PART I

Introduction til Aristotle

Prehistory to 3rd Century BCE

(Chapters 1 – 15)

Philosophos

If Aristotle, the great Greek philosopher, is right and *definition is understanding*, then Philosophy could simply (and literally) be the 'love of wisdom'[1] and we could be done with it. But alas, that would first make for a short book, and second be untrue to the modern philosophical spirit of obfuscation and double meaning. So let us confound it further and state that it is also known in some circles simply as Metaphysics (somewhat literally pertaining to and the study of things "beyond the physical", but more on that later). This would be slightly inaccurate as I hope we will see. Those circles are trying to relegate it to some obscure mumbo-jumbo fringe, which has no bearing in our lives. Since Aristotle himself gives us the notion of physics (and metaphysics, and psychology, and biology) which they so seem to love, then to heck with them – they do not know what they are talking about anyway. Let us embark upon our own journey, unfettered by the confusion or judgments of others and delve into the true meaning and place of philosophy.

For our purposes then, philosophy is *the devotion and discipline of thinking which is committed to understanding*, not just a commitment of knowing, *how the world is put together*, like the molecular components of water, but *also* of an understanding of 'truth' of *how the world works and our place in it*. One can see then, that philosophy, rather than being separate and inconsequential to science, math, politics, ethics or whatever you can come up with (thanks again, Aristotle), is integral to all human thought and action. A fairly 'bold statement for a one eyed fat man'[2], but one which I hope will be vindicated by the end of this work.

So on what basis is such a claim made? The Greeks divided the world into the physical: tangible objects (earth, wind, fire and water) and the metaphysical: as said, the things which were beyond the physical (beauty, truth, etc.). Perhaps more speculative than tangible, it uses logic, science and reason as well as experience to transform knowledge into understanding. In its own way it is similar to what we presently call science[3] in that it too seeks a 'Unified Theory', not just of the physical universe but of life and living. We will use words like '*being*' and '*substance*' to help us understand this world, but mostly to help us understand ourselves. What are we? What is thought? How are we different than the world around us? How are we part of it? We will examine critical methods using words like '*logic*' and '*dialectic*'. In this form it is as legitimate of a science as physics itself (and was considered such by the Greeks – but again, that is another discussion).

Understanding: Thinking About Thinking

This seems like such a simple term, and in order to stave off this kind of quick conclusion let us here and now strip it of such a simplistic dismissal. *Understanding*, or as we will also call it *wisdom*, is getting your head around an idea, not just at your level but on its level. What I mean by this is seeing it 'eye to eye', on its own ground and not with hubris or bias. In an inappropriate appropriation of an idiom: *Seeing is skin deep but Understanding goes right to the bone*.[4]

Understanding is not a passive activity. It should be and is efficacious, as we will see. We come together, then, here within these pages seeking more knowledge and wisdom than when we entered, as both student and teacher. It is a road to becoming a philosopher, not a destination, to

[1] think *Philadelphia* – the city of 'brotherly love'
[2] *True Grit*
[3] Or perhaps more correctly we should say that in its own way science is similar to and based within what we call philosophy.
[4] As my father always says "'I see', said the blind man to the deaf mute".

over-coin a phrase and in order to begin we need to shod our feet with good shoes for the journey and take the first steps. On our way we can both look ahead on our journey and behind to where we have been, but we must always keep our focus: *understanding* is the main goal and *logic* is our main road.

Logic: Testing the Waters

That means that the next word which we must wrest from the hands of infidels is *logic*. Logic is the art and action of critical thinking, not merely the means by which you 'win' an argument[5]. By that I mean it contains the tools and methods to allow us to evaluate *validity* and *falsity* and therefore determine *truth*. Truth is a word we will get to but in opposition to popular thinking we must first grasp that logic is primarily *systematic* and *deductive* in nature, that is, it is a system which follows a deductive reasoning path called a *syllogism* made up of *thesis* (aka *premises, or truths*) which are combined to reach a *conclusion* (aka new truth) as in: 'If A and B then C', and not 'A and B *imply* C' or 'I think A therefore C'. The art of argumentation, known as 'rhetoric' was formalized in the West by the Greeks and was taught religiously (or philosophically, I suppose) until recently (think *classical* education systems like the English). The art of critical thinking requires a chest of tools, and logic is their source – though they are often now delegated not to Philosophy but the realm of Psychology (which too has been discounted as a 'speculative science', and not just because it rises from philosophy, but more on that later) and is by that means often used against us rather than for us. But then I digress. Let us continue on the path of definition and the insight which comes from it.

Logic then is the study of *truths* (again, aka *thesis* or *premises*) and the systematic methods for determining the validity of such truths. It evaluates not the *source* of the truth but the '*truth*' itself. Truths therefore may originate from any source, be it rational thought, science, or experience, and may develop from any resource available to the human mind and heart. What we want to understand is a *truth* in the context of the *argument* being made *with* it and then ultimately the *validity* of the conclusion made *from* it.

Thinking Well: Logical Basis

But what is truth? Are mine the same as yours (*with all apologies to Pilate and the Evangelist John*)? Logic gives us an answer to this question because it is the best objective basis (so far) for the determining of *truth*. All well and good but how do we fight our way through the pervasive chicken-and-egg problem to objectively determine what is logical? At what point do we determine that the premise is sufficiently 'true' and 'true' in and of itself? These questions and many others are used to establish the logical ground rules and the means to accomplish them have been proposed, honed, and 'perfected' over time. While many will argue and debate over the final definition or even the necessity of logic, that is a discussion for another time.

Terms Logic

The problem with defining things is finding all of the words you need to define first in order to define that thing. When honing our definition of logic there are terms to be addressed in order to understand the definition, and so let us start by defining a few of them. Do not worry, many other definitions will follow so you will definitely[6] get your money's worth. You have just been introduced

[5] And by 'winning' they mean crushing the life out of your opponent with nothing more than clichés and pat slogans.

[6] Ha, ha…get it?

to these terms but here is the official discussion of them. Think of this first set of definitions as the *how-is-human-thought-organized* group (in descending order):

Methods:	The ways of demonstrating and formulating ideas, like a syllogism ($A^2 + B^2 = C^2$).
Systems:	Groupings or classes from which logical premises may be derived (like axioms in Trigonometry – remember those?)
Truths:	The foundation or basics by which other methods, systems or arguments may be measured or developed (i.e. 'humans think') also known in an argument as the *theses* or *premises* or...well you get the idea.

List 1: Basic Thought Organization Terms

The Logical Playing Field

The form of logic is the *argument*. An argument is a series of propositions which added together form some sort of conclusion. In a bit of set logic, be aware that all arguments are not necessarily *good* arguments and while they may be true, they do not always arrive at *the* truth, being flawed in ways we will discuss. We are not concerned at this moment with the *correctness* of an argument merely the understanding of what an argument *is*.

That said, the final caveat is that this is a *Western* discussion. On our journey, there will be some exploration of Eastern philosophers but for now, as they say, write what you know. In order to understand the basics we will keep it basic. That said, there are (basically) two main systems of Logic developed within the West:

Predicative:	based in terms (nouns and verbs).
Propositional:	based on the operators between those terms (+, -, =, and, or).

List 2: Basic Thought Organization Terms

For our purposes the two main representative Logics of these systems are:

Aristotelian:	Classic basis for Western logic. It is of the predicative type because it uses *syllogisms* (if A and B then C *or* if A is B and B is C then A is C) involving nouns and verbs and such words as *all*, *some*, *are*, *not*.
Boolean:	Familiar to all computer programmers, a symbolic pared-down version of Aristotle's form. Fashions truth tables using *and*, *or*, *not*, and is more about how the propositions are paired using those operators.

List 3: Major Types of Western Logic (Logical Systems)

We will discuss other forms and their impact but these two are the most prevalent and the others will make more sense only when we understand these, or as I am fond of saying, that, my friends is another chapter. Suffice it to say that at this time our focus is on *deductive* styles of thinking and that these two forms fit the bill. They also hang nicely in time with Aristotle's classical style coming from ancient Greece and Boole's coming from the 20th century.

The Last Word?

One final thought to keep in mind. Gottfried Leibniz (*1646-1716, see Chapter 38*) postulated that propositions can be thought of as *contingent* (may or may not be true) or *necessary* (can only be true), thinking on which we will dwell more later. That said, what we really want to pull out of this tidbit is his two 'great' premises for establishing this basis:

The Identity of Indiscernibles	This is the paring down of something until it is undistinguishable from another thing, that is, all of their properties are identical, meaning that the things themselves are for all practical purposes the same thing.
Principle of Sufficient Reason	The acceptance of a premise because at this point no reasonable argument can be made against it.

List 4: A Useful Subset of Leibniz's Theory of Proof

Thinking Poorly: Logical Fallacy

This term *fallacy* is used to imply several levels of 'error' with or within an argument. Though there are probably as many methods of fallacy categorization as fallacies, most fallacies can be categorized into three types of errors by *where* the error takes place:

In Argument	the actual components of the argument are flawed.
Reasoning	the thinking behind the argument is flawed.
Belief	roughly, what we *think* to be true is flawed.

Another way to think about them is to categorize them by the format of the error, or to put it another way, *how* they take place:

Formal	structure based *('form-al')*, that is, the physical structure of the argument is flawed.
Informal	internal to the structure *('in-form-al')*, that is, one part, a premise or conclusion for example, is flawed.

For our purposes we will lump, I mean organize errors into three 'basic' ways to identify them (though there are many more specifically identified):

1. ***Some invalid idea presented as valid***: Using irrelevant, incorrect or insignificant information (which is similar to *belief*), for example:
   Ad hominem – personal attack ("*This person says they have a plan, but that cannot be correct because they're a liberal/conservative*")
2. ***Applying an unjustified premise****:* Use of *non-sequitur*[7] (non-following) statements (as with *reasoning,* or *formal*), for example:
   Consequent Affirmation – bi-directional logic; using the premise to prove itself ("*Aristotle was Greek, that guy's name is Aristotle so he must be Greek*")
3. ***Fact Misuse****:* Ignoring or suppressing relevant information (an *informal* type), for example:
   "No I did not touch my sister" (*the stick I poked her with touched her*).

List 5: Three Habits of Highly Bad Thinking

By way of thinking well about thinking poorly, in the end we want to keep in mind that what most of these categories and fallacies deal with is the improper use of ideas or their presentation. We must think before we speak.

Putting It Together

Philosophy and philosophical thinking rely on a structured, consistent language. If we spend all of our time arguing terms, where does that leave us? No, really that is just a rhetorical question. Logic is the tool of philosophy, but the aim is to examine life, in a consistent and repeatable manner.

As confusing as all those categorizations may be, do not be worried. Rome was not philosophized in a day, as we might but probably should not say. Philosophers have proposed various ideas for centuries, using different words and groupings but all seeking the same end – a common language for discussing ideas, so we should not get bogged down in the terms and then creating a common structure for presenting those terms. Placing these errors within categories only serves us mnemonically and so there are no hard and fast rules which dictate their commitment to memory. Thousands of years have gone into perfecting our understanding of logic, and probably thousands more will continue in their development. Keeping in mind the notions which they represent is the first step to utilizing them. It is also the most important step in utilizing them.

[7] Just one non-sequitur after another….

Once again: *do not expect to remember every one of them*. Expect instead to understand them and utilize every one of them in avoiding and identifying error when constructing or understanding arguments.

One last wrench in the works: suffice it to say these methods do not speak to the veracity or the morality of the truths being examined, merely that they are or are not relevant to the argument. When looking at logic we are not making judgments so much about the *content* of the thesis but their *context*.

"These common thoughts are expressed in a shared public language, consisting of shared signs...a sign has a 'sense' that fixes the reference and is 'grasped by everybody' who knows the language..."

Noam Chomsky, *Language and Thought*

Logic

In the last chapter I presented two mainstream logical methods, Aristotelian and Boolean. Are they by any means the only two methods? No, but then this is a *15-minute* philosophy lesson not the spend-the-rest-of-your-life-committing-terms-to-memory philosophy lesson. For our purposes, we will stick to these two as sufficient to illustrate the point about how do we think about truths. We will peek at others as we go along.

With that in mind, let us get this out of the way: when we use the word *truth* we think of it more as a promulgated statement which is the basis for other statements, not necessarily as the end objective conclusion (as in 'ultimate truth'), nor necessarily as 'true' in the sense of valid. Do not quote me on this but in a preliminary way of offering explanation, *truths* are the premises of arguments from which we derive a conclusion or another *truth*. To this we apply logic standards which are the meat of this discussion (structure, fallacy, etc.). The fancy words we could use for a truth are *thesis* or premise, but *a rose by any other name…*.

Supercalifallacylogicalidoscious

To start with, we must examine the concept of *logic*. Logic, like *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* may be the strangest word you have ever heard. We may think we understand what it means, but we do not. Logic is not merely a term, it is a way of life. When we think logically we are thinking critically, merely categorizing, ordering and curtailing our thoughts, keeping a watch over our tongues as it were. By this method we can consistently share, organize and evaluate specific aspects of an argument and determine its validity and soundness. Starting here gives us a *lingua franca*, the confidence and the means to examine and understand. That said (again) let us move to logical thinking.

Aristotle: The Square of Opposition

Among his many gifts to the world, Aristotle (4th century BCE – *Chapter 16ff*) laid out for us the 'limits' of thinking, that is, what thoughts are viable within logic, or to put it another way (which I apparently do with great alacrity throughout this work) *what are the possible viable deductive paths of argumentation*?

Not every philopher/phy would refer to or give credit to this formal designation but it really is a standard in Western thought. The sum of Aristotle's thought is encased in the doctrine known as the 'square of opposition'. Through it he hoped to finalize the boundaries of argumentation making it possible to have an argument in a controlled, logical way (do not worry, there will be more on this later).

Syllogisms (in the form of *truth*, *truth*, *new truth*) are the basis of Aristotelian logic. The square of opposition is a diagram showing how *theses* (hypothesis/ideas hence *thesis* and *antithesis*) – not the 'truths' themselves – are logically related. The diagram is just a useful way to keep them straight (or diagonal as the case may be). The *theses* concern logical relations among four logical forms or *operations* (logical relationships):

NAME	*FORMAT*	*AKA*
A	Every *S* is *P*	Universal Affirmative

NAME	FORMAT	AKA
E	No *S* is *P*	Universal Negative
I	Some *S* is *P*	Particular Affirmative
O	Some *S* is not *P*	Particular Negative

Table 1: Aristotle's Logical Theses

These theses are fairly self explanatory, but I will expound anyway: what it comes down to are a *general* true and false and a *particular* true and false. For Aristotle these four statement types pretty much summed up all that you could say, logically. It is the relationship of these simple statements which are also shown in the square. The theses are placed at the corners of a diagram which, as said, we call the *square of opposition* (Figure 1, though it looks more like a rectangle of opposition).

The corners are connected by specific oppositions:

- **Contradictories**: if they cannot both be true and they cannot both be false.
- **Contraries**: if they cannot both be true but can both be false.
- **Subcontraries**: if they cannot both be false but can both be true.
- **Subaltern:** must be true if its superaltern is true (think *sub* as *below*)
- **Superaltern:** must be false if the subaltern is false (think *super* as *above*)

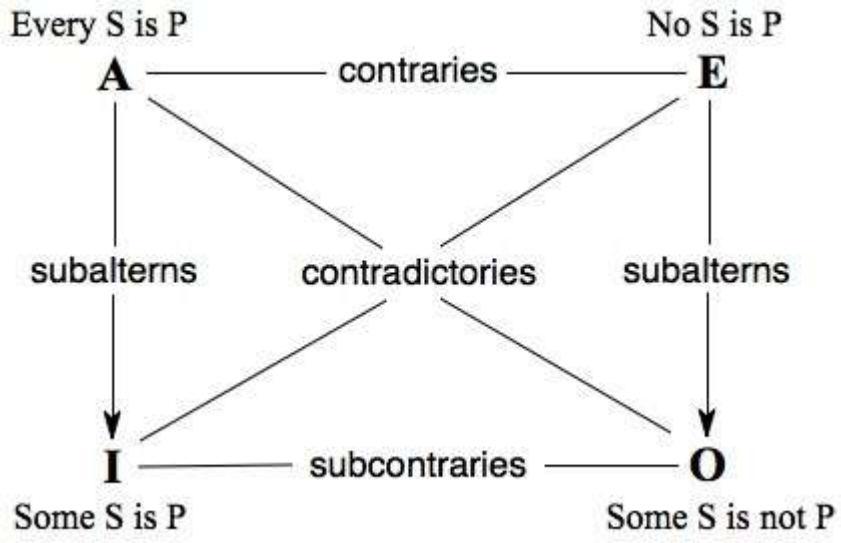


Figure 1: The really non-rectangular Square of Opposition

Just as the four logical operations are set in pairs, the *theses* embodied in this diagram are thereby further grouped into relational pairs:

- 'Every *S* is *P*' and 'Some *S* is not *P*' are contradictories.
- 'No *S* is *P*' and 'Some *S* is *P*' are contradictories.
- 'Every *S* is *P*' and 'No *S* is *P*' are contraries.
- 'Some *S* is *P*' and 'Some *S* is not *P*' are subcontraries.
- 'Some *S* is *P*' is a subaltern of 'Every *S* is *P*'.
- 'Some *S* is not *P*' is a subaltern of 'No *S* is *P*'.

Confused? Don't be. When we think of an idea, we place it somewhere in this square. The next idea is in relationship to that point at another point on the square. If the idea does not fall into a relationship noted by the square then we must disregard it. Simple Enough? The verbiage of *alterns* and *contraries* is only a means to evaluate the ideas placed on the square or better yet where to place them on the square.

By thinking this way we share a common ground for discussion. This gives logic its power: common understanding and rules.

Boole: Truth Tables

George Boole (19th century CE) was a mathematician and at the risk of preaching to most of the choir, I'll spend a minute on his stuff at, as above, a very high and rough level. Logic looks for tools, and Boole proposed a logic method using mathematical means which became the main method for that period (and therefore influences into the 20th+ century).

Boole broke the logic down to three basic *operations* (aka logical relationships, remember?):

NAME	*FORM*
AND	A and B
OR	A or B
NOT	not A

Table 2: Boole's Theses of Operators

These three are part of a total of 16 *operations* which can be applied in what we usually call 'truth tables'; Boole did not invent the truth table but it is the best illustration, like the 'square' above.

AND Form		
Argument A	Argument B	Function Value
False	*false*	false
False	*true*	false
True	*false*	false
True	*true*	true

OR Form		
Argument A	Argument B	Function Value
false	*false*	false
false	*true*	true
true	*false*	true
true	*true*	true

NOT Form	
Argument A	Function Value
false	True
true	False

Table 3: Boole's Truth Tables

Compared to Aristotle, Boolean logic presents us with a pared-down, bare-bones semantic guide for discussing a truth (or *premise*). The thought here being that we really do not need to muddy the water with discussions (i.e. all that baggage which Aristotle saddles us with) which are fruitless (in the end) because they are merely manufactured subsets of the basic argument/truth. By eliminating them we could have gotten to and through the main truths faster and more logically.

Of course the worst thing about this is that you have been studying using Aristotelian logic for almost a whole semester and suddenly they drop this in your lap. I on the other hand, have been merciful.

Gödel: *Incompleteness*

As a further sign of my benevolence, at this time I'll throw in the Kurt Gödel (20th century CE) tidbit at no extra cost. You may have heard of Gödel from the popular book *Gödel, Escher and Bach* by Douglas Hofstadter. If not (and even if), Gödel demonstrated that in any branch of mathematics (or as we might say 'system'), you would eventually find propositions which you could not prove or disprove using that system. The implication is that *all* logical systems of any complexity have, by definition, a level of *incompleteness*; that is, each of them contains more true statements than it can possibly prove by the methods and rules of *that* system. In other words they will in and of themselves always be incomplete systems for demonstrating truth.

You are welcome.

Putting It Together

When we approach a 'truth' or a proposed conclusion logically in order to determine the value or validity of that truth or conclusion, we have to determine what path we will take to get there. There has to be a defined, agreed upon set of rules by which we will argue our truth to a conclusion.

The logical systems presented by philosophers are used to set the boundaries within which they will think and argue. Is the loss of Aristotelian grey areas presented by Boolean logic the end word? Is Aristotelian logic better or worse at reaching logical consensus? Why am I asking you? Peace. Here is where Gödel comes in: to keep ourselves honest we must admit that in any system there comes a time where we will run into a quandary or paradox or whatever that we will be unable to solve within the scope we are working…and you know what? That is okay because it forces us to continue to think beyond what we know and are secure/comfortable with. We may even, dare I say, look to other systems in which to seek the answers.

"*Whoa, Sam Gamgee, your legs are too short, so use your head!*" J.R.R Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

Fallacy

Incomplete, flawed or just plain wrong thinking is the source of so many misunderstandings that it deserves its own section just for that reason. For our purposes though, we will constrict ourselves to the realm of philosophical logic. Therefore let us start with the defining of the idea and its ramifications. *Logical fallacy* hinders our ability to form understanding and ultimately our ability to live the 'examined life'. This affects most often our moral decisions which in my humble opinion (and as you shall see, a large number of philosophers') are the true driving force for which we seek understanding.

Argumentation is mainly a *deductive* process but may sometimes involve *inductive* reasoning. For logic purposes, deductive is preferred because in the end you have a solid *argument* from which you can derive an agreed upon *truth*. Inductive logic tends to only provide a plausible truth, which even though agreed to by a majority of thinkers could still leave the truth up for grabs. Inductive reasoning also avails one to go down the primrose path of fallacy, because it *sounds* reasonable. But as we should be learning, in logic just because it sounds reasonable does not make it so. *Ergo sum*[8], the use of inductive reasoning for further argumentation might/can really lead to problems later in a method or system but, as we will see, the use of deductive reasoning may not be any better.

Fallacious Thinking

As mentioned before, a technical way of thinking about fallacies is *formal* (invalid form) and *informal* (invalid argument). The best way to understand these are to think in terms of someone deliberately or accidently misshaping the argument to confuse or confound (formal) or someone deliberately or accidently misshaping some aspect of the argument (informal). Most errors tend to be informal but we can elaborate on this later.

Recognizing fallacious thinking can be harder than we think, especially because so many of the fallacies appeal to prejudices and stereotypes or seem 'logical enough'. Affronts to logic aside, we define fallacies as flaws or errors in the argument, introduced usually in the premises (though sometimes in the conclusions) and *are often minor*. Think of adding instead of subtracting or misplacing the parenthesis in a mathematical formula. The effect is that any conclusion drawn from the flawed argument which is used as a later premise only compounds the error throughout the whole of the argument or system.

The scariest thing about logical error is that you can reach a correct conclusion from flawed arguments. For example "All men die, Aristotle is a man, Aristotle is dead" or something like "whales are fish, fish live in the sea, whales live in the sea". In the first argument, the premises are both correct but the order does not lend itself *deductively* to the conclusion – though it does *inductively* (the name Aristotle does not just apply to the Greek philosopher Aristotle but in this context we can *imply* that it does.). In the second example the first fact is wrong, but the conclusion is correct.

Think back to the Aristotle's Square or Boole's truth tables. These are the tools we keep in mind when constructing or evaluating an argument, so that we do not run into the error of the first argument; keeping the logical fallacies in mind helps to keep us from making the error in the second argument.

Thinking Fallaciously

[8] Let's just call it "therefore it is".

In addition, we must be vigilant in even detecting an argument. Here are some classic example statements like:

"*Have you stopped beating your wife yet?*"

This is not an argument, though it seems to have conclusions all throughout it (it is a formal violation: *Plurium Interrogationum* – too many questions)*. Another inference style statement is:

"*If the Bible is accurate, Jesus must have been the Son of God.*"

This is not an argument but an *assertion* that looks like an argument; there seems to be one 'premise' and one 'conclusion' but no statement in the sentence proves any other statement. Arguments are not open to opinion or only one premise.

Finally for your viewing pleasure, look at this one:

"*Einstein made his famous statement 'God does not play dice' because of his belief in God.*"

This too is not an argument but an *explanation*. We cannot derive that Einstein believed in God or what that belief was just because he used the word 'God' in a sentence once. Again there are no statements within the sentence which give proof of any other statement within the sentence. One could even argue that in the last part the word *belief* could be ambiguous.

Get the idea?

Exercise: *What would be an argument then? Let's take the assertion and see if we can do anything with it for example by restructuring it and adding a premise: "The Bible is an accurate, historical document; Jesus makes statements recorded in the Bible;…" What conclusion can we draw? In this case is the first statement a good premise? Is the second?*

Bias and Logical Bias

(Warning: the following contain personal logical reflections of the author that may or may not be embraced by the wider philosophical world but possibly by my mother but only because she loves me)

I think we understand bias (a particular leaning which colors the argument) but is there something known as 'logical bias'? Can we over intellectualize something? Are some statements seen as true by some but not by others? Does a statement *have* to mean something? Can we unwittingly make one system (or even a single truth) the only system for gauging truth?

The simple answer to all these and many other questions is *yes*. In addition to (and usually containing) logical fallacy, we can be biased toward one system or another or method to the exclusion of all others. The argument that something is wrong merely because it disagrees with our own conclusions, or does not follow what we *believe* to be the logic rules is what I would term a logical bias (some might call it intellectual hubris). This is in addition to any other biases we bring into the argument.

This leads me to address one particular effect from this attitude: the tendency to speak in absolutes based on logic. Some things are considered true throughout history and they can pretty much be depended upon to continue to be true. Say, the earth is round. That was true whether people knew it or understood it to be true. Well actually the earth is kind of egg-shaped. Does that bar us from using 'the earth is round' as a premise? If we are figuring rocket trajectories then round may not be good enough, but for most argument's sake, 'the earth is round' works pretty well. What we have to watch is 'once-thought-always-true' mentality (or as I like to classify it: *one track mind, derailed*) as well as the 'well-that-was-disproved-and-therefore-completely-useless' (or *baby with the bathwater*) syndrome.

Fallacies Bergere

Okay, enough wandering. Aristotle divided fallacies up into three types if I recall:

1. **Material**: subject matter of or within the statement(s) – often *unquantifiable* or *incorrect* statements.
2. **Verbal**: communication errors or abuses.
3. **Formal**: structural errors in the argument.

List 6: Aristotelian Forms of Fallacy

(Another probably less formal way to think about them is to divide them up as fallacies of ***relevance***, fallacies caused by ***causal*** (cause and effect) ***reasoning***, and fallacies caused by ***ambiguity***…as I have said, there are probably as many ways as there are philosophical systems and again, you just have to find the one that suits you.).

Fallacies are easily identifiable as they often have Latin names**. The list of fallacies seems to be growing even since I first studied them, but I think that most are subsets of a basic few. By that I mean that you can place most into families which involve the same basic flaw, just as you can group them like we do above. Sometimes the categories fail and some are defined which cross over between two or more categories (*Yada, yada, yada; quit coverin' yer butt*). Still the most effective way to keep them in mind is to group them and remember the groupings. Whatever mnemonic helps go for it! I am sorry, what was I saying? Oh yes. For now and to be able to continue writing we will stick with the above.

Here then, are a choice few:

Material:

- ***Ad Verecundiam***: (argument from/to modesty) deferring to another source
    - ***Related Common Example*: Ipse Dixit**: (he himself said) he said/believes it therefore it must be true (aka Appeal to Authority/Celebrity, etc) slightly different but in the same family.
- ***Ad Hominem***: (at/to the man) attacking the individual not the truth; one of the most prevalent.
- ***Plurium Interrogationum*:** (too many questions) questions couched such that no answer is sufficient for all of the questions.
- ****Non Sequitur*:** (does not follow) presenting two disparate statements as connected.
- ***Circulus in Probando***: (circular argument) assuming the conclusion in the premise (s)
- ***Ignoratio Elenchi***: (ignoring of the chosen [argument]) intentionally diverting attention away from the facts at hand.

