**THE SECRET CODES OF THE MIND: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY. Book II.**

**Ancient Greek Philosophy**

**by Dr. Andrew V. Kudin**

**Narrator Jeff Heisler**

**Part 1**

**PRE-SOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY: THE ORIGINS OF WESTERN THOUGHT**

Our journey through history begins, as it traditionally does, with Ancient Greece, the cradle of Western civilization. The first step on this journey is an introduction to Pre-Socratic philosophy, the cornerstone of Western thought.

**Pre-Socratic philosophy spans the early seventh to mid-fifth centuries BC, predating Socrates’ influence.** This era is marked by Greek thinkers’ attempts to explain the world’s nature, origins, and the essence of being through rational principles, breaking away from mythological interpretations. Pre-Socratic philosophy encompasses a variety of schools and approaches. Among them are the Miletian school, the Pythagoreans, the Eleates, and the Atomists. Each of these schools developed unique approaches and concepts to comprehend the world. Their quest for a rational understanding of nature, coupled with their use of logic and analysis, profoundly shaped the history of Western civilization.

In those distant years, ancient Greece sprawled across a diverse landscape, embracing the mainland, the Peloponnese peninsula, and islands such as Crete and Euboea. The mountainous terrain, dominating the region, fostered isolation and spurred the emergence of autonomous city-states. Each had its own culture, traditions and political system.

Ancient Greece enjoyed a Mediterranean climate, with hot, dry summers and mild winters, ideal for agriculture. This favored the development of agriculture, particularly the cultivation of olives, grapes and cereals. However, the limited fertile land forced the Greeks to seek new territories for colonization, which led to the spread of Greek culture throughout the Mediterranean.

In the sixth and fifth centuries BC, ancient Greece was politically decentralized. There was no single Greek state during this period; instead, Greece consisted of many independent polities. Each polis developed its own form of government—aristocratic, oligarchic, democratic, or tyrannical.

One of the most important polities was Athens, which reached the peak of its power and influence in the 5th century BC. Under Pericles, democracy emerged as a model of governance, allowing all free citizens to partake in state affairs. Athens became a center of culture, science, and art, attracting philosophers, poets, and scholars.

Sparta, another major polis, adhered to a radically different political system. Its society was organized around strict military discipline and oligarchic rule. Sparta was renowned for its formidable army and a rigid social structure centered on warrior education.

Greek political life in the 6th and 5th centuries BC was marked by constant conflicts and alliances between the polis. A defining event of this period was the Persian Wars (500–449 BC), where the Greeks united against the Persian Empire's invasion. These wars culminated in a Greek victory, reinforcing their identity and independence.

After the Persian Wars, the Peloponnesian League led by Sparta and the Alliance of Delos led by Athens came to the fore. This rivalry ignited the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC), concluding with Athens’ defeat and Sparta’s brief ascendancy.

**Mathematics and mysticism in the teachings of Pythagoras.**

When we think of philosophy, the name Pythagoras (ca. 570-495 BC) often comes to mind, along with his famous words: “Philosophy is the love of wisdom”. Few today realize that in ancient times, Pythagoras was revered as a living god, honored as Christians now honor Christ.

Pythagoras was born on the island of Samos, a vibrant center of Greek culture and trade in the Aegean Sea. His father, Mnesarchus, a wealthy merchant, ensured that Pythagoras received an excellent education. Pythagoras showed great interest in math, music, and philosophy from an early age. He studied under local teachers and according to some accounts was a pupil of the famous philosopher Pherekides of Syros.

Pythagoras traveled widely, studying mathematics and astronomy in Egypt, where priests shared both mathematical knowledge and insights into the world’s structure through numerical symbolism. After Egypt, Pythagoras visited Babylon. There he continued his study of mathematics, astronomy and mystical teachings.

These travels and contacts with different cultures enriched his worldview and contributed to the creation of a unique philosophical system. Upon returning to Greece, Pythagoras first settled on Samos but soon moved to Croton in southern Italy, where he established a unique community that merged science and mysticism, seeking to uncover the secrets of the world through the magic of numbers. Entering the Pythagorean brotherhood required passing various tests and initiations, and members were obliged to observe strict ethical norms and rituals. All knowledge within the community was kept in the strictest secrecy and passed on only to those who proved their loyalty.

A central tenet of Pythagoras’ mystical teachings is metempsychosis, **the transmigration of souls.** This concept includes the belief that the **soul is immortal and, after the death of the body, moves into another body, passing through cycles of birth and rebirth. This process continues until the soul reaches purification and returns to the divine source. The soul, according to Pythagoras, is the true essence of a person, while the body is merely a garment, changed from time to time like clothing.** In other words, the true self is the driver and the body is the vehicle, the instrument by which the personality interacts with the earthly world.

The Pythagoreans taught that one’s actions and deeds in life shape their future incarnations. Righteous and virtuous actions contribute to spiritual growth and approach to liberation, while bad actions can lead to lower forms of life.

Pythagoras and his followers practiced asceticism, self-restraint, and moral perfection to purify their souls and prepare them for their final liberation from the cycles of rebirth. They adhered to strict rules of life that included vegetarianism, abstinence from certain foods, and adherence to moral standards. These rules promoted spiritual purification and prevented the accumulation of negative karma .

The Pythagoreans believed that the **universe was an ordered whole in which each element had its place and function. This doctrine included ideas about harmony and symmetry, which had to exist both in nature and in human life.** The Pythagoreans sought harmony in everything - in thought, action and social institutions.

Galileo Galilei, in his famous work Il Saggiatore (The Assayer), published in 1623, wrote: "Philosophy is written in that great book which is always open before our eyes - I speak of the universe - but it cannot be understood unless we first learn to understand the language and master the symbols in which it is written. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its symbols are triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures, without an understanding of which no word can be understood; without them we wander in a dark labyrinth."

Many prominent scientists and mystics throughout the history of mankind have said that **mathematics is the language in which the Universe is written**. By the way, my higher mathematics professor, Dr. Anatoly Skorokhod, held a similar belief. He was certain that philosophers ought to understand mathematics even better than graduates of physics and mathematics faculties. Anatoly Skorokhod was a distinguished Soviet, Ukrainian, and American mathematician, and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

The school of Pythagoras emphasized the study of mathematics, music, astronomy and metaphysics. One of the central tenets of Pythagoras' teachings was the statement that "everything is number". This statement implied the existence of numerical harmony and order in the universe.

Pythagoras knew that numbers are the basis of all things and that the universe is governed by numerical laws. That is why Pythagoras wrote down his teachings in the form of numbers and formulas. We see these formulas, but without knowledge of the code system, numbers remain only numbers, and formulas only formulas. Only those who knew the system of codes were able to transform numbers and formulas into words and understand their secret meaning.

For Pythagoras, numbers had not only quantitative but also qualitative aspects, symbolizing various cosmic and spiritual principles. For example, number 1 meant unity and divine origin, number 2 meant duality and contradiction, the second law of dialectics - the unity and struggle of opposites, number 3 could be read as Heaven, Earth, birth; harmony and balance, and number 4 meant order and stability.

Such arithmetic operations as subtraction, addition, multiplication or division can describe not only objects of the material world, but also emotions, feelings, everything that is usually attributed to the spiritual or ideal world.

Pythagoras developed the concept of the "harmony of the spheres", according to which the planets and stars move in orbits, forming harmonious sounds that, although inaudible to the human ear, affect the order and harmony of the universe. This idea was based on observations of musical intervals and ratios, which the Pythagoreans regarded as reflections of cosmic harmony.

Pythagoras is best known for his contributions to mathematics, particularly the theorem bearing his name, which states that in a right triangle, the square of the hypotenuse equals the sum of the squares of the two legs. Although it is believed that this theorem was known earlier, it was Pythagoras and his students who first gave it a rigorous mathematical proof.

The Pythagoreans advanced music theory, uncovering the mathematical relationships between sounds and their harmonic intervals. They discovered that musical harmonies could be expressed through simple numerical relationships, which confirmed their belief in the numerical nature of the universe.

The Pythagorean school in Crotona gained considerable influence not only in science and philosophy, but also in the political life of the city. Pythagoras' disciples often held important positions and tried to introduce his ideals of justice and harmony into the governance of the polis. However, not all Crotonians were happy with the growing influence of Pythagoras and his followers.

Some sources claim that the conflict was caused by disagreements between democratic and oligarchic forces in the city. The Pythagoreans, who adhered to strict rules and wielded considerable power, were perceived as a threat to the democratically inclined groups of the population.

There are several versions of how exactly the revolt against the Pythagoreans began. One of the most famous stories is the one told by the historian Diogenes of Laertes in his treatise "On the Lives, Teachings and Sayings of Famous Philosophers"₂ . According to this version, the opponents of Pythagoras surrounded and set fire to the house where the meeting of the brotherhood was held. The legend says that Pythagoras could have avoided death, but preferred death together with his followers.

This tragedy led to the destruction of the Pythagorean school in Crotona and weakened the influence of the Pythagoreans in the region. However, though many of Pythagoras’ followers were physically destroyed, his ideas and teachings endured. The surviving disciples traveled to other countries and cities, continuing to spread the teachings of their teacher.

Pythagoras’ mystical concepts profoundly influenced later philosophical and religious movements. For example, Plato borrowed many Pythagorean concepts, including ideas about the immortality of the soul and the metaphysical nature of numbers. These ideas were also reflected in Neoplatonism and Gnostic teachings.

**The Most Famous Aphorisms and Sayings of Pythagoras**

**"The beginning is half of everything."**

These words remind us of the importance of starting, as the moment of beginning sets the tone and direction for any endeavor.

Overcoming fear of the unknown.

Often, the hardest part is deciding to start. Fear of failure, laziness, or doubt can hold us back, but the moment we take the first step, the psychological barrier begins to crumble. We realize that it is not as difficult as it seemed.

Building momentum.

The beginning of any process is like starting a mechanism. Taking the first step sets a rhythm, allowing things to move forward naturally. This momentum helps overcome challenges that may arise later.

Direction Determination.

The starting point helps you find the right path. Even if something goes wrong, it provides an opportunity to adjust your course based on experience.

***Life Application:***

1. Start small. If a task feels overwhelming, break it down and begin with something simple. For instance, want to write a book? Start with a single page or just a few sentences.
2. Take action without delay. Begin your day with the most important task, even if it feels daunting. Often, the hardest part is simply starting—but once you take the first step, the rest becomes easier.
3. Step-by-step progress. Recognizing that the beginning is already a significant step forward can keep you motivated. Even if the goal feels distant, remember—starting is half the battle.
4. Don’t hesitate to try new things. Want to learn a skill or begin a project? Remember, perfection doesn’t come instantly. What matters is starting; the rest will follow with experience.

In daily life, these words inspire action over procrastination. Pythagoras highlights the first step as a crucial contribution to ultimate success.

**"Do not despise anyone or anything, for each has its own significance."**

Pythagoras taught respect for everything around us. He encouraged us to see value even in what seems insignificant at first glance.

Every human being is a carrier of experience.

Everyone carries their own story, lessons, and unique contribution to the world. Even those who appear insignificant may prove to be crucial links in the chain of events.

Nature and things have a role to play.

Nothing exists without purpose. Even the smallest stone contributes to a larger structure, and the tiniest insect plays its role in the ecosystem.

Respect as the foundation of harmony.

Recognizing that everything has its place and purpose cultivates tolerance and wisdom. Rather than judging or showing contempt, we start to perceive the world more holistically.

***Life Application:***

1. Value the diversity of people. When interacting with others, focus on their strengths and respect their perspective, even if it differs from your own.
2. Pay attention to the little things. Small details often have a big impact, whether in work, relationships, or nature.
3. Learn from everything around you. Every person and situation holds a lesson—it’s essential to remain open to them.

This principle fosters respect, tolerance, and awareness, cultivating a more harmonious relationship with the world and yourself.

**"Silence is the first step to wisdom."**

Pythagoras reflects on the power of silence and inner peace, emphasizing that through silence, one begins to hear oneself and comprehend the world more deeply.

Silence as a space for reflection.

Amid the hustle and bustle of daily life, finding time to simply think can be challenging. Silence offers an escape from the external noise, inviting you to turn inward.

Listening instead of speaking.

Wisdom arises not only through words but also from the ability to listen—to others, to nature, and to one’s inner thoughts. Silence unlocks these vital sources of insight.

The ability to curb emotions.

Silence soothes the storm within, fostering calmness that enables thoughtful decisions and a broader perspective on life.

***Life Application:***

1. Create moments of silence. Dedicate time to being alone. Turn off your phone, set aside distractions, and simply sit in stillness. This practice can help you refocus and restore inner harmony.
2. Listen more than you speak. In conversations, focus on truly hearing others. This enriches your understanding and strengthens relationships.
3. Practice meditation—the art of silence. It clears your mind of clutter and anchors you in the present moment.

Silence is not emptiness; it is a powerful tool that cultivates awareness and fosters wisdom.

**"If you know yourself, you will know the world and the gods."**

Self-knowledge is the key to understanding all things. Pythagoras taught that the inner world of a person is inextricably linked to the structure of the Universe.

Man as a microcosm.

A person is a reflection of the universe. By exploring one’s thoughts, emotions, and nature, one can uncover the laws governing the world.

The inner world as a mirror of the outer world.

By recognizing our weaknesses and strengths, aspirations and fears, we gain deeper insight into others and the world around us. What exists outside resonates within.

The Path to Spiritual Truths.

Self-knowledge unlocks a deeper understanding of the divine and spiritual. Inner harmony leads one closer to the highest wisdom.

***Life Application:***

1. Ask yourself meaningful questions. What do you truly desire? What inspires or frustrates you? Understanding your true motivations helps you make wise decisions.
2. Address your inner conflicts. Acknowledge your weaknesses and strive to improve them. This will not only strengthen you but also deepen your understanding of others.
3. Seek harmony. Strive for balance between your desires, thoughts, and actions. A harmonious individual perceives the rhythms of life more keenly and interacts with the world effortlessly.

Wisdom begins with a journey inward. By knowing yourself, you unlock the secrets of the Universe.

**"Health is not everything, but everything without health is nothing."**

These words reflect a profound truth: health is the foundation of all activities and goals. Pythagoras believed that without physical and spiritual well-being, every other aspect of life loses its meaning.

Health as a foundation.

Health is not the ultimate goal, but without it, one cannot truly live, create, love, or succeed. It forms the foundation of a happy and fulfilling life.

The connection between the physical and the spiritual.

Pythagoras taught that the body and soul are deeply interconnected. Caring for the body nurtures mental clarity and fosters inner balance.

The value is in the simplicity.

Health is often taken for granted until it begins to slip away. This aphorism urges us to cherish and protect it from an early age.

***Life Application:***

1. Listen to your body. Notice how you feel—fatigue, pain, or discomfort are signals that should never be ignored.
2. Choose healthy habits. Cultivate healthy habits. A balanced diet, regular physical activity, and sufficient sleep are keys to a long and active life.
3. Don’t overlook your mental health. Foster inner peace through meditation, relaxation, and meaningful connections with loved ones. Inner harmony reflects outward in physical well-being.

Health is not merely the absence of illness; it is a state where body and spirit work in harmony, enabling a person to live life to its fullest.

**"Weak minds discuss people. Average minds discuss events.**

**Strong minds discuss ideas."**

These words highlight the varying depths of human thought, inviting us to reflect on where we direct our time and mental energy. The power of the mind is revealed through the focus of our attention.

Weak minds.

Discussing people often devolves into gossip and judgment—a superficial level of thought fixated on others’ shortcomings and personal affairs, without deeper analysis or understanding. Constantly fixating on others’ personal lives not only wastes time but also poisons the mind, eroding inner peace.

Middle Minds.

Those who discuss events focus on facts and what’s happening around them, representing a more constructive level of thought. Discussing events promotes awareness of what’s happening but often lacks depth. Without deeper analysis, it can lead to anxiety or apathy, especially when events feel beyond one’s control.

Strong minds.

Strong minds seek meaning and substance. They engage with ideas, concepts, and principles, striving to understand the underlying processes that shape our world. They focus not only on what happened but also on why it happened and how it can be changed or applied.

