalism, the competitive struggle for ownership of capital, is simply an inevitable part of human nature. It's how the natural world works."

"Of course homosexuality is unnatural. When's the last time you saw two animals of the same sex mating?" (Actually, that's much more common than people think! But that, too, is irrelevant.)

"Our attraction to 'beautiful' people parallels the instincts of birds and mammals. Love, therefore, is nothing but an instinct!"

Appeal to pity (argumentum ad misericordiam): This is an appeal to your tender emotions, your sympathy: Listen, if you can bear it, to any telethon. Or listen to advertisements that try to sell computers to parents.

"You wouldn't want your kids to be left behind on the information super-highway, would you? What kind of parent are you anyway?"

"I did not murder my mother and father with an axe! Please don't find me guilty; I'm suffering enough through being an orphan."

"Qualitative methods are used by a small group of dedicated researchers working in a hostile environment of experimentalism."

Appeal to ignorance (argumentum ad ignorantiam, argumentum ex silentio): Arguing that something must be true, simply because it hasn't been proved false. Or arguing that something must be false because it hasn't been proved true. That is, my position is right because there is no evidence against it. Or yours is wrong because there is no evidence for it.

"We have no evidence that God doesn't exist. Therefore, he *must* exist."

"There is intelligent life in outer space, for no one has been able to prove that there isn't." Fact of the matter is, you can't prove the non-existence of something: No matter how hard you look, I can always say you haven't looked hard enough. Go ahead: Prove to me that unicorns don't exist!

"We don't know whether holistic medicines actually help psychological disorders, so we might as well use them!" (Followed by a **pity** argument: Would you deny people the chance of getting better, just because there's no evidence?)

A common accompaniment to the appeal to ignorance is **shifting the burden of proof**: The burden of proof is always on the person asserting something. Shifting the burden of proof is the fallacy of putting the burden of proof on the person who denies or questions the assertion.

So, when an arguer cannot provide the evidence for his claims, he may challenge his opponent to prove him wrong.

"Prove God *doesn't* exist, then!"

"Prove UFO's *aren't* real, then!"

"I believe that homosexuality is based on biological differences – I dare you to prove me wrong!"

Appeal to fear (argumentum ad baculum, appeal to force): Don't argue with me, it's dangerous!

"If you do not convict this murderer, one of you may be his next victim." A similar argument is frequently used in deodorant ads.

"If you don't believe in God, you'll burn in hell!"

"You better learn your stats: You'll never be able to get your doctorate if you don't!"

A little more subtle is the **argument from adverse consequences**:

"The accused must be found guilty, otherwise others will commit similar crimes"

And a common variation is the **slippery slope**: Arguing that a change in procedure, law, or action, will result in adverse consequences.

"Give 'em an inch, and they'll take a mile!"

"Pass the equal rights for women amendment and before you know it, we'll all be using unisex bathrooms!"

"If we legalize marijuana, then more people would start to take crack and heroin, and we'd have to legalize those too. Before long we'd have a nation full of drug-addicts on welfare. Therefore we cannot legalize marijuana."

"If we allow doctor assisted suicide, then eventually the government will control how we die." It does not necessarily follow that just because we make changes that a slippery slope will occur.

"If you start people on Prozac, they will become dependent on it, then on drugs in general, and never learn to deal with their problems on their own!"

Argumentum ad nauseam: This is the incorrect belief that an assertion is more likely to be true, or is more likely to be accepted as true, the more often it is heard. So an Argumentum ad Nauseam is one that employs constant repetition in asserting something; saying the same thing over and over again until you're sick of hearing it. See almost any commercial, or take a look at the practice of having children memorizing Bible verses.

"Classical conditioning must be at the root of all learning – I had that drummed into my head at Penn State!"

"All my life, people have told me: a man doesn't show weakness!"

Epicureans and Stoics

Cynicism

After Plato and Aristotle, the concerns of the philosophers moved further and further from metaphysics, epistemology, and anything resembling modern science, to the issue that had always concerned the ancient Greeks the most – ethics. What is it to be virtuous, to have character, to live the good life, to have "arete" (nobility)?

Antisthenes (445-365) was the son of an Athenian citizen and a Thracian slave girl. After starting his own school, he came to recognize that Socrates was wiser than he. He went over, students and all, to learn from the master.

Antisthenes is the founder of **cynicism**. Cynic comes from the Greek word for dog, originally because Antisthenes taught at the Cynosarges (Dogfish) gymnasium, which had been set up for the poor of Athens.

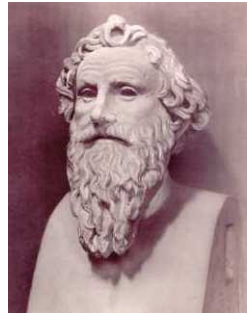
Cynicism involves living the simple life in order that the soul can be set free. It is a "back to nature" type of philosophy, ala St. Francis of Assisi or the Hindu ascetics. By eliminating one's needs and possessions, one can better concentrate on the life of philosophy.

Cynicism makes virtue the only good, the only true happiness. You can't control the world and life's ups and downs, so control yourself! Inhibit your desires! become independent of the world! "I would rather go mad than feel pleasure!" said Antisthenes. Rejecting civilization, cynics tended to withdraw from society, even to live in the desert. In this, they may have influenced early Jewish and Christian monastics.

Cynicism wasn't entirely negative (from today's values perspective): They strongly encouraged individualism, believed that all men were brothers, were against war and slavery, and believed in free speech. They also believed in the legitimacy of suicide and, oddly, free love!



The most famous of the cynics was **Diogenes** (412-323), a student of Antisthenes. He saw himself as a citizen of the world (a "cosmopolitan"), yet for a time lived in a discarded clay jar. There is a famous story that has Alexander the Great finding him sleeping in the sun and announcing "I am Alexander the great king!" Diogenes replied "I am Diogenes the dog!" Alexander asked if there was anything he could do for him. Diogenes just asked him to move out of the sun.



Hedonism

Aristippus (435-355) was also a student of Socrates. Originally from Cyrene on the north coast of Africa, he returned there to found his own school, where he taught the philosophy of hedonism (from the Greek word for pleasure). Hedonism is very simple: Whatever we do, we do to gain pleasure or to avoid pain. Pleasure is the only good, and the achievement of pleasure the only virtue. Morality is only a matter of culture and customs and laws, something we now call ethical relativism. Further, science, art, civilization in general, are good only to the extent that they are useful in producing pleasure.

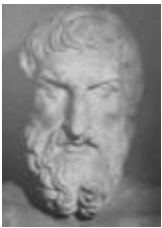


Note, however, that Aristippus also taught that some pleasures are higher than others, and that we should be

slaves to none of them. He was equally cheerful in good times and in poverty, and despised useless displays of wealth.

He and his students lived as a part of a commune-like school where all practiced what they preached, including free love, more than 2000 years before Woodstock! Women were the full equals of men, and not only hypothetically: His daughter **Arete** succeeded him in leadership of the school and commune. She wrote 40 books herself and was honored by the city of Cyrene with the title "Light of Hellas.*"

Skepticism



Skepticism today is usually considered a positive thing – not to accept anything on faith could be a motto for any number of famous philosophers! In its origin, however, it was a bit more extreme. **Pyrrho of Elis** (365-275) is usually credited with founding the "school" of skepticism. It is believed that he traveled to India and studied with the "gymnosophists" (naked lovers of wisdom), which could have been any number of Indian sects. From there, he brought back the idea that nothing can be known for certain. The senses are easily fooled, and reason follows too easily our desires.

If we cannot ever know anything for certain, then we may as well suspend our judgment, stop arguing over what will never be settled, and try to find a little peace and tranquility in life. That tranquility he called **ataraxia**. Note that, although we can't know anything for certain, we can know many things well enough to get by. The sun may or may not rise tomorrow – but the odds are good that it will, and what use would it serve to worry about it anyway!

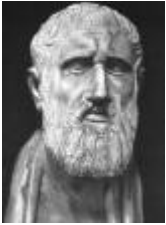
Likewise, if no system is ultimately supportable, for the sake of peace, simply adopt whatever system is prevalent in your neck of the woods. Pyrrho lived out his life worshiping the gods of Elis, although he would certainly never acknowledge that they had any more likelihood of reality as any other gods, or no gods at all! There are many things a skeptic might accept for convenience, even though there be no ultimate proof.

Although at first glance this sounds positive, one of my students, Annie Lam, said this:

Using Pyrrho's reasoning, slavery would still exist today because Black Americans should accept their role in life as chattel in order to preserve peace in the community. Most societies organize themselves into hierarchical systems, thus, those groups of individuals who are lower on the hierarchy typically experience oppression, and in some extreme examples may be dehumanized and brutalized. I agree with the idea that nothing can be known for certain; however, it is for this reason that I believe arguments and debates should occur as opposed to being discouraged as advocated by Pyrrho. It is only with the free and respectful exchange of ideas that individuals can develop their personal values and beliefs in an educated manner. I think if we sacrifice this exchange in order to acquire ataraxia, we also sacrifice our ability to develop a genuine self because self-reflection – judgment of self and others – is not encouraged.

Later skeptics became prevalent among the students in Plato's Academy. One in particular, **Carneades of Cyrene** (c.214-129), was notorious for arguing one side of an issue one day and the other the next day. He said "There is absolutely no criterion for truth. For reason, senses, ideas, or whatever else may exist are all deceptive."

Stoicism



The founder of stoicism is **Zeno of Citium** (333-262) in Cyprus. Zeno may have been Phoenician or part Phoenician. He was a student of the cynics, but was also influenced by Socrates. His philosophy was similar to that of Antisthenes, but tempered by reason. Basically, he believed in being virtuous, and that virtue was a matter of submitting to God's will. As usual for Greeks who postulated a single god, Zeno did not strongly differentiate God from nature. So another way of putting it is to live according to nature ("Zen kata physin.").

The school got its name from the Painted Porch (stoa poikile) in Athens where Zeno studied. Walking up and down the open hallways, he lectured his students on the value of **apatheia**, the absence of passion, something not too different from the Buddhist idea of non-attachment. By passion Zeno meant uncontrolled emotion or physical desire. Only by taking this attitude, he felt, could we develop wisdom and the ability to apply it.

"Let no one break your will!" he said. Man conquers the world by conquering himself. Start by developing an indifference to pain and pleasure, through meditation. Wisdom occurs when reason controls passions; Evil occurs when passions control us.

Another aspect of Stoicism is its belief in the development of a universal state, in which all men were brothers. Stoics believed in certain "natural rights," a concept which we wouldn't see again until the 18th century. They also believed in the right to commit suicide – an important part of Roman cultural tradition.

