

theistic tendencies into a system. He taught that the soul (atman) is an aspect of the impersonal Absolute (Brahman) from which everything in the cosmos has come. The result is that the world is an illusion (*maya*) that tricks people into believing that the world is real. He taught that by means of knowledge obtained by identification with the Absolute, the soul might find release.

Shankara's argument is nondualistic because he claims that ultimate reality (Brahman) and temporal reality are of the same essence. He opined that *moksha* (liberation) arises from the knowledge that Brahman and atman are one. Shankara's system is called Advaita (nondualism) Vedanta. Its implications for Hinduism were great. The inferences that arise from his nondualism are that the world is an illusion (*maya*). Furthermore, the practice of bhakti is devotion to an illusion. For those who achieve the liberation of understanding from the Advaita system the ultimate implication is that there is only one Brahman and all else including dharma, gods, rituals, scripture, and devotional practices are illusions.

Later Vedanta philosophers rejected his radical nondualism. Ramanuja (c. 1017–1137 C.E.) was a member of the Vedanta tradition who wrote commentaries that moved devotion to a mode or avatar of Brahman back to the center of spiritual belief and practice. His system is called Vaishnavites (qualified nondualism). This system allowed for worship of Vishnu. In the 1200s C.E. the Vaishnavite theologian Madhva taught dualism in the Davait (dualist) Vedanta school. A little earlier Ramanuja (1100s C.E.) took a middle qualified nondualistic position between Madhva and Shankara. This meant that there was a real difference between the Brahman and the individual self that worshipped. This theology aided the development of bhakti movements in south India. It allowed for a tension between identity with the divine power (*abheda*) and individuality (*bheda*) to create *bhedaabheda*.

The Samkhya ("knowledge" or "wisdom") school taught "evolutionary dualism." It is probably the oldest of the Hindu philosophical systems. It is believed by some to have been founded by Kapila after 100 B.C.E. References in the Svetasvatara Upanishad and the Bhagavad Gita are considered to be references to the philosophy in its preliterate form. One of its important ideas was *prakrti* (matter).

Another important idea was *purusha* (consciousness). Both *prakrti* and *purusha* are words in the *MAHABHARATA*, suggesting that these ideas are at least as old as the *Mahabharata*. The opposition of *prakrti* and *purusha* was basic. Individual souls were infinite and discrete, so

salvation occurred when the soul recovered its original purity, completely purged from matter.

The Samkhya school taught that *prakrti* is composed of three *gunas* ("strands" or "ropes"). The *sattva* ("reality" or "illumination") rope is the psychological rope that produces happiness. The *raja* ("foulness" or "corrupt activity") rope leads to pain. The *tama* ("darkness" or "unilluminated") rope leads to darkness of mind or ignorance. The Yoga (disciplined meditation) school of philosophy is usually paired with the Samkhya school. It developed and practiced the disciplines necessary to achieve liberation from karma in accordance with Samkhya philosophy. The yogi (practitioner of yoga) applying the Samkhya metaphysics used ascetic meditation disciplines and a strict moral code to purge himself or herself of *prakrti*. Eventually, the Samkhya, Yoga, and Vedanta schools adapted their philosophy so that it served as a base for their theistic system.

See also ARYAN INVASION.

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ANDREW J. WASKEY

Socrates

(c. 470–399 B.C.E.) *Greek philosopher*

Socrates is one of the three greatest philosophers of Greek classical thought and, together with ARISTOTLE and Plato, helped to provide the foundations of Western thought. Socrates was the first of this triumvirate, although he did not produce any written records of his beliefs. A number of issues concerning his beliefs remain controversial, and there is still doubt about the reasons for his death and whether he could or should have sought to escape his fate.

Socrates was born in Athens a decade after the Battle of Salamis signaled the end of the Persian attempts to conquer Greece. Consequently, he was born into a society that was coming to terms with its physical independence and matching that with intellectual independence, although that had been expressed by what are now called the pre-Socratics in terms mostly of vague metaphysics and religious speculation. The main event during his lifetime was the PELOPONNESIAN WAR fought between Athens and Sparta, which was also seen as a struggle between personal independence and the militarization of society. The ultimate defeat of militarism did not occur until the long and perilously difficult years of warfare had passed, with the coarsening of public life and morals that accompanied the war.

Socrates was at the forefront of public life in Athens. Xenophon describes him as being part of the circle of PERICLES and the other prominent leaders of Athenian society. It is also possible that he worked for a period with Archelaus, a pupil of Anaxagoras, who is reputed to be the first Athenian philosopher. He also may have been familiar with the subjects of geometry and astronomy. Notwithstanding these advantages in society, it is believed that the later part of his life was lived in poverty, as he is so depicted in a play by ARISTOPHANES. Socrates spent most of his working life teaching and practicing philosophy, and he has been depicted as a man so captured by the world of the mind that he could be found unmoving like a statue, completely rapt in thought.



