

# PSYCHOLOGY IN GREEK PHILOSOPHY

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Greece. The word evokes images of sunny islands, music and dancing, cruise ships, and magnificent crumbling ruins. It also conjures up thoughts of dusty tomes filled with difficult ramblings by thinkers who died more than two thousand years ago..

It wasn't like that in ancient times, of course. The islands were as sunny and the waters as blue and inviting as ever, but philosophers were celebrities. Almost everyone knew about their lives and doings, and each of the most famous had an enthusiastic group of students spreading his doctrines widely. In those days, "philosophy" included many areas of knowledge that are separated into different disciplines now. A philosopher of those days might have been concerned with mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, metaphysics, biology, ethics, psychology, and more. Philosophers were pretty much the only game in town in the area of higher education. Well-to-do citizens who wanted their children to have some education beyond the rudiments of reading, writing, arithmetic sent them to study with philosophers. For the same reason, bright young people flocked to them and idolized them.

Greece has given us more philosophy than any other place in the Western World. To survey it all takes volumes. This paper is a look at the highlights of its psychological side, including the realm of ethics, which partakes of both philosophy and psychology. Remember throughout it the place and times. From start to end, our stage is the edge of the Mediterranean, from the Turkish coast to Athens to North Africa to Rome, drenched in sun for much of the year but lashed by cold storms in winter, a land which had once been rich in forests, but 500 B.C. already deforested and turned to stony pasture. (Homer described the sounds of the loggers' mighty axes as they felled the great old trees.) In inland Greece people eked out a living on tired, rocky soil; near the sea, many lived by fishing and trading.

Greek philosophy as we know it came after the rise and fall of the high culture on Crete, its end now thought to have been hastened by a giant tidal wave due to a major volcanic eruption. On the mainland, the Mycenaean civilization had prospered, spread, and then perished. After these civilizations perished came Achaean Greece, the Heroic Age of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, which lasted from around 1300 to 1100 B.C.. This culture was a step backward from the civilizations that had flourished before it, but its people kept alive some of the old arts and knowledge. Then came the invasion of the Dorian Greeks from the north, at a time when savage peoples were overrunning civilized peoples throughout the Mediterranean, and in Greece it was the start of a "Dark Age" of over 400 years from which hardly a tale or a word survives. The people returned to an age of hard work and poverty in which most of the achievements of past high cultures perished completely.

The first city to begin to rise out of this dark age was Sparta, in the heart of the Peloponnesian Peninsula, the heartland of Southern Greece. Music was the most popular of its arts, and composers and musicians came from all over Greece to compete in its contests. The communal spirit was strong and choral music dominated, especially patriotic and military music. For a brief time poetry and the arts flourished as well, until the Messenian wars ended such pastimes. Thirty thousand Spartan citizens

managed to suppress and rule over eleven times as many subjects only by abandoning the arts and turning every Spartan into a soldier. Except for its political and military achievements, Sparta withdrew from the stage of history. Lycurgus, who lived sometime between 900 and 600 B.C., was a statesman and philosopher who developed the remarkable code of laws which produced the kind of behavior which even today we call "Spartan." These laws were extensive. Infants were brought before state inspectors and any who appeared defective were thrown off a cliff. At age seven a boy was taken from his family and enrolled in a school which was both a military regimen and a scholastic class. Older men provoked quarrels among the youth, to test their fortitude and bravery. All faced trials of hardship and misfortune, to teach them to endure pain. After age twelve, a boy was allowed just one garment for a year. Until he was thirty he lived in a military barracks and knew no comforts of home and hearth. Reading and writing were taught, but barely, for most education was by oral training. Spartans learned to forage in the fields for food, or starve, and to steal in permissible ways.

Girls were taught games meant to make them strong and healthy for perfect motherhood. Both young women and young men went naked in public dances and processions, to help them learn proper care of their bodies, but, declares Plutarch, "modesty attended them, and all wantonness was excluded." Sexual freedom was widespread, but love was subordinated to war and marriage was strictly controlled by the state. Men were expected to marry at thirty and women at twenty. Celibacy was a crime and avoiders of marriage could not vote and were punished by public ridicule. Marriage was arranged by parents, divorce was rare, and Spartan women were more powerful and privileged than anywhere else in Greece. Plutarch writes that they "were bold and masculine, overbearing to their husbands...and speaking openly even on the most important subjects." Durant adds, "Nearly half the wealth of Sparta was in their hands. They lived a life of luxury and liberty at home while the men bore the brunt of frequent war, or dined on simple fare in the public mess."(84)

The Spartans insulated themselves from outside influences, so that foreign styles of clothing, freedom, thought, luxury, and the arts would not corrupt them. They became the world's best soldiers, but most of the rest of what we call "civilized" perished. The other city states of Greece came to so detest Sparta that when it crumbled, hardly a tear fell to moisten the Greek soil.

From 600 to 400 B.C.. first Corinth and then Megara, which sit astride the narrow strip of land that connects Athens to the Peloponnesus, became important trading centers, but their pursuit was of gold rather than philosophy and they left us few ideas to remember.

Meanwhile on the Turkish coast, southeast of the island of Samos, the city of Miletus had become a crossroads of trade with the orient and the richest city of the Greek world. Agriculture, industry, trade, art, literature, and philosophy flourished. This city of wealth and luxury drew expatriates from a hundred other states, while its citizens visited Athens, Egypt, the Middle East, and perhaps even India. In this city-state two philosophical currents developed. We can associate the naturalistic current with the physician Hippocrates, and the mystical current in connection with Heraclitus and those who followed him. "Now and then some great spirit--Socrates, Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius--merged the two currents in an attempt to do justice to the unformulable complexity of life," writes Will Durant. "But even in these men the dominant strain, characteristic of Greek thought, was the love and pursuit of reason."(136)

Thales of Miletus, born about 640 B.C., is often called the first Greek philosopher (not counting Sparta's Lycurgus, who belongs to quite a different tradition). Thales was an astronomer and cosmologist who studied in Egypt and Babylonia. He concluded that "every particle of the world is alive, that matter and life are inseparable and one, ...that the vital power changes form but never dies."(Durant 137) In these comments he sounds remarkably similar to today's "deep ecology."

Thales sought to find one substance or element from which everything else derives. Greeks called such a primary element a *physis*, and those who tried to discover it were called *physicists*.

## HERACLITUS OF EPHEBUS

Another city in the same region, Ephesus, which had been founded about 400 years before by colonists from Athens, also became a rich trading center. Its art had a strong Eastern influence, and around 540 BC the largest temple Greek temple yet was raised there. Before long it came to be called one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Ephesus was a city of poetry and high fashion, yet its most famous son was the philosopher Heracleitus of Ephesus (c540-480 B.C.) His pithy work *On Nature* holds passages which are still quoted today. He lived at about the same time Buddha was teaching in India and Lao-tsu in China.

Heracleitus' work combines the principles of order and change. "All things are one," he said. To the question, "What is this one?" he answered "Fire," but by fire he appears to have meant something more like "energy" than fire per se, for he talks of fire's frequent transformation through many different forms. In any case, he was speaking on a metaphysical rather than a strictly material level.

The best-known aspect of Heracleitus' ideas is the omnipresence of change. There is, he says, nothing static in the universe, the mind, or the soul. Everything is ceasing to be what it was and becoming what it will be. This was a new idea. He went beyond asking what things are to ask how they became what they are. a "All things flow; nothing abides," he wrote. and "we are and we are not." His best known passage is, "You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters are ever flowing on to you." This appears to be a misquotation by later philosophers, his actual statement apparently having been, "Over those who step into the same river, different and again different waters flow." In Heracleitus'

view, you and I are changing and becoming just as is the universe. "In change one finds rest;" he wrote; "it is weariness to be always toiling at the same things."

A third theme in his work is the unity of opposites. Contraries are interdependent. Conflict is harmony. Surfeit and hunger require each other. So do winter and summer, good and bad, life and death, waking and sleeping, youth and age. All things and beings exist somewhere between polar opposites, and each polarity partakes of the nature of the other. "Beginning and end are common on the circumference of a circle," he wrote, and "They would not know the name of Justice if [injustices] did not exist." Reality arises out of strife, tension, the alternation between opposites, and the tension between them. "That which is at variance with itself agrees with itself. There sits attunement of the opposite tensions, like that of the bow of the harp.... From things that differ comes the fairest attunement." This unity that comes from the tension of opposites applies to the struggles between man and woman, between social classes, and among ideas. You will no doubt notice a resemblance among this conception, the yin/yang of Chinese philosophy, and between Hegel's statement that, "Everything carries within itself its own negation." Heraclitus summarizes, "Things taken together are wholes and not wholes; being brought together is being parted; concord is dissonance; and out of all things, one; and out of one, all things."(MacGill 13) Amid all this, he stressed the ordered and eternal pattern that intelligence could discern in the flux of existence.(MacGill 16)

Heraclitus often compares "the many" to sleepers. "For men awake there is one common cosmos, but men asleep turn away, each one into a private world." He added, "A man's character is his destiny."

Heraclitus left an enduring legacy of ideas. Some still seem fresh today. Although he left no "school," the Stoics later found enough in common with him to adopt him as their intellectual ancestor.

## PROTAGORAS AND THE SOPHISTS

Between 560 and 500 B.C. the Persians under Cyrus the Great, his son Cambyses, and his successor Darius, conquered much of the Middle East. The Empire stretched from Egypt and Arabia to Babylon, the Indus Valley, and Thrace. Even Macedon paid submission. The Persian infantry and cavalry seemed invincible, and after Persia formed an alliance with Carthage, the Greek cities along the West Coast of Turkey were no match for the Empire. The simple, clean lines of the great Doric temples date from this Persian era.

But as Persia extended itself, Athens was fortifying itself and building the greatest Navy in history. The Greeks developed better armor, longer spears, and better athletic training. One Persian fleet was shipwrecked in 492 B.C., a second was defeated by the Athenians at Marathon in 490, the Persian commander Xerxes lost much of his fleet at Salamis in 480, and in the same year the Carthaginians were badly beaten. In 479 Xerxes lost the rest of his fleet and the land army he had left in Greece. In 478 Greeks united in the Delian League (which held its meetings and kept its money on the island of Delos) for protection against Persia. The League's force of 300 ships and 60,000 men freed other Greek cities around the Aegean, who in turn joined the league. Athens contributed the most ships, commanded the fleet, and became ever more dominant politically and financially as decades passed. Finally it started using the Delian money to build temples and other adornments in Athens. In 449 Greece made peace with Persia and in 447 Athens began construction of the Parthenon, but the Delian confederacy continued.