The best presentation of stoicism is by the Greek slave **Epictetus** (50-138 ad), who wrote during the Roman era. There is also a little book, **Meditations**, by the Roman emperor **Marcus Aurelius** (121-180 ad).

Epicureanism

"The gods are not to be feared;
death cannot be felt;
the good can be won;
all that we dread can be conquered."
– Epicurus

Epicurus (341-270) was born on the island of Samos in Ionia. At 19, went to Athens to study at the Academy. It seemed, though, that he liked the philosophy of Democritus better. The school he founded was particularly egalitarian, accepting women and slaves. Epicurus, it is said, wrote 300 books. Sadly, only fragments survive.

Epicurus had little patience with religion, which he considered a form of ignorance. He was particularly eager to help people loose their fear of the gods. He did, however, also say that the gods existed, although they lived far away in space somewhere and had little or nothing to do with people on earth. Atheism, you see, was still illegal in Athens!

One of the most persistent issues concerning belief in God is the problem of evil. Epicurus's argument still holds up:

Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent.
Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent.
Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil?
Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?

Epicurus felt that it was useless to argue over metaphysics, that there was no such thing as a soul that lived after death, that we arrived at our present condition by means of evolution, and that we had the quality of free will.

We can see an almost "modern" materialism and empiricism here: All things – including minds – are made of atoms and follow natural laws. All knowledge comes from the senses. Thoughts and memories are nothing but weak sensations....

Virtue for Epicurus was a means to an end. That end is happiness. It is good to feel pleasure and to avoid pain, but one needs to apply reason to life. Sometimes pain is necessary in order to gain happiness. Other times, pleasure leads to more suffering than it is worth.

And there are levels of pain and pleasure, smaller and greater happinesses. Friendship, for example, is rated one of the highest pleasures. "A sage loves his friends as he loves himself," he said, and "It is better to give than to receive." And "It is not possible to live pleasantly without living prudently, honorably, and justly; nor to live prudently, honorably, and justly without living pleasantly." He reminds me of Benjamin Franklin!

Society is seen as necessary: It protects one from injustices. He foreshadows utilitarianism by suggesting that a society should be arranged to provide the greatest happiness to the greatest number.

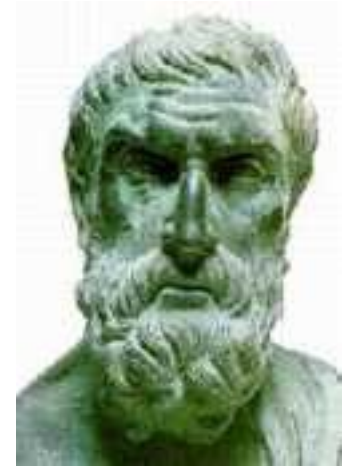
The ultimate happiness, though, is peace, and he borrows Pyrrho's word for tranquility – **ataraxia**. His motto was "lathe biosas" – live unobtrusively. He may be considered the first true humanist, as witnessed by this quote: "Philosophy is an activity that uses reasoning and rigorous argument to promote human flourishing."

The best summary of epicureanism is the epic poem **On the Nature of Things** by Roman Lucretius (95-52).

Note the practical similarities between stoicism and epicureanism, despite their theoretical differences! Both were popular in the Roman era, stoicism in Rome's early, more vigorous years and continuing among the rank and file of Roman citizenry, and epicureanism (even hedonism) behind closed doors, especially at the highest levels of the empire.

Alexander the Great introduced what is called the **Hellenistic**¹ period of history: His empire brought Greek ideas, art, language, habits to "the world," as far east as India and south as Egypt. But, with his death at the age of 33, his empire began to come apart, his generals dividing it amongst themselves and incompletely conquered nations reasserting their independence. And a new people stood in the wings to take over dominance of the Mediterranean: The Romans.

And yet the influence of the Greeks would outlast the empire of Alexander, its collapse, and even the Romans. But for now, the world had become a different place, a place of large powers maneuvering among themselves, centralized authorities just like those of Asia, huge trading and marketing conglomerates tightly tied to those authorities. Not quite the place for individualistic thinking and observation.



¹ Hellas is Greek for Greece, and the Hellenes are the Greeks. Greece and Greek are Roman names.

Epicurus: Letter to Menoecus*

Greetings.

Let no one be slow to seek wisdom when he is young nor weary in the search thereof when he is grown old. For no age is too early or too late for the health of the soul. And to say that the season for studying philosophy has not yet come, or that it is past and gone, is like saying that the season for happiness is not yet or that it is now no more. Therefore, both old and young ought to seek wisdom, the former in order that, as age comes over him, he may be young in good things because of the grace of what has been, and the latter in order that, while he is young, he may at the same time be old, because he has no fear of the things which are to come. So we must exercise ourselves in the things which bring happiness, since, if that be present, we have everything, and, if that be absent, all our actions are directed toward attaining it.

Those things which without ceasing I have declared to you, those do, and exercise yourself in those, holding them to be the elements of right life. First believe that God is a living being immortal and happy, according to the notion of a god indicated by the common sense of humankind.... For truly there are gods, and knowledge of them is evident; but they are not such as the multitude believe, seeing that people do not steadfastly maintain the notions they form respecting them. Not the person who denies the gods worshipped by the multitude, but he who affirms of the gods what the multitude believes about them is truly impious. For the utterances of the multitude about the gods are not true preconceptions but false assumptions; hence it is that the greatest evils happen to the wicked and the greatest blessings happen to the good from the hand of the gods, seeing that they are always favorable to their own good qualities and take pleasure in people like to themselves, but reject as alien whatever is not of their kind.

Accustom yourself to believe that death is nothing to us, for good and evil imply awareness, and death is the privation [removal] of all awareness; therefore a right understanding that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not by adding to life an unlimited time, but by taking away the yearning after immortality. For life has no terror; for those who thoroughly apprehend that there are no terrors for them in ceasing to live. Foolish, therefore, is the person who says that he fears death, not because it will pain when it comes, but because it pains in the prospect. Whatever causes no annoyance when it is present, causes only a groundless pain in the expectation. Death, therefore, the most awful of evils, is nothing to us, seeing that, when we are [alive], death is not come, and, when death is come, we are not. It is nothing, then, either to the living or to the dead, for with the living it is not and the dead exist no longer. But in the world, at one time people shun death as the greatest of all evils, and at another time choose it as a respite from the evils in life. The wise person does not deprecate [devalue] life nor does he fear the cessation of life. The thought of life is no offense to him, nor is the cessation of life regarded as an evil. And even as people choose of food not merely and simply the larger portion, but the more pleasant, so the wise seek to enjoy the time which is most pleasant and not merely that which is longest. And he who admonishes the young to live well and the old to make a good end speaks foolishly, not merely because of the desirability of life, but because the same exercise at once teaches to live well and to die well. Much worse is he who says that it were good not to be born, but when once one is born to pass with all speed through the gates of Hades. For if he truly believes this, why does he not depart from life? It were easy for him to do so, if once he were firmly convinced. If he speaks only in mockery, his words are foolishness, for those who hear believe him not.

We must remember that the future is neither wholly ours nor wholly not ours, so that neither must we count upon it as quite certain to come nor despair of it as quite certain not to come.

We must also reflect that of desires some are natural, others are groundless; and that of the natural some are necessary as well as natural, and some natural only. And of the necessary desires some are necessary if we are to be happy, some if the body is to be rid of uneasiness, some if we are even to live. He who has a clear and certain understanding of these things will direct every preference and aversion toward securing health of

*© 1994-1998 by the Internet Classics Archive, at classics.mit.edu/Epicurus/menoec.html

Translated by Robert Drew Hicks

body and tranquillity of mind, seeing that this is the sum and end of a happy life. For the end of all our actions is to be free from pain and fear, and, when once we have attained all this, the tempest of the soul is laid; seeing that the living creature has no need to go in search of something that is lacking, nor to look to anything else by which the good of the soul and of the body will be fulfilled. When we are pained, then, and then only, do we feel the need of pleasure. For this reason we call pleasure the alpha and omega of a happy life. Pleasure is our first and kindred good. It is the starting-point of every choice and of every aversion, and to it we come back, inasmuch as we make feeling the rule by which to judge of every good thing. And since pleasure is our first and native good, for that reason we do not choose every pleasure whatever, but often pass over many pleasures when a greater annoyance ensues from them. And often we consider pains superior to pleasures when submission to the pains for a long time brings us as a consequence a greater pleasure. While therefore all pleasure because it is naturally akin to us is good, not all pleasure is worthy of choice, just as all pain is an evil and yet not all pain is to be shunned. It is, however, by measuring one against another, and by looking at the conveniences and inconveniences, that all these matters must be judged. Sometimes we treat the good as an evil, and the evil, on the contrary, as a good. Again, we regard independence of outward things as a great good, not so as in all cases to use little, but so as to be contented with little if we have not much, being honestly persuaded that they have the sweetest enjoyment of luxury who stand least in need of it, and that whatever is natural is easily procured and only the vain and worthless hard to win. Plain fare gives as much pleasure as a costly diet, when once the pain of want has been removed, while bread and water confer the highest possible pleasure when they are brought to hungry lips. To habituate one's self therefore, to simple and inexpensive diet supplies all that is needful for health, and enables a person to meet the necessary requirements of life without shrinking and it places us in a better condition when we approach at intervals a costly fare and renders us fearless of fortune.

When we say, then, that pleasure is the end and aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some through ignorance, prejudice, or willful misrepresentation. By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking-bouts and of merrymaking, not sexual love, not the enjoyment of the fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table, which produce a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the greatest disturbances take possession of the soul.... For this reason prudence is a more precious thing even than the other virtues, for one cannot lead a life of pleasure which is not also a life of prudence, honor, and justice; nor lead a life of prudence, honor, and justice, which is not also a life of pleasure. For the virtues have grown into one with a pleasant life, and a pleasant life is inseparable from them.

Who, then, is superior in your judgment to such a person? He holds a holy belief concerning the gods, and is altogether free from the fear of death. He has diligently considered the end fixed by nature, and understands how easily the limit of good things can be reached and attained, and how either the duration or the intensity of evils is but slight. Destiny which some introduce as sovereign over all things, he laughs to scorn, affirming rather that some things happen of necessity, others by chance, others through our own agency. For he sees that necessity destroys responsibility and that chance or fortune is inconstant; whereas our own actions are free, and it is to them that praise and blame naturally attach. It were better, indeed, to accept the legends of the gods than to bow beneath destiny which the natural philosophers have imposed. The one holds out some faint hope that we may escape if we honor the gods, while the necessity of the naturalists is deaf to all entreaties. Nor does he hold chance to be a god, as the world in general does, for in the acts of a god there is no disorder; nor to be a cause, though an uncertain one, for he believes that no good or evil is dispensed by chance to people so as to make life happy, though it supplies the starting-point of great good and great evil. He believes that the misfortune of the wise is better than the prosperity of the fool. It is better, in short, that what is well judged in action should not owe its successful issue to the aid of chance.