Socrates chose to self-administer the fatal hemlock that killed him and ensured that all his domestic duties were completed.

He married Xanthippe comparatively late in his life and had three children with her, who survived him when he was arrested by the state on charges of corrupting the youth of Athens and not worshipping the gods of the city. He was brought to trial and condemned to death. Socrates chose to swallow the hemlock that killed him even though it is likely that he could have escaped from confinement had he so desired. However, Socrates believed it was his duty to continue to serve the state and so acquiesced in the process.

SOCRATIC BELIEFS

It is from Aristotle and, especially, Plato that understanding of Socrates' beliefs may be found. Aristotle's main commentary is contained in *Metaphysics*, while Plato created a number of dialogues in which Socrates was supposed to have been a participant, notably in *Crito* and *Phaedo*, while his *Apology of Socrates* claims to be a set of speeches the philosopher made at his trial in making a case for his vindication. Both Aristotle and Plato report that one of his main philosophical methods is the use of syllogism in the effort to ascertain what a thing is. Socrates was concerned with the application of reason in the search for the true nature of humanity and of society, which was quite a different body of knowledge from that which occupied PRE-SOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY.

The syllogism is a technique that requires the pupil to question personal beliefs through answering the questions of the teacher. The pupil must first state a position in respect of some ethical concern, which is one that cannot be settled by an immediate objective test and is subjective. Socrates then poses supplementary questions that the pupil is required to answer by either an affirmative or a negative response. Socrates guides the dialogue until the pupil is obliged to come to the opposite of his or her original statement. Socrates uses this technique both as a philosophical tool, with which he develops knowledge by adding premises to those already existing and thereby developing the argument, while also claiming that he had no real knowledge of any sort, which could be demonstrated by the same method. This technique can be used by the skilled questioner to demonstrate the opposite of any moral position and comes close to the accusation made against the early Sophists that they would use debating technique merely to advance their own interests rather than in the pursuit of truth.

Socrates tried to bypass this accusation by claiming that he never taught anybody anything and that his technique merely pursued the answers to genuine questions, and that it was beyond his control (or even inter-

est) what those answers ultimately turned out to be. Socrates left himself open to accusations of impropriety by this method, and he was condemned by a number of people who supported the concept of immutable truths or moral guidelines for a variety of reasons. But this form of inductive reasoning is at the heart of the beginning of the scientific approach, which was subsequently used by Aristotle to start the classification of existing knowledge. The word Socrates used for the opposing premise used in constructing a syllogism was *irony*, and this concept has survived to the modern day as meaning an action that contradicts the words used to describe it.

Despite the complaints made about Socrates, he believed he was a staunch defender of the concept of absolute morality. He considered this the center of the soul's quest for truth and virtue, a quest on which the great majority of people had scarcely embarked. Only through a rigorous application of reason could there be any kind of understanding of true morality, which is that which also provides the greatest level of pleasure to the soul, the soul being identical with the individual. He rejected the existing religious concept that held the soul separate from the individual. Consequently, what is good for the soul is also good for the body. This leads to a connection with hedonism, which became more fully expressed through the work of Epicurus and his followers.

However, Socrates was more concerned to show that the pleasure a person derives from life and to some extent the value of a person's life depends on the soul's ability to understand true goodness. Only true goodness brings happiness, according to Socrates, because any activity that is not inspired by the quest for goodness will bring unintended unhappiness or misfortune to the individual, the surrounding people, or society as a whole. For this reason Socrates opposed early innovations with the concept of democracy since the majority of people were not to be trusted to be motivated by true goodness but, instead, false and probably unexamined desires. This should not really be construed as elitism since Socrates believed that the elite of society was no more likely to be properly educated in morality than anyone else. However, he would have maintained that he was the only person in Athens suited for rule, and that the optimum arrangement would have seen him installed as a tyrant like PEISISTRATUS.

THE LEGACY OF SOCRATES

As one of the seminal thinkers of Western philosophy, Socrates's legacy has been enormous. Perhaps his most influential legacy was one of the earliest—the distinction

between idea or concept and reality that was to become such an important part of Plato's thought. Socrates was also influential in the development of the educational system. He opposed the utilitarianism of the early Sophists and their tuition that was aimed at educating people and empowering them into achieving a better type of life. Instead, he believed that since virtue was the true goal of humanity but could not be taught, the proper type of education should center on the rigorous and personal search for reality. This led to a debate as to the purpose of education in society that has persisted until the present day. However, the Socratic idea that it is possible to lead the mind to profound truths without previous knowledge of the background to those truths is no longer widely supported in academic institutions. Instead the Western tradition features the mastery of content as well as the ability to guide the mind to the truths behind or beyond that content.

