

Makeup & Breakup

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Socrates, Plato and Aristotle – Philosophical Thoughts of Three Great Thinkers

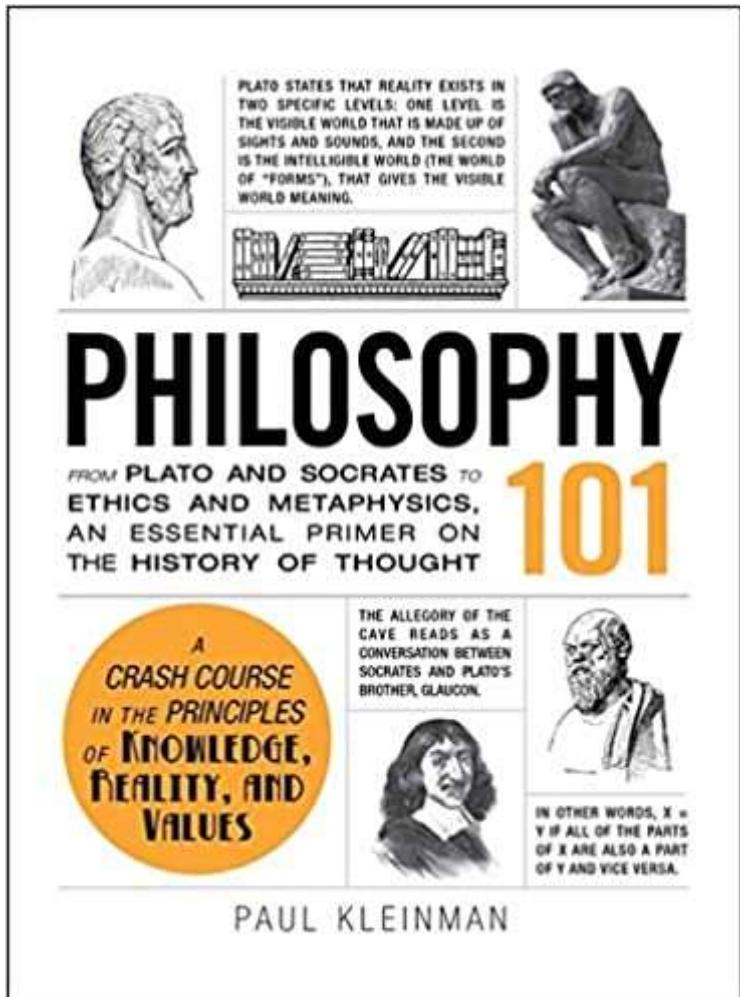


The great ancient **Greek philosophers** were influential in laying the foundations for the modern world that is now grappling with so many fundamental questions; deeply searching for meaning in everyday life and profoundly shaping their musings into a framework of thoughts captured and encapsulated in different forms and formats of manuscripts. The subject being quite broad and all-encompassing it included everything. Essentially, philosophy is so much about the search for fundamental meaning of life, for a greater understanding of the way of living our basic life, for answers to the myriad unanswered questions deeply surrounding our existence, our purpose, and the very universe at large.

Plato learned from Socrates and Aristotle learned from Plato.

The student-teacher-student relationship was one of the most fascinating aspects of the formation of the world of Western Philosophy. There were no organized places to learn and teach. It was Plato who had set the **Academy** and it was Aristotle who had set the **Lyceum**. The Plato's Academy was founded in 387 BC in Athens. Aristotle joined the Academy at an early age of 16 or 17 and remained there till the age of 37. Aristotle left Athens and tutored Alexandria the Great. It was after that tutelage that he ventured to conquer the East.

There are no written words from Socrates and it was only the written words of Plato in the form of dialogues that he had with Socrates. And it was Plato who described



Socrates as his teacher and that what he learned about philosophy is from his master.

Socrates remained the main subject in almost all works of Plato.

Socrates questioned everything. His method of enquiry is known as Socrates method (*elenchus*). The preaching of pedagogy, it is the practice of teaching where the teacher gets the best answer from the students by eliciting the technique of questioning. The phrase “*unexamined life is not worth living*” is the core behind the very idea of questioning everything around and the art of living and learning is deeply in the craft of questioning. If we have a problem then we break it down into a series of questions and we will have the answer in the response to those questions.