During these years, Pericles became leader of Athens and the symbol of its golden age of art, drama, architecture, and poetry. There was no system of higher education per se, but a group of teachers developed who mostly taught young men of the upper classes. Most of these philosophers were orators who presented their views forcefully and well.

Responding to all this, one group of philosophers concluded that truth was relative and that there were many truths about a matter, rather than just one. They had begun to ask, "What can we know, and how can we know it?" In short, they were proposing an epistemology.

Protagoras (480-411 B.C.), the best known of the Sophists, could be called the "Father of Relativism." Born in the Thracian town of Abdera, Protagoras spent most of his adult life in Athens. We can find no absolute truth, he held, but only truths that hold for given men under given conditions. Different truths can hold for different people at different times. Truth, goodness, and beauty are subjective and relative. In his well-known statement, "Man is the measure of all things: Of that which is that it is, and that which is not that it is not," he was saying, writes Robert McCleod, that "Everything that we know is in part a function of the knowing agent. The data of direct experience may be accepted as such; what is not given in direct experience must always be questioned..... Knowledge may extend beyond experience, but...the interests and limitations of the thinker will determine the nature of the product (p. 49)." Protagoras is implying that, "First, truth depends on the perceiver rather than on physical reality. Second, because perceptions vary with the previous experiences of the perceiver, they will vary from person to person. Third, what is considered to be true will be, in part, culturally determined because one's culture influences one's experiences. Fourth, to understand why a person believes as he or she does, one must understand the person"(Hergenhahn, p. 36). Protagoras was saying that each of the Athenian philosophers was presenting his subjective understanding rather than an "objective" truth about physical reality. Referring to Heraclitus' famous statement, Protagoras said, "The river is different for each individual to begin with.

The distinction Protagoras made between appearance and reality runs throughout Greek philosophy. "Appearances (phenomena)...are the familiar things, events, and relationships of everyday perception," comments McCleod (49-50). That appearances are deceptive is a truism. The stick in the water appears bent; ...the hallucinations of the insane,



the faces in the clouds--all are appearances that are clearly at variance with reality.... The world of the worm is limited to what the worm can perceive and comprehend; the world of man is structured by the capacities and motives of man. The perceiver and thinker can never transcend his own perceiving and thinking process."

Collectively, the Sophists developed grammar and logic and taught public speaking. They criticized traditional morals and politics. They inquired into linguistic theory, metaphysics, mathematics, and the nature and origin of the universe. Their students lauded them for liberating their minds from superstition and tradition, while Athens' elders viewed them as subversives who were ruining the minds of the youth. The early designation "sophist" (from "sophos" which means "wise" or "learned") meant something like "college professor", although they were private teachers who existed outside an institutional setting. Socrates and Aristophanes attacked the Sophists, while Plato distinguished between Sophists and "true philosophers". Related words are "sophistry" and "sophisticated."

In retrospect, Protagoras may have contributed at least as much to our psychological understanding as Plato, once the latter turned from reporting the thinking of Socrates to advancing his own ideas. Philosophers like Parmenides rejected sensation as a guide to truth, but Protagoras viewed it as the most direct doorway to knowledge. His view that all sacred principles and established truths were subject to challenge established individualism on a philosophical basis.

Twentieth Century phenomenologies, building on the relativism of Protagoras, hold that appearances (phenomena) are worth studying in their own right, and that other people's ideas about themselves and the world are a rich mine of psychological understanding. The identification of processes such as attribution, projection, and introjection are all a spinning-out of the implications of Protagoras' views. "Attribution" and "projection" are descriptions of how our views of others are based on our own thoughts and motives, while "introjection" is a description of

how we take in our friends,' family's, society's or culture's interpretations of the world and make these our own. Cognitive behavioral psychology, which is based on identifying and changing what we tell ourselves about ourselves and the world around us, can trace its ancestry back to Protagoras.

The connection is even more direct for the philosophical currents known as "constructivism" and "postmodernism." Constructivism holds that each of us constructs our own reality out of the combination of who we inherently are, our personal experiences, and the social and cultural ideas and arrangements which surround us. Postmodernism holds that the scientific model of a single conception of reality which can be known and accepted by all is mistaken; that such models are inevitably colored by personal and cultural factors. A white Englishman and a Black African woman, for instance, may tell very different stories about colonialism in Africa. Indeed, if we listen to twenty people, they may each tell a different story about it, each with its own validity, based on the storyteller's experience. We will emerge from listening to those twenty "truths" with a broader and deeper understanding than we could gain through attempting to grasp a single elusive reality. So say the postmodernists, This conception is part of the current movement toward legitimizing a "narrative" approach in psychology. We all have our stories.

Back in Athens, Protagoras finally grew so bold as to write, "With regard to the Gods I know not whether they exist or not, or what they are like. Many things prevent our knowing; the subject is obscure, and brief is the span of our mortal life." The Athenian assembly, which like most seats of power was never overly tolerant of heretical ideas, banished Protagoras and burned all copies of his books it could find. Protagoras fled to Sicily and is said to have drowned on the way.

## ORIGINS OF SCIENTIFIC MEDICINE

Alcmaeon of Croton, a physician who practiced at the end of the sixth and the start of the fifth century B.C., is said to have been the first Greek to dissect the bodies of animals to study their brains, organs, skeletons, and muscles. He was also among

the first to dissect human bodies. From his dissections, he concluded that sensations reach the brain through channels from the sense organs, that perceiving and thinking are separate processes and that the brain is the seat of both sensation and thought. The brain, he suggested, stores and arranges perceptions and is responsible for memory and belief. He At the medical school he founded in Croton, he taught a holistic, rational, observational approach to disease. Like today's holistic health practitioners, he believed that health and illness result from the balance or imbalance of the body's systems.

No medical name is more famous than that of Hippocrates (460?-377? B.C.), who was born into a family of priests and physicians on the island of Cos, a center of temple medicine. He observed the results of head injuries and correctly concluded that the right side of the brain controls the left side of the body and vice versa.

Hippocrates held that nature's own healing power helps the body heal itself and throw off disease. Thus the physician's first commandment is to do no harm, to avoid interfering with this natural healing power. Following Alcmaeon, he maintained that all disease results from natural causes and should be treated using natural methods. His approach to holistic healing included rest, healthy food, exercise, proper diet, exercise, fresh air, massage, baths, music, and the visits of friends. The goal was to restore the body to a harmonious state. He emphasized treating the total, unique patient, not just the disease. We might note the difference between this approach and that of some of the contemporary doctors who take the "Hippocratic Oath." And just for the record, he advised doctors to, "Sometimes give your services for nothing, calling to mind a previous benefaction or present satisfaction. And if there be an

opportunity of serving one who is a stranger in financial straits, give full assistance to all such."(W.H.S. Jones, p. 319).

Hippocrates can be viewed as a psychologist in four ways. One was in his formulation of theories of temperament and motivation. A second was as a physiological psychologist, as in the observations described above. A third was in his conception of the Hippocratic Oath, designed to produce the proper frame of mind in the doctor. A fourth was in his descriptions of behavior disorders and his diagnoses of causes of psychological problems. He agreed with Alcmaeon that the brain is the source of our intellectual abilities, and added that it also causes many of our emotional problems, making us happy or unhappy, sorrowful or at peace with ourselves.

For the next great name in medical history we must skip ahead six hundred years, to Galen (A.D. 130-200) who studied medicine and anatomy at the Museum and Institute of Alexandria after Alexander had conquered Egypt and then the Greek rulers of Egypt, the Ptolemies, had fallen into decadence, and the Roman Republic had arisen and turned into an empire. Many anatomists with sharp knives and keen eyes had worked at the museum throughout the centuries, and Galen studied their works carefully. He had plenty of direct experience as surgeon to the gladiators of his hometown of Pergamon, and he dissected many kinds of animals. In 169 A.D. he was appointed physician to Emperor Marcus Aurelius, giving him access to the Imperial Library's collection of texts from every corner of the empire.

Besides his strictly medical knowledge, Galen wrote a treatise called *On the Passions and Errors of the Soul*. He saw that psychological problems can occur when we become lost in such passions as fear, anger, grief, envy, and violent lust. Freeing ourselves from such passions by striving for understanding and self-knowledge is not easy because we blind ourselves to our own shortcomings so that we see only others' faults. (This is not a bad description of the mechanism of projection). For the inner work to overcome such problems, he wrote, we need a good

therapist. "The mature person who can see these vices must reveal with frankness all our errors. Next, when he tells us some fault...let us go aside and consider the matter by ourselves; let us censure ourselves and try to cut away the disease not only to the point where it is not apparent to others, but so completely as to remove its roots from our soul."(Quoted by Hajal, 1983, 321-2) The influence of Stoic philosophy and Marcus Aurelius can be discerned in these remarks.

## SOCRATES

Socrates (c. 470-399 B.C.) lived at a golden moment. It was during the decade before his birth that the Persians invaded and largely destroyed Athens. Then the Athenians retreated to the nearby island of Salamis behind their "wooden wall" of Athenian and allied ships, and "the outnumbered Greeks outmaneuvered and largely destroyed Persia's navy" (Eliot, 14). Before long Athens had become the leader of the Delian league. Her population was about three hundred thousand, a third of them slaves, with perhaps forty thousand adult male voting citizens. Most of the forty thousand spent part of every day at the athletic clubs, practicing sports and fighting. Athenians rebuilt their homes, most of them modest dwellings, and built marvelous temples. The economy prospered, trade was brisk, intellectual life sparkled, and the arts flourished. One of the stonecutter-sculptors who worked on the temples was a young man named Socrates (469-399 B.C.), also known as a brave fighter in Athens' military campaigns who sometimes marched barefoot in the snow.

We have no writings by Socrates himself. Our knowledge about him comes primarily from Plato's Dialogues, and from Xenophon and the playwright Aristophanes. Socrates fought bravely as a soldier against Sparta in the Peloponnesian wars between 432 and 422 and generously gave up to others his claims for prizes of valor. Impudent and incisive in discussion and debate, he questioned and challenged fellow Athenians

from every level of society. Brought up as he was in his father's stonecutting trade, he made many of his points with examples from such trades as blacksmith, herder, cobbler, and carpenter. Few have ever reasoned as brilliantly.