***Life Application:***

1. Pay attention to where your focus lies. In conversations, steer away from gossip and trivial matters. Instead, center your discussions on ideas and topics that inspire and broaden your perspective. If you catch yourself dwelling on others’ affairs, redirect your focus toward what truly matters for your growth.
2. Seek to analyze and uncover meaning. When discussing events, concentrate on cause and effect. This broadens your horizons and deepens your understanding of the world.
3. Cultivate your ability to think critically. Read books, attend lectures, and engage in discussions that expand your thinking and push you beyond the ordinary. Seek inspiration in transformative ideas and allow them to reshape your worldview, fostering personal growth.

**"Do not speak little of much and much of little.**"

Pythagoras urged precision, cautioning against skimming over important topics or delving too deeply into matters unworthy of attention.

Essence instead of vanity.

When we address many topics superficially, the essence is lost. It is vital to delve into what truly matters rather than getting entangled in everything at once.

Focus on the meaningful.

Dwelling on minutiae diverts attention from what truly matters. Excessive focus on trivialities wastes both time and energy.

The power of brevity.

Short, succinct words often convey more than lengthy discourses. Pythagoras stressed that every word should hold meaning, never becoming mere noise.

***Life Application:***

1. Identify what truly matters. Before speaking, consider carefully what you wish to convey. Focus on key ideas, avoiding superficial engagement with multiple topics.
2. Respect your listener’s time. Be brief yet concise, avoiding unnecessary details that do not enhance understanding of the core message.
3. Embrace conciseness. Learn to speak so that every word carries weight. This not only refines your speech but also makes it more compelling. The strength of words lies not in their quantity but in their precision and meaning.

**"Time is the soul of the world."**

Time is not merely a stream of moments, but a living essence that permeates and unites all things. It not only structures life but also imbues it with meaning.

Time as the basis of order.

Time shapes the rhythm of existence. The cycle of day and night, the turning of seasons—all are governed by the relentless passage of time. Without it, the world would descend into chaos.

Time as a creator.

Time offers the opportunity for growth and transformation. Every creation, from personal development to the evolution of the Universe, unfolds within its bounds.

Time as judge and witness.

Time reveals the truth, erases falsehoods and preserves what is genuine. The past lingers in memory, the future rests in hope, and the present lies within our grasp.

***Life Application:***

1. Cherish the moment. Each moment is unique and irreplaceable. Use the present wisely, as it is the only thing that truly belongs to you.
2. Honor the past, but do not dwell in it. Time offers lessons yet abhors stagnation. Learn from experience, but always look ahead.
3. Do not rush. Everything follows its own rhythm. The ability to act at the right moment is a cornerstone of a harmonious life.

Pythagoras viewed time as more than the mere passage of hours. To him, time was the soul of the world—a hidden force that moves the stars, shapes destinies, and gives meaning to all that exists.

**"Number is the essence of all things."**

Pythagoras taught that everything in the universe adheres to mathematical laws. For him, numbers were not mere abstractions but the foundation upon which all reality rests.

Numbers as the language of the universe.

All phenomena—from the movement of planets to the harmony of music—can be expressed through numbers. They bring order to chaos and unveil the hidden structure of the world.

Harmony through proportion.

The greatest beauty and harmony in nature, art, and science emerge from numerical ratios. The Golden Ratio and musical intervals are prime examples of numbers creating perfect order.

Numbers as symbols.

For Pythagoras, numbers held both quantitative and qualitative significance. Each number possessed unique characteristics and symbolism, reflecting the profound principles of existence.

***Life Application:***

1. Identify patterns in complex situations. Seemingly chaotic events often follow underlying rules that become clear through careful analysis. A mathematical approach helps structure thoughts and break problems into manageable components, providing clarity and enabling rational solutions. For instance, when planning a budget or allocating tasks, rely on numbers and precise calculations to avoid errors and miscommunication.
2. Align yourself with the rhythms of the world around you. Observe numerical symmetry in nature. Nature amazes with its precision and repetition—the spiral of a seashell, the petals of a flower, the patterns on a butterfly’s wings—all embody numerical harmony. By appreciating this beauty, we gain deeper insight into how the world works. Numbers not only describe these phenomena but also shape human creations in architecture, design, and music, where proportion and rhythm are essential.
3. Harness numbers for personal growth. Mathematics can be a powerful tool for self-improvement. Keep a diary to track time and tasks, and analyze your achievements using graphs and statistics to better manage resources and monitor progress. This cultivates motivation and discipline, clarifying your path to success.
4. Discover harmony in the little things. Awareness of numerical patterns reveals beauty in everyday life—the symmetry of furniture in a room, the perfect balance of a morning coffee. These small details show how numbers bring order and aesthetic charm to our lives.

By embracing numerical principles, we deepen our understanding of the world while achieving inner harmony, where every action, thought, and decision aligns with a unified rhythm.

**"Listen to understand, not to respond."**

True communication begins with listening not for answers but for understanding. This kind of listening demands attention and empathy, fostering deeper connections.

Listening as a tool for understanding.

In conversations, many people focus more on crafting their response than truly understanding the other person. This results in superficial exchanges, where the essence of words gets lost. Genuine listening reveals the hidden motives, emotions, and ideas behind words.

Empathy and respect.

Listening to understand demonstrates that we value the other person’s opinions and feelings. It goes beyond processing information—it is an act of respect that builds trust and strengthens relationships.

The ability to see a situation from different angles.

Attentive listening unveils new perspectives. It helps us move beyond our own beliefs, broadening our horizons and learning even from those with whom we disagree.

***Life Application:***

1. Be present. In conversations, give your full attention to the person speaking. Silence your inner monologue and listen without bias.
2. Ask clarifying questions. Rather than rushing to respond, seek a deeper understanding of what is being said. Such questions show genuine interest and encourage the other person to open up.
3. Take time before responding. Resisting the urge to form an immediate reply can be challenging at first. Practice intentional listening, aiming not to argue but to truly understand the other person’s perspective.
4. Cultivate patience. Listening often requires giving the other person the time to express themselves fully. Avoid interrupting or rushing them—it strengthens mutual understanding.

**The Miletian School.**

**The Doctrine of the Primary Principle of Thales of Miletus.**

**Thales of Miletus** (ca. 624–546 BC), the founder of the Miletian school. He is regarded as the first philosopher to explain the world through reason rather than mythology.

Born in Miletus, a Greek polis on the coast of Asia Minor, Thales came from an aristocratic family. Thanks to his family’s wealth and status, he received an excellent education. Thales traveled extensively, studying science and philosophy in Egypt and Babylon, much like Pythagoras.

Thales’ primary philosophical contribution lies in his doctrine of the original principle (arche). Thales asserted that water is the fundamental essence of all things. Thus, he introduced the first materialistic approach to explaining nature in the history of philosophy.

Thales of Miletus argued that the world could be understood through observation and reason. For example, he explained earthquakes as the result of the vibrations of the Earth floating on water rather than the actions of angry gods. This rational approach became the foundation for the subsequent development of science and philosophy.

Thales is renowned for his contributions to mathematics and astronomy. He applied geometric principles to practical problems, including measuring pyramid heights using shadows.

Thales of Miletus, became famous primarily for his discoveries in natural philosophy and science. In astronomy, Thales of Miletus predicted a solar eclipse, which greatly impressed his contemporaries and enhanced his reputation as a scientist. He also argued that the Moon shines by the reflected light of the Sun, which was an important step in understanding celestial phenomena.

In addition to his scientific achievements, Thales also took an active role in the political life of Miletus. He was known for his wisdom and was considered one of the seven sages of ancient Greece. Thales offered rational solutions for running the city and often gave advice to politicians and rulers. Thales firmly believed that philosophy should not remain an abstract theory but serve as a guiding star, illuminating the path to a better life. He believed true happiness lies in self-knowledge and the ability to wisely manage one’s desires. Only by realizing oneself and finding inner harmony can one come to true joy and freedom.

There are several versions of how Thales of Miletus died. One well-known story suggests that Thales fainted while watching a sports event and died from extreme heat.

**Anaximander: A Study of the Infinite**

Anaximander  (ca. 610-546 BC)was born in Miletus. As a student of Thales, Anaximander adopted his desire for a rational explanation of nature but went further in his philosophical investigations by proposing a new, original concept.

The central idea of Anaximander's doctrine is "apeiron", which means "limitless" or "indefinite" in Greek. Anaximander argued that apeiron is the primordial basis (arche) of all things. Unlike Thales, who considered water to be the prime mover, Anaximander proposed a more abstract concept that has no concrete physical properties. Apeiron is something infinite and indefinite, from which all things originate and to which they return after their destruction.

Anaximander also developed an early cosmological model. He believed that the Earth hung loosely at the center of the universe, unsupported by anything and surrounded by various celestial bodies. Anaximander argued that the heavenly bodies move in circular orbits and are at various distances from the Earth. This idea was revolutionary for its time and laid the foundation for the subsequent development of astronomy.

According to Anaximander, the universe and all beings in it arise from apeiron through a process of separation of opposites, such as hot and cold, wet and dry. These opposites interact with each other, leading to the formation of various elements and structures. Anaximander also assumed that the universe was subject to a constant cycle of creation and annihilation, reflecting his idea of the infinity and eternity of apeiron.

Anaximander did not limit himself to natural philosophy and cosmology. He thought about the place of man in the cosmos and the relationship between natural phenomena and ethical norms. His doctrine of the justice of nature suggests that all things return to the apeiron from which they arose, according to some natural order and regularity. This understanding of harmony and justice in the universe was reflected in later philosophical systems.

Anaximander was not only a philosopher and scientist but also an active participant in Miletus's social life. He was prominent in the political and social structure of the city. Anaximander was also known for his astronomical and geographical knowledge, which he used to improve navigation and trade.

Anaximander's ideas of an infinite beginning and cosmological theories inspired Anaximenes, Heraclitus, Plato, and many other philosophers of ancient Greece.

**Anaximenes: air as the basic substance of the universe.**

The exact dates of Anaximenes' birth and death are unknown, but it is assumed that he was born in Miletus and lived sometime between 585 and 525 B.C. Anaximenes was a student and follower of Anaximander, whose ideas about the limitless apeiron had a significant influence on him. However, unlike his teacher, Anaximenes proposed a more concrete and definite substance as the beginning of all things - air.

Anaximenes argued that air is the fundamental substance from which all things are derived. He believed that air had the ability to transform into other elements and forms through the processes of densification and rarefaction. In his opinion, it is these processes that lead to the formation of various natural phenomena and material objects.

According to Anaximenes, air, being infinitely extended and invisible, when rarefied turns into fire, and when condensed - first into wind, then into clouds, water, earth and, finally, into stones. Thus, air, passing through various stages of transformation, creates all the elements and structures of the world.

Anaximenes developed a cosmological model in which the Earth was represented as a flat disk floating in infinite air. He said that all celestial bodies, including the Sun, Moon, and stars, are made of air and move in circular orbits. In his view, the celestial bodies are held in place by the properties of air.

His ideas about the transformation of elements through densification and rarefaction resonated with the works of Heraclitus and Empedocles.

**Heraclit**us

**The flow of change and the harmony of opposites in the teachings of Heraclitus.**

As we observe the fluidity of life, we often say: "Everything flows, everything changes. This phrase belongs to the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus (ca. 535-475 B.C.), , who lived in Ephesus, a wealthy and cultured city in Ionia, on the western coast of Asia Minor. Heraclitus came from an aristocratic family and was entitled to the royal throne, but renounced it in favor of his brother, preferring the life of a philosopher and explorer.

Heraclitus led an isolated and secluded life, avoiding social activities and the hustle and bustle of the city. He was known for his melancholic character and critical attitude towards his contemporaries. Heraclitus despised the crowd and believed that most people were incapable of grasping the truth. His sayings and aphorisms were often enigmatic and paradoxical, earning him the nickname "the enigmatic" philosopher.

Heraclitus left behind his treatise On Nature (Greek: Περὶ φύσεως), which consisted of three parts: On the Universe, On Politics, and On Theology. Unfortunately, this work has not survived to this day in its entirety. We know about the teachings of Heraclitus and his philosophical ideas through quotations and fragments in the works of later philosophers and historians, such as Plato, Aristotle, Diogenes of Laertes, Plutarch and others.

One of the central tenets of Heraclitus' philosophy is the assertion that everything is in constant motion and change. This idea is expressed in his famous aphorism, "You cannot enter the same river twice." By this Heraclitus meant that the water in a river is constantly flowing, renewing itself, and thus the river never remains the same. This statement reflects his view of the world as a continuous stream of change where nothing remains the same.

Heraclitus believed that all existing things are subject to change, and this movement is the basis of being. Changes, in his opinion, are not accidental, but are subject to a certain law - logos. Logos in Heraclitus represents a universal principle of order and harmony that governs everything in the world. He believed that the logos could be understood through reason and philosophical understanding.

The second key aspect of Heraclitus' teachings is the idea of the unity of opposites. Heraclitus argued that opposites not only coexist but also depend on each other for their existence. For example, the concepts of "day" and "night", "life" and "death", "heat" and "cold" are all interrelated and form a wholeness. Heraclitus believed that only through the interaction of opposites is it possible to understand the nature of things.

Heraclitus emphasized that the struggle of opposites leads to harmony and order. For example, the tension of the strings on a bow or lyre creates a harmonious sound. This statement can be seen as an early idea of dialectics, a philosophical method based on the interaction of opposites and their resolution in a higher unity.

Heraclitus also developed the concept of fire as the basic element of the universe. He believed that fire was a symbol of constant change and transformation. In his view, all things arise from fire and return to it, which emphasizes the dynamic nature of being. Heraclitus' fire metaphor reflects his view of the world as a place of continuous process of emergence and disappearance.

**Heraclitus' most famous aphorisms.**

**"Everything flows, everything changes."**

This aphorism vividly captures the essence of Heraclitus' philosophy. He saw the universe as a flow in which nothing is unchanging. Everything that exists is in constant motion, transformation, and renewal.

The world is like a river.

Heraclitus compared life to a river: its water is constantly flowing, and by entering it twice, we touch new streams each time. Everything that surrounds us - people, events, nature - changes with each passing moment.

Change is a law of the universe.

Heraclitus argued that change is not an exception but the basis of being. Even if things appear to be stationary, at a deeper level they are constantly changing.

Opposition and harmony.

Heraclitus saw in the changes the struggle of opposites - day replaces night, and life turns to death. However, it is through this opposition that harmony and balance are achieved.

***Life Application:***

1. Accept change as part of life. Recognizing that change is inevitable helps you adapt more easily to new circumstances and see them as an opportunity for growth.
2. Don't cling to the past. Understanding the nature of constant movement frees you from the fear of change and helps you live in the present.
3. Find strength in change. Every change is a chance for renewal. Difficulties over time turn into valuable lessons, toughen us up, and make us stronger.

**"You can't step into the same river twice.**"

The river you enter is still the same at first glance, but its water is not the same as before. Everything around us is in constant motion, and this applies not only to the outside world but also to ourselves.

The variability of the outside world.

Nature changes every moment: winds carry clouds away, water sinks into the ground, and life around us moves forward. Even those things that seem stable are in fact subject to the law of change.

Human Variability.

We ourselves change from moment to moment. Our thoughts, feelings and perception of the world never remain the same. You cannot enter the "same river" again, because you are not the same person you were before.

The temporal nature of everything.

Everything that seems permanent is an illusion. Each moment is unique and unrepeatable. This realization teaches you to appreciate the moment and see the beauty in change.

***Life Application:***

1. Embrace change. Change is inevitable, and to resist it is to go against the natural order of things. Embrace them as an opportunity for growth and discovery.
2. Appreciate every moment. Realizing that everything is temporary helps you see the value of the present and find joy in the little things.
3. Learn from experience, but don't cling to it. Every situation is unique, and even similar events will never be identical. This gives us the freedom to rethink and act in new ways.

**"War is the father of all things and the king of all things."**

By "war" Heraclitus understood not only physical conflict, but also the universal struggle of forces that moves the world and creates order. Heraclitus believed that struggle is not the enemy of order, but its creator. The world finds harmony not in spite of conflicts, but thanks to them, and this truth applies to all aspects of life.

Struggle as a source of change.

Heraclitus believed that it is in the clash of opposites that everything new is born. Day and night, heat and cold, life and death - these opposites are necessary for each other. Without struggle, there would be no movement, and without movement, there would be no life.

Harmony through conflict.