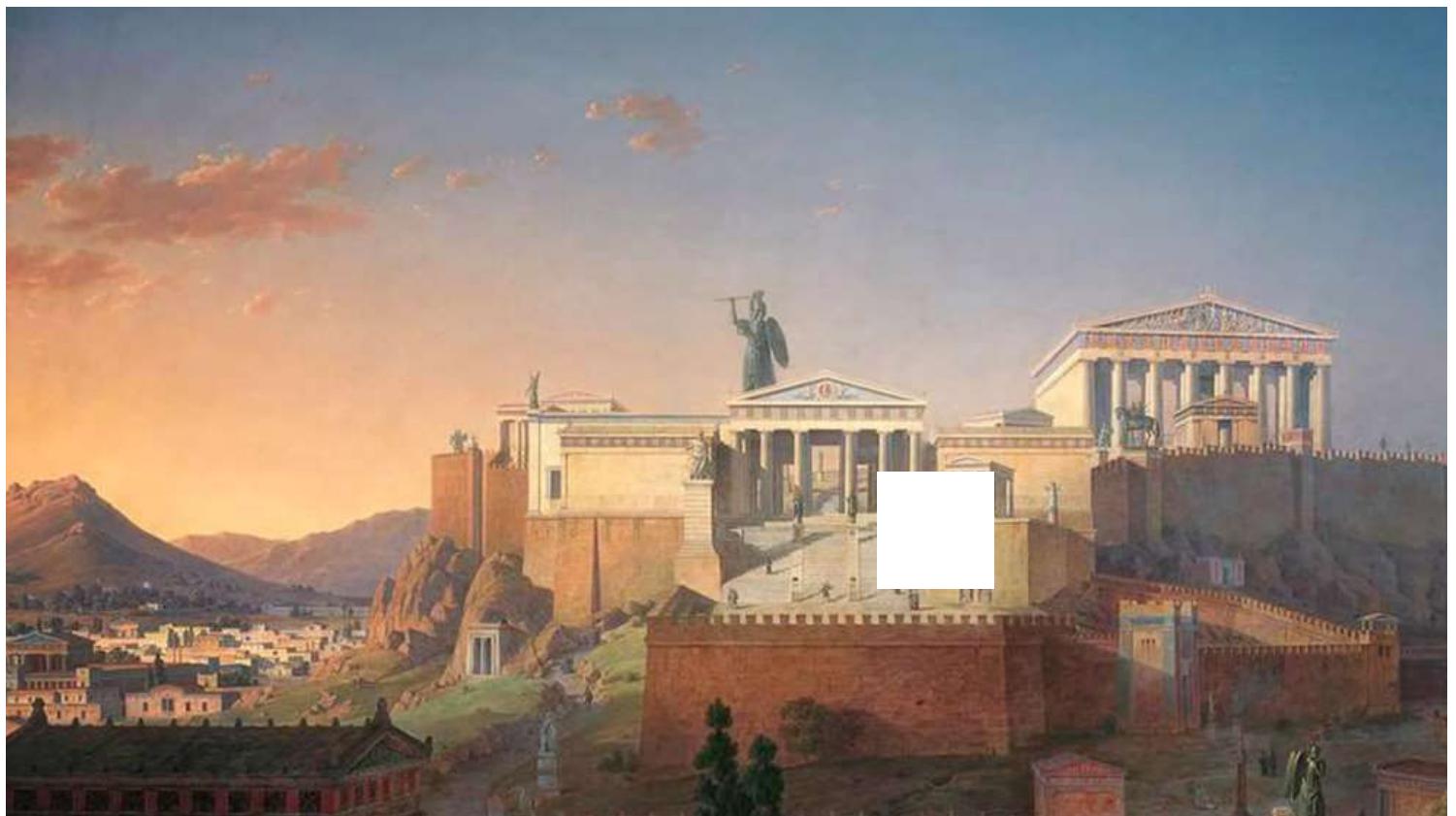
The art of questioning is one of the most difficult art but deceptively appears as the simplest act of life.

Either we take it for granted or we get lost in the disguise of such power of simplicity. His major contribution remains in the field of Ethics but his thoughts on Logic and Epistemology may not be striking but cannot be kept aside. He believed that wisdom was parallel to one's ignorance. He believed that one should focus on self-development than on material possession.