Exercise yourself in these and kindred precepts day and night, both by yourself and with him who is like to you; then never, either in waking or in dream, will you be disturbed, but will live as a god among people. For people lose all appearance of mortality by living in the midst of immortal blessings.

THE END

Epictetus: Selections from *The Enchiridion**

1. Some things are in our control and others not. Things in our control are opinion, pursuit, desire, aversion, and, in a word, whatever are our own actions. Things not in our control are body, property, reputation, command, and, in one word, whatever are not our own actions.

The things in our control are by nature free, unrestrained, unhindered; but those not in our control are weak, slavish, restrained, belonging to others. Remember, then, that if you suppose that things which are slavish by nature are also free, and that what belongs to others is your own, then you will be hindered. You will lament, you will be disturbed, and you will find fault both with gods and men. But if you suppose that only to be your own which is your own, and what belongs to others such as it really is, then no one will ever compel you or restrain you. Further, you will find fault with no one or accuse no one. You will do nothing against your will. No one will hurt you, you will have no enemies, and you not be harmed.

....

Work, therefore to be able to say to every harsh appearance, "You are but an appearance, and not absolutely the thing you appear to be." And then examine it by those rules which you have, and first, and chiefly, by this: whether it concerns the things which are in our own control, or those which are not; and, if it concerns anything not in our control, be prepared to say that it is nothing to you.

2. Remember that following desire promises the attainment of that of which you are desirous; and aversion promises the avoiding that to which you are averse. However, he who fails to obtain the object of his desire is disappointed, and he who incurs the object of his aversion wretched. If, then, you confine your aversion to those objects only which are contrary to the natural use of your faculties, which you have in your own control, you will never incur anything to which you are averse. But if you are averse to sickness, or death, or poverty, you will be wretched. Remove aversion, then, from all things that are not in our control, and transfer it to things contrary to the nature of what is in our control. But, for the present, totally suppress desire: for, if you desire any of the things which are not in your own control, you must necessarily be disappointed; and of those which are, and which it would be laudable to desire, nothing is yet in your possession. Use only the appropriate actions of pursuit and avoidance; and even these lightly, and with gentleness and reservation.

....

5. Men are disturbed, not by things, but by the principles and notions which they form concerning things. Death, for instance, is not terrible, else it would have appeared so to Socrates. But the terror consists in our notion of death that it is terrible. When therefore we are hindered, or disturbed, or grieved, let us never attribute it to others, but to ourselves; that is, to our own principles. An uninstructed person will lay the fault of his own bad condition upon others. Someone just starting instruction will lay the fault on himself. Some who is perfectly instructed will place blame neither on others nor on himself.

....

8. Don't demand that things happen as you wish, but wish that they happen as they do happen, and you will go on well.

....

11. Never say of anything, "I have lost it"; but, "I have returned it." Is your child dead? It is returned. Is your wife dead? She is returned. Is your estate taken away? Well, and is not that likewise returned? "But he who took it away is a bad man." What difference is it to you who the giver assigns to take it back? While he gives it to you to possess, take care of it; but don't view it as your own, just as travelers view a hotel.

....

* © 1994-1998 by the Internet Classics Archive, at classics.mit.edu
Translated by Elizabeth Carter

13. If you want to improve, be content to be thought foolish and stupid with regard to external things. Don't wish to be thought to know anything; and even if you appear to be somebody important to others, distrust yourself. For, it is difficult to both keep your faculty of choice in a state conformable to nature, and at the same time acquire external things. But while you are careful about the one, you must of necessity neglect the other.

14. If you wish your children, and your wife, and your friends to live for ever, you are stupid; for you wish to be in control of things which you cannot, you wish for things that belong to others to be your own. So likewise, if you wish your servant to be without fault, you are a fool; for you wish vice not to be vice, but something else. But, if you wish to have your desires undisappointed, this is in your own control. Exercise, therefore, what is in your control. He is the master of every other person who is able to confer or remove whatever that person wishes either to have or to avoid. Whoever, then, would be free, let him wish nothing, let him decline nothing, which depends on others else he must necessarily be a slave.

15. Remember that you must behave in life as at a dinner party. Is anything brought around to you? Put out your hand and take your share with moderation. Does it pass by you? Don't stop it. Is it not yet come? Don't stretch your desire towards it, but wait till it reaches you. Do this with regard to children, to a wife, to public posts, to riches, and you will eventually be a worthy partner of the feasts of the gods. And if you don't even take the things which are set before you, but are able even to reject them, then you will not only be a partner at the feasts of the gods, but also of their empire. For, by doing this, Diogenes, Heraclitus and others like them, deservedly became, and were called, divine.

....

22. If you have an earnest desire of attaining to philosophy, prepare yourself from the very first to be laughed at, to be sneered by the multitude, to hear them say, "He is returned to us a philosopher all at once," and "Whence this supercilious [high-brow] look?" Now, for your part, don't have a supercilious look indeed; but keep steadily to those things which appear best to you as one appointed by God to this station. For remember that, if you adhere to the same point, those very persons who at first ridiculed will afterwards admire you. But if you are conquered by them, you will incur a double ridicule.

....

30. Duties are universally measured by relations. Is anyone a father? If so, it is implied that the children should take care of him, submit to him in everything, patiently listen to his reproaches, his correction. But he is a bad father. Are you naturally entitled, then, to a good father? No, only to a father. Is a brother unjust? Well, keep your own situation towards him. Consider not what he does, but what you are to do to keep your own faculty of choice in a state conformable to nature. For another will not hurt you unless you please. You will then be hurt when you think you are hurt. In this manner, therefore, you will find, from the idea of a neighbor, a citizen, a general, the corresponding duties if you accustom yourself to contemplate the several relations.

...

Be for the most part silent, or speak merely what is necessary, and in few words. We may, however, enter, though sparingly, into discourse sometimes when occasion calls for it, but not on any of the common subjects, of gladiators, or horse races, or athletic champions, or feasts, the vulgar topics of conversation; but principally not of men, so as either to blame, or praise, or make comparisons. If you are able, then, by your own conversation bring over that of your company to proper subjects; but, if you happen to be taken among strangers, be silent.

Don't allow your laughter be much, nor on many occasions, nor profuse.

Avoid swearing, if possible, altogether; if not, as far as you are able.

Avoid public and vulgar entertainments; but, if ever an occasion calls you to them, keep your attention upon the stretch, that you may not imperceptibly slide into vulgar manners. For be assured that if a person be ever so sound himself, yet, if his companion be infected, he who converses with him will be infected likewise.

Provide things relating to the body no further than mere use; as meat, drink, clothing, house, family. But strike off and reject everything relating to show and delicacy.

As far as possible, before marriage, keep yourself pure from familiarities with women, and, if you indulge them, let it be lawfully. But don't therefore be troublesome and full of reproofs to those who use these liberties, nor frequently boast that you yourself don't.

If anyone tells you that such a person speaks ill of you, don't make excuses about what is said of you, but answer: "He does not know my other faults, else he would not have mentioned only these."

....

41. It is a mark of want of genius to spend much time in things relating to the body, as to be long in our exercises, in eating and drinking, and in the discharge of other animal functions. These should be done incidentally and slightly, and our whole attention be engaged in the care of the understanding.

42. When any person harms you, or speaks badly of you, remember that he acts or speaks from a supposition of its being his duty. Now, it is not possible that he should follow what appears right to you, but what appears so to himself. Therefore, if he judges from a wrong appearance, he is the person hurt, since he too is the person deceived. For if anyone should suppose a true proposition to be false, the proposition is not hurt, but he who is deceived about it. Setting out, then, from these principles, you will meekly bear a person who reviles you, for you will say upon every occasion, "It seemed so to him."

....

44. These reasonings are unconnected: "I am richer than you, therefore I am better"; "I am more eloquent than you, therefore I am better." The connection is rather this: "I am richer than you, therefore my property is greater than yours;" "I am more eloquent than you, therefore my style is better than yours." But you, after all, are neither property nor style.

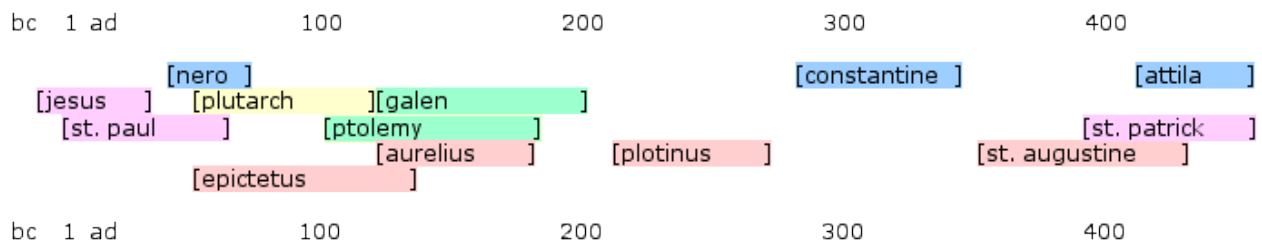
45. Does anyone bathe in a mighty little time? Don't say that he does it ill, but in a mighty little time. Does anyone drink a great quantity of wine? Don't say that he does ill, but that he drinks a great quantity. For, unless you perfectly understand the principle from which anyone acts, how should you know if he acts ill? Thus you will not run the hazard of assenting to any appearances but such as you fully comprehend.

....

48. The condition and characteristic of a vulgar person, is, that he never expects either benefit or hurt from himself, but from externals. The condition and characteristic of a philosopher is, that he expects all hurt and benefit from himself. The marks of a proficient are, that he censures no one, praises no one, blames no one, accuses no one, says nothing concerning himself as being anybody, or knowing anything: when he is, in any instance, hindered or restrained, he accuses himself; and, if he is praised, he secretly laughs at the person who praises him; and, if he is censured, he makes no defense. But he goes about with the caution of sick or injured people, dreading to move anything that is set right, before it is perfectly fixed. He suppresses all desire in himself; he transfers his aversion to those things only which thwart the proper use of our own faculty of choice; the exertion of his active powers towards anything is very gentle; if he appears stupid or ignorant, he does not care, and, in a word, he watches himself as an enemy, and one in ambush.

Timeline 1 to 400 ad

A note about dates: It has become a tradition in the west to use BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini, "year of our lord," the presumed year of Jesus' birth). This was started by a monk by the name of Dionysius Exiguus in 525 (AD, of course) while trying to figure out the appropriate dates to celebrate Easter. As an ancient Roman, he didn't use zero, so the first year was year one, which is the reason that the centuries and the millenia begin a year after they seem like they should (e.g. 2001 instead of 2000). Because not everyone is Christian and because Jesus was probably born several years BC (Before Christ!), many now use the initials BCE (before the common era) and CE (the common era) instead. Since I am old and cranky, I stubbornly continue to use BC and AD.