Socrates has also been considered a founding father of science and of agnosticism, although these attributions depend on contested ideas of exactly what he originally said and believed. It is perhaps in his trial and death that Socrates remains most central to the Western imagination. Some have conflated the charges of corrupting the youth of Athens with homosexual activities with his followers, which would have been a common enough activity at the time. He has been viewed as both foolish pederast and heroic supporter of the truth in an age of religious persecution and the suppression of freedom of speech. Existing Athenian popular sources referring to Socrates are mostly those found in satirical plays in which he is lumped together with Sophists as a kind of disreputable wordsmith with questionable hygiene habits. This representation clashes noticeably with the striking and compelling personality of Plato's descriptions.

His legendary status as defender of personal liberty has been buttressed by the notion that he would have been able to escape from confinement in Athens had he so desired. That he chose to stay and administer to himself the fatal poison renders him something of a martyr. According to Plato's account, at the moment of his death, Socrates was concerned with ensuring that all his remaining domestic duties and chores were complete.

See also EPICUREANISM; HERODOTUS, THUCYDIDES, AND XENOPHON; SOPHISM.

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JOHN WALSH

Soga clan

The Soga became the most powerful ruling clan in the early Japanese Yamato state between the seventh and eighth centuries C.E. The origins of the Soga clan are unclear, but they claimed to be descended from the Katsuragi clan leader who survived the purge of emperor Yûryaku in the fifth century C.E. Some scholars believe that the Soga were an immigrant family from the Korean peninsula. They moved to the Soga region of the Yamato state in central Japan and formed alliances with immigrants from the Korean kingdoms, providing scribal and managerial technical skills. The Soga clan's rise to power began with Soga no Iname, the head of the clan and the first Soga to hold the position of grand minister. He was victorious in the policy debates of 540 C.E. and married two of his daughters to Emperor Kimmei. However, neither of Iname's grandsons became heir to the throne.

The next Soga clan head, Soga no Umako, also grand minister, succeeded in marrying one of his daughters to Kimmei's son, King Bidatsu, and the couple produced a son who was one of three candidates for the throne. The Soga candidate was eventually enthroned as emperor Yômei after fierce military battles between the Soga clan and their rivals, the Mononobe, who also supplied a male heir to the throne through a Mononobe woman. Yômei took another daughter of Soga no Iname to be his queen, and the two produced the famous prince Shôtoku Taishi. The victory was short lived however when Yômei fell ill, and fighting between the Soga and Mononobe resurfaced. Again the Soga were victorious, and another male offspring of a Soga woman became the sovereign King Sushun. Once the main line of the Mononobe was massacred in 587 the Soga dominated court affairs.

Despite Sushun's connection to the Soga, rumors spread that Sushun would betray his uncle Umako, so Umako had him assassinated and Sushun's consort, SUIKO, became empress. Suiko ruled alongside her son and regent, Shôtoku, during a time when the Soga clan heads Emishi and his son Iruka attempted to assert Soga dominance by levying taxes and trying to expand their

lands. Suiko, despite being a part of the Soga, refused requests to expand Soga lands. Iruka even killed Prince Shôtoku's son. Histories of the time criticize the Soga for trying to become monarchs. The most tyrannical of the Soga patriarchs, Iruka, was assassinated in 645 in a palace coup that effectively ended the Soga rule.

The significance of the Soga dynasty was their importation of culture, government, and religion from China and Korea and their influence in domestic politics through marriage arrangements and intrafamilial assassination. The Soga supported Buddhism over other forms of court-related native religions, creating several large Buddhist temples, statues, and bells that attested to their power in the physical and spiritual realms. This support for Buddhism further antagonized other clans, who often held key religious-political positions.

See also YAMATO CLAN AND STATE.

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Sogdians

Sogdiana was the meeting point of Asia and Central Asia before 100 B.C.E. The Sogdiana area encompassed modern-day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and was also called Transoxiana. The use of the word *Sogdiana* was an attempt to distinguish surrounding BACTRIA from Transoxiana, and the provincial Persian terminology has persisted in modern historical literature. *Sogdiana* was a collective term to describe the various principalities within its area. Positioned alongside the SILK ROAD, it is where Greco-Roman, Indian, and Persian culture collided. The major cities of Sogdiana—Samar-kand (Samarqand), Bukhârâ, and Pendzhikent (Penjikent, Panjikand)—enjoyed the fruits of trade that came with their positioning along the Silk Road and played an important part in establishing and maintaining trade relationships between Asia and Central Asia.