Verbal:

- ***Argumentum Verbosium***: (verbose arguing) overwhelming by the sheer repetition of words.
- ***Unum Ad Pluribus* (**I think): (…from one to all) assuming the whole is true because the parts are [this has an opposition of assuming each from the whole]. This is verbal because it is a confusion of terms.
- **Equivocating** (can't recall the Latin, or even make it up) using a word ambiguously or using a word which could have two or more meanings.

Formal:

- ***Quaternio Terminorum***: (four terms) introducing a fourth element (premise) into the normal three element argument.
- **Negative Premises**: assuming the positive from two negatives – two wrongs do not make a right.
- ***Petitio Principii*:** assuming the conclusion implicitly (or explicitly) within a premise.

List 7: Fallacy Styles and Examples

Putting It Together

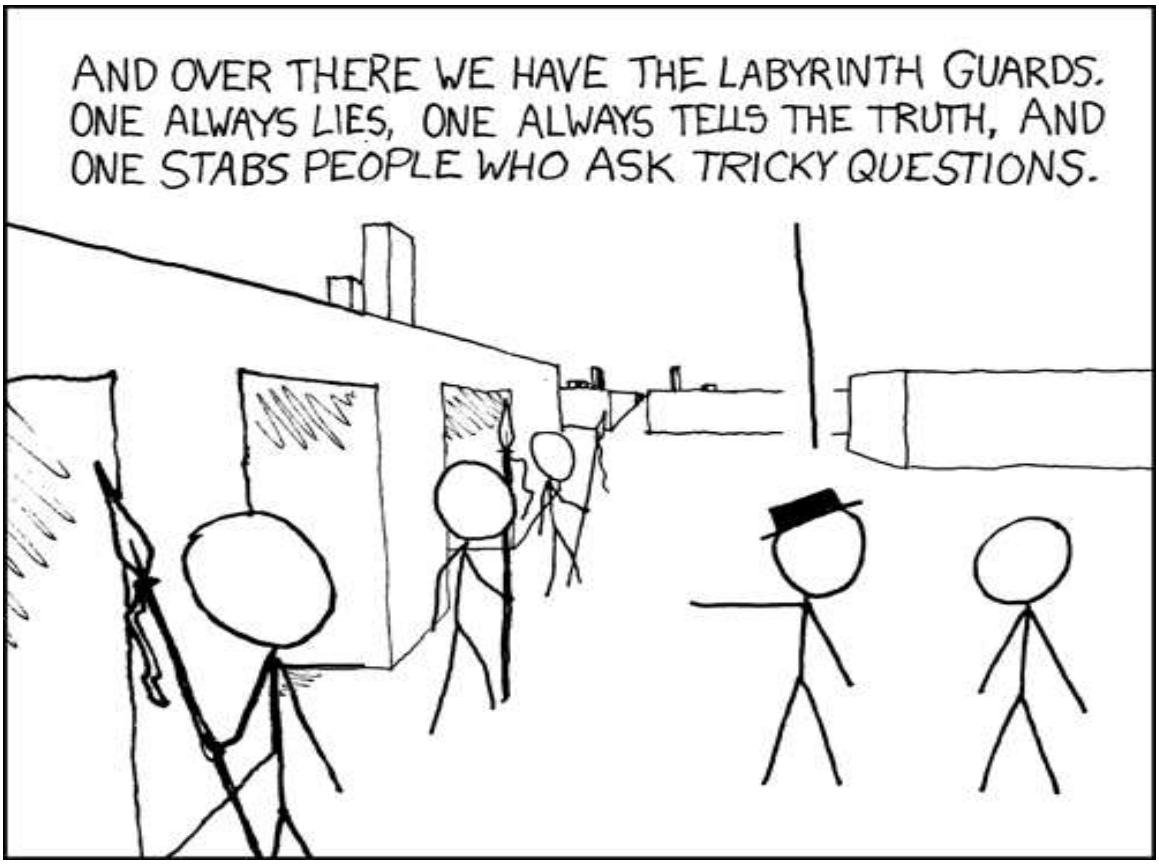
Logic is a pretty Zen experience then. We *must not* allow ourselves to be overly influenced by either emotional passion or intellectual passion. We *must* allow ourselves to be *open* to all influences and yet *disciplined* to eliminate those which are redundant, extraneous, erroneous or false.

Still, it is not a cold and passionless discipline. Understanding, enlightenment, peace, or whatever you want to call it should be the result of our search. Calm rational discussion, based in specific rules and methods will eventually produce for us a system of operating from which we will tackle the world. Philosophical pursuits only have validity if applied in the real world, the day-to-day workshop of life, not just for ourselves but for everyone and should always involve kindness.

If philosophy insulates us from life then we have failed in our attempt make sense of the world and have fallen into the reality fallacy: what we think is real actually is not, kind of like 'Reality TV'.

Post Discernment Exercises:

1. When asked about a particular point within a candidate's speech all a commentator had to say was "I don't think he really had anything to say." Discuss.
2. The Bible says: "There is no God." The Bible is literally true. Therefore, there is no God. Discuss.



From Xcdr (A webcomic of romance, sarcasm, math, and language)

Decisions, Decisions

In this episode, we want to delve deeper into the basic facts and influences on our thinking, and at the same time add yet another definition. We have to understand what clouds, controls, influences, and enhances our thinking. Logic gives us the basis for proving or disproving truths. We can see how faulty logic or hubris can influence the ongoing argument but what are some of the truths from which our system will ultimately operate? That is, what we might consider whenever we approach a subject. In what can only be called audacious, let me state that this basic founding principle is often called the *Prime Cause* or the *Prime Mover* or the First Principles, that is, the one thing which gets the whole ball rolling. This overlaps but should not be confused with Aristotle's idea of 'first principles', which are basic ideas without being *the* basic idea which is not really shared by some of the later thinkers – well, do not worry, we will cover that later (as we will examine ideas like *cause* and *movement*).

For now, remember that this is often a premise or thesis which should at a minimum meet the two rules we mentioned earlier from Herr Leibniz:

- *Identity of Indiscernibles* (reduction renders the two indiscernible from one another)
- *Sufficient Reason* (no logical argument exists against it at this time)

So when we begin to look at this Prime Mover idea, we are trying to come up with the primal cause of all things, the agreed upon singularity or truth from which we can begin to establish other truths.

Time To Focus

Usually, when we examine something, we are fixed within a space and time frame. That is, we reason it out, not from its very foundational cause, but usually within the time and space frame in which it happened/happens/will happen (*I wonder what I will have for lunch*). We do this not from its very source, that is, its primary cause or as we might say, the '*PRIME' Prime Mover*, position (*I only have peanut butter and jelly, so I cannot have a steak*).

This is mostly because we are trying to solve or understand the problem right before us. Our needs are very immediate, or seem limited to the immediate. How though, do we know we are even on the right path when we begin our investigation?

For us, in order to fully explore our own thinking, we need to establish base camp truths from which we can feel confident in our explorations. To put it simply (and trust me on this one) at this time, this primary cause is our Prime Mover.

In our discovery we want to avoid the chicken-and-the-egg problem, or the always-half-way-there problem of never knowing where to start (or to stop). So we can reason that there must be a place where truth starts. We will 'postulate' (assume or take something for granted based on sufficient reasoning, i.e. our two principles above) a beginning.

Cause and *Effect* are two portions of the argument. Most often we observe an effect and we postulate or premise a cause. A ball rolls by on a billiards table, followed by the cue ball. What caused it? Was there a cause? What cause operated on which ball? On both? We know from experience of the rules of pool that it usually means that someone with a cue stick hit the cue ball into the other ball causing both to roll past our field of vision, but is that true? If we did not see the initial cause it is mere speculation on our part as to what that cause was. Perhaps someone just grabbed one of the balls and rolled it into the other; perhaps the white ball was hit by the other and not the other way around, etc., etc.

Yet, even though we observe effects and causes after the fact, we naturally apply cause and effect as a normal mental operating environment. For that reason, we will begin to take on two of the more common postulates. Hmmm. Sounds suspiciously like a segue.

But First, A Detour: A Priori and *A Posteriori*

Of course, as you may increasingly be beginning to understand, you just cannot begin there. There are always more terms which must be utilized so that we can say that we are all on the same page. Two concepts we need to explore now are the idea of *a priori* (from before) and *a posteriori* (from afterwards) which I have already bantered about in less formal terms.

A priori: This is kind of what we are thinking of when we talk about deductive reasoning; it is sequential as in one thing depends on the thing before it. In this thinking, we take the things from *before* (our premises) and come to a conclusion. A priori, it can be postulated, is done mainly without or at least does not depend upon experiential knowledge or more precisely perhaps, independent of experience, really working from the obvious (2+2=4).

A posteriori: This is what we think of when we doing more analytic reasoning; we take the things from *after* (our experiences, the *effects*) and come to a conclusion. Posteriori is really based on experience, sometimes the unquantifiable (men grow beards).

Ultimately, and for our needs (as there are/will be other uses of these terms and the fact that I forgot what I was about to write), these are the terms for understanding how we might arrive at a premise. Some things just *are*, independent of our thoughts and experience and other things *are* because experience (or experimentation) has shown it to be so.

Another way to look at these might be by using the terms themselves. Prior means *before* so think of a priori as 'before the conclusion' that is we are moving toward an unknown conclusion through deductive argument. Posterior means (well aside from that) *after*, so we can see a posteriori as moving back from the conclusion. A priori: think science experiment; a posteriori: think crime investigation.

Sooooo, when we look at an idea, we have to evaluate its a priori or a posteriori nature. There is no value judgment per se, as to which is more better. What judgment we have to exercise is whether the argument has merit, as we have discussed before.

Exercise: *The statements "The Earth revolves around the Sun" and "The Sun revolves around the Earth" can both be considered 'true'. How? What kind of thinking (a priori or a posteriori) is involved?*

In the end, all that out-of-the-way ruminating will help us to look at two of the possible *Prime Movers*.

Postulating 'God' as the *Prime Mover*

The really great thing about God is that you can throw Him in at the end of any argument when you reach the boundary of truths reachable within that system (kind of like that old joke of adding *in my bed* to the end of any fortune cookie fortune).

There is the argument (St. Anselm's, actually 11th century, but more on him later) that states that God is *that thing which we can conceive of which nothing greater can be conceived*…that is, try to think about the greatest thing you can think of in the universe and whatever that is, for which you can think of nothing greater (simply because it is the greatest), well, that is God. This is not a definition of God, nor is the word 'God' the definition for this thing, but it is the word that we often use for such a concept.

This begs the question then, because we have conceived it, does that make it so? Is there such a being, just because we can conceive it (think unicorns)? So we have a *definition* of what could be construed as God, but no *proof*. Now we begin to argue about the conception versus the objection or 'thought' versus 'reality'. Very soon after that our heads explode.

Blaise Pascal (17th cent, *Chapter 38*), known to many due to the computer language named for him, posited a square of oppositions or truth table if you will where he basically used the following four 'truths':

1. God exists
2. God does not exist
3. I believe in God
4. I don't believe in God

and sub to these:

a) Heaven and Hell exist
b) Heaven and Hell do not exist

From these four 'premises' of sorts he (basically) worked out that (although there is more to this, and I'm doing this all from memory):

A. If God exists and I believe in him (and heaven exists) then 'whoo hoo'! ☺
B. If God exists, and I don't believe in him (and hell exists) then 'oops', ☹.
C. If God does not exist and I don't believe in him, nothing happens, 😐.
D. If God does not exist and I believe in him then nothing happens, 😐.

List 8: Pascal's Proof For God

So one has to ask oneself what is the worst outcome if I do believe and what is the worst outcome if I do not believe. Pascal would say 'two out of three ain't bad', so you might as well believe.

The 'strength' of this PM is that the design of the universe is logically and soundly based in an immutable external.

The 'weakness' of God as PM is the 'improvability' of God.

Postulating Physics as the *Prime Mover*

The really great thing about Physics is that you can throw in speculations based on experiential observation and call it plausible when you reach the boundary of truths reachable within that system.

Modern thought (~17th century and on) often relegates the God PM to the outer fringe, starting off the whole business but TDY or dismisses the idea as unobservable and therefore not valid as a premise or truth. This comes from the argument that any 'proof' (think not only 'provable' but also the 'mathematical proof') of God is no proof at all. Rationalism and Empiricism view the world as knowable within itself and apart from any mystical or external cause. This post-medieval thinking champions the sensible/rational human being origin of knowledge over a

Throughout philosophical history, there are many advocates of the 'no god' school, like Epicurus (3rd cent BCE) who saw the only viable world as the here and now and Nietzsche (19th cent CE) whose point was less that there was no God but more that if there was we had long since supplanted him/her/it. His famous quote of "God is dead." is actually larger *God is dead, and we have killed him. Now who will clean up the blood?* (or something in German to that effect)[9].

[9] "Where has God gone?" he cried. "I shall tell you. We have killed him - you and I. We are his murderers…Do we not hear anything yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we not smell anything yet of God's decomposition? Gods too decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How

Nietzsche really pushed into the psychological realm looking more to the achievements of man through science, obviously exclusive of any repressive religious or godly influence. We can look at Kant, Sartre and even Sagan among others, arising from the intellectual revolution which questioned the nature and source of intelligence. The universe seems like an unlikely but well tuned machine which runs by immutable rules.

The 'strength' of this PM is that it relies on the observable world and does not rely on any miracles or mystical universals to explain any phenomena.

The 'weakness' of Physics as PM is the *a posteriori* nature of the scientific method (as per our billiards example earlier).

Final Answer?

Actually, neither mover precludes the other. If God, God could control all of the forces within himself or could have created them, to act independently of him yet completely within the confines of his created forces; if physics, by the earlier statements, their independence from anything could be complete, but they may have been designed by their creator to be in and of themselves. Nothing solved, eh?

Making the Decision

So what we are really exploring is the beginnings of philosophy. What are the questions which spur philosophical endeavors? Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? What is the meaning of life? What does all this have to do with the price of tea in China (a lot apparently).

The first thing we must remember at this point is that the search is for *understanding*, not just *knowledge*. Knowledge without understanding enhances our view of the world but really does not lead us to critical thinking about that knowledge and how it should be applied. Still without knowledge, in all of its forms, our wisdom would be lacking.

What means of argument can help us come up with the Prime Mover? There is no limit to the number, but we have to do some leg work. Anselm uses a *reductio ad absurdum* (reduced to the absurd) argument which means he switches the argument around (takes its opposite) until he reaches an absurd conclusion, thereby 'proving' because the opposite is ridiculous or self-contradictory. Think of it like 'water is wet'; how does one prove this? Well let's take the opposite: water is not wet, therefore it is dry, but dry is the absence of water so how could water not be wet? Or something to that effect.

Others, would argue *epistemologically*, from the point of 'what can we know?' This tact relies heavily upon our senses and our perceptions, which may or may not be faulty and therefore to what level can we depend upon them? However we approach the problem, the quandary of beginnings is one of the toughest in all of philosophy.

Putting It Together

When we begin to ask the *cause and effect* questions and we discuss such notions as 'god' or 'physics' what kind of knowledge are we discussing? Many might pooh-pooh one or the other

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shall we, murderers of all murderers, console ourselves? That which was the holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet possessed has bled to death under our knives. Who will wipe this blood off us? With what water could we purify ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we need to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we not ourselves become gods simply to be worthy of it? " *(The Gay Science)* To be exact.

because of what they consider it *a posteriori* knowledge (science *or* faith), but are there any *a priori* arguments which might overcome these conjectures?

Think back to the billiard ball example. Understanding the prime mover is important for answering some of the questions, but not necessary for all the questions which might arise from the situation. For instance we know, *a posteriori*, that an object will remain at rest until acted upon by a greater force and that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. So some of the events taking place on the table are explained or have their arguments taken care of, that is, we do not have to argue them within the framework of the event. Still we may be able to backtrack, using them in seeking out the prime mover. Then again they may lead us down a winding and rocky path to nowhere.

So, two things: we do not always need to know the prime mover or first cause to discuss something and we may not be able to determine the prime mover from our discussions.

Man: I came here for a good argument!
Mr. Vibrating: No you didn't, you came for an argument.
Man: Well, an argument's not the same as contradiction.
Mr. Vibrating: It can be.
Man: No it can't. An argument is a connected series of statements to establish a definite proposition.
Mr. Vibrating: No it isn't.
Man: Yes it is. It isn't just contradiction.
Mr. Vibrating: Look, if I argue with you I must take up a contrary position.

The Name Game

Where do we go now? After our last chapter, and as what would seem to be beating a dead horse, I have decided to include one more discussion of 'thinking'. So far, in an effort to shift our way of thinking toward better understanding, we have looked at what philosophy is, what its tools are, how to go about 'thinking', what are some good habits to develop, what are some faults to avoid and even how to think about a possible place to start. Let us take some time to look at places to stop.

When we begin to look at the 'big picture' as we did last chapter, we begin to see the limits of systems and argumentation. But it does not mean that we do not seek ways to discuss these difficult topics. After all we are seeking wisdom and there are difficult questions which must be asked, some of which we may not be able to answer within our present framework, but will open up after consideration of other systems.

The limitations and boundaries of discussion have been the focus of previous examinations of the subject. As the author of this work, let me just say I am not really sure where this is going but that has never stopped me before. Hopefully by the end we can all make some sense of it.

Semantics

The 'final' (at least in this conversation) roadblock to understanding is ironically the road itself. While symbolic logic hopes to accomplish logical communication through the use of only symbols (hence the symbolic part), thereby reducing any confusion there may be by eliminating language, it may be considered a bit 'cold' or un-nuanced. It also could be considered, depending upon how you define 'language', merely another 'language' among the myriad ways of human communication.

Language is the most complex of human characteristics and developments. One moment, it is a shared meaning, i.e. a word is attached to a concept by which we communicate the same idea to another, no matter what the language being used ('hat' or 'chapeau'). The next it is a confusion of meaning, i.e. the concept behind the word evokes different meanings ('love'). And furthermore, it might contain several meanings evoked by the user, all, some or none of which might be available to the hearer. But I ramble.

Often in philosophy, in order to be unmistaken about a concept, a word from the writers' native language will be used, for example *zeitgeist*[10]. Like so many words in English, that word becomes an entity unto itself, holding a different meaning than just the plain word or words from which the 'term' is derived.

Since words are the main means of the communication of ideas, we must also be prepared to learn to keep words within their context, that is, a word used in Greek times may be re-used in Medieval times and then again later, but with different 'meaning' each time; we need to keep the meanings separate and within their time context. This may also be true between methods and systems of the same time/thought period.

Sometimes the thing itself drives the meaning, for instance, as from above, 'hat' or 'chapeau'; either word works for that thing which you set on your head. Often though, it is the word which drives the meaning, for instance, as from above, 'love'. English uses the word 'love' for many things, to cover many concepts and it is the context alone which gives the meaning, whereas the Greeks use

[10] *Spirit of the time*.

five different terms, *eros*, *agape*, *philia* (the three main ones), *storge* and *thelema* with each one carrying its specific meaning, that is, having no need for context.

All worthy of discussion but I think you get the idea so I will finally abandon that now and move on. We do not want to get bogged down here, as semantics can be a branch of study all on its own – and that is another chapter. Suffice it to say that verbal context is another factor to keep in mind when approaching systems or methods. Put it also in the context of biases; some words may just get your hackles up unless you can keep them compartmentalized in their proper place.

The Branches of the Philosophical Tree

There are several 'flavors' of philosophy, each fixing on some of the great questions of the world (and many conveniently laid out by Aristotle – therefore easily recognized, like fallacies, because they are in Greek) such as:

- **Epistemology – the mind:** How do we know? What do we know?
- **Ontology – the soul or being:** What are we? Why are we?
- **Aesthetics – the senses:** What is beauty? What is art?
- **Hermeneutics – the mouth (communication):** How do we understand written texts? How should they be interpreted?
- **Theology – the Other:** What/who is God? What is the relationship between God and humans?
- **Ethics – praxis (putting thought into actions):** How should we live? How do we live together?

List 9: The Disciplines of Philosophy

The Flowering of Philosophical Thought

Each of these branches can involve one or all of the other branches. For example there is a parallel of philosophy and theology, and at times one has seen as the 'handmaid' of the other, but that is another chapter. When we look at each of these we see a basic avenue of thought. Why do humans think? What is thinking? Am I something special or just a figment of mine or someone else's imagination? Why do I care about things that most creatures do not? Why can we speak? Does it matter how I act?

If we want to put a name on the flower, it might be how the Greeks thought of wisdom, as understanding truth, and from truth meaning and action.

Putting It Together

And the list goes on. Think of these like disciplines in other fields. Into this mix could also go sciences and maths, but as they are snobby we have to talk about the 'philosophy of mathematics' or the 'philosophy of science' (not 'mathology' or 'scientology' – hmmmm – or something like that).

Now this is a different categorization than philosophical methods such as Scholasticism or Existentialism, the sort of things we will get to later. These are logical discussions about themes and most systems will attempt to incorporate most into themselves; after all the system is trying to answer all of these questions. By specializing, these focus logical argument within the confines of an idea. They can also include discussions which have no real place in a system, and are just ends in themselves, the 'mechanics' of speech.

These disciplines can help to give us consistent language within an idea which may be incorporated or utilized within a system or method, as well as a place to refer to, a well pre-thought

out series of truths on which we can rely, keeping most systems from wandering too far or reaching a dead-end.

Think about it this way, if you were to define a system, where would you start? How long could you discuss before wandering? Having these areas of pre-defined discussion can be an aid in our own journeys into understanding.

"Let me give you a warning…If you go to Paris, France: 'chapeau' means 'hat'; 'oeuf' means 'egg'... it's like those French have a different word for everything!" ***Steve Martin***

We Have A History

Okay. So it seems that nowadays no one can agree on a basic principle or even what language to use or how to approach a problem or question. Still, we might, through the means of looking at philosophical systems over time, be able to find a few basic principles and terms.

The History of Philosophy

In one of the greatest simplifications of this over-simplified discussion, we can probably make a generalization that there are two branches of philosophical thought: Dynamic and Static or as they are often designated 'Western' and 'Eastern'. As an aside I thought it odd as I began my studies that it was east and west not north and south or east and north or…well you get the picture. As a complete aside one might argue that it is because the sun moves in an east/west motion and therefore all of thought is tied to this simple action of rotation.

Getting aside from the aside:

East vs. West

Well perhaps it is not so aside, because when we speak of Eastern versus Western thought we must be aware of the direction the sun moves in the sky. In a further example of previous discussion about understanding in context, earlier thinkers spoke of the whole world in terms of that path. "From East to West" meant everywhere. Okay, digression done, really. Where we geographically draw the philosophical line for East/West is about as arbitrary as the one we use for maritime purposes. So why do it? It might seem odd, if all people are people, that there might be the possibility of differences in approach to thinking dependent upon geography. Oddly enough then, there may be a subtle difference to be stated here.

(*Warning: author influenced attempts at explanation to follow, which even my mother may disagree with even though she loves me*)

It might be safe to say that even though 'Western' thought developed from Greek thought, Greek thought is 'Eastern' in nature. That said, while there may be a difference in approach, all basic philosophical thoughts are all 'Eastern' in basis, which is to restate that people are people, no matter where they live. They just develop different ideas of what is important and what is not and these differences are often culturally based.

At the risk of seeming trite or of reducing all of human thought to a couple of catch-phrases, let me put forth that Eastern thought tends to seek 'enough' of an answer – at the risk of leaving some things 'unanswered' (*mysterion*), hence its more 'static' nature, whereas Western thought tends to want the final answer, splitting hairs to leave no stone unturned, producing a more dynamic nature in thought.

Think of it like 'liberal' and 'conservative' in their broadest of meanings. Conservatives, seeking to conserve, present a very static system; liberals, seeking to broaden, present a very dynamic system. People's tendency toward one system or another is dependent on many factors, including place and time. More on that later.

Either way, each system has strengths and weaknesses. The East can make grand pronouncements leaving you thinking 'yeah, but what does that *mean*?'; the West can beat a horse to death, leaving you thinking 'okay, but where is the answer?' As an example, the words *catholic* as in Roman Catholic and *orthodox*, as in Greek Orthodox reflect these two positions, and as such can be seen within their respective theologies.

Geographically

Philosophies are sometimes associated with a specific geography or country, and as such are often labeled 'Greek' or 'Chinese' or 'German'. This is usually because philosophies can often be culturally related. Socrates and Plato are directly related not only to each other but to the Sophists before them (incidentally they are grouped together because all we know of Socrates comes through the writings of Plato, but that is another chapter). Aristotle depends directly upon them. Hence there is a Greek 'school' of philosophy, though the systems are not necessarily congruent in time or thought.

Chronographically

Philosophies are also associated with specific times, such as 'The Enlightenment', grouping several philosophers or systems together by time frame. Often, the systems grouped this way are more congruent because the authors are building on similar ideas within a similar framework, even though they are spread out over different systems.

Philosophically

Philosophies are most often grouped by system, 'Pragmatism' or 'Existentialism'. These systems are related by an idea or grounding, and are usually different approaches to the same situations. Some seem quite similar, others not as much; some are associated with only a few philosophers, others with many. An example would be Empiricism or Rationalism, which gives you an idea of the nature of the thinker even though they may be spread out over time.

Our journey is now at the gate. How to proceed? We can step down a philosophical time-line or we could wander through history looking at specific ideas throughout time. We can examine the development of ideas through time or we can seek to understand the time and therefore what gives rise to thoughts. We can approach the different philosophical branches in and of themselves or seek to understand them within different times. It is pretty open from here.

I think for our purposes, at least for now, we can start by looking at the idea of philosophical thought through time.

Pre-History

Think back to our original discussion of the meaning of philosophy: the love or search for understanding. Human communication takes many forms, many of which are non-verbal. We can look at cave paintings or material artifacts[11] and get an idea of what people are/were thinking. We look at burial practices, religious or cultural buildings, listen to oral stories handed down, observe tribal behavior untainted by modern society or thinking and we will hear what is important to people.

Most often during this period, what we see is theo-philosophy (*my term*); that is, not quite theology but systems heavily based in a theological view. Nature religions, death cults, poly-theism, ancestor worship; these represent a fair number of the philosophies of what we might call pre-history. The codification and writing down of these theo-philosophies meant that many lasted centuries (think Greek, Zoroastrian and Egyptian mythologies).

Where am I going? Keep thinking back to our early discussions; knowledge and understanding go hand in hand. The more knowledge you have, the deeper your understanding can be and vice versa.

[11] This would be such things as pottery, weapons, housing, or art.

Still, knowledge and truth are not mutually exclusive. Does the fact that the sun does not go around the earth (factually) affect other 'truths'? Yes and no. Can truths be gleaned from seeming non-facts? Yes. Looking at myths (even the Judeo-Christian ones) shows a vast amount of understanding especially of human nature. Are these 'myths' factual? Yes, inasmuch as they reveal 'truths' about ourselves to us (c.f. M. Eliades or J. Campbell for good discussions in this realm).

We have always and will always seek meaning and understanding. Even as our scientific knowledge grows we still must make facts fit into our understanding. Einstein shifted the way we look at time, yet the Greeks already had a concept of time which was relative (*Kiaros* versus *Chronos*).