At first glance, the struggle seems destructive. But it is in it that Heraclitus saw the basis of order. Just as the taut strings of the lyre create the harmony of sound, the conflict of opposites creates the harmony of the world.

The Power of War.

Heraclitus called war the "king" of all things, emphasizing its supreme role in the structure of the universe. It is through struggle that boundaries are established and the laws of nature and society are formed.

***Life Application:***

1. Don't be afraid of conflict. Conflicts are an inevitable part of life. It is important to see them not only as challenges but also as opportunities for growth and change.
2. Look for harmony in contradictions. Opposing views, ideas, or feelings may seem incompatible. But by accepting them, you can find balance and new understanding.
3. Take difficulties as a path to order. Every crisis or struggle within us can lead to inner harmony if we learn the right lessons from them.

**"The way up and the way down are one and the same."**

Life is a continuous flow. By "path," Heraclitus meant not only physical movement but also a deeper philosophical principle: rise and fall, growth and decline are inseparable parts of a single process.

The unity of opposites.

Heraclitus believed that opposites do not exist independently of each other. Ascent is inextricably linked with descent: to ascend, one must start from somewhere, and to descend, one must have risen earlier.

The cyclical nature of life.

Everything in nature and human life is subject to cycles. Day replaces night, spring comes after winter. The highs and lows of life are parts of the same path.

The subjectivity of perspective.

What appears to be upward movement to one may seem downward to another. It all depends on the point of view from which we look at things.

***Life Application:***

1. Accept change as part of the journey. In the ups and downs of life, remember that these are just stages on the same path. Neither successes nor difficulties are eternal.
2. Find meaning in every movement. Whether you are up or down, every movement has meaning. Even in decline, you can find new lessons and opportunities for growth.
3. Don't be afraid to start over. A descent often precedes a new ascent. Understanding this makes it easier to accept difficulties and see them as preparation for a new start.

**"Immortals are mortal, mortals are immortal;**

**live by the death of these and die by the life of these.**"

This enigmatic aphorism of Heraclitus reflects the profound relationship between life and death, the finite and the eternal.

The interdependence of life and death.

Heraclitus argued that life and death are inseparable. The life of one creature is made possible by the death of another. This is manifested everywhere in nature: plants grow by eating decayed organic matter, and animals survive by eating other organisms. Thus, death becomes not an end, but a source of new life.

Immortality in mortality.

Mortals, living in limited time, can achieve immortality through their deeds. Their ideas, creativity, and discoveries remain alive, influencing the next generations. For example, Heraclitus' writings continue to inspire people thousands of years later. Physical mortality does not erase their impact.

The mortality of the immortals.

This thought has many interpretations. An immortal can lose this gift and become mortal if he makes a mistake. One can also interpret these words as follows: when people stop honoring or worshiping gods, their "life" ends.

The unity of opposites.

Heraclitus saw the world as an arena of constant struggle and interaction of opposites: day and night, life and death, birth and destruction. However, this struggle does not destroy harmony, but, on the contrary, creates it. Life is sustained by death, and death gives rise to new life. This cyclical movement underlies the existence of the whole world.

Transient and eternal.

In every moment of life, death is already embedded, and in every moment of death lies the beginnings of new life. This perspective reminds us that all that is transitory is inherently connected to the eternal and that every end is but part of a greater process.

***Life Application:***

1. Appreciate the transient. Realizing that everything is temporary helps us to appreciate moments of joy and love more deeply. We begin to realize that it is finitude that gives life its uniqueness and beauty.
2. Look for the eternal in your actions. Our actions, words, and thoughts can live longer than we do. By creating something meaningful, we gain a kind of immortality, passing on a part of ourselves to the next generation.
3. Accept the natural course of things. Fear of death is lessened by seeing it as part of a larger cycle. It helps to accept the inevitable losses and see them not only as an end, but also as a new beginning.
4. Find harmony in change. Life is filled with ups and downs, losses and opportunities. Recognizing that life and death are interconnected fosters balance and inner peace.

**"All things happen by enmity and necessity."**

(πάντα κατ᾽ ἔριν γίνεσθαι καὶ χρεών.)

Heraclitus argued that conflict and necessity are inseparable forces driving the universe, sparking change and bringing forth the new.

Hostility as a source of motion.

Heraclitus viewed enmity not as a destructive force but as a catalyst for progress. Change, whether in nature, society, or within the individual, arises through confrontation. Opposites clash, generating the balance essential for the world’s existence.

Necessity is an inevitable order.

For Heraclitus, necessity represented the natural order of things—the laws of nature and fate. While enmity drives change, necessity directs this process, ensuring harmony and stability. Everything unfolds as it should, with each event holding its place and meaning in the grand scheme.

Becoming through conflict.

Heraclitus emphasized that nothing comes into being without struggle. In nature, this is evident in the changing of seasons or the growth of plants breaking through the soil. In human life, it is through overcoming challenges that individuals grow stronger and wiser.

Harmony through confrontation.

The enmity between opposites generates order, not chaos. Just as the strings of a musical instrument produce harmony only under precise tension, the world attains harmony through struggle and necessity.

***Life Application:***

1. View conflicts as opportunities for growth. Difficulties and contradictions are inevitable, but they offer chances for personal and professional development. Facing challenges allows us to learn, adapt, and improve.
2. Seek meaning in the inevitable. Every event carries its reason and significance. Even the most challenging situations conceal valuable lessons.
3. Use conflict as a catalyst for creation. Conflict is not a dead end but a starting point for something new. See it as an opportunity for change, a reassessment of values, or the pursuit of better solutions.
4. Discover harmony in confrontation. Instead of avoiding conflict, learn to navigate it and achieve balance. This applies not only to external challenges but also to the inner struggles between desires, goals, and fears, which can foster inner harmony.

**"The living and the dead, the awake and the sleeping, the young and the old, are one and the same in us;**

**For these, being changed, are these, and these, being changed, are these."**

Heraclitus argued that opposite states not only coexist but also transition into one another, forming an unending cycle of change.

The unity of opposites.

Heraclitus emphasized that opposites—life and death, wakefulness and sleep, youth and old age—are not isolated. They are interdependent, flowing into one another. Life inherently contains elements of death, just as youth carries the seeds of old age.

Constant change.

Everything we experience is in constant flux. Wakefulness gives way to sleep, youth inevitably transforms into old age, and life itself culminates in death. Yet these changes do not destroy; they create, perpetuating the ongoing cycle.

Relativity of opposites.

The boundaries between these states are fluid. What seems lifeless may harbor the beginnings of renewal, just as sleep serves as preparation for action. Perspective and timing shape how we perceive these transitions.

***Life Application:***

1. Embrace the inevitability of change. Recognizing that everything is in flux makes life’s transitions—from youth to maturity, from action to rest—easier to accept. Change is both natural and essential.
2. Seek balance between extremes. Learn to harmonize opposing states: to act and rest at the right times, to value youth without fearing old age.
3. View difficulties as temporary phases. Challenges are merely steps in a larger cycle. Over time, circumstances evolve, bringing new opportunities for growth.

**"Fire lives by the death of air, and air lives by the death of fire; water lives by the death of earth, earth by the death of water."**

Fire, air, water, and earth not only replace one another but also sustain themselves through mutual absorption and destruction. The world is a dynamic system where destruction and creation go hand in hand. Everything in nature, including human life, is governed by the law of change, where every "dying" marks the beginning of something new. Heraclitus' philosophy is a philosophy of eternal renewal, which teaches us to accept the world as it is.

Unity through transformation.

The interaction of elements generates movement and sustains life. When one element fades, it gives rise to another. For example, fire "feeds" on air, but it also turns to ash, enriching the earth. This change creates balance and keeps the world in motion.

Death is the source of life.

For Heraclitus, the death of one phenomenon was not an end but a necessary precondition for the birth of another. This is a manifestation of his idea that opposites are not only connected but also give rise to each other.

Cyclicality of change.

The elements of nature perpetually transform into one another. Water evaporates into the air, the air becomes fire, and then fire returns to earth. This process has no beginning and no end, reflecting the cyclical nature of all things.

***Life Application:***

1. Accept change as part of life. Realizing that every ending is a new beginning helps you accept change and loss more easily.
2. Find strength in transformation. Difficulties and destruction are stages that provide opportunities for new growth. For example, a crisis can be the basis for renewal and personal development.
3. Look for balance in opposites. Just as nature maintains balance through the cycle of elements, so in life it is important to find harmony between different states - activity and rest, joy and sadness.

**"Measure is the greatest virtue, and wisdom consists in speaking the truth and acting according to nature, with attention ruling."**

This aphorism of Heraclitus unites three central ideas: the importance of measure, the value of truth, and the necessity of living in harmony with natural laws. Together they form the basis of his philosophy of harmony and wisdom.

Measure as the highest virtue.

For Heraclitus, measure is the ability to maintain a balance between extremes. It encompasses not only moderation in actions, but also harmony in thoughts, feelings, and desires. Measure prevents excess and preserves balance in life.

Truth is the foundation of wisdom.

Truth is not merely the literal statement of fact but a pursuit of honesty with oneself and others. For Heraclitus, wisdom is connected with realizing the nature of things, and truth helps a person to understand and accept them as they are.

The following nature.

To act "according to nature" means to live in harmony with the natural laws of the universe. This involves understanding one’s place in the world, honoring its rhythms, and fostering harmony between the individual and the environment.

Attention Management.

The ability to focus on what truly matters and eliminate distractions is key to the right action. Only by consciously managing your attention can you stay in moderation, speak the truth, and act in accordance with nature.

***Life Application:***

1. Maintain balance. Avoid extremes in desires, actions, and emotions. The measure helps to maintain mental clarity and inner peace.
2. Practice honesty. Strive for truthfulness in both words and deeds. This builds trust, strengthens relationships, and allows you to live in harmony with yourself.
3. Align with the natural rhythm. Avoid forcing or delaying natural processes. Respect your physical and emotional needs by listening to the rhythms of nature.
4. Focus on what truly matters. Directing your attention prevents wasted time and energy. Focus on what is really important for your growth and well-being.

**"Nature likes to hide."**

The true essence of things often lies hidden beneath outward appearances. Nature, in its profound depths, does not reveal itself easily and demands effort to uncover. This statement applies not only to the world around us but also to the human soul, which holds many secrets.

The hidden essence of things.

What we see and perceive is merely the surface. The true nature of phenomena and processes — their causes and laws — lies deeper. For example, the movement of stars in the sky seems simple but hides the complex laws of the cosmos.

Cognition through effort.

Nature demands not only observation but also deep reflection, urging us to ask questions and seek the truth. Only through the realization of hidden connections and regularities can we come closer to understanding its deep structure.

Human nature.

A person’s true motives, emotions, and goals are often concealed not only from others but even from themselves. Self-knowledge requires courage and attention to see what is hidden.

Stealth as a defense.

Nature conceals its secrets to preserve balance and order. If everything were obvious, it could disrupt the natural flow of life. Appreciating this secrecy is part of realizing harmony.

***Life Application:***

1. Don't settle for superficial explanations and conclusions. Ask questions, reflect, look for hidden connections - whether in nature, art, or relationships.
2. Develop observation. Pay attention to small things and details that may indicate hidden truths. For example, in communication, it may be not directly said, but conveyed by gestures or intonation.
3. Know yourself. Think about what aspects of your character or motives are hidden from you. Self-knowledge helps you understand your own goals and actions.
4. Respect the mysteries of nature. Don't seek to control or instantly explain everything. Sometimes mystery is part of the beauty and harmony of the world.

The world is like a mysterious symphony that requires careful listening. True understanding of the nature of things comes only to those who are willing to seek and see more than what is on the surface.

**"Knowledge is not wisdom. Wisdom is knowing the cause of things."**

There is a distinction between merely accumulating facts and deeply understanding their meaning. True wisdom resides not in the quantity of information but in the ability to discern interconnections, causes, and essence.

Accumulation of knowledge and understanding.

Knowledge remains scattered and superficial unless carefully analyzed and grounded in reflection on its causes.

Reason as the key to truth.

Wisdom lies in the ability to delve into the essence of phenomena, perceiving not just their manifestations but their underlying mechanisms. For example, to know how a tree grows is knowledge, but to understand why and thanks to what it grows is wisdom.

A critique of scientists and philosophers.

Citing the examples of Hesiod, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, and Hecataeus, Heraclitus suggests that even great thinkers may be "rich in knowledge but poor in wisdom" if they fail to seek the deeper nature of things.

The goal of wisdom is harmony.

Wisdom helps man not only to realize the laws of nature and society but also to live in harmony with them.

***Life Application:***

1. Go beyond mere facts. In studying anything, strive to uncover its causes, connections, and consequences. For example, instead of memorizing numbers, try to understand their meaning.
2. Ask questions. Constantly ask yourself "Why?" and "Why?" This will help you see the hidden connections between phenomena.
3. Pursue a holistic perspective. Integrate knowledge from diverse fields to grasp the bigger picture. Wisdom is born at the intersection of disciplines, where knowledge begins to complement each other.
4. Practice meaningful listening skills. Reading, observing, and reflecting will help you develop the habit of seeing the deeper meaning behind the facts.

**"Measure is everywhere and in everything."**

Heraclitus highlights measure and proportion as essential principles of harmony in both nature and human life. Heraclitus asserts that measure is a universal law sustaining balance and order.

Nature and Measure.

Everything in the world adheres to the laws of proportion: from planetary orbits to the structure of a cell. Violation of proportion leads to disharmony, while its observance ensures stability and beauty - both in nature and in art.

Measure as a virtue.

For individuals, measure signifies the ability to balance extremes: excess and deficiency, passion and detachment, ambition and contentment. This quality makes life harmonious and sustainable.

Proportion as a law of development.

Measure is not a static condition but a dynamic equilibrium. Both in nature and in human life, it allows adapting to changes while maintaining inner integrity.

Man is the measure of things.

This aphorism can also be viewed through a human lens: the human mind, emotions, and perceptions define the measure of all things. We evaluate the world through our abilities and see harmony or disharmony through our internal standards.

***Life Application:***

1. Strive for balance. In all aspects of life — work, relationships, and rest — seek proportion. Avoid extremes that disrupt your well-being or harmony with others.
2. Value moderation. Find contentment in what is essential. This does not mean giving up ambition, but it teaches you to avoid greed and excesses that can cause harm.
3. Look for harmony in the details. Look for ratios and proportions in your life. How is your time organized? How much energy do you devote to your goals, to people, and to rest? These proportions determine the quality of your life.
4. Follow the laws of nature. Nature's rhythm is the perfect school of proportion. The change of day and night, the seasons, the cycles of life - everything teaches us proportionality and the ability to live in the flow without resisting the inevitable changes.

**"Wisdom is the knowledge of the One who governs all things through all things."**

These words of Heraclitus unveil his concept of wisdom as the understanding of the universal law that underlies all things. This unified and all-pervasive law binds all phenomena and processes into a cohesive whole.

The unity of all things.

Heraclitus argued that beneath the apparent diversity of the world lies a unifying principle—a universal law governing every aspect of reality. This unity is expressed through the laws of nature, the cycles of life, and the interaction of opposites.

Wisdom as comprehension of universal law.

Wisdom is not merely the knowledge of particulars but the capacity to perceive the world as a unified whole. It is the ability to recognize how one phenomenon is related to another and how they together form a harmonious order.

The law governs everything.

The universal law penetrates and governs all that exists. It is manifested in the movement of the stars, the passage of time, and the change of day and night, in human life and relationships. To understand this law is to understand how the world works and how to live in it.

Harmony in contradictions.

The One governs all, including the interplay of opposing forces. Opposites, such as life and death, light and darkness, day and night, are in eternal connection and interdependence, creating balance.

***Life Application:***

1. Seek the interconnectedness of phenomena. Reflect on how events in your life, nature, and society interrelate. Recognizing these connections helps you better understand the world around you.
2. Strive to discern the whole within the particular. There is a deeper law behind each individual phenomenon. See details as part of a larger order, not isolated events.
3. Live in harmony with nature. Follow the natural laws of life: respect its rhythms, accept the inevitable changes, and do not resist what cannot be changed.
4. Cultivate inner harmony. Understanding the One Law aligns your desires, thoughts, and actions, integrating them into a greater whole.