Merchants and trade caravans traversed the Silk Road during the early first century B.C.E. Contrary to popular belief, the Silk Road was actually a network of roads that crossed from China into Europe. It was at least 2,000 years old by the time the Chinese had set up

history. Mecca is the site of divine, angelic, prophetic, and auspicious human activity since the beginning of creation. Second, it is clear that the high regard for Mecca is based on pre-Islamic reverence for such places as Arafat, Muzdalifah, Mina, and the Kaaba. All of these sites are connected with celestial and mountain deities.

Two other pilgrimage groups have ancient roots: the Hindus and the Buddhists. One cannot speak about Hinduism without mention of their many holy sites in the land of India. The Sanskrit word for pilgrimage place is *tirtha* (water-crossing place, or ford). This word has important historical overtones, for it explains why the ancient INDUS CIVILIZATION sites such as MOHENJO-DARO and the Harappa are also religious pilgrimage sites. The ancient Vedic scriptures cite this river and seven other Punjab “mother rivers” in northwest India.

The Hindu classics of the BHAGAVAD GITA, the MAHABHARATA and RAMAYANA, also detail places of religious veneration, including the Ganges River valley, that go back before the Common Era. The most popular site for Hindus unto this present day is Banaras, a northward bend in the Ganges River, where the largest concentration of *tirthas* are found. It is said that a devotee is certain of *moksha* (liberation) if he or she dies at Banaras. Nonetheless, the Hindu mystics have tried to deemphasize pilgrimage by saying that “the true Ganges is within.” Though Buddhists stress that nirvana (liberation) is achieved internally and outside of time, there is a history of pilgrimage in the religion. As far back as ASHOKA, the Buddhist Indian king (270–232 B.C.E.), Buddhists were erecting stupas (shrines) to attract converts. It was felt that ultimate deliverance came from within, but interest in the religion could come only from without.

Buddhist shrines tried to entice worldly people to consider religion. Ashoka’s own chronicles confirm that he made several of his own pilgrimages and sponsored the building of stupas to increase his subjects’ interest. Undoubtedly he traveled to Bodh Gaya, the place where GAUTAMA BUDDHA first achieved enlightenment (sixth century B.C.E.). This place is the most important pilgrimage site for Buddhists in India. Another important voice comes from the Chinese traveler FA XIAN (Fahsien), whose fifth-century B.C.E. journey to India testifies to the popularity of Buddhist pilgrimages.

Eventually, as Buddhism fell out of favor in India and Hinduism continued its dominance, pilgrimage sites were found in other Southeast Asian lands. As Mahayana Buddhism blossomed in China, Mount Wutai attracted many pilgrims as the place where a famous bodhisattva (angelic intermediary) figure, Manjusri, had his home. Even here, however, Buddhists built

upon the residual Daoist belief that Mount Wutai was already holy.

See also CHRISTIANITY, EARLY; GREEK MYTHOLOGY AND PANTHEON; HINDU PHILOSOPHY; JEWISH REVOLTS; JUDAISM, EARLY (HETERODOXIES); PATRIARCHS, BIBLICAL; THERAVADA AND MAHAYANA BUDDHISM.

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MARK F. WHITTERS

Platonism

Platonism is the philosophy or worldview of Plato, a Greek scholar who believed in a world beyond the everyday world, a world in which things were more real and vital than the world that one typically perceives with one’s senses. Plato, who lived 427–347 B.C.E., was a citizen of Athens. SOCRATES, who Plato called “the most just man of our times,” taught him. Socrates claimed that he was only wiser than others in that, “I know what I do not know.” Socrates did not write anything down; it is largely through the writings of Plato that modern readers learn about Socrates. Plato attempted to defend Socrates when he was tried and put to death, but the judges were quite biased against Socrates. Following the death of Socrates, Plato traveled the known world in search of further training, studying geometry from Euclid, mystical philosophy from the Italian schools founded by PYTHAGORAS, mathematics from the African Theodorus, and philosophy in Egypt. Eventually, he opened the Academy, outside of Athens, where he taught philosophy. Plato taught ARISTOTLE, who taught ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

IDEAS (FORMS) AND PARTICULAR INSTANCES

Central to Plato’s worldview is the reality of archetypal Ideas, often mistranslated as Forms. These Ideas are reflected in our language: A flower is an idea, but that small sunflower that one steps on is a particular instance of a flower. The fact that we have a word for flower indicates that we have an abstract, archetypal concept—an Idea of a flower. Plato says that this idea is more real because unlike the sunflower, which fades and dies, the Idea of a

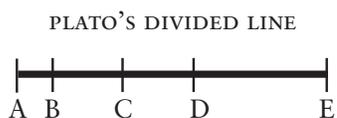
flower lives on. Plato does not say where Ideas are, but modern scholars clearly state that time and space do not apply to Ideas; as above, the Idea of a flower does not die. Though ideas are not seen in the normal way, Plato is convinced that they can be apprehended through the means of intelligence and reason.