Where am I going with all of this? First we must not think of philosophy as a 'modern' invention. People have always sought understanding and systems have developed, usually what we call religions or sacred rituals, myths and thoughts. The validity of these myths or religions lies not in their 'scientific' or 'factual'[12] nature but in their 'true' insights and archetypes. As we discussed earlier (well at least I did), many understandings and 'truths' can be lost by invalidating systems based on hubris and bias, and this time in human development and history should not be discounted, even though the 'factual' nature of the observations may be suspect to our modern ears. As a final judgment call, we can categorize most philosophical 'thought' of this period is *a posteriori* or experiential in nature.

History

This would be our 'recorded' time. We have snippets of writings starting in this period and continuing until today. What would be the difference between pre-history and history? Nothing really, except that we have datable, serial understanding and a greater practical knowledge of the workings of the universe which a) causes us to re-evaluate and b) gives us deeper understanding. Again, though, this is not better or worse. Truth comes to us through both a priori and a posteriori means. Perhaps then the main difference is the systemization of philosophical thought, aside from and somewhat independent of the a posteriori nature of the earlier period. Here we develop logic and other a priori methods of coming to knowledge and understanding.

Philosophy becomes detached from survival concerns (why doesn't it rain?), becoming more humanistic (why do I?).

There are arguments about all periods of time, calling some 'dark' or 'backwards' and others 'enlightened' or 'golden'. What we have to keep in mind here is that just like the pre-history at all times people seek meaning, and that at all times people find meaning. We must avoid the hubris of knowledge and see progress in terms of the effectiveness (efficacious nature) of thought in people's lives. We must also not judge based on our present sensibilities, biases or knowledge.

Putting It Together

The first thing we will notice is that some questions are eternal. They have always been asked and they will always be asked: Why are we here? What makes something beautiful? What makes us human?

We need to evaluate each idea or system within its own framework, but mainly within the body of established 'truth', not by some unrelated standard. We are striving to develop objective criteria for critical thinking. This is not promoting a face-value, non-critical evaluation but the exact opposite. As we plow through writers and writings, we must listen, as we might to a myth or allegorical story, for the 'truth' within it, as well as the fallacies which hinder the truths. Through this

[12] At least not how we define science and fact today.

we can build a broad and deep understanding of ourselves and our world. [What motivates? What captivates?]

Here you are trying to learn something, while here your brain is doing you a favor by making sure the learning doesn't stick. Your brain's thinking, "Better leave room for more important things, like which wild animals to avoid and whether naked snowboarding is a bad idea."

Head First Servlets and JSP™ Second Edition by Bryan Basham, Kathy Sierra, and Bert Bates, 2008

Philosophical Journeys

So now where do we go? We have established the rules, traveled through thinking, rummaged about the attic of philosophy run down the steps to the basement of meaning and finally examined the first floor of a very basic basis of human understanding. Where else but the back yard?

You know that place where you can lounge safely, often behind the boundary of a fence and the comfort of a hammock.

The Roots of Philosophy

When humans looked out and tried to live in their world, they came up against a broad range of obstacles: Nature, limitations of the human body, cruelty, death. Life could seem very arbitrary. If the rain came, you were fine. If the rain did not come you were in a world of hurt, so to speak. Slowly the cycles of nature became apparent, but still arbitrary events happened, earthquakes, floods, sunshine, crops, death. Stories developed to pass on the knowledge of the seasons, of the dangers of life, and of life lessons.

These stories often took the form of myths. The telling of a myth involves the exchange of an idea in a teaching format. Like Aesop's fables there is always a moral at the end in a form which can be understood, and reached 'logically' by the individual.

The search to explain and to transmit that explanation is at the root of the human experience. Without such thinking and transmittal we would not have made it very far.

When we begin to have a good operations manual, we begin to branch out beyond just the basic, what shall I eat, what shall I wear, where will I sleep existence. The questions of life, death, birth, illness, love, happiness, fear begin to rise up in our minds beyond the level of physical survival to that of mental survival.

The Philosophy of Roots

Tracing philosophy can be a bit like tracing your genealogy. There are gaps, solid evidence, hints, wrong paths, exhilaration and frustration. You have to move from what you know to what you do not yet know. You may even have to abandon long-held ideas about something in order to move in the right direction.

If you were to examine your 'personal philosophy' at this moment, how would you identify the roots of that philosophy? Could you? Experience would be your most likely answer, but how about family? Country? Region? Era?

The ultimate root of philosophy is human experience and the ultimate foundation of human experience comes from the shared experience of humanity. One might say that philosophy is in our very soul. It is passed from generation to generation, tinged by the time and situations through which it passes. Are times good? Are times bad? Are the ills human caused or natural disasters? What effect does each generation have on an idea? What nudges or changes of direction are part of the propulsion of an idea?

In the end, ideas survive because they have merit outside of the slice of time in which we consider them.

Are We There Yet?

Still, the journey into philosophical thought is a life-long one. Our experiences are important but without a framework or a language in which to exchange them with others, how can we make sense of them? For this reason we have not discussed specific philosophers yet. We are not ready to get on the road until we pack the car correctly, and pick up a good map.

But just like having a map does not show you where you are and what you will see, so the map we have created so far is only good once we get on the road, headed for the place we have not yet arrived. Like I tell my kids when they ask the age old question: *Have we stopped yet? We only stop when we get there, so we must not be there yet*.

There exists for each generation the chance to re-invent the wheel. Fresh mistakes and discoveries are always possible, but we know that *we stand on the shoulders of giants* and *those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it*. Our problem will be that there is often more to the issue than our glancing blow can reveal. So in a sense even this foray will not get us there, merely on our way.

So Just Where Are We Going?

Okay. I have spouted off enough about the ways of the world and the obvious shortcomings of this work and its author. What does that have to do with why we have gathered these thoughts together here in this volume? Think of it as a vague map. We have yet to lay out a detailed route, similar to maps made in the 1400's versus maps made by AAA. In a way the first thing we have to do is begin shedding some of that baggage we packed. And we have to be willing to get lost, mess up the directions, and misread the map. Sometimes we will go to the same place over and over again. Thought will rise to a high level only to be challenged or torn down at a later time. Ideas which seemed insignificant at one time will rise up to the forefront of thought.

We are on a journey of personal discovery, but like all things, we are not alone on that journey. Just as AAA has done some of the leg work for us and can even tailor our map to our particular journey, so this time together will hopefully do the same. With an awareness of the high-level nature of the discussion and the survey nature of the information we can wander off the beaten path, stop where we want to stop and see things the map can never tell us. Where we choose to spend our time along the way is not dictated by the map.

Putting It Together

The commitment to philosophical learning is not a short-term one. Part of that commitment is the abandoning of pre-conceived notions and ideas, as well as pre-dispositions to current prejudices and understandings. We are not so much seeking to examine things from our modern point of view but to understand them within two contexts: their own time, where sensibilities and correctness may not agree with us and secondly within the overall human condition.

Granted this survey will not give us all the answers but hopefully it will whet our appetites and give us cause to delve deeper and come to understandings which will guide us. The souvenirs which we pick up along the way will always remind us where we have been and stand as the foundation for where we are going.

Philosophy World

The title here is not to imply that we will now journey through thoughts about how the world should operate. Instead it is more along the lines of our movement into the world of philosophy. Think of it more as a browsing in the philosophy department store, with departments like Western Philosophy and Eastern Philosophy and Logic (first floor).

Thinking about Thinking

I don't know. Perhaps we should examine that one little blurb from the Chapter 6 where I brought up the development of thought. Philosophers rarely cling to one system throughout their lives. Circumstances and events combine to create *a posteriori* experiences which hone *a priori* discussions. Still within that development it is rarely a radical 180 degree shift but often a more subtle one. Socrates may have started out as a soldier, a Pythagorean or a Sophist, but he reacted against those teachings, yet not radically. Granted he was poisoned for upsetting the political balance (corrupting the youth of Athens, to state the exact charges – that is another class), but he, or at least Plato, was not radical in his discussion. For Socrates, the answers lay within us already. We have knowledge, as shown by the things we do (politics, art, society, religion) which guides us. Right, wrong, good, bad, table, chair – we *know* these things innately, even if we do not *understand* them. How else could we even begin to discuss them?

The philosopher seeks to peel away the layers to seize the heart of the thing. The knowledge of who we are, how we think, what our strengths and weakness are – these are the things which direct us. Still, our understanding is imperfect and develops. We should be well aware of this and be able to adjust as we make new discoveries. These discoveries are never in vain, even if they are replaced, for without them who knows if we should ever have arrived where we are now. (Take a moment and think about what is the most important thing to you; Logic? Morality? Order? Causality?; what about 10 years ago?)

Finally, we do not go into philosophy with the intention of creating a system. If that is our discovery then so be it, but let us take a journey not head for a destination.

Western Philosophy at a Glance

We will also study our Eastern philosophical heritage, but as they say *write what you know*, or in our case, start with what you know. Here are a couple of on-line timelines which may or may not be helpful. If you find more in your searches please share. I thought this one was quite nice, interactive with some basic overall views though at times a bit speculative: http://www.wadsworth.com/philosophy_d/special_features/timeline/ptimeline.html (from part of a larger philo-historical timeline). This one was a nice quick reference, including some minor events for perspective but including the whole in one view: http://www.rit.edu/cla/philosophy/Timeline.html. And finally one not as easy to read but very full: http://www.hyperhistory.com/online_n2/History_n2/a.html

I'm sure that there are many others out there. I have included a broader philo-historical reference in *Appendix B* but the following quick reference is (as stated) biased toward western philosophy. Its categories are also perhaps a bit precocious, my being certain that Xenophanes would not prefer to be lumped together with Thales much less be known as a 'pre-Socratic', but we, with our hubris of history (and them being dead) can lump them any way we want.

Western Philosophy Quick Reference

Philosophers	Time	Main concerns
The `Pre-Socratics'	to 469 BC/BCE	How is the world ordered? How is change possible? What is everything made of?
Socrates	469-399 BCE	How should one live? Living and knowledge go together. The world is based on objective Forms.
Plato	427-347 BCE	Expanded on Socrates. What is knowledge and how is it possible? What is the relationship between mathematical (rational) objects and everyday (sensual) objects? Is the world as it appears to be? How should we act within it?
Aristotle	384-322 BCE	You name it – and pretty much he did.
Early Christians (Apologists)	100-500 AD/CE	What is the nature of God and Humanity? How does God want people to live? What is the nature of the divine order? How can we make God understandable in light of secular (non-Christian – usually Platonic) thought?
Medieval philosophers	500-1200 CE	How can God and his properties be made logically comprehensible? What is the relationship between faith and reason?
Thomas Aquinas, Scholasticism and the Catholic doctors	1250-1500 CE	Resurgence of Ancient texts. How can Aristotle's philosophy be reconciled with Christian doctrine?
Early Modern/pre-Newtonians	1530-1716 CE	The 'Death' of Scholasticism. How can knowledge be built on new foundations (other than God) that will guarantee truth? What is the relationship between reason and material causation?
Post-Newtonians	1716-1804 CE	What is the relationship between the scientific (Newtonian) picture of the world and the common sense picture?
19th century Moralists / Existentialists	1800-1910 CE	What is the place of humanity and its moral concerns in the wider intellectual landscape, and in the modern State? We know we are the dominant beast but why can't we just get along?
Analytic philosophers	1910-1960 CE	Can all non-scientific problems be dissolved by examining logic and/or language?
Contemporary philosophers	since 1960 CE	What is the relationship between the scientific (post-Newtonian) picture of the world and the everyday (moral, social, religious) picture? What is social justice and how can it be increased in the contemporary state? What is the philosophy of everything?

Table 4: Western Philosophical Systems

Development of Philosophies

From our previous discussion the tack we will navigate will be, as the name implies, a back and forth through history, examining the beginnings of philosophies in terms of historical placement. When we examine early philosophy, we must keep in mind their theo-philosophical nature. Often knowledge, wisdom and faith are tied together. This is true of many philosophies throughout time

but at this time there is a struggle to step beyond mere anthropomorphism or pantheism to understand into a more humanistic view. Still, most see us as part of a whole, not separated from the whole as later humanism does but as within, part of the overall functioning of the universe.

The Players

Dates	Philosophers	Main Points
Ionians, Italians, Greeks, Orientals		
~625-547	Thales	*One thing, an underlying 'spirit' (anima - water) orders everything; the world is 'one'*
~610-545	Anaximander	*The underlying principle must be 'other' than the things which make it up found through reason*
~560-478	Xenophanes	*One god, a conscious universe; 'father' of epistemology*
~545-?	Anaximenes	*Air is the founding spirit.*
~540-480	Heraclitus	*Change; everything is transitory except the 'Logos'*
~581-507	Pythagoras	*Reincarnation. Numbers reveal the order of the universe.*
?	Lao Tse	*Balance, harmony yin-yang. The underlying principle is unfathomable yet not transcendent.*

Table 5: The Early Players

Early Thinking

We can take a moment here and point out some names. The ones you might easily recognize would be Heraclitus and Pythagoras from the West and Lao Tse from the East. We will touch on their thought later but take a moment and contemplate why you know their names (aside from why you do not know the others). Most of us know Pythagoras because of his theorem and prowess as a mathematician but not so much as a philosopher and Heraclitus because of his famous river metaphor, but not so much a natural scientist and his observations of the natural world which will play into later philosophies. What we know and what we think we know are not just two different things but may also be different than the reality.

So it is for our early philosophers. What is the nature of reality, of humans, of the world? Are all things one or are they separate? Are they different but connected? How do we come to know? Is the world a place of laws and predictability or is it completely random? Is what is in front of me real or what is in my head? These questions may seem obvious to us but they were not obvious at that time (and some may still be not obvious!). The early thinkers set about to understand their world and their place in it, so without discussion specific systems or philosophers let us examine some of these basic ideas.

Something Or Nothing

Is there something or nothing? Seems like a strange question to us but it was a hot topic back then. When I move my arm through the air is there something, some medium, some n which allows for that movement? If there is something would not that stop my arm from moving, like a wall in the way? Does nothing imply non-existence? If it does how could there be nothing in between the two point of my arm at rest?

You can begin to see the depth to which this simple question plumbs. We have insight that they did not have, about molecules and such. We know that technically there is something in the way but we are able to push it out of the way because air is not as solid as a wall. They begin to postulate

such things but they have no empirical proof. Common sense tells me that I can move my arm, and nothing stops it from happening. But the question is *why*?

Cause And Movement

Whether there is something or nothing, we still observe change. Heraclitus said that you never stand in the same river twice. He understood the linear nature of a river, and he extrapolated that to time as well. We can see how movement implies change. We see a boy become a man. We see the earth change with the seasons. All of this change implies movements of state, that is, change from one state to another, as well. Of course he also thought that everything is made of fire.[13]

The earlier thinkers pondered on the meaning and the mode of this. If I roll a ball down the bowling alley I observe its movement from point A to point B (and hopefully point B is not the gutter) and I see pins fall when the ball hits them. So I *know* that the ball hitting the pins *caused* them to fall. I *know* that me throwing the ball *caused* it to roll toward the pins. Basically one begins thinking about cause as a thing in itself. With light I can see, without light I cannot. Is the thing that changed destroyed? Does it remain with the object, but we just cannot see it?

Animal, Mineral Or Vegetable?

Where do humans fit into the universe? We are obviously different than starfish, but we have hair like dogs. Philosophers will make observations about what makes us *us*. In terms of the other two sections, this is the logical next step for us. No matter how the universe is constructed, we *think*. We are aware that we are our self.

Putting It Together

There is a broad playing field here in these early days. There is as much epistemological thinking as there is ethical systems, with a big interest in *why* and that falls under the heading of metaphysics. The two big names here are Heraclitus and Parmenides, and if we spent some time with them you would see why. At the least Plato thought they were the bee's knees.

These two basically laid out the ideas of determinism and libertarianism (not to be confused with the political party), meaning that everything is completely determined (past, present, and future) or free-will rules. These two forms of thinking can be found at the center of most systems.

Obviously the point here is that there comes a point where we no longer have to just worry about where our next meal is coming from and whether or not it will eat us first.

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[13] This really makes sense, trust me.

Western Philosophy

We have visited those crazy and kooky pre-Socratics, with their wild notions about the nature of things, so now we can move on to the slightly more sane mainstream philosophers. Let us set the scene. Picture Athens in its Golden Age; Thinkers are moving from theo-philosophy to philo-theology to philosophy. Art is moving from representation and symbol to realism and sign. Democracy is producing a powerful state as worthy of reckoning as much as the powerful military states. Smoke drifts across the field of view from some unseen brazier. The camera pans from a hard rocky terrain to a conquered hill of buildings and activity…wait, sorry, my latest screenplay file must have gotten mixed in here somehow.

Most of the folks in the list are heavily influenced (initially) by the Pythagoreans. Often, they began there but broke for some reason, usually after a meeting of some sort with another. Still they are developing new ideas which they are not afraid to share with one another, and in some cases with the next generation of thinkers.

I stuck Confucius here instead of above mainly through lack of conviction, and to contrast him with Mo Tzu.

The Players

Dates	Philosophers	Main Points
Greeks (Italians), Orientals		
551-479	Confucius	*Ethical living through ritual observances (political, religious and etiquette)*
515-450	Parminedes	*Step by step arguments – others rely on senses too much*
500-428	Anaxagoras	*Everything must be in everything else – 'seeds'; external causes; the 'Mind' (νους)*
490-430	Empedocles	*Both a priori and posteriori; 'opposite' principles*
490-420	Protagoras	*Sophism; relativism: truth is in the eye of the beholder*
490-430	Zeno of Elea	*Paradoxes; 'reduction ad absurdum'*
483-376	Gorgias	*Sophist – rhetoric; reality = appearance; knowledge = opinion*
470-391	Mo Tzu	*Self-reflection and authenticity rather than obedience to ritual*
? & ~460-?	Leucippus & Democritus	*Atomism; movement and nothingness*
470-399	Socrates	*Socratic Method – birthing ideas; 'Why?; unity of virtue*
428-348	Plato	*Student of Socrates; foundations of Western Philosophy*

Table 6: The 'Pre-Socratics'

Fate

This may seem a strange concept to introduce, but Fate, in Greek thought especially, plays a big role. At this time, Fate was not really a philosophical concept but a *religious* one. Still for the later more established thinkers, it does play into some of the philosophical thinking. So, more on this later.

Okay, before we go, one can think of Fate as the 'end of something', that is, examine it from a *teleological* point of view. Suffice it to say, these guys do not.

The Sophists

The Sophists were a school of thought and teaching which originated in Protagoras (do not confuse him with Pythagoras) but had many exponents, including Gorgias (mentioned by Plato in a dialogue of the same name). The Sophists believed that there were always two sides to every argument. They taught an idea which we would call *relativism* – that is everything is relevant to its observer. Truth is *subjective* not *objective*. For Protagoras it is the art of persuasion which determines truth. Gorgias also put forth that the stronger argument basically trumped the weaker argument. That is to say, that he made his living from teaching rhetoric or oratory skills and so better argumentation made right.

Before we write this off, consider that in the Sophist's view, 'Man', or in an effort to avoid even the hint of an impropriety, Humanity, is the 'measure of all things' of what exists and does not exist. Because of this, things should seem the same to you as they do to me, by our shared humanity. I may just understand it better than you, so my job is to persuade you to greater understanding.

Protagoras also felt that even though one opinion was as good as another, people would do what is best (because of laws or social pressure), not just what they felt like doing.

In a final note here, Gorgas also taught that laughter was a great tool: "In contending with adversaries, destroy their seriousness with laughter." Good advice in any corner.

***PHILOSOPHICAL MOMENT*:** We end up with two questions here, which we somewhat cover above. First, if everyone's knowledge/opinions are the same who is right? And secondly, in terms of moral action, who is right? Ponder these for a moment.

The Others

In this section we will look at the non-sophists and their contributions to the whole of human thought. You can see from the table above that the list is beginning to grow. The number of people out plying the philosophical shingle is growing rapidly in response to the relative stability of the Greek empire. Leisure time is growing. A wealthier class is growing from the merchant community. No longer is thought and learning the playground of the original privileged class (royalty) but in Athens democracy gives political power to that wealth as well. An educated ruling class becomes the staple of the masses. At least the non-slave, land-holding masses.

People, no longer scrounging for their next meal, hang out in the agora or main plazas and listen to sages. These sages are transforming into teachers, and these teachers are teaching philosophy for a living.

Yet the persistent questions still persist.

Parmenides bears mentioning here as the guy who decided that a priori argumentation was the way to go. His treaty *On Nature: That Which Is* was a poem, of which only a fragment (original, not second-hand) exists. He also bore mentioning by Plato later in a dialog bearing his name, which helps to fix him on the shelf of philosophy giants. Anyway there are two paths; he tells us one, where we *comprehend** what we think to exists and the other (which, he says, is sheer nonsense), that you can *comprehend** something which does not exist. Think of it kind of like 'I think it therefore it is, because it is impossible to know something that is not.' What he does is distinguish between our reason and our senses. We can only know the things which are not changing.

I will mention Zeno (*of Elea*) here, because he is a disciple of Parmenides, who writes to defend his mentor's thoughts, but by doing so introduces a style of argumentation, '*reduction ad absurdum*', which we have mentioned before. He uses it to show the paradoxes within his mentor's detractors' arguments, as well as introducing paradoxes which confound to this day.

Empedocles, saw things somewhat differently. For him, both reason and senses were flawed, but together they did a pretty fair job of getting us through the day. For him, things are paired together for such purposes. One by itself would be insufficient to give us a clear understanding of things.

These opposites or pairs were complimentary. Our first Western Zen master. In an aside, he did postulate a theory of evolution where the best adapted is the ones who survive.

Next comes Anaxagoras, who was very curious and very *scientific* in his approach to things. Aside from his eventual banishment, he can be noted as looking at things and trying to understand how something can be at the same time 'of itself' (an apple) and 'of something else' (me, after I eat the apple). He also wonders in the same vein, things like how does a thing like hair (a thing in itself) come from me (a different thing). He understands (as Parmenides tells us) that nothing can be created or destroyed so that within everything is a share of everything else. We can see in this the idea of the atom which will develop. These 'seeds' as he calls them were separated by a force called the 'Mind'. We might think of this a God, but that was not what he saw, and it was probably what got him kicked out.

Finally let me throw in Leucippus and Democritus. Like Socrates, most of what we know of Leucippus comes from Democritus, though most of both their works is still fragmentary. Leucippus wrote that nothing is random but is necessity (our one sentence fragment). Democritus expounds a bit fortunately. There is something and there is nothing, but even nothing is something. Everything is made up of something which is ultimately indivisible (literally *a-tomos*) and that there is something in the nothing, we just cannot perceive it. They bounce off one another and into our senses. These 'atoms' are not controlled by a force or deity.

The Gist

Okay, let us take a second and talk about overall concepts which are developing in this period. Logic is on the rise and ground rules are being laid by Zeno and Parmenides. Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Empedocles and Democritus are defining the natural world in a way that we can almost understand. Parmenides tells us that there is something not nothing. Leucippus and Democritus say that there is nothing which is not nothing. The Sophists are telling us that most of life is an illusion which must be cleared up.

The thinkers in this period are classified in several ways. Since we are doing more of a historical look, the only ones I mention as a group are the Sophists because you hear that one a lot. But one of the other main thought-groups is the Pluralists who put forth that there is a plurality of things, that is, everything is not 'one' a concept which comes to us from earlier thought. The ability to 'separate' things, like movement from objects is laying the groundwork for a physics we recognize. Many of these fellows fall into this group.

Movement is of great concern to these guys. Odd as that may seem, they question back and forth whether it really exists or is a mere illusion. Remember, movement implies change. It gets to the core that niggles. Therefore substance and movement dominate many of these discussions. ***WARNING*: The Following Introduces Terms** Being able to distinguish between an object's '*substance*' (the things which make it up, make it what it is) and its '*accidents*' (its attributes) is really the heart of this.

What does this mean? No 'nothingness' means there can be no movement, because there is no space to move in. Nothingness means that there is space for movement, but that confuses how things come together and stay together (like people and ice cream). Both ideas call into question our senses and our reason. How we perceive and or know them bears heavily on their arguments for and against. Without getting into the specifics, they are really concentrating on what makes things up, what makes them distinguishable from one another and how do they operate together and finally how do we know.

Anther one of the many things we get from this group goes back to our discussion of the Prime Mover. The ideas like the 'Mind' posit a purposeful, external force acting upon the stuff that makes up everything. Others argue a more mechanical nature of things, unguided and random.

Putting It Together

During this period of time, there develops an interesting mix of thoughts on the nature of things. Questions about what we know, what we can know, how can we know it and how does it all fit together are really beginning to take front row seats. For the most part, this is the environment into which Socrates enters and participates. We place more emphasis on Socrates mainly because we have a more broad understanding of his thought as provided for us by Plato. So lucky for Socrates but unlucky for these guys, they or their followers where plain out-written. Socrates = better press. It is simply because of that later philosophers lean heavily on him and we can see more of his influence because of it.

Still there is a depth of thought and connection between these guys which I have really not touched on or developed, but then the format limits us. What we can pull away is the idea that Sophists pretty much saw the world in a very practical way, and that your brain is your ticket around. Second, the others were not a group, like the Pythagoreans or the Sophists. They were mainly individuals or becoming more individual. Not that they did not consult or question one another, but they were postulating as individuals, not for lifestyles per se but espousing critical thinking in those around them.

They also began to develop styles of logic and argumentation which are still in force. We can see here as we talked about before, one had to develop a means of arguing. The formulation of logic and logical systems really begins to develop and blossom during this period, as well as many ideas, such as the 'seeds' or survival of the fittest.

Eastern Philosophy

Before we plunge deeper into Western philosophy let us take a class to examine the East mainly because they too arise during this period and secondly I am afraid that I will forget if I do not.

When we approach this, as we are with the Western philosophers, we will concentrate on the ideas, not so much the cultural implications of these thinkers. By no means an expert on this subject, I will both hesitate to opine here and refrain from speculation, though it might be argued that it is all speculation on my part.

The rise of Classical Greek culture corresponds to a similar rise in China and India. I will not pretend to discuss the reasons for this, or even hazard a guess (but I do recommend it as an interesting project for someone). It is fascinating that all (both East and West) are roughly contemporaries though separated by many miles. As to whether they were aware of each other may be a different matter. I believe one Greek philosopher was rumored to have traveled to India where he met with 'naked seers', so some interaction may actually have taken place between India and Greece!

Where Angels Fear To Tread…

These Eastern figures are arising as were their counterparts and contemporaries in the West at times of relative peace in their respective empires. Of course this peace could be an object of conjecture but let us ignore that now and plunge deeply into the uncharted waters. They too are often seeking to rise above recent chaos and give meaning and order to the world around them.

Along those lines let me make a note about spelling which I will use in this text (well perhaps less of a note and more of a disclaimer): I neither speak nor read any Chinese or Indian language or dialect. I have not studied these thinkers in great detail. Hence I have settled upon what I consider to be the most familiar or best Anglicization of the original. If you want to say Dao instead of Tao, be my guest. Cross it out and rewrite it if you are so inclined! Just do not write me (see appendix F for a guide to why things look different).

The Players (a refresher)

Dates	Philosophers	Main Points
South Asian, East Asian		
?	Lao Tse	*Balance, harmony yin-yang. The underlying principle is unfathomable yet not transcendent.*
563-483?	*Buddha*	*Emphasizes personal experience, a pragmatic attitude, and the use of critical thinking toward all types of knowledge*
551-479	Confucius	*Ethical living through ritual observances (political, religious and etiquette)*
500-428	Mo Tzu	*Self-reflection and authenticity rather than obedience to ritual*

Table 7: Early Eastern Philosophers

Lao Tse

Lao Tse does not directly fit historically into this group (though depending on how you date some these guys, he could have been a contemporary), but since I was trying to cover the early East in on shot I thought it best to include him here.