Having somehow come by a little capital early in life (perhaps as a gift from a wealthy patron), Socrates lived on the interest and saw no need to work, except to turn a piece of stone into sculpture when he wished, and chose to think and talk as his lifelong occupation. His income was not great, but he did not need much. In his own life he anticipated part of what the Cynics and Stoics later articulated in their philosophies.

Content with a simple, ragged cloak, he liked going barefoot better than wearing sandals or shoes. "He kept well on very little means," writes his biographer Alexander Eliot. "Hunger is the finest sauce,' he used to say, 'and thirst lends the best bouquet to a glass of wine. Fine clothes are for play actors. The markets are crammed with what one doesn't need.... An unencumbered life is the godliest.'.... When...offered a piece of real estate as a present, he turned it down with the remark that one doesn't need a whole oxhide to make a pair of sandals.... What others might call hardship, Socrates considered prudent hardening."(p. 18) "He was incredibly free of the acquisitive fever that agitates mankind," writes Durant. "He commented, "How many things there are that I do not want! --and felt himself rich in his poverty.... He let the rich entertain him now and then...but...could get along very well without them and rejected the gifts and invitations of magnates and kings.... He gallantly promised his help to the courtesan Theodota, who rewarded him with the invitation: "Come often to see me."(Durant, p. 366) His mother was a midwife. It was joked that Socrates merely continued her trade, helping others deliver their ideas.

For this was his hallmark: not expounding doctrines of his own, but questioning others, drawing them out, exposing the inadequacies of their reasoning or helping them to more accurate conclusions. Socrates believed that truth cannot be defined by any absolute authority but lies hidden in every person's mind. This was the basis of his philosophy of

education. He was known for good humor and kindness, for great wisdom in telling better from worse, for preferring virtue to pleasure, and for an unerring instinct in discerning the character of others. He displayed great composure in the face of adverse circumstances, even in his response to taunts and criticism. "Suppose a donkey kicked me," he said when asked about this. "Should I then kick the donkey?"

For Socrates, the goal of life was the pursuit of Reason. Intriguingly enough, at the same time his chief source of ethical guidance was an inner voice, his "daemon," as he called it, which often told him what to do or not do. This man for whom Reason was the highest good relied above all on his intuition! This might seem to us a contradiction, yet I suspect he simply viewed it as making full use of all his faculties, just as Carl Jung and Fritz Perls recommended in the Twentieth Century.

He met and learned from all the philosophers who passed through Athens in his time. His university was the streets --the market, the workshops, the gymnasiums, the public squares, and anywhere else he might find someone interesting with whom to speak. He was the first known advocate of free public higher education, chiding the sophists for charging high fees and accepting no money for his teachings. He questioned, prodded, and poked holes in flimsy beliefs, demanding precise answers and consistent views. He sought to provoke everyone whose ideas were vague or fuzzy to clarify what they knew and what they did not. By question after question, he led his listeners to fuller, sharper definitions of their ideas, and most of these ideas were related to personal conduct. Dialogues like Euthyphro show that when pressed, supposedly wise men cannot define basic concepts they use regularly, like "piety," "justice," and "courage." Their actions, based on their ignorance, can be disastrous. In Crito, Socrates holds that wrongdoing is reprehensible on all occasions. "It is never right to do a wrong or return a wrong or defend one's self against injury by retaliation." His central interest was "daily converse about virtue, examining myself and others; for a life unscrutinized is unworthy of a man."

A typical Socratic dialogue," points out Donald Palmer (49), has three parts:

"(1) A problem is posed (e.g., the problem of what virtue is, or justice, or truth, or beauty); Socrates becomes excited and enthusiastic to find someone who claims to know something.

"(2) Socrates finds "minor flaws" in his companion's definition and slowly begins to unravel it, forcing his partner to admit his ignorance.

"(3) An agreement is reached by the two admittedly ignorant men to pursue the truth seriously. Almost all the dialogues end inconclusively. Of course, they must do so. Socrates cannot give his disciple the truth. Each of us must find it out for ourselves."

While Socrates agreed with the Sophists that personal experience is important, he disagreed with their view that no truth exists beyond personal opinion. His method of inductive definition began with specific instances of justice, truth, beauty, or love, and then asked what it was that all instances of each virtue had in common. He sought to find the essence of each. Understanding these essences was knowledge, and gaining knowledge is the goal of life. Knowledge leads to virtue, while ignorance leads to improper conduct.

Because his central concerns were problems related to human existence, Socrates has sometimes been called the first existential philosopher. In the mid-Twentieth Century, Jean-Paul Sartre held that each of us is fully responsible for our own life, that we paint our portrait through our actions and that portrait is all there is. We are "thrown into" life-circumstances, but what we make of them is our own doing; under conditions of uncertainty, we choose, not knowing what the outcomes of our choices will be. Socrates lived by all these principles. He saw that his life was what he made it. He voiced no regrets. He bequeathed this outlook to Antisthenes, who passed it on to the Cynics and Stoics who came after him.



The Oracle at Delphi declared that no one was wiser than Socrates, because he claimed that he himself knew nothing, while others who knew far less walked about parading their knowledge, Socrates set out to see if he could disprove the oracle by finding a wiser man. Naturally, his exposure of others' ignorance made him unpopular with those who were shown to be less wise than they thought themselves to be. Part of Socrates' message was that admission of one's errors and the limits to one's understanding is a necessary prerequisite for learning.

Socrates was the first to use the word "psyche" as we do today, as the seat of intelligence and character. He described the human soul as consisting of three parts. We all have within us the impulsive or appetitive element, the element of thought or reason, and between these two, an element that can curb impulses and cravings and take orders from thought or reason. It is not farfetched to see in this the prototype for Freud's id, ego, and superego.

In discussing rhetoric, he told Phaedrus that, "To influence men's souls, you have to know what types of soul there are. Each type requires its own style of discourse.... The next person you try to persuade may require...reasons corresponding to his own special type. One must develop a keen ear...and cultivate a sense of what's appropriate to say...to become a persuasive person" (Eliot, 36). Therein lay the start of a personality typology. Nonetheless, it appears that in making his points, Socrates made enemies as well as friends. Perhaps he did not do enough to help others find more satisfying personal directions to replace the pretensions which he demolished.

In a critical appraisal of Socrates, Aristotle later remarked, "To Socrates, being able to define justice seemed pretty much the same thing as being just...so Socrates inquired about what justice is, instead of asking how or under what conditions justice comes into being.... We don't really want to know what justice is as much as to be just. Nor what courage so much as to be brave ourselves. Nor what health is as to be healthy" (Eliot, 49).

As Socrates became Athens' leading philosopher, Pericles became its de-facto ruler, while maintaining the appearances of democratic forms. During the "Golden Age" of his three decades of power, Athens became the leader of, in effect, a Greek empire. But, writes Eliot (16-17), "The gold was autumnal...and winter followed." Pericles, one of the greatest statesmen in history, was run out of office and Athens rejected Sparta's overtures toward peace. Many of Athens' best young men died during "thirty years of wasting war with Sparta which...spread to set all Greece aflame. Plague came and went like death's own breath. Morals rotted. Starvation, torture, and massacre became usual. Finally, in 404 B.C., Athens fell. Sparta, herself bled white, had "won". During the period before Athens fell, the Assembly became vindictive and disgusting. After the naval battle of Arginusal, in which the Victorious Athenian fleet lost only twenty-five ships while rival Sparta lost seventy, the Athenian Assembly put its admirals on trial for having failed to rescue the crews of her sunken tirmes, and condemned them to death.

But if democracy did not serve Athens well, aristocracy served her worse. Sparta, after her victory, installed a ruling committee of thirty Athenian aristocrats. The thirty "went mad with sudden power and embarked on a course of extortion and legalized murder" (37). The thirty did not last long. Not long afterward a plague took a third of what remained of Athens' population. Scarred by one disaster after another, the citizens of Athens were in an angry mood and wanted scapegoats. These were the circumstances when Socrates was placed on trial for turning the youth against traditional values, and condemned to death.

Athens expected him to grovel for mercy at his trial. Instead, he gave no quarter. Asked to suggest his punishment, Socrates recommended that the Athenians build a statue in his honor in the main square. "Are you not ashamed," he chided the pillars of the community who sat in judgment of him, "that you give your attention to acquiring as much money as possible, and similarly with reputation and honour, and give no attention or thought to truth and understanding and the perfection of your soul?" Ashamed that they were about to execute their most eminent

citizen, the Athenians were prepared to look the other way when the prison guard was bribed to let Socrates escape. Instead, Socrates said that to break the law by escaping would be to declare himself an enemy of all laws. He drank the hemlock, philosophized with friends for as long as he could talk, and ever since has been a symbol of martyrdom for Truth.

## PLATO'S PURE IDEAS

The Peloponnesian War ended after almost thirty years with Sparta's victory in 404 B.C.. The Spartans ruled until defeated by Thebes in 371. In 359 Philip II became king of Macedon; in 338 he subjugated Greece, and in 336 he was assassinated and his son Alexander the Great succeeded him.

Amid this turmoil, philosophy continued. A handsome youth born to a wealthy family, Plato (c. 427-337) was called by that name because of his broad shoulders. His writings fall into two distinct periods. During the first, he was essentially reporting the teachings of Socrates. After Socrates' death he left Athens for southern Italy and studied with the Pythagoreans. Pythagoras (c. 580-500 B.C.), best known as a mathematician, believed that everything in the universe could be explained in terms of numbers and numerical relationships. He noticed, for instance, that when one string on a lyre is exactly twice as long as another and they are both played, a pleasant sound results.

The Pythagoreans, writes Hergenhahn(p. 31), "assumed a dualistic universe: One part abstract, permanent, and intellectually knowable, and the other empirical, changing, and known through the senses." They held that the sensory interferes with the attainment of true knowledge, and should be avoided --in other words, direct experience is inferior to reasoning as a source of knowledge.

Plato's own views, as they developed, owe at least as much to the Pythagoreans as to Socrates. Perhaps more. When in 387 Plato returned to Athens, he based his Academy (after which all subsequent "academies" are named) on Pythagorean precepts, placing a sign "Let no one without an understanding of mathematics enter here" above its entrance. His famous allegory which likened us to people in a cave who can see only shadows of the realities above referred to a world of enduring, unchanging "pure ideas" or "forms" which our perceptions and understandings can only approximate. A "form," he held, exists in its own right. I may deal with several thousand "triangles" in my life, for example, but none is the ideal "Triangle" which exists as pure form. So too with other ideas in geometry, metaphysics, ethics, etc. For Plato, the path to more accurate knowledge of the world lay in measurement and deductive reasoning. He mistrusted the graspable, concrete world which we can come to know with our senses. (There is an interesting contradiction here, since measurement is an extension of sensation.)

