

Scholars have studied Plato's many dialogues very carefully. Many of them agree that the dialogues were written over many years and that they appear to have a slightly different tone, which reflects Plato's intention in writing them. Indeed, scholars who find in them a progression of ideas set the dialogues in a temporal order. Plato works from those ideas and methodology he inherits from Socrates and then devises his own unique set of ideas and further develops the dialectical method of reasoning, which he learned from Socrates.

Below is a breakdown of the Dialogues into five different categories or periods. In each group are those dialogues that appear to have been written with intent different from that of the other periods. In this course we shall see the progression throughout the first three periods.

Chronological Listing of Plato's Dialogues

Plato's basic problems and periods of philosophical development together with dialogues indicative of such. (The links are to translations by Benjamin Jowett.)

- I. The defense of Socrates from the charges of impiety and corruption of youth.**
- II. The defense of Socrates from the charge of being a Sophist and having an Amoral character.**

In these dialogues there is an attack against the Sophists.

- III. The need to synthesize a comprehensive view of reality and to deal with the problem of contradictory speculative theories circulating at the time. Plato is synthesizing all of Greek thought up to the time.**
- IV. The need to develop in a critical fashion such a conceptual framework that would be capable of enunciating all the distinctions one must make in describing reality and yet capable of eliciting the meanings one must have. Plato develops a single coherent worldview.**
- V. The need to give a detailed elaboration of practical proposals as tests for theories.**

Note: There exist a number of spurious dialogues and dialogues whose authenticity is questioned by many serious scholars.

The above is based on Robert S. Brumbaugh, **Plato and the Modern Age.** New York:
Crowell Collier Press, 1962