For Lao Tse the Prime Mover is the Tao (*way, path*) which has existed before time. Everything depends upon the Tao, but the Tao is not obvious within all things. The Tao is unfathomable but can be *known about,* that is to say that we cannot say what it is or what it is not, merely that it is.

A certain amount oneness is necessary for living in harmony. Being one with nature brings one into harmony with nature. Still, life is full of balances: light, dark; big, small; male, female. When these things are in balance there is harmony.

Buddha

Buddha, like so many of the philosophers we have looked at so far, did not write anything down. Followers and 'schools' which came later did that. So, like anything else separating the original philosophy from later philosophical and theological development is difficult.

Avoidance of extremes is a central idea. Buddha taught that the two extremes of thinking *dogmatism* and *skepticism* should be avoided. This pragmatic, a posteriori view did involve deep levels of critical thinking applied to truths, but still allowed for the dynamic experiences of life or the wisdom of others to influence thinking. That said, it is not a chaotic dynamism but one with boundaries (Buddha is reacting to both ridged doctrine of the Brahmas and the extreme skepticism of the Sramanic movement, wandering teachers something like the Sophists – odd how that seems to be the way with wandering teachers).

For the Buddha there are no self-caused entities and that everything is dependent, that is, it arises from or upon something else. Life is a process, because nothing is permanent. There is really only self-knowledge but human identity is without a permanent and substantial self. The 'self' is an evolving process constrained or enhanced by previous or past 'selves'. Reincarnation is the process of that development (this question also arises in Socrates' thought – *transmigration of the soul*). Buddha also presents an ethical view based on these epistemological thoughts.

Confucius

The person or thought school known as Confucius is mainly ethical in focus and presents no logic or logic systems. While he seems to be against any sort of divine Prime Mover, there is a higher order or 'heaven' which is dependent upon the person to carry out its will. Ritual is the means of carrying out the will.

Ritual adherence is based on heavenly 'mandates' and we are 'good' in terms of how we align ourselves to that will by carrying out the mandates. Manners, taste, morality and social order are part of and dependent upon 'heaven' but are combined with 'moral force' (action) to bring harmony and symmetry to the world.

Confucius is often associated with government and governing. He spent a large amount of time training adherents for government service, so we can see that influence in history. Still, he does not seem to posit a 'philosopher class' for ruling.

The stronger the moral force in a person the better person, ruler, boss, philosopher, painter, etc. they are. It is important to correct the lacking moral force in another but it must be done with respect.

All thought and action therefore are directed to seeking and bringing about harmony and symmetry.

Mo Tzu

Mo Tzu is the rival (and I do not use the word lightly) to the teachings of Confucius and his teaching is summed up in ten theses extensively argued in the non-self authored text that bears his name (though the text could be considered fragmentary because some of the sections below are

marked ‘missing’). He seems somewhat akin to Confucius in some teachings, but he really departs from him into a more practical, common sense way of looking at things. He is also associated (in another divergence from Confucius) with scientific and logical explorations. In the end he is pretty much supplanted in China by Confucianism but the influence of his thought is visible.

1. Elevating the Worthy – for political office
2. Exalting Unity – consistency of moral thought
3. Impartial Concern – do unto others as you would have them do unto you
4. Against Military Aggression – both unprofitable and immoral
5. Frugality in Expenditures – governing requires thrift
6. Frugality in Funerals – do not be opulent, similar to the above
7. Heaven's Will – directly involved in human action
8. Elucidating the Spirits – skeptics are wrong, spirits exist
9. Against Music – not against all but lavishness, like funerals above
10. Against Fatalism – leads to chaos

You Buddha do Mo Tzu be less Confucius

Honestly, there are several developments of Eastern philosophers which may have bearing within our present and eventual conversations but they are not presented here. I have tried to boil down the origins to the concepts we are already discussing. Eventually, for example, it looks like Buddhism develops a type of atomism (Democritus)but I did not find (in my short exploration) a statement by Buddha on atomism. I have tried to distill to what the guys themselves seem to stress, not what their followers developed. In other words any complaints should be made to the Tao complaint department, if one existed.

Buddha, Mo Tzu and Confucius gave a sense of order and comfort during raucous periods in their cultures’ history. As in the West, there seems to be a movement away from theological explanations to more philosophical or theo-philosophical exploration for meaning. A certain practicality, that is, a less speculative thought appears, differing from the West, which has moved in a more metaphysical direction; less of a *why* do we live and more of *how* do we live.

For Mo Tzu heaven is active, unlike Confucius and Buddha who keep heaven out of the affairs of humans. Still both groups see heaven as the source of moral action. There is some difference on the place of humans in the overall scheme of things, but as we have seen in the West there is some disagreement about that place. A certain notion of separation from the ‘one’ is present, but also the notion that there is more to the ‘one’ than there is to ‘other’.

The moral nature of these thinkers’ philosophies must, like Socrates’, speak to the nature of the times in which they lived. We can also see the more static nature of Eastern philosophy in that these systems have continued to exist on their own for thousands of years.

Balance and Ritual are a big portion of the thought of these guys. The loss of concern for ritual or earlier thinking has brought about chaos. The attachment to extremes has produced imbalance which produces immoral behavior, hence chaos.

For Buddha and arguably Confucius, chaos seems to be produced by over-thinking.

Putting It Together

For the most part, these are philosophies of action. They are mainly ethical in nature, the how-to-live mode of thought. In this way they are very much like the West at this time.

Most of these systems are not seen in opposition to each other, hence you can hear of *Zen Buddhism*. This aspect is important because in contrast, Western thinkers tend to put themselves

into opposition to other thinkers and secondly because Western thinkers will begin to explore and lean on some of these systems within their own systems.

Honestly, and completely aside, I think that Western people who abandon Western thought in favor of Eastern thought do injustice to the both systems. This ability to integrate is somewhat foreign to Westerners who seek to distinguish and separate (which I guess is really the problem and base cause of their abandoning). The Western tendency to dichotomize is not always true to even the roots of Western thought (recall one of our earliest discussions as to the roots of Western philosophy).

There is a non-compromising synthesis within Western philosophy but it is often ignored. Examining Eastern thought often re-vitalizes that thought within the West.

Introduction to Socrates and Plato

Plato does not fall directly under this era of philosophy, but without him we would know little to nothing of Socrates (other sources do not cover the breath of Plato's dialogues). Socrates was a teacher and so we rely mainly on Plato (*authorship arguments aside here*) who was his student. At the same time, Plato is a filter. Plato tells stories about Socrates, so he advances Socrates' philosophy and his own at the same time. Think of it this way: Plato tells stories or aspects of stories from Socrates teaching which promote Plato's way of thinking, kind of a 'selective philosophy'.

Still scholars tell us that the 'early Socrates' of Plato's early writing may reflect more closely Socrates' actual thinking. From that we can guess that as Plato's thoughts emerge and develop, Socrates may become more of a mouthpiece as time goes on, but couched within a recognizable true Socrates. If that were not true then more of a ruckus would probably have been raised at the time. **Understanding Aside**: When we talk about authorship in this time (and probably until 'modern' times), we have to be aware of the idea that one might write quotes from or 'in the thought or vein of' the character mentioned as the author. That is to say, *this is what so-and-so said or would have said had he said it*, so we can 'attribute' it to him, ergo he is the 'author'. This was a widely accepted practice.

Who Is That Guy Behind Those Platonic Dialogues?

With aforementioned in mind, what can we say about Socrates? A bunch. Ultimately, for Socrates, it was all about living, and living right at that. He flouted many of the social norms of the day and directly attacked many, like the Sophists, who had political influence, because he felt their thinking and their lifestyles did not reflect the 'examined life'. He was not afraid, at least in Plato's telling, to broach any subject, lifestyle or mannerism. In the end he was condemned to drink poison at a trial from which he should have escaped punishment. In the *Apology* (from the Gk for *defense*), a 'transcript' of the trial and some 'subsequent' dialogues, we see that instead he turns on his detractors and supporters alike to keep to his principles and stubbornly make his point. Needless to say, it did not extend his life.

Enough of the man; how did he view the world? Unlike the Sophists, he does not stop at sensations, at opinion based knowledge; his 'investigations' tended to scrutinize the more intimate part of man, by what makes a human a human: reason. Like the Sophists, was not concerned with metaphysics, saying that nature is under the direction of gods. He concentrated all his attention on the search for moral concepts; he was convinced that the practice of morality could only be accomplished by having a concept of justice. From this rose his opposition to that destructive idea which Sophists espoused.

Socrates is a teacher. He is not the first full-time teacher in Athens (as we saw above in the Sophists among others). He is different in that he is not only teaching but challenging the notions of other teachers and political and moral leaders. Now a cynic might say that like the sophists he was just looking for a buck and so had to discredit the competition, but as they did not die for doing the same thing, one has to lend a bit more credence to Socrates as a 'gadfly' and trouble maker for a cause.

Natural Law

Something I probably should have covered earlier but will do so here because I like the placement better is a concept known as 'Natural Law'. In a nutshell, within each of us lies an innate

knowledge of how things should be, i.e. a natural or (human) nature-based, hard-wired knowledge. This differs from Secular or Human Law in that human law is imposed from the outside. Natural Law is often considered the basis for Secular Law.

To the Sophists Natural Law meant "the right of the stronger" (*Republic*), that is the one who can impose his will (*usually* through rhetoric). Socrates saw it more as an innate understanding of right and wrong.

The Socratic Method

Socrates seems to embody many of thoughts and theories of his day. His search for wisdom and understanding brings him into contact with the movers and shakers of politics, philosophy and science. For this reason he discusses a great many things which may seem odd since we present Socrates as an ethical-moral philosopher, but is not in *why* he discusses a great many things.

Whenever a concept is being proffered, espoused or ranted about Socrates often asks everyone else to define it, because he is ignorant and needs their input. People are always trying to help poor Socrates understand. Socrates continues to ask questions, to draw out meaning from the individual. This process, which Socrates thought of as 'midwifery', we call his 'method'

This questioning honed the person's own understanding, and we would think of it as an informal form of logic, as we have discussed before. Socrates' directed questioning was often sly but served to remove poor premises and lead to logical thinking. Generalities should only be used when sufficient cause could be shown that they could be; that reason should be the rule by which we judge them and that eventually we could arrive at general concepts by which other concepts could be judged, and so on and so on. Function and meaning go hand in hand.

For Socrates, wisdom was the end.

Virtue

What does Socrates mean by the word we translate as 'virtue'? First let us start with what it is not. For Socrates *ignorance*, not malice per se, is why one does evil. To know good is to do good. Therefore wisdom and learning are not just virtues as we would think of them, they *are* Virtue.

Therefore Virtue and Wisdom go hand in hand. Socrates asks what good are worldly possessions or power if you do not have the sense to use them? That becomes especially pertinent when say, we are the powerful person wielding it. As paraphrasing Jesus would say, "*what profit it a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul in the process*?"

Wisdom leads to right living. For Socrates that is paramount. That is the reason we gain wisdom. By working from the particular (usually a particular circumstance) we can gain wisdom and see general patterns which guide us in the particular. Socrates called this a 'unity of virtues', in the sense of all things being one.

This sense is why we classify Socrates, at least the one presented mainly by Plato, as an ethical philosopher, because for him, all things, all knowledge, all learning are about living right. For this reason 'the unexamined life is not worth living'. This is not an intellectual hubris; knowledge is virtue and virtue is everything.

Putting It Together

So, without getting into the nitty-gritty of the texts we can see the powerful influence Socrates has, not only for his time but for all times to follow. His inability to be satisfied with the status quo (or whatever the Greek equivalent of that phrase is) drove him to question everything and everyone all by asking questions. Do not worry though, as '*methinks my lady doth protest too much*'. Socrates

is crafty and vicious in his pursuit of wisdom. He defers and grovels, cajoles and angers, praises and self-deprecates, but he is a bull dog for virtue.

WANDA: The central message of Buddhism is not: “Every man for himself.” And the London Underground is not a political movement. Those are all mistakes, Otto. I looked them up.

OTTO: Don’t call me stupid….
WANDA: To call you stupid would be an insult to stupid people. I've known sheep who could outwit you. I've worn dresses with higher IQs, but you think you're an intellectual, don't you, ape?
OTTO: Apes don't read philosophy.
WANDA: Yes they do, Otto, they just don't understand it.

WANDA: What would Plato do?
OTTO: Apologize.

***A Fish Called Wanda* (1988)**

Socrates and Plato

Socrates states in Plato's *Apology* that the whole direction of his life is due to the Oracle's at Delphi answer to a simple question his friend Chaerephon asked of it: *who is the wisest man?* The Delphic answer was *Socrates*. This 'simple act' set Socrates on the path to understand why he was the wisest of men. According to him (or is PR man, whoever you choose to believe), he did not see himself as wise so he set out to understand this Oracle. It was not his fault that those he sought out, those whom he saw as wise, were unable to answer his simple questions.

Virtue Revisited

A word we brought up before and bandied about here is *virtue*. This is the catch-word for the gist of Socrates' thought. Recall that virtue is knowledge/wisdom and knowledge/wisdom is virtue. What the wise man does is virtue and what the virtuous man does is wisdom. Ignorant and unwise people are not virtuous because they cannot act virtuously. Still, they are not evil, because since they are ignorant they are not responsible. It is really impossible to do wrong voluntarily because you would really only do good voluntarily. *Capice*?

The Dichotomized Man

Socrates believed in duality. Humans were body *and* soul. In terms of ontology or being, the idea of the 'soul', i.e. that thing which is separate from the 'body', is that which makes us, well, *us*. This is somewhat different from other *Weltanschauung* (world-view), like say the Hebrews, who saw the person as unity, that is, the 'head' and the 'heart' made up the person. So who cares, right? Well the concept of a separate soul does is allow within Western philosophy the idea of the after-life (which will eventually creep into Hebrew thoughts as well). We brushed against this in the early Western philosophers and most recently in the Eastern philosophy section. The idea of heaven, the idea of something beyond us becomes more immediate, more ethical in nature here, as opposed to concepts like 'the Mind' which we saw in earlier Greek thought.

Think back. Is everything *one* or is everything *plural*? This dichotomy places Socrates squarely within the Pluralist's camp but more importantly means that not only can I be outside of something else, but also that something else can be outside of me, as well as both together. Take a long drag on that thought cigarette and hold it. (*you know how to argue don't you Steve? You just put your two premises together and cognate….*)

Because of this, Virtue plays into Socrates' understanding of the soul and vice versa.

Name Dropping

For ease of reference, a quick list of the works of Plato follows. Though all involve Socrates, the 'Early' group is considered closest to Socrates' thought, probably because Plato is writing them closest to the events they recount. Because we are inquirers and not Platonic Scholars we will put authorship and chronological questions aside and plunge forward and roughly order the dialogs by period. While the grouping and the order may be questionable at best, here goes:

Chronological Division	Works
Early	*Apology*, *Crito*, *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, *First Alcibiades*, *Greater Hippias*,

Chronological Division	Works
	Lesser Hippias, Ion, Laches, Lysis
Middle	*Cratylus, Euthydemus, Gorgias, Menexenus, Meno, Phaedo, Protagoras, Symposium, Republic, Phaedrus, Parmenides, Theaetetus*
Late	*Timaeus, Critias, Sophist, Statesman, Philebus, Laws*

Table 8: Plato's Dialogs By Period

Important Secondary Source for Socrates' Thought: *Xenophon* – look him up!

The Early Dialogues: Questions, I Got Questions…
(Ethics, Religion, Psychology and Epistomology)

Once more, due to the nature of our inquiry, let us sift through and reduce Socrates' thoughts to some quick one-liners. Socrates' ethical/theological (I will tie them together) and epistemological (how we *know* things) understanding can be found in the early dialogues of Plato, which as discussed are probably the closest thing to Socrates' thought as we can divine. The fight here is opinion verses knowledge, ignorance versus virtue.

Reading Philosophy

As a pretty major aside here, as earlier sections were given in order to help with the beginning of *thinking* philosophy, this section is the introduction to beginning to *read* philosophy. Reading can be difficult, especially in translated works. Depending on how the translator chooses to translate (*word for word; meaning for meaning; timeframe, etc.*), how contemporary the philosopher's thought is to our own, just to name a few, we can have more or less difficulty in plowing through the text. In the end most of the thought are thoughts which are familiar to us in one form or another. Still, we are seeking to understand what the author is *trying to tell us*, not necessarily *what we think is being said*. The ultimate goal is to be able to pick up a work and read it from beginning to end, all the while marking arguments and conclusions as we go along, finally gleaning some understanding after we are done. Be aware that this may take more than one reading!

It is really a three-step process. Think about what we have discussed so far and why. Well, this is why. First we want to be able to *objectively* read a work or series of works. In this step we are really just seeking to hear what the author is trying to tell us, that is the work in and of itself (or the body of work), free of our own thinking on the subject. Second, we want to examine it within a context, still objectively, understanding the author's subjective and environmental influences and how that plays into the work. Thirdly, we begin to examine it for the purpose of 'usefulness' to us, i.e. *critically*, using the tools we have stuck into our belts as a work of influence in our own thoughts.

We do not just want to depend upon the learned and consumed commentaries of others. We want to read the texts themselves and not take it for granted that is what they say or what they mean for us. Therefore think of this exposition as a good 'reading list' for us to start with. Rather than tackling whole body of a single work, we will start with ideas, and see if we can recognize these ideas within the text. Later we will start with a passage and the try to determine what the idea being proffered is. For now, baby steps.

Reading Plato

The following list is based on the early works of Plato, those which we see as closest to Socrates' thought. Take a moment, read the **Idea** and reflect on what *you think* it means. Make sure you grasp

the idea. Now go to the text as listed under the **Passage** heading and see if that is being said in that passage. Hopefully, if I have not screwed up, it at least touches it.

Part of this exercise also challenges us to understand the commentaries we read. Like this exercise, we generalize what is said, but we generalize because enough of the texts support that generalization about the author's thought. For the most part these pericopes are not the only place in the writer's works you would see this idea proffered.

So two of the aspects of come into play here: the work within itself and within a body of works (context). Do not forget that some of the works are in reaction to the ideas or works of others! The first ones show only one passage for easing into the process, but after that more passages, more work.

IDEA	PASSAGE
Body as metaphor for soul. Goodness is to be understood in terms of conduciveness to human happiness, well-being, or flourishing, which may also be understood as "living well," or "doing well"; doing injustice harms one's soul, the thing that is most precious to one, and, hence, that it is better to suffer injustice than to do it. – karma?	*Crito* 47a-48b
The health of the soul as important as the health of the body. Virtue is good just by itself; anything else that is good serves virtue.	*Apology* 30b
One should do the right thing; A rejection of retaliation, or the return of harm for harm or evil for evil. – sound familiar?	*Crito* 48b-49d
Is something the sum of part of its parts? Merely listing examples of some particular ethical value, even if all are viable and reasonable cases of that value would never provide an adequate analysis of what the value is, nor would it provide an adequate definition of the value term that refers to the value and therefore not an adequate understanding of that value. Proper definitions must state what is *common* to all examples of the value – objective truth	*Euthyphro* 6d-e; *Meno* 72c-d
Definitive definition of ethical terms is at least a necessary condition of reliable judging of specific instances of the values they name.	*Euthyphro* 4e-5d, 6e; *Laches* 189e-190b; *Lysis* 223b; *Greater Hippias* 304d-e; *Meno* 71a-b, 100b
Those with *expert* knowledge or wisdom on a given subject do not err in their judgments on that subject, and therefore can teach and explain their subject – Prime Arguer?	*Ion 532a-b; Euthyphro* 4e-5a*; Laches* 185b, 185e, 1889e-190b
The common good: the view that the citizen who has agreed to live in a state must always obey the laws of that state, or else persuade the state to change its laws, or leave the state – good of the soul, good of the soul collective	*Crito* 51b-c, 52a-d

Table 9: Reading Plato, Part I

Let's kibitz on this group so far. Can you see a continuity of thought? A development of argument? How effective is Socrates' questioning? What effect on later thought do these arguments have? Enough; continue.

IDEA	PASSAGE
The gods are completely wise and good	*Apology* 28a; *Euthyphro* 6a, 15a
Natural Law: in some sense, everyone recollects knowledge, that is the knowledge is within them	*Meno* 81; see also *Gorgias* 472b, 475e-

IDEA	PASSAGE
	476a
Divine inspiration: Poets are able to write and do the wonderful things they write and do, not from knowledge or expertise, but from some kind of divine inspiration. The same can be said of diviners and seers, although they do seem to have some kind of expertise-perhaps only some technique by which to put them in a state of appropriate receptivity to the divine	*Ion* 533d-536a, 538d-e; *Apology* 22b-c; *Laches* 198e-199a; *Meno* 99c
Various types of divination can allow human beings to come to recognize the will of the gods	*Apology* 21a-23b, 33c
No one really knows what happens after death, but it is reasonable to think that death is not an evil; there may be an afterlife, in which the souls of the good are rewarded, and the souls of the wicked are punished	*Apology* 40c-41c; *Crito* 54b-c

Table 10: Reading Plato, Part II

Putting It Together

Nothing like reducing months if not years of study to a short burst of activity! This chapter is primarily a hands-on activity, so the conclusions to draw from its reading are mainly of the personal type. Socrates has some very definite ideas about how the world works/should work and he is not afraid to share them. We can get a sense from this short reading set his 'method', and the effectiveness (and annoyingness) of it.

There is another small point here. Hopefully from this reading session, some of the humor comes through too.

Homegame

Question: Even with all of his protestations, does Socrates use rhetoric similarly to the Sophists (i.e. as a blunt object)?

Activity: Let us look at one short work from the early period as a whole, *Ion;* a seemingly odd discussion with an actor.

Technical Terms

Art: *techne* = skill or craft, as in the *art* of medicine.

Knowledge: *epistome* = knowledge of or about a thing (sometimes *inspiration* or *science*), as in a doctor *knows* about the flu.

So in this case, you go to your doctor feeling achy and sniffling and coughing. The doctor *knows* this is the flu and he *does* something to make you feel better.

Plato: Ion

Personae

- Socrates
- Ion – an actor (*rhapsodes*) from Ephesus

530a ***Socrates*** Welcome, Ion. Where have you come from now, to pay us this visit? From your home in Ephesus?

Ion No, no, Socrates; from Epidaurus and the festival there of Asclepius.

Socrates Do you mean to say that the Epidaurians honor the god with a contest of rhapsodes also?

Ion Certainly, and of music in general.

Socrates Why then, you were competing in some contest, were you? And how went your competition?

Ion We carried off the first prize, Socrates.

530b ***Socrates*** Well done: so now, mind that we win too at the Panathenaea.

Ion Why, so we shall, God willing.

Socrates I must say I have often envied you rhapsodes, Ion, for your art: for besides that it is fitting to your art that your person should be adorned and that you should look as handsome as possible, the necessity of being conversant with a number of good poets, and especially with Homer, the best and divinest poet of all, and of apprehending

530c his thought and not merely learning off his words, is a matter for envy; since a man can never be a good rhapsode without understanding what the poet says. For the rhapsode ought to make himself an interpreter of the poet's thought to his audience; and to do this properly without knowing what the poet means is impossible. So one cannot but envy all this.

Ion What you say is true, Socrates: I at any rate have found this the most laborious part of my art; and I consider I speak about Homer better than anybody, for neither

530d Metrodorus of Lampsacus, nor Stesimbrotus of Thasos, nor Glaucon,[5] nor any one that the world has ever seen, had so many and such fine comments to offer on Homer as I have.

Socrates That is good news, Ion; for obviously you will not grudge me an exhibition of them.

Ion And indeed it is worth hearing, Socrates, how well I have embellished Homer; so that I think I deserve to be crowned with a golden crown by the Homeridae.

Socrates Yes, and I must find myself leisure some time to listen to you;

531a but for the moment, please answer this little question: are you skilled in Homer only, or in Hesiod and Archilochus as well?

Ion No, no, only in Homer; for that seems to me quite enough.

Socrates And is there anything on which Homer and Hesiod both say the same?

Ion Yes, I think there are many such cases.

Socrates Then in those cases would you expound better what Homer says than what Hesiod says?

Ion I should do it equally well in those cases, Socrates, where they say the same.

531b ***Socrates*** But what of those where they do not say the same? For example, about the seer's art, on which both Homer and Hesiod say something.

Ion Quite so.

Socrates Well then, would you, or one of the good seers, expound better what these two poets say, not only alike but

differently, about the seer's art?

Ion One of the seers.

Socrates And if you were a seer, would you not, with an ability to expound what they say in agreement, know also how to expound the points on which they differ?

Ion Of course.

Socrates Then how is it that you are skilled in Homer,

531c and not in Hesiod or the other poets? Does Homer speak of any other than the very things that all the other poets speak of? Has he not described war for the most part, and the mutual intercourse of men, good and bad, lay and professional, and the ways of the gods in their intercourse with each other and with men, and happenings in the heavens and in the underworld, and origins of gods and heroes?

531d Are not these the subjects of Homer's poetry?

Ion What you say is true, Socrates.

Socrates And what of the other poets? Do they not treat of the same things?

Ion Yes; but, Socrates, not on Homer's level.

Socrates What, in a worse way?

Ion Far worse.

Socrates And Homer in a better?

Ion Better indeed, I assure you.

Socrates Well now, Ion, dear soul; when several people are talking about number, and one of them speaks better than the rest, I suppose there is some one who will distinguish the good speaker?

531e ***Ion*** I agree.

Socrates And will this some one be the same as he who can distinguish the bad speakers, or different?

Ion The same, I suppose.

Socrates And he will be the man who has the art of numeration?

Ion Yes.

Socrates And again, when several are talking about what kinds of foods are wholesome, and one of them speaks better than the rest, will it be for two different persons to distinguish the superiority of the best speaker and the inferiority of a worse one, or for the same?

Ion Obviously, I should say, for the same.

Socrates Who is he? What is his name?

Ion A doctor.

Socrates And so we may state, in general terms, that the same person will always distinguish, given the same subject and several persons talking about it,

532a both who speaks well and who badly: otherwise, if he is not going to distinguish the bad speaker, clearly he will not distinguish the good one either, where the subject is the same.

Ion That is so.

Socrates And the same man is found to be skilled in both?

Ion Yes.

Socrates And you say that Homer and the other poets, among whom are Hesiod and Archilochus, all speak about the same things, only not similarly; but the one does it well, and the rest worse?

Ion Yes, and what I say is true.

Socrates And since you distinguish the good speaker,

532b you could distinguish also the inferiority of the worse speakers.

Ion So it would seem.

Socrates Then, my excellent friend, we shall not be wrong in saying that our Ion is equally skilled in Homer and in the other poets, seeing that you yourself admit that the same man will be a competent judge of all who speak on the same things, and that practically all the poets treat of the same things.

Ion Then what can be the reason, Socrates, why I pay no attention when somebody discusses any other poet, and am unable to offer any remark at all of any value,

532c but simply drop into a doze, whereas if anyone mentions something connected with Homer I wake up at once and attend and have plenty to say?

Socrates That is not difficult to guess, my good friend; anyone can see that you are unable to speak on Homer with art and knowledge. For if you could do it with art, you could speak on all the other poets as well; since there is an art of poetry, I take it, as a whole, is there not?

Ion Yes.

532d ***Socrates*** And when one has acquired any other art whatever as a

whole, the same principle of inquiry holds through all the arts? Do you require some explanation from me, Ion, of what I mean by this?

Ion Yes, upon my word, Socrates, I do; for I enjoy listening to you wise men.

Socrates I only wish you were right there, Ion: but surely it is you rhapsodes and actors, and the men whose poems you chant, who are wise; whereas I speak but the plain truth, as a simple layman might.