**"For the awakened, there is one common world, for the sleeping there is each to their own."**

There are cardinal differences in the perception of reality: between those who realize the essence of things and those who are immersed in subjective illusions.

A shared world for the awakened.

The awakened are those who perceive the world as it is, without distortion or illusion. They realize the universal laws that bind everything that exists and see harmony in the totality of the world. For them, reality is unified and objective.

The illusory worlds of the sleeping.

Sleepers are people whose minds are closed to deep awareness. Their perception is limited by personal perceptions, emotions and prejudices. Each of them creates their own subjective picture of the world, moving away from the common and unified.

The state of being "asleep" and "awake".

Sleep in this context symbolizes a state of ignorance, delusion, and limitation. Waking, on the other hand, reflects awareness, wisdom, and the ability to see the truth.

Unity and separateness.

The awakened are bound together by a common understanding of the order of the universe, while the sleeping are divided by their subjective perceptions. This contrast emphasizes the difference between objective reality and the illusory world created by the mind.

***Life Application:***

1. Strive for mindfulness. Work on seeing things as they are, freeing yourself from preconceptions and misconceptions. Conscious perception helps you find the truth.
2. Learn to go beyond your experience. Try to understand the world through objective laws, not only through the prism of your emotions and beliefs. This will help you get closer to the common and unified.
3. Be aware of your illusions. Recognize the moments when subjectivity prevents you from seeing the truth. Ask yourself questions: "Is this reality or my interpretation?"
4. Seek common ground with others. Even if everyone perceives the world differently, strive to find common ground. This helps to build harmonious relationships and better understand others.

**The Eleatic School**

**Parmenides: Nonexistence and the Limits of Existence**

Parmenides of Eleia (ca. 515–450 B.C.) laid the foundation for metaphysics with his ideas about being and non-being, profoundly influencing subsequent schools of philosophy. His philosophy, presented in the poem On Nature, is a profound exploration of the nature of reality and the limits of existing things.

Parmenides was born in Eleia, a Greek colony in southern Italy. Little is known about his life. Parmenides was the founder of the Eleatic school of philosophy, which also included his student Zeno of Eleia, famous for his paradoxes. His poem On Nature is the main source of our knowledge of Parmenides' philosophy.

At the heart of Parmenides’ philosophy lies the distinction between being and non-being. **Parmenides argued that only being is real while non-being neither exists nor can be conceived or expressed**. This claim is presented in the form of a metaphysical argument that questions our ordinary conceptions of the world.

Parmenides described being as eternal, immutable, indivisible, and unified. He asserted that being cannot arise from nothingness, as nothingness does not exist. Thus, **being has always been and always will be, it is not subject to change or annihilation.** Parmenides' being is absolute and continuous, it is not divided into parts and contains no differences.

Parmenides unequivocally denied the existence of nothingness. In his opinion, to speak of nothingness is self-contradictory, as nothingness can neither be conceived nor articulated. This means that all reasoning and perceptions based on the idea of nothingness are erroneous and illusory.

Parmenides also discussed the limits of existence. **Since being is one and indivisible, it cannot have external boundaries**. Otherwise, beyond the boundaries of being there would have to be nothingness, which is impossible. Therefore, **being has neither beginning nor end, it is infinite and pervasive.**

Parmenides’ teachings profoundly shaped the development of Western philosophy. His ideas about being and non-being became the basis for the metaphysical thoughts of Plato, who developed them in his theory of ideas. Plato, deeply influenced by Parmenides' arguments, sought to reconcile his teachings with the world of phenomena.

Zeno, a student of Parmenides, developed his ideas through his paradoxes, which demonstrated the logical difficulties of perceiving motion and change. These paradoxes questioned the conventional ideas of space and time and continued to develop the philosophical ideas of the Eleatic school.

**Reflections on Infinity: Zeno's paradoxes**

Zeno of Eleia (ca. 490–430 ВС), like his teacher Parmenides, was a member of the Eleatic school of philosophy, which upheld the unity and immutability of being.

Zeno was born in Elea and accompanied Parmenides on his travels, actively defending and developing his teacher’s teachings. Plato mentions Zeno in his dialogue "Parmenides", where Zeno appears as a defender of Eleatic philosophy.

Zeno is best known for his paradoxes, which he created to defend Parmenides' doctrine of the unity and immutability of being. These paradoxes are directed against those who assert the reality of multiplicity and motion. Here are a few of Zeno's most famous paradoxes:

1. **The paradox of Achilles and the tortoise**.

In this paradox, Zeno argues that the fast Achilles can never catch up with the slow tortoise if the latter gains a slight advantage. When Achilles reaches the point where the tortoise once was, the tortoise has already advanced slightly further. This process continues indefinitely, which would seem to make it impossible for the turtle to catch up.

1. **The paradox of dichotomy**.

This paradox asserts that movement is impossible because before traveling the whole path, one must travel half of it, and before that, one must travel a quarter of the path, and so on to infinity. Since the divisions are infinite, reaching the endpoint appears impossible.

1. **The Arrow Paradox**.

In this paradox, Zeno asserts that at any given moment, a flying arrow occupies a specific position in space and does not move. Thus, if time consists of instants, the arrow is always at rest and never moves.

1. **The stadium paradox**.

In this paradox, Zeno describes three groups moving in opposite directions in a stadium. The first group of bodies stands still, the second group moves in one direction, and the third group moves in the opposite direction. They are all moving at the same speed, but Zeno states that the moment one group passes the other, the time taken for this event will be contradictory.

Zeno tries to show that if some bodies move relative to other bodies, it would seem that half the time of motion turns out to be equal to double time, which calls into question the concepts of time and motion. For example, if objects A and B are moving in opposite directions with a velocity that is equal to the velocity of object C moving towards them, then according to our intuitions, the time of motion of A relative to C and B relative to C should be the same. However, Zeno argues that half the time (for one part of the motion) turns out to be equal to double the time for the other, which creates a logical contradiction.

This paradox illustrates the problems associated with dividing time and space into infinite parts and their impact on our understanding of motion

Zeno’s paradoxes profoundly influenced both philosophical and mathematical thought. They prompted philosophers and mathematicians to explore the nature of infinity, motion, and time. Zeno's paradoxes aroused the interest of philosophers such as Aristotle, who tried to refute them, and mathematicians, who developed theories of infinitesimal quantities.

These paradoxes also influenced the development of the theory of limits and calculus in mathematics, becoming an important step in the understanding of infinity and continuity. In more recent times, Zeno's paradoxes have inspired areas such as analytic philosophy and set theory.

**Melissus of Samos: philosopher of eternal and infinite being.**

Melissus of Samos (ca. 5th-century ВС) was a prominent figure of the Eleatic school and a devoted follower of Parmenides’ ideas. His doctrine of eternal and infinite being profoundly influenced the evolution of ancient Greek metaphysics and ontology.

Melissus of Samos was born on the island of Samos, a vibrant cultural and commercial hub in the Aegean Sea. Melissus was not only a philosopher but also a military leader. Historical accounts recount that he commanded the Samos fleet against the Athenians, achieving victory —a testament to his strategic acumen and the respect he commanded among his contemporaries.

Melissus built upon Parmenides’ ideas, expanding the doctrine of a singular, eternal, and unchanging being. His philosophy survived in the form of fragments and references in the works of later philosophers such as Aristotle and Simplicius.

The central concept of Melissus' philosophy is being, which he considered eternal, infinite, and unchanging. Melissus asserted that being has always existed and will always exist. Unlike Parmenides, who emphasized the unity and immutability of being, Melissus emphasized its infinity.

1. The eternity of being.

Melissus argued that being has always been and always will be. This means that it has no beginning and no end, which excludes the possibility of origination and annihilation. The eternity of being makes it immutable and unchanging.

1. The infinity of being.

Meliss also believed that being is infinite in the spatial sense. He reasoned that if being were finite, it would necessitate the existence of nothingness beyond it, which is inconceivable. Thus, being must be infinite and all-encompassing.

Meliss used logical arguments to defend his ideas. One of his key arguments is this: if being were subject to change, it would cease to be itself. Since change implies a transition from one state to another, a being that changes would have to include non-being, which is contrary to its nature.

Melissus maintained that being must be unified, as multiplicity implies division and difference—concepts incompatible with the notion of a singular and unchanging being.

Melissus’ philosophy profoundly shaped the trajectory of ancient Greek thought. Plato used the ideas of the Eleates to develop his theory of ideas, in which true reality is unchanging and eternal, as opposed to the changeable world of phenomena. Aristotle also critically analyzed the teachings of Melissus and other Eleates, which contributed to the development of his own philosophical system.

**Empedocles: harmony and conflict in the theory of the four elements**

Empedocles (ca. 490–430 ВС) was born in Akragas on the island of Sicily. He was a philosopher, poet, physician, and politician, combining multiple roles in his pursuit of knowledge and influence. His theories on the nature of the universe—especially the concept of four elements (earth, water, air, and fire) and two opposing forces (love and strife) — profoundly influenced the evolution of philosophy and science. Empedocles' doctrine is a unique combination of cosmology, metaphysics, and theology, with harmony and conflict playing central roles.

**Four Element Theory**

Empedocles proposed one of the earliest systematic theories of nature, asserting that all beings and objects consist of four fundamental elements: earth, water, air, and fire. These elements are eternal and immutable, with all changes in the world arising from their intermingling and separation.

1. **Earth** - symbolizes solidity and stability.
2. **Water** - represents fluidity and change.
3. **Air** - associated with lightness and mobility.
4. **Fire** - represents energy and transformation.

**The forces of love and strife**

Alongside the four elements, Empedocles introduced two opposing forces—love (philia) and discord (neikos)—that govern their interaction.

1. Love (philia).

Love unites the elements, creating harmony and order. Under the influence of love, the elements strive for unity and form complex structures and living beings.

1. Discord (neikos).

Discord, on the other hand, separates the elements, causing chaos and destruction. Under the influence of discord, the elements tend to separate and return to their original states.

**Harmony and conflict**

Empedocles' doctrine of harmony and conflict emphasizes the dynamic nature of the universe. The interplay of love and strife ensures constant movement and change in the world. In the cyclical process described by Empedocles, periods of domination by love alternate with periods of domination by discord, resulting in the birth and destruction of worlds and beings.

Empedocles believed that in moments of love's maximum influence, the universe achieves harmony and all elements unite into a whole. On the contrary, when discord reaches its climax, the elements separate and return to their original states. This cycle is endless and represents the basis of all natural processes.

**Anaxagoras: a study of reason and the infinite division of matter**

Anaxagoras (ca. 500–428 ВС) was born in Clazomenae, a city in Asia Minor, and later relocated to Athens, where his teachings gained widespread recognition. He was the teacher of Pericles, a prominent Athenian political leader, and had a significant influence on the intellectual life of Athens at the time. Anaxagoras was the first philosopher to bring to Athens the ideas of Ionian natural philosophy, which sought to explain the nature of the world in terms of natural processes. His doctrine of mind (nous) and the infinite division of matter represented an important step in the development of metaphysics and science.

**The doctrine of reason (nous)**

The central concept of Anaxagoras' philosophy is nous (reason). Anaxagoras contended that nous is an infinite, omniscient, and omnipresent principle governing all existence. Unlike material elements, nous embodies consciousness and purpose, making it the source of order and harmony in the universe.

1. Nous is the cosmic mind.

Nous is the active beginning that sets in motion and orders the material elements. It is not mixed with matter and remains pure and independent, ruling the universe from outside.

1. Functions of nous.

Nous is responsible for the birth, growth, and ordering of all things. He is the cause of cosmic order and harmony, ensuring the existence and stability of the world.

**Infinite fission of matter**

Anaxagoras also proposed the theory of infinite division of matter, which represents an important contribution to the development of atomistics and physics.

1. Homeomeria.

Anaxagoras posited that all things are composed of infinitely small particles, called homeomeria, which can be further divided into smaller parts. These particles possess the qualities of the things to which they belong.

1. Infinite division.

According to Anaxagoras, each homeomere can be divided into infinitesimal parts, and in each of them, the properties of the whole will be preserved. This idea anticipated the development of the atomistic theory and the concept of the divisibility of matter.

Anaxagoras' doctrine of nous and the infinite division of matter had a significant influence on subsequent philosophy and science.

**Influence on Plato**.

Plato adopted Anaxagoras’ concept of a rational principle governing the universe. In his theory of ideas, Plato developed this concept, arguing that true reality consists in eternal and unchanging ideas that are governed by reason.

**Influence on Aristotle**.

Aristotle critically engaged with Anaxagoras’ teachings but incorporated some of his ideas into his metaphysics. In particular, Aristotle developed the concept of acting reason, which sets all things in motion.

**The Fundamental Substance of the Universe**

**What is the basic substance of the universe?**

Various schools of philosophy have provided distinct answers to these questions.

1. **Specific elements (Thales, Anaximenes, Heraclitus)**.

These philosophers used concrete substances as the basic substance, emphasizing the importance of observation and empirical data. Thales posited water as the fundamental substance of all things, emphasizing its essential role in sustaining life. Anaximenes proposed air as the basic substance, considering its ability to transform into other elements through condensation and rarefaction. Heraclitus identified fire as the fundamental substance, symbolizing his philosophy of perpetual movement and transformation.

1. **Abstract concepts (Anaximander, Parmenides)**.

Anaximander and Parmenides sought more abstract and universal principles. Anaximander introduced the apeiron, an infinite and indefinite principle from which all things arise and to which they return. This concept emphasizes the idea of infinity and perpetual motion. Parmenides, by contrast, asserted that being is the sole reality—unchanging and eternal. His philosophy rejects any form of change and multiplicity as illusions, which emphasizes the radical difference between his views and other Pre-Socratic thinkers.

1. **Mathematical Nature (Pythagoras)**.

The Pythagorean school proposed numbers and mathematical ratios as the basis of reality. Pythagoras believed that all beings and phenomena could be explained through mathematical principles, which led to the formation of the idea of harmony and order in the universe. This approach laid the foundation for the subsequent development of science and mathematics, integrating abstract mathematical concepts into the explanation of nature.

1. **Pluralism (Empedocles, Anaxagoras)**.

These philosophers proposed more complex systems involving multiple elements and forces. Empedocles formulated the theory of four elements — earth, water, air, and fire — which interact perpetually under the opposing forces of love (philia) and discord (neikos). These forces unite and divide the elements, ensuring a dynamic balance in the universe. Anaxagoras proposed the concept of homeomeria, the infinitesimal particles that make up all things. He also introduced the concept of nous (mind), which governs and orders matter, ensuring harmony and order in the universe.

**The Struggle for Truth: Heraclitus’s Change and Parmenides’s Constancy**

Heraclitus of Ephesus and Parmenides of Eleia represent two diametrically opposed views on the nature of reality. Heraclitus argued that everything is in constant motion and change, while Parmenides argued that being is one, unchanging and eternal, and that all change is only illusion. These two philosophical concepts laid the foundation for the further development of metaphysics and ontology.

**A comparative analysis of the teachings of Heraclitus and Parmenides.**

1. **The nature of reality**.

Heraclitus considered reality dynamic and changeable, emphasizing continuous movement and change. Parmenides, on the contrary, argued that reality is static and unchanging, denying the possibility of change.

1. **Core Substance**.

Heraclitus selected fire as a symbol of change, while Parmenides eschewed specific elements, emphasizing the unity and immutability of being.

1. **Cognitive methods**.

Heraclitus relied on sense perception and logos to understand nature, whereas Parmenides rejected sense data, relying solely on rational thought.

**Philosophical implications**.

Heraclitus’ doctrine of motion and change laid the groundwork for dialectics, profoundly influencing the philosophies of Hegel and Marx. Parmenides' doctrine of unchanging being influenced Plato's metaphysics and Aristotle's concept of the immobile engine

**Comparative Analysis of Cosmological Theories in Pre-Socratic Philosophy**

**Anaximander and Anaxagoras** introduced the concept of the orderliness of the universe through apeiron and nous respectively. Anaximander believed that apeiron regulated order and harmony in nature, while Anaxagoras argued that nous (mind) was the active force that ordered matter and created cosmic order.

**Heraclitus** believed that the logos governs change. Logos, according to Heraclitus, is a rational principle through which the nature of things can be understood and which provides order and harmony in the universe.

**Empedocles** introduced love (philia) and discord (neikos) as the fundamental forces governing the universe. These forces unite and divide the elements, ensuring dynamic balance and order in the universe.