Map: The Roman Empire under Trajan 116 ad



The Philosophies and Religions of the Roman Empire

Rome was founded c. 500 bc. By 200 bc, it ruled most Italy, and in 150 bc, it conquered Carthage, the greatest power of the western Mediterranean at the time. By 150 bc, only three cities had over 100,000 people: Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. By 44 bc, Rome would rule them all.

When **Julius Caesar** was assassinated in 44 bc (pretty much as Shakespeare described it!), that ended the vigorous Roman Republic. His adopted heir, calling himself Augustus Caesar, became first emperor. The Roman Empire would reach its greatest extent in 116 ad under the Emperor Trajan.

As you can imagine, the best minds of Rome were absorbed into politics, war, and economics. Few had the luxury of abstract philosophizing. Besides which, the Greeks had done that already, and look how far it got them: Quite a number of Greek philosophers wound up as Roman slaves, tutoring the youth of Roman aristocracy!

In this atmosphere, we find a powerful renewed interest, among the rich and poor alike, in religion. The old religion of Rome was given lip service, to be sure. But most saw the gods as little more than stories to scare naughty children (except when the adults themselves got frightened!). They were looking for comfort in uncertain times, and they found philosophy too dry. Many different cults – of the Great Mother, of Dionysus, of Isis from Egypt, Mithra from Persia, Baal from Syria, Yahweh from Palestine – became popular. Eventually, the Judaic sect we now call Christianity would prevail.



[Why talk about religions and religious philosophies in a book on the history of psychology? There are actually a number of reasons. First, religion, philosophy, science, and psychology all come from the same human roots: We have a strong desire, even need, to understand the nature of the universe, our place in that universe, and the meaning of our lives. Religion included answers to these issues that have been psychologically satisfying as well as socially and politically powerful. Philosophy began separating from religion in the Greek and Roman times, and yet the great majority of people stuck with religion for their answers. In the renaissance and enlightenment, science began to separate from both religion and philosophy, and still the great majority remained loyal to religious dogma. And throughout much of history, religions have often taken a strongly anti-philosophical and anti-scientific position. Psychology inherits some of these issues, even into the modern era. It is valuable to any student of the history of philosophy, science, and psychology to understand the roots of religious belief and the power of those beliefs. – CGB]

Neo-Platonism

Roman Philosophy was rarely more than a pale reflection of the Greek, with occasional flares of literary brilliance, but with few innovative ideas. On the one hand, there was the continuation of a sensible, if somewhat plodding, stoic philosophy, bolstered to some extent by the tendency to eclecticism (e.g. Cicero). On the other hand, there was the growing movement towards a somewhat mystical philosophy, an outgrowth of Stoicism usually referred to as Neo-Platonism. It's best known proponent was **Plotinus**.



Plotinus (204-269) was born in Lycopolis in Egypt. He studied with Ammonius Saccus, a philosopher and dock worker and teacher of the church father Origen, in Alexandria. Plotinus left for Rome in 244, where he would teach until his death. He would have considerable influence on the Emperor Julian "the Apostate," who tried unsuccessfully to return the Roman Empire to a philosophical version of Paganism, against the tide of Christianity.

On a military campaign to Persia, he encountered a variety of Persian and Indian ideas that he blended with Plato's philosophy:

God is the supreme being, the absolute unity, and is indescribable. Any words (even the ones I just used) imply some limitation. God is best referred to as "**the One**," eternal and infinite. Creation, Plotinus believed, is a continuous outflow from the One, with each "spasm" of creation a little less perfect than

the one before.

The first outflow is called **Nous** (Divine Intelligence or Divine Mind, also referred to as **Logos**), and is second only to the One – it contemplates the One, but is itself no longer unitary. It is Nous that contains the Forms or Ideas that the earlier Greeks talked about. Then comes **Psyche** (the World Soul), projected from Nous into time. This Psyche is fragmented into all the individual souls of the universe. Finally, from Psyche emanates the world of space, matter, and the senses.

Spirituality involves moving from the senses to contemplation of one's own soul, the World Soul, and Divine Intelligence – an upward flow towards the One. Ultimately, we require direct ecstatic communion with the One to be liberated. This made neo-Platonism quite compatible with the Christianity of ascetic monks and the church fathers, and with all the forms of mysticism that would flourish in the following 1800 years!



Another proponent of Neo-Platonism worth mentioning is **Hypatia** of Alexandria (370-415). A woman of great intellect, she became associated with an enemy of the Christian Bishop Cyril. He apparently ordered his monks to take care of her. They stripped her naked, dragged her from her home, beat her, cut her with tiles, and finally burned her battered body. Raphael thought enough of her to include her in his masterpiece, The School of Athens.

Mithraism

One of the most popular religions of the Roman Empire, especially among Roman soldiers, was Mithraism. Its origins are Persian, and involves their ancient hierarchy of gods, as restructured by **Zarathustra** (c. 628- c. 551 bc) in the holy books called the **Avestas**.

The universe was seen as involved in an eternal fight between light and darkness, personified by **Ahura-Mazda** (good) vs. **Ahriman** (evil). This idea probably influenced Jews while they were in Babylon, which is when they adopted HaShatan – Satan – as the evil one!

Within the Persian pantheon, **Mithra** was "the judger of souls" and "the protector," and was considered the representative of Ahura-Mazda on earth.

Mithra, legend says, was incarnated into human form (as prophesized by Zarathustra) in 272 bc. He was born of a virgin, who was called the Mother of God. Mithra's birthday was celebrated December 25 and he was called "the light of the world." After teaching for 36 years, he ascended into heaven in 208 bc.



There were many similarities with Christianity: Mithraists believed in heaven and hell, judgement and resurrection. They had baptism and communion of bread and wine. They believed in service to God and others.

In the Roman Empire, Mithra became associated with the sun, and was referred to as the **Sol Invictus**, or unconquerable sun. The first day of the week – Sunday – was devoted to prayer to him. Mithraism became the official religion of Rome for some 300 years. The early Christian church later adopted Sunday as their holy day, and December 25 as the birthday of Jesus.

Mithra became the patron of soldiers. Soldiers in the Roman legions believed they should fight for the good, the light. They believed in self-discipline and chastity and brotherhood. Note that the custom of shaking hands comes from the Mithraic greeting of Roman soldiers.

It was operated like a secret society, with rites of passage in the form of physical challenges. Like in the gnostic sects (described below), there were seven grades, each protected by a planet.

Since Mithraism was restricted to men, the wives of the soldiers often belonged to clubs of **Great Mother** (Cybele) worshippers. One of the women's rituals involved baptism in blood by having an animal slaughtered over the initiate in a pit. This combined with the myth of Mithra killing the first living creature, a bull, and forming the world from the bull's body, and was adopted by the Mithraists as well.

When Constantine converted to Christianity, he outlawed Mithraism. But a few Zoroastrians still exist today in India, and the Mithraic holidays were celebrated in Iran until the Ayatollah came into power. And, of course, Mithraism survives more subtly in various European – even Christian – traditions.

Christianity

Jesus was born, it is thought, about 6 bc. His name is Latinization of the Hebrew name Yeshua, which we know as Joshua. Legend has it that he was born in the small town of Bethlehem, to a virgin named Mary, the

fiancée of a carpenter, Joseph. He grew up in Nazareth, part of a large Jewish family. He was apparently very intelligent and learned, for example, to read without formal education.

As a young man, he became very religious, and joined a group of ascetic Jews led by a charismatic leader named John the Baptist. When John was beheaded by local authorities for "rabble-rousing," many began looking to Jesus for leadership.

He had 12 disciples from various towns and walks of life, and literally hundreds of other followers, men, women, and children. They wandered the area, in part to spread their beliefs, in part to stay ahead of unfriendly authorities.

At first, Jesus's message was a serious, even fundamentalist, Judaism. He promoted such basic ethics as loving one's neighbor and returning hatred with kindness. He particularly emphasized the difference between the formal religion of the priests and Jewish ruling class and the less precise, but more genuine, zeal of the simple people. Supporting the message was his apparent ability to heal the sick.

The Jews of his time felt oppressed by their Roman overlords, and many believed that their God would intervene on behalf of his people by sending a **messiah** – a charismatic leader who would drive out the Romans and establish a new Jewish state.

Many of Jesus's followers, of course, believed that he was the messiah. At some point in his career, he began to believe this, too. Unfortunately, the Jewish authorities, answerable to the Romans, were concerned with his popularity, and had him arrested in Jerusalem.

He was condemned to death and crucified. His followers were clearly disappointed that the promised Jewish state was not delivered. But rumor of his coming back to life, and his appearance as a vision to several of his followers, reignited their faith. Many believed that he would return – soon! – to lead them.

As time went by, of course, it was clear that he wouldn't be coming back in their lifetimes. The less messianic, more religious aspects of his teaching began to be emphasized, and his notion of the kingdom of God as within us, or at least as our heavenly reward, replaced the hoped-for Jewish state.

For better or worse, Judea was actually quite metropolitan – heavily "Hellenized" if not so "Romanized." The same currents of thought in other parts of the empire were felt here as well. So the story of Jesus, as recorded in the gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, began to be attached to ideas that were more properly neo-Platonist, gnostic, or even Mithraist!

The gospel of John, for example, is very different from the others, and refers to Jesus as the word, or **Logos** – a common Greek idea. Revelations, also attributed to John, but very different in style and content, has all the complex imagery of gnostic and Mithraist end-of-the-world stories, popular among the Jews at this time. It includes the idea of an eventual resurrection of the body – a concept that Jesus of the gospels did not promote, and which most Christians today do not believe in.

But it was **Paul** (c. 10 - c. 64 ad), a Romanized Jew, who would be most responsible for re-creating Jesus, whom he had never met, and never refers to by name. He is also responsible for divorcing this newly formed religion from its Jewish roots. It was Paul who introduced the idea that Jesus was the son of God and that only by faith in him could we hope to be "saved" from our inherent sinfulness.

For nearly a century, the early Christians were split into two hostile camps: One group followed Peter, one of Jesus's original disciples. They were predominantly Jews and continued many Jewish traditions, as Jesus himself had done. The other group followed Paul, who was far more open to non-Jewish converts and waived much of Jewish law for those not born into it. The battle between these groups was, of course, won by Paul. Some critics suggest that Christianity ought to be called "Paulism!"



Both Peter and Paul were executed in Rome about 64 ad. Paul was beheaded. Peter was crucified upside-down (at his request, so as to avoid comparison with Jesus).