DOCTRINE OF RECOLLECTION

In his Meno dialogue Plato has a Socrates character assert that we do not learn things so much as recollect them. The human spirit was trapped in a body and forgot everything but can remember it without outside help. Meno was skeptical of this, and in the dialogue, Socrates answers Meno's skepticism by calling over an uneducated boy. Socrates clearly demonstrates that the lad lacks all training in geometry. Socrates then sets before the slave a problem involving squares, triangles, and trying to double the size of a given square. Socrates provides no information, but keeps prodding the boy to look at the problem. The boy solves the problem easily and elegantly enough that any reader can follow the steps to the solution. Scholars call this an example of a priori knowledge—knowledge that does not come from prior experience. Plato and his Socrates character assert that all humans have an innate knowledge of geometry from before birth, which can be recollected. Modern mathematics is founded upon this doctrine, that mathematics is part in the world of archetypal Ideas and can be discovered or recalled through mathematical research.

- A square is only an Idea of a square, due to imperfections in the thickness of the lines, for example.
- The Idea of a square is based on the Idea of a line, the Idea of a right angle, etc.
- Since a human cannot see an infinitely thin line, it is assumed that such lines exist. Geometry assumes that the Ideas of squares, lines, and points exist.
- Ordinary geometry cannot exist without these basic assumptions.
- The assumptions cannot be verified.
- If the assumptions are changed, then the entire system of geometry has to change with them.
- These Ideas, called fundamental assumptions in geometry, are the most pivotal aspect of this branch of mathematics.

DIVIDED LINE



This concept of a divided line also relates to the Greek notion of the Golden Mean, or Extreme and Mean Ratio. Imagine a line, with points ABCDE.

Let the length of CE be X times longer than the length of AC. Plato declares that AC represents all entities one can comprehend with vision. For instance, a person can see a particular rose, so it is an object in AC. CE represents all things that are comprehensible through intelligence or reason. For example, the Idea of a rose is not something seen with the eyes, but rather something that is apprehended with the heart or mind. CE is longer than AC, and in this diagram, the longer something is, the clearer it is and the easier to comprehend. X is the ratio of the length of CE to the length of AC. This would mean that things apprehended with reason are X times as understandable as those comprehended with mere vision.

- Things represented in BC are the ordinary objects.
- Things represented in AB are the images of these objects. For example, reflections and shadows are images of objects that cast reflections or shadows.

Plato instructs to make sure that the length of AB is to the length of BC as AC is to CE, or $BC/AB = X = CE/AC$. This is an example of the Golden Mean. Images of objects are harder to understand: It is easier to learn to type by looking at the keyboard to see where the keys are, rather than to look at the shadow of the keyboard. Similarly, it is easier to understand all objects by looking at them rather than their images, reflections, or shadows. Now break the line CE into two parts, analogously to the division made in the visible arena:

- The lower part, CD, will represent things that are mere images of the things in DE.
- Things in CD will be comprehended by understanding, whereas things in DE will be comprehended by reason. And again, the lengths of CD and DE are such that $DE/CD = X$. In Plato's terminology, as CD is to DE, so is BC to AB.

Things in CD will be Ideas, like the Idea of a point, the Idea of the line, or the Idea of a square. To get more information about an Ideal square, a geometer draws a picture. The picture is a physical object, seen with vision, so it is in the arena represented by AC, things which are apprehended by sight. Yet one can draw the square on a piece of paper, hold it up to a mirror, and have a reflection of the drawing. Therefore, the drawing is a thing in BC, and the reflected image of the drawing is a thing in AB. This example can explain how to move up the ladder to

higher forms of comprehension. The reflection is just an image of the paper, and to better understand the square, one can turn attention not to the reflection, but to the paper on which the square is drawn. And if one goes beyond looking at the drawing of the square to considering the Idea of a square, it is considering a higher form of the concept by turning to the realm of the intelligence.

The reflection is a mere image of the physical object on which the square is drawn, because everything in category AB is a mere image of something in category BC. However, this physical object is a mere image of the Idea of a square. This teaches that just as everything in AB is an image of something in BC, everything in BC is an image of something in CD. Because of how the line is constructed, everything in CD is an image of something in DE, so things in each category are mere images of things in the category above. And just as it is easier to understand something by looking at the object itself than by looking at its image, it is always easier to understand the world by looking at a higher category. Plato claims it is still easier to comprehend the world by looking at the higher-level ideas in DE than the lower-level ideas in CD. The ideas in CD are mere images of the ideas in DE. The higher ideas in DE partake more directly of the Idea of goodness than do the Ideas in CD. The Ideas in CD are apprehended by reason.

