

History of Western Philosophy

Kookmin University

Peter Lee, Spring 2019

L07

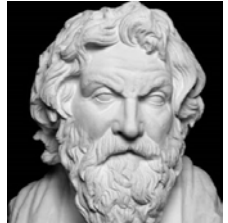
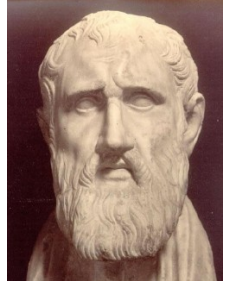
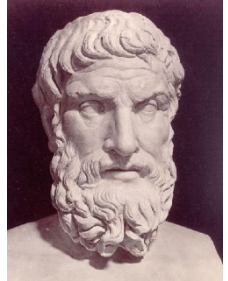
- I. Greek Philosophy after Aristotle:
Epicureanism, Stoicism, Skepticism, Neoplatonism
- II. Christian Philosophy: Augustine, Aquinas

After Aristotle: Four Major Schools

- After Aristotle to the rise of Christianity, four significant schools of Greek thought:

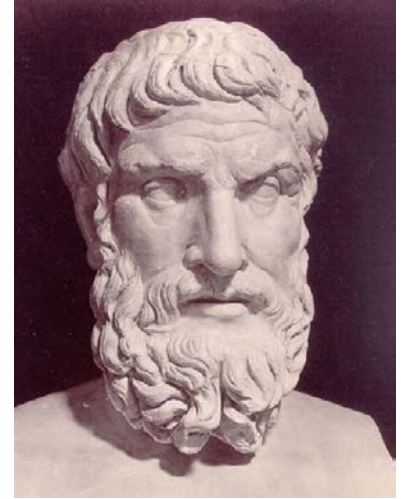
Epicurianism, Stoicism, Skepticism, Neo-Platonism, about 600 years (322 BC ~ 270 AD).

- Honorable mention: the **Cynics** (“dog-like”)
 - “The **dropouts** of society”; so should we care?
 - **Diogenes** disavowed money, government, culture, tradition, wanted to live like a dog.
 - Ancient version of anarchism.
 - First to say **Cosmopolitan**: “I am a citizen of the world” [didn’t want to belong to any one state].



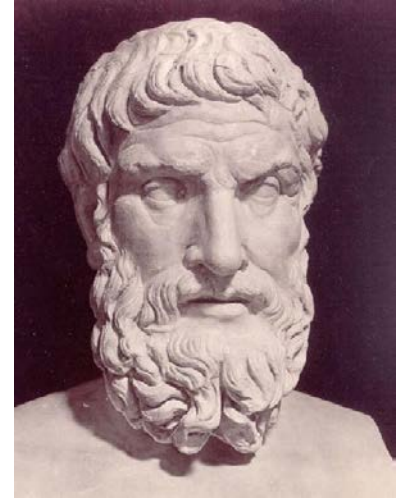
After Aristotle: Epicureanism

- Epicurus (~360-271 BC), Athenian phil.
- Atomic materialists [cf. Democritus]
- “**Pleasure**” greatest good, gained through modest living (limiting desire), acquiring knowledge + freedom from fear and pain.
- Has come to be associated with **Hedonism**.
- Originally against Platonism, but later opposed Stoicism.
- Belief in **free will**: “When atoms move ... through the void by their own weight, they deflect a bit in space at a quite **uncertain time and in uncertain places**.... if they were not in the habit of **swerving** nature would never have produced anything.”
(Lucretius)



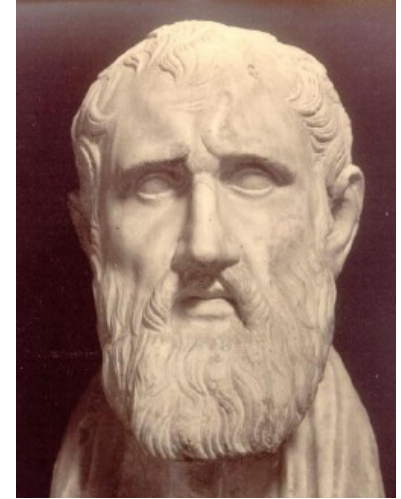
After Aristotle: Epicureanism

- “Become accustomed to the belief that **death is nothing to us**. For all good and evil consists in sensation, but death is deprivation of sensation. ... So death, the most terrifying of ills, is nothing to us, since **so long as we exist death is not with us; but when death comes, then we do not exist**. It does not then concern either the living or the dead, since for the former it is not, and the latter are no more.”
[Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*]
- Epicurus: Death is the end; we cease to exist (feel). **Death is nothing**; cannot be something good or evil.
- Very similar to today’s **scientific liberal humanism**.