As a rationalist, Plato's dualistic view divided the person into a material, imperfect body and a mind or soul which contained pure knowledge. He held that all knowledge is innate and can be attained through introspectively searching one's inner experience.

Plato agreed with Socrates that nothing was more important than the welfare of the soul, that thought and knowledge is more important than pleasure in living the Good Life. He also argued that the fact "that a man should not be a mere weathercock to his fears, likings, and hankerings does not entail that ideally he should be screened from them. Though gales may sink the ill-rigged or ill-steered sailing ship, no ship can sail without winds. Winds can be too weak as well as too strong."(Ryle, 333)

Plato borrowed from Socrates the idea "that reason was not only a capacity of man, but a force that could penetrate through appearances and reveal reality in its true form." Plato himself went even farther, in his assertion that the Idea, the rationally derived concept, is the fundamental element of reality, and that the natural world is only a

partial expression, even a degradation, of the world of ideas. The idealist believes that by clear thinking, we can discern the reality behind appearances. "From the idealist's point of view, science is a process of discovery. The ideas are there to begin with as the essential structure of reality." Our task is to discover them, to come to know them as closely as we can. "The ideas of causality, of opposition, of beauty and of goodness are not products of the scientist's thinking; they are part of the reality that is gradually becoming known to him.... He has in the inner consistency of his own thinking an indication as to whether or not he is on the right track." (McCleod, 57-9)

With hindsight it is easy to see both the value and the problems in Plato's views. On one hand, his insistence that there are enduring principles which we can discover was one of the starting points of the hugely productive enterprise of scientific inquiry. On the other, his assertion that the consistency of our thinking can serve as a measure of whether we are right or wrong led such thinkers as Freud and Marx to call their systems "scientific," even though they were actually mixtures of brilliant insights and scientifically verifiable propositions with other views which proved mistaken.

Plato also bequeathed to us the problematic notion that reason is somehow inherently "higher" or "better" than emotion or as he puts it, "material forces." He failed to note that internally consistent reasoning can be to completely misguided when it is based on faulty postulates and axioms, as in mistaken rigid ideologies, and that sometimes our untutored feelings can tell us what's really going on and help us distinguish sense from nonsense.

Borrowing from Socrates, Plato describes the soul as consisting of appetite, spirit, and reason. Appetite, which includes hunger and sex, is our "lower nature" which Plato locates primarily in the lower parts of the ody. Spirt, for Plato, includes ambition and strength of purpose. The word "will" seem to capture much of what he meant by spirit. Reason, the highest faculty of our material and immortal soul, allows us to attain

truth, recognize beauty, and live the Good Life. Plato offered no evidence to support this model, but went on to use it in *The Republic*, where the flaws in his reasoning become too obvious to ignore. He starts off sensibly enough, asserting that the principles which underlie the just state must reflect those by which the individual person attains the good life. Then he likens "appetite" in his ideal state to "the workers, who cannot be trusted with many decisions, and whose virtues are industry and sobriety" He connects "spirit" with "the soldiers...who must defend the state and whose virtue is courage," and "reason" with "the philosopher-kings who make the decisions, and whose virtue is wisdom." (McCloud, 60) In short, Plato's ideal state is a tight oligarchy in which the few philosopher-kings make the decisions for all and the soldiers make sure that the workers do as they are told. With a little and fine-tuning, these conceptions could lay the foundations for an enduring caste-system. Plato does not display a great deal of insight, psychology, or wisdom in his politics.

*The Republic* does, however, offer one useful idea--that of looking at processes which run through both psychodynamics and social dynamics to see how they are alike and different at each level of analysis. Suppression and repression, for example, occur at every level from the personality to the nation--state. So to do projection, distortion, deflection, denial, and several other personal and social defense mechanisms. How they function at each social level --personal, family, community, corporate, governmental, and in the culture-at-large, is an interesting and important question.

Few psychologists today view themselves as idealists. Nonetheless, points out McCleod, something akin to Plato's idealism is involved in numerous contemporary research projects, such as the attempts to identify "pure" factors in intelligence or personality, which has met with some success, and the construction of mathematical models of behavior, which has proven worthwhile in a few areas like psychophysics, but in others, from Clark Hull's work until our own time, often seems to offer highly questionable cost-benefit ratios.

Whatever the value of his particular ideas, Plato bequeathed us a container for philosophical and psychological inquiry. He offered an epistemology, or theory of knowledge; an ontology or theory of being; an esthetics or theory of beauty, and an ethics, or theory of conduct. Together they made up his metaphysics, or general worldview. And he left us one verse to tack up on our walls where we can see it when we need:

"Please, my friends,

Be kind,

For everyone you meet

Is fighting a hard battle."

## ARISTOTLE: THE GREAT NATURALIST

Born in Stageirus, a Greek colony on the northwestern shore of the Aegean Sea, Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) was the son of a physician and learned some anatomy from his father. He studied under Plato for twenty years and raised a monument to him after his death. After Plato died in 307, Aristotle went to the court of his friend Hermeias who had studied with him at the Academy and raised himself from slavery to become dictator of Atarneus and Assus in upper Asia Minor. Hermeias' daughter Pythias became his wife. After Hermeias was assassinated by the Persians, the couple fled to Lesbos, where Aristotle studied the natural history of the island and Pythias gave birth to a daughter, then died. In 343 Philip of Macedon asked him to tutor Alexander, then thirteen; he was the future emperor's teacher for four years. By 338, Philip's armies had subjugated Greece. Aristotle directed the restoration of Stageirus which had been destroyed in the war of Olynthus, and drew up laws for the city. During his years as a naturalist, city planner, builder and

lawmaker, he lived a down-to-earth life which colored his inquiries and his philosophy.

After Philip's death in 336, Alexander became ruler of the Macedonian Empire and held power until he perished in an ill-starred military campaign in 323. In 335 Aristotle returned to Athens and founded a school of philosophy and rhetoric, the Lyceum. Alexander probably supplied the money, since Aristotle chose an elegant group of buildings dedicated to Apollo Lyceus, surrounded with shady gardens and covered walks. He established a zoo, a library, and a museum of natural history. The school was called the Lyceum, and his group and its philosophy were named Peripatetic ("those who walk around") after the peripatoi, or covered walks where Aristotle and his students strolled as they talked. (The word is from "peri" meaning "around", and "pateoo" meaning to tread or step, related to our word "patio.")

In sharp contrast to Plato, Aristotle emphasized careful observation and did not trust purely rational methods. While Plato believed that forms existed independent of nature, Aristotle held that essences existed but could only be discovered by studying nature. Like Socrates, he believed that if we study enough examples of a principle or phenomenon, we will finally be able to puzzle out the essence that underlies them. In this he turned Plato's approach upside down. For Plato a real thing or event could illustrate a principle that reason could grasp directly, while Aristotle countered that we discover the principle through observation of particulars. His method was to observe, classify, deduce the implications, and then use the deductions as the basis for a new round of observation. As we will see below, the term "empirical" was not coined until two centuries later, but it describes a central part of Aristotle's point of view. The revival of this method in the 16th Century was an important part of the rise of science after a millennium-and-a-half of ecclesiastical orthodoxy. "The scientist," writes McCleod, "studies particular structures and processes to learn how they reflect a being's inner nature, and what general purposes they serve, and how they do that.



Anticipating the work of Harry Harlow and Robert W. White's Twentieth Century work on the motives of curiosity and exploration, Aristotle claimed that human beings have a deep, innate impulse to know and find out. He emphasized this motive as heavily as Sigmund Freud emphasized sexuality & repression and Alfred Adler emphasized power.

He described three associative processes: similarity, contrast, and contiguity. Things are seen as associated if they appear similar, or appear together in time or space.

He also proposed a law of frequency: That the more frequently an experience is repeated, the better it will be remembered. This principle resurfaced in several behavioral learning theories of the 1900s. And there is his law of "ease": That some events are remembered more easily than others, and some associations are formed more easily than others. His observation has been confirmed in our time by Martin Seligman's work on "prepared" stimuli, which showed that many people form fears of insects or heights more easily than other fears, and by John Garcia's demonstration that each species of animal differs from others in regard to which behaviors it learns easily and which others it learns only with difficulty, if at all.

In regard to the emotions, Aristotle anticipated Freud's principle of catharsis, noting that drama sometimes arouses emotions that have a cleansing or purgative effect. He could also, points out Richard Lazarus, "...be called the first cognitive theorist of the emotions, and his analysis makes implicit use of the ideas of relationship, appraisal [of the situation's relevance to our goals], and action tendency" (1991, p. 217). As he seeks to describe how a public speaker can manipulate the emotions of the audience, Aristotle notes that, "Anger may be defined as a belief that we, or our friends, have been unfairly slighted, which causes in us both painful feelings and a desire or impulse for revenge. . . . We must discover (1) what the state of mind of angry people is, (2) who the people are with whom they usually get angry, and (3) on what grounds

they get angry with them. It is not enough to know one or even two of these points; unless we know all three, we shall be unable to arouse anger in anyone. The same is true of the other emotions" (1941, p. 1380). In his *Poetics*, he describes how a tragedy can evoke the emotions of pity and fear (1970).

Aristotle saw all living beings as forming a "ladder of creation" and outlined nutritive (plants), sensitive (animals), and rational (human) levels. In *Creative Evolution*, French philosopher Henri Bergson was later to speak of the evolution of life forms as developing successively higher degrees of consciousness.

Few ideas were more important to Aristotle than his emphasis on the purposes which our acts are meant to serve. In this he anticipated Adler and Tolman in the early Twentieth Century. We do not just act, said Aristotle, but act to accomplish something, to attain some end, and our behavior can seldom be understood without reference to this intention. This teleological principle was central to his views. At the same time, he suggested that we gain less pleasure from attaining our goals than from exercising the abilities through which we achieve them (Lazarus, p. 92).

