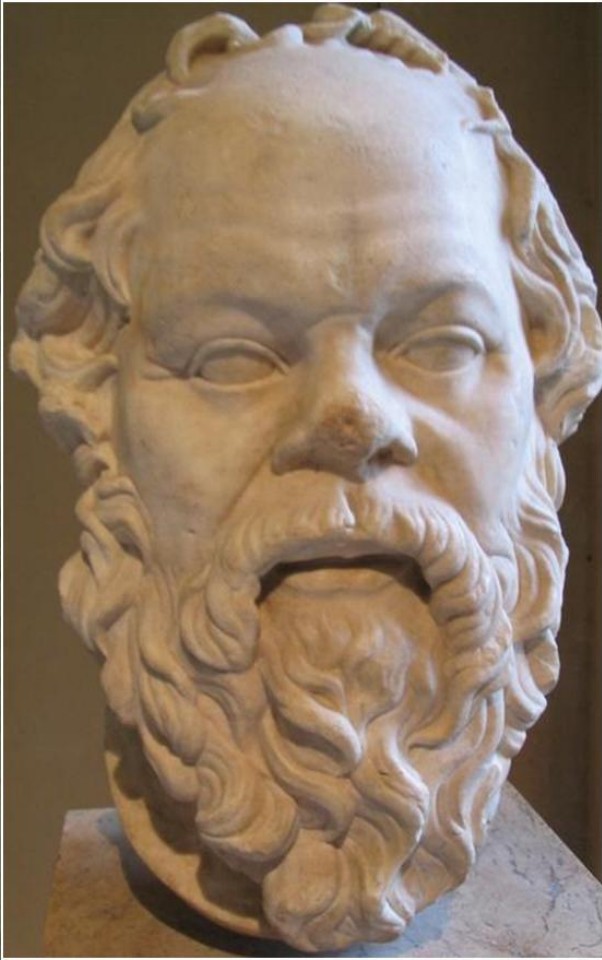


# Socrates & Plato

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Metaphysics and Epistemology

# Socrates - A Brief Biography:



- (born 470, died 399 , Athens) Details about Socrates are derived from three contemporary sources: Besides the dialogues of Plato there are the plays of Aristophanes and the dialogues of Xenophon. It is unclear how Socrates earned a living. According to Xenophon's Symposium, Socrates is reported as saying he devotes himself only to what he regards as the most important art or occupation: discussing philosophy. Xenophon and Aristophanes respectively portray Socrates as accepting payment for teaching and running a sophist school with Chaerephon, while in Plato's Apology of Socrates and Symposium Socrates explicitly denies accepting payment for teaching. In the Apology, Socrates cites his poverty as proof that he is not a teacher. His final words suggest that he was very poor indeed: he requests that his friend Crito pay off a small debt (a rooster) to the god Asclepius.
- Several of Plato's dialogs refer to Socrates' military service. Socrates says he served in the Athenian army during three campaigns: at Potidaea, Amphipolis, and Delium. In the Symposium Alcibiades describes Socrates' valour in the battles of Potidaea and Delium, recounting how he saved his life in the former battle (219e-221b). Socrates' exceptional service at Delium is also mentioned in the Laches, by the general the dialogue is named after (181b). In the Apology Socrates compares his military service to his courtroom troubles, and says that anyone on the jury who thinks he ought to retreat from philosophy must also think that soldiers should ditch when it looks like they will be killed in battle.