The Ideas of points, lines, and squares are assumptions. Therefore, when reason allows humans to see beyond these assumptions in CD to the clearer and more intelligible things above it in DE, they will achieve an understanding that transcends assumptions. The process by which reason allows a vision of the clearest things in DE is the process that Socrates uses in teaching his students: the process of dialectic. Once this amazing state of seeing the thing in DE has been achieved, one can then use this new understanding to move down the line, by first creating a better assumption in CD, and then viewing the consequences of this new assumption, achieving a new and better understanding of the world.

THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

Imagine a group of people born to a cave, where they are chained to stone benches so that they cannot turn around: They are forever facing one large wall of the cave. Behind them is a great bonfire, and between the chained people and the fire, a handful of people hide behind a partition like puppeteers and hold up things to make shadows on the wall at which the others stare. The chained people spend their lives looking at the shadows on the wall and trying to describe them. Thus, the chained people only experience the lowest things mentioned in the divided line

discussion—the shadows of objects. All that the chained people know about life comes from their observations of these shadows. The chained people judge one another by their skill at quickly recognizing shadows, and they dislike people who judge poorly or take a long time to recognize the shadows. Plato then describes a process of gradual philosophical awakening. Suppose a chained person breaks free, turns around, and sees both the fire and the people who make the shadows. Plato remarks that his eyes will initially be blinded by the firelight, and the things he sees will appear less real than the shadows he has spent his whole life watching.

But, over time the freed individual's eyes will adjust to the fire, and he will be able to see it and the puppets that are held up to make the shadows. Perhaps he will realize that what he has been looking at his whole life are not real things but shadows of puppets. Perhaps then the freed prisoner will ascend the long passage that leads from the underground cave to the surface. Imagine that he is compelled to do so quickly. When he arrives at the surface, the light will be too bright and will overwhelm the prisoner's eyes. At first, the prisoner will see nothing, and then perhaps he will be able to see the shadows of objects that are in the sunlight. In this upper world the shadows are images of the real objects in the sunlight; hence they are like the things represented in CD, in the discussion of the Divided Line. Plato says that in time the freed prisoner may accustom his eyes to see actual objects in the light of day and even to look at the Sun itself, and to see what the Sun is and how it moves across the sky to create the seasons. At this point the freed prisoner can begin to understand what life is and how it works, because he is contemplating the things represented in the category DE from the Divided Line discussion; he is contemplating things that can only be perceived by the true light of reason. At this point the freed prisoner becomes a philosopher. Plato notes that the freed prisoner will desire to remain in the sunlight contemplating the higher things by the light of reason, since the shadows in the cave will seem trivial to him. The newly created philosopher, understanding things by the light of reason will have no desire to discuss shadows.

Yet, Plato asserts that this is exactly what is required for society to improve: The philosopher must return to the cave. No one else understands things as they really are, since everyone else is talking about shadows of puppets, and only the philosopher who understands the nature of the world can lead the people. However, Plato notes that upon returning to the cave, the philosopher will be unaccustomed to the darkness and will at first perform poorly in the shadow-naming contests and

be unable even to see the shadows. The prisoners will laugh at the philosopher and think that his journey to the sunlight has ruined his vision. If someone else were to try to free these prisoners by showing them the fire, they would try to kill that person rather than having their vision ruined like they believe the philosopher's vision has been destroyed. Plato asserts that if the philosopher remains in the cave and becomes reacclimated to the darkness, the philosopher might be able to get others to the surface most quickly, and the philosopher might teach them to see in the shortest period of time. That art is the dialectic study of philosophy, which is how Socrates taught Plato and others.

See also GREEK ORATORY AND RHETORIC; NEOPLATONISM; PAIDEIA.

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JOSEPH R. GERBER

polis

The polis was a city-state in ancient Greece and was a significant feature of Greek civilization. Most of Greece was controlled by a polis, and they were organized with sufficient efficiency for the central city to administer large tracts of land. The surrounding areas were dominated by agricultural activities, and any surplus was taxed by the city, which in return provided military security and housed items of ceremonial and religious importance. In many parts of Greece, small city-states existed in close proximity of one another. The study of politics began with the management of the polis.