Among the distinctions Aristotle made was that between the potential and the actual. Potential refers to the possibilities open to us. Actual is what we are. "A human being is potentially a criminal or a saint," writes McCleod (65), "but he is not potentially an elephant." We have the opportunity to change and become within the limits of our potentialities. It is only a small step from there to Jean-Paul Sartre's distinction between an attribute and an action.

Aristotle also reflected on the nature of causality --the "why-because" connection. He distinguished among "material, efficient, formal, and final" causes. The first three explain events in terms of antecedent and concomitant conditions (variables). Aristotle's innovation was to add the fourth, or "final" cause, the end which an act is meant to serve.

In Aristotle's view, our physical nature is composed of matter, but our essence, the soul, is something which gradually comes into being through the course of our development. Unlike Plato, he was not convinced that it survived the body's death. He is said to have distinguished among the "nutritive soul," common to all living beings, the "sensitive soul," common to animals and humans, and the "rational soul," found only in human beings. Each person and each species strives to actualize its own potential. (Shades of Kurt Goldstein's and Abraham Maslow's "self-actualization"!) In successive stages of evolution, which is a striving upward toward rationality, more and more potentialities become actual. "Thus," writes McCleod (69), "the inherent purpose of any person, living being, or object is to behave in accord with its own inner nature.

Aristotle might well be called the father of biology, for he collected an immense number of specimens and drew up the basic lines of biological classifications. This project led Aristotle to develop a large number of mutually exclusive categories, and each specimen one or another of these. A pitfall which is sometimes associated with this tendency to classify is probably as old as human thought itself. A person or thing is either this or that, edible or poisonous, friend or enemy. This is an extension of the dualistic thinking in which we conceive of two categories, and mentally put everything into either one or the other. Twentieth-Century General Semanticists christened this approach "Aristotelian Logic," which they contrasted with "non-Aristotelian Logic" (or "null-A") in which a thing can occupy more than one category at once. The pervasiveness of being several-things-at-the-same-time in the natural world is reflected in the ancient Chinese yin-yang symbol, which has a white dot in the middle of the black side and a black dot in the middle of the white side. Mathematical set theory shows this quite clearly. If we draw two non-overlapping circles on a page (circle A and circle B), and fill them with dots, then we have mutually exclusive categories in which each dot is either an A or a B but not both. But if the circles overlap, there is an area AB which is part of both, and each of the dots in it is an AB dot. Add yet a third circle which overlaps

both the others, and we have area ABC with dots which partake of the properties of all three circles. This depicts the basis of non-Aristotelian logic, which, as it happens, includes most of the events of interest to psychologists. Emotions, for example, usually come in clusters, such as pain and anger and grief and jealousy all mixed up together. A great deal of confusion, and wasted time and effort, has resulted from trying to divide things into this or that when in fact they are both --or all-- at once. Set Theory supplements Asian philosophy in providing a basis for a non-dualistic logic.,

In reality, Aristotle himself appears to have been much more openminded and pragmatic than the term "Aristotelian Logic" would suggest.

He was not, of course, right about everything. He claimed that to be fully worthy of honor, a person must be well-endowed with the conventional goods or values of fortune, such as good birth, power, wealth, and a large body (too bad for midgets and many world-class gymnasts and figure-skaters), that falling rocks accelerate because they are happy to be getting home, and that snakes have no testacles because they have no legs. (Nicomachean Ethics IV, Oates 292, Palmer 79.) Nonetheless, Aristotle enriched and systematized the knowledge of his time in almost all the sciences of nature. The volume of research carried out at the well-funded Lyceum was enormous. Perhaps Aristotle's greatest contribution was in combining detailed systematic observation with careful reasoning, both inductive and deductive. He began science as we know it.

"In Aristotle and Plato together," writes Tarnas (68), there is an "elegant balance and tension between empirical analysis and spiritual intuition." He points to Raphael's Renaissance painting *The School of Athens*, in which, "in the center of the many Greek philosophers and scientists gathered in lively discussion, stand the elder Plato and the younger Aristotle, with Plato pointing upward to the heavens, to the invisible and

transcendent, while Aristotle motions his hand outward and down to the earth, to the visible and immanent."

## FROM THE HELLENIC TO THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD

Hellenic Greece was an era of small city states marked by a combination of a fierce individualism and an equally fierce commitment to the local polis. Like Buddha with his "Golden Mean," Aristotle held that finding a balance between extremes is an important part of wisdom. The Athenians had trouble finding that balance and it contributed to their unwillingness to make peace with Sparta and to their ultimate defeat, just as it contributed to the collective defeat of the individualistic city-states at the hands of Alexander's disciplined Macedonian army.

By the time Alexander the Great died in 323, Greece had entered a different era. The Hellenistic Age, when Greek ideas but not Greek power dominated the Eastern Mediterranean, is dated from Alexander's death to Rome's conquest of Greece in 146 B.C., but a few threads of Greek thought continued to develop until barbarians began to invade the Roman Empire around 235 A.D. During the Hellenistic Period, Greeks continued to fan outward from the denuded hills and exhausted soils of the Greek peninsula and islands to colonies all around the border of the Mediterranean, carrying their ideas and culture with them. "Greece fell just as it culminated, yet spread triumphantly just as it submitted," writes Tarnas (74). "As planned by Alexander, the large cosmopolitan cities of the empire--above all Alexandria, which he founded in Egypt, became vital centers of cultural learning, in whose libraries and academies the classical Greek inheritance survived and flourished.... [Even after] the Roman conquest, Greek high culture still presided over the educated classes of the greater Mediterranean world.... The Romans...more pragmatic genius lay in the realm of law, political administration, and military strategy. In philosophy, literature, science, art, and education, Greece remained the most compelling cultural force in the ancient

world. As the Roman poet Horace noted, the Greeks, captive, took the victors captive."

During the Hellenistic period, philosophy changed with the changing world. Aristotle's expansion and classification of the sciences had done much to separate science from philosophy. As a consequence, the Hellenistic schools strove "less from the passion to comprehend the world in its mystery and magnitude, and more from the need to give human beings some stable belief system and inner peace" in the face of an environment that was at once more chaotic, more cosmopolitan, and frequently more hostile (Tarnas 76). Alexander's belief that a universal humanity united everyone became more prominent, while at the same time, citizens' control over their political destiny was largely lost, first to Alexander's empire and then to Rome. There was little opportunity in these empires for most people to be politically active, influential, and responsible, hence little room for political philosophy. But there was an increasing awareness of individuality, especially in art and literature. Philosophy took a humanistic turn as people began to scrutinize human nature for laws to guide their actions, rather than looking to custom or the gods for an objective notion of the "right." Several competing schools, each tracing its ancestry to some aspect of Socrates, Plato, or Aristotle's teachings, competed for the people's allegiance. "Athens, too poor to maintain its state medical service, nevertheless opened private universities that made it...the 'school of Hellas,' the intellectual capital and arbiter of Greece." (Durant, 503)

## THE SKEPTICS

The school which ultimately may have contributed most to the development of modern science was that of the Skeptics. In the end, Plato and Aristotle had agreed on very little except the possibility of

arriving at ultimate truth. At the Lyceum under Aristotle's student Theophrastus, the Peripatetics turned more and more to specialized studies in botany, zoology, history, and biography. But Athens was growing poor, and not long after Theophrastus died, the center of scientific inquiry shifted to the thriving new Egyptian city founded by Alexander which he had named, of course, Alexandria. Meanwhile, at Plato's Academy, as interest turned to mathematics and morals, metaphysics languished.

Around 360 B.C., Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360-270 B.C.) was born. He studied in India and then returned to Elis, his birthplace, to teach philosophy. Pyrrho was the first of the Sceptics, after the Greek term *skeptikos*, which meant "inquirers." The Sceptics were the most direct successors to Socrates' stance of questioning every presumed certainty. Scepticism promoted a suspension of all belief. A philosophical sceptic examines alleged achievements in various fields to see if those who claim to know something really know what they claim to know. Some sceptics claimed that no knowledge beyond immediate experience is possible, while others doubted that even immediate experience is a fully reliable guide to truth.

Pyrrho took the latter tack. He maintained that we cannot find truth through the senses because they distort the object as we perceive it. Nor can we find it through reason, because we use our reason to deceive ourselves in the service of our desires. (He was unerringly accurate on that point. I have listened to people well-trained in critical thinking bend every rule of logic in order to reach conclusions which fit their emotional biases.) Therefore, held Pyrrho, we cannot be certain about anything, and therefore the wise person will pursue peace of mind rather than truth. Thus Pyrrho managed the neat trick of setting himself against the almost opposite teachings of Aristotle and Plato at the same time, and of simultaneously honoring and contradicting the heritage of Socrates.

Phyrrro pointed out that the same experience can be pleasant or unpleasant depending on our mood and state of mind, and that the same event can seem ugly or beautiful, or moral or immoral, depending on our point of view. Even an object can seem large or small, depending on the context. (Here he and the Sophists are on common ground.) India has one set of Gods and Greece another, and who can say which are real, if either? He went on to state that "every reason has a corresponding reason opposed to it" but saw little ground to prefer one reason over another. He took on conventional logic: "Every syllogism begs the question, for its major premise assumes its conclusion." During the third and second centuries B.C., skepticism became the dominant position at the Academy. One of its members, Arcesilaus, declared, "Nothing is certain, not even that." (Tarnas, 77)

Since in Phyrrro's view all theories are false, he found no rational grounds to prefer one course of action over another. Thus we may as easily accept the conventions and myths of one's own time and place as those of any other, so the best attitude is a calm acceptance of events and the world. He could have copied the line from Protagoras. There is, a double-standard here which is obvious once we notice it: Skepticism toward philosophic and scientific inquiry, but pragmatic acceptance of conventions. As we will see, in regard to social convention, the Cynics were the real skeptics.

Skepticism was less influential by the second century A.D., but that century boasted the most charming and insolent writer of the skeptics, Lucian, who lectured in Rome, Gaul, and Athens, and supported himself in old age with an official post in Egypt, thanks to the generosity of Marcus Aurelius. Lucian defines philosophy as an attempt to, in the words of Durant, "get an elevation from which you may see in every direction. [He] is as impartial as nature; he satirizes the rich for their greed, the poor for their envy, the philosophers for their cobwebs.... In the end he concludes with Voltaire that one must cultivate his garden" (497).