The profound thoughts of Socrates are known through the work of Plato and Aristotle, and before them it was Xenophon and Aristophanes.

Most of the thoughts of Socrates we know came from the Plato's work “The Apology”.

Aristotle philosophy stressed more on **biology** and on the other hand Plato's philosophy emphasized more on **mathematics**. Aristotle was considered the first biologist in the western world, the originator of scientific study of life. His study of natural world led him to both biologist and a scientist. Plato predominantly known as a great philosopher he was also a mathematician inspired by Pythagoras. In his Academy he emphasized mathematics as a way of understanding reality and led to work in geometry and harmonics. In fact Plato became known as maker of mathematics, he was known as the **Platonic Solids**



Plato more an idealist.

He believed in the idea of an “***Ideal State***”, a state where people have relinquished the idea of having a family and building the private property. No government unified self-governed society. No family. No private property. No father or mother can claim a child. No man or woman can claim a property. Every human being need to go beyond the possession and selfishness.

Aristotle more a realist.

He believed in the idea of a “***Practical State***”, state where people have their own family, possessed property and run by a government. The physical world, the real working that governs our life. The unit of family. Our children for whom we work. The piece of private property. The possession of things that empowers us. The real world and accepting the rules of reality.

The School of Athens is a fresco by Italian Renaissance Artist **Raphael**.

It was painted during 1509 to 1511, and he was commissioned to decorate **Stanze di Raffalleo**. The painting emphasizes the worldly matter and not the spiritual and it was during Renaissance the movement was moving away from the world of spiritualism. If we analyze the painting we have Plato and Aristotle side by side and talking on something. Plato is pointing his finger towards the sky and Aristotle is showing his palm towards the earth. Perhaps there was some intriguing conversation between the idea of “**Idealism**” and the idea of “**Realism**”. As both had crafted their own school of philosophy, there were differences and the paradox added to the evolution of the subject of philosophy. And together those thoughts hugely contributed towards the building of a whole body of western philosophy that defines and redefines the way we think and work today.

The work of these great thinkers continues to influence and inspire us and make us think differently based on those very fundamental premises.

Academy and Lyceum

Lyceum was known as the peripatetic school, it is from the Greek work “*peripatos*” meaning stroll. Aristotle loved walking and teaching. This very habit of strolling about the grove and teaching acquired the label of Peripatetic. It was a school where the focus was on

finding answers for scientific enquiry to conducting modern scientific studies. It was here he wrote widely on subjects from politics to logic to ethnics to metaphysics. In other way it is associated with place to walk to oasis for reflection.

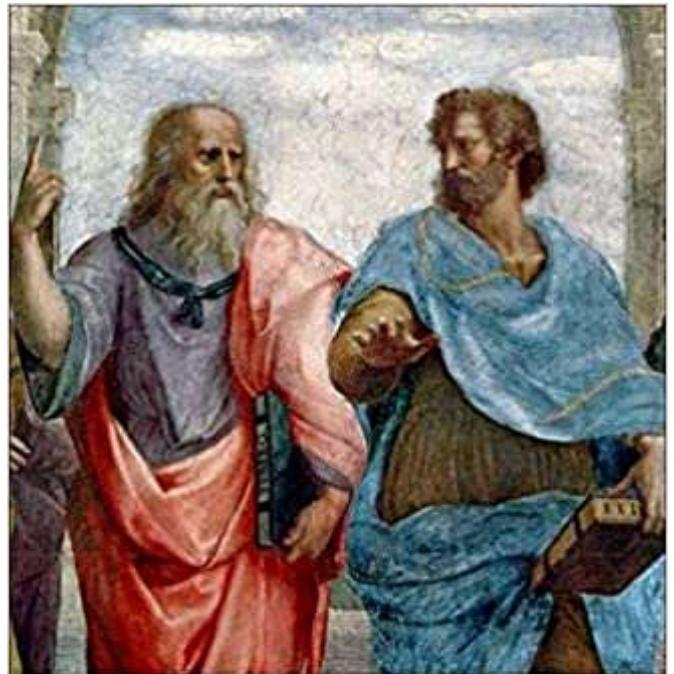
Aristotle studied in the **Academy** set by Plato. Academy was considered the first university in the western world. He believed that the philosopher should rule the world. They are the constant seeker of true knowledge. They are in the best position to rule based on the knowledge. Unlike Lyceum it was not a formal setup of education but a place where thinkers, intellectuals, philosophers deliberated on subjects ranging from philosophy to astronomy, from mathematics to physics.