**Parmenides** believed that being itself is orderly and unchanging. For Parmenides, true reality does not need an additional principle of ordering, since it is inherently unchanging and harmonious.

**The Pythagorean school** introduced mathematical principles and numbers as the basis of cosmic order. The Pythagoreans argued that the universe was organized according to numerical ratios and harmony. For them, numbers were fundamental builders of reality, and the music of spheres arising from the movement of celestial bodies illustrated the harmony and order of the universe.

**Anaximander** posited that apeiron governed order and harmony in nature, whereas Anaxagoras contended that nous (mind) was the active principle orchestrating matter and establishing cosmic order.

**Thales** envisioned the earth floating on water as the basis for understanding the cosmic order. He saw water as a vital element regulating nature and ensuring the stability of the world.

Despite their differences and occasionally contradictory views, all the pre-Socratics share the belief that the world is governed by an active principle, without which the universe as we know it would not exist. All of them, in one form or another, recognize the existence of some acting force or principle that governs the world and is responsible for its order and structure.

**Argumentative Methods of the Pre-Socratic Philosophers**

Pre-Socratic philosophers developed various methods of argumentation to support their theories and explanations of nature. These methods included deductive and inductive reasoning, which allowed them to formulate more logically sound conclusions and hypotheses.

**Deductive reasoning.**

Deductive reasoning entails deriving specific conclusions from general principles or axioms. This method of argumentation was used by many Pre-Socratic philosophers to explain their theories.

Example. Parmenides (ca. 515-450 BCE) used deductive reasoning in his argument for the unity and immutability of being. He argued that being could not arise from non-being and could not be divided or changed. His conclusions were based on logical axioms and principles that he considered self-evident.

**Inductive reasoning.**

Inductive reasoning, conversely, consists of forming general conclusions based on observations and empirical evidence. This method also found application among the Pre-Socratic philosophers.

For example, Empedocles (ca. 490-430 B.C.) used inductive reasoning to develop his theory of the four elements. He observed a variety of natural phenomena and concluded that all things are made up of combinations of earth, water, air, and fire. His method was to observe and summarize these data.

**The Influence of the Pre-Socratic Philosophers**

**The influence of the Pre-Socratic philosophers on Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.**

**Influence on Socrates.**

Socrates (ca. 469-399 BC) Socrates was not a direct follower of a particular Pre-Socratic philosopher, but his thought was clearly influenced by the general trends and ideas of the period, such as a critical approach to mythological explanations and the pursuit of rational inquiry.

1. **Critical dialog method**:

Socrates developed the method of critical dialog, which, to some extent, can be considered an evolution of the argumentation methods of the Pre-Socratic philosophers. His dialogues often included refutation of mythological explanations and search for rational answers to fundamental questions.

1. **Ethical and metaphysical issues**:

The influence of the pre-Socratics can be seen in Socrates' interest in ethical and metaphysical questions. For example, his quest to define justice, virtue, and knowledge can be seen as a continuation of the efforts of the Pre-Socratic philosophers to find the fundamental principles of social organization.

**Influence on Plato.**

Plato (ca. 427-347 BC) systematized and developed the ideas of Socrates, creating one of the most influential philosophical systems in history. The Pre-Socratic philosophers had a significant influence on his thinking.

1. **Parmenides' ideas**.

Parmenides' influence on Plato is especially noticeable in his theory of ideas. Parmenides argued that true reality is unchanging and unified. Plato developed this idea by proposing the concept of eternal and unchanging ideas, which are the true reality, in contrast to the changeable world of phenomena.

1. **Dialectical method**.

Plato employed the dialectical method, an evolution of the logical techniques introduced by the Pre-Socratic philosophers. This method involved the sequential investigation and analysis of concepts, which allowed Plato to explore the nature of reality and knowledge more deeply.

1. **Empedocles and Pythagoras**.

Plato also integrated ideas from Empedocles and Pythagoras, including the four elements and mathematical principles, to elucidate the structure of the cosmos and the nature of the soul.

**Influence on Aristotle.**

Aristotle (384-322 BC) developed his own philosophical system, which had a great influence on Western thought. The Pre-Socratic philosophers played an important role in shaping his ideas.

1. **Physics and metaphysics**.

Aristotle expanded upon the Pre-Socratic philosophers’ concepts of nature and matter. For example, he borrowed the concepts of elements from Empedocles and Anaximenes in developing his theory of matter and form. His concept of the "prime mover" can also be considered a development of Pre-Socratic ideas about the first causes and foundations of being.

1. **Logic and methodology**.

Aristotle systematized the logical methods used by Pre-Socratic philosophers, creating formal logic. His works Categories and Organon are the result of the development of the methods of argumentation and analysis begun by his predecessors.

1. **Empiricism**.

Aristotle extended the inductive method developed by Pre-Socratic philosophers such as Empedocles and Anaxagoras. His empirical approach to studying nature and science laid the groundwork for the development of the scientific method.

**The influence of Pre-Socratic thought on Western philosophy.**

Pre-Socratic philosophy established the foundation of Western thought by pioneering rational and logical approaches to understanding reality. Ancient Greek philosophers tried to explain the nature of the universe independently, without relying on the mythological explanations that prevailed before them.

1. **Rational research**:

The Pre-Socratic philosophers began a tradition of rational inquiry that became the basis for the further development of philosophy. Their quest for logical and empirical explanations of the world inspired future generations of philosophers to pursue truth through reason and observation.

1. **Methods of Argumentation**:

The integration of deductive and inductive reasoning laid the groundwork for the development of both logic and the scientific method. These methods have become key tools in philosophical and scientific research throughout history.

**The influence of Pre-Socratic thought on science.**

The Pre-Socratic philosophy had a significant influence on the development of science. Their approaches to the study of nature and the development of the first scientific hypotheses were important steps in the establishment of the scientific method.

1. **Natural Science**.

Philosophers like Thales and Anaximenes pioneered scientific explanations of natural phenomena, particularly the origin and structure of matter. Their work inspired subsequent generations of scientists to study the world through observation and experimentation.

1. **Cosmology**.

The cosmological theories of Pre-Socratic thinkers like Anaximander and Anaxagoras significantly influenced the development of astronomy and physics. Their ideas about the nature of the universe and the motion of celestial bodies laid the foundation for subsequent scientific discoveries.

1. **Medicine**.

Empedocles and Anaxagoras advanced early medicine through their explorations of nature and the human body. Their ideas about the four elements and the infinite division of matter influenced the development of anatomy and physiology.

**Final remarks (Part 1)**

Don't think that the people we talked to you about today lived a very long time ago. For the universe, two and a half thousand years is just a blink of an eye. We have looked at the main features of Pre-Socratic philosophy, its representatives and how these philosophers influenced the development and shaping of Western thought.

Every theory you encounter has roots. It is important to see and know how different philosophical viewpoints were born and shaped in order to better understand the thoughts and actions of those around you.

I look at these lines and feel a quiet sadness as memories take me back to the late autumn of 1982. At that time, I was a first-year university student. We were listening to a lecture on ancient Greek philosophy given by Professor Yuri Kalinin as part of our course on the history of philosophy.

Dr. Kalinin later became my academic advisor, guiding my work with care and wisdom. In 1995, under his thoughtful supervision, I successfully defended my dissertation. The following year, in 1996, Yuri Kalinin was supposed to turn fifty. He dreamed of gathering all his friends to celebrate this milestone. He worried deeply that his birthday fell in July, a time when many of us might be away on vacation and unable to attend. We came to see him much earlier. On April 19, 1996, Yuri Anatolyevich passed away, just a few short months before his fiftieth birthday.

Yuri Kalinin often quoted Parmenides: "...only being is real... non-being does not exist!" But even more frequently, he shared this thought in his own, gentler words: "Remember—death does not exist! It is an illusion. You should never be afraid of something that does not exist."

**PART 2**

**SOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY: THE ART OF DIALOGUE AND THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH**

The name of Socrates and his tragic fate, like an invisible boundary, divided ancient Greek philosophers into those who came before Socrates and those who came after him. This remarkable man, who did not write a single book, laid the foundation of Western thought with his unique approach to philosophy, which continues to influence us today. Today, we will delve into Socrates's world, learn how his attention to ethical and epistemological questions changed philosophy, and discuss his exceptional role in the development of this discipline. We will explore his famous method, maieutics. Socrates used this method to help people uncover their true beliefs through a series of questions and answers. We will examine Socrates' views on truth and virtue, as well as his belief that truth is hidden within each of us and can be discovered through dialogue.

Socrates' influence on his students, such as Plato and Xenophon, was profound. Through them, his ideas spread throughout the entire Western philosophical tradition. Understanding Socrates' contribution helps us better grasp the evolution of philosophical ideas and their significance in the modern world.

The Socratic dialogue remains an important method in contemporary education and philosophy. It fosters the development of critical thinking, self-knowledge, and reasoned debate, which is especially relevant in our rapidly changing world. Everything we know about Socrates has come down to us thanks to his students, especially Plato and Xenophon, who recorded his dialogues and ideas.

Socrates was born in Athens around 469 BC. His father, Sophroniscus, was a stonemason and sculptor who worked with stone carving, while his mother, Phaenarete, was a midwife. In those times, citizenship in ancient Athens was inherited and available only to ethnic Greeks. Citizenship and ethnicity played key roles in the social and political structure of the city-state. Remember this fact from his biography; we will find it useful again in the future. Socrates was a citizen of Athens. His family lived quite modestly. Socrates often mentioned his mother and her profession. He frequently compared his philosophical method to his mother's midwifery, claiming that he helped "birth" the truth in the minds of his interlocutors. Little is known about Socrates' other relatives. In one of Plato's dialogues, his brother Patroclus is mentioned, but there are virtually no details about him. Socrates' parents instilled in the young Socrates a respect for labor and moral principles, which later became the foundation of his philosophical views. From a young age, Socrates learned everything that Athens had to offer: he studied literature, music, gymnastics, and, of course, his father's craft.

During his military service, Socrates was a hoplite—a heavily armed infantryman in the Athenian army. On the battlefield, Socrates demonstrated resilience, courage, and self-control. During the Battle of Potidaea in 432 BCE (which took place during the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, along with their allies), Socrates saved the life of his comrade Alcibiades. Alcibiades was wounded and found himself in a dangerous situation, but Socrates, risking his own life, pulled his comrade from the battlefield and continued to protect him until help arrived.

In the Battle of Delium in 424 BCE, Socrates once again proved himself as a brave and composed warrior. When the Athenian army was defeated and retreating, Socrates did not succumb to panic and maintained the morale of the soldiers. His calmness and determination inspired others and helped prevent a complete rout. Socrates' military exploits show him not only as a great philosopher but also as a man of outstanding character and moral fortitude. His actions on the battlefield reflected the same principles he preached in his philosophy — courage, virtue, and self-knowledge.

When Socrates reached maturity, he began spending a lot of time on the streets and squares of Athens, engaging in dialogues with various people. He believed that true knowledge could only be found through dialogue and self-examination. Socrates claimed that his mission was to help people "give birth" to the truth, just as his mother helped deliver children.

Socrates' wife, Xanthippe, was known to have a rather difficult personality. She was said to be extremely quarrelsome and intolerable. They had three sons named Lamprocles, Sophroniscus, and Menexenus. Lamprocles, the eldest son, had a complicated relationship with his mother and was a difficult child. Socrates taught him to respect and appreciate his mother despite the family disagreements. The middle son, Sophroniscus, was named after his grandfather, and little is known about the youngest son, Menexenus.

Athenian democracy in the 5th century BCE was a unique political system in which citizens directly participated in the governance of the state. This period, known as the Golden Age of Athens, was characterized by a flourishing of art, science, and philosophy. Athenian citizens had the right to participate in the Assembly (Ekklesia), where important decisions were made, as well as in the jury courts, which played a key role in justice.

Socrates lived during a time when Athenian democracy reached its peak. His involvement in public life, his criticism, and his questions about moral and ethical norms reflected the interaction between the individual and the democratic system. Socrates believed that truth and wisdom could be found through dialogue and self-examination, aligning with the ideals of democratic participation and discussion.

Athenian society was multicultural and diverse, contributing to philosophy's development. Athens attracted artists, philosophers, scientists, and craftsmen from all over Greece. In this diversity of cultures and ideas, Socrates found fertile ground for his philosophical inquiries. His dialogues often took place on the streets and squares of Athens. He discussed questions of justice, virtue, and knowledge with various people, ranging from artisans to politicians.

Plato and Xenophon are the two primary sources through which we know about the life and philosophy of Socrates. Both students of Socrates wrote about him in their works, although their views on Socrates and his teachings did not always coincide.

Plato, like an artist, used the image of his teacher as a canvas for his own philosophical explorations. His dialogues are profound and multilayered. In these dialogues, Socrates serves as the voice of reason, guiding his interlocutors toward the understanding of higher ideas and abstract concepts.

Xenophon, on the other hand, portrayed Socrates in a different light. For him, Socrates was primarily a mentor and a moral compass, whose teachings were concerned with everyday life and practical matters. Xenophon depicted Socrates as a man of action, whose words and deeds were directed toward the pursuit of virtue and ethical behavior. His Socrates is a teacher leading people to the truth through simple yet wise guidance.

Through the lenses of these two different perspectives, we see the greatness of Socrates, illuminated by Plato's philosophical ideas and Xenophon's practical wisdom. Their works, like two facets of a single precious gem, give us a complete and multifaceted understanding of a man whose influence on the world went unrecognized during his lifetime but became eternal after his passing.

Plato wrote numerous dialogues in which Socrates is the central figure. In these dialogues, Plato uses the character of Socrates to convey his own philosophical ideas. Here are some of Plato's most significant works featuring Socrates:

* **"Apology".** Plato recounts Socrates' behavior at his trial, where he defends his philosophical views and methods. Plato portrays Socrates as a courageous and principled man, willing to die for his beliefs.
* **"Crito".** In this dialogue, Socrates discusses with Crito the reasons for his refusal to escape from prison after being sentenced to death. Socrates explains why he must obey the laws and accept the punishment.
* **"Phaedo".** This dialogue describes the final hours of Socrates' life, his reflections on the immortality of the soul, and the philosophy of death.
* **"Dialogues".** In many of Plato's dialogues, such as "Gorgias," "Meno," "Phaedrus," "Symposium," "The Republic," and others, Socrates appears as the central character who leads philosophical discussions on various topics—ranging from ethics to metaphysics and politics.

Xenophon, though less philosophically profound compared to Plato, also left important accounts of Socrates. As we mentioned earlier, his works provide a more down-to-earth and practical perspective on Socrates and his life:

* **"Memorabilia" (Memorabilia)** - This is a collection of recollections about Socrates, where Xenophon describes his dialogues with various people and reveals his teachings on virtue and morality.
* **"Apology"** **(Apology)** - Xenophon also wrote his own version of Socrates' defense at the trial, which differs from Plato's version and highlights different aspects of Socrates' character and argumentation.
* **"Symposium" (Symposium)** - In this work, Xenophon describes a banquet where Socrates engages in conversations about love and friendship.
* **"Oeconomicus" (Oeconomicus)** - A dialogue in which Socrates discusses issues of household management, demonstrating his interest in the practical aspects of life.

It should be emphasized that the works of Plato and Xenophon continue to be important sources for the study of ancient philosophy and history.

Persecution has existed at all times, like a dark cloud hanging over the heads of those who dared to rise above the common level. It is only many centuries after the departure of a great person that we can appreciate their true greatness. But during their lifetime, amidst the bustle and pettiness of human affairs, such people are often misunderstood and unappreciated. Wise men are taken for eccentrics, and their profound thoughts and aspirations are considered empty dreams and idleness. This public misunderstanding and hostility poison the lives of those who, being persecuted and unrecognized, will later become objects of pride and reverence. Their lives, like distant stars, shine brightest only after they have gone out, leaving an eternal light for future generations.

The ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes wrote the comedy "The Clouds" (Νεφέλαι), in which Socrates was portrayed in a caricatured and critical light. This play was first performed in 423 BC and is one of the most famous examples of criticism of the philosopher. The playwright criticized Socrates because the philosopher, in Aristophanes' opinion, was destroying the moral foundations of Athenian society with his new and radical ideas. The play reflected the skeptical attitude of many Athenians toward philosophy and innovations, which seemed dangerous to the stability of the polis. In my opinion, this was an expression of meanness and envy typical of many people. Aristophanes, with venomous irony and mockery, depicted Socrates as an immoral and arrogant thinker, detached from reality and engaged in useless and senseless inquiries. In the play, Socrates, like a dreamer detached from the earth, is suspended in a basket and hangs in the air — a symbol of his "airy" and impractical ideas. Socrates also engages in absurd activities such as measuring the jumps of a flea or explaining the nature of sound through farting, which emphasizes his detachment from common sense and everyday life. This caricatured image of Socrates was intended to ridicule the philosophers and sophists of that time, who, according to Aristophanes, engaged in demagoguery and undermined traditional moral and social values. Subsequently, the image of the philosopher in the comedy "The Clouds" contributed to the negative perception of Socrates by the Athenian public, which was reflected in the prosecution of Socrates in 399 BC.

**Socratic Dialogue (Maieutics)**

**Definition and Characteristics of the Method**

Socratic dialogue, also known as maieutics, is a method of philosophical inquiry and teaching developed by Socrates and popularized by his disciples, especially Plato. The main goal of maieutics is to help the interlocutor uncover truths and knowledge already embedded in their consciousness through systematic questioning and dialogue.

***Definition of Maieutics***

Maieutics (from the Greek word "μαιευτική", meaning "midwifery") is a method of philosophical dialogue that aims to reveal true knowledge through a series of leading questions. Like a midwife, Socrates helped his interlocutors "give birth" to the truth hidden in their minds.

***Characteristics of the Method***

* **Irony and Admission of Ignorance**: Socrates often began the dialogue by admitting his own ignorance, which created an atmosphere of equality and encouraged open discussion. This also helped to break down the interlocutors' biases and opened the way to deeper inquiry.
* **Leading Questions**: The main tool in maieutics are leading questions. Socrates asked sequential questions that forced his interlocutors to reconsider their assertions and arrive at new understandings. The questions were aimed at revealing logical inconsistencies and unfounded assumptions.
* **Elenchus (Refutation)**: In the process of dialogue, Socrates used refutation to identify logical inconsistencies in his interlocutors' arguments. This helped to dismantle false beliefs and stimulated the search for more justified conclusions.
* **Dialectical Approach**: Socrates' method is dialectical by nature. Truth is achieved through the successive consideration and discussion of opposing viewpoints, which helps to arrive at more accurate and deeper conclusions.
* **Focus on Ethical and Philosophical Questions**: Socratic dialogue often addressed issues of morality, virtue, justice, and knowledge. Socrates believed that true knowledge leads to the right action, and his dialogues aimed for participants to recognize their ethical obligations and principles.

**Examples and Influence**

An example of a Socratic dialogue is Plato's "Meno," in which Socrates explores the nature of virtue and attempts to determine whether it can be taught. Throughout the dialogue, Socrates helps Meno recognize his misconceptions and arrive at a deeper understanding of the subject. The "Meno" dialogue is a profound philosophical investigation that demonstrates Socrates' methods and approaches in action.

**Main Questions of the Dialogue**

At the beginning of the dialogue, Meno asks Socrates the question: "Can virtue be taught, or is it acquired through experience, or is it given to people by nature, or by some other means?" In response, instead of providing a direct answer, Socrates suggests investigating the very nature of virtue by asking questions about what virtue is and how it manifests.

**Methods Used by Socrates in the Dialogue with Meno**

* **Irony and Admission of Ignorance**: Socrates claims that he does not know what virtue is and asks Meno to help him understand it. This is typical Socratic irony, which positions the interlocutor as an investigator.
* **Leading Questions**: Socrates asks Meno a series of leading questions to uncover his understanding of virtue. He asks Meno to define virtue, leading to an examination of the various manifestations of virtue in human life.
* **Elenchus (Refutation)**: Socrates identifies contradictions in Meno's arguments during the dialogue. For instance, when Meno suggests that virtue is the ability to govern, Socrates points out that such a definition does not include the virtue of children and slaves, rendering it incomplete.
* **Dialectical Approach**: Socrates uses the dialectical method, examining different aspects and forms of virtue. He helps Meno arrive at a more precise understanding through discussion and critique.

**Anamnesis (Recollection)**

One of the central moments of the dialogue is the theory of anamnesis, or recollection, which Socrates introduces through examples with Meno's slave. Socrates demonstrates that knowledge is a recollection awakened through questioning rather than learning something new. He illustrates this by having the slave solve a geometric problem, gradually guiding him to the correct solution through leading questions. This shows that knowledge is already within us and can be awakened by the right method.

Here lies a very interesting and profound idea. From birth, knowledge is inherently within us; we possess it initially, but in most cases, this knowledge remains undeveloped, like a seed that stays a seed and does not grow into a mighty tree. The essence of education is not to teach a person something new but to make them remember what they already know. In fact, through contradictions and dialogue, Socrates awakens in his interlocutor those forces that help activate dormant knowledge.

**Ending the dialog**

The dialogue concludes with Socrates and Meno arriving at the idea that virtue cannot be transmitted through teaching, like ordinary knowledge. However, it can be cultivated through upbringing and mentorship. The teacher plays a key role in this process, knowing when and what questions to ask the student in order to encourage independent thinking and help the student reveal their best qualities. This is more about gently guiding the student in the right direction rather than imposing ready-made answers. Nevertheless, this conclusion in the dialogue remains open for further reflection and is not considered a definitive solution to the question.

**Elenchus (Method of Refutation)**

**Principles of Elenchus**

Elenchus (from the Greek ἔλεγχος, meaning "refutation" or "examination") is a key method Socrates used to uncover the true beliefs of his interlocutors by systematically refuting their arguments. This method became the foundation of the Socratic dialogue and has several key principles:

* **Dialogical Process**: Elenchus is based on dialogue involving two parties: Socrates and his interlocutor. The goal is not merely to win an argument but to jointly explore the truth.
* **Admission of Ignorance**: Socrates often began dialogues by declaring his own ignorance, creating an atmosphere of equality and openness. This helped the interlocutor feel comfortable and more open to discussion.
* **Leading Questions**: Socrates asked leading questions to make his interlocutor think more deeply about their assertions and reveal logical contradictions.
* **Identifying Contradictions**: Elenchus's primary goal is to uncover contradictions in the interlocutor's arguments. Socrates systematically examined assertions to show they could not all be true simultaneously, forcing the interlocutor to reconsider their views.
* **Striving for Truth**: Elenchus not only dismantles false beliefs but also aims to seek more substantiated and true knowledge. Socrates believed that truth could be found through critical examination and dialogue.

**Examples of the Method in Plato's Dialogues**

* **Meno**. In the previously mentioned dialogue "Meno," Socrates uses elenchus to explore the nature of virtue. Meno initially claims that virtue is different for different people (men, women, children, etc.). Socrates asks questions to show that all these examples must have something in common to be considered virtue. He then leads Meno to the conclusion that they do not actually know what virtue truly is.
* **Euthyphro**. In the dialogue "Euthyphro," Socrates discusses the nature of piety with Euthyphro, who claims that piety is what is pleasing to the gods. Socrates uses elenchus to show that the gods can have different opinions. The same action can be both pleasing and displeasing to different gods simultaneously. This leads Euthyphro to realize that his initial definition is insufficient.
* **Gorgias**. Socrates converses with Gorgias about rhetoric and justice. Gorgias claims that rhetoric is a great art that benefits society. Socrates, through Elenchuson, suggests that rhetoric can be used for unjust purposes and that true virtue lies in justice, not merely in the ability to persuade.

These examples demonstrate how Socrates used elenchus to explore complex philosophical questions and to encourage his interlocutors to engage in deep reflection and self-examination. This method had a profound impact on the Western philosophical tradition and remains a relevant tool for critical thinking and dialogue today.

**Goals and Objectives of the Socratic Method**

**Striving for Self-Knowledge and Moral Improvement**

***Self-Knowledge***

* **Recognition of One's Own Ignorance:** Socrates believed that the first step to knowledge is acknowledging one's ignorance. This principle allows a person to be open to new knowledge and develop critical thinking.

Socrates believed that the path to knowledge begins with the recognition of one's own ignorance. Acknowledging that you don't know something allows you to reconsider your views and makes you open to acquiring new knowledge. This approach helps develop critical thinking and teaches one to always be open to new ideas. Socrates trained the minds of his students, making their brains more flexible. In some sources, this ability is referred to as "brain plasticity," the capacity to flexibly absorb new knowledge and adapt it to the constantly changing circumstances of the external world.

I can't help but think of Confucius, who lived in China during very challenging times. Once, Confucius was asked, "How did you manage to live to such an honorable age in such difficult times?" To this, Confucius replied, "I was never categorical."

Socrates teaches us to be firm, but not categorical. Unfortunately, many people confuse these concepts.

* **Development of Critical Thinking:** Through systematic questioning, the interlocutor is forced to analyze their beliefs, leading to a deeper understanding of themselves and their knowledge. It often happens that, upon hearing an opinion from someone we or our social circle respects, we forget to analyze the statement, compare it with others, including well-considered ones, and simply accept it on faith, as if we had personally verified and reflected upon it. Here, the principle of mental energy conservation might be at play: "Why check if the authorities have already done it for me?" In this way, we can end up trapped in contradictions and confused in our judgments. Asking questions helps to uncover contradictions in statements and find a way out of this deadlock.

***Moral Improvement:***

* **Ethical and Moral Questions:** Socrates often discussed topics related to virtue, justice, and good. He believed that understanding these concepts leads to moral growth and character improvement.
* **Influence on Behavior:** Socrates thought that truth and knowledge directly influence a person's behavior. Thus, the awareness and understanding of moral principles lead to the improvement of behavior and virtue.

**Pursuit of Truth Through Questioning and Critical Analysis**

***Asking Leading Questions***

* **Method of Elenchus (Refutation):** Identifying contradictions in the interlocutor's arguments through sequential questioning, which shows the incompleteness or incorrectness of their beliefs.
* **Dialectical Process:** Socrates used a dialectical approach, where truth is revealed through the discussion and refutation of opposing viewpoints.

***Critical Analysis:***

* **Logical Consistency:** Socrates aimed for his interlocutors to examine their beliefs logically and consistently, identifying any discrepancies.
* **Identifying Fundamental Principles:** Socrates guided the dialogue so that the interlocutors would arrive at an understanding of the fundamental principles and truths underlying their beliefs.

**Socratic Philosophical Concepts**

**Knowledge and Virtue**

Socrates' philosophy is significantly based on his concept of knowledge and virtue. He asserted that "knowledge is a virtue," a statement with both epistemological and ethical dimensions.

***1. Assertion "Knowledge is Virtue" (Epistemological and Ethical Aspects)***

* **Epistemological Aspect:** Socrates believed that true knowledge leads to the right actions. He argued that a person who knows what is good will always strive for virtue. For Socrates, knowledge was not just the accumulation of facts but a deep understanding of ethical principles and truth. Thus, he placed knowledge on the highest pedestal, asserting that one can achieve virtue only through awareness and understanding.
* **Ethical Aspect:** The ethical side of the statement "knowledge is a virtue" lies in the direct link between knowledge and moral behavior. Socrates claimed that all evil in the world stems from ignorance. If a person knows what is good, they cannot act otherwise than virtuously. According to Socrates, knowledge is the key to moral improvement. A person who understands the true meaning of justice, kindness, and courage will strive to embody these qualities in their life.
* **Connection Between Knowledge and Moral Action:** For Socrates, the connection between knowledge and moral action was obvious and indisputable. He believed that knowledge forms the basis for all virtues. For example, a person who knows that justice is good will strive for just actions. Socrates asserted that an ignorant person cannot be truly virtuous because they do not understand what virtue entails.

Socratic maieutics, or the midwifery art, played a key role in this process. Through dialogue and questions, Socrates helped his interlocutors realize their misconceptions and attain true knowledge. He believed that truth is inherent in every person and can be revealed through critical thinking and self-analysis. The link between knowledge and moral action is a fundamental part of Socratic philosophy.

***2. "I Know That I Know Nothing" — Analysis and Interpretation***

One of Socrates' most famous statements is his phrase, "I know that I know nothing." This paradoxical statement may seem contradictory at first, but it holds deep philosophical meaning and significance.

* **Analysis and Interpretation:** **Acknowledgment of Ignorance:**
  + Socrates does not claim absolute ignorance but emphasizes the limitation and incompleteness of his knowledge. He realizes that his understanding of the world and truth is limited, and in this awareness, he sees wisdom.
  + This statement reflects Socratic methodological skepticism, which involves continuous questioning and doubt aimed at finding deeper truths.
* **Pursuit of Truth:**
  + Acknowledgment of his ignorance stimulates Socrates and his interlocutors to a continuous quest for knowledge. This realization of one's incompetence prompts study and self-improvement.
  + Socrates believes that recognizing one's ignorance is the first step toward true knowledge and wisdom.
* **Ethical Aspect:**
  + Socrates believed that awareness of one's limitations helps avoid arrogance and promotes humility and respect for others' knowledge.

***3. Role of the Paradox "I Know That I Know Nothing" in Socratic Dialogue and Philosophy***

* **In Socratic Dialogue: Starting Point of Dialogue:** Socrates often begins a dialogue by acknowledging his ignorance, creating an atmosphere of openness and honesty. This helps to break down biases and encourages the interlocutor to engage in open discussion.
* **Method of Elenchus:** This method is based on identifying contradictions in the interlocutors' arguments. Acknowledging his ignorance allows Socrates to accept no assertions at face value but critically analyze them to uncover the truth.
* **In Socratic Philosophy: Foundational Principle:** The paradox "I know that I know nothing" is a central element of Socratic philosophy. It underscores the importance of critical thinking, doubt, and the continuous pursuit of knowledge.
* **Ethical Virtue:** Socrates believed that true knowledge leads to virtue. The recognition of one's ignorance stimulates the pursuit of truth and contributes to moral improvement.
* **Example from Plato's Dialogues:** In the dialogue "Apology," Socrates explains how he came to his paradoxical assertion. He recounts how he visited various "wise men" of Athens and found that many of them, despite their reputations, did not possess true knowledge. Socrates realized that his wisdom lay in recognizing his ignorance, while others mistakenly believed themselves to be knowledgeable.

The Socratic paradox "I know that I know nothing" plays a key role in the Socratic dialogue, providing a foundation for critical analysis and self-examination. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing one's limitations and the continuous pursuit of knowledge and moral improvement.

My father told me that the boundary of our knowledge is simultaneously the boundary of our ignorance. The more we learn, the more we expand the boundaries of our knowledge, but at the same time, we expand the boundaries of our ignorance. By expanding the boundaries of our knowledge, we rise upwards and begin to see from a height what was previously inaccessible to our sight and understanding. This expansion of boundaries is endless. At some stage, it comes to understanding that, in this way, God knows himself through us.

**Concept of the Soul (Psyche)**

For Socrates, the Soul (psyche) was the central element of human existence and the bearer of morality and wisdom. He believed that caring for the Soul should be a priority for every person, surpassing even physical health and material well-being. Socrates argued that one can achieve true goodness and happiness only through self-knowledge and the development of virtues.

***Caring for the Soul as the Highest Virtue***

Socrates asserted that true self-care lies in caring for the Soul rather than the body or external goods. In the dialogue "Apology," he states, "You should care more about the soul than about the body, for the soul is the source of life and moral behavior" (Plato, "Apology").

Socrates emphasized that the Soul is the source of true happiness and virtue. He urged his students and interlocutors to pursue self-knowledge and self-improvement, asserting that only through understanding one's Soul can one achieve true goodness.

***The Path to Self-Knowledge***

Socrates believed that caring for the Soul begins with self-knowledge. In the dialogue "Phaedo," he states, "The unexamined life is not worth living" (Plato, "Phaedo"). This call to self-knowledge is a key point in his philosophy, where he uses the method of maieutics to help interlocutors reveal the truth hidden within their souls.

***Understanding the Soul as the Source of Morality and Wisdom***

Socrates saw the Soul as the source of all moral qualities and wisdom. He asserted that the state of the Soul determines a person's behavior and destiny.