Most GREEK CITY-STATES passed through a succession of government types, starting with a hereditary king (*vasileus*) and moving through tyrants and oligarchs, eventually becoming democracies. Not all states passed through every form of government, and the state could even revert to what might be considered an earlier form of governance. Sparta, for example, retained its kings and its rigid military government while contending with democratic Athens during the PELOPONNESIAN WAR. Those cities that tended to side with Athens or were influenced by it were more likely to have a democratic basis to their government. However, during the

Mycenaean period, early cities were abandoned sometime around 1100–1200 B.C.E., and the people resumed living a tribal, seminomadic lifestyle.

Under kings and the tyrants such as PEISISTRATUS, members of the polis could scarcely be called citizens since they had few recognizable rights. As tyrants gave way to oligarchs, competing political interests developed a motivation to capture increasing amounts of forms of economic production and use them to reward their own followers. This may have transformed into a continued privilege that became customary in time. Citizens in functioning democracies had the greatest degree of freedom, although Greek democracy, even in Athens, bore little resemblance to modern conceptions. Only a small group of elite males, for example, was permitted to vote. The size of the polis had to be kept comparatively small so that the democratic system could reach decisions with some efficiency. A large city would find democratic norms too unwieldy and would be more likely to resort to tyranny. During the PERSIAN INVASIONS of 490 and 480 B.C.E., Athens provided 10 generals, each of which was to command for a single day in strict rotation. Yet, as soon as the threat became imminent, the generals voted to place one man in absolute control. Plato observed that a polis should have no more members than one man could recognize.

A number of Greek commentators and philosophers wrote about the polis and its nature. ARISTOTLE considered the polis based on the household as the unit of analysis. The household consisted of an extended family, together with servants, slaves, and clients who would be capable of contributing a significant amount to the life of the polis, while the latter would provide opportunities to the household that would not be available in other governmental models. This depended on maintaining a comparatively small size for the polis, to which the household could make a noticeable contribution because increased size would have the effect of reducing the value of the household and, hence, sense of identity.

It was common for people to move to a different polis, although no doubt this was impossible or very difficult for some classes of society or women. Consequently, city-states competing for scarce human resources would have felt pressure to offer their citizens favorable living conditions. Moving to a polis was no guarantee of being able to partake of its benefits. Citizenship was variously defined but customarily required descent from at least one parent who was a citizen. There were periodic exceptions made to this rule, resulting most commonly from need inspired by warfare, famine, or other environmental disaster. In most cases the armored, spear-wielding

The Birds can be read as an attack on the rulers of Athens and the idea that people would be better off elsewhere. *Acharnians* is an earlier play, which more directly addresses the misery of war. In *Frogs* the actions of the gods are explicitly brought into the sphere of humanity as Dionysus descends into hell to retrieve a famous tragedian to produce work that could enlighten the lives of the people of Athens, given the currently woeful state of that art in the city.

See also GREEK DRAMA.

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JOHN WALSH

Aristotle

(384–322 B.C.E.) *Greek philosopher*

Aristotle is one of the greatest figures in the history of Western thought. In terms of the breadth and depth of his thought, together with the quality and nature of his analysis, his contribution to a variety of fields is almost unparalleled. His areas of investigation ranged from biology to ethics and from poetics to the categorization of knowledge. Born in Stagira in northern Greece, with a doctor as a father, he studied under Plato for 20 years until Plato's death and then left to travel to Asia Minor and then the island of Lesbos.

He received a request in about 342 B.C.E. from King PHILIP OF MACEDON to supervise the education of his son ALEXANDER, who was 13 at that time. He consented and prepared to teach Alexander the superiority of Greek culture and the way in which a Homeric hero in the mold of Achilles should dominate the various barbarians to the east. Alexander went on to conquer much of the known world, although he failed to observe Aristotle's instruction to keep Greeks separate from barbarians by pursuing a policy of intermarriage and adoption of eastern cultural institutions. Alexander proved to be an obstinate student, and Aristotle's influence was slight.

Once this tutelage was completed, Aristotle retired first to Stagira and then to Athens to establish his own academy. He continued to be accompanied by former pupils of Plato such as Theophrastus. His academy became known as the Lyceum. Aristotle wrote his most

developed works at this time, but much of what has been passed down through the ages was subsequently edited, and much of his work gives the impression that it contains interpolated material and other notes. His works were translated into Latin and Arabic and became immensely influential throughout the Western world. Aristotle departed Athens for the island of Euboea in 322 B.C.E. and died that year.

SCIENTIFIC WORKS

At the basis of Aristotle's works is his close observation of the world and his astoundingly powerful attempts to understand and reconcile the nature of observed phenomena with what might be expected. This is perhaps most easily witnessed in Aristotle's scientific works, including the *Meteorologica*, *On the Movement of Animals*, and *On Sleep and Sleeplessness*. Aristotle's works were deeply rooted in the real world, since the establishment of fact is central to the inquiry. This is the strand of Aristotle's work that was later developed by scholars such as Roger Bacon and early scientific experimenters.