The most mature and sensible development of the skeptical position occurred in Roman Greece during the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D., under physician and philosopher Sextus Empiricus. In his *Pyrronian Hypotheses* and *Against Mathematics*, Sextus held that we should suspend judgment about all claims to knowledge that go beyond immediate experience. He pointed out that different animals perceive things differently; different people perceive things differently; human senses perceive objects in different ways; and our circumstances seem to alter what we perceive. How can we know, he asked, that we and not some other person or animal, perceive the world correctly? Have we any way of knowing under what circumstances we can tell the true nature of things?

Sextus attacked every claim by dogmatic philosophers to knowledge about the "nonevident world" (any condition that is not now being, and cannot at some time be, observed). Any criterion used to judge something nonevident can be tested by asking whether the criterion is itself observable. There are, he pointed out, continuing disputes about everything that cannot be observed.) He kept his position consistent by not denying that knowledge of the nonevident was possible, but saying that he suspended judgment on the question. He would surely have found B.F. Skinner a most congenial colleague. Our modern word "empirical" is apparently due to his influence.

## THE CYNICS: ANTISTHENES AND DIOGENES

While Plato was Socrates' most famous student, two others were also influential, Antisthenes (c. 444-371 B.C.); and Aristippus (c. 435-356 B.C.), whom we will meet later. Antisthenes, the son of an Athenian citizen and a Thracian slave, founded the school which came to be known as the Cynics. He gave up all property and dressed in a cloak so ragged that Socrates joked, "I can see your vanity, Antisthenes, through the holes of your cloak." After Socrates died, Antisthenes chose to speak

at the Cynosarges (Dogfish) gymnasium lecture center, because it was used by people of the lower classes and foreigners. From it comes the name "Cynic." Antisthenes was a true proletarian in his disposition. He accepted no pay, dressed like a workingman, preferred the poor for pupils, and made poverty and hardship part of his course of study. "All refined philosophy he held to be worthless; what could be known, could be known by the plain man. He believed in the 'return to nature'.... There was to be no government, no private property, no marriage, no established religion. His followers, if not he himself, condemned slavery.... He despised luxury and all pursuit of artificial pleasures of the senses."(Russell, 230-31) The Cynics were cynical toward all the material gettings, doings, and trivial pursuits of society. "The essence of the Cynic philosophy," writes Durant, [is] to reduce the things of the flesh to bare necessities so that the soul may be as free as possible (506)."

Antisthenes' reputation was eclipsed by that of his student Diogenes (c. 412-323 B.C.). Almost all of us have seen the picture of an old man in a cloak, holding a lantern and a staff, which appears on many versions of the Tarot Card, "The Hermit." Some say that the lantern was meant to help Diogenes in his search for truth; others hold that it was to help him find an honest man. Perhaps both assertions were true. A bankrupt banker from Sinope, Diogenes lived the Cynic doctrine totally. The St. Francis of ancient Greece, he chose the robe, wallet and staff of a beggar. He sought to render worthless the conventional labels and "social currencies" of the world such as "king, general, and honor." He imitated the simple life of animals, sleeping on the ground, eating whatever he could find or beg, and (witnesses attest) "performing the duties of nature and the rites of love in the sight of all. Seeing a child drink from its hands, he threw away his cup."(Durant, 507) He was an advocate of free love and a community of wives (but, so far as we know, not of husbands. There may be some sexism here). He refused to obey any law that made no sense to him, but injured no one. In short, he lived much like any of thousands of wandering yellow-robed mendicant sadhus in India today, but his intelligence and wisdom made him, after

Alexander, the most famous man in Greece. He called Freedom of Speech the greatest of social goods, had a wonderful sense of humor, and allegedly never lost an argument.

Cynic philosophy dismissed Plato's theory of pure ideas as utter nonsense. It held that only ethics is real philosophy, and we should study the wisdom of nature as a guide to life. Happiness, it maintains, is to be found in a simple and natural life, with as little help from outside things and possessions as possible. The pursuit of pleasure so often leads to naught or to remorse that it is more often the path to unhappiness than to happiness. (Again we hear the echo of Hindu and Buddhist philosophies: To transcend desire, they hold, is a key to happiness.) "A modest and virtuous life is the only road to abiding content, wealth destroys peace, and envious desire...eats away the soul.... Only internal freedom counts. The gods, said Diogenes, gave man an easy existence, but man complicates it by itching for luxuries."(Durant, 508) The Cynics held that to act in a virtuous, honorable, and upright way is its own reward. Virtue includes desiring, possessing, and eating little, drinking nothing but water, and injuring no one.

Diogenes had many followers who begged for alms and slept on the streets or temple steps. The Cynics largely disappeared about 200 B.C., but important threads of their ideas became part of the Stoic school.

## THE CYRENAICS AND THE EPICUREANS

Socrates' student Aristippus (c. 435-356 B.C.) was a product of the wealth and luxury of the upper classes of the half-Asian city of Cyrene on the African coast. Handsome, refined, honest, straightforward, and articulate, he took great delight in scandalizing the respectable sinners of Athens. He declared that whatever we do is in pursuit of pleasure or from fear of pain. Pleasure is the greatest good, and everything else must be judged by how well it can bring us pleasure. Wisdom lies not in the

search for abstract truth, but the quest for pleasant sensations. The keenest pleasures are physical or sensual rather than intellectual or moral, so the wise person will seek physical delights above all else. Since only the present exists, "the art of life lies in plucking pleasures as they pass, and making the most of what the moment gives." (Durant, p. 504)

This came to be called the "Cyrenaic" school, and it is the most explicitly hedonistic philosophy found in the Greek tradition. All opinion was dismissed as illusory; only physical sensations were viewed as sure guides to action. (Here Aristippus and Sextus Empiricus are not so far apart.) Philosophy's greatest value is helping us find and use what is pleasant. The goal is not to master pleasures by asceticism, but to enjoy them without becoming enslaved by them, and to learn to tell the difference between those that endanger us and those that don't. Thus wisdom includes a circumspect respect for law and public opinion, and in being "neither the master nor the slave of any man." Wealth and luxury were viewed as capable of producing pleasure, but not as pleasant in and of themselves. It might be better to be poor and free than wealthy and choked with cares. Aristippus declared that his greatest gift to his daughter Arete was that he had taught her "to set a value on nothing that she can do without." She followed him as head of the Cyrenaic school and became known as "The Light of Hellas."

Fourteen years after Aristippus died, Epicurus (c.342-270 B.C.) was born on the small, sun-drenched, hilly island of Samos, cooled by breezes and surrounded by the deep blue sea. He studied at the Academy in Athens, and borrowed from many philosophers who had preceded him. He credited much of his thought to Democritus and to Aristippus, whose philosophy of pleasure was actually more "Epicurean" in the Roman sense than Epicurus' ever was. He lectured on philosophy in various Asian cities. The citizens of Lampsacus thought so well of him that they bought him a house and gardens on the outskirts of Athens for

his school. He welcomed women into his community, and gave equal treatment to rich and poor, slaves and freemen.

Far from adopting an opulent lifestyle, Epicurus lived simply and quietly. His motto was "live unobtrusively." He is said to have been an unsurpassably kind and generous man. His basic premise is that the goal of philosophy is to free people from fear (especially fear of the gods). He disliked religion because he thought it thrived on ignorance and darkened life with fear of punishment. The Gods, he suggested, live a serene and deathless life in some far-off space among the stars but do not bother with the affairs of so insignificant a species as humankind. He followed the atomism of Democritus but rejected the latter's determinism. "According to Epicurus, the atoms making up humans never lose their ability to move freely; hence, he postulated free will. Epicurus agreed with Democritus that there was no afterlife because the soul was made up of freely moving atoms that scattered upon death... [so] the atoms comprising an individual would become part of another configuration following the individual's death.... The good life must be attained in this world, for there is no other.... Epicurus believed that the idea of immortality destroyed the only hope most people had for finally escaping pain" (Hergenhahn, 57). "Death, therefore, is nothing to us, nor does it concern us in the least, inasmuch as the mind is held to be mortal," wrote the later Epicurean Lucretius.(MaGill 222)

Epicurus had an interesting theory of knowledge. Repeated experiences preserved in memory give rise to "anticipations" which make language possible. When I hear the word "tree" I "anticipate" the kind of knowledge to which the name refers. He had no use for rhetoric, which he called "an abuse of language."

Epicurus stressed "practical wisdom", which compares pleasures to pains, accepting pains that lead to greater pleasures and rejecting pleasures that lead to greater pains. The justification for virtues like justice, temperance, and courage is that they are among the means for living the pleasant life. Judgments about good and right, he held, have

meaning so far as they refer to pleasures and pains. "We recognize pleasure as the first good in us, and from pleasure we begin every act of choice and avoidance."

He distinguished between "kinetic" pleasures like eating which result from some action, and "catastematic" pleasures like not being hungry which result from a stable condition. He most often spoke of "pleasure" in the sense of avoiding unpleasantness. The good life, he said, depends most on the latter. Pleasures of the mind are related closely to physical sensations. The mind feels delight at the body's well being, and enjoys peace of mind at the removal of pains and cares. A wise person remembers past pleasures and looks forward to pleasures to come when faced with distress in the presence. (There seems more than a little similarity between these ideas and Thorndike's "satisfiers" and "annoyers.")

We have three kinds of needs that will not be denied, he held: Equanimity or peace of mind; bodily health and comfort; and the exigencies of life itself. Luckily few things are really necessary to sustain life and keep the body healthy, and in most cases they are fairly easy to obtain.

There are, he declared, two kinds of desire: Natural Desire and Vain Desire. Natural desire includes those that are necessary, such as for food and sleep, and those that are not, such as for sex. Vain Desire is the wish for things like decorative clothing, a fancy chariot, or exotic food. Necessary natural desires must be satisfied and they bring pleasure and not much pain. But Epicurus held that unnecessary natural desires, like sex, involves relationships that ultimately are more painful than pleasant, and so should be overcome when possible. (Perhaps emotional wounds from his own life have found their way into his philosophy.) Vain desires, because there are no natural limits to them, tend to become obsessive and bring painful consequences if we give ourselves over to trying to fulfill them. (Palmer, 82-3)

Epicurus' definition of pleasure is largely negative --the absence of pain. Palmer (84-5) maintains that "the trouble with this definition is that, taken to its logical extremity, the absence of life is better than any life at all (as Freud discovered in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* where he claimed that behind the 'pleasure principle' is THANATOS, the Death Instinct.)" Epicurus, who was sickly in his later years, did indeed pay great attention to the desire for repose. both physical and mental, and to being free from worry. One of his favorite pleasures was to repose in his hammock, swinging back and forth.