* **The Soul as the Source of Morality:** Socrates asserted that all virtues, such as justice, courage, wisdom, and temperance, originate from the state of the soul. He believed that bad actions are the result of ignorance and lack of knowledge, rather than deliberate evil. In the dialogue "Meno," Socrates explores the nature of virtue and concludes that virtue is knowledge and, therefore, can be attained through education and self-development (Plato, "Meno").
* **The Soul as the Source of Wisdom:** Socrates believed that wisdom lies in understanding that you do not know. His famous assertion, "I know that I know nothing," reflects his conviction that true wisdom consists in recognizing one's limitations and continually striving for knowledge (Plato, "Apology"). Socrates emphasized that the soul should be oriented toward the pursuit of truth and understanding, rather than external goods and material achievements. In the dialogue "Phaedrus," Socrates describes the soul as a "lover of truth" and asserts that the pursuit of truth is the highest form of human existence (Plato, "Phaedrus").

**Socrates and Sophists: Contrasting Approaches and Philosophies**

***Athens in the 5th Century BC***

In the 5th century BC, Athens reached its zenith as the center of political and cultural life in Greece. The democratic system of governance required citizens to actively participate in politics and public life, where the ability to persuade and articulate one's thoughts became crucial. In this context, rhetoric and education by the Sophists gained special popularity. Sophists such as Protagoras and Gorgias offered systematic training in rhetoric and other disciplines, teaching citizens the skills necessary for success in political debates and legal proceedings. Their approach, based on relativism and pragmatism, attracted many who sought practical solutions and ways to achieve their goals.

**Socrates' Contrasting Approach**

On the other hand, Socrates' methods and philosophical beliefs significantly differed from those of the Sophists, who aimed at objective truth and moral improvement. His method of maieutics, focused on self-knowledge and discovering truth through dialogue, contrasted with the rhetorical techniques of the Sophists. Socrates criticized the Sophists for their tendency to manipulate and their superficial approach to truth, emphasizing the importance of deep understanding and moral steadfastness.

**Popularity of the Sophists**

The popularity of the Sophists was not only due to their rhetorical skills but also their ability to adapt to the changing conditions of Greek society. They taught their students to use rhetoric to achieve success, making their education highly sought after by citizens aspiring to political and social activity. Socrates, in turn, represented an alternative path—a path of seeking truth and moral improvement, which required deep self-knowledge and critical thinking.

These differences in approaches and views on truth and rhetoric make the comparison between Socrates and the Sophists especially interesting and significant for understanding the evolution of philosophical thought.

**Comparing Socrates' and the Sophists' Methods**

* **Socrates** **Method of Maieutics (Socratic Dialogue):** Socrates used the method of maieutics, which involved engaging in dialogue and asking leading questions to help the interlocutor arrive at their own understanding of the truth. He believed that truth is hidden within each person and can be uncovered through critical thinking and self-examination.

Example: In Plato's "Meno," Socrates uses questions to help his interlocutor understand the nature of virtue. Socrates does not impose or indoctrinate anything. He helps a person make a personal discovery.

* **Sophists** **Rhetoric and Persuasion:** Sophists like Protagoras and Gorgias were professional teachers of rhetoric and the art of persuasion. They taught their students the skills of argumentation and public speaking, emphasizing the importance of rhetorical techniques for achieving success in politics and public life.

Example: Protagoras, one of the most famous Sophists, claimed that "man is the measure of all things," emphasizing relativism and the subjectivity of knowledge. This means that the truth or falsity of any statement depends on the individual and their perception of the world, rather than on objective reality. In this way, Protagoras rejected absolute truths and emphasized that all knowledge is determined by personal beliefs and sensations, highlighting relativism.

**Views on Truth and Rhetoric**

* **Socrates' View of Truth**: Socrates believed in the objective existence of truth. He held that truth is immutable and can be reached through dialogue and critical inquiry. Socrates rejected relativism, asserting that knowledge and virtue are interconnected, and that true knowledge leads to right action.

Example: In the dialogue "Euthyphro," Socrates questions the existing notions of piety and asks Euthyphro questions to determine what exactly makes actions pious. He seeks a universal and objective definition that would apply to any case, rather than relying on opinions or circumstances. Throughout the conversation, Socrates demonstrates that Euthyphro's answers are either contradictory or insufficiently grounded, thereby highlighting the complexity of finding the true nature of piety.

* **Socrates' View of Rhetoric:** Socrates criticized the Sophists' rhetoric for its superficiality and manipulativeness. He believed that rhetoric aimed at persuasion without regard for truth is dangerous and harmful to society. In his view, rhetoric should serve truth and virtue, not personal interests.

Example: In the dialogue "Gorgias," Socrates argues against rhetoric, claiming that it can be used for unjust purposes.

* **Sophist's View of Truth:** Sophists claim that truth is relative and depends on each person's perception. They believed that knowledge and moral values are subjective and changeable. For them, there were no absolute truths, and truth could change depending on context and circumstances.
* **Sophists' View of Rhetoric:** Sophists placed great importance on rhetoric as a tool of persuasion and influence. They taught their students to use rhetorical techniques to achieve success in politics, legal proceedings, and public life. For the Sophists, rhetoric was an art that allowed one to achieve goals regardless of truth.

**Socratic Critique of Sophists: Socrates Against Rhetoric and Relativism**

**Main Points of Socratic Critique of Sophist Practice**

* **Attitude Towards Truth and the Relativism of the Sophists:** Sophists like Protagoras claimed that "man is the measure of all things," implying that truth is subjective and depends on individual perception. They argued that there is no absolute truth, and that knowledge is relative and changeable.
* **Socrates and Objective Truth:** Socrates strongly disagreed with this approach. He believed in the existence of objective truth, which could be reached through critical inquiry and dialogue. For him, truth was unchanging and did not depend on individual opinions or beliefs. In the dialogue "Euthyphro," Socrates demonstrates that true piety cannot be defined by subjective opinions but requires objective understanding.
* **Rhetoric and Manipulation** — **Rhetoric as a Means of Persuasion:** Sophists taught their students the art of rhetoric, emphasizing the importance of the ability to persuade and influence people's opinions. They saw rhetoric as a powerful tool that could be used to achieve success in politics, legal proceedings, and public life.
* **Socrates' Critique:** Socrates criticized the Sophists for their tendency to use rhetoric for manipulation and achieving personal goals without regard for truth. He believed that rhetoric aimed at persuasion without seeking truth is dangerous and destructive to society. In the dialogue "Gorgias," Socrates shows that rhetoric used for unjust purposes leads to moral decay.
* **Moral Responsibility and the Ethical Neutrality of the Sophists:** Sophists claimed that their teaching of rhetoric and philosophy was morally neutral and could be used for any purpose, depending on their students' desires.
* **Socratic Ethical Principles:** Socrates, on the other hand, believed that knowledge and virtue are inseparably linked. He argued that true knowledge leads to moral improvement and right behavior. For Socrates, education should promote the development of virtues such as justice, wisdom, and courage.

**The Significance of Socrates' Critique of the Sophists for Understanding the Socratic Method**

Socrates' critique of Sophistic rhetoric and relativism underscores the importance of the Socratic method of maieutics, which aims at self-knowledge and uncovering truth through dialogue. Socrates believed that truth is inherent within each person and can be revealed through sequential questioning and critical thinking.

***Self-Knowledge and Discovery of Truth***

Unlike the Sophists, who taught persuasion techniques for success in public life, Socrates used maieutics to help individuals uncover deeper truths about themselves and the world. He engaged his interlocutors in a process of questioning that led them to realize their own ignorance and gradually approach a clearer understanding of ethical and philosophical concepts.

***Pursuit of Objective Truth and Contrasting Relativism.***

The Socratic method emphasizes the necessity of striving for objective truth in contrast to the relativism of the Sophists. Socrates used dialogues to explore ethical and philosophical questions, demonstrating that truth can be achieved through honest and deep investigation. While Sophists like Protagoras argued that truth is subjective and dependent on individual perception, Socrates contended that objective truth exists and is discoverable. His dialogues aimed to strip away false beliefs and lead participants to a more accurate grasp of concepts like justice, virtue, and piety.

***Moral Responsibility of Knowledge and Ethical Implications***

Socrates' criticism of the Sophists also highlights his conviction that knowledge should lead to moral improvement. For Socrates, truth and moral behavior were inseparable, and true knowledge should foster the development of virtues. Socrates believed that understanding the truth about ethical principles leads to virtuous behavior. In this view, the role of the philosopher is not just to debate or win arguments but to guide oneself and others toward a better, more ethical life.

***Understanding Socratic Criticism***

Socrates' critique of the Sophists was based on fundamental differences in their approaches to truth, rhetoric, and morality. Socrates sought objective truth and moral improvement, while the Sophists emphasized the relativity of knowledge and the importance of rhetoric as a tool of persuasion. Understanding this critique is essential for appreciating the depth and significance of the Socratic method, which continues to influence philosophical traditions today.

By emphasizing critical self-examination, objective truth, and the moral responsibility of knowledge, Socrates established a philosophical framework that challenged the prevailing norms of his time and laid the groundwork for subsequent ethical and epistemological inquiries.

**The Trial of Socrates: Charges and Verdict**

The trial of Socrates in 399 BC is one of the most renowned judicial processes in human history. In democratic Athens, the well-known philosopher and hero of the Peloponnesian War was tried and executed for his beliefs. This process has been detailed extensively in the literature. On the surface, everything seems clear, but a closer examination of the trial raises many questions.

Socrates faced two primary charges: impiety (brought on by introducing new deities and not recognizing the gods of the state) and corrupting the youth.

**Blasphemy Charges**

At first glance, the charge of blasphemy seems straightforward - religion was an integral part of the social and political life of Athens at the time.Introducing new deities or criticizing existing ones could be perceived as a threat to public order and stability. Socrates was accused of introducing new gods and failing to recognize the gods worshipped by the state. This accusation implied that he questioned traditional religious beliefs and undermined the religious foundations of society.

In 5th-century BC Athens, multiple gods were worshipped, including Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, who played central roles in the city's religious and social life. Temples and public rituals were dedicated to these gods, and their veneration was deemed crucial for the polis' well-being. Accusers argued that Socrates did not acknowledge these gods, thereby undermining the traditional religious foundations of society. For instance, he criticized the mythological tales about gods presented by Homer and Hesiod, which could be interpreted as a refusal to recognize traditional deities.

To be fair, Socrates often questioned traditional myths and criticized their moral and ethical aspects, which could be perceived as undermining religious foundations. In the dialogue "Euthyphro," Socrates questions the commonly accepted understanding of piety, raising logical contradictions in traditional religious beliefs. However, this should not have warranted a death sentence. Similarly, his claim of being guided by a "Daimonion"—an inner divine voice warning him of possible mistakes—should not have been grounds for such a severe verdict. Many sages, mystics, and oracles reported hearing inner voices, yet they were not executed for it.

The question arises—what specific gods did Socrates speak of that could have been so dangerous as to threaten the Athenian society? Accusers claimed that Socrates' teachings and questions **corrupted the youth**, instilling doubts about traditional values and authorities, including religious ones. Young people taught by Socrates began to question established religious norms, potentially leading to anarchy and the breakdown of societal structures.

In Plato's dialogues, such as the "Apology," Socrates indeed appears as a teacher who encourages his students to critically reflect on the world. It is believed that Socrates' methods and questions could have been perceived as subversive and dangerous to societal stability. However, many used Socratic methods, including Plato, and they were neither executed nor prosecuted for it.

The question remains—how exactly did Socrates corrupt the youth? We put aside the sexual side - in those days there were no restrictions on sex, and Socrates himself led a very virtuous life. So there was something about religion and tradition that nobody talked about except Socrates. Or it was not customary to talk about it in Athens. What exactly did Socrates say that was perceived as a threat to the state's existence and warranted his death sentence?

Many people sympathized with Socrates, and he had the opportunity to flee Athens. This would have been a solution for both the judges who sentenced him to death and Socrates himself, who could have saved his life. Outside of Athens, Socrates could have continued saying what he said. Outside Athens, but not within the city among Athenians. However, Socrates refused to leave his native city and accepted death.

Socrates was closely acquainted with Critias, one of the leaders of the oligarchic group known as the "Thirty Tyrants," who came to power after Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian War and established a short-lived but brutal dictatorship. Their rule was characterized by repression, confiscation of property, and execution of political opponents. Critias proved to be one of the most ruthless and uncompromising members of this regime, actively participating in the persecution of democratic leaders and supporters of democracy. As we know Critias was one of Socrates' disciples, which makes their relationship particularly interesting. It is worth noting that Socrates, as a teacher of philosophy and morality, had many students, some of whom later held high political positions. Despite studying under Socrates, Critias' methods of governance starkly contrasted with Socratic principles and teachings. Critias supported harsh repression and oligarchic rule, while Socrates preached justice, morality, and critical thinking. The connection between Socrates and Critias and other notable political figures such as Alcibiades could have influenced society's perception of Socrates and played against him during the trial. However, Critias' connection was not included in the official charges against Socrates.

Therefore, there was something in Socrates' teachings that neither Plato nor any other of his disciples spoke about. What exactly that Socrates said? This question puzzled me for many years until I came across a hypothesis by a researcher who managed to answer it.

If we look at the accusation of impiety, it's clear that the situation is far from straightforward. In the 5th century BCE, Athens was an important trading hub, maintaining active economic ties with other cities and regions of the Mediterranean. The trade of grain, olive oil, wine, and pottery contributed to the city's prosperity, with Piraeus, the port of Athens, playing a key role in international commerce. Athens was in constant interaction with the peoples of Asia Minor, significantly influencing their culture and public life. Regular trade exchanges with cities such as Miletus, Ephesus, and Smyrna facilitated Athens' economic prosperity and cultural exchange. Merchants brought not only goods but also new ideas, technologies, and customs. Contacts with Lydia and Phrygia led to the adoption of new artistic styles and techniques.

The influence of other cultures contributed to the development of art and architecture. Athenian artists and craftsmen adopted Eastern motifs and techniques, enriching local traditions. The influence of Persia and Egypt was also reflected in Athenian architecture and decorative arts. Eastern religious cults, such as the cult of Cybele, Ishtar, and others, sparked keen interest in new religious practices and mysteries in Athens. The emergence of the mystery cults of Demeter and Persephone in Eleusis contributed to religious diversity and the enrichment of the spiritual life of Athenians. The interpenetration of religious beliefs led to a variety of religious practices and rituals in Athens, fostering religious tolerance within Athenian society.

Socrates did not encourage but did not object to Athenian youth worshipping other gods. It was a widespread hobby at the time, and there was nothing forbidden about it. Consequently, the charge of blasphemy was the backdrop for the more serious charge of corrupting the youth.

We know that a citizen of Athens could only be an ethnic Greek whose ancestry was not in question. The Athenians were careful about blood purity; they realized that Athens was surrounded by other, far more numerous peoples of Asia Minor than the Greeks. If Athenians were allowed to enter into marital unions with representatives of other peoples, the other peoples inhabiting the territory of Asia Minor would quickly enough dissolve the Athenians, and as a people, the Greeks would cease to exist. There is an opinion that Socrates advocated the right of a free man to create families with representatives of other peoples, which was perceived by the Athenians as actions aimed at undermining the foundations of the state. This is what was meant by the phrase "undermining traditional values."

Socrates' trial was conducted in an Athenian jury trial known as Heliaea. The court consisted of 501 jurors, typical of Athenian courts for cases considered of special importance. The jurors were citizens of Athens, chosen by lot, and represented a cross-section of society. All jurors had to be at least 30 years old and respected by their fellow citizens.

The accusers of Socrates were three Athenians: Meletus, Anitus, and Lykon. Each of them had his own motives for accusing Socrates. Meletus was a poet and probably acted as a formal accuser. Anitus, being an influential politician and supporter of democracy, was angered that Socrates criticized democratic leaders and raised questions about the education of youth.

As for Lycon, he represented rhetors and actors who felt aggrieved by Socrates' criticism.

Socrates defended himself using his customary dialogical method. In the "Apology," we read that Socrates claimed in court that his activities benefited Athens by encouraging people toward self-knowledge and moral improvement.

After the speeches of the prosecutors and the defense, the jury voted on the question of Socrates' guilt. A majority of the jury (about 280 out of 501) found him guilty.

A second vote was then taken on the question of punishment. Socrates offered the possibility of paying a fine as punishment, but the prosecutors insisted on the death penalty, and the majority of the jury voted in favor of execution by drinking poison (cicuta).

