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An Introduction to Greek Philosophy

Course Guidebook

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From 1982 to 1995, Professor Roochnik taught at Iowa State University. In 1995, he moved to Boston University, where he teaches in both the Department of Philosophy and the "core curriculum," which is an undergraduate program in the humanities. In 1997, he won the Gitner Award for excellence in teaching in the College of Arts and Sciences. In 1999, he won the Metcalf Prize, awarded for excellence in teaching at Boston University.

Professor Roochnik has written two books on Plato: *The Tragedy of Reason: Toward a Platonic Conception of Logos* (1991) and *Of Art and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of TECHNE.* In addition, he has published some thirty articles on a wide range of subjects in classical Greek philosophy and literature, as well as on contemporary issues. He has also published one short story and numerous opinion pieces in the *Des Moines Register*, *The Boston Globe*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education.*

David Roochnik is married to Gina Crandell, a professor of landscape architecture at both Iowa State University and Harvard University. He is the father of two daughters, both of whom attend the Brookline public schools.

Table of Contents
An Introduction to Greek Philosophy

Table of Contents
An Introduction to Greek Philosophy

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Scope:

This series of twenty-four lectures will introduce the student to the first philosophers in Western history: the ancient Greeks. The course will begin (approximately) in the year 585 B.C.E. with the work of Thales of Miletus and end in 325 with the monumental achievements of Aristotle. (All dates used throughout this course are B.C.E.) These lectures have two related goals: (1) to explain the historical influence of the Greeks on subsequent developments in Western philosophy and (2) to examine the philosophical value of their work. The Greeks asked the most fundamental questions about human beings and their relationship to the world, and for the past 2,600 years, philosophers have been trying to answer them. Furthermore, many of the answers the Greeks themselves provided are still viable today. Indeed, in some cases, these ancient thinkers came up with answers that are better than any offered by modern philosophers.

The course is divided into four parts. Lectures One through Eight are devoted to the "Presocratics," those thinkers who lived before or during the life of Socrates (469–399). Lecture Nine discusses Socrates himself. Lectures Ten through Seventeen concentrate on the works of Plato (429–347). Lectures Eighteen through Twenty-Four are devoted to Aristotle (384–322).

These lectures take a "dialectical" approach to the history of Greek philosophy, meaning that they treat the various thinkers as if they were participating in a conversation. (The word "dialectical" comes from the Greek *dialegesthai*, "to converse.") Therefore, for example, Anaximander (610–546), who also lived in Miletus, will be conceived as directly responding to, and specifically criticizing, his predecessor, Thales. Anaximander, like any good thinker, acknowledged what was positive and valuable in his opponent, but then significantly disagreed and tried to improve upon him. In a similar manner, Plato responded to his predecessors, Protagoras and Gorgias, and Aristotle, despite the fact that he studied with Plato for twenty years, was a critic of his teacher. The purpose of this course is not only to inform students about the first great conversation in Western thought, but also to invite them to participate. The questions the Greeks struggled with are perennial ones that concern all of us. As far away in time as these ancient Greeks were, they can nonetheless be brought back to life and talk to us today.

This course places two special demands on its students. First, there is the issue of the Greek language. It is remarkably expressive, and as a result, it is often very difficult to translate into English. Therefore, several crucial Greek words will be left untranslated, in the hope that they will become part of the students' vocabulary. Those Greeks words that have been left untranslated, as well as their English derivatives, can be found in the glossary.

The second demand facing the student is the nature of the textual evidence that remains from ancient Greece. For the Presocratics, the evidence is fragmentary, and very little of it remains. This part of the course, then, must be somewhat speculative. When it comes to Plato and Aristotle, the problem is the opposite: there is too much evidence. Both wrote an extraordinary number of works. This part of the course must, therefore, be highly selective. The selection of material discussed in this course is based on one principle: each thinker is treated as responding to his predecessors. Therefore, for example, the lectures on Plato will concentrate on those of his works in which he criticized the Presocratics. Similarly, the discussions of Aristotle will focus on his response to Plato.

Lecture One
A Dialectical Approach to Greek Philosophy

Scope: This first lecture introduces the two basic goals of this course: (1) to show the extraordinary impact of the ancient Greeks on the subsequent development of Western philosophy and (2) to explain the enduring philosophical value of these thinkers. The Greeks asked fundamental questions and, amazingly, some of their answers are as good as any that have ever been proposed.

The course is divided into four parts: Lectures One through Nine are devoted to the "Presocratic" philosophers, those thinkers who lived before or during the life of Socrates (469–399). Lecture Ten discusses Socrates himself. Lectures Eleven through Seventeen concentrate on the works of Plato (429–347). Lectures Eighteen through Twenty-Four are devoted to Aristotle (384–322). Throughout, the approach of the course is "dialectical." It treats the development of Greek thought as a conversation in which each thinker acknowledged what was positive in his predecessor, but then criticized and attempted to move beyond him.

Outline

I. This lecture will introduce the course by answering four questions:

- **A.** What are we going to study? In other words, what exactly is ancient Greek philosophy?
- **B.** Why should we study ancient Greek philosophy?
- **C.** How will we study it?

II. Ancient Greek philosophy can be divided into four basic periods.

- **A.** The Presocratics: these were thinkers who lived before and during the life of Socrates. The first Presocratic was Thales of Miletus, whose date is traditionally given as 585 B.C.E. (All dates in this lecture series are B.C.E.)
- **B.** Socrates: the Athenian philosopher who lived from 469–399.
- **C.** Plato: 429–347.
- **D.** Aristotle: 384–322.

III. Why study these "dead" philosophers?

A. Their historical influence was monumental.

1. Alfred North Whitehead said, "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato." In his view, Plato asked all the fundamental questions that philosophers can ask.

2. Aristotle was perhaps even more influential. In the Middle Ages, he was simply known as "the philosopher." His writings became the organizing principle of European universities, and they still shape these institutions today. Jewish philosophers (particularly Maimonides), Christian (Thomas Aquinas), and Muslim (Avicenna and Averroës) tried to synthesize their religious views with Aristotle's philosophical conception of the world.

3. Western philosophy, indeed Western civilization as such, was fundamentally shaped by the works of Plato and Aristotle. To the extent that world culture has become "Westernized," the entire world is in debt to the Greeks.

4. However, Plato and Aristotle themselves were influenced by, and were responding to, earlier thinkers, namely Socrates and the Presocratics.

5. One purpose of this course is to chart this historical development, which begins in 585 with the work of Thales of Miletus and ends with Aristotle. The goal is to show how the Greeks asked the most basic philosophical questions and, thereby, influenced all subsequent developments in Western philosophy.

B. In addition to its historical significance, there is a deeper reason to study Greek philosophy. Even today, the work of the Greeks is philosophically interesting and valuable.

1. "Philosophy" means "love [*philia*] of wisdom [*sophia*]."

2. But what is wisdom? A preliminary answer: being able to answer the "perennial" or "fundamental" questions. Some examples:

a. Is anything stable and permanent, or is reality always changing?

b. Are human beings capable of understanding reality as it is in itself? Or is reality always seen from a human

perspective, which distorts it? Must reality remain a mystery?

c. Are ethical values, such as justice and courage, relative? Do they depend on the individual or group that holds them? Or are there some absolute values that are independent of who holds them, ones that are simply and forever right and true?

d. What sort of political community is most just? Is any political system better than democracy?

e. Is freedom the highest and most important political value, or are there higher ones?

f. What is the proper relationship between human beings and the natural world? Does the natural world exist for human consumption? Should it be revered? Can it be understood? Should it be conquered?

3. It is possible that the answers to such questions offered by the ancient Greeks are superior to the ones produced by modern thinkers.

a. Of course, in the natural sciences, the ancient Greeks were inferior. Aristotle, for example, believed that the sun revolved around the earth.

b. However, concerning questions of the value and meaning of human life, the answers of the ancient Greeks are legitimate alternatives to any produced by the modern world.

c. This is especially true of Aristotle. In this sense, he will be the "hero" of this course.

IV. How are we going to study Greek philosophy?

A. First and foremost, these lectures will present an overview of ancient Greek philosophy from approximately 585–325.

B. The course will be divided into the four distinct units mentioned above: the Presocratics, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

C. The course will be approached "dialectically."

1. The history of Greek philosophy will be approached as a conversation between thinkers who respond to each other. ("Dialectic" comes from the Greek *dialegesthai*, "to converse.") These thinkers acknowledge and are dependent on

their predecessors, but criticize and move beyond them. They engage in a "dialogue."

2. Dialogue plays a significant role in Socrates and Plato.

V. The study of Greek philosophy places three unique demands on its students.

A. Ancient Greek is a difficult language to translate adequately into English. Therefore, several extremely important philosophical words will be left untranslated. All of these can be found in the Glossary.

B. Only fragments of Presocratic writing remain. The lectures on these philosophers will, therefore, have to be somewhat speculative.

C. When dealing with Plato and Aristotle, the problem is exactly the opposite. Each produced a huge body of work, only a tiny bit of which can be discussed in the lectures. Once again, the guiding principle in selecting material to be discussed will be that which generates a conversation between the two greatest Greek philosophers.

VI. The ultimate purpose of this course is to invite the student to enter the dialogue that the Greeks began and that continues to this very day.

Essential Reading:

Cohen, Curd, Reeve, *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, pp. viii–ix.

Supplementary Reading:

Kirk, Raven, Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* pp. 1–6.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is your reason for studying Greek philosophy? Are you willing to consider the possibility that, unlike science, in philosophy, "there's nothing new under the sun"?
2. Such words as "democracy," "psychology," "physics," "myth," "autonomy," and "political" all have their etymological origins in Greek words. You may wish to look these words up in the dictionary and find out what their original meanings were. Also, see if you can think of any other English words that have Greek origins.

Lecture Two
From Myth to Philosophy—Hesiod and Thales

Scope: To understand what was revolutionary about the first philosopher in the history of the West, Thales of Miletus, we must contrast him with his predecessors. Before philosophy appeared, there were poets, storytellers, and myth-makers. This lecture considers a pre-philosophical poem, Hesiod's *Theogony* (written in approximately 700), which is his story of how the gods, nature, and the human world came into existence. The lecture explains in what ways this Greek myth was both similar to, and different from, a work of philosophy.

The lecture turns next to Thales, who is traditionally dated at 585 and generally regarded as the first philosopher of the West. Thales claimed to have rationally discovered the origin (*archê*) of all things, which he said was water. With this claim, he offered a rational explanation (*logos*) of what came to be known as "Being itself." As such, he fundamentally broke with the myth-makers of the past.

Outline

I. Before philosophy, there was poetry, especially the poems of Homer and Hesiod.

A. Homer was the first and the greatest of the pre-philosophical Greek poets. Nothing is known with certainty about him. He probably lived around 750. The Greeks believed that he composed the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad.*

1. Homer's poems tell the stories of the Trojan War and of Odysseus's return from Troy. The Greeks themselves, as well as modern archaeologists, believe that the events inspiring the stories of the Trojan War occurred around 1200.

2. Homeric poetry expresses and encapsulates much of Greek culture, especially the stories about the gods.

3. In Greek, *muthos* means "myth" or "story" and is the origin of our word "myth."

B. Hesiod lived around 700 in Boeotia. He described himself as a shepherd who, while tending his sheep on Mount Helicon, was visited by the Muses, the goddesses of inspiration, who inspired him to compose his poetry.

1. Hesiod's *Theogony* recounts the origin of the gods, as well as the earth, the sea, the sky, and the physical world. His story is genealogical. Successive generations depicted in the *Theogony* form a gigantic family tree.

2. The first 115 lines of the poem are an invocation to the Muses. Hesiod is utterly dependent on them. Hence, he begins his poem by saying, "Tell me these things, Olympian Muses/From the beginning, and tell which of them came first" (l. 114–16).

3. Relying on the Muses implies that the human mind cannot do its work alone. It is too weak.

4. The Greek word *logos* has two meanings: "reason" and "speech." It could be translated as "rational speech." It is often found in the suffixes of English words that name intellectual disciplines. "Biology," for example, means the *logos*, or rational account, of life (*bios*).

5. The fact that Hesiod invokes the Muses before he tells his *muthos* implies that, for the poet, human *logos* is incapable on its own of understanding reality.

C. The first story Hesiod tells begins as follows:

Tell me these things, Olympian Muses,
From the beginning, and tell which of them came first.
In the beginning there was only Chaos, the Abyss,
But then Gaia, the Earth, came into being,
Her broad bosom the ever-firm foundation of all,
And Tartaros, dim in the underground depths,
And Eros, loveliest of all the Immortals.

(*Theogony,* 114–120)

1. The meaning of *Chaos* is not the same as it is in English. In Greek, it means "abyss," "gap," or "emptiness."

2. Notice that Hesiod offers no explanation of why earth came to be from the abyss. It just did.

3. "Eros" can be translated as "love," but its more primary meaning is "sexual desire." Hesiod's world takes place through sexual reproduction. Earth and sky mate and produce

offspring. The world is born, then continues to grow. The result is like a family tree. Therefore, Eros must be introduced right at the beginning of the myth as the primal force responsible for all future generations.

4. But the question arises: How, ultimately, can something come of nothing, as in Hesiod's story of creation? Later philosophers, such as Parmenides, will consider this very point.

D. Hesiod's *muthos* implies that human beings cannot comprehend the world. *Logos* working on its own cannot dissolve its mysteries.

II. Thales lived in Miletus, a city on the west coast of Asia Minor (now the west coast of Turkey). The Greeks had expanded into this region, which became known as Ionia, some time before 1000. Legend has it that Thales predicted a solar eclipse that we now know occurred in 585. Therefore, this is the date traditionally attributed to his work.

A. According to Aristotle, Thales was "the founder" of what came to be called "natural philosophy," which is the rational attempt to explain, to give a *logos* of, nature. The Greek word *phusis*, which is the origin of "physics," means "nature." The first Greek philosophers were *phusiologoi*, those who offered a *logos* of *phusis.*

B. Thales believed that the "origin" (*archê*) of all things is water.

1. There are several ways to translate *archê*: "beginning," "origin," "source," "first principle," "ruling principle." The English words "archaic" and "archaeology" are derived from it.
2. According to Aristotle, Thales's *archê* is the source of all things. It is that from which all things come into being and into which they perish.
3. For Thales, all things come from water and return to water. But water itself endures.

C. Aristotle speculates that Thales "got this idea from seeing that the nourishment of all things is moist, and water is the principle of the nature of moist things" (*Metaphysics*, 983b18–27).

1. Thales determined what the *archê* is by means of empirical observation and rational thought. He needed no Muse and composed no *muthos*. His is a work of *logos* alone.

