

The History of Philosophy:
An Exploration of the Evolution of Our Views on the Human Condition

Introduction and Exploratory Questions

As society progressed, did our views change? Did our priorities and struggles? What themes persisted?

Exploratory Data Analysis

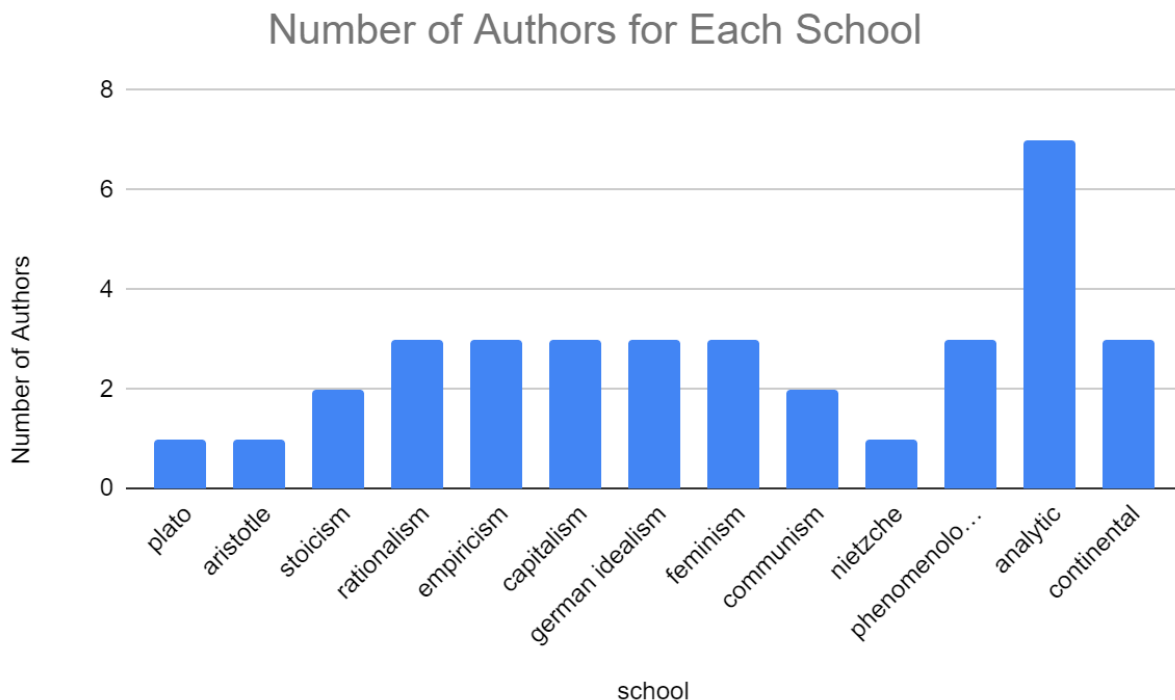
(please refer to the EDA file under the lib folder for code that produced some of the findings below)

Basic Information About the Schools

The schools' timelines are as follows:

plato	-350 - 350
aristotle	-320 - 320
stoicism	125 - 170
rationalism	1637 - 1710
empiricism	1689 - 1779
capitalism	1776 - 1936
german_idealism	1781 - 1820
feminism	1792 - 1981
communism	1848 - 1883
nietzsche	1886 - 1888
phenomenology	1907 - 1950
analytic	1910 - 1985
continental	1961 - 1972

There are 13 main schools of thought in this dataset - each of them had different numbers of contributors. What can the increasing number of contributors to each school tell us about how we viewed the human condition? (The code for this can be found in the EDA file under lib).



We see a shift of pluralism of scholars in each school over time, very likely due to a more democratic barrier of entry into what it means to be a philosopher. In Ancient Greece, people who could 'philosophize' were restricted to the most noble and upper echelon castes of society. The common classes were relegated to doing all of their laborious work for them; farming, cooking, building, etc. and very likely did not have time to immortalize their thoughts unlike the privileged Plato and Aristotle who were part of the Greek nobility. Not only that - but literacy was a skill that was also reserved for nobility. As time went on as we know, globally, literacy has become an expectation of the average person due to education being a necessary skill to survive as our world changed. With that, it has given the means for people to immortalize their thoughts. Additionally, as education became more accessible, being able to broadcast ones thoughts did too as academic institutions offered a platform for publishing – all consequenting in a temporal trend of more philosophical contributors for each school.