# The death of Socrates:

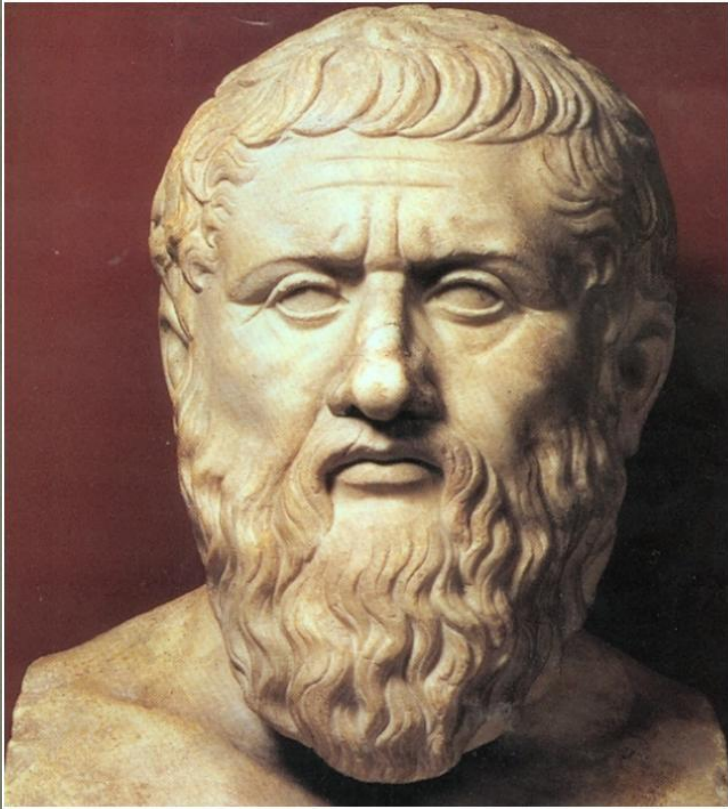


# The death of Socrates:

- .....**Socrates:** *The young men who observe me later imitate what I do. When they expose esteemed men as unwise, these latter men blame me for leading the youth astray. Going further, they say I deliberately stir up trouble by challenging traditional beliefs and promoting strange religious ideas, including my own gods. ....But my chief accuser here, Miletus, is the one who is doing wrong. Although he professes to be concerned about the youth of our community, he does not care about them at all. Tell me, Miletus, is it better to live among good citizens or bad ones?*
  - .....**Miletus:** *Good ones.*
  - .....**Socrates:** *Is there someone who would rather be hurt than helped by people around him?*
  - .....**Miletus:** *No.*
  - .....**Socrates:** *Do I deliberately corrupt youth?*
  - .....**Miletus:** *Yes.*
  - .....**Socrates:** *All right, then, why would I want to corrupt people when I know that doing so will make them want to harm me. You just agreed that no one would want to live around people he knows would harm him. As for religion, do you accuse me of teaching different gods or of being an atheist?*
  - .....**Miletus:** *You are an atheist.*
  - .....**Socrates:** *But you say I teach spiritual concepts and believe in strange divine beings. How curious it is that I believe in gods and not believe in gods at the same time. The fact is, it appears that you and others here are going to condemn me simply because I have the courage to tell the truth. In this respect, I am like Achilles, the greatest of the Greek warriors in the Trojan War. He knew that if he avenged the death of his friend Patroclus by killing the Trojan warrior Hector, he was fated to die. But rather than live in disgrace, he killed Hector and died with honor. In my case, if you offered to free me if I stopped practicing philosophy in my honest and truthful way, I would reject your offer. As long as I live, I shall obey God and continue to tell the truth to anyone I encounter. Of course, it would be foolhardy of you to execute me, for it would be hard to replace a gadfly like me. God commissioned me to search for the truth, and I have done so with all my heart to the extent that I have neglected my own needs for the sake of you. Since I was a child, a divine voice has spoken to me, has given me signs, telling me to me to prod and question other men in order to put them on the road toward true wisdom. But if I am evil, let the young men I corrupted and their relatives come forth and speak against me. They will not, of course, because they know that I am not evil.*
- By a vote of 280 to 220, the council finds Socrates guilty and sentences him to death. However, under Athenian law, a convicted person can propose an alternative sentence. Socrates proposes a small fine and, in an act of defiance, suggests that he be allowed to dine at taxpayer expense at a public table reserved for esteemed citizens of Athens. The council rejects his proposal by an even larger vote. A month later, he is executed by the prescribed method of capital punishment: drinking poison.



# Plato: A Brief Biography



- Born 428/427 , Athens, Greece—died 348/347, Athens, ancient Greek philosopher, student of Socrates ( 470–399 ), teacher of Aristotle (384–322 ), and founder of the Academy.
- The son of Ariston (his father) and Perictione (his mother), Plato was born in the year after the death of the great Athenian statesman Pericles. His brothers Glaucon and Adeimantus are portrayed as interlocutors in Plato's masterpiece the *Republic*, and his half brother Antiphon figures in the *Parmenides*.
- Plato's family was aristocratic and distinguished: his father's side claimed descent from the god Poseidon, and his mother's side was related to the lawgiver Solon ( 630–560 ). Less creditably, his mother's close relatives Critias and Charmides were among the Thirty Tyrants who seized power in Athens and ruled briefly until the restoration of democracy in 403.



# The Academy:



- Plato's Academy, founded in the 380s, was the ultimate ancestor of the modern university (hence the English term *academic*); an influential centre of research and learning, it attracted many men of outstanding ability. The great mathematicians Theaetetus (417–369) and Eudoxus of Cnidus (395–342) were associated with it. Although Plato was not a research mathematician, he was aware of the results of those who were, and he made use of them in his own work. For 20 years Aristotle was also a member of the Academy. He started his own school, the Lyceum, only after Plato's death, when he was passed over as Plato's successor at the Academy, probably because of his connections to the court of Macedonia.