2. The *archê* for Hesiod is *Chaos*. It cannot be explained rationally. Hence, he must invoke the Muse and tell a *muthos*.
3. Therefore, Thales has been traditionally deemed the first philosopher, and the year 585 is among the most important in all of human history. Thales, in other words, was the first Western thinker to offer that reality could be conceived.
4. The *archê*, for Thales, endures. It "is." It is the realm of Being, what is permanent, stable, and ultimate. It is the unifying principle of reality. And for Thales, the *archê* is water**.**

D. All the many various things of the world are in the realm of Becoming. They come into Being, then they pass away. They suffer generation and destruction.
1. These terms, Being and Becoming, the One and the Many, are fundamental in understanding all of Western philosophy. Indeed, philosophy may be conceived as the quest to comprehend the relationship between the two.
2. For Hesiod, Being is incomprehensible.
3. For Thales, on the other hand, it is conceivable. For Thales, in fact, the many can be unified in the one—in water.

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 1–9.

Supplementary Reading:

Cornford, F., *From Religion to Philosophy*, preface and chapter 1.

Hyland, D., *The Origins of Philosophy*, chapter 1.

Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, chapter 1.

Questions to Consider:

1. What do you think a myth is? What myths do you live by? Do you think it is possible to live without myths?
2. Is the myth of creation in Genesis similar or dissimilar to what we read in the *Theogony*?
3. In what ways is Thales's thinking similar to modern physics?

Lecture Three
The Milesians and the Quest for Being

Scope: This lecture examines the debate between three philosophers from Miletus: Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes. Anaximander (610–540) agreed with Thales that the world has an origin (*archê*) that can be comprehended by rational thought (*logos*). But he disagreed on what the *archê* was. For Thales, it was water, a "determinate" substance that can easily be distinguished from other substances (such as fire, earth, and air). For Anaximander, the *archê* was the "indefinite" (*to apeiron*). It was infinite or indeterminate, and it had no limits.

Anaximenes (approximately 550) agreed with Anaximander that there must be an *archê* and that Thales's choice of water was a bad one. But he disagreed that the *archê* was indeterminate. Instead, he claimed it was air. For Anaximenes, as for Thales, the *archê* was a determinate substance. The first debate in Western philosophy was held on the question "Is Being itself determinate or indeterminate?" Xenophanes and Pythagoras, two other sixth-century thinkers, are also discussed in this lecture.

Outline

I. The philosophers of Miletus: Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes.

- **A.** Thales was the founder of the Milesian school.
- **B.** Anaximander wrote the first surviving philosophical work in approximately 550. (Nothing remains of Thales's actual writings.) It is possible that he studied with Thales.
- **C.** Anaximenes was younger than Anaximander and may have been his student. He probably wrote his work around 545.

II. For Thales, the *archê* was water, an ordinary "determinate" element.

- **A.** "Determinate" means "limited." To say that something is determinate implies that it has specific qualities that distinguish it from other determinate things.

B. The Greeks traditionally thought there were four basic elements: water, fire, earth, and air. Each was determinate and could be readily identified.

III. Anaximander both agreed and disagreed with Thales.

A. He agreed that there was an *archê* that could be comprehended by rational thought, by *logos*, alone. He agreed that there was no need for a Muse nor for *muthos.* In other words, like Thales, he was a philosopher.

B. But he disagreed fundamentally on the nature of the *archê.*

1. Anaximander argued that "the indefinite," *to apeiron*, was the *archê.* This could also be translated as "the infinite," "the unlimited," or "the indeterminate."

2. What was Anaximander's reasoning? Perhaps he reasoned that it didn't make sense to identify the *archê* with an ordinary, determinate substance. After all, the *archê* is the ultimate reality. It is somehow responsible for everything else that exists. It must be permanent. But all determinate substances, things that we can see and touch, seem to come into being, then disappear. Therefore, to be ultimately responsible for all other things, the *archê* must be fundamentally different from them. It must be "indeterminate."

3. Anaximander's innovation is a positive development. His argument is logically powerful.

4. If Thales is an "empiricist," then Anaximander is a "rationalist."

IV. Anaximenes both agreed and disagreed with Anaximander.

A. He agreed that there is a rational *archê* of the world. He agreed that there was a problem with Thales's choice of water.

B. But, Anaximenes may have reasoned, Anaximander pays a heavy price for making the *archê* indeterminate.

1. It becomes unintelligible. To think is to think about something determinate. Therefore, the indeterminate cannot be thought on its own.

2. For this reason, Anaximander's *to apeiron* is similar to Hesiod's *Chaos*, "the abyss." Neither can be understood on its own.

C. He disagreed that the *archê* was indeterminate.

1. For Anaximenes, the *archê* was air.

2. Like water, air is a determinate, ordinary substance.

3. But air has a great advantage over water: it is intangible. It is easier, therefore, to conceive of air as being responsible for all things. Anaximenes argued that air can exist at different levels of density. Hence, it can become other things. Like water, air is intelligible: it can be thought. Perhaps he thought that air combined the advantages of Thales's *archê* with the indefinite qualities of Axamimander's *to apeiron.*

4. With air, Anaximenes hoped to solve the problem of Being and Becoming, of the One and the Many.

V. This debate leads us to yet another seminal thinker. Xenophanes was born in Colophon, which is near Miletus, probably around 570. He joined the Milesian quest for Being.

A. Xenophanes was a religious thinker. He offered a fundamental critique of Greek polytheism. Instead of many gods, he believed that "god is one."

1. Xenophanes's god was able to move all things by his mind alone. But this god itself does not move.

2. For Xenophanes, god is the *archê*; god is Being.

B. Like Anaximander, Xenophanes may have reasoned that the *archê* had to be essentially different from all other things. God is one, permanent, and does not move but somehow moves everything else.

VI. Pythagoras represents a different version of this quest.

A. Pythagoras was born in Samos, an island in the Aegean not too far from Miletus, but most of his work was done in Croton, which is on the east coast of Italy (which was then the westernmost part of the Greek-speaking world). He was born in approximately 570 and died around 500.

B. In Croton, Pythagoras founded a religious cult. It required a strict obedience to rules, such as abstention from eating meat or beans. The Pythagoreans believed in reincarnation.

C. Pythagoras's views were based on an essential philosophical intuition: reality is a *kosmos*, an orderly whole, and its order is derived from a mathematical structure.

1. Pythagoras is said to have discovered that musical intervals can be explained mathematically. This might have led him to consider that the universe as a whole is harmonious and that its harmony is mathematically derived.
2. In sum, the Pythagoreans worshipped numbers.
3. The Pythagoreans probably did some real mathematical work in Croton, but we know nothing about it. For example, we cannot credit him with the Pythagorean theorem.
4. Numbers are stable and permanent. They cannot be touched or seen or sensed in any way, but they can be thought. In other words, they are intelligible. By contrast, particular things are sensible and they do change. For example, three apples, each of which I can sense, can become two apples. But the numbers three and two do not change. And the numbers three and two can just as easily apply to oranges or grapes as they can to apples.
5. Number is an excellent candidate for Being or the *archê*.

D. Pythagoras would side with Thales and Anaximenes, not Anaximander, in the Milesian debate. The *archê* must be determinate, limited. Numbers have this feature.

VII. During the sixth century, the Milesians, Pythagoras, and Xenophanes were trying to understand and offer a rational account of the permanent structure of reality. They were trying to comprehend Being, the One, the *archê* that unifies the manifold world of Becoming.

A. A basic question now surfaces: what is the relationship between Being and Becoming? How can the many things of Becoming, those things that we can sense and that change, participate in Being, which is changeless? Being and Becoming are so fundamentally different that any connection between them will be extraordinarily difficult to explain.

B. This question animates all future philosophy.

VIII. In the next two lectures, we will examine two of the greatest and most radical solutions to the problem of Being and Becoming: those of Heraclitus and Parmenides.

Essential Reading:
Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 10–23.

Supplementary Reading:

Burkert, W., *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*.

Hyland, *The Origins of Philosophy*, chapter 2.

Jaeger, W., *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, chapter 3.

Kirk, Raven, Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, chapters II–IV.

Nietzsche, F., *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, pp. 38–50.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think that the world has an *archê?* If so, does it seem more plausible to you that it is determinate or indeterminate?
2. What might be some contemporary candidates for the *archê?*
3. The contemporary world is often described as "the age of the computer." Are we living in Pythagorean times?
4. Do you think there are aspects of life that cannot be reduced to numbers? What might these be?

Lecture Four
The Great Intrusion—Heraclitus

Scope: This lecture concentrates on Heraclitus of Ephesus (approximately 540–480), the most radical of the Presocratics. He offered a daring response to the dilemma of Being and Becoming: he eliminated Being. According to Heraclitus, nothing is stable or permanent. There is no unifying *archê*, at least not of the sort that Thales or Anaximenes or Pythagoras would recognize.

Heraclitus's solution to the problem of Being and Becoming created its own dilemma: if nothing is stable, then how can there be a rational account, a *logos*, of reality? Doesn't philosophy itself depend on the assumption that there is an *archê*? Heraclitus's *logos* was ingenious and uniquely beautiful. He wrote in an enigmatic style in which short aphorisms often contradicted each other. His *logos* itself was in a state of Becoming. For this, he was severely criticized by the next thinker we will study, Parmenides.

Outline

I. Heraclitus lived in Ephesus, which is near Miletus in Asia Minor, from approximately 540 to 470. He probably wrote a book. What remains of his writings, however, are only some 100 fragments or aphorisms.

II. His basic teaching is captured in the mysterious aphorism "It is not possible to step twice in the same river" (#62).

- **A.** Reality itself flows like a river. Nothing is permanent; nothing is fixed or stable.
- **B.** Heraclitus's solution to the dilemma facing the Milesians was to eliminate Being entirely.

III. But if there is no Being, then how can a human make sense of, give a *logos* of, the world?

- **A.** Like all philosophers, Heraclitus believed that there was a *logos*. He stated, "This *logos* holds always but humans always prove unable to understand it" (#1).

B. But Heraclitus's *logos* is quite unusual. It attempts to express the fluid nature of reality by itself being fluid. For example, he seems to contradict himself. Consider the following sayings:

1. "The road up and the road down are one and the same" (#60).

2. "The same thing is both living and dead" (#67).

3. "Changing, it rests" (#75).

C. To many traditional philosophers, contradiction is the ultimate in nonsense. But for Heraclitus, it is an immensely rational act. Perhaps contradiction is the only way to describe the flux of the world.

D. What could these apparent contradictions mean?

1. Over the course of time, things change into their opposites. Once the traveler walking up the road reverses direction, the road is downward. What is alive becomes dead.

2. Because nothing is stable, no single statement can ever be simply and unambiguously true. Every true statement is also false.

3. This is why Heraclitus says, "We step and we do not step into the same river" (#63).

E. Because he conceives of reality as fluid, Heraclitus is a relativist.

1. "The sea is the purest and most polluted water: to fishes drinkable…to humans undrinkable and destructive" (#50).

2. "Pigs rejoice in mud more than pure water" (#51).

3. "Asses would choose rubbish rather than gold" (#52).

F. Because nothing is stable, nothing is good or bad in itself. Everything changes over time. Today gold is considered valuable. But tomorrow water may be considered more valuable. Neither gold nor water is good in itself. Neither has a permanent or absolute value.

IV. Is Heraclitus a philosopher in the Milesian tradition? Does he propose that there is an *archê*? It seems that it might be fire.

A. "The cosmos, the same for all…was always and is and shall be: an ever-living fire…" (#74).

B. This certainly sounds Milesian.

C. In fact, however, fire is not really an *archê* of the sort Thales or Anaximenes proposed. After all, Heraclitus also says the following:

1. "War is the father of all and king of all" (#79). This saying seems to contradict the one above. But war, like child's play, is unpredictable and unstructured. Reality, for Heraclitus, is not determined by a stable *archê* or by a fixed mathematical structure.
2. "A lifetime is a child playing…the kingdom belongs to a child" (#109). Child's play is chaotic and unstructured. This saying, then, indicates that Heraclitus did not have a Milesian view of the world.
3. Fire is symbolic of the constant motion, the perpetual dance, of the universe. Heraclitus's *logos*, which is deliberately enigmatic, is meant to express the fluid nature of reality itself.
4. Heraclitus is an anarchic thinker. What fragments we retain of his are fluid, changing, unstable.

V. Heraclitus's *logos* has both a positive and a negative side, itself a contradiction.

A. He is extraordinarily honest about impermanence. Nothing endures. As a result, opposites are unified and relativism reigns. To think otherwise is to be deluded.

B. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) was a great fan of Heraclitus. He, too, thought that nothing was stable in this world. He, too, wrote in a very enigmatic style.

C. But the enigmatic, often self-contradictory quality of Heraclitus's *logos*, while wonderfully provocative, must be subjected to philosophical critique. It contradicts itself. It sounds more like a *muthos* than a *logos.*

D. This is precisely the objection of Parmenides, Heraclitus's great critic.

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 24–34.

Supplementary Reading:

Kahn, C., *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*.

Kirk, Raven, Schofield, *The Presocratics*, pp. 181–213.

Nietzsche, F., *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, pp. 50–68.

Questions to Consider:

1. What do you make of Heraclitus's way of writing? Are his paradoxical statements offensive to you, or do you find them intellectually attractive?
2. Of all of Heraclitus's fragments, which do you find to be most expressive of his philosophical position?
3. Try to construct an index to Heraclitus's writings. In other words, try to group his fragments under subject headings. (For example, under "fire," you would include #77, #81, #82.)

Lecture Five
Parmenides—The Champion of Being

Scope: This lecture treats the first thinker in the West to focus exclusively on the question of Being itself, Parmenides of Elea (approximately 515–440). Unlike Heraclitus, he was a supreme rationalist. He believed that reasonable people should accept only those statements that passed the strictest test of logic. As a result, he thoroughly denigrated "appearance" (*doxa*), what the world seems like to our eyes and ears and other senses. *Doxa,* he argued, is filled with change, multiplicity, and contradictions. As such, it is totally unreliable. Parmenides thus drew the sharpest possible distinction between "appearance" and "Truth" (*alêtheia*). The former is linked to Becoming and is philosophically worthless. The latter is linked to Being and is the one and only subject of serious reasoning.

Outline

I. Parmenides was born in Elea (in Italy) in approximately 515. He is the first philosopher in the West to focus explicitly on the question of Being.

II. According to Parmenides, there are three "ways of Inquiry," three basic intellectual options. The first is the way of Truth (*alêtheia*). It is expressed by the affirmation "Being is." The second way affirms the reality of non-Being. This, Parmenides argues, is logically incoherent. The third way asserts that both non-Being and Being are. This way is identified with what Parmenides calls *doxa*, "appearance" or "the way things seem to be." He probably associated it with the work of Heraclitus. It, too, is false.

A. Parmenides's basic point is that it is impossible to think non-Being. It is unclear exactly what he means by this phrase. Begin by thinking of non-Being as "nothingness."

1. It is impossible to think non-Being because to think at all means to think of something that is. It is impossible to think of nothing. This is why Parmenides says, "for the same thing is for thinking and for being" (#3).

2. This is why the second path is "completely unlearnable." Non-Being is completely unintelligible. (It is, thus, like Hesiod's *Chaos*.)