CATEGORIES

Aristotle's classification of all material phenomena into categories is contained in his work of the same name. According to this method, everything was part of substance and could be classified as such, while some individual items would be classified as an individual item. The latter are considered to be qualities rather than essential parts of substance. The ways in which Aristotle organized these categories does not always appear intuitively correct, which reflects differences in methods of thinking and language. He also distinguished between form and matter. Form is a specific configuration of matter, which is the basis or substance of all physical things. Iron is a substance or representation of matter, for example, which can be made into a sword. The sword is a potential quality of iron, and a child is potentially a fully grown person. It is in the nature of some matter, therefore, to emerge in a particular form. If form can be said to emerge from no matter, then it would do so as god.

Whether one thing is itself or another thing depends on the four causes of the universe. The material cause explains what a thing is and what is its substance; the final cause explains the purpose or reason for the object; the formal cause defines it in a specific physical form, and the efficient cause explains how it came into existence. According to Aristotle's thinking, all physical items can be explained and accounted for fully by reference to these four causes. In a similar way his exposition of the syllogism in all its possible forms

and the definition of which of these are valid and to what extent are an effort to establish a system that is inclusive and universal and is both elegant and parsimonious in construction. The syllogism is Aristotle's principal contribution to the study of logic.

POETICS

Aristotle's methods enabled him to make a number of influential contributions to language and to discourse. His *Sophistical Refutations*, for example, analyzes the use of language to identify the forms of argument that are valid and discard false or disreputable discourse that is aimed at winning an argument rather than seeking the truth. Aristotle, like SOCRATES and Plato before him, was convinced of the primacy of the search for truth; no matter how uncomfortable this may prove to be. This placed him in occasional conflict with the Sophists, who were more willing to teach pupils to use philosophical discourse for self-advancement. Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* was aimed at determining the extent to which scientific reasoning rested on appropriately considered and evaluated premises that flow properly from suitable first principles. He applied the same rigorous approach to his examination of the Athenian POLIS and also to the study of tragedy in the *Poetics*.

The *Poetics* remains one of Aristotle's most influential works. It aims to outline the various categories of plot and chain of cause and events that are appropriate for the stage and the ways in which the various elements of theater should interact. His conception of the properly tragic character as one whose inevitable downfall is brought about by a character flaw, and that the anagnoresis, or reversal of fortune, was the plot device by which this most commonly was brought about, dominated the production of drama until the modern age.

ARISTOTELIANISM

A number of prominent scholars and thinkers of the medieval ages, called Aristotelians, seized upon Aristotle's methods. From the time of Porphyry (260–305 C.E.), the Aristotelian method of analysis was used as a weapon to attack Christianity. This raised a theme that recurred numerous times throughout western Europe, particularly in the subsequently developed universities. While Arabic scholars generally saw no problem in utilizing the dialectical method as a tool in helping to understand the ways in which the physical universe worked, those from Christian countries faced opposition when Aristotelian thought was classified as irreligious or blasphemous. This was determined by the prevailing political

and religious environment and meant that some scholars were able to avail themselves of Aristotelian thought quite freely, while others were constrained from doing so and their insights were lost to history. Among the former are, notably, Thomas Aquinas (1225–74 C.E.), whose writings investigated the canon of Aristotle with considerable intensity and clarity.

Albertus Magnus (1200–80 C.E.), an important tutor of Aquinas, had achieved a great deal in integrating Aristotelian thought and methods into the mainstream of Christian thought in terms of responsible philosophical inquiry. Together with Roger Bacon (1220–92 C.E.), the Aristotelians made progress toward experimental science that would eventually flourish with the scientific method.

In the Islamic world Aristotelianism is perhaps best known in the person of Ibn Sina (980–1037 C.E.), the Persian physician and philosopher whose ideas perhaps came the closest of all Muslim thinkers to uniting Islamic belief with the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. Ibn Sina shared Aristotle's devotion to the systematic examination of natural phenomena and his support for logical determinism brought him into conflict with religious authorities. His religious beliefs tended toward the mystic, possibly as a means of resolving the difficulties inherent in the gap between observable and comprehensible phenomena and divine revelations. The eastern part of the Islamic world had enjoyed the infusion of ideas from the Hellenistic tradition for some centuries and so was better able to integrate concepts more peaceably than in, for example, the western Islamic states of the Iberian Peninsula. Consequently the beneficial impact of Aristotle's protoscientific method may be discerned in many of the scholarly works of the medieval Islamic world. This also provided a route by which ideas could be transmitted further east.

See also PLATONISM; SOPHISM.

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