The Patrists, or church fathers, were the first Christian philosophers. In the eastern part of the empire, there was **Origen of Alexandria** (185-254); in the west, there was **Tertullian of Carthage** (165-220). Tertullian is best remembered for saying that he believed (in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ) precisely because it was absurd. Origen, on the other hand, had much more of the Greek in him, and pointed out that much of the Bible should be understood metaphorically, not literally. Keep in mind, though, that Origen cut off his own genitals because he took Matthew XIX, 12 literally!

The idea of the trinity, not found in the Bible itself, preoccupied the Patrists after Theophilus of Antioch introduced the concept in 180 ad. Tertullian felt that the trinity referred to God, his word (Logos), and his wisdom (Sophia). Origen was more precise, and said that it refers to the One (the father), intelligence (Logos, here meaning the son), and soul (Psyche, the holy spirit), following the Neo-Platonic scheme. Because the concept of the trinity is a difficult one, it was the root of many different interpretations which did not coincide with the official explanation. These alternative interpretations were labelled **heresies**, of course, and their authors excommunicated and books burned.

Origen also did not believe in hell: Like the Neo-Platonists, he thought that all souls will eventually return to the One. In fact, it is believed that Origen and the great neo-Platonist Plotinus had the same teacher – a dock worker/philosopher by the name of Ammonius Saccus.

The Patrists' philosophies were for the most part the same: All truth comes from God, through the mystical experience they called grace (intuition, interior sense, light of faith). This clearly puts the church fathers in the same league as the neo-Platonists, and contrasts Christian philosophy with that of the ancient Greeks: To take truth on faith would be a very odd idea indeed to the likes of Socrates, Plato, Democritus, and Aristotle!

Christianity had certain strengths, with strong psychological (rather than philosophical) messages of protection, hope, and forgiveness. But its greatest strength was its egalitarianism: It was first and foremost a religion of the poor, and the empire had plenty of poor! Despite incredible persecution, it kept on growing.

Then, on the eve of battle on October 27, 312, a few miles north of Rome, Emperor **Constantine** had a vision of a flaming cross. He won the battle, adopted Christianity, and made it a legal religion with the Edict of Milan. In 391, all other religions were outlawed. But even then, Christianity still had competition.

Gnosticism

Gnosticism refers to a variety of religio-philosophical traditions going back to the times of the Egyptians and the Babylonians. All forms of Gnosticism involved the idea that the world is made up of matter and mind or spirit, with matter considered negative or even evil, and mind or spirit positive. Gnostics believe that we can progress towards an ultimate or pure form of spirit (God) by attaining secret knowledge – "the way" as announced by a savior sent by God.

The details of the various gnostic sects depended on the mythological metaphors used – Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek, Jewish, Christian... Gnosticism overall was heavily influenced by Persian religions (Zoroastrianism, Mithraism) and by Platonic philosophy.

There was a strong dependence on astrology (which they inherited from the Babylonians). Especially significant are the seven planets, which represent the seven spheres the soul must pass through to reach God. Magical incantations and formulas, often of Semitic origins, were also important.

When Christianity hit the stage, gnosticism adapted to it quickly, and began to promote itself as a higher,

truer form of Christianity. The theology looked like this:

At first, there was just God (a kind of absolute). Then there were emanations from God called his sons or **aions**. The youngest of these aions was **Sophia**, wisdom and the first female "son." Sophia had a flaw, which was pride, which then infected the rest of the universe. We need to undo this flaw (original sin) but we cannot do it on our own. We need a **savior aion**, who could release Sophia from the bonds of error and restore her to her status as an emanation of God.

Worship among the gnostics included baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist. In fact, it is likely that several of the non-canonical gospels were written by Christian gnostics, and some say that John was a gnostic.

Gnosticism was strongly refuted by the early Christian Church in the 100's and 200's, as well as by the neo-Platonists, like Plotinus, who saw it as a corruption of Plato's thought. In fact, of course, the reason for the animosity was more a matter of how similar gnosticism was to Christianity and neo-Platonism!

Manicheanism

Manicheanism was founded by **Mani**, born 215 ad in Persia. At 12, he was visited by an angel, who told him to be pure for 12 more years, at which time he would be rewarded by becoming a prophet. He would eventually consider himself the seal (i.e. the last) of the prophets, a title Mohammed would later claim for himself.

Forced to leave Persia, he wandered the east, preaching a gnostic version of Mithraism, with elements of Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism. He considered himself an apostle of Jesus. When he returned to Persia, he was imprisoned and crucified.

In Manicheanism, **Ormuzd** (a corruption of the name Ahura Mazda) is the good god, the god of light, creator of souls. There is also a god of evil and darkness – sometimes referred to as Jehovah! – who created the material world, even trapping Ormuzd's souls in bodies. Another tradition has Ormuzd placing fragments of light – reason – in the evil one's mannequins.

So there is light trapped inside of darkness! Mani believed that salvation comes through knowledge, self-denial, vegetarianism, fasting, and chastity. The elect are those who follow the rules most stringently. Their ultimate reward is a release of the light from its prison.

His followers were severely persecuted, by Persians and Romans alike. Still, the religion spread to Asia Minor, India, China, the Middle East, even Spain. It lasted in Europe until the 10th century ad and influenced later Christian heresies such as the Bogomils and the Cathars.



St. Augustine

St. Aurelius Augustine of Hippo (354-430) was a Manichean for 10 years before converted to Christianity in 386 ad. He would go on to become the best known Christian philosopher prior to the Middle ages.

He is best known to us for the first truly psychological, introspective account of his search for truth, in his **Confessions**. A hint of the intimate detail of his account can be gotten from one of his best known quotes: He prayed to God to "give me chastity and continence, but not yet!"

His philosophy is a loose adaptation of Plato to the requirements of Christianity. In order to reconcile the idea that God is good with the evil that obviously exists in the world, he turned to the concept of **free will** and our personal responsibility for sin. And he emphasized intentions over actions when it comes to assigning moral responsibility

There are, of course, problems with his arguments: If God is omniscient and omnipotent, he knows what we will do and in fact made us this way, so isn't he still responsible for evil? Besides which, despite the admittedly great evil we human beings do to each other, aren't there also natural disasters and diseases that could be considered evil, yet have nothing to do with our free will? These arguments would trouble philosophers even into the twentieth century. (See Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* for examples!)



Augustine became bishop of Hippo Regius (west of Carthage) in 395. He died in 430, during the siege of Hippo by the Vandals, a Germanic tribe that conquered North Africa (which was the "breadbasket" of Italy in those times!). You could say he lived through the fall of the Roman Empire.

The Fall of Rome

The Roman Empire was seriously declining. The economy began to stagnate. Too much money was being used to simply maintain the borders and unity of the empire. The cities began to deteriorate. City services declined, and hunger and disease severely hurt the poor. Many moved out to the country, where they found themselves working in the great latifundi – what we might call agribusinesses – as peasants and artisans. Free peasants turned over their ownership of land to these powerful landlords, in exchange for protection. In turn, these latifundi were ready-made mini-kingdoms for the barbarian chieftains who would be coming soon!

By the third century, the empire was being attacked from every direction. It was nobly defended by 33 legions (5000 men each). Internally, it was suffering from sheer size, and in 395, it officially split into two halves, the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire.

In the 400s, the Huns entered Europe from the Russian steppes, and got as far as Chalons, near Paris. They spread terror everywhere they went. Their empire collapsed in 476, but not before they set dozens of German tribes in motion towards the Roman Empire.

The Romans fought some off, paid some off, and let some in to protect the borders. Most of the mighty legions were eventually composed of German soldiers! One rather large tribe, the Visigoths (western Goths), began to move towards Italy from their settlements in the Balkans. In 410, they destroyed Rome. The western half of the Roman Empire was for all intents and purposes dead and in the hands of the various invaders.

The Eastern Roman Empire was also in decline and was plagued by wars, external and internal. Emperor Justinian (527 - 565) tried but failed to reconquer Italy and sent the Eastern Empire into financial crisis. His efforts to discourage pagan philosophies and eliminate Christian heresies would eventually lead to much dissatisfaction with his rule. On the other hand, Justinian codified Roman law and adapted it to Christian theology, and he promoted great works such as the building of the Hagia Sophia, with its incredibly large dome and beautiful mosaics.

Barbarians at the gates were only part of the Empire's problems, however. There was famine in the remnants of the Roman Empire on and off from 400 to 800. There was a plague in the 500's. The Empire's population dropped by 50%. The city of Rome's population dropped 90%. By 700, only Constantinople— capital of the eastern Roman Empire – had more than 100,000 people.

In the late 600's, Arabs conquered Egypt and Syria (up till then still a part of the Eastern Empire), and even attempted to take Constantinople itself. In the 700's, Europe was attacked by Bulgars (a Mongol tribe), Khazars (a Turkish tribe which had adopted Judaism), Magyars (the Hungarians), and others. The Eastern Empire would see the Turks take Anatolia (appropriately renamed Turkey) in 1071, and finally take Constantinople in 1453.

In the meantime, western Europe was ruled by various size gangster-like hierarchies of illiterate warriors. The great mass of people were reduced to slave-like conditions, tilling the soil or in service jobs in the greatly reduced cities. We don't call 'em the dark ages for nothing!

But, when the sun sets on one civilization, it is usually rising somewhere else....

Islam

So, as the Roman Empire faded into the sunset, the opportunity for other civilizations to make a mark arose. I doubt that anyone at the time would have guessed that the major contender would come from the relatively desolate western coast of Arabia. Arabia could only marginally sustain its population agriculturally. But, positioned nicely between the wealthy empires to its north and the untapped resources of Africa to its south – and later the ocean routes to India and beyond – it managed to provide its people with the option of lucrative trade.

Mohammed was born 569 ad in Mecca, a merchant town near the Red Sea. His mother died when he was six, so he was raised, first by his grandfather, later by his uncle. He was probably illiterate, but that was the reality for most Arabs of the time.

At 26, he married a wealthy widow 14 years his senior, who would be his only wife until she died 26 years later. He would have ten more wives – but no living son. He and his first wife had a daughter, Fatima, who would become a significant character in Islamic history. She married Mohammed's adopted son, Ali.

As he got older, he became increasingly religious, and sought to learn about Judaism and Christianity. He began to meditate alone in the desert and local caves.

In 610 ad, Mohammed fell asleep in a cave, when tradition has it that the angel Gabriel appeared to him and told him he would be the messenger of God (**Allah***). He would have this experience repeatedly throughout the rest of his life. Each time, the angel would provide him with a lesson (**sura**) which he was to commit to memory. These were eventually recorded, and after his death collected into the Islamic holy book, the **Quran** (or Koran).

*Allah is the Arabic word meaning "the God." It comes from the same root as the Hebrew Elohim, and ultimately comes from the Cananite word El, which referred to the father of all the gods.