Prudence, said Epicurus, means knowing what various satisfactions are worth and what they cost. It is prudent, he said, to get used to simple food and plain surroundings. If we learn to be satisfied with these, we are freed from most of the cares of the future. He agreed with Democritus that justice begins in "a pledge of mutual advantage to restrain men from harming one another and save them from being harmed." As circumstances change, what was once considered just may be so no longer. The justice of a law ultimately depends on it being of advantage to all parties to the compact. Since we can never be sure we will not be caught if we act unjustly, he said, "The just man is most free from trouble, the unjust most full of trouble." He urged us to avoid fame and power because these make other envious and they may become enemies. Better, he counseled, to try to live our lives unnoticed.

The teachings of Epicurus were popularized during the first century B.C. by Lucretius (Titus Lucretius Carus, c. 98-55 B.C.), whose *On the Nature of Things* is generally agreed to be the greatest didactic poem in any language. This work contrasts "the peaceful serenity of the Epicurean's life...with the troubled existence of the unenlightened, who in getting and spending lay waste their powers" (MacGill 220). Lucretius emphasized the Epicurean preference for naturalistic explanations:: "You will learn thus, led on with little trouble; for one thing will grow clear from another, nor will blind night snatch away the road and not let you perceive Nature's ultimates. Thus things will kindle lights for things.... Nothing prevents us living a life worthy of the gods."

This great unfinished work of philosophical poetry ends abruptly at its author's death, from causes unknown to us.

In sum, Epicurus is one of history's most misunderstood philosophers. In his inclinations and habits he was more stoic than "Epicurean," and the philosophers whose views were most like those often attributed to him were the Cyrenaics Aristippus and Arete.

Why the misunderstanding? "Some of Epicurus' Roman followers interpreted 'pleasure' ...as positive titillation," writes Palmer (85). Due to their misinterpretation, epicureanism today is often equated with sensualistic or greedy hedonism.

## THE STOICS, FROM ZENO OF CITIUM TO MARCUS AURELIUS

The Stoic school existed as such for five hundred years. It held that the basic task of humankind is to follow the law of nature, and devoted itself to determining what that is.

The Stoic lineage can easily be traced back to the cosmopolitan Cynics, with their view of nature as superior to local customs or politics, their Spartan lifestyle, and their belief in the autarkeia, or autonomy, of the virtuous person. Indeed, Stoic teachings are foreshadowed in Heraclitus of Ephesus, with his subordination of the person to the law of nature, to logos or reason, and his belief in eternal change. The Stoics also revered Socrates for his enduring example of rational self-control and the simplicity of his material life.

The school itself is said to have begun in 300 B.C. when its founder Zeno of Citium (also sometimes called Zeno of Cyprus, c. 336-262 B.C.), who was born in Citium, Cyprus began lecturing on the Painted Porch (Stoa Poikile) of a temple in Athens named for the paintings of Polygnotus which adorned it. Other early Stoics were the poet and religious visionary Cleanthes (c. 331-232 B.C.) and the systematizer



Chrysippus (c. 280-206). From the work of these three emerged the basic Stoic philosophy. Zeno of Citium believed that the world was ruled by a divine plan, that whatever happens occurs for a reason, that to live in accord with nature was the ultimate virtue, and that learning to accept one's fate with indifference, even if suffering was involved, was part of the task that faces us. Like the Epicureans, the Stoics sought to give human beings a stable basis for ethics and inner peace in the face of a chaotic and sometimes hostile environment. Like the Cynics, the Stoics viewed all human beings as participants in the divine Logos, as members of a universal human brotherhood and sisterhood. Unlike other philosophies of the time, in the Stoic view each person "was called upon to participate actively in the affairs of the world and thereby fulfill his duty to this great community.... Stoicism, the most broadly representative of the Hellenistic philosophies," writes Tarnas, possessed a loftiness of vision and moral temper that would long leave its mark on the Western spirit" (76).

The good life according to the Stoics includes cultivating intelligence, bravery, justice, and self control. Study and imitation of the wise person was said to be one path to wisdom. We can learn to become indifferent to the vicissitudes of fate, yet must hold ourselves and others ethically responsible for every action. We likewise have a responsibility to play the part in civic life that we are suited by our nature to play, but must not attach our happiness to place, power, or possessions.

This is no self-indulgent philosophy.

All the chief virtues are related, the Stoics maintained, so that we cannot succeed in developing some while neglecting the others. This conception is related to the ideal of a balance among the different sides of a person's being and life which played a major role in many strains of Hellenic and Hellenistic thought.

The Stoics also believed that every person, even slaves and foreigners, held within them a spark of the creative fire. It is a person's duty, they

said, to do more than seek personal happiness. We must, like all other beings in nature who do their useful work as part of the larger systems of which they are part, be of service to our fellow humans beings and to other creatures. Zeno longed for a breakdown of racial and national barriers. He and Chrysippus looked forward to a time of no nations, no classes, no rich or poor, no masters or slaves, when all human beings would be brothers and sisters together as members of one great family.

In the second and first centuries B.C., the Middle Stoics strongly influenced the increasingly powerful Roman Republic. These included Diogenes of Seleucia, Panaetius of Rhodes, and Posidonius of Apamea. These three had a strong influence on the brightest of the Roman intellectuals, and through them on the broader Roman culture.

"Panaetius," writes Philip P. Hallie, "faces forward to the time when Stoicism became involved in the military, social, and political life of Rome. He helped soften the asceticism of the Early Stoa, attached more value to external goods than the Early Stoa did, and spoke in terms of gradual moral progress or discipleship, not the pure ideal of the wise man. Posidonius, on the other hand, brought rigor and detail to the Stoic system."(p. 20) Things that early Stoics said the wise person would spurn came to be spoken of as "advantages" to be used but not to be needed. This broadened Stoicism's appeal.

It is an irony of history that Rome was a stoic civilization during its early years, and that its great Stoic philosophers appeared on the scene during its decadent later years. During the first several hundred years of Roman power, its people dressed simply, diluted their wine with water, and in public life men of the upper classes were expected to be stern, calm, and austere. Luxury in dress and dining were frowned upon and even in their private lives people were expected to live in a Spartan manner. These qualities built the Empire. "The typical educated Roman of this age," writes Durant in *Caesar and Christ*, "was orderly, conservative, loyal, sober, reverent, tenacious, severe, practical. He enjoyed discipline, and would have no nonsense about liberty. He obeyed as a training for command. He took it for granted that the

government had a right...to value him purely according to his services to the state.... He could not, for the life of him, understand Plato, or Archimedes, or Christ. He could only rule the world."

Seneca (c. 4 B.C.-65 A.D.), born in Cordoba, Spain, is the most paradoxical figure among the stoics. Born to a wealthy family, he became extremely rich through clever investments. The millionaire sage marvelled when his one of his friends, a teacher of Cynic philosophy who lived by begging, refused a gift of 200,000 sesterces from the emperor Caligula. When asked about the friendship, Seneca said, "Why should I not hold Demetrius in high esteem? I have found that he lacks nothing."

Seneca was a man of action and worldly affairs as well as a philosopher. He sought in stoicism a guide to "human decency, family unity, and social order." Like most people of wealth, he was no radical. Despite his riches, he found stoicism a guide in his personal habits -- he ate sparingly, drank only water, and slept on a hard mattress. After a lengthy exile to Corsica for alleged improper relations with Julia, daughter of Germanicus, he was recalled to Rome to tutor the young emperor-to-be Nero. "In truth he never made up his mind which he loved better," writes Durant,- "philosophy or power, wisdom or pleasure; and he was never convinced of their incompatibility. He admitted that he was a very imperfect sage. 'I persist in praising not the life that I lead, but that which I ought to lead.'" Yet after Rome burned in 64, he donated the greater part of his wealth to rebuilding the city. Soon afterward he wrote four books of informal essays which were "urbane attempts to adapt Stoicism to the needs of a millionaire." Durant sums up his views: "He is too Stoic to be practical, and too lenient to be Stoic..... Wisdom is the art of living. Happiness is the goal, but virtue, not pleasure, is the road...In the long run honesty, justice, forbearance, kindness, bring us more happiness than ever comes from the pursuit of pleasure.... How does one acquire wisdom? By practicing it daily, in however modest a degree; by

examining your conduct each day at its close; by [working to reduce] your own faults and [being] lenient to those of others; by associating with those who excel you in wisdom and virtue; by taking some acknowledged sage as your invisible counselor."(306) Accident and illness aside, he held, we all hold in our hands the final choice of when and how we die.

Epictetus was a Greek born at Hierapolis in Phrygia about 50 A.D.. Since he was a slave woman's son, he too became a slave. Eventually he became the property of Epaphroditus, Nero's administrative secretary. He was lame, apparently due to beatings by one of his owners. Epaphroditus sent him to the lectures of stoic teacher C. Musonius Rufus and later freed him. He became a teacher of stoic philosophy in Rome until about 90 A.D., when Domitian banished all philosophers and he left for Nicopolis in Epirus to continue his teachings.

Epictetus held that we must find happiness within ourselves, stressing the importance of cultivating complete independence from external circumstances. He cited the example of Diogenes, who wore sackcloth and slept on the bare ground, and quoted Diogenes' remark that Fame is but the empty noise of madmen. When a feast is set before us, he said, we accept what is given, rather than asking for something more. In this way we learn to endure all the twists and turns of fate. "Have you not received the inner powers with which to endure all that comes to pass?" he asked. "Do you not have greatness of heart, courage, fortitude?" Even a slave as he himself was, he pointed out, can be inwardly and spiritually free. Events are what they are, but what we make of them is up to us."

Epictetus foreshadowed contemporary communication theorists' "reframing" and cognitive behaviorists' "cognitive restructuring" in his observation, "Everything has two handles, one by which it may be borne, the other by which it may not. If your brother sin against you lay not hold of it by the handle of his injustice, for by that it may not be

borne; but rather by the fact that he is your brother, the comrade of your youth, and by this handle it may be borne."

He anticipated the emphasis which Gestalt Therapy places on direct awareness in his question, "Are we in our senses, or are we not?" He was even something of a behaviorist. "Habits and faculties are necessarily affected by the corresponding acts. Those that were not there before, spring up; the rest gain in strength and extent.... Suppose you have once lusted after money.... the next time [this lust] is excited by the corresponding object, the flame of desire leaps up more quickly than before. By frequent repetition, the mind in the long run becomes callous and...produces confirmed Avarice."