After Aristotle: Stoicism

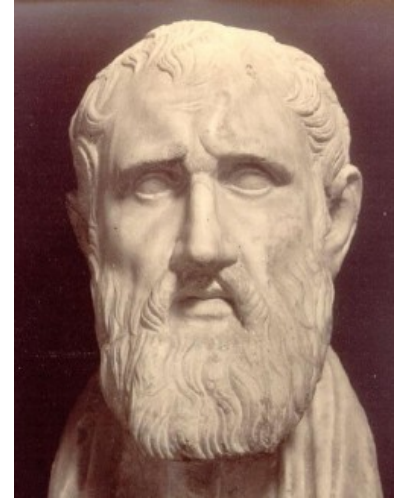
- Zeno of Citium (~334-262) from Cyprus
- Studied logic, ethics, physics
- Belief in **determinism** but, unlike Atomism, believed in Fate, providence, **virtue**:
 - Virtue was recognizing and accepting Fate
 - Virtue necessary + sufficient for happiness
 - Everything happens for a **good** reason (providence).
- **Stoicism**: “The universe came from fire, will return to fire, and history will repeat in an endless cycle, all in accordance with **Fate**.”
- Emotions are judgments: can be false; reason must rule.
- Famous Stoics: Seneca, Marcus Aurelius [determinists].



After Aristotle: Stoicism

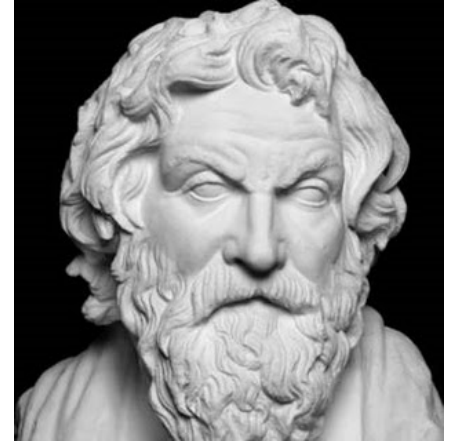
- **Stoic**: one who can endure pain or hardship without showing feelings or complaining.
- Everything happens according to the will of God, divine **providence** – this is **Fate**.
- So, nonsensical to say, “I’ll go against Fate” because everything becomes part of Fate.
- All things “act with one movement”:

“Constantly regard the **universe as one living being**, having one substance and one soul; observe how all things have reference to one perception, the perception of this one living being; how all things act with one movement; how all things are the cooperating causes of all things that exist”
[Marcus Aurelius]



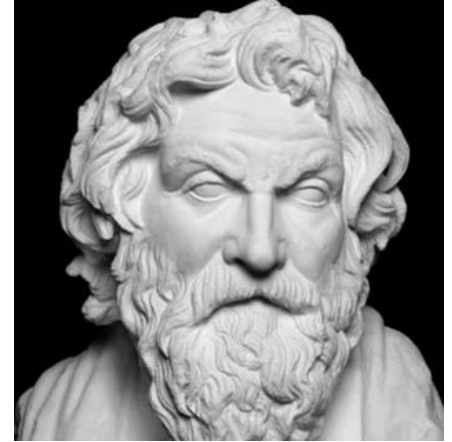
After Aristotle: Skepticism

- Pyrrho of Elis (~365-275)
- Was a soldier in Alexander's army.
Taught that nothing could be known,
hence wrote nothing, like Socrates.
- All reasoning is circular [cf. [Coherentism](#)].
- As Plato's Academy became more Socratic in method,
became part of the Academy.
Skepticism (Pyrrhonism): knowledge is impossible.
- Tended to oppose the Stoics as they were empiricists.
- Skeptics: senses can deceive us. If nothing can be known,
our attitude should be one of *ataraxia* ("freedom from
worry"); **"don't worry, be happy."**



After Aristotle: Skepticism

- Skepticism **self-defeating**, contradictory.
- Life of Skeptic: if nothing can be known, we should suspend belief but **accept local customs as guide** for conduct.
- Pyrrhonism revived during Renaissance:
 - questioning of authority
 - used by Church to promote **fideism** (“faith-ism”).
- Motivated Descartes to respond with **radical skepticism** in order to establish firm foundation of knowledge.
- Skepticism similar to but NOT the same as Sophism.
- Skepticism always with us: from Socrates and the Sophists to the post-modernists (eg. Derrida).