532e For in regard to this question I asked you just now, observe what a trifling commonplace it was that I uttered—a thing that any man might know—namely, that when one has acquired a whole art the inquiry is the same. Let us just think it out thus: there is an art of painting as a whole?

Ion Yes.

Socrates And there are and have been many painters, good and bad?

Ion Certainly.

Socrates Now have you ever found anybody who is skilled in pointing out the successes and failures among the works of Polygnotus son of Aglaophon, but unable to do so with the works of the other painters;

533a and who, when the works of the other painters are exhibited, drops into a doze, and is at a loss, and has no remark to offer; but when he has to pronounce upon Polygnotus or any other painter you please, and on that one only, wakes up and attends and has plenty to say?

Ion No, on my honor, I certainly have not.

Socrates Or again, in sculpture, have you ever found anyone who is skilled in expounding the successes of Daedalus son of Metion, or Epeius son of Panopeus,

533b or Theodorus of Samos, or any other single sculptor, but in face of the works of the other sculptors is at a loss and dozes, having nothing to say?

Ion No, on my honor, I have not found such a man as that either.

Socrates But further, I expect you have also failed to find one in fluting or harping or minstrelsy or rhapsodizing who is skilled in expounding the art of Olympus

533c or Thamyras, or Orpheus, or Phemius, the rhapsode of Ithaca, but is at a loss and has no remark to offer on the successes or failures in rhapsody of Ion of Ephesus.

Ion I cannot gainsay you on that, Socrates: but of one thing I am conscious in myself—that I excel all men in speaking on Homer and have plenty to say, and everyone else says that I do it well; but on the others I am not a good speaker. Yet now, observe what that means.

Socrates I do observe it, Ion, and I am going to point out to you

533d what I take it to mean. For, as I was saying just now, this is not an art in you, whereby you speak well on Homer, but a divine power, which moves you like that in the stone which Euripides named a magnet, but most people call "Heraclea stone." For this stone not only attracts iron rings, but also imparts to them a power whereby they in turn are able to do the very same thing as the stone,

533e and attract other rings; so that sometimes there is formed quite a long chain of bits of iron and rings, suspended one from another; and they all depend for this power on that one stone. In the same manner also the Muse inspires men herself, and then by means of these inspired persons the inspiration spreads to others, and holds them in a connected chain. For all the good epic poets utter all those fine poems not from art, but as inspired and possessed, and the good lyric poets likewise;

534a just as the Corybantian worshippers do not dance when in their senses, so the lyric poets do not indite those fine songs in their senses, but when they have started on the melody and rhythm they begin to be frantic, and it is under possession—as the bacchants are possessed, and not in their senses, when they draw honey and milk from the rivers—that the soul of the lyric poets does the same thing, by their own report. For the poets tell us, I believe, that the songs they bring us are the sweets they cull from honey-dropping founts

534b in certain gardens and glades of the Muses—like the bees, and winging the air as these do. And what they tell is true. For a poet is a light and winged and sacred thing, and is unable ever to indite until he has been inspired and put out of his senses, and his mind is no longer in him: every man, whilst he retains possession of that, is powerless to indite a verse or chant an oracle. Seeing then that it is not by art that

they compose and utter so many fine things about the deeds of men—

534c as you do about Homer—but by a divine dispensation, each is able only to compose that to which the Muse has stirred him, this man dithyrambs, another laudatory odes, another dance-songs, another epic or else iambic verse; but each is at fault in any other kind. For not by art do they utter these things, but by divine influence; since, if they had fully learnt by art to speak on one kind of theme, they would know how to speak on all. And for this reason God takes away the mind of these men and uses them as his ministers, just as he does soothsayers and godly seers,

534d in order that we who hear them may know that it is not they who utter these words of great price, when they are out of their wits, but that it is God himself who speaks and addresses us through them. A convincing proof of what I say is the case of Tynnichus, the Chalcidian, who had never composed a single poem in his life that could deserve any mention, and then produced the paean which is in everyone's mouth, almost the finest song we have, simply—as he says himself—"an invention of the Muses." For the god, as it seems to me,

534e intended him to be a sign to us that we should not waver or doubt that these fine poems are not human or the work of men, but divine and the work of gods; and that the poets are merely the interpreters of the gods, according as each is possessed by one of the heavenly powers. To show this forth, the god of set purpose sang the finest of songs through the meanest of poets:

535a or do you not think my statement true, Ion?

Ion Yes, upon my word, I do: for you somehow touch my soul with your words, Socrates, and I believe it is by divine dispensation that good poets interpret to us these utterances of the gods.

Socrates And you rhapsodes, for your part, interpret the utterances of the poets?

Ion Again your words are true.

Socrates And so you act as interpreters of interpreters?

Ion Precisely.

535b ***Socrates*** Stop now and tell me, Ion, without reserve what I may choose to ask you: when you give a good recitation and specially thrill your audience, either with the lay of Odysseus leaping forth on to the threshold, revealing himself to the suitors and pouring out the arrows before his feet, or of Achilles dashing at Hector, or some part of the sad story of Andromache or of Hecuba, or of Priam, are you then in your senses, or are you carried out of yourself, and does your soul in an ecstasy suppose

535c herself to be among the scenes you are describing, whether they be in Ithaca, or in Troy, or as the poems may chance to place them?

Ion How vivid to me, Socrates, is this part of your proof! For I will tell you without reserve: when I relate a tale of woe, my eyes are filled with tears; and when it is of fear or awe, my hair stands on end with terror, and my heart leaps.

535d ***Socrates*** Well now, are we to say, Ion, that such a person is in his senses at that moment,—when in all the adornment of elegant attire and golden crowns he weeps at sacrifice or festival, having been despoiled of none of his finery; or shows fear as he stands before more than twenty thousand friendly people, none of whom is stripping or injuring him?

Ion No, on my word, not at all, Socrates, to tell the strict truth.

Socrates And are you aware that you rhapsodes produce these same effects on most of the spectators also?

535e ***Ion*** Yes, very fully aware: for I look down upon them from the platform and see them at such moments crying and turning awestruck eyes upon me and yielding to the amazement of my tale. For I have to pay the closest attention to them; since, if I set them crying, I shall laugh myself because of the money I take, but if they laugh, I myself shall cry because of the money I lose.

Socrates And are you aware that your spectator is the last of the rings which I spoke of as receiving from each other the power transmitted from the Heraclean lodestone?

536a You, the rhapsode and actor, are the middle ring; the poet himself is the first; but it is the god who through the whole series draws the souls of men whithersoever he pleases, making the power of one depend on the other. And, just as

from the magnet, there is a mighty chain of choric performers and masters and under-masters suspended by side-connections from the rings that hang down from the Muse. One poet is suspended from one Muse, another from another:

536b the word we use for it is "possessed," but it is much the same thing, for he is held. And from these first rings—the poets—are suspended various others, which are thus inspired, some by Orpheus and others by Musaeus; but the majority are possessed and held by Homer. Of whom you, Ion, are one, and are possessed by Homer; and so, when anyone recites the work of another poet, you go to sleep and are at a loss what to say; but when some one utters a strain of your poet, you wake up at once, and your soul dances,

536c and you have plenty to say: for it is not by art or knowledge about Homer that you say what you say, but by divine dispensation and possession; just as the Corybantian worshippers are keenly sensible of that strain alone which belongs to the god whose possession is on them, and have plenty of gestures and phrases for that tune, but do not heed any other. And so you, Ion, when the subject of Homer is mentioned, have plenty to say, but nothing on any of the others. And when you ask me the reason

536d why you can speak at large on Homer but not on the rest, I tell you it is because your skill in praising Homer comes not by art, but by divine dispensation.

Ion Well spoken, I grant you, Socrates; but still I shall be surprised if you can speak well enough to convince me that I am possessed and mad when I praise Homer. Nor can I think you would believe it of me yourself, if you heard me speaking about him.

Socrates I declare I am quite willing to hear you, but not until

536e you have first answered me this: on what thing in Homer's story do you speak well? Not on all of them, I presume.

Ion I assure you, Socrates, on all without a single exception.

Socrates Not, of course, including those things of which you have in fact no knowledge, but which Homer tells.

Ion And what sort of things are they, which Homer tells, but of which I have no knowledge?

537a ***Socrates*** Why, does not Homer speak a good deal about arts, in a good many places? For instance, about chariot-driving: if I can recall the lines, I will quote them to you.

Ion No, I will recite them, for I can remember.

Socrates Tell me then what Nestor says to his son Antilochus, advising him to be careful about the turning-post in the horse-race in honor of Patroclus.

Ion "Bend thyself in the polished car slightly to the left of them; and call to the right-hand horse"

537b "and goad him on, while your hand slackens his reins. And at the post let your left-hand horse swerve close, so that the nave of the well-wrought wheel may seem to come up to the edge of the stone, which yet avoid to touch." (*Hom. Il. 23.335 ff).*

Socrates Enough. Now, Ion, will a doctor or a charioteer be the better judge

537c whether Homer speaks correctly or not in these lines?

Ion A charioteer, of course.

Socrates Because he has this art, or for some other reason?

Ion No, because it is his art.

Socrates And to every art has been apportioned by God a power of knowing a particular business? For I take it that what we know by the art of piloting we cannot also know by that of medicine.

Ion No, to be sure.

Socrates And what we know by medicine, we cannot by carpentry also?

Ion No, indeed.

537d ***Socrates*** And this rule holds for all the arts, that what we know by one of them we cannot know by another? But before you answer that, just tell me this: do you agree that one art is of one sort, and another of another?

Ion Yes.

Socrates Do you argue this as I do, and call one art different from another when one is a knowledge of one kind of thing, and another a knowledge of another kind?

537e ***Ion*** Yes.

Socrates Since, I suppose, if it were a knowledge of the same things—

how could we say that one was different from another, when both could give us the same knowledge? Just as I know that there are five of these fingers, and you equally know the same fact about them; and if I should ask you whether both you and I know this same fact by the same art of numeration, or by different arts, you would reply, I presume, that it was by the same?

Ion Yes.

538a ***Socrates*** Then tell me now, what I was just going to ask you, whether you think this rule holds for all the arts—that by the same art we must know the same things, and by a different art things that are not the same; but if the art is other, the things we know by it must be different also.

Ion I think it is so, Socrates.

Socrates Then he who has not a particular art will be incapable of knowing aright the words or works of that art?

538b ***Ion*** True.

Socrates Then will you or a charioteer be the better judge of whether Homer speaks well or not in the lines that you quoted?

Ion A charioteer.

Socrates Because, I suppose, you are a rhapsode and not a charioteer.

Ion Yes.

Socrates And the rhapsode's art is different from the charioteer's?

Ion Yes.

Socrates Then if it is different, it is also a knowledge of different things.

Ion Yes.

Socrates Now, what of the passage where Homer tells how Hecamede,

538c Nestor's concubine, gives the wounded Machaon a posset? His words are something like this: "Of Pramneian wine it was, and therein she grated cheese of goat's milk with a grater of bronze; and thereby an onion as a relish for drink." (*Hom. Il. 11.639-40)* Is it for the doctor's or the rhapsode's art to discern aright whether Homer speaks correctly here or not?

Ion For the doctor's.

Socrates Well now, when Homer says:

538d "And she passed to the bottom like a plummet which, set on a horn from an ox of the field, goes in haste to bring mischief among the ravenous fishes" — (*Hom. Il. 24.80-82)* are we to say it is for the fisherman's or for the rhapsode's art to decide what he means by this, and whether it is rightly or wrongly spoken?

Ion Clearly, Socrates, for the fisherman's art.

Socrates Then please observe: suppose you were questioning me and should ask:

538e "Since therefore, Socrates, you find it is for these several arts to appraise the passages of Homer that belong to each, be so good as to make out those also that are for the seer and the seer's art, and show me the sort of passages that come under his ability to distinguish whether they are well or ill done"; observe how easily and truly I shall answer you. For he has many passages, both in the *Odyssey*, as for instance the words of Theoclymenus, the seer of the line of Melampus, to the suitors:

539a "Hapless men, what bane is this afflicts you? Your heads and faces and limbs below are shrouded in night, and wailing is enkindled, and cheeks are wet with tears: of ghosts the porch is full, and the court full of them also, hastening hell-wards 'neath the gloom: and the sun is perished out of heaven, and an evil mist is spread abroad;" (*Hom. Od. 20.351-57)*

539b and there are many passages in the Iliad also, as in the fight at the rampart, where he says:"For as they were eager to pass over, a bird had crossed them, an eagle of lofty flight, pressing the host at the left hand,

539c and bearing a blood-red monster of a snake, alive and still struggling; nor had it yet unlearnt the lust of battle. For bending back it smote its captor on the breast by the neck, and the bird in the bitterness of pain cast it away to the ground, and dropped it down in the midst of the throng;" "and then with a cry flew off on the wafting winds." (*Hom. Il. 12.200-7)* This passage, and others of the sort, are those that I should say the seer has to examine and judge.

Ion And you speak the truth, Socrates.

Socrates And so do you, Ion, in saying that. Now you must do as I did, and in return for my picking out from the Odyssey and the Iliad the kinds of passage that belong severally to the seer,

539e the doctor, and the fisherman, you have now to pick out for me—since you are so much more versed in Homer than I—the kinds which belong to the rhapsode, Ion, and the rhapsode's art, and which he should be able to consider and distinguish beyond the rest of mankind.

Ion What I say, Socrates, is—"all passages."

Socrates Surely you do not say "all," Ion! Can you be so forgetful? And yet forgetfulness would ill become a rhapsode.

540a ***Ion*** Why, how am I forgetting?

Socrates Do you not remember that you said that the art of the rhapsode was different from that of the charioteer?

Ion I remember.

Socrates And you also admitted that, being different, it would know different things?

Ion Yes.

Socrates Then by your own account the rhapsode's art cannot know everything, nor the rhapsode either.

Ion Let us say, everything except those instances, Socrates.

540b ***Socrates*** By "those instances" you imply the subjects of practically all the other arts. Well, as he does not know all of them, which kinds will he know?

Ion Those things, I imagine, that it befits a man to say, and the sort of thing that a woman should say; the sort for a slave and the sort for a freeman; and the sort for a subject or for a ruler.

Socrates Do you mean that the rhapsode will know better than the pilot what sort of thing a ruler of a storm-tossed vessel at sea should say?

Ion No, the pilot knows better in that case.

540c ***Socrates*** Well, will the rhapsode know better than the doctor what sort of thing a ruler of a sick man should say?

Ion Not in that case either.

Socrates But he will know the sort for a slave, you say?

Ion Yes.

Socrates For instance, if the slave is a cowherd, you say the rhapsode will know what the other should say to pacify his cows when they get fierce, but the cowherd will not?

Ion That is not so.

Socrates Well, the sort of thing that a woman ought to say—a spinning-woman—about the working of wool?

40d ***Ion*** No.

Socrates But he will know what a man should say, when he is a general exhorting his men?

Ion Yes, that sort of thing the rhapsode will know.

Socrates Well, but is the art of the rhapsode the art of the general?

Ion I, at any rate, should know what a general ought to say.

Socrates Yes, since I daresay you are good at generalship also, Ion. For in fact, if you happened to have skill in horsemanship as well as in the lyre, you would know when horses were well or ill managed:

540e but if I asked you, "By which art is it, Ion, that you know that horses are being well managed, by your skill as a horseman, or as a player of the lyre?" what would your answer be?

Ion I should say, by my skill as a horseman.

Socrates And if again you were distinguishing the good lyre-players, you would admit that you distinguished by your skill in the lyre, and not by your skill as a horseman.

Ion Yes.

Socrates And when you judge of military matters, do you judge as having skill in generalship, or as a good rhapsode?

Ion To my mind, there is no difference.

541a ***Socrates*** What, no difference, do you say? Do you mean that the art of the rhapsode and the general is one, not two?

Ion It is one, to my mind.

Socrates So that anyone who is a good rhapsode is also, in fact, a good general?

Ion Certainly, Socrates.

Socrates And again, anyone who happens to be a good general is also a good rhapsode.

Ion No there I do not agree.

Socrates But still you agree that anyone who is a good rhapsode

541b is also a good general?

Ion To be sure.

Socrates And you are the best rhapsode in Greece?

Ion Far the best, Socrates.

Socrates Are you also, Ion, the best general in Greece?

Ion Be sure of it, Socrates and that I owe to my study of Homer.

Socrates Then how, in Heaven's name, can it be, Ion, that you, who are both the best general and the best rhapsode in Greece, go about performing as a rhapsode to the Greeks, but not as a general?

541c Or do you suppose that the Greeks feel a great need of a rhapsode in the glory of his golden crown, but of a general none at all?

Ion It is because my city, Socrates, is under the rule and generalship of your people, and is not in want of a general; whilst you and Sparta would not choose me as a general, since you think you manage well enough for yourselves.

Socrates My excellent Ion, you are acquainted with Apollodorus of Cyzicus, are you not?

Ion What might he be?

Socrates A man whom the Athenians have often chosen as their general, though a foreigner;

541d and Phanosthenes of Andros, and Heracleides of Clazomenae, whom my city invests with the high command and other offices although they are foreigners, because they have proved themselves to be competent. And will she not choose Ion of Ephesus as her general, and honor him, if he shows himself competent? Why, you Ephesians are by origin Athenians, are you not, and Ephesus is inferior to no city?

541e But in fact, Ion, if you are right in saying it is by art and knowledge that you are able to praise Homer, you are playing me false: you have professed to me that you know any amount of fine things about Homer, and you promise to display them; but you are only deceiving me, and so far from displaying the subjects of your skill, you decline even to tell me what they are, for all my entreaties. You are a perfect Proteus in the way you take on every kind of shape, twisting about this way and that, until at last you elude my grasp in the guise of a general, so as to avoid displaying your skill

542a in Homeric lore. Now if you are an artist and, as I was saying just now, you only promised me a display about Homer to deceive me, you are playing me false; whilst if you are no artist, but speak fully and finely about Homer, as I said you did, without any knowledge but by a divine dispensation which causes you to be possessed by the poet, you play quite fair. Choose therefore which of the two you prefer us to call you, dishonest or divine.

Ion The difference is great, Socrates; for it is far nobler to be called divine.

542b ***Socrates*** Then you may count on this nobler title in our minds, Ion, of being a divine and not an artistic praiser of Homer.

Determine Three 'Ideas' From This Work

Idea	Passage(s)	Reason(s)
1.		
2.		
3.		

A Quick Analysis

Some of the ideas Socrates seems to be investigating are art, knowledge, inspiration, expertise. From where do the better natures we participate in derive?

Plato

Though he probably regarded himself a teacher, artistically, by some accounts Plato started out life as a playwright. I guess then, artistically, he ended his life as a playwright as well. Anyway this is what makes the Dialogues so readable. They are witty and insightful. The language is rich and full, just as you would expect from a poet or writer during this high time of Greek culture.

Still, Plato saw the dialogues only as popular reading. We will find little of him in the dialogues as they mainly feature Socrates. If that is the case, what do we know of Plato the Philosopher? Now we have sort of the opposite problem. As we try to see Socrates shine through the words of Plato so we try to see Plato within the words he gives to Socrates.

We do know many things about him; his family was political, therefore his education was extensive. We know that he met Socrates early in his life, yet pursued a military career (as would be the want of his family) and politics. However, with the death of Socrates at the hands of an increasingly autocratic government, he seems to have shifted away from politics. He began to see only the worthy, those who have followed Socrates' lead and sought wisdom, as viable leaders.

Plato takes Socrates' basic ideas and expounds, extends and conforms them to his view of the ideal state, where people get along and the state looks out for the needs of its citizens. And not just an ideal state but a state of ideals where we can move beyond the partial images of selfish and ignorant thought to full vision and wisdom.

To this end he returned to Athens and sets up the "Academy" (named for its location near the Grove of Academus) in order to educate future statesmen.

Virtue

As with Socrates, Virtue is everything for Plato as well. Striving for the best is the only way to live life. In this he is truly Socrates' disciple. Sure the bar is high and may seem pie in the sky, but that does not mean we do not strive for it. "*Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, Or what's a heaven for?*" (Robert Browning). Plato tempers and expands Socrates' ideas, giving form and meaning to the incessant questioning. He handles a lot of the how as well as the why, but he too sees an objective truth and guiding principle. There must be an objective base for all things. If the subjective is the rule then there is nothing which permanently binds us to the Good; I can change social or cultural norms or abide by them only as a matter of convenience and convenience is not virtue.

The Forms

We can 'see' overall ideas, as we looked at in the last lesson, but now we must explore Plato's idea of *the ideal*. In many of his dialogues, Plato mentions 'supra-sensible' (above the senses) entities he calls '*Forms*' (or 'Ideas'). So, for example, in the *Phaedo* (see *Phaedo* 74a-75d), Plato talks about equality and the *idea of* equality, that is, particular sensible *equal* things for example, equal sticks or stones are equal because of their "participation" or "sharing" in the character of the *Form of Equality*, which is absolutely, changelessly, perfectly, and essentially equal.

Think of it this way: for us to recognize two pieces of a tree on the ground as 'sticks', because their *accidents* could be completely different (one could be oak and the other magnolia) there must be some set formal idea of what is a stick *is*, aside from its accidents. Not only must there be an ideal but we must be able to grasp it, that is, that these things can 'participate' in the larger idea of

'stick'. Plato sometimes characterizes this participation in the Form as a kind of imaging, or 'approximation' of the Form.

The same may be said of insensible, non-particular things, the many things that are greater or smaller and the *Forms of Great and Small* (*Phaedo* 75c-d), or the many tall things and the *Form of Tall* (*Phaedo* 100e), or the many beautiful things and the *Form of Beauty* (*Phaedo* 75c-d, *Symposium* 211e, *Republic* V.476c). When Plato writes about 'instances' of Forms 'approximating' Forms, it is easy to infer that, for Plato, Forms are archtypes. If so, Plato believes that The *Form of Beauty* is perfect beauty, the *Form of Justice* is perfect justice, and so forth. Conceiving of Forms in this way was important to Plato because it enabled those who grasp the entities to be best able to judge to what extent 'sensible instances' of the Forms are good examples of the Forms they approximate. That is, judging something by an objective norm.

Keep In Mind: this is different than *substance* and *accidents*.

One question: *a priori* or *a posteriori*?

The Middle Dialogues: Answers, I got Answers….

(Forms, Morality and Love)

As mentioned in previous chapters (and rehashed here), Plato's early works mainly reflect the teachings of his teacher, Socrates, and are almost all in the form of *Socratic Dialogues*, using the *Socratic Method* in which Socrates because he is merely seeking to understand (cough, cough) asks somebody what appears at first glance to be a straightforward question, such as "what is beauty?" or "can virtue be taught?". The person, often sought out by Socrates because of their expertise in an area (though the encounters *seem* accidental) confidently gives an answer, but Socrates, by asking further 'questions', shows that the person really *doesn't* know the answer after all. The key feature of the early works is that they never give the answer to these questions – their purpose is to make the reader think for himself and come to his own conclusions about the subject being asked. These dialogues are skillfully written 'plays' in their own right and often feature real historical figures, other philosophers or their disciples. They probably give a reasonably accurate picture of what Socrates was really like (an astonishingly irritating man to try to have a conversation with!). Several of these works are attacks on the Sophists - professional teachers of rhetoric who made a living by teaching aristocratic young men who wanted to learn the art of public speaking (an extremely important skill in Athens). Socrates considered the sophists to be completely 'amoral' (lacking virtue) because they taught how to argue anything from both sides, without reference to which was "right" or "wrong".

In the "middle" dialogues, Plato's Socrates actually begins supplying answers to some of the questions he asks, or at least beginning to put forth positive doctrines (*authoritative teachings*) on the subjects. This is generally seen as the first appearance of Plato's own views. What becomes most prominent in the middle dialogues is the idea that knowledge comes of *grasping* knowledge one already has of objective truths, unchanging *Forms* or *essences*, along with active seeking of the knowledge of such Forms. The immortality of the soul, and specific doctrines about justice, truth, and beauty, begin appearing here. The *Symposium* (a drinking party) and the *Republic* (a political party?) are considered the prime examples of Plato's middle dialogues. It is here that we also meet the *Allegory of the Cave* (see below).

The Late Dialogues

(Methodology, Forms and Law)

Those dialogues considered to be written last by Plato look more at the "big picture" – how was the world created; what are the ideal characteristics of the good ruler; what laws should the state

have, etc. Plato has danced about the edges in the earlier dialogues, laying foundations for the difficult ideas, and now begins to lay them out. Consequentially these are difficult and challenging philosophical works, and represent Plato's mature thoughts on the subjects raised in his earlier works. These are not, it must be said, remotely as easy and enjoyable to read as his earlier works.

Timaeus, *Sophist*, and *Laws* probably represent the centerpieces of the Late writings, with *Laws* being one worth concentrating on for understanding later ideas of governance.

Digging Deep

So let us look at some of these themes, but from the other angle. What you will be supplied with is the passage notation, and you will need to determine what idea, from the previous exercise it is tied to.

PASSAGE	IDEA
Gorgias 468b; *Meno* 77e-78b	
Republic I. 354	
Protagoras 352a-c; *Gorgias* 468b	
Republic I.335	
Euthydemus 281d-e	
Protagoras 329b-333b, 361a-b	
Gorgias 472b, 475e-476a	
Phaedo 72e-76a ; Symposium 211	

Exercise 1: Guess the Platonic Thought

Putting It Together

Reading, as one might say, *is believing*. Once again it is the delving into the works which will help us to fully appreciate and understand these over-simplifications. Alfred North Whitehead, a 20th Century mathematician and philosopher stated that all of Western Philosophy was a series of *footnotes* to Plato[14]. Do you agree or disagree with such a blanket statement? Do you think you are qualified to do so (remember poor Ion)? Do you think you will only discover the truth of the statement as time goes on?

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[14] "*The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato*." To be exact.

A Plato Addendum: Allegory of The Cave

Socrates (and Plato) uses illustration and comparison in order to educate and convince; what we might (and probably should) call a*llegory* (the using of symbolic or physical representations to express spiritual or abstract ideas). Recall how Socrates said that just like a body does ill or well and we can see that, so the soul too can be understood in the same light (*Crito 47*). We can see a certain a posteriori method in his illustrations – take what you know and push through to understanding. Hopefully I am making some sense here (and sense of Platonic thought): we move (journey) from partial, incomplete or faulty knowledge to pure complete knowledge; this is equally true in the material world and the objective world.

But First: The Analogy of the Divided Line

The basic framework for understanding Platonic thought is a table, divided into quadrants. The quadrants are further divided by level of 'reality' so to speak, in an ever increasing upward depth.

	Objects	Mental States
Intelligible World	The Good	Knowledge / Wisdom
	Forms	Thinking
	Mathematical Objects	
World of Appearances	Visible Things	Belief
	Images	Imagination

Table 11: Plato -- The Divided Line

The sensible world is the world of things, but these things are only sense-perceived images of things. Whether physical or mental, these things really are not *real* in the sense that they are mere reflections of the *real* things which we can know through our intellect.

Therefore there is a 'division' between the flawed sensible/mental world and the perfect objective/intelligible world.

Digging Deeper – The Cave

So what is all this talk I hear about a cave? In Chapter XXV of the dialog known as *The Republic*, Plato seeks to illustrate the above tenets using a cave in which prisoners are trapped in a pretty stringent time-out corner. Unable to move or look around they are left with only the things they can see by which they can understand their world, which in their case turns out to be the back wall of the cave. Behind and unbeknownst to them is an elevated walkway on which passers-by carry objects. To light their way is a large fire. This fire casts shadows on the back wall, which consequentially are all that the prisoners can perceive. Most people, Plato feels, live at this level, never knowing the source of their understanding or the faint shadow of reality which it represents.