B. Because non-Being cannot be thought, the way of *doxa*, which combines non-Being and Being, is false.

1. *Doxa* means "appearance" or "the way things seem to be." It also has the more restricted meaning of "opinion" or "belief." It is the root of the English words "orthodox" (correct opinion) and "paradox" (what is contrary to commonly held beliefs).
2. The essence of *doxa* is the belief in multiplicity and change. When we open our eyes, we see lots of things and they are moving around. This is the realm of Becoming. We believe things come into being, then pass away. Parmenides challenges this belief.

C. Parmenides advises his readers to "not let habit born from much experience compel you…to direct your sightless eye…but judge by reason (*logos*)" (#7).

1. Habit and experience give us *doxa*. So do our senses. Our eyes tell us that the world is filled with many changing things.
2. Parmenides urges us not to pay attention to our senses but to concentrate on the rational truth.
3. Parmenides's argument seems to be this: given that Becoming requires both Being and non-Being and given that non-Being is unintelligible, Becoming, too, is unintelligible. Ordinary human beings believe in Becoming. This is the essence of *doxa.* But *doxa* is not true.
4. Parmenides has a very paradoxical view.
5. Distrustful of experience, he is a rationalist.

D. Only the third way of seeing is philosophically viable: Being is. To assert that non-Being is, is self-contradictory. To assert Becoming is, is equally contradictory. There is only one true path of thinking: that Being is and that it is not possible for it not to be.

III. Parmenides's Being is eternal, one, and indivisible—it is the notion of a pure rationalist.

A. Being must be eternal, for it could not come to be. If it did come into being, it would have to come from non-Being. But non-Being

is not. Therefore, Being did not come to be. For the same reason, it cannot perish. Where would it go?

B. Being must be one and indivisible. If it were more than one, it would have internal divisions. But if it had internal divisions, then one part of Being would not be another. But Being cannot "not be." Therefore, Being cannot be divided. It is one.

IV. Parmenides is the first philosopher in the West sharply to separate reality and appearance, Truth and *doxa.* The way things seem to be is misleading.

V. Parmenides is a rationalist; a strict, logical thinker who ignores empirical observation (*doxa*).

A. By contrast, Thales was an empirical thinker. He reached his philosophical conclusions by means of observation of the external world.

B. Heraclitus, too, is, in a curious way, an empirical thinker. His thinking is an attempt to be faithful to the flux of experience and the passage of time.

C. Much of the subsequent history of philosophy can be divided into empiricists (such as Locke and Hume) and rationalists (such as Descartes and Leibniz).

VI. Parmenides and Heraclitus are both extremists.

A. Heraclitus affirms the flux of experience.

B. Parmenides denies the truth of *doxa.*

C. Greek philosophy after Heraclitus and Parmenides tried to reconcile these two thinkers.

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 35–41.

Supplementary Reading:

Kirk, Raven, Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, pp. 239–262.

Mourelatos, A., *The Route of Parmenides*.

Nietzsche, F., *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, pp. 69–84.

Questions to Consider:

1. Parmenides seems altogether hostile to the use of empirical observation. Can his view be defended?
2. Nietzsche thought that because he was such a purely abstract thinker, Parmenides hated life. Do you agree?

Lecture Six
Reconciling Heraclitus and Parmenides

Scope: Much of Greek philosophy in the fifth century attempted to reconcile the conclusions of Heraclitus and Parmenides. Philosophers tried to preserve Parmenides's insights about Being—namely, that it must be unchanging, indivisible, and unified—without lapsing into his paradoxical denial of Becoming. They tried to preserve Heraclitus's keen appreciation of Becoming, without sacrificing the logical clarity of philosophical explanation.

This lecture discusses three such efforts. For Democritus of Abdera (born approximately 460), the world was composed of atoms and the void. Atoms (from the Greek *atomos*, "uncuttable") share the qualities of Parmenidean Being. They are changeless, indivisible units. But atoms move through the void, where they can combine with other atoms to form sensible objects. In a similar fashion, the pluralistic theories of Anaxagoras (500–428) and Empedocles (493–433) also attempted to account for both Becoming and Being.

Outline

I. Both Heraclitus and Parmenides were extremists.

- **A.** Fifth-century Greek philosophy aimed to find an in-between position.
- **B.** The goal was to preserve the insights of Parmenides about Being without ending up in his utterly paradoxical denial of Becoming and to affirm Heraclitus's keen appreciation of Becoming without lapsing into his irrational form of *logos.*

II. Atomism was an attempt to effect a synthesis between Being and Becoming.

- **A.** Leucippus was the originator of atomic theory. Nothing is known about him. He may have been born in Miletus and did his work some time in the middle of the fifth century.
- **B.** Democritus was born in Abdera (in Thrace) around 460. He may have studied with Leucippus.

C. His theory had two components: atoms and the void through which they move.

1. "Atom" comes from the Greek *atomos*, which means "uncuttable." Like Parmenides's Being, an atom is indivisible and eternal.

2. There are an infinite number of atoms. They differ only in shape and size. They are invisible, but they are the ultimate constituents of all reality.

3. Atoms move through the void, empty space.

4. Atoms combine to form larger, visible objects. Such objects pass away when the atoms no longer cohere and disperse. But the atoms themselves do not pass away. They simply move on.

D. Atomism preserves the best of both Parmenides and Heraclitus.

1. Atoms are like Parmenidean Being.

2. Unlike Parmenides, however, the atomists do not have to sacrifice Becoming. The sensible world of Becoming is composed of eternal atoms.

E. Atomism was rediscovered in the European Renaissance (1500) and developed into the modern scientific theories of the seventeenth century (known as "corpuscular philosophy").

F. Like Parmenides, Democritus maintains that reality and appearance are different. And as in modern science, the reality of Democritus is quantitative.

III. Empedocles was a "pluralist."

A. Empedocles lived from c. 490–c.430 in Sicily.

B. His theory has two basic components.

1. There are four kinds of "roots," or elements: fire, air, water, and earth. These combine and separate to form sensible objects.

2. Two basic forces in the universe govern the motion of the roots: love and strife.

3. When love is active, the roots combine. When strife is active, the roots repel each other and disperse.

C. The roots are eternal and like Parmenides's Being. But their various combinations call for the multiplicity and motion of the sensible world. Empedocles's notion of chance even bears a vague

resemblance to the ideas of much later thinkers, such as Charles Darwin.

D. Empedocles attempted a synthesis of Being and Becoming.

IV. Anaxagoras of Clazomanae (500–430) was also a "pluralist."

A. Like the atomists and Empedocles, his theory had two basic components.

1. He had a concept of "seeds," which are elemental particles of every known quality.

2. These seeds can interact and form sensible objects. This process is under the governance of a universal force that Anaxagoras called "mind."

B. This force initiates all cosmic motion and is the animating principle of living things.

V. In summary, fifth-century Greek philosophy worked on the problems of Being and Becoming and tried to offer some sort of synthesis.

VI. But something is missing from all of the philosophy we have studied so far. There is no mention of human experience!

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 42–56, 62–69.

Supplementary Reading:

Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, pp. 3–75.

Kirk, Raven, Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, pp. 280–321, 352–384, 402–433.

Questions to Consider:

1. What do Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and Democritus have in common?

2. For Democritus, the world is composed of atoms and the void. From this, he concludes that the qualities we think we experience, such as the sweetness of a drink, are merely a "convention." What does he mean?

Lecture Seven
The Sophists—Protagoras, the First "Humanist"

Scope: This lecture introduces an extraordinary group of thinkers who lived in the fifth century: the Sophists. They were professional teachers (the first in the West), who traveled from city to city. There were many Sophists, but this lecture will focus only on Protagoras of Abdera (485–415), the first humanist in the West. Unlike the Presocratics, he regarded human beings as the center of all reality, declaring, "human being is the measure of all things." Protagoras was a relativist for whom the distinctive feature of human beings was language, specifically the ability to enter into political deliberation and debate. Thus, he taught rhetoric, the art of speaking well.

The Sophists were particularly attracted to the city of Athens, because it was a democracy in which free speech was protected and whose citizens placed great value on political discussion. The Sophists taught the most ambitious Athenians how to succeed in politics.

Outline

I. The achievements of the Presocratic natural philosophers were extremely impressive. They studied the ultimate structure of nature and raised the fundamental questions of Being and Becoming, the One and the Many.

II. However, the Presocratics were largely silent on questions concerning the meaning and value of human experience.

- **A.** There were exceptions. Democritus, for example, taught that it was "best for a person to live his life as cheerful and as little distressed as possible" (#31).
- **B.** Still, the overwhelming tendency in Presocratic thought is to concentrate on nature, not human nature.

III. The Sophists, itinerant professors, were different. Protagoras of Abdera, who probably lived from 485–415, challenged the Presocratics with his most famous single statement:

A. "Human being is the measure of all things—of things that are, that they are, and of things that are not, that they are not" (#1).

B. Protagoras was a humanist.

1. He was not interested in nature or the *kosmos* or the *archê*. He thought these things were unknowable.

2. For Protagoras, human beings were the center, the "Measure," of all reality.

IV. Protagoras was a relativist.

A. Relativism is the view that whether something is true or false, good or bad, depends on the person or group who holds that truth or value.

B. For example, a relativist would say that stealing is not intrinsically good or bad, but that it depends on, is relative to, who is making the judgment.

C. The opposite of relativism is absolutism, the view that a truth or a value is independent of who holds that truth or value. The absolutist believes that something can be true or good in and of itself.

V. Protagoras, like many Sophists, taught rhetoric, the art of speaking well.

A. Rhetoric and relativism go hand in hand.

1. Relativism is the denial that there are any absolute truths or values.

2. If nothing is absolutely true or good, then the truths and values that guide human life get their authority from human agreement or convention.

B. Protagoras stated that on every issue "there are two opposing arguments (*logoi*)" (#3). He was able "to make the weaker argument the stronger" (#4).

1. According to the Sophist, no single argument is absolutely decisive. Both sides of every issue can be argued equally.

2. Protagoras taught his students to argue both sides of every issue.

3. Protagoras taught his students to enter into political debate.

4. Objections to the sophistic relativists, as we shall see, will be nowhere stronger than in Plato.

VI. There were many Sophists: Gorgias of Leontini (483–376), Hippias of Elis (485–415), and Prodicus of Ceos (approximately 470–400) were among the most prominent.

A. The Sophists were from many different city-states, but they all were attracted to Athens.

B. Athens was a vibrant democracy in the fifth century.

1. It was politically powerful and very wealthy.

2. It celebrated and protected free speech.

3. In its primary legislative body, the Assembly, citizens could debate anything.

C. In such an environment, Sophists were hot commodities. By teaching rhetoric, they offered the most useful skill for advancing a political agenda or career. They were like the "media consultants" of today. The reliance on democratic debate was a perfect environment for sophistry.

D. Protagoras is said to have associated with Pericles, the great leader of democratic Athens from approximately 460 to 430. This suggests the close link between sophistry and democracy.

VII. Sophistry, with its twin pillars of relativism and rhetoric, has been a constant presence in the history of ideas.

A. It is extremely popular today. We live in a highly relativistic time.

B. The contemporary Sophist is today known as a "postmodernist."

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 74–82.

Supplementary Reading:

Barnes, J., *The Presocratic Philosophers*, pp. 146–168.

Fish, S., *Doing What Comes Naturally*, pp. 471–503.

Guthrie, W., *The Sophists*, pp. 181–188, 262–269.

Sprague, R., *The Older Sophists*, pp. 3–29.

Questions to Consider:

1. In dealing with questions of value (e.g., whether abortion is morally justified), are you a relativist or an absolutist?

2. Can you explain the conceptual link between relativism and rhetoric? This is crucial to understanding the Sophists.

Lecture Eight
Socrates

Scope: This lecture concentrates on Socrates, the Athenian philosopher who lived 469–399. Socrates wrote nothing, but several writers described him. By far the most notable of these was Plato. But Xenophon (428–354) also wrote Socratic dialogues. Aristophanes, the comic playwright, wrote the *Clouds* around 420 and, in it, brutally lampooned Socrates. Aristotle also made several comments about Socrates. From him, we know that Socrates was interested in ethical questions. Specifically, he sought definitions. He asked such questions as, "What is justice?" and "What is courage?" His basic concern was how a person could live a good life. He claimed not to know the answers to his own questions, but he was very good at showing others that they did not know either. In 399, Socrates was executed by the city of Athens. This lecture will try to explain why.

Outline

I. Socrates was the first great Athenian philosopher. He lived from 469–399. He was executed for introducing new gods into the city and corrupting the youth of the Athenian democracy.

II. Socrates himself wrote nothing. Therefore, we know nothing for certain about him or his thought.

III. Several writers described Socrates.

- **A.** Xenophon (428–354) wrote the *Memorabilia*, which were his recollections of Socrates.
- **B.** Aristophanes, the comic playwright, wrote the *Clouds* in 420. He brutally lampooned Socrates.
- **C.** Aristotle made several comments about Socrates.
- **D.** It is Plato, however, who immortalized Socrates. In many of Plato's dialogues, Socrates was the main speaker and the obvious hero. We will discuss Plato's relationship to Socrates in the next lecture.

E. One description of Socrates from Plato is particularly important because it touches on the subject of why Socrates himself didn't write.

1. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato has Socrates tell a story about the invention of writing. He alleges that writing, far from enhancing our memory, only weakens it.

2. When we write something, Socrates says, the written work is outside of us. The work circulates in the world, fixed and indiscriminate, always subject to misinterpretation by different people. As a result, Socrates preferred conversation to writing.

3. This criticism of the written word, as we shall later see, has important implications for our understanding of the purpose of a (written) Socratic dialogue.

F. The following probably can be safely said about Socrates.

1. He was fundamentally concerned with the question of what is the best life for a human being.

2. He probably asked "what is it?" questions. For example, "What is justice?" and "What is courage?" He was, in other words, seeking definitions that could be understood in universal, not relativist, terms.

3. Socrates himself offered no answers to his own questions. Instead, he showed other people that, even though they thought they did, they did not know what a good life really was. This side of Socrates is best depicted in Plato's *The Apology of Socrates*.

IV. Why was Socrates executed?

A. A brief history of fifth-century Athens.

1. The Persians amassed a tremendous army and attacked Greece in 490 and again 480.

2. Against overwhelming odds, the Greeks prevailed.

3. With Athens as its leader, the Delian League, an alliance of Greek city-states, was founded to protect against Persia in 478.

4. Athens became incredibly powerful after this.

5. Pericles was the most influential politician in Athens from around 450 until his death in 429. He was responsible for the construction of the Parthenon and other great buildings.

6. In 431, the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, two Greek city-states, began.
7. The war ended in 404 with the defeat of Athens. The democracy in Athens was replaced by the regime of the "thirty tyrants," some of whom associated with Socrates.
8. The democracy was restored in Athens in 403. Socrates may have been seen as an ally of the tyrants.

B. The end of the fifth century was a time of great political turmoil in Athens. Because he asked so many questions, Socrates was perceived as being a subversive. He was critical of Athens and of democracy itself.

C. By 399, the Athenians may just have been sick and tired of Socrates's endless questioning.

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 112–131 (*The Apology of Socrates*).

Supplementary Reading:

Stone, I., *The Trial of Socrates*.