He preached to the people of Mecca, but was met with considerable opposition from pagan leaders. When the threat of violence became clear, he left Mecca for the town of Medina, to which he had been invited, with some 200 of his followers. Here, he was much more successful, and eventually he took over secular authority of the town.

Relations with the pagan families of Mecca continued to deteriorate, and relations with the Jews of Medina, at first promising, deteriorated as well. An alliance between the Meccan families and the Medina Jews fought Mohammed's followers over the course of several years.

In 630, Mohammed took Mecca. Within two more years, all of Arabia was under his control, and Islam was a force to be reckoned with. Mohammed died June 7, 632.

Mohammed's basic message was simple enough: We must accept Allah as the one and only God, and accept that Mohammed was his prophet. Say words to this effect three times, and you are a Moslem.

Islam means **surrender**, meaning that we are saved only by faith. Allah, being all-knowing, knows in advance who will and who will not be saved. This idea (which we will see again among the Protestants in Europe) tends to encourage bravery in battle, but it also tends to lead a culture into pessimistic acceptance of the status quo. But that would not happen to Islam for many hundreds of years!

The Quran says that some day (only Allah knows when), the dead will rise and be reunited with their souls. They will be judged. Some will be cast into one of the seven levels of hell. Some will be admitted into **paradise** – described in very physical, even hedonistic, terms. Much of this scenario came from the Jews, who in turn got it from the Persians.

Islam is very rule-oriented, blending the religious with the secular. Church and State are one. In the Quran, there are rules for marriage, commerce, politics, war, hygiene – very similar to the Jewish laws, which Mohammed imitated. Among those rules, Moslems are not to eat pork or dog meat and may not have sex during a woman's period, just like the Jews. Mohammed added a rule against alcohol. The society Mohammed envisioned is approximated by such authoritarian states as Saudi Arabia and Iran today.

Marriage was encouraged, and celibacy considered sinful. Polygamy was permitted, within limits. Women, as in Judaism and Christianity, were clearly secondary to men, but were not to be considered property. They were equal to men in most legal and financial dealings, and divorce, while easy, was strongly discouraged. Likewise, although slavery was not condemned, many rules were designed to humanize the institution.

Mohammed and the Moslems were generally accepting of Jews and Christians ("people of the book"), but intolerant of pagans. War and capital punishment were clearly condoned and practiced by the prophet: "And one who attacks you, attack him in like manner" (ii, 194).

The Arabic culture and language, and the religion of Islam, soon would dominate much of the world, from Spain and Morocco to Egypt and Palestine to Persia and beyond. For a while, it would present a progressive, tolerant face, and Moslem philosophy would rival that of the ancient Greeks.

A Brief History of Judaism

Palestine^{*1} was a fertile area, warm and watered by Mediterranean rains – a most desirable location. It lay between the sophisticated societies of Egypt and Mesopotamia, making it an ideal location for trade and, of course, war.

Tradition has it that the Hebrews came with father Abraham from Ur in Mesopotamia around 2000 bc, along with Abraham's El Shaddai ("god of the mountain"). It is more likely that they were natives to the area just to the east and conquered their close relatives the Canaanites^{*2} to establish their historical domain. Constant warfare with neighboring peoples apparently resulted in a large number of Hebrews being enslaved by the Egyptians, which sets the stage for the singular event of Jewish history, the Exodus.

Moses, probably an Egyptian, assisted the captive Hebrew population in its hour of need, possibly by introducing Egyptian cleanliness laws in a time of plague. Around 1300 bc, he led them, it is said, back into Palestine, where they would be of enormous influence on their settled brethren.

The Hebrews organized themselves into 12 tribes, with warrior-priest chieftains, referred to in the Bible as Judges. Intertribal wars led them to seek a monarch similar to the ones they had observed in Egypt and Mesopotamia. In about 1010 bc, they found that monarch in a ruthless warlord named Saul.

Only four years later, his seat was taken by David. After defeating the Philistines – the "Sea People" (possibly early Greeks) who had settled the coast – he established Jerusalem as his capital.

In 966 bc, David was succeeded by Solomon. Under his rule, the Hebrews became rich, investing in the trade between Phoenicia and Egypt, as well as in sea routes to Arabia and east Africa. Solomon had a temple built in Jerusalem to contain the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was a gold-covered wooden box that presumably contained the tablets of the Law that Moses received from God Himself at Mt. Sinai. It was the most sacred symbol of Yahweh, and was believed to give the Hebrews power over their enemies.

The Hebrews were originally polytheistic, even animistic. They believed in spirits and, as pastoralists, were particularly devoted to cults of the bull, the sheep, and so on. Animal sacrifice was the tradition, mostly at local altars and wilderness sites. They performed divination using dice, something which they would continue to do for many centuries.

It should be noted that much of Genesis consists of the common myths of the region (and many other regions), such as the creation story, the fall of man, the flood, and so on.

Yahweh, possibly the Canaanite god Yehu or Yaw, became the "national" god of the Hebrews. With Solomon and the Temple, he was made into the greatest god of all. He retained, as the Bible demonstrates profusely, very human characteristics: Jealousy, regret, anger, love of the scent of burnt offerings, and openness to bribery were among his qualities.



*1 Palestine is the name that the Romans gave to the area. It comes from their name for the Philistines, the people who once occupied the coast, and who may have been Greeks from Crete or Cyprus. The earliest name for Palestine was Canaan, and today, of course, we call most of it Israel.

*2 The Hebrews, the Canaanites, and the Phoenicians were ethnically the same people. Their languages were merely dialects of each other, and they shared in the use of the first alphabet.

Early beliefs did not involve the concept of hell as we now know it. There was instead *Sheol*, a land of darkness beneath the ground. But, like *Hades* among the Greeks and *Hel* among the Germans, it was home to nearly all who died, not just those who sinned. Unpleasant, it was not yet a place of eternal torture. But only a very few people went to heaven to live with the gods.

The religion revolved around laws – *many* of them, and not unlike the laws of the Hindus. Sin could be lifted by means of prayer and sacrifice, and uncleanness (such as menstruation and childbirth) by ritual purification, all controlled by the priestly caste. Beyond the Commandments, the Laws of Moses regulated all of life for the Hebrews – diet, hygiene, medicine, even sexuality.

After Solomon, the condition of the Hebrew tribes began to deteriorate. Rich and poor classes developed, and the caste of priests (descendants of Levi) became increasingly powerful. Solomon's kingdom split into Israel in the north and Judah in the south. In 722 bc, Sargon II, the Assyrian emperor, overwhelmed the entire area.

The Assyrians were a particularly brutal group and the Hebrews, like others, suffered greatly. In the era of their overlordship of Palestine, a number of religious fanatics became influential among the Hebrews. They were disdainful of the rich and of the priests, and preached that the downfall of the Hebrews was due to their own sinfulness. These preachers were, of course, the prophets of the Bible: Amos, Hosea, Elijah, and Isaiah – all preaching in the 800's bc. They introduced an idea borrowed from the larger cultures around them: the Messiah, including virgin birth and all. In the Greek translations of the Bible, *Mahsiah* would be translated as *Christos*, "the anointed one."

King Josiah ruled the area from 639 to 609. He and his priests saw the need for a codification of Hebrew traditions to provide solidarity among the people. In 622, they "discovered" (or created) a scroll presumably written by Moses, and called it the Book of the Covenant or the Law. It was probably much of Deuteronomy, and parts of Exodus (xx to xxiii?). The scroll was read outloud over two days and proved to be a hit! With that support, Josiah went on to destroy the idols to other gods in Palestine.

In 587 bc, in the midst of a war between Egypt and Babylonia, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar invaded Palestine, destroyed most of Jerusalem, including the Temple. He took much of Jerusalem's population to Babylon as slaves. This was the Babylonian Captivity.

Just prior to the captivity, Jeremiah gave his warnings, and later, Ezekial reprimanded the Jews for bringing this on themselves once again. Also around this time there was a prophet, who also wrote under the name Isaiah, who developed a new image of Yahweh. His God was the only God, and he was the embodiment of love and kindness. And his ultimate victory over the evil of this world would be brought about by a Messiah.

In 539, Cyrus, King of Persia, conquered Babylonia and made Palestine part of the Persian Empire. He freed the Babylonian Jews and restored their wealth, and they returned to Jerusalem. They supplanted the non-Jewish settlers, rebuilt the Temple, and reestablished priestly rule and the Law of Moses.

Ezra, in 458 bc, had this Law read outloud. This time, it took two weeks, because the collection included the entire five volumes of the Torah. The present form of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) was developed by 300 bc.

Modern scholars view the Torah as having four authors (or groups of authors):

- "J" (for Jehovah) called God *Yahweh* and was likely from Judah. He was responsible for much of Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers.
- "E" (for Elohim) used *Elohim* (God) instead, and was likely from Israel. He wrote the rest of Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers. J and E were probably integrated soon after 722 bc.
- "D" represents the Levite priests who put together Deuteronomy. It probably dates from not long before 622, when King Josiah "discovered" it.
- "P" (for priestly code) covers geneologies and rituals in the preceding books, plus Leviticus. It was probably written not long before King Josiah died, in 609. Some believe "P" may have been Jeremiah.

- "R" (for redactor) combined J, E, and P into the first four books of the Torah, and then added D. Some scholars believe he may have been Ezra.

In 332 bc, Alexander the Great took Jerusalem. It surrendered without a fight. Alexander was supposedly an admirer of the Jews and their God. This introduced a long period of Greek rule – and accompanying Hellenization – which would affect Judaism greatly. Besides a translation into Greek called the Septuagint in about 200 bc, the prophets were added to the collection of scriptures during this period, as well as Proverbs, Psalms, the Song of Solomon, Job, and Ecclesiastes.

The development of a Hellenized Jewish community in Alexandria (Egypt) led to a split between those liberal Jews and the more conservative Jews of Palestine. Also, the Samaritans, who inhabited what was originally Israel, broke ranks with the Jews of Judea (Judah), keeping only the ooriginal Torah as their scripture.

In 168 bc, Simon Maccabee took Judea out of the hands of Alexander's successors (the Seleucids), and began his own dynasty. But in 63 bc, Pompeii conquered the area and made Judea a part of the Roman province of Syria.

The next hundred or so years were crucial ones for the Jews. In 37 bc, nationalistic Jews in league with Parthian invaders, revolted. The Romans had appointed Herod ("the Great") as King of the Jews two years earlier, and he repelled the invaders and eliminated their Jewish supporters. He ruled the area until 4 bc, which may have been the year in which Jesus was born.