Republic and Politics

One inherent constraint in reading and challenge in understanding these bodies of works are the writing of different translators and they have further added the factor of subjective. It cannot be a word by word translation and meaning by meaning. First of all Socrates never wrote his work and it was Plato. And whatever Plato and Aristotle wrote they wrote in **Attic Greek** (*Greek sub-dialect Ionic, the first literary language of ancient Greece*) and there have so many different authors based on their interpretation have done the translation.

The context behind the text and the connotation behind the word have a whole of world of difference when it adds up into sentences and a message through a paragraph or chapter.

The Republic is a Socrates dialogue written by Plato around 380 BC. The word “**Republic**” is from Latin, “**res publica**” means public matters. The subject was on just city state with order, justice and reason. Socrates in Republic argued that city should be unified to the greatest good possible. The ruling class should be sharing everything, and there should be no private properties or private families. He divided the just society into three classes namely the producers, the auxiliaries and the guardians.



Aristotle
Politics

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*A 250 plus page conversations between **Socrates and Plato** continues to keep us in awe and wonder even after 2500 years.*

 [The Republic, Plato](#) This book “**Republic**” grapples with the very idea of empowering us, so as to galvanize our untapped power of imagination. It is the question of how we channelized our immense power of imagination to craft and construct an ideal city state. This book is so much about asking questions so if we are looking for all the right set of answers we may get relatively disappointed. It is perhaps the foundation of western philosophy, and that the power of thoughts can change our perspective and create a whole new world.

The Greek word for city is ‘polis’, and the English word politics is derived from this very word. During his time the most important political entities were the cities, it had full sovereignty over the territory that it controlled.

Politics is a work of political philosophy by Aristotle. In the opening statement in this body of work he states that city is a partnership and citizens are sharing that partnership. He was more of scholar and loved teaching, and that eventually led to opening of his own school Lyceum. According to him it is a practical science which deals with making the people happy.

Politics is the most important text for understanding his thoughts on political philosophy. He believed that politics and ethics are closely linked. His philosophy is to discover the ultimate purpose of life. The role of politicians is to make laws and constitutes constitution that it should work for the well-being and happiness of the citizens of the state. He had stated that “*man is a political animal*”. He deals with the different kinds of political community during his time. The citizens must actively participate in politics to be happy and lead a virtuous life.

Human being by nature is a ***political animal*** and it is the nature that has also bestowed human being with speech and reason that makes us distinctly different from other animals. The knowledge of what is good and what is bad, also the ability to communicate our act of being just and unjust has made us to collaborate. It is about working together for a common purpose. It is then about living together for a building a better society for our future generation. The moment there is unjust between the people living together there has to be a mechanism to resolve and someone to solve. It is the city and the law that acts to arrest these disputes and equilibrium to any disparity.

In other words without the state and the justice system human beings demonstrate their animal instincts and could be more ferocious than a wild animal.

Socrates never wrote down his work on philosophy.

Everything we know about his philosophy was from the writings of Plato. It was written in the form of a dialogue and it was more like a play. It was fascinating to read and connect. The writing of Plato was pretty comprehensive and deeply engaging unlike the writing of

Aristotle which was more in the form of notes. Initially, the philosophy of Plato was more of the historical Socrates.

Plato was what he captured during the prolonged interaction with his teacher Socrates. Over time after the demise of Socrates, there was a change in the discourse of Plato. Only later part of his philosophy was more of Plato himself less of historical Socrates. Plato profusely credits his learning and knowledge to Socrates.

Though **Pythagoras** is known as a mathematician but he was also a great philosopher and had immensely influenced Socrates and inspired his work. He believed that he is the wisest man Athens because he knows what he didn't know. And **Socrates** main focus was on Epistemology i.e. with knowledge and on ethics i.e. on Value Theory. Plato was a man of ideas. He was an idealist. He dealt with the theory of forms where the worlds of ideas are more real than the things in the world.

Aristotle was man of things. His writing in ethics to metaphysics are driven from observation and not reasoning. Just like **Galileo Galilei** he believed that Sun not Earth is at the center of the Universe. Interesting, Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander the Great.