Versenyi, L., *Socratic Humanism*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Socrates refers to himself (in Plato's *The Apology of Socrates*), as a "gadfly." Why does he use such a strange image to describe himself?
2. How would you react if someone asked you "What is justice?" or "What is courage?" Do you think such questions can be answered?

Lecture Nine
An Introduction to Plato's Dialogues

Scope: This lecture introduces the student to the dialogues of Plato. It begins with some general comments about Plato's corpus. It is vast, comprising some twenty-five dialogues, some of them (the *Republic* and the *Laws*), quite long. Only a small portion of Plato's writings will be addressed in this course. A few basic themes taken from several dialogues will be discussed. Although many issues will be raised, these themes will be selected with one consideration in mind: How did Plato respond to his predecessors, the Sophists and the Presocratics?

The relationship between Plato and the historical Socrates will be explained. Although Socrates appeared as the main character in many of his writings, Plato's dialogues were not meant to accurately depict the man who lived from 469–399.

Outline

I. Plato (429–348) was the son of Ariston and Perictione, who were both from distinguished and wealthy Athenian families. Though not a student of Socrates, he no doubt associated with him.

II. His written corpus was vast. He wrote more than twenty-five dialogues, some of which, particularly the *Republic* and the *Laws,* are extremely long.

III. Plato's writings are extraordinarily diverse.

- **A.** He wrote on every possible philosophical subject.
- **B.** This is why Alfred North Whitehead said, "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."

IV. Some scholars believe that Plato's corpus can be divided into three distinct chronological periods.

- **A.** In his "early" dialogues, such as *The Apology*, *Crito*, and *Euthyphro*, Plato was still heavily influenced by Socrates and had not yet developed his own views.

B. In his "middle" period, when he wrote the *Meno* and the *Republic*, Plato had liberated himself from Socrates and had begun to formulate his own theories.

C. In "late" dialogues, such as *The Sophist*, *The Statesman*, and *Parmenides*, all of which seem to differ significantly from his "middle" dialogues, Plato had found his own distinctive method of philosophy. In these dialogues, Socrates is no longer the main speaker.

V. These lectures will not use the chronological approach.

A. Although it has obvious merit, it is highly speculative.

B. The method used in this course is "dialectical."

1. The following lectures will concentrate on some basic themes, which will be taken from a wide variety of dialogues.

2. Those themes that show how Plato responded to his predecessors, the Sophists and the Presocratics, will be discussed.

VI. No attempt will be made to determine the relationship between Plato and the historical Socrates.

A. Nothing is known for certain about Socrates.

B. Therefore, from now on, when the name "Socrates" is used, it will refer only to the character appearing in Plato's dialogues.

1. As a result, the names "Plato" and "Socrates" will often be used interchangeably.

2. This is, however, potentially misleading. Plato wrote dialogues in which Socrates was a character. He never expressed his own views in his own voice. He never wrote a treatise.

3. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates criticizes the act of writing, as we have seen. Because Plato wrote this criticism himself, it is something of an exquisite irony.

4. By not expressing his own views in his own voice, Plato wanted the reader to question everything he said. Perhaps he wanted the reader to criticize Socrates himself. We never really know what Plato believes; the reader is always on edge. This approach reflects Plato's debt to Socrates, because it forces the notion of exchange or dialogue on the reader.

5. For example, Alcibiades interrupts the *Symposium* and presents a scathing criticism of Socrates. Plato gives Alcibiades the last word in this dialogue!
6. Questioning and self-criticism are Plato's great legacy. He writes in such a way as to overcome the criticism of writing he made in the *Phaedrus*. The written word in Plato is vital and alive, not deadening, as it is said to be in the *Phaedrus*.

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 252–262 (*Symposium* excerpt).

Supplementary Reading:

Gordon, J., *Turning toward Philosophy*, pp. 1–13.

Question to Consider:

1. Do you engage in self-criticism? If so, of what sort? If not, why not?

Lecture Ten
Plato versus the Sophists, I

Scope: From the beginning of his career to the end, Plato was obsessed with the Sophists. He was profoundly opposed to their relativism. He believed that the idea that "human being is the measure of all things" was philosophically, morally, and politically pernicious. This lecture will introduce some basic features of Plato's philosophy by trying to explain why.

One of the most famous debates between Socrates and a Sophist occurs in Book I of the *Republic,* where Socrates does battle with Thrasymachus. This lecture will examine in some detail one argument the philosopher used against his Sophistic opponent.

Outline

I. Plato often depicted actual historical figures in his dialogues.

- **A.** Thrasymachus of Chalcedon appears in Book I of the *Republic.*
- **B.** Thrasymachus was a Sophist who taught rhetoric. He came to Athens and did much of his work between 430 and 400. He analyzed the role that the emotions play in persuasion.

II. Thrasymachus's basic position is "justice is the advantage of the stronger."

- **A.** By "stronger," Thrasymachus means the politically stronger, the ruling body.
- **B.** Thrasymachus has a relativistic conception of justice.
  - **1.** Ruling bodies differ in different regimes.
  - **2.** In a monarchy, the king rules. What is advantageous to the king is what, according to Thrasymachus, would be counted as just.
  - **3.** In a democracy, the people rule. (*Demos* means people.) What is advantageous to the people is just. Of course, the people often change their minds about what this might be.
  - **4.** Justice differs from one regime to another. It is relative to the regime. Nothing is just in and of itself.

III. Why did Plato find this view objectionable?

- **A.** Relativism allows for an unlimited number of conceptions of justice, none of which is better or worse than any other.
- **B.** According to Thrasymachus, for example, in Hitler's Germany, whatever was advantageous to the Nazis would have been just. Plato fundamentally disagreed.

IV. How did Plato attack relativism?

- **A.** Socrates asks Thrasymachus questions.
  1. Do you think it is just to obey all laws?
  2. Thrasymachus answers yes. According to him, laws are made by, and for the advantage of, the ruling body. Therefore, he says that it is just to obey all laws.
  3. When the ruling body or ruler is creating its laws, does it sometimes make mistakes?
  4. Thrasymachus answers yes.
  5. When the ruler makes a mistake, it creates a law that is actually to his disadvantage.
  6. Because it is just to obey all laws, sometimes it is just to obey laws that are disadvantageous for the ruling body.
  7. Thrasymachus has contradicted himself. He has said that justice is and is not to the advantage of the stronger.
  8. For Heraclitus, contradictions were tolerable; for Parmenides (and Plato), they were not.
- **B.** This is a classic refutation. It is known as an *Elenchus* and is what Socrates is most famous for.
- **C.** This refutation relies on one simple point that most people, including Thrasymachus, are willing to grant: people make mistakes.
  1. If it is possible to make a mistake, then it is also possible to get something right.
  2. According to the relativist, it is not possible to make a mistake. There are no wrong answers. All answers are equal, because all of them are relative to the person or group giving the answer.
  3. Remember, Protagoras said that both sides of every issue can be argued for. This is similar to saying that there are no mistakes.

4. Thrasymachus is refuted by agreeing that people make mistakes.

D. Plato seems to believe that it is in the human soul to want knowledge.

1. Relativism, though attractive, requires one to give up the desire for knowledge, an extremely difficult position. From Plato's point of view, relativism is a shameful doctrine.
2. Ultimately, Plato asks, "Do you, the reader, want knowledge?"
3. A Platonic dialogue, then, forces us to look into ourselves. We become philosophers.

E. Despite its apparent simplicity, the argument against Thrasymachus is worth pondering at length. About what matters in human life can one be mistaken?

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 263–291 (Book I of the *Republic*).

Supplementary Reading:

Bloom, A., *The Republic of Plato*, pp. 307–337.

Howland, J., *The Republic: The Odyssey of Philosophy*.

Question to Consider:

1. Carefully read Socrates's refutation of Thrasymachus (pp. 274–276). Do you think it is successful? Does Socrates "play fair"?

Lecture Eleven
Plato versus the Sophists, II

Scope: This lecture discusses another strategy that Plato used against the relativism of the Sophists: the self-reference argument. In this sort of refutation, a position is used against itself. For example, consider the statement "there are no truths." If this statement is forced to refer to itself, it falls apart. After all, if there are no truths, then the statement itself cannot express a truth. The same situation obtains with the statement "all truths are relative." If it is true, then that very statement is itself relative.

In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates uses the self-reference argument against the views of Protagoras. He also argues that Heraclitus, with his emphasis on flux, provides the theoretical foundation for Sophistic relativism. He then attacks Heraclitus with the same sort of self-reference argument.

Outline

I. A basic strategy Plato uses against the Sophists is the self-reference argument.

- **A.** Such an argument refutes a statement by forcing it to refer to itself. When it does so, the statement falls apart.
- **B.** Consider the statement "there are no truths." If the statement is made to refer to itself, it self-destructs. After all, if there are no truths, then the statement itself cannot express a truth.

II. In the dialogue *Theaetetus*, Socrates uses a self-reference argument against the position of Protagoras.

- **A.** If all truth is relative, if there is no absolute truth, then no one is really wiser than anyone else.
- **B.** Protagoras believes he is wise, as evidenced by the fact that he charges his students a great deal of money to study with him.
- **C.** But Protagoras is a relativist. Therefore, by his own reckoning, he is no wiser than anyone else.
- **D.** Thus, Protagoras really has no right to teach anyone or to charge tuition.

E. Socrates, by contrast, never charged tuition. In fact, he was quite poor.

III. In this dialogue, Plato argues that Heraclitus provides the theoretical foundation of Sophistic relativism.

A. Heraclitus believes that everything flows, that nothing abides, that there is no stable reality whatsoever.

B. Such a view leads to relativism. Because there are no stable values, values come into being, then pass away, just like everything else.

C. Socrates uses a self-reference argument against Heraclitus as well.

1. If nothing is stable, then words themselves have no stable meaning.

2. If words have no stable meaning, then there can be no true statements.

3. But Heraclitus tries to make true statements, one of which is, "nothing is stable."

4. But if nothing is stable, then the very sentence "nothing is stable" is not stable and, hence, has no meaning.

5. Heraclitus's position, as well as Sophistic relativism, self-destructs.

IV. We must ask whether Heraclitus and Protagoras can dodge this sort of refutation.

A. Perhaps Heraclitus's *logos* is deliberately unstable.

B. Perhaps Protagoras would not make the sort of claims that lead to refutation by self-reference.

C. The Heraclitean-Protagorean conception of language may well be able to protect itself from the Platonic critique.

1. Socrates demands that his opponents offer a stable, coherent *logos* against which he can argue.

2. Heraclitus and Protagoras may refuse to offer such a *logos.* Their conception of language may simply be fundamentally different from Plato's.

3. From Plato's perspective, Heraclitus and Protagoras are practitioners of *muthos*, not *logos.*

4. From Plato's perspective, poets and Sophists are, therefore, fundamentally similar.

5. No wonder, then, that in Book I of the *Republic*, Socrates argues against the Sophist Thrasymachus and, in Books II, III, and X, he argues against the poets.

Essential Reading:

Burnyeat, M., *The Theaetetus of Plato*, especially pp. 259–285.

Supplementary Reading:

Burnyeat, M., *The Theaetetus of Plato*, pp. 7–52 (Burnyeat's commentary on the dialogue).

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think the "self-reference" argument is a good strategy to use against the relativist? Try to defend Heraclitus and Protagoras against the Socratic onslaught.
2. At this point in the course, do you find yourself more sympathetic to the Sophists or to Plato?

Lecture Twelve
Plato's Forms, I

Scope: Clearly, Plato opposed the relativism of the Sophists. But what did he offer as an alternative? The previous lecture introduced the notion of a Platonic "Form" or "Idea." This lecture will elaborate. It will begin by discussing another dialogue in which Socrates faces a Sophistic opponent, *The Meno*. Here, Socrates converses with Meno, an associate of the Sophist Gorgias. Socrates asks Meno, "What is virtue itself?" This question demands a definition of virtue. A definition must be universal: it must articulate what is common to all particular cases or examples of virtue. "Virtue itself" is what Socrates would call the "Form of Virtue." It is the universal that embraces all the particulars. This crucial Platonic concept will be explained in some detail.

Outline

I. Clearly, Plato attacked and tried to refute relativism. He was, therefore, an absolutist. He thought there were certain truths that were entirely independent of context.

II. How did Plato conceive of the absolute truth?

- **A.** The key is his word "Form" (or "Idea," which he used as a synonym).
- **B.** In Greek, *eidos* means "Form." It is the root of our word "eidetic." Etymologically, the Greek *idea* is identical to our "idea."
  1. In its ordinary usage, a "Form" is the shape of a thing, the way something looks. It is the visual structure of a thing.
  2. In Plato's special philosophical usage, a Form is what numerous particular things have in common.
  3. For example, numerous beautiful things exist in the world: a beautiful face, a painting, a sunset.
  4. What they have in common is "beauty itself," or "the Form of Beauty."
  5. The beautiful painting is a particular. The Form of Beauty is universal.

6. Forms provide the answer to the "what is it?" questions of Socrates.

III. An excellent example of what Form means for Plato comes from the *Meno.*

A. Meno opens the dialogue by asking Socrates, "Can virtue be taught?"

1. "Virtue" translates the Greek word *aretê*, which also means "excellence."
2. Meno wants to know how virtue can be transmitted.
3. Meno wants to know a quality or an attribute of virtue, namely whether it is teachable.

B. Socrates refuses to answer Meno's question.

1. Socrates insists that before one can know what qualities something possesses, one must know what that thing is. Before one can know what something is like, one must know what it is.
2. Socrates, therefore, asks Meno, "What is virtue itself?"

C. In response, Meno gives a list of examples.

D. Socrates rejects Meno's answer. He is not looking for a list of particulars. He wants a definition of virtue itself. He wants to know what all the particular instances have in common. The answer would be the Form of virtue.

E. "Even if they are many and various, all of [the virtues] have one and the same form which makes them virtues" (pg. 193).

F. Meno is resistant to the "what is it?" question. Frustrated, he ends by insulting Socrates.

IV. The *Meno,* like so many of Plato's dialogues, ends without a definite answer to the question.

A. It ends in *aporia,* "perplexity" or "impasse." The Form of virtue is never articulated. Socrates is seemingly nourished by *aporia*, while Meno is paralyzed by it.

B. Socrates was famous for both experiencing and causing others to experience *aporia.*

C. Why, then, should we believe that there are Platonic Forms? Why should we believe that relativism is wrong?

D. It is important to consider how Meno could have avoided Socrates's "what is it?" and whether this question is, in fact, a reasonable one to ask.

E. We arrive at Meno's Paradox. Meno objects to the "what is it?" question by saying it can't be answered. He argues that learning is impossible.

1. Meno argues that there are two responses to the "what is it?" question—either 'I know the answer' or 'I don't know it.'

2. If I "know" what virtue is, I can't learn what it is because I already know. If I don't know it, then I can't learn what it is because I would never be able to recognize the right answer.

3. Thus, for Meno, there is no such thing as learning. But Socrates, as we shall see, has a response to his objection. For Socrates, it is Meno, not he, who preaches paralysis.

Essential Reading:
Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 191–196.