Palestine had a population of about two and one half million at this time, with some 100,000 people in Jerusalem. Three sects became influential:

- The *Sadducees* were a conservative, highly nationalistic group. They did not believe in immortality.
- The *Pharisees* believed in strict application of the Law, and added an oral tradition. They did believe in immortality, and were more conciliatory towards the Romans.
- The *Essenes* were an extremist monastic tradition, possibly influenced by Buddhist monastics. They believed that a Messiah would establish the Kingdom of Heaven, to which only the "pure" would be admitted.

Over time, the government of Palestine – mostly Roman-appointed Jews – would degenerate into incompetence and corruption. Groups of *Zealots* (fanatics) arose who swore to kill all disloyal Jews. They killed quite a few, and many Gentiles as well. The Gentiles of the area responded in kind. Emperor Vespasian sent his son Titus with Roman legions to Palestine and Titus offered the Jews a lenient settlement. The Zealots turned him down, so the legionnaires slaughtered them.

In 70 ad, Titus ordered the Temple destroyed and the Jews dispersed – the *Diaspora*. Millions of Jews spread throughout the Empire, which already contained some seven million Jews – roughly 7 % of the Empire's population. With the Diaspora, the Sadducees disappeared and the Pharisees, by means of their teachers (*rabbis*) kept the flame alive by preaching the Law in thousands of synagogues.

Around 132 ad, there was another uprising by Jews in the Near East. The Emperor Hadrian outlawed teaching of the Law, and destroyed most of Judea. Many Jews went to Babylon, where they were fairly well treated and did quite well. In around 500 ad, they completed the Babylonian Talmud, a collection of commentaries on and explanations of the Law.

Within the Roman Empire, the Jews were granted citizenship (like everyone else) in 212 ad. They were, however, greatly disliked by other Roman citizens: They insisted on dressing differently, celebrating different holidays, eating different foods. Even more annoying was their exclusivity, their firm conviction that they were better than everyone else, and their disdain for anyone else's gods. The increasing popularity of one Jewish messianic sect – Christianity – only made things worse.

In 417 ad, Constantine, the first Christian emperor, lowered the Jew's status to secondary citizens of the Empire. They remained in that precarious position for the next 1400 years or so.

Early Christian Heresies

A heresy is a belief that deviates from some standard, official belief. When religious authorities decide that a belief is heretical, they usually take active efforts to eradicate the belief, usually including the removal of the offending believers (by excommunication or worse). Of course, one man's orthodoxy is another man's heresy!

Most Christian heresies centered around the twin issues of the nature of the trinity and, more specifically, the nature of Jesus Christ. The official stand on these issues (according to all the Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches) are as follows: God is a trinity, three persons but one essence; Jesus Christ was one person, simultaneously human and divine. That these two statements are not particularly rational was considered irrelevant. The trinity was seen as mysterious and a matter of faith, not reason.

What follows are eight heresies, ranging from sects that see Jesus Christ as purely divine, to others which see him as purely human.

Sabellianism: Sabellianism is named for its founder Sabellius (fl. 2nd century). It is sometimes referred to as modalistic monarchianism. The father, son, and holy ghost are three modes, roles, or faces of a single person, God. This, of course, implies that Jesus Christ was purely divine, without humanness, and therefore could not truly have suffered or died.

Docetism: The name comes from the Greek word *dokesis*, meaning "to seem." Along the same lines as Sabellianism, Docetism says that Christ was not a real human being and did not have a real human body. He only seemed to be human to us. In a nutshell...

Christ only (no Jesus)

Monophysitism: Monophysite comes from the Greek words for "one body." This heresy says that Jesus Christ was a joining of the eternal Logos with the human person Jesus, which occurred at incarnation. He therefore is two separate natures joined in one body. Monophysitism is very much alive in several present-day Egyptian and Middle Eastern sects of Christianity.

Jesus
> Jesus Christ
Christ

Adoptionism: Adoptionism says that Jesus was a human being who was "adopted" by God at his conception, at which point he developed a divine nature. Later versions sometimes suggest that he was adopted later, such as when he was baptized by John the Baptist.

Jesus > Christ

Nestorianism: Supposedly, Nestorius, Patriarch of Antioch (fl. 410), believed that Jesus Christ had two natures -- man and God -- which remained separate throughout his period on earth. This is not really what Nestor said (although he did deny virgin birth) but the name stuck. You can still find a few Nestorian churches in Iran.

Jesus.....
Christ.....

Apollinarianism: Named for Apollinaris of Laodicea (fl. 350), this heresy says that Jesus Christ was not a

real man, but not totally divine either. Apollinarians suggested that he had a human body and a human soul, but his mind was taken over by the eternal Logos.

Je(Christ)sus

Arianism: Arianism is named after Arius (c. 250 - c. 336), a priest in Alexandria. This is considered the most serious heresy. Jesus Christ was thought of as a special creation by God for man's salvation. Arianism was the form of Christianity that the Goths adhered to, and it was popular in all the areas they conquered, including Italy, Spain, and Africa.

Socianism: A version of Arianism called Socianism (from the Latin *socius*, meaning "companion"), simply says that Jesus was an extraordinary man. This heresy still lives on in two very different forms, the Unitarians and the Jehova's Witnesses.

Jesus only (no Christ)

Other Heresies

Not all heresies focussed on the issues of the trinity and Christ's nature. Here are the leading examples.

Donatism: Named for its leader, the theologian Donatus the Great (d. 355), Donatism included a group of extremist sects, mostly in North Africa, that emphasized asceticism. They valued martyrdom, found lapses of faith (even under torture or threat of death) inexcusable, and believed that the sacraments required a pure priest to be effective.

Pelagianism: Another group of sects, centered in Gaul, Britain, and Ireland, is associated with the Irish monk Pelagius (fl. 410). He believed that original sin was not transmitted from Adam and Eve to their children (and thereby to us). Baptism was not considered necessary, and people could be "saved" by their own efforts, that is, they did not necessarily require the grace of God. Many modern liberal Christians agree with Pelagius.

Gnosticism: Discussed in my article on Roman philosophy and religion, the Christian versions were, obviously, considered serious heresies. Gnosticism has never entirely disappeared, and can be seen in the traditions of Alchemy and Astrology, and even in modern times in the works of Carl Jung.

Manicheanism: Also discussed in that article, Manicheanism is actually a separate religion which blends Christianity with Gnosticism, Mithraism, neo-Platonism, and even Buddhism. Again, it was considered a very serious heresy. It survived well into the Middle Ages, where it strongly influenced the Bogomils in the Balkans and the Cathars in southern France.

The Bulgarian Heresy: This heresy is worth a few extra paragraphs!

In the 10th century, there arose in Bulgaria a gnostic heresy credited to a priest by the name of Bogomil. The beliefs of the **Bogomils**, as they were called, were adoptionist, meaning that they considered Jesus to have been "adopted" by God at the time of his baptism, but did not consider him to be a part of a trinity. Neither did they consider Mary in any way the mother of God.

Simplicity and strict adherence characterized their practices, with priests elected from their own groups and congregations meeting at homes rather than churches. Infant baptism was not practiced, marriage was not considered a sacrament, and saints were considered false idols.

The heresy had a strong Manichean flavor to it. They believed that God had two sons, Michael and Satan. Satan created the material world and attempted to create Adam, but was unable to create a soul. God added the soul to Adam, but mankind was bound in service to Satan. Michael came to earth in the form of the holy spirit, which entered into Jesus. As Christ, he broke the original agreement which bound mankind to Satan. But it was Satan who orchestrated the crucifixion, and he is still working to recapture mankind by means of the mainstream churches.

The basic ideas of this Bulgarian heresy spread rapidly west, through northern Italy to Southern France. There, the believers called themselves **Cathars**, from the Greek word meaning pure. Others called them Albigensians, after the town of Albi, or Bogres, for Bulgarians. This last name is the source of the word bugger, due to accusations of sodomy.

Even stricter than the Bogomils, the Cathars attempted to live simple, exemplary lives, with the most serious believers refraining from sex and other physical pleasures. Many adopted strict veganism. They had only one sacrament, the *consolamentum*, which was something of a last rites in which sin was removed.

The Cathars believed that the God of the old testament was actually Satan, and that he was responsible for the creation of the material world. Jesus was therefore purely spirit (Docetism), since he would have been tainted if he had had a real body. By purity of living, anyone could cast off the physical body and awaken in heaven. The impure were doomed to rebirth into this physical world. One interesting side effect of this belief was that women were treated as equal to men, since we have all been men or women at some time in our past lives.

The Bogomils and the Cathars were harshly persecuted by the Orthodox church in the east and the Catholic church in the west. By the 14th century, the Bulgarians were absorbed by the Islamic Ottoman Empire, and the Cathars were virtually eliminated by Crusades and the Inquisition. They had laid the foundations, however, for the Reformation.

For considerably more detail on these and other heresies (from an admittedly Catholic perspective) see the online **Catholic Encyclopedia** at <http://www.newadvent.org>

Sunnis and Shiites

The major split in Islam is that between the majority Sunnis and the minority Shiites. The split goes back to events in the 7th century:

After Mohammed's death, leadership of the Islamic community passed to Abu Bakr, one of Mohammed's closest companions. Some in the community felt that this succession was not legitimate, and that the title of caliph really belonged to Ali. Ali's claim was supported by the fact that he was Mohammed's cousin, his adopted son, his first convert (at the age of nine), and husband of his daughter Fatima. Both sides believe that Mohammed specifically designated their man: Supporters of Abu became the Sunnis, those of Ali the Shiites.

The Caliphate passed from Abu Bakr to Umar, and from Umar to Uthman. Uthman at last passed the torch to Ali. When Ali was murdered in 661, the Caliphate passed to Muawiya, who would found the famous Umayyid Caliphate. Ali was buried in Najaf in what is now Iraq, and the site remains a major Shiite holy site.

Sunni refers to the sunnas, or oral traditions and interpretations of the Koran – a body of work similar to the Jewish Talmud. Sunnis believe that the position of Caliph should be a position to which one is elected by the religious leaders of the Islamic community, and not dependent on direct lineage from Mohammed.

Shiite comes from the word shia, which means "the party (of Ali)". They are mostly found in Iran and Iraq, and among the Palestinians. They consider certain direct descendants of Ali – the Imams – infallible and the true inheritors of Mohammed. Ali was the first Imam, his son Hassan the second, his second son Hussein the third. Ali's sons were killed in the conflict with Caliph Muawiya. However, their succession ended with the 12th Imam, who went into hiding in 940. Most Shiites believe that the 12th Imam will reemerge someday as the Mahdi or Messiah, and reassert his leadership of the Islamic world. In the meantime, ayatollahs are elected to serve as caretakers of the faith.

Sunnis tend to be a bit more liberal (though not by modern western standards) and keep their religion simpler than the Shiites. The Shiites tend to be more intense about their religion and have a tradition of valuing martyrdom that came out of their early experiences of conflict with the Sunnis.