This wonderful saga of student-teacher cycle between the various great thinkers led to this rich body of knowledge...philosophy literally means love of wisdom.

Their Big Ideas

Socrates the classical Greek thinker is best known through Plato's dialogues, which reveal a key contributor to the fields of ethics and education. He is best known as a teacher of thought and insight, it is perhaps appropriate that his most widely recognized contribution is a way of approaching education that remains fundamentally relevant even today, the Socratic Method which involves the methods learning through questioning.

Aristotle was also in a unique position tutoring a young Alexander the Great when he requested by future conqueror's father, Phillip II of Macedon. This position of influence gave Aristotle the means to establish the library at Lyceum, where he produced hundreds of writings on papyrus scrolls. He asserted the use of logic as a method of argument and offered the basic methodological template for analytical discourse.

As the apprentice of Socrates and the mentor to Aristotle, **Plato** is the connecting bridge to what might be termed the great triumvirate of Greek thought in both philosophy and science. Plato founded political philosophy, introducing both the dialectic (*discourse between two or more people holding different points of view about a subject*) and dialogic (*shared dialogue to explore the meaning of something*) forms of writing as ways to explore various areas of thought. He articulated the theory of forms, the belief that the material world is an apparent and constantly changing world but that another, invisible world provides unchanging causality for all that we do see

Their Guiding Principles

S

orcates's looked at philosophy with a perspective that it should achieve practical goals for the greater well-being of society. He underlined the idea that the more an individual knows, the better is one's ability to reason out and make better choices that shall be the harbinger of real happiness. He believed that nothing will change unless we make the change in ourselves.

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lato's logic deeply explored justice, beauty, and equality, and contained deliberations in aesthetics, politics, language, and cosmology the science of the origin and development of the universe. He emphasized the need for people to be kind and charitable to others that will inspire strength within for all our endeavors.

A

ristotle's intellectual knowledge covered every sphere of science and arts, prompting him to idealize the Aristotelian syllogistic, a belief that logical argument applies deductive reasoning to arrive at a conclusion based on two or more propositions assumed to be true. His advice to others was to never give up and continue to work hard to excel and strive for greatness.

Key Takeaways:

- When we think of philosophy, we think of Western philosophy and there is so much that is associated with ancient Greece but much of it revolves around three great philosophers.
- Ancient Greek philosophers can be broadly categorized into three groups: the Pre-Socratics, the Socratics, and the Post-Socratics.
- Pre-Socratic philosophers mostly investigated natural phenomena, the Socratic philosophers in ancient Greece were Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the Post-Socratic philosophers established new schools of philosophy.
- Three philosophers in ancient Greece were Socrates, Plato and Aristotle . They are remembered for thier teaching methods and for asking thought-provoking questions.
- If we want to conjure them in few words, here it is; Socrates: Athens' street-corner philosopher, Plato: The philosopher who would be king, Aristotle: A long walk to the Golden Mean.
- Philosophy, the love of wisdom, was for Socrates (470-399) BCE itself a sacred path, a holy quest. Making use of questions and answers to remind his students of knowledge which is called maieutics (*midwifery*), dialectics, or the Socratic method.
- Plato (437-347) BCE was Socrates' prized student, he can be understood as idealistic and rationalistic. He divides reality into two – one hand we have *ousia*, idea or ideal and the other hand there's phenomena, a manifestation of the ideal.

- Aristotle (384-322) BCE was Plato's prize student, was as much a scientist as a philosopher endlessly fascinated with nature and the anatomy of animals, pretty much the one who invented modern language of logic.
 - Aristotle though was a student of Plato, but they disagreed on many fronts, what Plato called idea or ideal, Aristotle called essence, and its opposite, he referred to as matter. Essence realizes ("makes real") matter.
 - Aristotle wrote the first book on psychology separate from philosophy and it was called *Peri Psyches*, Greek for "about the mind or soul."
 - Plato's most famous work is the *Republic*, which details a wise society run by a philosopher. It is a Socratic dialogue, concerning justice, the order and character of the just city-state, and the just man.
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simplifying thoughts and amplifying ideas



Published November 2, 2018

Categorized as [Writing](#) Tagged [Academy](#), [Aristotle](#), [Lyceum](#), [Philosophers](#), [Philosophy](#), [Plato](#), [Politics](#), [Republic](#), [Socrates](#)



By Makeup & Breakup

A uniquely designed digital space to get intellectually involved, creatively indulged and spiritually inspired. The goal is to break down as many barriers as possible in our thoughts to make it thought-provoking. Thereby nurturing a nuanced perspective for healthy conversation and wealthy camaraderie...