Supplementary Reading:

Klein, J., *A Commentary on Plato's Meno*, pp. 35–53.

Nehamas, A., "Confusing Universals and Particulars in Plato's Early Dialogues," in *Virtues of Authenticity*, pp. 159–175.

Question to Consider:

1. Is Socrates's "what-is-it?" question fair? Is it true that to identify an example of X, you must be able to define X? Is this true about "the good"? Must you be able to define the good before knowing what is a good thing to do?

Lecture Thirteen
Plato's Forms, II

Scope: This lecture takes up the challenge with which the previous lecture ended: why should anyone believe that there are Platonic Forms? This is a profound question, because it goes to the heart of the debate about relativism, a debate that still rages today.

Plato mustered an argument on behalf of the Forms in his dialogue the *Phaedo.* It is connected to his "theory of recollection." Socrates shows that for simple intellectual tasks to take place, such as measuring or counting, some notion of absolute standards must already be present in the human mind, namely, the Forms. The Forms cannot be derived from experience. Hence, they are prior to experience. Human beings do not learn about these Forms the way they learn about everything else. Instead, the Forms are "recollected." This lecture will explain what this theory means.

Outline

I. Why should we believe that Forms exist? After all, in the *Meno*, Socrates failed to define virtue itself.

II. Socrates offers a positive argument on behalf of the Forms in the *Phaedo.*

- **A.** Imagine that you are measuring the length of two sticks and you determine that they are equal.
- **B.** Of course, the two sticks are not exactly equal. No measuring device could determine the exact equality of two such objects.
- **C.** In measuring sensible objects, such as sticks, equality is never exact or perfect.
  - **1.** The equality of sensible things is relative.
  - **2.** For example, the sticks may be equal in length but unequal in weight.
- **D.** However, to use the concept of "equality" in measuring sticks, one must have an idea of perfect equality, or what Socrates calls "the equal itself."

1. For ordinary intellectual activities, such as measuring, to take place, human beings must invoke standards and ideas that are perfect.
2. Experience is always imperfect. We never experience two perfectly equal sticks. Experience "falls short" of the Form.
3. Therefore, the Idea of perfect equality, of "the equal itself," cannot come from experience.
4. "The equal itself" must be prior to experience.
5. In the *Republic*, Socrates argues that numbers that we all use in everyday life are like Forms. They are "perfect," yet accessible.

E. "Recollection" is the name that Socrates gives to the human ability to use *a priori* Forms.
1. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates uses recollection to prove that the soul is immortal.
2. Because we have access to the Forms and because that access cannot come from experience, we must have gotten our knowledge of the Forms before we were born.
3. Therefore, Socrates argues, the soul does not die: it is reincarnated.

F. To modern ears, Plato's ideas about the immortality of the soul and reincarnation probably sound quite implausible.
1. His basic point, however, is entirely plausible.
2. Kant made the notion of the *a priori*, that which is prior to, but determinative of, experience, famous. But this idea is Platonic in origin.
3. Human beings use Forms whenever we think about things. But these Forms cannot come from experience.
4. Our knowledge of Forms must be *a priori.*
5. Also, consider the contemporary understanding of DNA: our genes contain "information" (which has "form" built into it). In other words, at conception, a human being has the form that it will eventually assume.

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 217–220.

Supplementary Reading:

Ahrensdorf, P., *The Death of Socrates and the Life of Philosophy*.

Gallop, D., *Plato's Phaedo*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Socrates argues that "the equal itself" cannot be derived from experience. Do you think he offers a good argument for this view?
2. Review the comparison made at the end of the lecture between Plato's doctrine of recollection and our current understanding of genetic information. Do you find it plausible?

Lecture Fourteen
Plato versus the Presocratics

Scope: As an opponent of the Sophists, Plato conceived of an ultimate reality and truth, to which he gave the name "Form." This conception might make him sound very much like a Presocratic philosopher. In fact, however, Plato was a fundamentally different kind of thinker. The Presocratics were *phusiologoi*, natural philosophers, interested most of all in giving an account of nature (a *logos* of *phusis*). By contrast, Plato was most involved with questions concerning the value and meaning of human life.

This lecture discusses a passage from the *Phaedo* in which Socrates explains his dissatisfaction with Presocratic philosophy. Precisely because the Presocratics were unable to explain human values, Socrates gave up on them. The lecture then turns briefly to the *Republic*, in which Socrates discusses "The Idea of the Good." This discussion will explain how, for Plato, the entire world was saturated in value.

Outline

I. The previous lecture might give the appearance that Plato was quite similar to the Presocratics. Plato seems to engage in the same sort of project as Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and Pythagoras, namely, the attempt to synthesize Being and Becoming.

- **A.** The Forms are like Parmenidean Being.
- **B.** Sensible reality is like Heraclitean Becoming.

II. In fact, Plato was quite critical of the Presocratics.

- **A.** His most sustained criticism comes in the *Phaedo.*
- **B.** The issue at hand is the nature of the human soul. *Psychê* means "soul" in Greek. It is the root of our word "psychology."
- **C.** Simmias argues that the soul is like a "harmony" produced by the strings of a lyre.
  - **1.** In other words, although it is not exactly a material thing, the soul is produced by, and inseparable from, a material thing.

2. This view of the human mind is commonly held among contemporary neurologists: the human mind, or consciousness, is a byproduct of a material entity, namely, the brain.

D. To explain why he opposes this view, Socrates tells a story about his youth.

1. As a young man, Socrates was fascinated by Presocratic natural philosophy.
2. But it left him dissatisfied.
3. Socrates turned to the work of Anaxagoras.
4. Anaxagoras had a notion of Mind as a primary force in nature.
5. Socrates was attracted to this idea. He thought that Anaxagoras could explain values, purposes, and goals, things that were aimed at by Mind.
6. He was disappointed in Anaxagoras, because Mind for him was merely a physical force and nothing like the mind of a human being.
7. For the Presocratics, an answer to the question "Why am I sitting here now?" was strictly physical or mechanistic. For example, you are sitting here now because your bones and sinews moved in a certain fashion.
8. According to Socrates, he is sitting here now because he thinks it is good to do so.

III. Socrates's fundamental objection to the Presocratics is that they could not explain the value-laden nature of human experience.

A. Human beings do things for a reason.

B. Human beings are always animated by a sense of what is good. In Socrates's terms, all human beings desire the good.

IV. Plato's critique of the Presocratics is extremely useful today.

A. The Presocratics looked at "things." Socrates, meanwhile, takes "refuge" in discussions. His concern is with *talking* about things, not things themselves.

B. Most contemporary thinkers believe that the mind is just "a thing," namely, the brain.

C. Plato would insist that this conception cannot do justice to the value-laden nature of experience.

V. The best evidence of Plato's disagreement with the Presocratics comes from Book VI of the *Republic*.

A. Socrates discusses the "Idea of the Good."

B. This passage is one of the most mysterious in the corpus.

C. The idea of the good is what all men seek. It is what confers value on human actions. Without it, nothing has value.

D. It is like the sun. It gives light: it makes things intelligible. And it gives life: it is the cause of all Being but is, nonetheless, "beyond being."

E. Although Plato's meaning here is unclear, one idea is certain: reality itself is saturated in value.

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 229–241, 428–432.

Supplementary Reading:

Gallop, D., *Plato's Phaedo*.

Question to Consider:

1. Do you think that the "mind" or "consciousness" has any reality that is independent of the brain? If so, why? If not, why not? Compare your views to those of Plato in the *Phaedo*.

Lecture Fifteen

The Republic— The Political Implications of the Forms

Scope: The Forms represent the ultimate goal of Platonic philosophy. They are the final protection against relativism, as well as the guarantor that the world itself has value. But the Forms were not merely theoretical entities for Plato. Instead, they played a crucial role in his political thinking.

This lecture turns to the "Parable of the Cave" in the *Republic* to consider the political implications of the Forms. In this dialogue, Socrates recommends that political rulers be philosophers who have studied the Form of the Good. To create a just city, rulers must rule by wisdom (*sophia*), not by mere opinion (*doxa*) or self-interest. His views about the Forms led Plato to criticize democracy, which is rule by the opinion of the majority. The regime Plato seems to recommend in the *Republic* is quite authoritarian. The ultimate authority, however, is not a man, but wisdom itself.

Outline

I. In Book VII of the *Republic*, Socrates tells the "Parable of the Cave."

- **A.** Human beings are like prisoners in a cave.
  - **1.** They are shackled and forced to look at the cave's back wall.
  - **2.** On this wall, they see images. These are really shadows projected by a fire behind the prisoners. The shadows are of objects that are placed before the fire.
  - **3.** The prisoners cannot turn their heads and, thus, cannot see the fire, only the shadows.
  - **4.** They think the shadows are real.
- **B.** Some prisoners are liberated.
- **C.** They are forced to turn around and start the climb upward to the light. On their way up, they see the fire and the objects.
- **D.** When they reach daylight, they can see the natural world.

E. Finally, they catch a glimpse of the sun and realize that it is the source of light and life.

F. The sun represents the Idea of the Good.

G. The liberated prisoners are forced to return to the cave.

H. Because they have seen the real world, these former prisoners, who are philosophers, are better equipped to govern those who live in the cave.

II. The key point about the cave is that those with wisdom, whether they are male or female, should rule. Wisdom is gained by studying the Idea of the Good.

III. Plato's teaching about the Ideas has radical political implications.

A. First, it forms the basis of his criticism of democracy.

1. In a democracy, all citizens, those who are knowledgeable and those who are ignorant, get to vote.

2. Democracy is rule by opinion, or *doxa.* According to Plato, unintelligent people cannot make good decisions.

B. Plato advocates censorship.

1. Unlike in modern political philosophy, freedom is not the fundamental value for Plato. Poetry will be censored according to the dictates of the philosopher/ruler.

2. It is more important that people be educated well than that they be allowed freedom.

C. The city of the *Republic* is authoritarian.

1. Knowledge should be authoritative.

2. Everything from private possessions to sexual relations is governed by the rulers, the "philosopher kings."

IV. Did Plato think the hypothetical city of the *Republic* could be realized? Was it a practical proposal?

A. No, it was a kind of ideal.

B. In fact, Plato understood the value of democracy.

1. Paradoxically, what is best about democracy is that it allows criticism of democracy.

2. In Book VIII, Socrates says that the kind of philosophical discussion he has just been having could probably take place only in a democracy.

3. Democracy allows for philosophy. Plato may have believed that only in a democracy is one free enough to be a philosopher.
4. The best thing about a democracy is that it allows for fundamental criticism of democracy itself.

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 436–441.

Supplementary Reading:

Annas, J., *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*.

Strauss, L., *The City and Man*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How would you defend democracy against the charges brought against it by Plato?
2. Are you in favor of censorship? Why or why not? Compare you views to those of Plato.

Lecture Sixteen
Final Reflections on Plato

Scope: By focusing on Plato's critique of the Sophists and the Presocratics, these lectures have not only located Plato in his own historical context, but positioned him so that he can enter into the major philosophical debates of today. Two dominant worldviews exist in contemporary thought: the scientific, which is the great legacy of the Presocratics, and the relativistic, whose representatives, often called "postmodernists," are even today descendants of the Sophists.

The Presocratic/scientific and the relativistic/Sophistic worldviews are two extremes. In rejecting both, Plato offers a rich and compelling middle way that is still viable.

Outline

I. Plato is as relevant today as ever.

II. This is because the descendants of his two great opponents, the Presocratics and the Sophists, are alive and well.

- **A.** Today's Presocratics are the scientists.
- **B.** In thinking about the meaning of human life, evolutionary biology and neuroscience, the study of the brain, are dominant.
  - **1.** Plato would criticize both.
  - **2.** Neither can provide a sufficient account of the value-laden nature of human experience.
  - **3.** Neuroscience tries to reduce a human being to a material entity, the brain.
- **C.** Today's Sophists are now called "postmodernists."
  - **1.** Postmodernists deny that anything in the world is really stable.
  - **2.** They think human language is subject to endless interpretation.
  - **3.** They affirm rhetoric over philosophy.
  - **4.** Two contemporary Sophists are Stanley Fish and Richard Rorty.

III. Plato never conclusively defeated the Sophists.

- **A.** To do so, he would have had to prove the existence of the Forms and explain how they make possible the world of particulars, and this he never did.
- **B.** Nonetheless, Plato continually opposed the Sophists. For him, the fight against relativism never is completely won, but always should be fought.

IV. The opposition between Platonism and Sophistry is a perennial one.

- **A.** The Platonist and the Sophist hold radically different views on the most fundamental issues.
- **B.** Their views determine what each considers to be meaningful discourse.
  1. For the Sophist, there is no independent Truth. Therefore, disagreements between opposing positions can never be independently adjudicated. As a result, philosophical debate about fundamental issues is meaningless.
  2. For the Sophist, what counts is not the Truth, but who wins the argument.
  3. For the Platonist, by contrast, there is an independent Truth; therefore, it is always worthwhile to engage in philosophical debate.
  4. What counts for the Platonist is not who wins an argument, but which position *should* win.
- **C.** The Sophist and the Platonist seem to be playing different games determined by different sets of rules.
  1. The Platonist repeatedly invites the Sophist to enter into philosophical debate.
  2. But for the Sophist, to enter into the debate is to agree to play by Plato's rules and, thereby, to grant him victory already.
  3. The best strategy for the Sophist, therefore, is to refuse to play the philosopher's game.
  4. The whole pursuit of philosophical dialogue is thus placed in doubt. Simply put, Platonic philosophy can't be argued without begging the question.
  5. A philosophical argument used to prove that one should philosophically argue "begs the question." A seemingly neutral invitation to debate contains a key assumption.

6. This is why Platonism cannot conclusively defeat the Sophists.
7. Cleitophon in Book I of the *Republic* illustrates this principle and shows that Plato was acutely aware of it.

V. Plato never proved that the Presocratics were wrong.

A. He never conclusively proved that there was more to reality than material things.

B. As in the battle against the Sophists, the disagreement between Plato and the materialists is fundamental.

VI. Instead of resolving issues, Plato's greatest legacy is articulating the basic philosophical questions and inviting his readers to participate in the ensuing conversation. The dialogue, for Plato, is perennial. The dialogue itself is the final answer.

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 274–275.

Supplementary Reading:

Fish, S., *Doing What Comes Naturally*, pp. 471–502.

Roochnik, D., *The Tragedy of Reason*, pp. 140–154.

Rorty, R., *Consequences of Pragmatism*, pp. xiii–xxi.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you agree that the debate between the Platonist and the relativist is fundamental? Do you agree that it cannot be resolved, yet must always be revisited?
2. Do you think that the human mind can be equated to the human brain? Why or why not? Compare your reasoning to that of Plato.