There are a number of splinter groups of both sects. Perhaps the most famous today is the Wahhabi sect (a Sunni splinter), of which Osama bin Laden is possibly a member. It is characterized by radical fundamentalism: The Koran is not to be interpreted but rather taken literally. There are to be no prayers or other appeals to prophets, saints, or any entity other than God. There are to be no images of or monuments to any supposed Islamic leaders, not even elaborate tombs for famous Moslems. And the Koran is to be the soul source of secular as well as religious law.

Another famous group is the Sufi movement, which can be Sunni or Shiite. Sufis are mystics who believe that God's love shines through everything, even ugliness and evil, and that by attaining a certain state of mind, one can directly experience this. In this sense, they resemble Zen Buddhism. Sufism is also noted for its use of stories that have layered meanings, much like the parables of Jesus. One subgroup of the Sufis is the "whirling dervishes," whose mystical practice includes religious dance.

Early Chinese and Indian History

Early Chinese History

Around 1500 bc, we see the rise of the semi-mythological Shang dynasty. This was a feudal kingdom that dominated the Yellow River basin, and established a number of small cities, most of which were in what is now Henan province. It is during the Shang dynasty that Chinese symbolic writing was developed by the dynasty priests.

In about 100 bc, we see a new dynasty – called the western Chou – centered in Loyang, also in what is now the Henan province. It consisted of many smaller feudal kingdoms with allegiance to a "head king" or emperor. Much of their cohesiveness was due to the constant need to defend themselves against the surrounding barbarians.

The eastern Chou dynasty began in 770 bc. This period was marked not only by constant warfare with the barbarians, but considerable warfare amongst the various parts of China as well. Culturally, peasants became more valued in this period (due to their importance in warfare), and the merchant class became more important. It is this period that saw the introduction of money.

During this dynasty, some of the most significant philosophers made their appearance. Confucius (551 to 479 bc) introduced a philosophy that combined ethics with religious traditions, a philosophy that would dominate Chinese political structure until the 20th century.

At about the same time, we also see Laotze introducing a more sophisticated version of traditional nature worship called Taoism, in one of the greatest books ever written, the Tao te Ching. While Confucianism would be the formal philosophy of the high court, Taoism would eventually profoundly influence the Buddhism introduced later.

From 403 to 221 bc, China was split into a number of warring states. In 221 bc, the Ch'in dynasty established its rule. Ch'in was a border state to the west of the previous centers of Chinese civilization, and we get the name China from their dynasty. The Ch'in established a highly centralized state, along the same lines as the Roman Empire, and standardized measurements, weights, and money. It was also during this time that construction of the Great Wall began, in an effort to keep out the Huns – the same people that would threaten Rome not too much later.

From 206 bc to 9 ad, we see the western Han dynasty. Han was a kingdom just south of the Chou kingdom, again in what is now Henan. The Han dynasty defeated the Huns in approximately 100 bc (sending them on their way towards Europe) and expanded their territory to the west. They also established the famous Silk Roads – routes to the Middle East used for trade with Persia, Rome, and India.

From 25 to 220 ad, the eastern Han dynasty took over, and oversaw a great "flowering" of their civilization. Trade with Rome and others in silk and porcelain was booming. Paper was invented about 100 ad, and Buddhism began to make inroads from northwestern India and Greek kingdom of Bactria (part of what is now Afghanistan).

From 220, we have the period of three kingdoms, followed by a period where China was divided into separate northern and southern empires. The north was invaded by a combination of Huns and Turkish tribes, while the south went through a series of dynastic changes. In 379 ad Mahayana Buddhism became the official religion (living in harmony with Confucianism and blending with Taoism).

China was reunified in 581 under the Sui dynasty, whose policies were taken over in 617 by the T'ang dynasty. Notable during this period, the written exam system of civil service became established in 606 ad. This system would continue until the communists took over in 1951. The T'ang dynasty lasted until 907.

The 900's was a period of rapid dynastic turnover, and we see a reversal of the fortunes of the Buddhists, who were actively persecuted. In 960, the northern Sung dynasty provided stability, although only by paying tribute to the Mongols. The southern Sung took over from 1127 until 1279, still paying tribute to the Mongols, but overseeing a second renaissance of culture and economics. During this period, the Chinese language was codified by Chu Hsi (1131 - 1200), literature, painting, and porcelain flourished, and both printing and gunpowder were invented.

In 1196, Genghis Khan became the supreme ruler of the Mongols and their Turkish and Tartar allies, and proceeded to lead them into China, taking Beijing in 1215. At the same time, he sent his troops west as far as Poland and Hungary. When he died in 1227, his empire was split into several smaller units ruled by his various sons. The Mongols would continue to rule the steppes well into the 1400's, Ivan III finally liberating Moscow in 1480!

Marco Polo, a Venetian adventurer, visited China during this period, and brought back stories of wealth that would make Chinese goods nearly as sought after as they had been during the Roman Empire. Sadly, in 1325, China suffered from one of its greatest famines, which killed 8 million out of its 45 million population.

In 1368, the Mongols were driven out of China, and the Ming dynasty begins. It had a strong centralized government founded on solid Confucian principles. The capital was moved to Beijing in 1421, where it would remain until the present day. The Great Wall was extended to 2450 km (about 1500 miles).

The Ming dynasty oversaw another renaissance, with novels, maps, great architecture, porcelain, and a new medical technique we call acupuncture. On the other hand, they didn't want too much to do with the world beyond the empire: European trade was limited to the Portuguese colony of Macao.

From 1644 all the way to 1911, China was again ruled by "barbarians," this time the Manchu from the northeast of China. The Manchus, being of limited numbers, were anxious to use the existing structures of Chinese bureaucracy and blended themselves with the native population as much as possible. In fact, they saw the greatest population growth in history and expanded the empire to its present extent. At first, they encouraged trade with the Europeans, but later would close the empire to foreign trade. As we know, the Europeans are rarely deterred when such a vast market looms on the horizon, and the colonial empires – especially the British – would chip away at the glory that had been China.

Early Indian History

In somewhere around 1500 bc, a group of people who called themselves Aryans invaded the Indian subcontinent, and came to dominate most of the original Dravidian people. The Aryans spoke a language distantly related to the western European languages, and came from the Russian steppes. They brought with them what is known as the Vedic religion, which would eventually result in a series of books called the Vedas.

As the Aryans settled in, they developed the caste system. The top two castes were composed entirely of Aryans: the Kshatriyas or warriors, and the Brahmins or priests. Below them were a mixed group of peasants called the Vaishyas, and the subject Dravidians, called the Shudras. Below all of these were the various people of the jungles, as well as the slaves of the original Dravidians, which were called the Pariahs or outcasts.

The hierarchical society would last officially until the British rule, and continues informally even today.

Around 500 bc, several people, in the process of searching for enlightenment, would shake the caste system: First, there was Siddhartha Gautama, better known as the Buddha. He preached a stoic life style involving moral living and meditation that would develop into the rich philosophy of Buddhism. The other was Vardhamana, called Mahavira, and his follower Jina, who believed that suffering was due to the mixing of spirit with base matter, which must be separated from each other by means of fasting, asceticism, and chastity. Their beliefs would become the religion called Jainism.

In the late 300's bc, the troops of Alexander the Great knocked at India's door, and would remain a significant presence in Bactria, just northwest of India. These Greeks would be the only westerners to adopt Buddhism, and they would take part in introducing Buddhism into China. Chandragupta, king of Maghada in eastern India (where Buddha preached), established the Maurya Empire, controlling most of northern India.

His grandson Ashoka (272 - 231 bc) is one of the most famous figures in Indian history. After a particularly bloody battle, he swore off killing and embraced Buddhism. Among other things, he established laws based on Buddhism and recorded them on stone pillars and monuments all over northern India. He also sent missionaries as far west as Egypt and Greece, whose effects on western thought are still unknown. Unfortunately, his empire was divided among his descendants after his death, and India again became a land of many small feudal states.

The next major event comes around 50 ad, when Yüeh-chih (an Indo-European people from western China called the Tocharians or Kushans) invaded India from their base in Bactria. In 320 ad, and lasting until 535, the Gupta Empire would permit a cultural renaissance, including a blossoming of poetry, drama, and other literature.

Beginning around 430 ad, the Huns would start nibbling away at the Gupta Empire until its collapse. This was followed by another period of short-lived empires and smaller states.

From 700 ad on, we see a major change in the subcontinent. First, Buddhism, the dominant religion of India, would be gradually driven out by the Brahmin caste and its supporters, and replaced with a revitalized, if very conservative, Hinduism. Second, the Moslems would enter India from the west and slowly expand to rule over the northern half of the subcontinent, all the way to Bengal (what is now Bangladesh). In 1206, the Sultanate of Delhi was established, an empire based on Moslem theocracy and military might. Nevertheless, India prospered during this period, and greatly expanded trade with the Near East. The Sultanate would last until 1526.

Despite Moslem rule, the caste system continued, now with Moslem rulers at the top, and the native Indians were kept poor through harsh taxation. The Moslems accepted Hindus as "people of the book" (what they called Jews and Christians in the west, because they shared the same Biblical traditions as the Moslems), as long as they kept to their place in society. Buddhism, however, they found threatening, and Buddhist monasteries, temples, and books were destroyed. This has continued even to the present, as with the destruction of ancient giant Buddhist statues in Afghanistan in 1998.

It was in 1498 that the Portuguese discovered the sea route to India, circumventing the hostile Moslem empires inbetween, and established the trading settlement that would become Calcutta. In the early 1500's they went on to colonize Goa, Ceylon, Bombay, and other coastal spots.

The Moguls – led by Babar, descendant of the Khans – invaded India from their stronghold in Kabul

(Afghanistan), and defeated the Sultan of Delhi. By 1576, they would take over all of northern India. The Moguls, although Moslem, were very tolerant of the Hindus and even the Jesuits, and declared the Edict of Toleration in 1583. A number of syncretic sects developed during this time, the most famous of which is Sikhism. The Sikhs were founded by Nanak (1469 - 1538), who blended Islam and Hinduism and other philosophies into a strong egalitarian religious culture, where each man takes as his last name "lion" and each woman "princess." To this day, the Sikhs provide the backbone of the Indian military.

The Arab Moslems and the Moguls, although outsiders, brought another period of renaissance to India. They established libraries and universities, contributed greatly to literature (including updates of the great Indian religious texts), and founded a new style of Indian architecture, exemplified by the great Taj Mahal.

In 1612, a new player entered the scene: The British took over the Portuguese colonies. They would eventually rule all of India and much more.

The History of Psychology

Part Two: The Rebirth

Part Three: The 1800's

Part Four: The 1900's

[<http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboree/historyofpsych.html>]