What are the most common phrases used in each school? What does that tell us about the progression of philosophy as it pertains to society's?

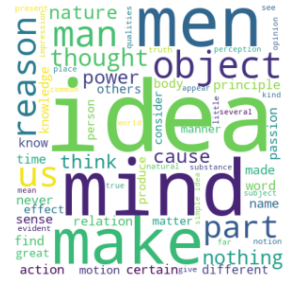

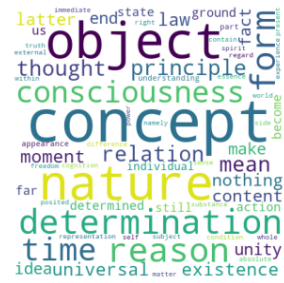
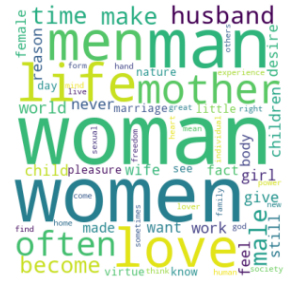
Let's take a look at the most common phrases used in each school by observing their corresponding word clouds. (The code for this can be found in the EDA file under lib).



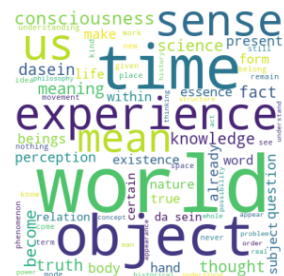
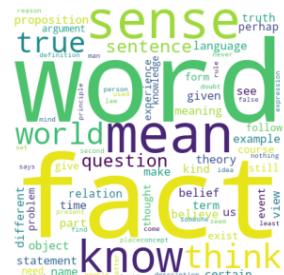
Data Cleaning Methodology

Please note that prior to creating the word clouds, I removed stopwords from NLTK's default vocabulary as well as iterated through each school's most common words and phrases in order to remove philosophy-specific language that would not be especially informative for the use

case of this project that I wanted to achieve. You can find this file under 'data preprocessing' under the lib folder of this project.

[illegible]

1689 - 1779	Empiricism		Empiricism argues that natural truths need to be experienced to be attained.
Potential trend of this era: based on words that are common in the word clouds (e.g. man, mind, object, idea) as well as what we know to be true of these schools; the 17th and 18th centuries were concerned with what constitutes reality. It is also interesting that rationalism and empiricism are almost counter arguments of each other; with the former arguing that reality is an internal assertion, and the latter is an external.			
1776 - 1936	Capitalism		Capitalism is an economic system in which individuals control a country's trade and industry.
1781 - 1820	German idealism		German idealism teaches that reality is largely a consequence of our experience of it.
1792 - 1981	Feminism		Feminism examines the oppression of women, and how it persists in other schools of philosophy.

1848 - 1883	Communism		Communism is the economic structure in which the central power is responsible for trade and industry.
1886 - 1888	Nietzsche		Nietzsche was concerned mostly with self actualizing to reach their highest form without reliance on God or transcendental forces.
Potential trend of this era: We see a trend with capitalism, communism and feminism examining the individual in the framework of the power structures they live in. Interestingly enough as we see those schools propose frameworks for individual power, German idealism and Nietzsche also assert that an individual's ability to experience reality and self actualize is their own autonomous responsibility.			
1907 - 1950	Phenomenology		Studies structures of experience and consciousness
1910 - 1985	Analytic		Analytic school concerns itself with semantics, logic, language in order to gain knowledge

Theme	Most common words according to LDA model
Relation to others	Life, love, labour, good, mother, great, self, husband, people, child
Macroscopic questions	World, whole, part, god, real, class, quantity, hand, existence, nature
Political power	Price, wages, produce, working, trade, right, political, know, value, moral
Social power	Work, money, value, society, home, time, interest, social, rate, marriage
Miscellaneous	Capital, movement, sometimes, alone, means, employment, eyes, time, situation, idea

This does somewhat align with our observations in the EDA section. Relation to others can contain questions about ethics and virtues - common themes of the “internal examination” mentioned above. Macroscopic questions entail considerations of the larger world around the individual; religious and existentialist inquiry are included here. Political power examines the power structures an individual exists in. Social power examines the role that society plays in an individual’s life. Miscellaneous includes anything that perhaps isn’t captured already.