Lecture Seventeen
Aristotle—"The" Philosopher

Scope: This lecture sketches the few facts we have about Aristotle's life, the most important of which is that he studied with Plato for twenty years. Aristotle's influence on Western civilization was monumental. He was so dominant that in the Middle Ages he was simply called "the philosopher." He was the first thinker to divide intellectual inquiry into distinct subjects. Most of the basic disciplines found in a modern university—biology, psychology, political science, ethics, physics, metaphysics—were originally devised by Aristotle. Unlike Plato, Aristotle presented systematic answers to the questions asked in each of these fields. He was a purely "theoretical" thinker. The Greek word theoria means "looking at" and is the origin of "theory." This lecture will examine some general characteristics of Aristotelian theory and begin to discuss in what way it is both similar to a modern conception of science and fundamentally different from it.

Outline

I. Aristotle (384–322) was the son of the court physician of Macedonia, from whom he probably inherited his love of biology.

- **A.** At the age of seventeen, he entered Plato's school in Athens, the Academy. He studied there until Plato's death in 348.
- **B.** In 343–342, Philip of Macedonia invited him to tutor his son Alexander (the "Great").
- **C.** Aristotle returned to Athens in 335 and founded a school, the Lyceum.
  - **1.** Manuscripts, maps, zoological samples, botanical samples, and political constitutions were all collected in Aristotle's school.
  - **2.** It was probably a kind of research center.
- **D.** In 323, when Alexander died, an anti-Macedonian backlash developed in Athens.
  - **1.** A charge of impiety was brought against Aristotle.
  - **2.** Rather than let the Athenians do to him what they did to Socrates, he left town. He died a year later.

II. Aristotle's interests were extraordinarily wide.

- **A.** He wrote works on logic, ethics, physics, metaphysics, biology, astronomy, meteorology, mathematics, psychology, zoology, rhetoric, aesthetics, and politics.
- **B.** His influence was monumental. In the Middle Ages, he was simply called "the philosopher." His work shaped the development of European universities and, therefore, European civilization itself.

III. Aristotle was a "theoretical" philosopher.

- **A.** *Theoria* literally means "looking at."
  - **1.** In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle says that human beings prefer sight to all of their other senses. "The reason is that sight, more than any of the other senses, gives us knowledge of things."
  - **2.** Sight becomes the basic metaphor for, as well as an essential source of, knowledge.
  - **3.** In a theoretical treatise, the author reports on what he "sees."
  - **4.** Aristotelian theories, unlike Platonic dialogues, are answers to questions.
- **B.** Aristotle's vast corpus is an attempt to see the whole world, from the earth to the sky, as it really is.
- **C.** Aristotle was a great believer in objective, non-relative truth. Like Plato, he opposed the relativism of the Sophists.
- **D.** Aristotle had great confidence in the human ability to know.
  - **1.** He claimed that "all human beings by nature desire to know."
  - **2.** The key phrase, and one of the most important in all of Aristotle's writings, is "by nature."
  - **3.** Human beings are natural. They have an objective nature that is discoverable by reason.
- **E.** Unlike Parmenides, Aristotle had great faith in *doxa*, which means both "appearance" and "opinion."
  - **1.** He valued the "phenomena" (*phainomena*). The way things appear is a fundamental clue to the way things really are.
  - **2.** Aristotle had great confidence in the reliability of the senses. Perception is the ultimate source of knowledge.
  - **3.** He especially valued the *endoxa*, the "reputable opinions" held by all, most, or the wisest of people. If something is believed by most people, then it must be true.

4. Examples can be found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII.1–2, and *De Caelo*, I.3.
5. Aristotle claimed that Parmenides's denial of motion and change is easily refuted by appearances.

F. For Aristotle, human beings are at home in the world.
1. The world is stable and makes sense. It is a "cosmos," a closed and hierarchically ordered whole.
2. All things have their places in the world.
3. The world lets itself be seen by, it shows itself to, the discerning "eye" of the philosopher.

G. Aristotle's theoretical stance to the world is the great ancestor of modern science, but also fundamentally opposed to it.
1. By the seventeenth century, the Aristotelian cosmos had given way to the modern conception of an infinite universe in which everything shares the same components and operates according to the same laws. For the modern philosopher, there was no longer any sense of place or hierarchy. The modern universe is not discoverable by the "naked eye," but by the telescope or the microscope.
2. In the modern universe, neither human beings nor anything else has a natural place.
3. On the one hand, modern science understands far better than Aristotle how things really work. On the other hand, Aristotle understands far better than modern science what it is like to be a human being on earth, seeing the world through the "naked eye."

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 690–692, 808.

Supplementary Reading:

Barnes, J., *Aristotle*.

Lear, J., *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*, pp. 1–15.

Question to Consider:

1. When you think of the word "theory," what do you have in mind? Compare your idea to the description of Aristotelian *theoria* offered in this lecture.

Lecture Eighteen
Aristotle's *Physics*—What Is Nature?

Scope: This lecture introduces Aristotle's *Physics*, his study (or theory) of nature. In this treatise, he continues the tradition established by the Presocratics: he offers a *logos* of *phusis.* Aristotle appreciates the groundbreaking efforts of his predecessors but believes that they put too much emphasis on material elements, such as water (Thales) or air (Anaximenes). As a student of Plato, Aristotle insists that "form" must play a crucial role in the constitution of natural beings. His general view is called "hylomorphism," a doctrine in which both matter (*hulê*) and form (*morphê*) play an essential role. Aristotle's forms differ from the Platonic "Form of Beauty" or the "Idea of the Good." Instead of being separate from particular instances, Aristotelian forms are "in" natural beings.

Though they disagreed about much, Plato and Aristotle were allies against the relativism of the Sophists. For the Sophists, forms were not natural at all. Human beings made them up.

Outline

I. Aristotle defines a natural being as that which has "within itself a principle [*arch*ê] of motion and rest." By contrast, a table has its principle of motion outside of itself. A human being made the table.

- **A.** A natural being, such as a species of fish, would exist even if human beings didn't.
- **B.** The primary instances of natural beings are animals, plants, and the simple bodies, such as earth, fire, air, and water.

II. There is no proof that nature exists.

- **A.** It is, instead, "evident."
- **B.** To deny that nature exists is to argue only for the sake of argument.

III. Many Presocratics, Thales for example, believed that matter was the basic ingredient of nature.

A. On this account, what is natural about a human being is flesh, bone, and water, that is, the material constituents. For Democritus, nature is composed of atoms.

B. These thinkers were not entirely wrong, because one way we speak of nature is indeed by identifying the matter of each thing.

IV. Another way of speaking about nature, which the Presocratics ignored, is in terms of its shape or form.

A. For example, the nature of a bed is not its wood.

1. Wood (matter) is only potentially a bed.

2. An actual bed has the form of a bed.

B. In fact, "the form is the nature more than the matter is" (*Physics*, II.1).

1. Aristotle takes his bearings from the phenomena.

2. The natural world shows itself to us through the appearance of distinct and determinate substances.

3. A substance becomes visible by having a form. The Greek word *eidos*, "form," has its root in a verb for seeing.

C. The distinction between actuality and potentiality is parallel to that between form and matter and is crucial to Aristotle's physics and metaphysics.

1. His definition of motion depends on the distinction.

2. Motion, which is a central topic in the *Physics*, is defined as actualization of potentiality.

3. Actuality is more basic, more fundamental than potentiality. The natural world is intelligible because of the presence of actual substances that are visible to human intelligence.

V. Democritus, for example considers the difference between a human being and a dog to be purely quantitative. Aristotle, a believer in heterogeneity, disagrees. Aristotle sees the natural world as organized into forms.

A. The Greek word for form, *eidos*, is also translated as "species."

B. The biological world is divided into species and genera.

1. The world is naturally organized.

2. Species are permanent features of the world.

C. Aristotle's *Physics*, then, is meant to preserve heterogeneity of phenomena.

D. From an atomic point of view (Democritus or modern physics), on the other hand, all phenomena are made of the same stuff.

VI. Aristotle learned the crucial lesson of Form from Plato.

A. For Plato, Forms are (mainly) of values. For example, the Form of Beauty and the Idea of the Good.

B. A Platonic Form is a universal in which individual instances (this beautiful painting) participate.

C. For Aristotle, a natural being has both form and matter in it. This is Aristotle's "hylomorphism," a view that combines matter (*hulê*) with form (*morphê*). (*Morphê* is here synonymous with *eidos*.)

D. Aristotelian forms are expressed with nouns; Plato's, with adjectives.

E. For Aristotle, form and matter are not separated in reality. A man is composed of matter (flesh, bone, and so on) and a form, being a specific kind of animal, that is, a man.

VII. Even if they disagreed about much on the issue of forms, Plato and Aristotle were allies in the battle against the relativism of the Sophists. For the Sophists, form is not natural at all. It is "made up" by human beings.

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 634–637.

Supplementary Reading:

Lear, J., *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*, pp. 15–43.

Questions to Consider:

1. To understand Aristotle, it is vital to understand his concept of form. See if you can summarize his argument in *Physics* II.1 (pp. 634–637).

2. Darwin, of course, seems superior to Aristotle. We believe that species are evolving rather than permanent. Does this mean that Aristotle was entirely wrong?

Lecture Nineteen
Aristotle's *Physics*—The Four Causes

Scope: This lecture introduces the student to Aristotle's doctrine of the four causes: the efficient, the material, the formal, and the final. The first two causes show in what ways Aristotle continued the tradition of the Presocratics. The third and fourth reveal his debt to Plato.

Aristotle's final cause implies that natural beings, not just humans, have purposes. This is Aristotle's "teleological" conception of nature and is essential to understanding his view of the world. Aristotle's teleology was vigorously rejected by the modern scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. This lecture looks briefly at the modern attack on Aristotle and argues that, in fact, teleology can still be defended.

Outline

I. To fully (scientifically) understand a natural being, one must be able to answer four questions:

- **A.** Of what is it constituted? For example, the bowl is made from bronze. Bronze is the material cause.
- **B.** What moves it? For example, the movement of my fingers causes the keys on the computer to move. This is the efficient cause.
- **C.** What is it? For example, I am a human being. This is the formal cause.
- **D.** What is its purpose (*telos*)? Health, for example, is the purpose of exercising. This is the final cause.
- **E.** These four terms—material, efficient, formal, final—were imposed on Aristotle's work by later Scholastic philosophers.

II. Aristotle shares with the Presocratics (as well as modern physicists) a concern with material and efficient causes.

- **A.** Thales's identification of water as the origin of the universe was, says Aristotle, a search for the material cause.
- **B.** Anaxagoras's "mind" is like an efficient cause. It started the rotation of the universe.

III. Aristotle broke with the Presocratics in his formal and final causes.

- **A.** The formal cause he got from Plato.
- **B.** The final cause is most distinctively Aristotelian.
  1. Aristotle has a teleological view of nature.
  2. This means that natural entities, not just human beings, have purposes.
  3. Teeth are for the sake of chewing. Plants grow leaves for the sake of the fruit.
  4. Aristotle stated, "Nature does nothing pointlessly."

IV. The modern criticism of Aristotelian teleology.

- **A.** Spinoza (1632–1677) is representative.
  1. Human beings, Spinoza argues, do things purposively, that is, with an end in view.
  2. Human beings are ignorant of the real causes at work in the physical world.
  3. Therefore, humans project purposes onto nature when, in fact, nature has no fixed aim in view.
  4. Therefore, all final causes are merely human fabrications. They are "superstitions."
  5. All things in nature proceed from necessity.
  6. The purpose of modern science is to discover laws that govern natural motion.
- **B.** To summarize**,** modern physics is quantitative. Its language is mathematics. Aristotelian physics is qualitative. It uses "ordinary" language.

V. How can Aristotelian teleology be defended?

- **A.** Aristotle considered (and rejected) the modern view that natural beings do not act purposively but are determined by necessity.
  1. In the determinist view, the fact that the front teeth are useful for chewing is really just an accident that happened to enhance the prospects for survival of the animal with teeth.
  2. Aristotle had some inkling of what Darwin would later say.
- **B.** Aristotle rejected the modern view. Teeth and other natural entities "come to be as they do either always or usually," and this idea wouldn't be true if they were the result of chance and natural necessity.

1. On the one hand, Aristotle was deeply wrong from a modern perspective.
2. Still, his teleological view of the world corresponds to human, earth-bound, "naked-eye" experience of the world.
3. Spinoza himself grants this: He states that human beings tend "by nature" to hold a teleological view. For him, this means that human beings are naturally prone to error.
4. The primary purpose of Aristotelian *theoria* is to articulate human experience.
5. We experience the world teleologically, and Aristotle has enormous faith in phenomena.

VI. In the 1930s, Edmund Husserl wrote a book titled *The Crisis of European Sciences*.

A. In it, he argued that modern science, which is essentially mathematical in character, is fundamentally limited.
1. Although modern science is fantastic at understanding how things work and how they move, it cannot explain how human beings experience the world.
2. Although modern science can explain how things work, it cannot explain what things mean.

B. Husserl was the founder of "phenomenology," a philosophical movement that attempted to explain the "phenomena," the "appearances," the human experience of a meaningful world.
1. The word "phenomena" is Greek in origin and vitally important to Aristotle.
2. Indeed, Aristotle was the first great phenomenologist.

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 639–641, 647–650.

Supplementary Reading:

Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, pp. 269–296.

Nussbaum, *Aristotle's De Motu Animalium*, pp. 59–100.

Spinoza, B., *Ethics*, Appendix to Part I.

Question to Consider:

1. Spinoza represents the modern attack on Aristotelian teleology. Do you find yourself to be sympathetic with him or not? Compare your reasoning to that of Aristotle.

Lecture Twenty
Why Plants Have Souls

Scope: This lecture synthesizes the previous ones by focusing on one particular Aristotelian idea: plants have souls. This sounds preposterous to modern ears. However, Aristotle's conception of soul (*psychê*) is so radically different from what we associate with the word that, in fact, his position can be philosophically defended.

We will discuss passages from Book II of Aristotle's *De Anima* (*On the Soul*), paying particular attention to his analysis of nutrition, an activity in which plants participate. Doing so will help to clarify the basic Aristotelian themes articulated so far: nature, form, matter, actuality, potentiality, and purpose.

Outline

I. Aristotle believes that plants have a soul (*psychê*).

- **A.** This idea sounds preposterous to modern ears. It sounds as if Aristotle is a primitive "animist."
- **B.** By discussing some crucial passages from *De Anima*, Book II, this lecture will explain Aristotle's conception of the soul and show why his view is philosophically interesting.

II. Aristotle defines soul as "the form of a natural body that is potentially alive" (II.1).

- **A.** Recall that form is equated with actuality and matter, with potentiality.
- **B.** Therefore, the soul is also defined as the actuality of a body that potentially is alive.
- **C.** Using this definition, Aristotle does not have a problem explaining how body and soul are united.
- **D.** Consider this statement: "If the eye were an animal, sight would be its soul" (II.1).
  - **1.** The eye is a material thing.
  - **2.** When an animal dies, the eye can be removed.
  - **3.** The removed, dead eye is an eye only in name.
  - **4.** A real, living eye is an eye that is busy seeing.

5. Even an eye of someone asleep can see.
6. Sight is like the soul of the eye.
7. The soul, for Aristotle, is the actuality, the activity, of the living body. Soul is the principle of life. It is not a substantial or separate entity in itself.

E. When a natural being is alive, its matter is organized and all of its parts are at work. It has a form. This is its soul.