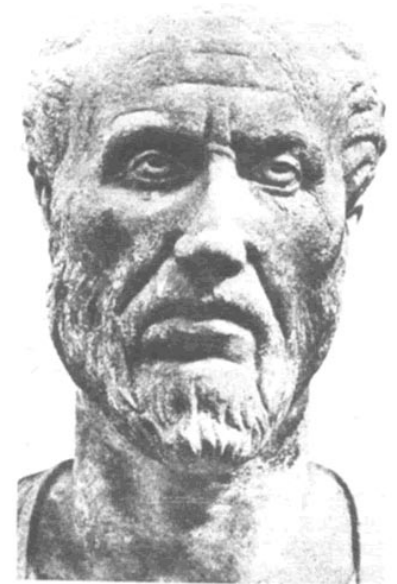
After Aristotle: Neo-Platonism

- Plotinus, Egypt (~204-270 AD); the last major Greek (**Hellenistic**) pagan philosopher.
- Began to study phil. at Alexandria at 27; went to Rome and established his school.
- Revived Platonism but revised some ideas; his teachings now come to be known as **Neo-Platonism** [term coined only in 19th c].
- Neoplatonic Ontology (levels of Being):
The **One** is above all [God of Xenophanes? Parmenides?]; above being and non-being; can't be comprehended, not even self-aware (for that is also a kind of division); The One is "**Light**," the source of everything.



After Aristotle: Neo-Platonism

- **Emanation** by the One:
 - **Nous** (Divine Mind, *Logos*) [Platonic Forms] from the **One**; like the Sun giving light. For Plotinus, the Light is prior to the Sun.
 - **World Soul** proceeds from the **Nous**, like the Moon reflects the Sun's light;
 - human souls (upper) from the **Soul** + physical matter (lower) [sensible world].
- True happiness: Eudaimonia attained only within consciousness, in contemplation and achieving *henosis* ("oneness, union") with the One [mysticism].
- Neoplatonism had a profound, lasting impact on the development of early Christian thought / theology.



Christian Philosophy: Background

- Christianity began as historical event with believers preaching the **Gospel**; theology and philosophy came later.
- Christian **theology**: spells out what it is we believe (eg. the Trinity, resurrection). Christian **philosophy**: tries to make sense of what we believe (theology) using reason.
- Christian theology **and/vs** philosophy:
St. Anselm: “**Faith seeking understanding**”; we should harmonize our faith with the truths that we know.
Tertullian: “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”; we believe “because it is absurd.”



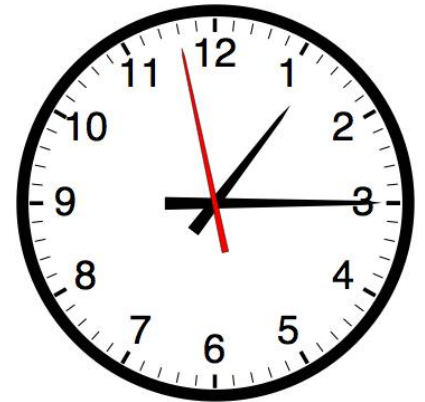
Augustine: Life and Works

- Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD)
- Born in Algeria, later became Christian, clergy, then became Bishop of Hippo
- “Most influential Christian philosopher” wrote hundreds of letters, sermons, books.
- Most famous works:
Confessions: “Lord make me chaste, but not yet.”
The City of God: we are all citizens of two cities.
- As young man, believed in **Manichaeism**, but became Neoplatonist, then Christian. Absorbed Platonic ideas into Christian worldview [still popular view].