# Plato & Socrates: A Quick Summary

- Goal is to build a complete system of philosophy including a theory of metaphysics, epistemology, politics, ethics, and aesthetics
- Metaphysics: theory that ultimate reality is not physical – it is immaterial – theory of the “*Eidos*”
  - Argues that what is really real is eternal (undying)
  - Also argues that what is really real is immutable – it cannot change
    - To change a thing would no longer be what it is – thus to be real requires not changing over time – remaining identical to itself.
- Epistemology: Knowledge of absolute reality is innate – imprinted on our souls



# Why isn't the material world enough?

- Plato & Socrates offered three arguments against the sufficiency of the material world and for the necessary existence of the Eidos. The first two are arguments from metaphysics and the last is an epistemological argument:
  - Argument 1: The Problem of Change in Individual Selves and Objects
  - Argument 2: The Problem of Orderly Change in the Material World
  - Argument 3: The Problem of Perfection
  - Argument 4: The Problem of Identification & Recognition of Groups of Objects



# Why isn't the material world enough?

- Argument 1: The Problem of Change in Individual Selves and Objects – It is agreed that all material things and selves change – this implies that things are never really what they are. If there is an ultimate reality, then it cannot be material because in order to be absolutely real, it must always be what it is.



# Why isn't the material world enough?

- Argument 2: The Problem of Orderly Change in the Material World – Plato and Socrates observed an orderliness in the material world but argued that this order could not be upheld by an ever-changing realm. They reasoned that there must be some other guiding principle or realm which did not change and thus ensured the continuity of the patterns of change in the material world.





# Why isn't the material world enough?

- Argument 3: The Problem of Perfection - We have a concept of perfection, but no where in the material world do we actually experience perfection. Where could this concept come from? Plato and Socrates argued that the concept could not have arisen from a finite and ever-changing world – it must arise from a realm that is eternal and immutable and thus able to sustain perfection.



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# Why isn't the material world enough?

- Argument 4: The Problem of Identification & Recognition of Groups of Objects – If we've never seen an object, how do we recognize it as a tree, horse or dog? Plato & Socrates argued that we could only do this if we already knew what it meant to be a tree, horse or dog and that this knowledge did not depend on prior experience of all instances of the objects in a class or category.





# The *Eidos*

- Translated as “Forms” – they are the absolutely real, immaterial blueprints of objects in the physical world
- They constitute those essential features of all individual objects belonging to the same class – e.g. what all horses have in common that makes them horses or what all acts of justice have in common that makes them just.
- Also translated as Ideals – Hence Plato’s theory of reality is called Idealism – These are the perfect, unchanging exemplars of all natural kind terms (objects naturally occurring) and all good things – e.g. –The perfect horse, tree, dog, or perfect justice, love, beauty – they also include the perfect circle or triangle or straight line, etc.
- The ultimate *Eidos* – that which all other *Eidos* have in common is the Form “Good”

# Two Worlds:

## Realm of Being

- Realm of the *Eidos*
- Immaterial
- Independently Real
- Unchanging
- Perfect

## Realm of Becoming

- Physical Realm
- Material
- Dependently Real
- Ever-Changing
- Imperfect - finite



# The Allegory of the Cave:

- Claymation version on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69F7GhASOdM&playnext=1&list=PL2A5434E201CB55EF>



# Allegory of the Cave

## The Metaphysical Metaphor:

- Images on wall are only dependently real shadows cast by physical objects
- Just as physical objects are only dependently real shadows cast by the *Eidos*

## The Epistemological Metaphor:

- Just as the prisoners are ignorant of the dependent nature of the shadows so might we be ignorant of the dependency of the physical world and the independently real realm of the *Eidos*



# On Knowledge:

- For Plato, knowledge of the Eidos is imprinted on our souls prior to birth
- The union of our souls to our bodies and our subsequent birth is so traumatic that we forget this innate knowledge
- We therefore have to remember this understanding through a process Plato called “anamnesis”
- In support of his theory, Plato argues that we cannot recognize anything (e.g. that an act is just) unless we first cognize it (e.g. the concept of justice)

# Anamnesis:

- Is achieved through three processes:
  - Experiential – e.g. Observing individual acts of justice and injustice
  - Rational – often through a dialogue process – one reasons what qualities all just acts share and unjust acts lack
  - Recognitional – once these ideas are fully understood, one recollects or recognizes their inherent truth
- Is absolute: Once a full recollection of an *Eidos* is made – all persons who share this recollection will agree – this knowledge is not subjective, it is universal
- If people disagree on the true nature of things, it is because the process of anamnesis is incomplete in either or both individuals
- To know an *Eidos* is to fall in love with it – hence the philosopher is the “lover of wisdom” from *philein* (lover) and *sophia* (wisdom)



# The Divided Line:

- In his famous question and answer with a slave about how to find the diagonal of a given square, Socrates argues that latent within the slave is an understanding of how to determine the diagonal (81-86b). The slave has various beliefs, some false and some true, about the way to discover the length of the diagonal. What is needed is only a set of prompts, here a set of questions, to elicit from the boy the knowledge that is latent within him. Socrates contends that he is leading the slave to recollect what he already knows. In the subsequent stages of the argument, Socrates distinguishes the sense in which a person can be said to merely have a belief about something (into which one might inquire), from the sense in which he can be said to know the same thing (97ff).

# The Job of the Teacher

- Socrates compared himself to a “midwife” who aids his students to give birth to the knowledge with which they were pregnant
- So....Breathe!.....Don't Panic!  
.....Push!