III. Plants have souls.

A. Plants nourish and reproduce themselves. This is their "nutritive soul," which is possessed not only by plants, but by all animals, as well.

B. In *De Anima*, II.iv, Aristotle explains nutrition.

C. Nutrition has three components:
1. That which is nourished, the body.
2. That by which the body is nourished, the food.
3. That which actually nourishes, the nutritive soul.

D. Nutrition works in the following way:
1. Before it is nourished, the food is actually different from the body, but potentially the same.
2. After is it nourished, the food becomes actually the same as the body.
3. The activity of nutrition is precisely this process of the potentially different becoming actually the same.
4. This process itself, and not some sort of substantial entity, is what Aristotle calls the nutritive soul.

IV. In nutrition, material stuff, for example the nutrients in the soil, become assimilated to the living organism, the plant.

A. By being nourished, the plant grows. The plant gets materially bigger, but always maintains its form.
1. Form is what the plant is.
2. Because it has a form (a formal cause), the growing plant also has a purpose (a *telos*, a final cause).
3. The purpose of a plant is to become healthy and mature.
4. The growing, organic, living being is the best example of Aristotle's teleological conception of nature.

B. In *De Anima*, Aristotle explains perception. It is analogous to nutrition. When we perceive something, it becomes like us. This implies that we can accurately perceive objects as they really are.

V. Two additional points need to be made:

A. For Aristotle, a hierarchy of living beings exists. Animals are, for example, higher than plants. A fully developed oak tree, which has reached its *telos*, is superior to an underdeveloped oak tree.

B. This hierarchy permits Aristotle to make objective value judgments about any constituents of the hierarchy.

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 745–753.

Supplementary Reading:

Kass, L., *The Hungry Soul*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Can you explain the differences between the Aristotelian conception of "soul" and the Judeo-Christian conception of an "immortal soul"?
2. Is Aristotle's account of nutrition compatible with a contemporary physiological account?

Lecture Twenty-One
Aristotle's Hierarchical Cosmos

Scope: Aristotle conceives of a cosmos, a hierarchically ordered world in which things have their places. The heavens are, quite literally, above the earth. They are higher, better, more perfect than things that are below the moon (sublunar). The motion of the fixed stars is perfect and eternal; it is circular. On earth, animals are higher (more complex, more worthy) than plants, and some animals are higher than others. Human being is the highest animal of all. The highest being of all is God, the unmoved mover of the entire world. God is pure actuality and contains no matter. God is pure thought.

Religious thinkers, such as Thomas Aquinas, borrowed heavily from Aristotle's arguments to prove the existence of God. This lecture examines the ways in which Aristotle's God is different from the one found in the monotheistic tradition.

Outline

I. Aristotle has a view of an orderly cosmos, a world in which all things have their proper places.

- **A.** The earth is at the center of the world.
- **B.** Beyond the earth and its atmosphere come the moon, the sun, the planets, and the fixed stars.

II. The basic ingredients of the world below the moon (sublunar) are earth, air, fire, water.

- **A.** Each has its natural place.
  - **1.** Fire, if left to itself, will move upward.
  - **2.** Earth, if left to itself, will move down.
- **B.** The heavenly bodies were made of a fifth element, a quintessence.

III. Aristotle was most interested in living beings.

- **A.** Living beings are also ordered hierarchically.
  - **1.** Plants are lower than animals, because they are less complex and have less worth.
  - **2.** Some animals are higher than others for the same reason.

3. Human being is the highest animal. It is the only animal with *logos*.

B. Human beings are suspended between two extremes—between the animals and God.

IV. In the *Physics*, Aristotle argues that there must be a highest being.

A. He argues that if there is movement in the world, there must be an original source of that movement.

1. Movement is eternal. And, for Aristotle, time is eternal.
2. Therefore, the original source of that movement must be eternal.
3. The original source of movement cannot itself be moved. If it were moving, it, too, would require a cause to move it.
4. There is one, primary, unmoved mover.

B. Movement is defined as the actualization of a potentiality.

1. Actuality is higher than potentiality.
2. Because the unmoved mover is the permanent source of all movement, it is pure actuality.
3. All sublunar beings are composite: they contain matter and form.
4. The unmoved mover contains no matter.
5. The unmoved mover is the best thing in the world. As such, it is the final cause.

C. In the *Metaphysics*, the unmoved mover is described as God.

V. Aristotle's arguments were borrowed by religious philosophers, such as Thomas Aquinas, to prove the existence of God.

A. But Aristotle's God is not like the God of the Jews, Christians, or Muslims.

B. Aristotle's God has no moral virtues. It is not generous or loving or just.

1. To be moral implies some sort of lack.
2. To be courageous, one must fear something.
3. To be self-controlled, one must have a bad desire.
4. God lacks nothing. Hence, God cannot be moral.

C. Aristotle's God is pure thinking, which is the highest activity, and it thinks only itself.

VI. Aristotle's views on these matters have been debated for centuries. The key point is that they give testimony to his conviction that the world is an intelligible cosmos. By having a first principle, an unmoved mover, it ultimately makes sense.

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 657–658, 671–673, 736–740, 816–819.

Supplementary Reading:

Barnes, J., *Aristotle.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Aristotle believes that fire has a natural place to which, if left on its own, it will move: upward to the heavens. By the standards of modern physics, this idea is dead wrong. Nevertheless, is there anything of value that is worth preserving in Aristotle's notion of natural place?
2. What are the differences and similarities between the Jewish-Christian-Muslim God and Aristotle's God?

Lecture Twenty-Two
Aristotle's Teleological *Politics*

Scope: Aristotle's teleological conception of the world is not confined to physical objects. It can be applied to his view of politics, as well. In particular, he argues that human being is by nature a "political animal." According to Aristotle, human beings naturally form communities. The first is between man and woman, and it is for the purpose of reproduction. The second is between master and slave, and its purpose is to enhance the household. From a group of households comes a village, and from a cluster of villages comes the city (*polis*). Although all communities are for the sake of human survival, only the city is "for the sake of living well." The city is, thus, the *telos* of human organization.

Aristotle's ideas about politics are shocking. Who today thinks that the purpose of marriage is simply to reproduce the species or that slavery could possibly be just? This lecture will examine these controversial ideas in some detail.

Outline

I. Aristotle's conception of the city (*polis*) is based on his teleological view of the world.

- **A.** Human beings form all sorts of communities: households, villages, and so on.
- **B.** Every community has its specific purpose.
- **C.** The city is the highest human community. Its purpose is to allow citizens to lead a good life.
- **D.** Human being is "by nature a political animal" (*Politics*, I.1).
  - **1.** Living "apolitically" is, therefore, decisively inferior to living politically.
  - **2.** This is a good example of Aristotle's teleology at work.
- **E.** Aristotle's argument:
  - **1.** "Nature does nothing pointlessly" (*Politics*, I.1).
  - **2.** "Human being is the only animal with rational discourse [*logos*]" (*Politics*, I.1).

3. The purpose of rational discourse is to articulate what is good and bad, just and unjust, beneficial and harmful.
4. Therefore, human being is by nature political.

II. To understand the *polis*, one must understand its constituent parts.

A. The first human community is the "household," which itself is composed of two smaller communities.

B. Male and female, the primordial human community, join in order to reproduce.
1. We share this impulse with other animals and plants.
2. The male is superior to the female.

C. Master and slave join together to allow the household to flourish.
1. Aristotle conceives of the master-slave relationship as natural.
2. A (natural) master has "rational foresight."
3. A (natural) slave is weak in reasoning but strong in body.
4. Just as the mind is superior to the body, so too is the master superior to the slave.
5. The master-slave relationship, Aristotle argues, is beneficial to both parties.
6. Aristotle objects to "conventional slavery." Someone who becomes a slave because his or her city has been conquered (that is, a typical Greek slave) is unjustly enslaved. Only natural slaves are justly enslaved.
7. The only natural slave is someone with a significantly inferior intelligence. Such a person is benefited by being told what to do.

III. Aristotle's views are shocking to us today.

A. We expect more from marriage than reproduction of the species. We disagree that men are superior to women.

B. Aristotle's world is essentially heterogeneous. Different beings exist in the world, and each of them occupies a specific "place" in the natural hierarchy.

C. This idea fundamentally clashes with the modern view of an essentially homogenous universe.

D. The great challenge Aristotle presents to modern thinkers is precisely on this issue.
1. Consider the statement "a woman's place is in the home."

2. This notion is offensive to modern ears. For us, all men and women are free and should be able to choose how they want to live in a thoroughly open world.
3. By contrast, for Aristotle, freedom is not the highest value. Instead, it is achieving one's purpose in a closed, teleological world in which natural beings each have a place.

IV. Can Aristotle's teleological politics be defended?

- **A.** On the one hand, the notion that women or anyone else have a "place" is troubling.
- **B.** On the other hand, are we really willing to live in an infinite, homogenous universe in which no one has a place?

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 824–827.

Supplementary Reading:

Lear, J., *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*, pp. 192–208.

Questions to Consider:

1. Aristotle is an "elitist": he thinks that some human beings are naturally superior to others. Do you agree or disagree? Compare your reasoning to his.
2. How does Aristotle's conception of politics depend on his teleological sense of nature?

Lecture Twenty-Three
Aristotle's Teleological Ethics

Scope: Like his *Politics*, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* reflects a teleological view of nature. To illustrate this idea, this lecture will discuss his conception of "happiness." Aristotle's understanding of this word is far different from our own. For him, happiness is "activity according to virtue." It is a kind of work. Happiness is an objective matter. It is not "in the eyes of the beholder." Human beings, like all animals, have a specific nature, a "proper function" or *telos*, which defines their potentialities. Human beings who fully actualize that nature are happy. Those who do not are unhappy (regardless of how they feel about themselves).

This lecture shows how, like Plato, Aristotle opposed the relativism of the Sophists. Quite unlike Plato, for whom only the philosophical life counted as a genuinely happy one, Aristotle understood the variety of ways in which human beings could be happy. Different kinds of human beings can and should do different kinds of work.

Outline

I. Aristotle applies his teleological thinking to human beings in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. He discusses what he calls the "highest good."

II. The highest good for human beings, according to the *Ethics*, is "happiness" (*eudaimonia*).

- **A.** "Happiness" is somewhat misleading as a translation of *eudaimonia.* "Flourishing" perhaps is better.
- **B.** For Aristotle, all human actions have a purpose.
  - **1.** For example, a person exercises to become healthy.
  - **2.** Health is the *telos* of exercising. Exercising is the means to attain the end of health.
  - **3.** Human life is thoroughly teleological.
- **C.** There must be some final purpose. If there weren't, the succession of means and ends, of doing X to attain Y, would go on forever.
  - **1.** If the succession did go on forever, human actions would be futile, and life would be meaningless.

2. But human life, Aristotle argues, is not meaningless.
3. Therefore, there must be an ultimate purpose to human existence. This is the highest good.
4. The highest human good is happiness. We do not desire to be happy to attain some other good. We desire it for itself. It is good in itself.

III. Saying that happiness is the highest good is a platitude. What exactly is it, and how can it be achieved?

A. For this, Aristotle asks, "What is the 'proper function' [*ergon*] of a human being?"

1. The virtue or excellence (*aretê*) of something depends on its "function."
2. The function of a carpenter is to build houses. Knowing this, we can determine whether a given carpenter is excellent or not.
3. The function of the eyes is to see. Knowing this, we can determine whether someone has excellent eyes or not.
4. If the function of human being were known, then we could determine whether a person is excellent or not.

B. The proper function of a human being is rational activity.

1. The human function cannot be the ability to nourish oneself or to procreate. This we share with plants.
2. It cannot be sense perception. This we share with other animals.
3. It must, therefore, be rational activity.

C. Human excellence or virtue is actualization of our potential to be rational.

IV. Happiness can now be defined: it is activity (*energeia*) of the soul according to virtue or excellence.

A. Happiness is a kind of work.

B. We can objectively determine whether an individual is happy or not.

1. This means that an individual can be wrong about evaluating his or her own happiness.
2. Happiness is not "in the eyes of the beholder."

V. Does Aristotle agree with Plato?

- **A.** For Plato, philosophy, the life of thought, is the only genuinely happy life.
- **B.** Aristotle agrees that rational activity is what makes us human.
- **C.** But for Aristotle, there is more than one way to be rational.
  - **1.** There is technical rationality: a carpenter thinks about how to build a house.
  - **2.** There is ethical rationality: a person wonders how best to help a friend in need. The ethical mean is a kind of practical wisdom exercised by someone who is capable of "sizing things up" and figuring out when it is too early and when it is too late to intervene effectively.
- **D.** Because there is more than one kind of rationality, there is more than one kind of happy life.
  - **1.** Aristotle is far more tolerant than Plato of non-philosophers.
  - **2.** For Aristotle, an ordinary, decent, thoughtful human being can be happy.
- **E.** Aristotle has a generous perspective of *logos* and rationality in the *Ethics*. But at book's end, he begins to sound much more like Plato, seemingly to argue, as we shall see next, for a single kind of happiness.

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 764–777.

Supplementary Reading:

Broadie, S., *Ethics with Aristotle*, pp. 3–17.

Nussbaum, M., *The Fragility of Goodness*, pp. 290–312.

Questions to Consider:

1. Aristotle argues that there must be a "highest good." Do you think his argument is valid or not?
2. What is your understanding of the word "happiness," and how does it compare to Aristotle's?

Lecture Twenty-Four
The Philosophical Life

Scope: Aristotle disagrees with Plato. Because he allows for a variety of kinds of rationality, he has a more inclusive and generous conception of human happiness. Finally, however, he does seem to agree with his teacher. The theoretical life, the life spent studying the world, is the best life of all.

What can we learn today from Aristotle's conception of a theoretical life? Although the technological achievements of modern science are extraordinary, they run the risk of blinding us to what it means to be human. Aristotle, with his "naked eye," earth-bound, commonsensical view of experience, keeps us connected to human life as it is actually lived. This valuable lesson is desperately needed in the contemporary world.

Outline

I. Aristotle disagreed with Plato on many subjects.

- **A.** For Plato, Form is separate and universal. For Aristotle, it is "in" particular beings.
- **B.** For Plato, the only good and happy life is the philosophical life spent studying the Forms. For Aristotle, there is more than one way of being rational; therefore, there is more than one way of being happy.
- **C.** For Plato, only a *polis* governed by philosophers would be a good and happy one. Aristotle understands that this goal is unrealistic. For him, a *polis* governed by decent men who put the good of the community above their own self-interest is a good one.
- **D.** Aristotle loved the natural world; Plato did not.

II. However, Aristotle agreed with Plato on some fundamental issues.

- **A.** He joined Plato in opposing the relativism of the Sophists. Both would be appalled by the postmodernists of today.
- **B.** Ultimately, he agreed that, even allowing for the possibility of other decent lives, the theoretical (the philosophical) life is the best.

1. The theoretical life, Aristotle argues in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, is the most self-sufficient. It has the least need for external goods.
2. The theoretical life is the most pleasant.
3. The theoretical life is most like that led by God. By theorizing, we actualize what is most divine in us.
4. Paradoxically, the best human life is that spent trying to be least human.