The cave then shows the nature of the universe as well as the levels of knowledge, understanding, reality and frankly effort which go with the path of enlightenment. Outside the cave lies the pure light of Forms and Reason, which he also says can be a bit overwhelming even for the seeker of Wisdom. It serves the dual purpose of explaining the physical and the interior worlds at the same time. Everything in one is paralleled in the other for we are beings of both body and soul, in a universe which is both physical and non-sensible.

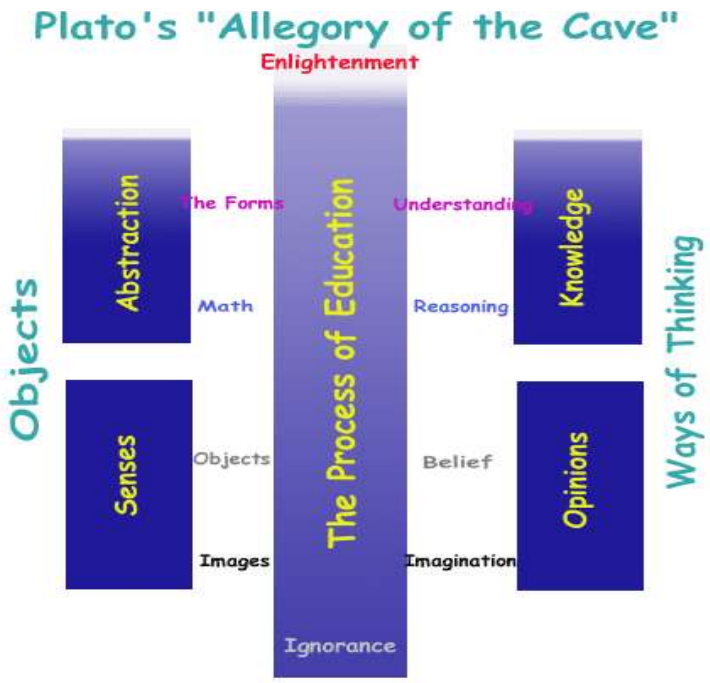

Figure 2: The Allegory Of the Cave

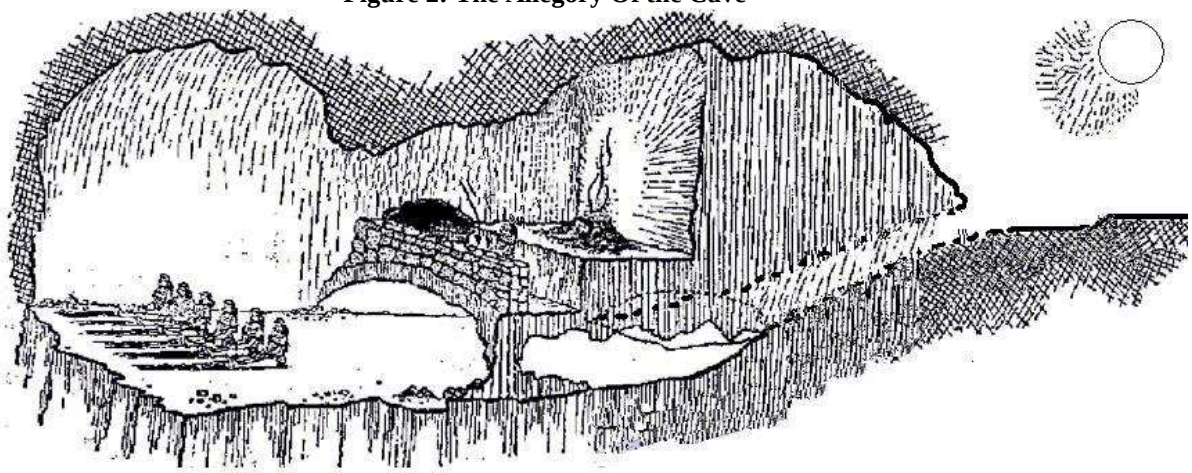

Figure 3: Illustration of the Cave Allegory

Yet Another Platonic Addendum: Grouping the Dialogues
(For your Consideration)

The dialogues are sometimes grouped by common thought or theme. This is, in my mind, only helpful simply because it means you can read similar ideas 'together'. In this case they are in groups of 4 (hence *tetra*), a grouping suggested by past authors who claim that Plato spoke of them this way. Who knows? There are other groupings but none of them ultimately are really important to understanding Platonic thought.

Overview Of the Groupings (*Tetralogies*)	**Cause (*aitia*)**	**Desires (*epithumiai*) Nature (*phusis*)**	**Will (*thumos*) Judgment (*krisis*)**	**Reason (*logos*) Order (*kosmos*)**
Start of quest: what is man?	***ALCIBIADES***	*LYSIS*	*LACHES*	*CHARMIDES*
	man	friendship (*philo-*)	manhood (*andreia*)	wisdom (*-sophos*)
Anti-Sophists: conjecture (*eikasia*)	***PROTAGORAS***	*HIPPIAS Maj.*	*GORGIAS*	*HIPPIAS min.*
	relativism	illusion of beauty	illusion of justice	illusion of truth
Socrates' trial: true belief (*pistis*)	***MENO***	*EUTHYPHRO*	*THE APOLOGY*	*CRITO*
	pragmatism	letter of the law	law in action	spirit of the law
The soul *(psuche)*	***THE SYMPOSIUM***	*PHAEDRUS*	*THE REPUBLIC*	*PHAEDO*
	the driving force: *eros*	nature of the soul: *eros<=>logos*	behavior of the soul: justice	destiny of the soul: being
speech (*logos*) knowledge (*dianoia*)	***CRATYLUS***	*ION*	*EUTHYDEMUS*	*MENEXENUS*
	the words of speech	logos of the poet	logos of the sophist	logos of the politician
dialectic science (*episteme*)	***PARMENIDES***	*THEAETETUS*	*THE SOPHIST*	*THE STATESMAN*
	the traps of reason	the limits of reason	the rules of reason	the goals of reason
Man in world order (*kosmos*)	***PHILEBUS***	*TIMAEUS*	*CRITIAS*	*THE LAWS*
	the good of man	contemplating (*theoria*)	deciding (*krisis*)	acting (*erga*)

Table 12: Plato's Tetralogies

Plato: Laws Book X

Personae

- An Athenian Stranger – (Socrates or Plato?)
- Clinias – a Cretan
- Megillus – a Lacedaemonian

8 84a **Athenian** Next after cases of outrage we shall state for cases of violence one universally inclusive principle of law, to this effect:—No one shall carry or drive off anything which belongs to others, nor shall he use any of his neighbor's goods unless he has gained the consent of the owner; for from such action proceed all the evils above mentioned—past, present and to come. Of the rest, the most grave are the licentious and outrageous acts of the young; and outrages offend most gravely when they are directed against sacred things, and they are especially grave when they are directed against objects which are public as well as holy, or partially public, as being shared in by the members of a tribe or other similar community. Second, and second in point of gravity, come offences against sacred objects and tombs that are private;

8 85a and third, offences against parents, when a person commits the outrage otherwise than in the cases already described.[1] A fourth[2] kind of outrage is when a man, in defiance of the magistrates, drives or carries off or uses any of their things without their own consent; and a fifth kind will be an outrage against the civic right of an individual private citizen which calls for judicial vindication. To all these severally one all-embracing law must be assigned. As to temple-robbing, whether done by open violence or secretly,

8 85b it has been already stated summarily what the punishment should be; and in respect of all the outrages, whether of word or deed, which a man commits, either by tongue or hand, against the gods, we must state the punishment he should suffer, after we have first delivered the admonition. It shall be as follows:—No one who believes, as the laws prescribe, in the existence of the gods has ever yet done an impious deed voluntarily, or uttered a lawless word: he that acts so is in one or other of these three conditions of mind—either he does not believe in what I have said; or, secondly, he believes that the gods exist, but have no care for men; or, thirdly, he believes that they are easy to win over when bribed by offerings and prayers

8 85c **Clinias** What, then, shall we do or say to such people?

Athenian Let us listen first, my good sir, to what they, as I imagine, say mockingly, in their contempt for us.

Clinias What is it?

Athenian In derision they would probably say this: "O Strangers of Athens, Lacedaemon and Crete, what you say is true. Some of us do not believe in gods at

all; others of us believe in gods of the kinds you mention. So we claim now, as you claimed in the matter of laws,

8 85d that before threatening us harshly, you should first try to convince and teach us, by producing adequate proofs, that gods exist, and that they are too good to be wheedled by gifts and turned aside from justice. For as it is, this and such as this is the account of them we hear from those who are reputed the best of poets, orators, seers, priests, and thousands upon thousands of others; and consequently most of us, instead of seeking to avoid wrong-doing, do the wrong and then try to make it good.

8 85e Now from lawgivers like you, who assert that you are gentle rather than severe, we claim that you should deal with us first by way of persuasion; and if what you say about the existence of the gods is superior to the arguments of others in point of truth, even though it be but little superior in eloquence, then probably you would succeed in convincing us. Try then, if you think this reasonable, to meet our challenge.

Clinias Surely it seems easy, Stranger, to assert with truth

8 86a that gods exist?

Athenian How so?

Clinias First, there is the evidence of the earth, the sun, the stars, and all the universe, and the beautiful ordering of the seasons, marked out by years and months; and then there is the further fact that all Greeks and barbarians believe in the existence of gods.

Athenian My dear sir, these bad men cause me alarm—for I will never call it "awe"—lest haply they scoff at us. For the cause of the corruption in their case is one you are not aware of; since you imagine that it is solely by their incontinence in regard to pleasures and desires

8 86b that their souls are impelled to that impious life of theirs.

Clinias What other cause can there be, Stranger, besides this?

Athenian One which you, who live elsewhere, could hardly have any knowledge of or notice at all.

Clinias What is this cause you are now speaking of?

Athenian A very grievous unwisdom which is reputed to be the height of wisdom.

Clinias What do you mean?

Athenian We at Athens have accounts[4] preserved in writing (though, I am told, such do not exist in your country, owing to the excellence of your polity)

8 86c some of them being in a kind of meter, others without meter, telling about the gods: the oldest of these accounts relate how the first substance of Heaven and all else came into being, and shortly after the beginning they go on to give a detailed theogony, and to tell how, after they were born, the gods associated with one another. These accounts, whether good or bad for the hearers in other respects, it is hard for us to censure because of their antiquity; but as regards the tendance and respect due to parents, I certainly would never praise them or say that they are either helpful or wholly true accounts.

8 86d Such ancient accounts, however, we may pass over and dismiss: let them be told in the way best pleasing to the gods. It is rather the novel views of our

modern scientists[5] that we must hold responsible as the cause of mischief. For the result of the arguments of such people is this,—that when you and I try to prove the existence of the gods by pointing to these very objects—sun, moon, stars, and earth—as instances of deity and divinity, people who have been converted by these scientists will assert that these things are simply earth and stone,

8 86e incapable of paying any heed to human affairs, and that these beliefs of ours are speciously tricked out with arguments to make them plausible.

Clinias The assertion you mention, Stranger, is indeed a dangerous one, even if it stood alone; but now that such assertions are legion, the danger is still greater.

Athenian What then? What shall we say? What must we do? Are we to make our defense as it were before a court of impious men, where someone had accused us [887a] of doing something dreadful by assuming in our legislation the existence of gods? Or shall we rather dismiss the whole subject and revert again to our laws, lest our prelude prove actually more lengthy than the laws? For indeed our discourse would be extended in no small degree if we were to furnish those men who desire to be impious with an adequate demonstration by means of argument concerning those subjects which ought, as they claimed, to be discussed, and so to convert them to fear of the gods, and then finally, when we had caused them to shrink from irreligion, to proceed to enact the appropriate laws.

8 87b **Clinias** Still, Stranger, we have frequently (considering the shortness of the time) made[6] the very statement,—that we have no need on the present occasion to prefer brevity of speech to lengthiness (for, as the saying goes, “no one is chasing on our heels”); and to show ourselves choosing the briefest in preference to the best would be mean and ridiculous. And it is of the highest importance that our arguments, showing that the gods exist and that they are good and honor justice more than do men, should by all means possess some degree of persuasiveness;

8 87c for such a prelude is the best we could have in defense, as one may say, of all our laws. So without any repugnance or undue haste, and with all the capacity we have for endowing such arguments with persuasiveness, let us expound them as fully as we can, and without any reservation.

Athenian This speech of yours seems to me to call for a prefatory prayer, seeing that you are so eager and ready; nor is it possible any longer to defer our statement. Come, then; how is one to argue on behalf of the existence of the gods without passion? For we needs must be vexed and indignant with the men who have been, and now are,

8 87d responsible for laying on us this burden of argument, through their disbelief in those stories which they used to hear, while infants and sucklings, from the lips of their nurses and mothers—stories chanted to them, as it were, in lullabies, whether in jest or in earnest; and the same stories they heard repeated also in prayers at sacrifices, and they saw spectacles which illustrated them, of the kind which the young delight to see and hear when performed at sacrifices; and their own parents they saw showing the utmost zeal on behalf of themselves and their children in addressing the gods in prayers and supplications, as though they most certainly existed; and at the rising and setting of the sun and moon

8 87e they heard and saw the prostrations and devotions of all the Greeks and barbarians, under all conditions of adversity and prosperity, directed to these luminaries, not as though they were not gods,

but as though they most certainly were gods beyond the shadow of a doubt—all this evidence is contemned by these people, and that for no sufficient reason, as everyone endowed with a grain of sense would affirm; and so they are now forcing us to enter on our present argument.

8 88a How, I ask, can one possibly use mild terms in admonishing such men, and at the same time teach them, to begin with, that the gods do exist? Yet one must bravely attempt the task; for it would never do for both parties to be enraged at once,—the one owing to greed for pleasure, the other with indignation at men like them. So let our prefatory address to the men thus corrupted in mind be dispassionate in tone, and, quenching our passion, let us speak mildly, as though we were conversing with one particular person of the kind described, in the following terms: "My child, you are still young, and time as it advances

8 88b will cause you to reverse many of the opinions you now hold: so wait till then before pronouncing judgment on matters of most grave importance; and of these the gravest of all—though at present you regard it as naught—is the question of holding a right view about the gods and so living well, or the opposite. Now in the first place, I should be saying what is irrefutably true if I pointed out to you this signal fact, that neither you by yourself nor yet your friends are the first and foremost to adopt this opinion about the gods; rather is it true that people who suffer from this disease are always springing up, in greater or less numbers. But I, who have met with many of these people, would declare this to you, that not a single man

8 88c who from his youth has adopted this opinion, that the gods have no existence, has ever yet continued till old age constant in the same view; but the other two false notions about the gods do remain—not, indeed, with many, but still with some,—the notion, namely, that the gods exist, but pay no heed to human affairs, and the other notion that they do pay heed, but are easily won over by prayers and offerings. For a doctrine about them that is to prove the truest you can possibly form you will, if you take my advice, wait, considering the while whether the truth stands thus or otherwise,

8 88d and making enquiries not only from all other men, but especially from the lawgiver; and in the meantime do not dare to be guilty of any impiety in respect of the gods. For it must be the endeavor of him who is legislating for you both now and hereafter to instruct you in the truth of these matters.

Clinias Our statement thus far, Stranger, is most excellent.

Athenian Very true, O Megillus and Clinias; but we have plunged unawares into a wondrous argument.

Clinias What is it you mean?

8 88e **Athenian** That which most people account to be the most scientific of all arguments.

Clinias Explain more clearly.

Athenian It is stated by some that all things which are coming into existence, or have or will come into existence, do so partly by nature, partly by art, and partly owing to chance.

Clinias Is it not a right statement?

Athenian It is likely, to be sure, that what men of science say is true. Anyhow, let us follow them up, and consider

8 89a what it is that the people in their camp really intend.

Clinias By all means let us do so.

Athenian It is evident, they assert, that the greatest and most beautiful things are the work of nature and of chance, and the lesser things that of art,—for art receives from nature the great and primary products as existing, and itself molds and shapes all the smaller ones, which we commonly call "artificial."

Clinias How do you mean?

8 89b **Athenian** I will explain it more clearly. Fire and water and earth and air, they say, all exist by nature and chance, and none of them by art; and by means of these, which are wholly inanimate, the bodies which come next—those, namely, of the earth, sun, moon and stars—have been brought into existence. It is by chance all these elements move, by the interplay of their respective forces, and according as they meet together and combine fittingly,—hot with cold, dry with moist,

8 89c soft with hard, and all such necessary mixtures as result from the chance combination of these opposites,—in this way and by those means they have brought into being the whole Heaven and all that is in the Heaven, and all animals, too, and plants—after that all the seasons had arisen from these elements; and all this, as they assert, not owing to reason, nor to any god or art, but owing, as we have said, to nature and chance.[7] As a later product of these, art comes later; and it, being mortal itself and of mortal birth, begets later playthings

8 89d which share but little in truth, being images of a sort akin to the arts themselves—images such as painting begets, and music, and the arts which accompany these. Those arts which really produce something serious are such as share their effect with nature,—like medicine, agriculture, and gymnastic. Politics too, as they say, shares to a small extent in nature, but mostly in art; and in like manner all legislation which is

8 89e based on untrue assumptions is due, not to nature, but to art.

Clinias What do you mean?

Athenian The first statement, my dear sir, which these people make about the gods is that they exist by art and not by nature,—by certain legal conventions[8] which differ from place to place, according as each tribe agreed when forming their laws. They assert, moreover, that there is one class of things beautiful by nature, and another class beautiful by convention[9]; while as to things just, they do not exist at all by nature, but men are constantly in dispute about them and continually altering them, and whatever alteration they make at any time

8 90a is at that time authoritative, though it owes its existence to art and the laws, and not in any way to nature. All these, my friends, are views which young people imbibe from men of science, both prose-writers and poets, who maintain that the height of justice is to succeed by force; whence it comes that the young people are afflicted with a plague of impiety, as though the gods were not such as the law commands us to conceive them; and, because of this, factions also arise, when these teachers attract them towards the life that is right "according to nature," which consists in being master over the rest in reality, instead of being a slave to others according to legal convention.[10]

8 90b **Clinias** What a horrible statement you have described, Stranger! And what widespread corruption of the young in private families as well as publicly in the

States!

Athenian That is indeed true, Clinias. What, then, do you think the lawgiver ought to do, seeing that these people have been armed in this way for a long time past? Should he merely stand up in the city and threaten all the people that unless they affirm that the gods exist and conceive them in their minds to be such as the law maintains[11] and so likewise with regard to the beautiful and the just and all the greatest things,

8 90c as many as relate to virtue and vice, that they must regard and perform these in the way prescribed by the lawgiver in his writings; and that whosoever fails to show himself obedient to the laws must either be put to death or else be punished, in one case by stripes and imprisonment, in another by degradation, in others by poverty and exile? But as to persuasion, should the lawgiver, while enacting the people's laws, refuse to blend any persuasion with his statements, and thus tame them so far as possible?

8 90d **Clinias** Certainly not, Stranger; on the contrary, if persuasion can be applied in such matters in even the smallest degree, no lawgiver who is of the slightest account must ever grow weary, but must (as they say) "leave no stone unturned"[12] to reinforce the ancient saying that gods exist, and all else that you recounted just now; and law itself he must also defend and art, as things which exist by nature or by a cause not inferior to nature, since according to right reason they are the offspring of mind, even as you are now, as I think, asserting; and I agree with you.

Athenian What now, my most ardent Clinias? Are not statements thus made to the masses

8 90e difficult for us to keep up with in argument, and do they not also involve us in arguments portentously long?

Clinias Well now, Stranger, if we had patience with ourselves when we discoursed at such length on the subjects of drinking and music,[13] shall we not exercise patience in dealing with the gods and similar subjects? Moreover, such a discourse is of the greatest help for intelligent legislation,

8 91a since legal ordinances when put in writing remain wholly unchanged, as though ready to submit to examination for all time, so that one need have no fear even if they are hard to listen to at first, seeing that even the veriest dullard can come back frequently to examine them, nor yet if they are lengthy, provided that they are beneficial. Consequently, in my opinion, it could not possibly be either reasonable or pious for any man to refrain from lending his aid to such arguments to the best of his power.[14]

Megillus What Clinias says, Stranger, is, I think, most excellent.

8 91b **Athenian** Most certainly it is, Megillus; and we must do as he says. For if the assertions mentioned had not been sown broadcast well-nigh over the whole world of men, there would have been no need of counter-arguments to defend the existence of the gods; but as it is, they are necessary. For when the greatest laws are being destroyed by wicked men, who is more bound to come to their rescue than the lawgiver?

Megillus No one.

Athenian Come now, Clinias, do you also answer me again,

8 91c for you too must take a hand in the argument: it appears that the person who makes these statements holds fire, water, earth and air to be the first of all things, and that it is precisely to these things that he gives the name of "nature," while soul he asserts to

be a later product therefrom. Probably, indeed, he does not merely "appear" to do this, but actually makes it clear to us in his account.

Clinias Certainly.

Athenian Can it be then, in Heaven's name, that now we have discovered, as it were, a very fountain-head of irrational opinion in all the men who have ever yet handled physical investigations? Consider, and examine each statement. For it is a matter

8 91d of no small importance if it can be shown that those who handle impious arguments, and lead others after them, employ their arguments not only ill, but erroneously. And this seems to me to be the state of affairs.

Clinias Well said; but try to explain wherein the error lies.

Athenian We shall probably have to handle rather an unusual argument.

Clinias We must not shrink, Stranger. You think, I perceive, that we shall be traversing alien ground, outside legislation, if we handle such arguments. But if there is no other way in which it is possible for us to speak in concert with the truth, as now legally declared,

8 91e except this way, then in this way, my good sir, we must speak.

Athenian It appears, then, that I may at once proceed with an argument that is somewhat unusual; it is this. That which is the first cause of becoming and perishing in all things, this is declared by the arguments which have produced the soul of the impious to be not first, but generated later, and that which is the later to be the earlier; and because of this they have fallen into error regarding the real nature of divine existence.

8 **Clinias** I do not yet understand.

92a **Athenian** As regards the soul, my comrade, nearly all men appear to be ignorant of its real nature and its potency, and ignorant not only of other facts about it, but of its origin especially,—how that it is one of the first existences, and prior to all bodies, and that it more than anything else is what governs all the changes and modifications of bodies. And if this is really the state of the case, must not things which are akin to soul be necessarily prior in origin to things which belong to body, seeing that soul

8 92b is older than body?[15]

Clinias Necessarily.

Athenian Then opinion and reflection and thought and art and law will be prior to things hard and soft and heavy and light; and further, the works and actions that are great and primary will be those of art, while those that are natural, and nature itself which they wrongly call by this name—will be secondary, and will derive their origin from art and reason.

8 92c **Clinias** How are they wrong?

Athenian By "nature" they intend to indicate production of things primary; but if soul shall be shown to have been produced first (not fire or air), but soul first and foremost,—it would most truly be described as a superlatively "natural" existence. Such is the state of the case, provided that one can prove that soul is older than body, but not otherwise.

Clinias Most true.

Athenian Shall we then, in the next place, address ourselves to the task of proving this?

8 **Clinias** Certainly.

92d **s**

Athen ian Let us guard against a wholly deceitful argument, lest haply it seduce us who are old with its specious youthfulness, and then elude us and make us a laughing-stock, and so we get the reputation of missing even little things while aiming at big things. Consider then. Suppose that we three had to cross a river that was in violent flood, and that I, being the youngest of the party and having often had experience of currents, were to suggest that the proper course

8 *92e* is for me to make an attempt first by myself—leaving you two in safety—to see whether it is possible for you older men also to cross, or how the matter stands, and then, if the river proved to be clearly fordable, I were to call you, and, by my experience, help you across, while if it proved impassable for such as you, in that case the risk should be wholly mine,—such a suggestion on my part would have sounded reasonable. So too in the present instance; the argument now in front of us is too violent, and probably impassable, for such strength as you possess; so, lest it make you faint and dizzy as it rushes past and poses you with questions

8 *93a* you are unused to answering,[16] and thus causes an unpleasing lack of shapeliness and seemliness, I think that I ought now to act in the way described—question myself first, while you remain listening in safety, and then return answer to myself, and in this way proceed through the whole argument until it has discussed in full the subject of soul, and demonstrated that soul is prior to body.[17]

Clinia s Your suggestion, Stranger, we think excellent; so do as you suggest.

8 *93b* **Athen ian** Come then,—if ever we ought to invoke God's aid, now is the time it ought to be done. Let the gods be invoked with all zeal to aid in the demonstration of their own existence. And let us hold fast, so to speak, to a safe cable as we embark on the present discussion. And it is safest, as it seems to me, to adopt the following method of reply when questions such as this are put on these subjects; for instance, when a man asks me—"Do all things stand still, Stranger, and nothing move? Or is the exact opposite the truth? Or do some things move

8 *93c* and some remain at rest?" My answer will be, "Some things move, others remain at rest."[18] "Then do not the standing things stand, and the moving things move, in a certain place?" "Of course." "And some will do this in one location, and others in several." "You mean," we will say, "that those which have the quality of being at rest at the center move in one location, as when the circumference of circles that are said to stand still revolves?" "Yes. And we perceive that motion of this kind, which simultaneously turns in this revolution both the largest circle and the smallest, distributes itself

8 *93d* to small and great proportionally, altering in proportion its own quantity; whereby it functions as the source of all such marvels as result from its supplying great and small circles simultaneously with harmonizing rates of slow and fast speeds—a condition of things that one might suppose to be impossible." "Quite true." "And by things moving in several places you seem to me to mean all things that move by locomotion, continually passing from one spot to another, and sometimes resting

8 *93e* on one axis[19] and sometimes, by revolving, on several axes. And whenever one such object meets another, if the other is at rest, the moving object is split up; but if they collide with others moving to meet them from an opposite direction, they form a

combination which is midway between the two." "Yes, I affirm that these things are so, just as you describe." "Further, things increase when combined and decrease when separated in all cases where the regular constitution[20] of each persists; but if this does not remain, then both these conditions cause them to perish. And what is the condition which must occur

8 94a in everything to bring about generation? Obviously whenever a starting-principle receiving increase comes to the second change, and from this to the next, and on coming to the third admits of perception by percipients.[21] Everything comes into being by this process of change and alteration; and a thing is really existent whenever it remains fixed, but when it changes into another constitution it is utterly destroyed." Have we now, my friends, mentioned all the forms of motion, capable of numerical classification,[22]

8 94b save only two?

Clinias What two?

Athenian Those, my good sir, for the sake of which, one may say, the whole of our present enquiry was undertaken.

Clinias Explain more clearly.

Athenian It was undertaken, was it not, for the sake of soul?

Clinias Certainly.

Athenian As one of the two let us count that motion which is always able to move other things, but unable to move itself; and that motion which always is able to move both itself and other things,—by way of combination and separation, of increase and decrease, of generation and corruption,—let us count as another separate unit

8 94c in the total number of motions.

Clinias Be it so.

Athenian Thus we shall reckon as ninth on the list that motion which always moves another object and is moved by another; while that motion which moves both itself and another, and which is harmoniously adapted to all forms of action and passion, and is termed the real change and motion of all that really exists,—it, I presume, we shall call the tenth.

8 94d **Clinias** Most certainly.

Athenian Of our total of ten motions, which shall we most correctly adjudge to be the most powerful of all and excelling in effectiveness?

Clinias We are bound to affirm that the motion which is able to move itself excels infinitely, and that all the rest come after it.

Athenian Well said. Must we, then, alter one or two of the wrong statements we have now made?

Clinias Which do you mean?