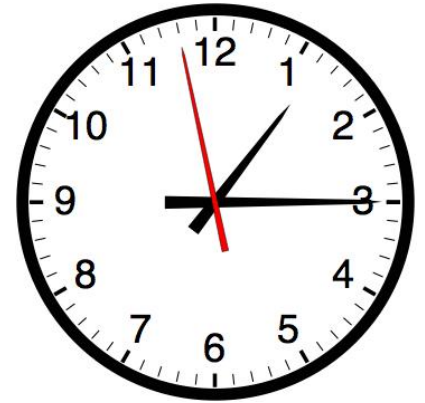
Augustine On Time (*Confessions* XI)

- What was God doing before the world began? [cf. CR 47-49]
- There was no “before” creation; “Before” itself a question of time.
- For God, there is no succession. There is only an **Eternal Present**.
- **Time is Unreal:** Only the present exists
 - The past is no longer, the future is not yet [don't exist]. Only the present is real (common view, language).
 - But if the present is only thing present (as reality), then what is **real** is not time but Eternity.
- What then is time? **Time is really only in the mind.**



Augustine On Time (*Confessions* XI)

- A length of time is really only a length of memory, or a length of expectation: “There is a present of things past (memory), present of things present (sight), present of things future (expectation).”
- This is called **Presentism** [vs. **Eternalism**].



“At no time then hadst Thou not made any thing, because **time itself Thou madest**. And no times are coeternal with Thee, because Thou **abidest**; but if they abode, they should not be times [time is fleeting]. For what is time? Who can readily and briefly explain this?”

[CR 47: from *Confessions* XI]

Augustine: Grace and Free Will

- **Fall of Man:** Adam and Eve sinned, and thus Death entered the world (result of **sin**).
- We became corrupt, can't save self from sin.
- Then how can we be saved? Only those who receive God's Grace [forgiveness of sin].
Then who receives? Those God has chosen.



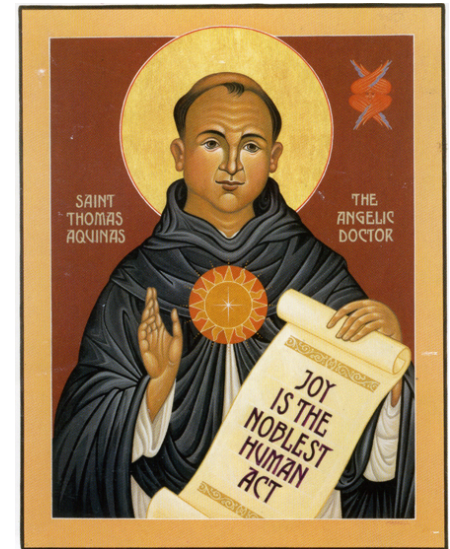
- The problem of **predestination**:

“Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ Just as it is written: ‘**Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.**’” (Rom 9:10-13) [cf. Determinism]



Aquinas: Life and Works

- Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD)
- Italian Christian Aristotelian philosopher.
- Best-known works: *Summa Theologiae*, *Summa contra Gentiles*.
- Rediscovery of Aristotle in 12th century; Aquinas adapted Aristotelian thoughts to theology, made it acceptable to Christian faith.
- Five proofs of God's existence or **Five Ways** [CR 50-51]:
- Aristotelian empiricism: knowledge comes from senses; newborn is a *tabula rasa* ("a clean slate").
- Christianizes Aristotelian soul: **Thomistic hylomorphism**.



Aquinas: Five Ways

- Proofs of God's existence or the **Five Ways** [CR 50-51]:

1. Argument of the Unmoved Mover
2. Argument of the First Cause
3. Argument from Contingency
4. Argument from Degree
5. Argument from Final Cause [teleological argument]



- Arguments later considered refuted by Kant, but some religious thinkers still debate them.

Aquinas: Soul and Resurrection

- **Augustine:** soul and body are like marriage partners, but the soul is a superior entity (cf. Platonic form).
- **Aquinas:** soul is the form of body (cf. Aristotelian form).
- Aristotle: matter cannot exist without form and form cannot exist without matter [death end of life].
- But Aquinas being Christian, the spiritual (rational) part of the human soul can **persist** without matter;
 - the soul “**sleeps**” until the day of the resurrection:
“If there is no resurrection of the dead, it follows that there is no good for human beings other than in this life.”
[Aquinas’ commentary on I Corinthians 15:12-14]