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12 comments



1. [balroop2013](#) says:
[November 2, 2018 at 5:10 pm](#)

This post makes an interesting study of the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle, both much beyond the reach of a common man...idealism has been thrown to the winds and realism seems to be more relevant in modern times.

It is sad that political philosophy too of these great thinkers is no longer followed. Is there any ethics left in

politics these days? The “political animal” has shown his animal instincts openly. The student-teacher relationship too has degenerated to dismal proportions. The philosophy propounded by the modern man is dangerously close to “self,” devoid of any efforts to understanding the real meaning of wisdom. Nihar, your posts are always deeply intellectual and enlightening, if one makes an effort to read them carefully. Thank you for keeping the reminders alive.

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1. [Nihar R Pradhan](#) says:

[November 3, 2018 at 1:15 am](#)

Indeed Balroop, the love for wisdom have been blatantly thrown out of the window. The tyranny of regressive actions is derailing the train of progressive thoughts. Idealism has been hijacked and realism is gasping for fresh bout of air.

Those profound thoughts of great thinkers like them would have changed the landscape our society and the way our leaders govern our state. There has been a steady degeneration of values but off late things have merely gone more bad and has worsen. The political scene across different countries are in such dire state and everywhere the vested interest and exploitation to corruption is holding the forte. Ethics has been buried in the lanes and by-lanes of history. What a tragedy, education system has been equally hammered and the code of conduct between teacher and student has been badly shattered, and it is all in the open, the schools have become a business house.

Then the big question remains where can we nurture knowledge and wisdom if the house is in such disarray. Everything is spoken in terms of the cost benefit analysis, if there is no benefit and just forget about the investment is the order, and here we talk merely on the materialistic and physical benefits, the spiritual and the holistic aspect is grossly ignored. I agree these great thinkers are conveniently kept aside by the people in control of power and propagate the philosophy that best suits them no logic and ethics in it.

Thanks always Balroop to have your incisive perspective and being so generous in your appreciation.



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2. [Infinite Living](#) says:

[November 2, 2018 at 8:11 pm](#)

How intriguing and inspiring always to read about these great philosophers!

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1. [Nihar R Pradhan](#) says:

[November 3, 2018 at 1:20 am](#)

Yes there is whole world of wisdom around us and we get so much mired in our routines and muddled in things that are urgent we miss out exploring and doing things that are important to us in life. Learning and experiencing wisdom makes us a better person, it is just that we need to spend quality time in such things where it matters, it is essential to be reading these great thinkers and learning from these icons who have fundamentally changed the way society has evolved, and their thoughts have been deep and profound, and continues to awe us even after thousands of year...



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3. [lorac888890](#) says:

[November 4, 2018 at 6:23 pm](#)

Thank you. But I feel too much credit is given to the Greeks when so much more came from older countries. Take care now.

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1. [Nihar R Pradhan](#) says:

[November 5, 2018 at 1:10 pm](#)

I agree western philosophy and the stories from Greek and Rome keeps defining the way we look at the history and philosophy. There is so much in the eastern part of the world from Japan to China to India, from Buddhism to Confucianism to Hinduism...it is just that the thoughts and ideas haven't got the due it deserve and the momentum to capture the imagination of a larger world audience. Things have changed and changing quite fast with the need for spiritualism becoming the pivot for the harbinger of harmony and peace.

You too take care. Thanks so much...



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 5. Pingback: [The Philosophy of Mathematics - Euclid, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle - Makeup & Breakup](#)
 6. Pingback: [The Philosophy of Art that is Profoundly Artistic... - Makeup & Breakup](#)
7. [Dalbir Singh](#) says:

[June 5, 2021 at 5:57 am](#)

A balanced view on the philosophy of the great Triumvirate in a simple n captivating style which will enable young students to know about the three thinkers

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1. [Makeup & Breakup](#) says:

[June 5, 2021 at 6:58 am](#)

Thank you Dalbir for staying by and sharing your lovely piece of insightful thoughts, so much appreciate your valued observations...

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