Athenian Our statement about the tenth seems wrong.

Clinias How?

Athenian Logically it is first in point of origin and power; and the next one is second to it,

8 94e although we absurdly called it ninth a moment ago.

Clinias What do you mean?

Athen This: when we find one thing changing another,

ian and this in turn another, and so on,—of these things shall we ever find one that is the prime cause of change? How will a thing that is moved by another ever be itself the first of the things that cause change? It is impossible. But when a thing that has moved itself changes another thing, and that other a third, and the motion thus spreads progressively through thousands upon thousands of things,

8 95a will the primary source of all their motions be anything else than the movement of that which has moved itself?

Clinias Excellently put, and we must assent to your argument.

Athenian Further, let us question and answer ourselves thus:—Supposing that the Whole of things were to unite and stand still,—as most of these thinkers[23] venture to maintain,—which of the motions mentioned would necessarily arise in it first? That motion, of course, which is self-moving; for it will never be shifted beforehand by another thing,

8 95b since no shifting force exists in things beforehand. Therefore we shall assert that inasmuch as the self-moving motion is the starting-point of all motions and the first to arise in things at rest and to exist in things in motion, it is of necessity the most ancient and potent change of all, while the motion which is altered by another thing and itself moves others comes second.

Clinias Most true.

Athenian Now that we have come to this point in our discourse,

8 95c here is a question we may answer.

Clinias What is it?

Athenian If we should see that this motion had arisen in a thing of earth or water or fire, whether separate or in combination, what condition should we say exists in such a thing?

Clinias What you ask me is, whether we are to speak of a thing as “alive” when it moves itself?

Athenian Yes.

Clinias It is alive, to be sure.

Athenian Well then, when we see soul in things, must we not equally agree that they are alive?

Clinias We must.

8 95d **Athenian** Now stop a moment, in Heaven's name! Would you not desire to observe three points about every object?

Clinias What do you mean?

Athenian One point is the substance, one the definition of the substance, and one the name;[24] and, moreover, about everything that exists there are two questions to be asked.

Clinias How two?

Athenian At one time each of us, propounding the name by itself, demands the definition; at another, propounding the definition by itself, he demands the name.

Clinias Is it something of this kind we mean now to convey?

Athenian Of what kind?

8 95e **Clinias** We have instances of a thing divisible into two halves, both in arithmetic and elsewhere; in arithmetic the name of this is “the even,” and the

definition is “a number divisible into two equal parts.”

Athenian Yes, that is what I mean. So in either case it is the same object, is it not, which we describe, whether, when asked for the definition, we reply by giving the name, or, when asked for the name, we give the definition,—describing one and the same object by the name “even,” and by the definition “a number divisible into two halves”?

Clinias Most certainly.

Athenian What is the definition of that object which has for its name “soul”?

8 96a Can we give it any other definition than that stated just now—”the motion able to move itself”?

Clinias Do you assert that “self-movement” is the definition of that very same substance which has “soul” as the name we universally apply to it?

Athenian That is what I assert. And if this be really so, do we still complain that it has not been sufficiently proved that soul is identical with the prime origin and motion of what is, has been, and shall be, and of all

8 96b that is opposite to these, seeing that it has been plainly shown to be the cause of all change and motion in all things?

Clinias We make no such complaint; on the contrary, it has been proved most sufficiently that soul is of all things the oldest, since it is the first principle of motion.

Athenian Then is not that motion which, when it arises in one object, is caused by another, and which never supplies self-motion to anything, second in order—or indeed as far down the list as one cares to put it,—it being the change of a really soulless body?

Clinias True.

Athenian Truly and finally, then, it would be a most veracious and complete statement

8 96c to say that we find soul to be prior to body, and body secondary and posterior, soul governing and body being governed according to the ordinance of nature.

Clinias Yes, most veracious.

Athenian We recollect, of course, that we previously agreed[25] that if soul could be shown to be older than body, then the things of soul also will be older than those of body.

Clinias Certainly we do.

8 96d **Athenian** Moods and dispositions and wishes and calculations and true opinions and considerations and memories will be prior to bodily length, breadth, depth and strength, if soul is prior to body.

Clinias Necessarily.

Athenian Must we then necessarily agree, in the next place, that soul is the cause of things good and bad, fair and foul, just and unjust, and all the opposites, if we are to assume it to be the cause of all things?

Clinias Of course we must.

Athenian And as soul thus controls and indwells in all things

8 96e everywhere that are moved, must we not necessarily affirm that it controls Heaven also?

Clinias Yes.

Athenian One soul, is it, or several? I will answer for you—”several.” Anyhow, let us assume not less than two—the beneficent soul and that which is capable of effecting results of the opposite kind.

Clinias You are perfectly right.

Athenians Very well, then. Soul drives all things in Heaven and earth and sea by its own motions,

8 97a of which the names are wish, reflection, forethought, counsel, opinion true and false, joy, grief, confidence, fear, hate, love, and all the motions that are akin to these or are prime-working motions; these, when they take over the secondary motions of bodies, drive them all to increase and decrease and separation and combination,[26] and, supervening on these, to heat and cold, heaviness and lightness,

8 97b hardness and softness, whiteness and blackness, bitterness and sweetness, and all those qualities which soul employs, both when it governs all things rightly and happily as a true goddess, in conjunction with reason, and when, in converse with unreason, it produces results which are in all respects the opposite. Shall we postulate that this is so, or do we still suspect that it may possibly be otherwise?

Clinias By no means.

Athenian Which kind of soul, then, shall we say is in control of Heaven and earth and the whole circle? That which is wise and full of goodness, or that which

8 97c has neither quality? To this shall we make reply as follows?

Clinias How?

Athenian If, my good sir, we are to assert that the whole course and motion of Heaven and of all it contains have a motion like to the motion and revolution and reckonings of reason,[27] and proceed in a kindred manner, then clearly we must assert that the best soul regulates the whole cosmos and drives it on its course, which is of the kind described.

Clinias You are right.

8 97d **Athenian** But the bad soul, if it proceeds in a mad and disorderly way.

Clinias That also is right.

Athenian Then what is the nature of the motion of reason? Here, my friends, we come to a question that is difficult to answer wisely; consequently, it is fitting that you should now call me in to assist you with the answer.

Clinias Very good.

Athenian In making our answer let us not bring on night, as it were, at midday, by looking right in the eye of the sun,[28] as though with mortal eyes we could ever behold reason and know it fully;

8 97e the safer way to behold the object with which our question is concerned is by looking at an image of it.

Clinias How do you mean?

Athenian Let us take as an image that one of the ten motions which reason resembles; reminding ourselves of which[29] I, along with you, will make answer.

Clinias You will probably speak admirably.

Athenian Do we still recollect thus much about the things then described, that we assumed that, of the total, some were in motion, others at rest?

Clinias Yes.

Athenian And further, that, of those in motion, some move in one place,

8 98a others move in several places?

Clinias That is so.

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Athenian And that, of these two motions, the motion which moves in one place must necessarily move always round some center, being a copy of the turned wheels; and that this has the nearest possible kinship and similarity to the revolution of reason?[30]

Clinias How do you mean?

Athenian If we described them both as moving regularly and uniformly in the same spot, round the same things and in relation to the same things, according to one rule and system—reason, namely, and the motion that spins in one place

8 98b (likened to the spinning of a turned globe),—we should never be in danger of being deemed unskillful in the construction of fair images by speech.

Clinias Most true.

Athenian On the other hand, will not the motion that is never uniform or regular or in the same place or around or in relation to the same things, not moving in one spot nor in any order

8 98c or system or rule—will not this motion be akin to absolute unreason?

Clinias It will, in very truth.

Athenian So now there is no longer any difficulty in stating expressly that, inasmuch as soul is what we find driving everything round, we must affirm that this circumference of Heaven is of necessity driven round under the care and ordering of either the best soul or its opposite.

Clinias But, Stranger, judging by what has now been said, it is actually impious to make any other assertion than that these things are driven round by one or more souls endowed with all goodness.

Athenian You have attended to our argument admirably, Clinias.

8 98d Now attend to this further point.

Clinias What is that?

Athenian If soul drives round the sum total of sun, moon and all other stars, does it not also drive each single one of them?

Clinias Certainly.

Athenian Then let us construct an argument about one of these stars which will evidently apply equally to them all.

Clinias About which one?

Athenian The sun's body is seen by everyone, its soul by no one. And the same is true of the soul of any other body, whether alive or dead, of living beings. There is, however, a strong suspicion that this class of object, which is wholly imperceptible to sense,

8 98e has grown round all the senses of the body,[31] and is an object of reason alone. Therefore by reason and rational thought let us grasp this fact about it,—

Clinias What fact?

Athenian If soul drives round the sun, we shall be tolerably sure to be right in saying that it does one of three things.

Clinias What things?

Athenian That either it exists everywhere inside of this apparent globular body and directs it, such as it is, just as the soul in us moves us about in all ways; or, having procured itself a body of fire or air (as some argue), it in the form of body pushes forcibly on the

body from outside;

8 99a or, thirdly, being itself void of body, but endowed with other surpassingly marvellous potencies, it conducts the body.

Clinias Yes, it must necessarily be the case that soul acts in one of these ways when it propels all things.

Athenian Here, I pray you, pause. This soul,—whether it is by riding in the car of the sun,[32] or from outside, or otherwise, that it brings light to us all—every man is bound to regard as a god. Is not that so?

8 99b **Clinias** Yes; everyone at least who has not reached the uttermost verge of folly.

Athenian Concerning all the stars and the moon, and concerning the years and months and all seasons, what other account shall we give than this very same,—namely, that, inasmuch as it has been shown that they are all caused by one or more souls, which are good also with all goodness, we shall declare these souls to be gods, whether it be that they order the whole heaven by residing in bodies, as living creatures, or whatever the mode and method? Is there any man that agrees with this view who will stand hearing it denied that "all things are full of gods"?[33]

8 99c **Clinias** There is not a man, Stranger, so wrong-headed as that.

Athenian Let us, then, lay down limiting conditions for the man who up till now disbelieves in gods, O Megillus and Clinias, and so be quit of him.

Clinias What conditions?

Athenian That either he must teach us that we are wrong in laying down that soul is of all things the first production, together with all the consequential statements we made,—or, if he is unable to improve on our account, he must believe us, and for the rest of his life live in veneration of the gods.

8 99d Let us, then, consider whether our argument for the existence of the gods addressed to those who disbelieve in them has been stated adequately or defectively.

Clinias Anything rather than defectively, Stranger.

Athenian Then let our argument have an end, in so far as it is addressed to these men. But the man who holds that gods exist, but pay no regard to human affairs,—him we must admonish. "My good sir," let us say, "the fact that you believe in gods is due probably to a divine kinship drawing you to what is of like nature, to honor it and recognize its existence; but the fortunes of evil and

8 99e unjust men, both private and public,—which, though not really happy, are excessively and improperly lauded as happy by public opinion,—drive you to impiety by the wrong way in which they are celebrated, not only in poetry, but in tales of every kind. Or again, when you see men attaining the goal of old age, and leaving behind them children's children in the highest offices,

9 00a very likely you are disturbed, when amongst the number of these you discover—whether from hearsay or from your own personal observation—some who have been guilty of many dreadful impieties, and who, just because of these, have risen from a small position to royalty and the highest rank; then the consequence of all this clearly is that, since on the one hand you are unwilling to hold the gods responsible for such things because of your kinship to them, and since on the other hand you are driven by lack of logic and inability

9 00b to repudiate the gods, you have come to your present morbid state of mind, in which you opine that

the gods exist, but scorn and neglect human affairs. In order, therefore, that your present opinion may not grow to a greater height of morbid impiety, but that we may succeed in repelling the onset of its pollution (if haply we are able) by argument, let us endeavor to attach our next argument to that which we set forth in full to him who utterly disbelieves gods, and thereby to employ the latter as well."

9 00c And do you, Clinias and Megillus, take the part of the young man in answering, as you did before; and should anything untoward occur in the course of the argument, I will make answer for you, as I did just now, and convey you across the stream.[34]

Clinias A good suggestion! We will do our best to carry it out; and do you do likewise.

Athenian Well, there will probably be no difficulty in proving to this man that the gods care for small things no less than for things superlatively great. For, of course, [900d] he was present at our recent argument, and heard that the gods, being good with all goodness, possess such care of the whole as is most proper to themselves.

Clinias Most certainly he heard that.

Athenian Let us join next in enquiring what is that goodness of theirs in respect of which we agree that they are good. Come now, do we say that prudence and the possession of reason are parts of goodness, and the opposites of these of badness?

Clinias We do say so.

Athenian And further, that courage is part of goodness, and cowardice of badness?

Clinias Certainly.

9 **Athenian** And shall we say that some of these are foul, *00e* others fair?

Clinias Necessarily.

Athenian And shall we say that all such as are mean belong to us, if to anyone, whereas the gods have no share in any such things, great or small?

Clinias To this, too, everyone would assent.

Athenian Well then, shall we reckon neglect, idleness and indolence as goodness of soul? Or how say you?

Clinias How could we?

Athenian As the opposite, then?

Clinias Yes.

9 01a **Athenian** And the opposites of these as of the opposite quality of soul?

Clinias Of the opposite quality.

Athenian What then? He who is indolent, careless and idle will be in our eyes what the poet described[35]—"a man most like to sting-less drones"?

Clinias A most true description.

Athenian That God has such a character we must certainly deny, seeing that he hates it; nor must we allow anyone to attempt to say so.

Clinias We could not possibly allow that.

Athenian When a person whose duty it is especially to act and care for

9 01b some object has a mind that cares for great things, but neglects small things, on what principle could we praise such a person without the utmost impropriety? Let us consider the matter in this way: the action of

him who acts thus, be he god or man, takes one of two forms, does it not?

Clinias What forms?

Athenian Either because he thinks that neglect of the small things makes no difference to the whole,

9 01c or else, owing to laziness and indolence, he neglects them, though he thinks they do make a difference. Or is there any other way in which neglect occurs? For when it is impossible to care for all things, it will not in that case be neglect of great things or small when a person—be he god or common man—fails to care for things which he lacks the power and capacity to care for.

Clinias Of course not.

Athenian Now to us three let these two men make answer, of whom both agree that gods exist, but the one asserts that they can be bribed, and the other that they neglect the small.

9 01d First, you both assert that the gods know and hear and see all things,[36] and that nothing of all that is apprehended by senses or sciences can escape their notice; do you assert that this is so, or what?

Clinias That is what we assert.[37]

Athenian And further, that they can do all that can be done by mortal or immortal?

Clinias They will, of course, admit that this also is the case.

9 01e **Athenian** And it is undeniable that all five of us agreed that the gods are good, yea, exceeding good.

Clinias Most certainly.

Athenian Being, then, such as we agree, is it not impossible to allow that they do anything at all in a lazy and indolent way? For certainly amongst us mortals idleness is the child of cowardice, and laziness of idleness and indolence.

Clinias Very true.

Athenian None, then, of the gods is neglectful owing to idleness and laziness, seeing that none has any part in cowardice.

Clinias You are very right.

9 02a **Athenian** Further, if they do neglect the small and scant things of the All, they will do so either because they know that there is no need at all to care for any such things or—well, what other alternative is there except the opposite of knowing?

Clinias There is none.

Athenian Shall we then assume, my worthy and excellent sir, that you assert that the gods are ignorant, and that it is through ignorance that they are neglectful when they ought to be showing care,—or that they know indeed what is needful, yet act as the worst of men are said to do, who, though they know that other things are better to do than what they are doing, yet do them not,

9 02b owing to their being somehow defeated by pleasures or pains?

Clinias Impossible.

Athenian Do not human affairs share in animate nature, and is not man himself, too, the most god-fearing of all living creatures?

Clinias That is certainly probable.

Athenian We affirm that all mortal creatures are possessions of the gods, to whom belongs also the

whole heaven.

Clinias Of course.

Athenian That being so, it matters not whether a man says that these things are small or great

902c in the eyes of the gods; for in neither case would it behove those who are our owners to be neglectful, seeing that they are most careful and most good. For let us notice this further fact—

Clinias What is it?

Athenian In regard to perception and power,—are not these two naturally opposed in respect of ease and difficulty?

Clinias How do you mean?

Athenian It is more difficult to see and hear small things than great; but everyone finds it more easy to move, control and care for things small and few than their opposites.

902d **Clinias** Much more.

Athenian When a physician is charged with the curing of a whole body, if, while he is willing and able to care for the large parts, he neglects the small parts and members, will he ever find the whole in good condition?

Clinias Certainly not.

Athenian No more will pilots or generals or house-managers, nor yet statesmen or any other such persons, find that the many and great thrive apart from the few

902e and small; for even masons say that big stones are not well laid without little stones.

Clinias They cannot be.

Athenian Let us never suppose that God is inferior to mortal craftsmen who, the better they are, the more accurately and perfectly do they execute their proper tasks, small and great, by one single art,—or that God, who is most wise, and both willing and able to care,

903a cares not at all for the small things which are the easier to care for—like one who shirks the labor because he is idle and cowardly,—but only for the great.

Clinias By no means let us accept such an opinion of the gods, Stranger: that would be to adopt a view that is neither pious nor true at all.

Athenian And now, as I think, we have argued quite sufficiently with him who loves to censure the gods for neglect.

Clinias Yes.

Athenian And it was by forcing him by our arguments to acknowledge

903b that what he says is wrong. But still he needs also, as it seems to me, some words of counsel to act as a charm upon him.

Clinias What kind of words, my good sir?

Athenian Let us persuade the young man by our discourse that all things are ordered systematically by Him who cares for the World—all with a view to the preservation and excellence of the Whole, whereof also each part, so far as it can, does and suffers what is proper to it. To each of these parts, down to the smallest fraction, rulers of their action and passion are appointed to bring about fulfillment even to the uttermost

903c fraction; whereof thy portion also, O perverse man, is one, and tends therefore always in its striving

towards the All, tiny though it be. But thou failest to perceive that all partial generation is for the sake of the Whole, in order that for the life of the World-all blissful existence may be secured,—it not being generated for thy sake, but thou for its sake. For every physician and every trained craftsman works always for the sake of a Whole, and strives after what is best in general, and he produces a part for the sake of a whole, and not a whole for the sake of a part;

9 03d but thou art vexed, because thou knowest not how what is best in thy case for the All turns out best for thyself also, in accordance with the power of your common origin. And inasmuch as soul, being conjoined now with one body, now with another, is always undergoing all kinds of changes either of itself or owing to another soul, there is left for the draughts-player no further task,—save only to shift the character that grows better to a superior place, and the worse to a worse, according to what best suits each of them, so that to each may be allotted its appropriate destiny.

9 03e **Clinias** In what way do you mean?

Athenian The way I am describing is, I believe, that in which supervision of all things is most easy for the gods. For if one were to shape all things, without a constant view to the Whole, by transforming them (as, for instance, fire into water), instead of merely converting one into many or many into one,

9 04a then when things had shared in a first, or second, or even third generation,[38] they would be countless in number in such a system of transformations; but as things are, the task before the Supervisor of the All is wondrous easy.

Clinias How do you mean?

Athenian Thus:—Since our King saw that all actions involve soul, and contain much good and much evil, and that body and soul are, when generated, indestructible but not eternal,[39] as are the gods ordained by law (for if either soul or body had been destroyed,

9 04b there would never have been generation of living creatures), and since He perceived that all soul that is good naturally tends always to benefit, but the bad to injure,—observing all this, He designed a location for each of the parts, wherein it might secure the victory of goodness in the Whole and the defeat of evil most completely, easily, and well. For this purpose He has designed the rule which prescribes what kind of character should be set to dwell in what kind of position and in what regions;[40] but the causes of the generation of any special kind he left to the wills

9 04c of each one of us men.[41] For according to the trend of our desires and the nature of our souls, each one of us generally becomes of a corresponding character.

Clinias That is certainly probable.

Athenian All things that share in soul change, since they possess within themselves the cause of change, and in changing they move according to the law and order of destiny; the smaller the change of character, the less is the movement over surface in space, but when the change is great and towards great iniquity,

9 04d then they move towards the deep and the so-called lower regions, regarding which—under the names of Hades and the like—men are haunted by most fearful imaginings, both when alive and when disparted from their bodies. And whenever the soul gets a specially large share of either virtue or vice, owing to the force of its own will and the influence of its intercourse growing strong, then, if it is in union

with divine virtue, it becomes thereby eminently virtuous, and moves to an eminent region, being transported by a holy road to another and a better region;

9 04e whereas, if the opposite is the case, it changes to the opposite the location of its life's abode.”“This is the just decree of the gods who inhabit Olympus,” “*Hom. Od. 19.43*O thou child and stripling who thinkest thou art neglected by the gods,—the decree that as thou becomest worse, thou goest to the company of the worse souls, and as thou becomest better, to the better souls; and that, alike in life and in every shape of death, thou both doest and sufferest what it is befitting that like should do towards like.[42]

9 05a From this decree of Heaven neither wilt thou nor any other luckless wight ever boast that he has escaped; for this decree is one which the gods who have enjoined it have enjoined above all others, and meet it is that it should be most strictly observed. For by it thou wilt not ever be neglected, neither if thou shouldest dive, in thy very littleness, into the depths of the earth below, nor if thou shouldest soar up to the height of Heaven above; but thou shalt pay to the gods thy due penalty, whether thou remainest here on earth, or hast passed away to Hades,

9 05b or art transported to a region yet more fearsome. And the same rule, let me tell thee, will apply also to those whom thou sawest growing to great estate from small after doing acts of impiety or other such evil,—concerning whom thou didst deem that they had risen from misery to happiness, and didst imagine, therefore, that in their actions, as in mirrors, thou didst behold the entire neglect of the gods, not knowing of their joint contribution and

9 05c how it contributes to the All. And surely, O most courageous of men, thou canst not but suppose that this is a thing thou must needs learn. For if a man learns not this, he can never see even an outline of the truth, nor will he be able to contribute an account of life as regards its happiness or its unhappy fortune. If Clinias here and all our gathering of elders succeed in convincing thee of this fact, that thou knowest not what thou sayest about the gods, then God Himself of His grace will aid thee; but shouldest thou still be in need of further argument, give ear to us while we argue with the third unbeliever,

9 05d if thou hast sense at all. For we have proved, as I would maintain, by fairly sufficient argument that the gods exist and care for men; the next contention, that the gods can be won over by wrongdoers,[43] on the receipt of bribes, is one that no one should admit, and we must try to refute it by every means in our power.

Clinias Admirably spoken: let us do as you say.

Athenian Come now, in the name of these gods themselves I ask—in what way would they come to be seduced by us, if seduced they were?

9 05e Being what in their essence and character? Necessarily they must be rulers, if they are to be in continual control of the whole heaven.

Clinias True.

Athenian But to which kind of rulers are they like? Or which are like to them, of those rulers whom we can fairly compare with them, as small with great? Would drivers of rival teams resemble them, or pilots of ships? Or perhaps they might be likened to rulers of armies; or possibly they might be compared to physicians watching over a war against bodily disease,

9 06a or to farmers fearfully awaiting seasons of wonted difficulty for the generation of plants, or else to masters of flocks. For seeing that we have agreed[44]

among ourselves that the heaven is full of many things that are good, and of the opposite kind also, and that those not good are the more numerous, such a battle, we affirm, is undying, and needs a wondrous watchfulness,—the gods and daemons being our allies, and we the possession[45] of the gods and daemons; and what destroys us is iniquity and insolence combined with folly,

9 06b what saves us, justice and temperance combined with wisdom, which dwell in the animate powers of the gods, and of which some small trace may be clearly seen here also residing in us. But there are certain souls that dwell on earth and have acquired unjust gain which, being plainly bestial, beseech the souls of the guardians—whether they be watch-dogs or herdsmen or the most exalted of masters—trying to convince them by fawning words

9 06c and prayerful incantations that (as the tales of evil men relate) they can profiteer among men on earth without any severe penalty: but we assert that the sin now mentioned, of profiteering or "over-gaining," is what is called in the case of fleshly bodies "disease,"[46] in that of seasons and years "pestilence," and in that of States and polities, by a verbal change, this same sin is called "injustice."

Clinias Certainly.

Athenian Such must necessarily be the account of the matter given by the man who says that the gods are always merciful to unjust men

9 06d and those who act unjustly, provided that one gives them a share of one's unjust gains; it is just as if wolves were to give small bits of their prey to watch-dogs, and they being mollified by the gifts were to allow them to go ravening among the flocks. Is not this the account given by the man who asserts that the gods are open to bribes?

Clinias It is.

Athenian To which of the guardians aforementioned might a man liken the gods without incurring ridicule? Is it to pilots,

9 06e who, when warped themselves by wine's "flow and flavor,"[47] overturn both ships and sailors?

Clinias By no means.

Athenian And surely not to drivers ranged up for a race and seduced by a gift to lose it in favor of other teams?

Clinias If that was the account you gave of them, it would indeed be a horrible comparison.

Athenian Nor, surely, to generals or physicians or farmers or herdsmen; nor yet to dogs charmed by wolves?

Clinias Hush! That is quite impossible.

9 07a **Athenian** Are not all gods the greatest of all guardians, and over the greatest things?

Clinias Yes, by far.

Athenian Shall we say that those who watch over the fairest things, and who are themselves eminently good at keeping watch, are inferior to dogs and ordinary men, who would never betray justice for the sake of gifts impiously offered by unjust men?

9 07b **Clinias** By no means; it is an intolerable thing to say, and whoever embraces such an opinion would most justly be adjudged the worst and most impious of all the impious men who practice impiety in all its forms.

Athenian May we now say that we have fully proved our three propositions,—namely, that the gods exist, and that they are careful, and that they are wholly incapable of being seduced to transgress justice?

Clinia Certainly we may; and in these statements you

s have our support.

Athenian And truly they have been made in somewhat vehement terms, in our desire for victory

9 over those wicked men; and our desire for victory
07c was due to our fear lest haply, if they gained the mastery in argument, they should suppose they had gained the right to act as they chose—those men who wickedly hold all those false notions about the gods. On this account we have been zealous to speak with special honor; and if we have produced any good effect, however small, in the way of persuading the men to hate themselves and to feel some love for an opposite kind of character, then our prelude to the laws respecting impiety

9 will not have been spoken amiss.
07d

Clinias Well, there is hope; and if not, at any rate no fault will be found with the lawgiver in respect of the nature of the argument.