This leads us to consider them as perhaps the five most important themes of philosophy. I then looked into where each of the schools fall within the five topics:

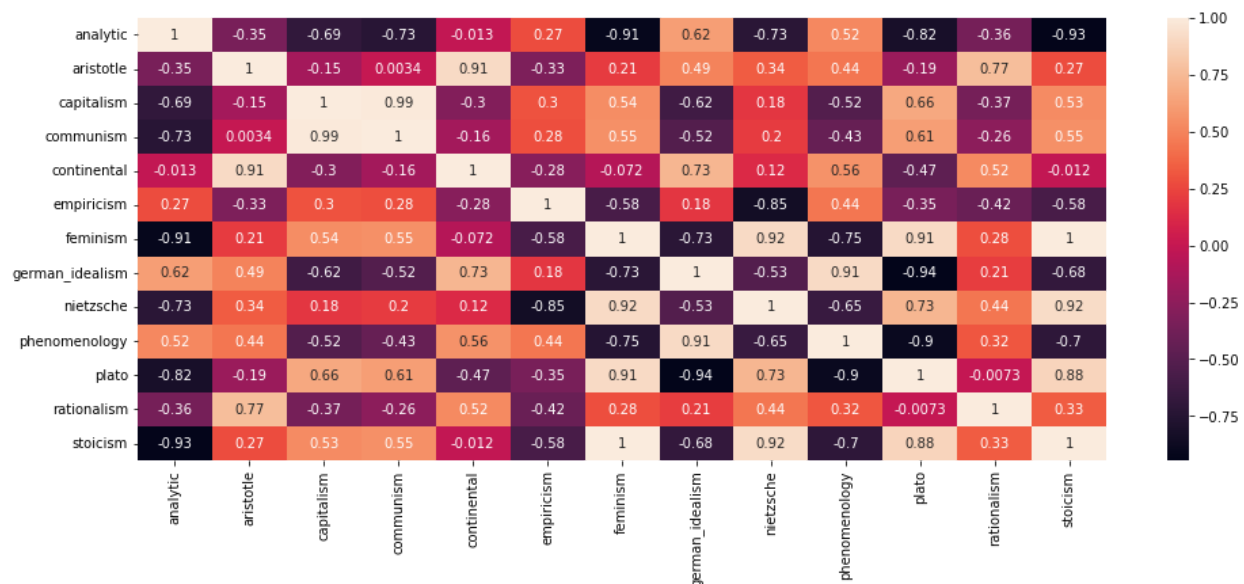
School	Most common two topics
Analytic	miscellaneous (26%), social power (23%)
Aristotle	Macroscopic questions (26%), relation to others (22%),
Capitalism	Social power (30%), relation to others (23%)
Communism	Social power (27%), relation to others (22%)
Continental	evenly distributed between all topics
Empiricism	evenly distributed between all topics
Feminism	relation to others (31%), social power (21%)

German idealism	macroscopic questions (25%), miscellaneous (24%)
Nietzsche	relation to others (33%), miscellaneous topics (18%)
Phenomenology	macroscopic questions (28%), miscellaneous topics (22%)
Plato	macroscopic questions (27%), social power (22%)
Rationalism	macroscopic questions (25%), relation to others (23%)
Stoicism	relation to others (36%), social power (21%)

The output above is not unpromising; but I was hoping I would see political power show as a main topic for capitalism, communism and feminism at the very least, which means there is some opportunity for finetuning the LDA model. Nevertheless, if we were to sort the schools by my “internal” and “external” examination postulation mentioned previously, we can see the Greek and 18-19th century schools which I determined to be “internal” examination schools are mainly concerned with relation to others and social power – which I don’t disagree with. The “external” schools (e.g rationalism, empiricism, continental, phenomenology, analytic) were mostly macroscopic questions and miscellaneous, which I’m also not unaligned with.

Which schools are similar to each other? Which ones are consistently similar to all schools - does that tell us anything persistent about the human condition?

I used a correlation matrix to evaluate each of the school’s corresponding LDA output vectors in order to see what they have most in common.



It is interesting to see that the “internal” examination schools are mostly more correlated with each other than the “external” examination schools and vice versa, although with many exceptions.

Conclusions

We can see that there are two main branches of philosophy: schools that are concerned with the fulfillment of the individual, and schools that are concerned with methodologies for finding universal truths. It is interesting to see that as time went on, the latter schools became more dominant, and the “internal” schools over time were concerned with how to contribute to the world and power structures around them instead of focusing on the needs of the individual. Regardless, as time goes on the more abstract the ideas of the schools entailed.