III. What can we learn from Aristotle's praise of the theoretical life?

- **A.** Recall the meaning of *theoria:* "looking at."
- **B.** Aristotle looks at the world with his naked eye. He has no telescope, no microscope. He does not work in a laboratory.
- **C.** He reports on how the world "looks," not how it works.
- **D.** He offers a human perspective on nature.
- **E.** This perspective is precisely what is missing from modern science and philosophy. It is the very best reason to study the ancient Greeks.

Essential Reading:

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, pp. 813–819.

Supplementary Reading:

Lear, J., *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*.

Question to Consider:

1. Do you feel any dissatisfaction with the modern scientific worldview? If so, is it possible that Aristotle could be of any use to you?

Timeline

B.C.E.

1184	The traditional date of the destruction of Troy.
776	First Olympic games.
750–700	The approximate dates of Homer and Hesiod.
585	Thales predicts a solar eclipse.
531	Pythagoras moves from Samos (in Ionian Greece) to Croton (in Italy).
515	Parmenides born.
508	Cleisthenes enacts basic reforms, which start to move Athens toward a democracy.
500	Heraclitus writes his book but chooses not to publish it.
490	Persians invade Greece. Battle of Marathon. Persians defeated by the Greek alliance.
480	Persians invade Greece again. Athens sacked. Persians finally defeated at Salamis.
478	With Athens as its leader, the Delian League, an alliance of Greek city-states, is founded to protect against Persia.
469	Birth of Socrates.
444	Protagoras draws up a code of laws for the Athenian colony of Thurii.
431	Beginning of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta.

429	Death of Pericles, great leader of democratic Athens. Birth of Plato.
423	Performance of Aristophanes's *Clouds*, a play that ridicules Socrates.
404	Peloponnesian War ends with the defeat of Athens. Democracy in Athens is overthrown by the "thirty tyrants."
403	Restoration of the democracy in Athens.
399	Execution of Socrates.
385	Approximate date of the founding of Plato's Academy in Athens.
367–347	Aristotle studies at Plato's Academy.
356	Birth of Alexander the Great.
348	Death of Plato.
343–342	Aristotle tutors Alexander the Great.
335	Aristotle establishes his school, the Lyceum.
323	Death of Alexander the Great.
322	Death of Aristotle.

Glossary

agora: "marketplace." The "central square" of ancient Athens, where Socrates used to spend his time having conversations. Root of "agorophobic."

aporia: "impasse, perplexity, confusion." Socrates was famous for experiencing this himself and causing others with whom he conversed to experience it.

archê: "first-principle, origin, source, beginning." Root of "archaic" and "archaeology."

aretê: "virtue, excellence." Key to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics.*

atomos: "uncuttable." Root of "atom." Key to Democritus's atomistic philosophy.

Chaos: "the abyss, gap, emptiness." Where Hesiod says the world originated.

demos: "the people." Root of "democracy," which means "rule by the people." Plato criticized it in the *Republic.*

dialegesthai: "to converse." The root of our words "dialogue" and "dialectical." The latter means "like a conversation." Made famous by Plato's dialogues.

doxa: "opinion, appearance, the way things seem." Parmenides denigrates it; Aristotle values it as a way of understanding the truth about the world. Root of our words "orthodox" (having the correct opinion) and "heterodox" (having different opinions).

eidos: "form." Plato made the word famous with his concept of "the Form of Beauty, Goodness, and so on." Aristotle inherited it from Plato and made it basic to his *Physics.*

Elenchus: "refutation." Socrates was famous for this. He could refute his opponents and reduce them to *aporia*.

energeia: "activity, actualization." Aristotle defines *eudaimonia* as a kind of *energeia*, a kind of activity, or proper work. Related to our word "energy."

ergon: "function." Key to Aristotle's definition of happiness. By identifying the "function" of a human being, he is able to define *arete* and *eudaimonia.* Related to "energy."

eudaimonia: "happiness." For Aristotle, this is the highest good, the ultimate end of human desire.

hulê: "matter." Root of "hylomorphism," the Aristotelian doctrine that beings are composed of form and matter.

idea: "idea, form." For Plato, synonymous with *eidos*, "form."

kosmos: "orderly whole." Key to Aristotle's conception of nature, which is hierarchically arranged and in which all natural beings have a purpose and a place.

logos: "speech, rationality, reason, rational account." The basic tool of the philosopher. Found as the suffix in such words as "psychology" (a rational account of the soul).

morphê: "shape, form." Root of "isomorphic" (of the same shape) and "hylomorphism," the Aristotelian doctrine that beings are composed of form and matter.

Muse: "the divine beings responsible for poetic inspiration." Daughters of Zeus and Menmosyne (whose name means "Memory"). Cited by Hesiod at the beginning of the *Theogony.*

muthos: "myth, story." The form of expression of those poets, principally Homer and Hesiod, who preceded Presocratic philosophy.

nomos: "custom, convention, law." Root of "autonomy," which means self-governance, or the ability to give oneself a law.

philia: "love, friendship." Found as a suffix in such words as "bibliophile" (lover of books) and "philosophy" (love of wisdom [*sophia*]).

phusiologos: "one who offers a rational explanation, a *logos*, of nature, of *phusis.*" A general description of many of the Presocratics (such as Thales).

phusis: "nature." The root of our word "physics."

polis: "city-state." Origin of "politics." The focus of Aristotle's inquiry in *The Politics.*

psychê: "soul." The root of "psychology."

sophia: “wisdom.” What the philosopher, the lover of wisdom, seeks.

telos: “end, purpose, goal.” The root of our word “teleology.” Key to Aristotle’s understanding of nature: natural beings have purposes.

theoria: “study, contemplation, looking at.” Root of “theory.” The basic intellectual activity in Aristotle’s thought.

to apeiron: “the indeterminate, the unlimited, the indefinite, the infinite.” The name of a well-known computer game that has no way of ever being won or completed.

Biographical Notes

Alexander of Macedonia ("the Great"; 356–323). Aristotle was his tutor. Became king in 336. Conquered much of Asia.

Anaxagoras (500–429; Claxomenae). First philosopher to reside in Athens.

Anaximander (610–546; Miletus). He held that the origin of all things was the "indeterminate." Made great advances in astronomy by charting the paths of the sun and moon as circles.

Anaximenes (? 546; Miletus). Younger than, and possibly a student of, Anaximander. Held that the origin of all things was air.

Aristotle (384–322). Born at Stagirus, son of the court physician of Macedonia. At the age of seventeen, entered Plato's school in Athens, where he studied for twenty years. In 343–342, Philip of Macedonia invited him to tutor Alexander the Great. In 335, he returned to Athens, where he founded his own school.

Democritus (Born ? 460; Adbera). Devised an atomistic view of the world.

Empedocles (493–433; Sicily). Held to the doctrine of four elements and two forces that make up the world.

Gorgias (483–376; Leontini). With Protagoras, one of the first great Sophists.

Heraclitus (? 540–480; Ephesus). Known as "the obscure," the great philosopher of Becoming.

Hesiod (approximately 700; Boeotia). Author of *The Theogony*, the Greek myth about the origin of the world.

Hippias (485–415; Elis). A prominent early Sophist.

Homer (approximately 700). The greatest of the Greek poets; author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Parmenides (? 515–535; Elea). The first great philosopher of "Being." A pure rationalist.

Pericles (495–427; Athens). The great leader of democratic Athens in the fifth century.

Philolaus (? 470; Croton). Wrote the first published works articulating the Pythagorean notion that the world was an orderly whole constituted by numbers.

Plato (429–348; Athens). The great philosopher who immortalized Socrates in his dialogues.

Prodicus (470–400; Ceos). A Sophist who was famous for his ability in word play.

Protagoras (485–415; Abdera). The first great Sophist. Traveled to Athens and associated with Pericles.

Pythagoras (? 570–495; Samos). Founded a school. Nothing is known of his actual work, but he seemed to believe that the world was orderly and somehow was constructed from numbers.

Socrates (469–399; Athens). The first philosopher to ask "what is it?" questions about ethical and political values (e.g., what is justice?). Had no positive teaching but was excellent at refuting others. Executed for corrupting the young and introducing new gods into Athens.

Thales (? 585; Miletus). Predicted solar eclipse in 585. Considered to be one of the legendary "Seven Sages" of ancient Greece. According to Aristotle, the first philosopher.

Thrasymachus (430–400; Chalcedon). Sophist who emphasized the role of emotions in persuasion. Refuted by Socrates in Book I of Plato's *Republic.*

Xenophanes (? 570–480; Colophon). The first monotheist.

Bibliography

Essential Reading:

Cohen, S., Curd, P., Reeve, C. *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy.* Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000. A comprehensive collection of philosophical texts. There are dozens of translations of everything we have read in this course, but all citations used have come from this collection.

Supplementary Reading:

Ahrensdorf, Peter. *The Death of Socrates and the Life of Philosophy.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995. A reading of the *Phaedo* that argues that the dialogue's main purpose is not to prove the immortality of the soul, but to reveal the nature of philosophy itself.

Annas, Julia. *An Introduction to Plato's Republic.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982. A judicious and entirely sensible introduction to Plato's masterpiece.

Barnes, Jonathan. *Aristotle.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982. An excellent, very short introduction to Aristotle.

Benson, Hugh. *Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. A collection of essays by a wide variety of authors on Socrates.

Bloom, Allan. *Plato's Republic.* New York: Basic Books, 1991. The most literal translation of the *Republic* available in English. Even though it sometimes sounds awkward, this is a masterpiece of consistency. It also contains an excellent interpretive essay on the dialogue.

Broadie, Sarah. *Ethics with Aristotle.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. A well-known and comprehensive commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics.*

Burkert, Walter. *Lore and Science in Ancient Greek Pythagoreanism.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972. A monumental study of the Pythagoreans.

Burnyeat, Myles. *The Theaetetus of Plato.* Indianapolis: Hackett, 1990. A complete translation of this important dialogue, as well as a comprehensive commentary written by one of the great British *Theaetetus* scholars of the twentieth century.

Cornford, Francis. *From Religion to Philosophy.* New York: Harper, 1957. A well-known and often-cited treatment of the relationship between early Greek myth-makers and the first philosophers.

Fish, Stanley. *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies.* Durham, NC: 1989. Fish is an excellent spokesman for contemporary "postmodernism." His chapter titled "Rhetoric" is superb at showing the links between postmodernism and Greek Sophistry.

Gallop, David. *Plato's Phaedo.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980. A sensible, comprehensive commentary on Plato's dialogue the *Phaedo.*

Gordon, Jill. *Turning toward Philosophy: Literary Device and Dramatic Structure in Plato's Dialogues.* University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1999. A good introduction to Plato that emphasizes the role that the dialogue form plays in his thinking.

Griswold, Charles. *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings.* New York: Routledge, 1988. A collection of essays that take up the issue of how to interpret Plato's use of the dialogue form in his writings.

Guthrie, W. *The Sophists.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971. A well-known interpretation of the major Sophists.

Hammond, N., and Scullard, H., eds. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970. A basic reference work that contains comprehensive information about the ancient world.

Howland, Jacob. *The Republic: The Odyssey of Philosophy.* New York: Twayne, 1993. An introduction to the *Republic* that argues for the similarity between it and Homer's *Odyssey*.

Husserl, Edmund. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology.* Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999. A statement by the great phenomenologist of his profound dissatisfaction with modern science. In many ways, Husserlian phenomenology is similar to Aristotle's work.

Hyland, Drew. *The Origins of Philosophy.* New York: Putnam, 1973. An excellent introduction to Presocratic philosophy.

Jaeger, Werner. *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964. A study of the theology of the Presocratics. Particularly useful on Xenophanes.

Kahn, Charles. *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979. A comprehensive interpretation of Heraclitus that has become a standard in the field.

Kass, Leon. *The Hungry Soul.* New York: Free Press, 1994. A thoroughly Aristotelian account of nutrition.

Kerferd, G. B. *The Sophistic Movement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. A theoretical overview of the basic ideas held by the Sophists.

Kirk, G., Raven, J., Schofield, M. *The Presocratic Philosophers.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. The standard reference work on Presocratic philosophy. Comprehensive textual material and extensive commentaries.

Klein, Jacob. *A Commentary on Plato's Meno.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1965. A fascinating interpretation of the *Meno.*

Lear, Jonathan. *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. A superb in-depth introduction to Aristotle's thought. Should be read in conjunction with the lectures of this course.

Monoson, S. Sara. *Plato's Democratic Entanglements.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. Argues for the heterodox notion that far from being an enemy of democracy, Plato was actually an ambivalent supporter of it.

Mourelatos, Alexander. *The Presocratics.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993. An overview of the Presocratics edited by one of the best contemporary scholars in the field.

Nehamas, Alexander. *Virtues of Authenticity.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. A collection of essays by one of the leading Plato scholars writing in English.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks.* Chicago: Regnery, 1962. A highly imaginative interpretation of the Presocratics by one of the most influential of all recent philosophers. Especially interesting on Heraclitus and Parmenides.

Nussbaum, Martha. *Aristotle's De Motu Animalium.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985. Contains a superb essay on Aristotle's teleology, "Aristotle on Teleological Explanation."

———. *The Fragility of Goodness.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. Contains a comprehensive argument that concludes that Aristotle is superior, in several senses, to Plato.

Roochnik, David. *The Tragedy of Reason.* New York: Routledge, 1990. An exploration of (among other issues) Plato's understanding of the conflict between philosophy and Sophistry.

Rorty, Amelie. *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980. A good collection of essays by numerous well-known scholars.

Rorty, Richard. *Consequences of Pragmatism.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982. A book that, perhaps more than any other, exemplifies the way in which contemporary philosophical thought is quite similar to that of the Sophists.

Schiappa, Edward. *Protagoras and Logos: A Study in Greek Philosophy and Rhetoric.* Columbia, SC: 1991. A defense of Protagoras, as well as an overview of basic Sophistic doctrines.

Spinoza, Baruch. *Ethics.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. The "Appendix" to Part I contains a critique of teleology that is highly representative of the modern attack on Aristotelian science.

Sprague, Rosamond. *The Older Sophists.* Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1972. A standard reference work that contains translations of all the surviving fragments of the fifth-century Sophists.

Stone, I. F. *The Trial of Socrates.* Boston: Little, Brown, 1988. A historical account of the trial and execution of Socrates by one of America's great independent journalists. (Stone taught himself Greek when he was well over sixty.) Highly speculative, but very interesting nonetheless.

Strauss, Leo. *The City and Man.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964. Three essays on classical Greek political philosophy. The one on Plato provides a fascinating introduction to the idea of Platonic "irony."

Versenyi, Laszlo. *Socratic Humanism.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963. A superb book that contrasts the humanism of Protagoras and Socrates.

Vickers, Brian. *In Defense of Rhetoric.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. A comprehensive history of rhetoric, as well as a defense of the Sophists.

Vlastos, Gregory. *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991. The last major work by the most famous Plato scholar of the twentieth century.