Athenian After the prelude it will be proper for us to have a statement of a kind suitable to serve as the laws' interpreter, forewarning all the impious to quit their ways for those of piety. For those who disobey, this shall be the law concerning impiety:—If anyone commits impiety either by word or deed, he that meets with him

9 shall defend the law by informing the magistrates,
07e and the first magistrates who hear of it shall bring the man up before the court[48] appointed to decide such cases as the laws direct; and if any magistrate on hearing of the matter fail to do this, he himself shall be liable to a charge of impiety at the hands of him who wishes to punish him on behalf of the laws. And if a man be convicted, the court shall assess one penalty

9 for each separate act of impiety. Imprisonment
08a shall be imposed in every case; and since there are three prisons in the State (namely, one public prison near the market for most cases, to secure the persons of the average criminals; a second, situated near the assembly-room of the officials who hold nightly assemblies,[49] and named the "reformatory"; and a third, situated in the middle of the country, in the wildest and loneliest spot possible, and named after "retribution"[50]), and since men are involved in impiety

9 from the three causes which we have described,
08b and from each such cause two forms of impiety result—consequently those who sin in respect of religion fall into six classes which require to be distinguished, as needing penalties that are neither equal nor similar. For while those who, though they utterly disbelieve in the existence of the gods, possess by nature a just character, both hate the evil and, because of their dislike of injustice, are incapable of being induced to commit unjust actions, and flee from unjust men

9 and love the just, on the other hand, those who,
08c besides holding that the world is empty of gods, are afflicted by incontinence in respect of pleasures and pains, and possess also powerful memories and sharp wits—though both these classes share alike in the disease of atheism, yet in respect of the amount of ruin they bring on other people, the latter class would work more and the former less of evil. For whereas the one class will be quite frank in its language about the gods and about sacrifices and oaths,

9 and by ridiculing other people will probably
08d convert others to its views, unless it meets with punishment, the other class, while holding the same opinions as the former, yet being specially "gifted by nature'' and being full of craft and guile, is the class out of which are manufactured many diviners and

experts in all manner of jugglery; and from it, too, there spring sometimes tyrants and demagogues and generals, and those who plot by means of peculiar mystic rites of their own, and the devices of those who are called “sophists.” Of these there may be many kinds;

9 08e but those which call for legislation are two, of which the “ironic”[51] kind commits sins that deserve not one death only or two, while the other kind requires both admonition and imprisonment. Likewise also the belief that the gods are neglectful breeds two other kinds of impiety; and the belief in their being open to bribes, other two. These kinds being thus distinguished, those criminals who suffer from folly,[52] being devoid of evil disposition and character, shall be placed by the judge according to law in the reformatory for a period of not less than five years, during which time no other of the citizens

9 09a shall hold intercourse with them, save only those who take part in the nocturnal assembly,[53] and they shall company with them to minister to their souls' salvation by admonition; and when the period of their incarceration has expired, if any of them seems to be reformed, he shall dwell with those who are reformed, but if not, and if he be convicted again on a like charge, he shall be punished by death. But as to all those who have become like ravening beasts, and who, besides holding that the gods are negligent

9 09b or open to bribes, despise men, charming the souls of many of the living, and claiming that they charm the souls of the dead, and promising to persuade the gods by bewitching them, as it were, with sacrifices, prayers and incantations,[54] and who try thus to wreck utterly not only individuals, but whole families and States for the sake of money,—if any of these men be pronounced guilty, the court shall order him to be imprisoned according to law in the mid-country jail,

9 09c and shall order that no free man shall approach such criminals at any time, and that they shall receive from the servants a ration of food as fixed by the Law-wardens. And he that dies shall be cast outside the borders without burial; and if any free man assist in burying him, he shall be liable to a charge of impiety at the hands of anyone who chooses to prosecute. And if the dead man leaves children fit for citizenship, the guardians of orphans shall take them also

9 09d under their charge from the day of their father's conviction, just as much as any other orphans. For all these offenders one general law must be laid down, such as will cause the majority of them not only to offend less against the gods by word and deed, but also to become less foolish, through being forbidden to trade in religion illegally. To deal comprehensively with all such cases the following law shall be enacted:—No one shall possess a shrine in his own house: when any one is moved in spirit to do sacrifice,

9 09e he shall go to the public places to sacrifice, and he shall hand over his oblations to the priests and priestesses to whom belongs the consecration thereof; and he himself, together with any associates he may choose, shall join in the prayers. This procedure shall be observed for the following reasons—It is no easy task to found temples and gods, and to do this rightly needs much deliberation; yet it is customary for all women especially, and for sick folk everywhere, and those in peril or in distress (whatever the nature of the distress), and conversely for those who have had a slice of good fortune, to dedicate whatever happens to be at hand at the moment, and to vow sacrifices

9 and promise the founding of shrines to gods and

10a demi-gods and children of gods; and through terrors caused by waking visions or by dreams, and in like manner as they recall many visions and try to provide remedies for each of them, they are wont to found altars and shrines, and to fill with them every house and every village, and open places too, and every spot which was the scene of such experiences. For all these reasons their action should be governed by the law now stated; and a further reason is this—to prevent impious men

9 *10b* from acting fraudulently in regard to these matters also, by setting up shrines and altars in private houses, thinking to propitiate the gods privily by sacrifices and vows, and thus increasing infinitely their own iniquity, whereby they make both themselves and those better men who allow them guilty in the eyes of the gods, so that the whole State reaps the consequences of their impiety in some degree—and deserves to reap them. The lawgiver himself, however, will not be blamed by the god; for this shall be the law laid down:—Shrines of the gods no one must possess

9 *10c* in a private house; and if anyone is proved to possess and worship at any shrine other than the public shrines—be the possessor man or woman,—and if he is guilty of no serious act of impiety, he that notices the fact shall inform the Law-wardens, and they shall give orders for the private shrines to be removed to the public temples, and if the owner disobeys the order, they shall punish him until he removes them.

9 *10d* And if anyone be proved to have committed an impious act, such as is not the venial offence of children, but the serious irreligion of grown men, whether by setting up a shrine on private ground, or on public ground, by doing sacrifice to any gods whatsoever, for sacrificing in a state of impurity he shall be punished with death. And the Law-wardens shall judge what is a childish or venial offence and what not, and then shall bring the offenders before the court, and shall impose upon them the due penalty for their impiety.

1 Cp. *Plat. Laws 868c ff.*, *Plat. Laws 877b ff.*, *Plat. Laws 930e ff.*

2 Cp. *Plat. Laws 941d*, *Plat. Laws 941e*.

3 Cf.*Plat. Rep. 364b ff*.

4 By Hesiod, Pherecydes, etc.

5 Materialists such as Democritus.

6 Cp. *Plat. Laws 701c*, *Plat. Laws 701d*; *Plat. Laws 858a ff*.: all this discussion is supposed to have taken place on one and the same day,—hence the ref. to "shortness of time."

7 This is a summary of the doctrines of the Atomists (Leucippus and Democritus) who denied the creative agency of Reason. Similar views were taught, later, by Epicurus and Lucretius.

8 A view ascribed to Critias.

9 Cp. *Aristot. NIc. Eth. 1094 b 14 ff*.

10 This antithesis between "Nature" (φύσις) and "Convention" (νόμος) was a familiar one in ethical and political discussion from the time of the Sophists. The supremacy of "Nature," as an ethical principle, was maintained (it is said) by Hippias and Prodicus; that of "Convention," by Protagoras and Gorgias: Plato goes behind both to the higher principle of Reason (νοῦς), cp. Introduction. p. xiv.

11 Cp. *Plat. Laws 634d*, *Plat. Laws 634e*; *Plat. Laws 859b*, al.

12 Literally, "utter every voice" (leave nothing unsaid).

13 In Books I and II.

14 Cp. *Plat. Laws 811d*.

15 Cp.*Plat. Tim. 34d*.

16 Cp. *Plat. Laws 886b*.

17 Cp. *Plat. Laws 896b*, *Plat. Laws 896c*.

18 Cp.*Plat. Soph. 255 ff.; Timaeus 57 ff*.

19 i.e. with a forward gliding motion, as opposed to rolling forward (like a car wheel).

20 i.e. as solid, liquid, or gaseous substance.
21 This account of the derivation of the sense-world from the "starting-principle" (ἀρχή) is obscure. It is generally interpreted as a "geometrical allegory," the stages of development being from point to line, from line to surface, from surface to solid,—this last only being perceptible by the senses (cp. *Aristot. Soul 404 b 18 ff.*).
22 The 8 kinds of motion here indicated are—(1) circular motion round a fixed center; (2) locomotion (gliding or rolling); (3) combination; (4) separation; (5) increase; (6) decrease; (7) becoming; (8) perishing. The remaining two kinds (as described below) are—(9) other-affecting motion (or secondary causation); and (10) self-and-other-affecting motion (or primary causation).
23 E.g. Anaxagoras, who taught, originally, "all things were together (ὁμοῦ);" and the Eleatic School (Parmenides, etc.) asserted that the Real World (τὸ ὄν) is One and motionless; cp.x*Plat. Theaet.180e*.
24 Cp.Epistles 7, 342 A, B.
25 *Plat. Laws 892a*, *Plat. Laws 892b*.
26 Cp. *Plat. Laws 894b*, *Plat. Laws 894c*.
27 i.e. the uniform revolution of a sphere in the same spot and on its own axis: cp. *Plat. Laws 898a*; *Plat. Tim. 34a*, *Plat. Tim. 34b*; *Plat. 90c,d*.
28 Cp.*Plat. Rep. 516a ff.*
29 Cp. *Plat. Laws 893b ff.*; the motion to which reason is likened is the first of the ten.
30 Cp.*Plat. Tim. 33b*, *Plat. Tim. 34a*; *Plat. Rep. 436b ff.*
31 i.e. envelopes the body and its sense-organs (like circum-ambient air).
32 Cp.*Plat. Tim. 41d*, *Plat. Tim. 41e*, where the Creator is said to apportion a soul to each star, in which it rides "as though in a chariot."
33 A dictum of Thales: *Aristot. Soul 411 a 7 ff.*
34 Cp. *Plat. Laws 892d*, *Plat. Laws 892e*.
35 *Hes. WD 303 f.*:τῷ δὲ θεοὶ νεμεσῶσι καὶ ἀνέρες ὅς κεν ἀεργὸς|ζώῃ, κηφήνεσσι κοθούροις εἴκελος ὁρμήν.
36 Cp. *Plat. Laws 641e*.
37 Here, and in what follows, Clinias is answering on behalf of the two misbelievers.
38 This seems to refer to three stages of the soul's incarnation; see p. 367, n. 2.
39 Cp.*Plat. Tim 37c ff.*
40 Cp.*Plat. Tim 42b ff.* where it is said that the soul of the good man returns at death to its native star, while that of the bad takes the form of a woman in its second, and that of a beast in its third incarnation.
41 Cp.*Plat. Rep. 617e*.
42 Cp. *Plat. Laws 728b f.*, *Plat. Laws 837a*.
43 Cp. *Hom. Il. 9.497 ff.*, τοὺς (θεοὺς) . . . λοιβῇ τε κνίσῃ τε παρατρωπῶς᾽ ἄνθρωποι κτλ.
44 Cp. *Plat. Laws 904a ff.*, *Plat. Laws 896c ff.*, *Plat. Rep. 379c*.
45 Cp.*Plat. Phaedo 62b*.
46 Cp.*Plat. Rep. 609*, *Plat. Sym. 188a ff.*, where the theory is stated that health depends upon the "harmony," or equal balance, of the constituent elements of the body ("heat" and "cold," "moisture" and "dryness,"); when any of these (opposite) elements is in excess (πλεονεκτεῖ), disease sets in. So, too, in the "body politic," the excess of due measure by any element, or member, is injustice.
47 *Hom. Il. 9.500* (quoted above, p. 371, n. 1).
48 Cp. *Plat. Laws 767c*, *Plat. Laws 767d*, *Plat. Laws 855c*.
49 Cp. *Plat. Laws 909a*, *Plat. Laws 961a ff.*
50 Cp. *Plat. Laws 704b*.
51 i.e. "hypocritical," hiding impiety under a cloak of religion.
52 Cp. *Plat. Laws 863b*, *Plat. Laws 863c*.
53 Cp. *Plat. Laws 908a*.
54 Cp. *Plat. Laws 933a*,, *Plat. Rep. 364b ff.*

Laws Book X Thought Sheet

Thought Point	Points of Thought
Describe this Dialog	
Main Point (What is he talking about?)	
What section(s) bests describe the Main Point?	
Minor Points (what examples does he use? What strikes you?) What section(s) bests describes the Minor Points?	
Does Socrates convince his audience?	
Does Socrates convince you?	

Let us face it. This is hard work. But it should not be. What we have to develop is some disciplines which aid us as we read. This sheet is one form of doing that. Underlining, highlighting, making notes, re-reading, all of these help us to get through the text to the meaning.

The East Revisited

Before we move on let us dwell once more in the shadow of the Banyan tree. Ahhh refreshing. But then thoughts arise. Are there any similarities between Plato and the Eastern philosophers of that time?

What Was Everyone Thinking?

While we may not do much justice to the Easterners, this chapter seeks to give a sense of Eastern thinking in light of what we have learned in the West, which hopefully will give us a common thought-chest from which to delve deeper. To do this we can revisit the themes previously presented or we can dive into another deep thinker. Or, well, we could do both but for an East-West meeting of minds kind of exercise.

The Players (a timeframe refresher)

Dates	Philosophers	Kind of Main Points
East and West		
551-479	Confucius	*Ethical living through ritual observances (political, religious and etiquette)*
500-428	Mo Tzu	*Self-reflection and authenticity rather than obedience to ritual*
428-348	Plato	*We must strive to live the best lives of reason and good works.*
369-289	Chuang-Tzu	*Move beyond the mundane to full understanding*
384-322	Aristotle	*Life is understandable in the observed world.*
372-289	*Mencius* (Mengzi)	*All human beings share an innate goodness that either can be cultivated or squandered, but never lost altogether*

Table 13: Ancient East and West Players

Chang-Tzu

Chang-Tzu is placed squarely in the Tao School. Similarly like Socrates, he espoused a holistic philosophy of life, encouraging disengagement from the artificialities of socialization, and cultivation of our natural "ancestral" (inherited/inherent) potencies and skills, in order to live a simple and natural, but full and flourishing life. He was critical of our ordinary categorizations and evaluations, noting the multiplicity of different modes of understanding between different creatures, cultures, and philosophical schools, and the lack of an independent means of making a comparative evaluation. He advocated a mode of understanding that is not committed to a fixed system, but is fluid and flexible, and that maintains a conditional, pragmatic attitude towards the valid use of these categories and evaluations for everyday living. That is to say, he does not really seem to want to be held bound by conventional thinking, or even hold fast to what beliefs he held before.

Here is a ~~completely stolen~~ summary of his works known as the *Zhuangzi* grouped as they are by a later editor of Tzu's works.

The Inner Chapters	School of Tzuang	Anarchist chapters	Huang-Lao school

1. Wandering Beyond	17. Autumn Floods	8. Webbed Toes	11. Let it Be, Leave it Alone
2. Discussion on Smoothing Things Out	18. Utmost Happiness	9. Horse's Hooves	12. Heaven and Earth
3. The Principle of Nurturing Life	19. Mastering Life	10. Rifling Trunks	13. The Way of Heaven
4. In the Human Realm	20. The Mountain Tree	11. Let it Be, Leave it Alone	14. The Turning of Heaven
5. Signs of Abundant Potency	21. Tian Zi Fang		15. Constrained in Will
6. The Vast Ancestral Teacher	22. Knowledge Wandered North	(16?. Mending the Inborn Nature)	(16?. Mending the Inborn Nature)
7. Responding to Emperors and Kings	23. *Geng Sang Chu*		
	24. *Xu Wugui*	28. Yielding the Throne	33. The World
	25. *Ze Yang*	29. Robber Zhi	
	26. External Things	30. Discoursing on Swords	
	27. Imputed Words	31. The Old Fisherman	
	32. *Lie Yukou*		

Table 14: Chang-Tzu Summary

Chang-Tzu and Plato: Compare and Contrast

From the chapter titles above we can see the main thought laid out in his works. Feel free to peruse them at leisure (http://chinese.dsturgeon.net/text.pl?node=2712&if=en), but I only want to touch on a few. Chapter One, *Wandering Beyond*, takes its notion from the idea of the 'walk-about' or wandering beyond the daily life, that is, getting away from the hubbub of society, but it is more than that. Like Socrates, Chang-Tzu is advocating the going beyond in the spiritual and intellectual sense as well. We must branch out beyond what we are comfortable with, beyond our everyday values. Socrates sees this as achieving wisdom and Chang-Tzu more of achieving harmony. The translation uses some words we encountered in Plato: passions and virtue.

Here Chang-Tzu takes on the question of 'what is man'.

> "Hui-Shi said to Chang-Tzu, 'Can a man indeed be without desires and passions?' The reply was, 'He can.' 'But on what grounds do you call him a man, who is thus without passions and desires?' Chang-Tzu said, 'The Tao gives him his personal appearance (and powers); Heaven gives him his bodily form; how should we not call him a man?' Hui-Shi rejoined, 'Since you call him a man, how can he be without passions and desires?' The reply was, 'You are misunderstanding what I mean by passions and desires. What I mean when I say that he is without these is, that this man does not by his likings and dis-likings do any inward harm to his body - he always pursues his course without effort, and does not (try to) increase his (store of) life.' Hui-Shi rejoined, 'If there were not that increasing of (the amount) of life, how would he get his body?' Chang-Tzu said, 'The Tao gives him his personal appearance (and powers); Heaven gives him his bodily form; and he does not by his likings and dis-likings do any internal harm to his body. But now you, Sir, deal with your spirit as if it were something external to you, and subject your vital powers to toil. You sing (your ditties), leaning against a tree; you go to sleep, grasping the stump of a rotten Dryandra tree. Heaven selected for you the bodily form (of a man), and you babble about what is hard and what is white (appearances).' "
>
> (*The Inner Chapters: The Seal of Virtue Complete 6*)

Chang-Tzu also presents a kind of Divided Line where you cross a horizontal boundary and free the imagination and a vertical ascension where we lose the distinction of things.

For Chang-Tzu, as for Socrates, a flourishing or examined life may indeed look quite unappealing from a traditional point of view. One may give up social ambition and retire in relative poverty to tend to one's spirit and cultivate one's nature.

Alternately, Chang-Tzu is a bit of an anarchist, and a certain type of relativism can be seen in his thought which would put it at opposition to that of Plato (though not fully in the camp of the Sophists). Take for instance the following story:

> "Men claim that [two women] were beautiful, but if fish saw them they would dive to the bottom of the stream; if birds saw them they would fly away, and if deer saw them they would break into a run. Of these four, who knows how to fix the standard of beauty in the world?"
>
> (*The Inner Chapters: Adjustment of Controversies 11*)

The following exchange takes place between Chang-Tzu and his intellectual sparring partner Hui-Shi we met above and illustrates/highlights several ideas.

> "Chang-Tzu and Hui-Shi were strolling along the dam of the Hao Waterfall when Chang-Tzu said, 'See how the minnows come out and dart around where they please! That's what fish really enjoy!'
>
> Hui-Shi said, 'You're not a fish — how do you know what fish enjoy?'
>
> Chang-Tzu said, 'You're not me, so how do you know I don't know what fish enjoy?'
>
> Hui-Shi said, 'I'm not you, so I certainly don't know what you know. On the other hand, you're certainly not a fish — so that still proves you don't know what fish enjoy!'
>
> Chang-Tzu said, 'Let's go back to your original question, please. You asked me *how* I know what fish enjoy — so you already knew I knew it when you asked the question. I know it by standing here beside the Hao.'"
>
> (*The Outer Chapters: The Floods of Autumn; 13*)

There is also an apparently annoying Socratic habit in asking questions.

Mengzi

In a short tag and in addition/opposition to Chang-Tzu, let me throw in this guy, a *Confucian* philosopher. Mencius takes a very internal view of things. Where Confucius emphasized the external rituals as well, Mencius sees self-cultivation as kind of the circulatory system of thinking. It flows out and comes back to itself, if that makes any sense. So in some senses he is similar to Chang-Tzu and different from Plato. Still, he has a deep abiding attachment to the idea of the *Tian* or deity, which is external/objective with its alignment with moral goodness, its dependence on human agents to actualize its will, somewhat, and the variable unpredictable nature of its associations with mortal actors, similar to Chang-Tzu and Plato.

Not Putting It Together

Because time is short, a final thing we can do is look to see if there is a development in Eastern philosophy. Does Chang-Tzu build upon or advance Taoism? Does he take it in a new and innovative direction? Does he give it a bad name? How is this development similar to Plato on his master Socrates? Dissimilar?

So here is the catch. There is a temptation to try to synthesize thought and ideas between philosophers to show how they are not that different from one another. We do not want to do that even though it makes for delightful discussion. We may group them into schools, we may compare and contrast them for historical purposes, but they are distinct, even within those groupings.

That does not mean that sometimes they do not build off one another, or that we cannot build a consistent philosophy for ourselves by building off them. What understanding we are looking at here is that our understanding of a 'school' of thought can be colored by all of the developments of that school. That is to say, if Taoism develops over a 1000 year period, our synopsis of it today would take in all 1000 years of thought development. The subtleties of development can be lost. Reading the works is really

the only way to truly understand and appreciate the development of a philosophy. We must keep the parts in mind even as we build the whole.

Putting It Together

So what can we say (in general) about the world philosophy during this time? There appears to be similar thought development regardless of the culture or sphere of influence. The questions which people are asking are very basic: what does it mean to be human? How should one live? What is the order of the world? Why is there something rather than nothing? What do we already know and is it correct and sufficient?

The point here is not to say which one of these philosophers is correct, or more correct or more insightful or even wrong. The point here is to begin to understand human thought and the quest for knowledge. Is it just 'natural' that disparate elements come to similar conclusions? Can cultural differences lead to similar arguments but different conclusions?

What is it about the human intellect which sets it apart from other animal intellects? What sets it apart and binds it to the observable world?

We can often see reactionary philosophies develop within cultures or between cultures which have contact with one another and that is easily understandable. But what about separate cultures? Should we view them as reactionary even though they had not contact?

Finally, does the *a posteriori* nature of thought at this time lend itself to these kinds of similar observed thought developments?

Post-Plato

We recognize Plato as a major influence in Western thought but that is mainly because later philosophers picked up on his ideas and tried to integrate or replace them. What about then, during or just after his lifetime? Was it just a fluke that his works and thought were preserved and persevered? Did he have any immediate influence? Well, I guess the answer had better be yes, or else this chapter will be really short.

The Players

Dates	Philosophers	Main Points
445-365	Antisthenes	
412-323	Diogenes	
384-322	Aristotle	
336-264	Zeno of Citium	
20 BC-50 AD	Philo of Alexandria	
150-215	Clement of Alexandria	
184–253	Origen	
204-270	Plotinus	
354-430	Augustine	
	Alkindus	
	Alpharabius	
	Avicenna	
	Averroes	

Table 15: Post-Platonic Players

The Academia

Plato was considered even within his lifetime as one of the most influential and celebrated teachers in Greece. The Academia (or Academy) of Athens was opened by Plato in about 387 BCE and lasted until it was closed down by the Emperor Justinian in 529 (for strictly political purposes). This 800 year unbroken existence speaks volumes for the ideas implanted there by its founder. History on the other hand, may not be as kind to the students.

The school's influence in a secular sense was carried over about mid way through its existence to the non-secular theologies of Philo of Alexandria (Jewish) as well as Christian theologians and apologists who rise up at this time due to the legitimization of Christianity by the Emperor Constantine.

While focused on the correct instruction of political leaders, it managed to keep intact, alive and fresh the ideas of its founder for countless generations.

The Minor Prophets

While only Plato seemed best able to present and expound on the whole of Socrates' thought, producing a balanced notion of discipline and virtue, he was not the only one who was able to glean something from it. Even then, Plato eventually mainly focused on the leadership aspect. Many people follow the thinking of an individual, presenting what they think the main point or focus to be. Sometimes they are right, and sometimes they are wrong. Other times they are just lunatics.

Cynics

From the Greek for 'dog-like', the Cynics took up Socrates' call for austerity, and pretty much little else. One should reject traditional desires (power, fame, etc.) and be free of possessions. Antisthenes identified self-denial as virtue; Diogenes felt Antisthenes did not take it far enough and took it farther by living in a tub. The term as we use it today only took on that meaning later in history.

Cyrenaics

Named for their port of origin, these folks while often confused name-wise, were the counterparts of the Cynics. Aristippus identified more with the instant and short-term pleasure side of Socratic thought, and pretty much little else. One can only guess the reason these guys too are not still around.

Aristotle

Plato really had no real use for what we might call the 'hard sciences'. To him knowledge only had use in terms of 'right action'. Oddly enough then, one of his star pupils became known as the father of modern science. We really do not want to spend much time here, because we will be spending a lot later on this figure. Suffice it to say, his rejection/reaction against his master Plato, produced a singularly large volume of work. Together, Plato and Aristotle form what we basically consider to be Hellenistic Philosophy (with all apologies to everyone else we have looked at).

He, for the West and because we tend to gloss over the details sometimes, begins that idea that every generation produces a genius who seems to step outside the boundaries of traditional thought to guide the world. But one (at least this one) wonders why philosophers hold up both Plato and Aristotle, but scientific thinkers only hold up Aristotle. But I cause us to wander.

Stoics

A fusion of Plato and Aristotle, these guys get their name from the *stoa* or columns from near which they spouted their philosophy. Zeno of Citium is considered their main founder and their 'school', lasted even into Rome (recall Seneca, Marcus Aurelius). The Stoic doctrine is divided into three parts: logic, physics, and ethics. Stoicism is essentially a system of ethics (like Plato) which is guided by logic (Aristotelian) and has physics (observable phenomena) as its foundation.

What they taught was that life should be lived in accordance with nature and controlled by virtue. Their teaching on morality though, is stern; it is an ascetic system, teaching self-denial, restraint and denial of worldly pleasures as well as a perfect indifference (*apathea*: apathy) to everything external, for nothing external could be either good or evil. Hence to the Stoics both pain and pleasure, poverty and riches, sickness and health, were supposed to be equally unimportant.

In this way they seem to also reflect the Taoists of the East, but that is another chapter.

Eclecticism

A synthesis from the 1st century BCE of Stoicism and Platonism, of Neo-Pythagoreansand the various Platonic sects, and others. The name is given to a group of philosophers who, from the existing philosophical beliefs, tried to select the doctrines that seemed to them most reasonable, and out of these constructed a new system.

They tried to balance the logical search for pure truth, the attainment of practical virtue and happiness, and the idea that pure truth was impossible to discover. Eclecticism was the original cafeteria-style belief system, seeking to reach by selection from the various systems, to the best possible degree of probability, with the full knowledge of the despair of attaining to what is absolutely true. Puff, puff, whew.

That is to say, they knew they would not reach perfect knowledge but they also knew that fact should not keep them from trying.

Neo-Platonism

Sure, okay, not really immediately after his life, but in our timeline fairly close, this is the much later (3rd century CE/AD) 'rediscovery' of Plato founded by Plotinus, an attempt to integrate Socratic/Platonic thought into newer systems. Alexandria in Egypt had replaced Athens as the center of learning and the new-found sense of peace led back to the pursuit of higher knowledge, truth, virtue and the state, in light of modern thinking.

Naturally they were drawn to the writings of Plato, for their ethical sense. We will be covering these thinkers later but they bear mention here, within this context.

Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Augustine

These Christian theologian/philosophers pick up the neo-platonic movement and carry it into the 4th century and beyond. They struggle with some of the notions of Plato, trying to reconcile them with Christian Orthodoxy but for the most part they create a smooth integration of Greek ideas into Christian thinking.

Alkindus, Alpharabius, Avicenna and Averroes

These Islamic theologian/philosophers pick up platonic ideas around the 11th century and produce an Islamic philosophic-theological synthesis similar to their Christian counterparts. These re-thinkings will be re-introduced into the West later in the late Middle Ages where they will have an influence.

Putting It Together

Socrates and Plato had a great influence in Western philosophy on the immediate and the long term thinking of the philosophers which followed them. Their thinking on morality gave a language and a basis for discussing the larger human situation. While most of their 'scientific' thinking has subsequently been dismissed, it has been hard to shake their moral discussions, or the thinking that within each of us lays a certain amount of knowledge which we can use to act correctly or at least discover how to act correctly and the responsibility to do so.

Our modern notions of law, of morality, of the 'greater good', of asceticism, even some aspects of God all have their inception here, in Plato. Whether it has been embraced or rejected, consciously or subconsciously integrated, the vestiges of Platonic thought are solidly woven into the modern Western mindset.

Thought Exercise

Would you consider the thinkers of this period, even Plato, to be *a posteriori* or *a priori* thinkers?


MORAL VALUES FOR DUMMIES