There was a bit of behavioral self-monitoring in his suggested method for overcoming anger. "If you do not wish to be prone to anger, do not feed the habit.... Keep quiet and count the days when you were not angry: "I used to be angry every day, then every other day: next every two, next every three days!"

He agreed with Socrates that it is important to throw away conceit about what we think we know, or we will learn nothing. He insisted on rigorous, continuing ethical instruction and effort. This included daily self-examination, in order to learn to evaluate one's actions clearly. Each person alone is responsible for his or her own deeds. We each have the power to choose, assent, or refuse. We possess the power to mold our own personalities. But such transformations may take time: "All great things are slow of growth; even a grape or a fig. If you say, "I want a fig," I will reply, "It needs time: First to flower, then to drop its blossoms, then to grow and ripen."

He pointed out that Socrates never became heated in argument and never insulted others, but rather patiently questioned them and often bore insult from them, accepting this end to a quarrel when no other seemed possible. He added that a guide does not mock the ignorant, but shows them the right way.

Here are just a few memorable lines:

"What you do not wish to endure yourself, do not attempt to impose on others."

"In this great Fair of life, some, like the cattle, trouble themselves about nothing but the fodder."

"A ship should not ride on a single anchor, nor life on a single hope."

"Try to enjoy the great festival of life with other men."

A largely-forgotten Stoic philosopher named Diognetus was one of the principal teachers of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, who was born in Rome in 121 A.D., became emperor in 161 and ruled until his death in 180. The Emperor found his central inspiration in the writings of Epictetus, which were brought to his attention by another philosopher, Junius Rusticus. His *Meditations*, written in Greek, are the last major contribution to Stoic philosophy.

The emperor who preceded him, Antoninus Pius, is widely recognized as the ablest and wisest man who ruled Rome before Marcus. In every area he was an outstanding administrator. He respected the rights and freedoms of his subjects and was greatly concerned with their welfare. Only Antoninus' adopted son Marcus outshone him. In one matter Antoninus did much better than Marcus: He chose Marcus as his adopted son and future emperor, while Marcus allowed the throne to pass to his own son Commodus, who had a cruel streak and proved unfit to be emperor. (Gossip was widespread that Commodus was actually the offspring of a liason between Marcus' wife and a gladiator while Marcus was off at the wars or busy with affairs of state.)

Nonetheless, Marcus Aurelius himself ranks among the few true "philosopher-kings" of history. He governed with remarkable skill, was

a brilliant military strategist, and left a written record of his philosophy. During his reign the far-flung empire was frequently challenged by barbarian armies, and it was during his spare time on military campaigns that he wrote much what became his "Meditations." Among the passages he penned are these:

"Value nothing as profitable which compels you to break your promise, to lose your self-respect, to hate any person, to act the hypocrite, or to desire anything which needs walls and curtains." Among the virtues he praised were simplicity, modesty, gentleness, bravery, truth, fidelity, and contentment.

He gave equal weight to inward self-control and to contributing in a useful way to his community and society (Halle, p. 20). He had no intent to create a utopia. "Let it be sufficient," he wrote, "that you have in some degree ameliorated mankind, and do not think such improvement a matter of small importance." He "devised legal protection for wards against dishonest guardians, for debtors against creditors, for provinces against governors...required the use of foiled weapons in gladiatorial contests, and did all that...custom would allow to banish death from the arena."(Durant, 1944, 428). The people protested with good humor, "He wants to force us to be philosophers."

He presaged Gestalt psychology, systems theory, and ecology in his comment, "Thou must always bear in mind, what is the nature of this whole, and what is my nature, and how this is related to that, and what kind of a part it is of what kind of a whole."(201) He had a keen appreciation of history and possibility but stressed action in the present moment: "Bear in mind that every man lives only this present time, which is an indivisible point, and that all the rest of his life is either past or it is uncertain."(209)

Marcus Aurelius described the stoic ideal of an introspective psychology. "It is in thy power whenever thou shalt choose to retire into thyself. For nowhere, either with more quiet or more freedom from

trouble, does a man retire than into his own soul, particularly when he has within him such thoughts that by looking into them he is immediately in perfect tranquillity; and I affirm that tranquillity is nothing else than the good ordering of the mind. Constantly then give to thyself this retreat, and renew thyself; and let thy principles be brief and fundamental."(212)

He counseled, "Take away thy opinion, and then there is taken away the complaint, 'I have been harmed.' Take away the complaint, "I have been harmed," and the harm is taken away.... Do not have such an opinion of things as he has who does thee wrong, or such as he wishes thee to have, but look at them as they are in truth."(213-14) He was content to have us do the best we can: "Be not...discouraged...if thou dost not succeed in doing everything according to right principles; but...be content if the greater part of what thou doest is consistent with man's nature."(225)

He also counseled, "Do what is necessary, and discern what is not. Since the greatest part of what we say and do is unnecessary, if you take this away you will have more leisure and less uneasiness. On every occasion you can ask yourself, 'Is this necessary?' This applies to thoughts as well as acts." He considered wisdom itself the most agreeable of all pleasures.

The excerpts above are just a few from the Golden Sayings and the Meditations. I have read both again and again, and found more in them of value to me personally than in any other work of Greek philosophy.

A careful reading shows that, taken together, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius provided a solid foundation for cognitive-behavioral psychology. Much of the work of such figures as Albert Ellis, Aaron Beck, A. John Rush, and others might easily be viewed as built on the foundation of these ancients--or perhaps it was a matter of the same principles being independently realized, two thousand years apart.



After Commodus and a succession of other incompetent emperors, Christianity replaced philosophy, the Empire crumbled, and for a thousand years Greek thought was largely forgotten. Not until the thinkers of the Renaissance began to read the ancient texts did the old Greek philosophers, who in some ways seem so remarkably contemporary, begin to affect the Western World again.

## WHAT DID THEY HAVE IN COMMON?

The sweep of history which embraces the philosophers and schools we have just surveyed spans seven hundred years. We have looked at their differences and now we can briefly examine their similarities. The origins of their philosophy lie, argues humanistic psychologist Mike Arons, "in an experience...of dissatisfaction, incompleteness, insufficiency" (1994, p. 17). This may be with the state of our knowledge about our world and the universe, or about how to live a satisfying life.

From this beginning, the Greeks sought to fathom the nature of reality, they tried to fathom what it was to live life well, they formulated codes of ethics, and, argues Arons, they strove toward self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*), the same word Abraham Maslow used to describe the "self-actualizing" people he studied. Aristotle held that we aim toward a state of being in which "nothing lacks." While his approach of enumerating the things a person needed for such self-sufficiency differed from that of the Cynics and Stoics who emphasized letting go of attachments to things we can get along without, almost all aim at describing a path by which we can attain happiness (*Eudaimaia*). In this, writes Arons, "common sense and reason work in tandem and never definitively part, for they are centered on a common value.... What reason supported and supporting intuition told the ancients --in looking at their lives as a whole -- is that we do anything or everything: health, wealth, good relations, recognition, etc. for happiness. We do not do happiness for

anything or everything else. Happiness is an end in itself, ...an intrinsic value" (p. 20). The interesting questions involve how we get there. Our challenges lie, as Sartre pointed out, in the choices which involve choosing well, or poorly, for our lives. I am reminded of the moment in the film *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* in which the skinny old Crusader, clanking about in his armor from a thousand years before, motioned around the cave filled with goblets of every shape and kind. Drinking from one would bring instant annihilation; from another, magical healing or eternal life. Jones and the German woman each chose a chalice; after the consequences were known, the old crusader, in a masterpiece of simultaneous understatement and redundancy, turned to one and said, "You chose. . . badly." To the other, he said, "You chose. . . well."

Many modern approaches to ethics, points out Arons, "deal with specific problems as they come up.... The Ancients (as he calls the old Greek thinkers), by contrast, start the inquiry by looking at the Picture of one's life as a whole. ...The ancient's perspective, like that of humanistic-transpersonal psychologists, is a holistic one, not an atomistic or pragmatic means to specific problem-solving" (21).

Arons goes on to point out that issues of ethics --concern about acting in ways that help rather than harm others-- played a central role in Greek thought. "For all the schools, ethics is not something which must be accounted for in achieving personal happiness, it is an intrinsic part of that pursuit" (23). To me this means seeking my gain in ways which bring others misery cuts me off from parts of myself which would contribute to my own happiness. Abraham Maslow points out that at some level, the Nazi concentration camp guard must "feel his psychological bones being crushed." The Stoics saw the unfolding of an ethical point of view as a natural part of the development of human nature.

The psychology and ethics of the Greeks, argues Arons, is summed up in such twentieth-century conceptions as Maslow's "self-actualization" and

Carl Rogers' "fully functioning person." Fritz Perls adds the insight that we grasp the the Gestalt of our life as a whole through direct awareness in the immediate moment. The ancients agree with humanistic psychologists on the importance of "an intrinsically oriented path... One does "it" for itself.... This, I suspect, is why 'self-actualization,' to the degree that it speaks to the sense of completeness.. is more appropriate than 'happiness' for our times" (29). They agree with transpersonal psychologists on the importance of finding methods and occasions to transcend our "me-first" attitudes and antagonistic states of consciousness. Some, like the Cynics, even agree with eco-psychologists on the importance of living in a close and mutually supportive relationship with nature.

## PHILOSOPHY, THE GODS, AND THE MYSTERIES

With all its brilliance, Greek philosophy had its limits as a psychology. This was partly because except for Aristotle, the ancient thinkers systematically exalted reason and paid too little attention to the role of passion and action in human life. Contrast their outlook, for example, with that of Nikos Kazantzakis' Zorba, whom perhaps only the Cynics and Cyrenaics would have welcomed as one of their own.

Nor did Greek philosophy have much use for the feminine half of the human race. Epicurus welcomed women among his followers, and there was Arete, the Light of Hellas, who inherited her mantle from her father Aristippus, but they were the exception. Greek philosophy was largely a masculine endeavor which tells us little of the feminine psyche or worldview. Greek society, the Hellenistic world, and Rome were patriarchal, male-dominated societies. Most of the discourses of women took place not in the academies and lecture-halls, but in the temples of the Gods and the sanctuaries of the mysteries. But that story goes beyond the boundaries of this paper, and is a tale for another time and place.

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