After the verdict was delivered, Socrates' friends and students proposed a plan for his escape, but he categorically refused. He had his reasons for this:

* 1. Socrates believed that adherence to the laws and rules of society is the foundation of justice and order. He argued that escaping would violate the laws he had always respected and followed throughout his life.
  2. Socrates believed that true virtue is demonstrated by accepting one's fate with dignity and courage. A person is worth as much as their convictions. Socrates preferred to die while remaining true to his principles rather than live by betraying his beliefs.
  3. His death would become a symbol of his philosophy and serve as an example for future generations. For this reason, Socrates chose to become a martyr for his beliefs. He did not fear death—he believed that it did not exist.

"The Apology of Socrates" is a key text for understanding Socratic philosophy and his views on life, truth, and virtue. This work, recorded by Plato, represents Socrates' defense speech at his trial in 399 BCE.

**Analysis of Socrates' key arguments in the defense**

**Admission of Ignorance**

Socrates begins his defense by admitting his own ignorance. He argues that his wisdom lies in the realization that he knows nothing. This contrasts him with his accusers, who believe themselves to be knowledgeable. Socrates quotes the Oracle of Delphi, who proclaimed him to be the wisest man, and explains that his wisdom lies in recognizing his ignorance, in contrast to those who mistakenly believe themselves to be knowledgeable.

**Criticism of False Accusations**

Socrates draws attention to the nature of the accusations against him, pointing out their unspecificity and lack of evidence. He argues that the accusers (Meletus, Anitus, and Lycon) are motivated by personal prejudice and political motives. Socrates shows that the accusations of corrupting the youth and introducing new deities are based on rumor and prejudice rather than actual evidence.

**The Role of Philosophy in Society**

Socrates explains his mission as a philosopher who stimulates people to self-knowledge and critical thinking. He believes that his work benefits society because it helps people realize their mistakes and strive for moral improvement. Socrates compares himself to a "gadfly" that awakens the "sleepy horse" (Athens), indicating the need for critical reflection and self-knowledge for society.

**Defense of His Way of Life**

Socrates refuses to change his way of life and to stop philosophical pursuits, even if they save him from death. He believes that following truth and virtue is more important than living. Socrates states that under no circumstances will he give up his purpose sent to him by God, even if it leads to his death.

**Refusal to Apologize and Humiliate**

Socrates refused to resort to emotional and humiliating pleas for mercy that were often used by the accused to elicit pity from the jury. He considered such actions unworthy and inconsistent with his principles. Socrates chose to remain true to his convictions and dignity even if it led to his condemnation.

**Plato's Contributions**

***Plato's Dialogues***

Plato recorded many dialogues in which Socrates is the main character and representative of philosophical ideas. These dialogues, such as the Apologia, Crito, Phaedon, Gorgias, Meno, and many others, have become the main sources of knowledge about Socrates.

In these dialogues, Plato not only transmits Socrates' philosophical methods and ideas but also develops them by introducing his own theories and concepts, such as the theory of ideas. Plato's Socrates often serves as a mouthpiece for the expression of Platonic philosophy, making it difficult to separate the ideas of teacher and student.

***Ethical and Political Ideas***

Plato used the figure of Socrates to discuss and develop his own ethical and political theories. In the dialogue "The Republic," Socrates appears as a defender of justice and the ideal state. Plato expands upon Socrates' ideas about virtue, knowledge, and self-knowledge, making them central elements of his philosophical system.

**The Method of Dialog and Maieutics**

Plato perpetuated the Socratic method of dialogue and maieutics, using it in his works to explore complex philosophical questions. This method has become an integral part of the Western philosophical tradition, providing a lively form of philosophical inquiry.

**Xenophontes's Contributions**

***Historical Notes***

Xenophontes, a historian and writer, produced several works describing Socrates's life and teachings. These include the Memorabilia (Recollections of Socrates), the Apologia Socrata, the Symposium, and the Economia.

***Practical Philosophy***

Xenophon emphasizes the practical side of Socrates' teachings, including his advice on household management (in "Oeconomicus") and child-rearing. He portrays Socrates as a mentor who taught his students wisdom and virtue through real-life examples. This approach makes Socrates' philosophy accessible and applicable in everyday life.

***Socrates' speech in his own defense.***

In the Apologia Socrata ( not to be confused with Plato's Apologia Socrata), Xenophontes defends his teacher against accusations of blasphemy and corrupting the youth. He presents Socrates as a wise and pious man whose actions were aimed at the good of society. "Xenophontes' Apologia Socrata is a less philosophical but more historically oriented account of the trial. Xenophontus also describes Socrates' defense speech, but his version is more straightforward and aims to justify Socrates' moral character in the face of the accusations. Xenophontus emphasizes Socrates' moral and ethical fortitude and his willingness to die for his principles, which emphasizes the high moral standards of his philosophy.

Socrates' methods and ideas not only shaped the worldview of his immediate students but also became the foundation for several philosophical schools, including Plato's Academy and the Cynic school.

**Plato's Academy**

Socrates' methods and ideas not only created his immediate disciples but also became the foundation for several philosophical schools, including Plato's Academy and the school of the Cynics. Plato founded the Academy around 387 B.C. Plato's Socratic method of dialogue became the basis for the pedagogical process at the Academy. In Plato's dialogues, Socrates is often the main character, demonstrating the method of asking leading questions to reach the truth. This method not only helped students develop critical thinking but also fostered an in-depth understanding of philosophical issues. Socratic irony and recognition of ignorance encouraged students to continually seek knowledge.

Plato developed many of Socrates' ideas, including his teachings on virtue and knowledge. Plato argued that virtue is based on knowledge and developed this doctrine in his theory of ideas. In dialogues such as The Phaedon and The Republic, Plato explores the nature of the soul, justice, and the ideal state based on Socratic principles. In "Republic," Plato presents the concept of a philosopher-king based on Socrates's idea that rulers should be wise and virtuous. Plato's Academy also made significant contributions to science and mathematics. Plato believed that the study of mathematics helped develop abstract thinking and an understanding of ideal forms. This idea also has its roots in the Socratic approach to knowledge and truth.

**Socrates' influence**

**The School of Atisphenes (School of the Cynics)**

The founder of the Cynic school, Antisthenes, adopted from his teacher the ideas of self-sufficiency and disdain for material goods. Antisthenes was impressed by the simplicity and asceticism of Socrates' life, his belief that true happiness is achieved through virtue and inner freedom. Antisthenes believed that philosophy should be practical and aimed at improving life, which is also a reflection of Socratic principles. The Cynics, following Socrates' example, rejected wealth, power, and social norms, seeing them as obstacles to true virtue. They sought to live in accordance with nature and self-control. Diogenes of Sinope, one of the most famous of the Cynics, was also deeply inspired by Socrates's teachings. His famous contempt for social conventions and his desire for autarky (self-sufficiency) reflect Socratic philosophy.

Socrates' influence on Stoicism and Christian philosophy confirms his central place in the history of Western thought. The Stoics developed Socratic ideas on virtue, rationalism, and self-knowledge, creating one of the most influential philosophical schools of antiquity. Christian philosophy took Socratic principles of ethics, self-sacrifice, and didactic teaching and integrated them into its religious doctrine.

**Socrates' influence on Stoicism**

Stoicism, a philosophical school founded by Zeno of Cytia in the early 3rd century BCE, reflects the Socratic heritage in its teachings and practices.

***Ethics and Virtue***

The central idea of Stoicism, virtue as the only good, directly echoes Socrates' teaching that true virtue lies in knowledge. Socrates argued that knowledge leads to right behavior, and the Stoics developed this idea by arguing that living in harmony with nature and reason is the highest virtue. Stoics such as Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius emphasized the importance of inner peace and independence from external circumstances, which was also a key element of Socrates' philosophy.

***Self-examination and Self-knowledge***

The Socratic method of introspection and self-knowledge was important to the Stoics, who believed in the need for constant self-examination and improvement. Socrates often spoke of the "unexamined life" as not being worth living, and the Stoics followed this principle in their pursuit of self-understanding and inner development. Epictetus, for example, taught his students that only through self-knowledge could one achieve true freedom and independence from external circumstances.

***Rationalism and Logic***

Socrates believed that reason was the key to the knowledge of truth and virtue. The Stoics, in turn, developed the concept of logos, a universal reason or order that permeates the entire cosmos. For the Stoics, living in accordance with the logos meant living in harmony with nature and reason. Chrysippus, one of the principal developers of Stoic philosophy, emphasized the importance of logic and rational thought in the attainment of virtue, which goes back to Socratic principles.

**Socrates' influence on Christian philosophy**

Christian philosophy, which emerged in the early centuries AD, also experienced a significant influence from Socratic ideas, particularly in areas such as ethics and morality.

***Ethical Teachings***

Socrates believed that knowledge and virtue are inseparably linked and that true virtue lies in following truth and justice. This resonates with Christian ethics, where virtue and moral behavior are key components of Jesus Christ's teachings. For example, the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus speaks of the Beatitudes, can be compared to Socratic ideas about inner virtue and moral self-improvement.

***The Life and Death of Socrates as an Example***

Socratic willingness to die for his beliefs and truth, refusing to compromise to save his life, has had a profound influence on the Christian understanding of martyrdom. Socrates, like many Christian martyrs, chose death over abandoning his principles. Early Christian thinkers such as Clement of Alexandria and Justin the Philosopher saw Socrates as an example of a true sage and a martyr for the truth.

***Dialogue and Edification***

The Socratic method of dialog and maieutics is reflected in the Christian tradition of preaching and didactic teaching. Jesus often used questions and parables to encourage his hearers to introspect and reflect, which can be compared to the Socratic approach of teaching through questions.

**Final remarks (Part 2)**

Today we explored the ideas, methods, and profound influence of Socrates. Special attention was given to the Socratic method of dialogue—maieutics—and the method of refutation, or elenchus. Socratic dialogue remains one of the most powerful ways to discover truth through persistent questioning and critical thinking. We examined how Socrates tirelessly pursued self-knowledge and moral improvement, always guiding his interlocutors toward deeper insight.

Central to our discussion were Socrates' key philosophical concepts: the intrinsic connection between knowledge and virtue, the famous paradox “I know that I know nothing,” and his unwavering insistence on caring for the soul. These core ideas underpin Socrates’ entire philosophy and continue to resonate powerfully today.

By comparing Socrates with the Sophists, we observed how his rejection of their superficial methods gave birth to his unique path toward truth. Socrates’ trial became a defining moment, as he bravely upheld his principles despite facing death. His defense speech endures as a symbol of intellectual courage and steadfast integrity.

Finally, we considered Socrates' impact on his students, including Plato and Xenophon, as well as his role in the birth of philosophical traditions, particularly Plato's Academy and the Cynics. Socrates' influence extended further, shaping both Stoicism and Christian philosophy. Like a mighty current, his thought flowed through the centuries, forever marking the history of Western philosophy.

**PART 3**

**PLATO: THE REALM OF IDEAS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ETERNAL**

Plato was born in 427 ВС in Athens. His given name was Aristocles, but he earned the nickname "Plato" (meaning "broad") because of his strong physique and broad shoulders. From an early age, Plato practiced gymnastics, was physically well-developed, and enjoyed excellent health. He came from a noble Athenian family, which allowed him to receive a good education and access to the intellectual circles of the city.

Plato's father, Ariston, claimed that their lineage descended from the last kings of Athens and took pride in their noble heritage. Plato's mother, Perictione, was related to the prominent Athenian politician and legislator Solon. Plato had several siblings, some of whom, such as Glaucon and Adeimantus, appear in his dialogues.

In accordance with his noble background, Plato studied grammar, music, gymnastics, and philosophy. In his youth, Plato met Socrates, who became his teacher and mentor. This relationship is reflected in Plato's early dialogues, where Socrates is the central figure.

In 399 BCE, when Plato was around 28 years old, Socrates was condemned and executed for "corrupting the youth" and "disrespecting the gods." This tragedy profoundly impacted Plato, leading to his deep disillusionment with Athenian democracy. We do not know what Plato truly felt after his teacher's execution. Was it pain or perhaps fear for his own life? He had seen and known things that were hidden from others. He was too close to Socrates. Regardless, after Socrates' execution, Plato left Athens and traveled around the Mediterranean. He visited Italy, Egypt, and Cyrene, where he studied philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy.

Plato was absent from Athens for about 12 years, enough time for the past to fade into obscurity. Upon his return to Athens around 387 ВС, Plato established the Academy—the first institution of higher learning in Western history. The Academy was located in the sacred grove of Academus and lasted nearly 900 years. In 529 AD, Byzantine Emperor Justinian I ordered the closure of all pagan philosophical schools, including Plato's Academy. At the Academy, Plato taught philosophy, mathematics, and dialectics, aiming to train new philosophers and rulers who could bring justice and wisdom to society.

Little is known about Plato’s personal life; he never married and had no children. Did he love? Historical records are silent on this matter. We can only speculate based on what he wrote about love in the dialogues "Symposium" and "Phaedrus."

Plato lived a long life and died in 347 BCE at about 80 years old. There are several accounts of his death, one of which claims that he died during a wedding feast. Other sources suggest that Plato died peacefully in his sleep. Regardless of the version, one thing is certain—his intellectual legacy continues to live on and influence philosophy and science to this day.

Plato lived during one of the most turbulent and dramatic periods in the history of ancient Greece. These were turbulent times—Athens faced significant social, political, and military upheavals. Bloody conflicts and societal instability underscored the fleeting and illusory nature of the material world. Bloody conflicts and societal instability highlighted the illusory nature of the material world. All of this had a profound impact on Plato's worldview.

**The Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE)**

This was an era of relentless bloodshed and devastation that stretched over nearly three decades. A grand conflict in scale, it engulfed the two most powerful states of ancient Greece — Athens and Sparta — along with their numerous allies. The war not only devastated these states but also transformed the political landscape of the entire region. Greece was plunged into chaos, with old alliances crumbling and new ones springing up like mushrooms after rain. Each side entered the struggle determined to win, but none could have imagined the terrifying consequences it would bring. The conflict began as a battle for influence but soon turned into a war of attrition. The swift victory that each side had hoped for was never achieved.

**The Archidamian War (431–421 BCE)** opened this grim chapter of history. Spartan King Archidamus II led the offensive against Athens. His name is forever etched in history as the initiator of the first phase of the war. The Archidamian War was characterized by a series of shifting military successes, where one battle followed another, leaving behind ruins and ashes. Periods of calm alternated with new waves of violence. Armies clashed repeatedly in battles. The fighting exhausted both sides, but neither was willing to concede. No one could have predicted that this first phase would be only a prelude to even bloodier events.

When the conflict seemed to be waning, the so-called **Peace of Nicias (421–413 BCE)** arrived. It was a time of temporary truce when the sides, drained by bloodshed, decided to take a breather. However, this truce was far from genuine peace—it was merely a fragile illusion. Athens, taking advantage of the respite, prepared for new campaigns, the most significant of which was the **Sicilian Expedition (415–413 BCE)**. This endeavor, aimed at capturing Syracuse, ended in disaster for the Athenians. They suffered a crushing defeat, losing both their fleet and army. This was a moment of truth for Athens when it became clear to all that their power was nearing its end.

This was followed by the **Ionian (Decelean) War (413–404 BCE)**, which became the final chord in this tragic struggle. Persia entered the conflict on Sparta's side, supplying it with the resources needed to prolong the war. Few in Athens could believe this, as Persia had been Sparta's sworn enemy. The heroic stand of the 300 Spartans at the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BCE during the Second Greco-Persian War is still legendary.

After their defeats in the Greco-Persian Wars, the Persian Empire sought to weaken Athens. Sparta, Athens' main enemy in the Peloponnesian War, was a natural ally for Persia in this context. The Persians provided money and weapons but did not intervene themselves; they merely observed from the sidelines as the Greeks destroyed each other. Their strategy relied on Athens' collapse, while Sparta, though victorious, would emerge weakened from the prolonged conflict. Then the Persians could easily regain control over the Greek cities on the coast of Asia Minor. That was their plan.

Sparta took advantage of Persian support and began a brutal blockade of Athens. The city was besieged, and its inhabitants suffered from hunger and deprivation. In 404 BCE, Athens capitulated to Sparta. This defeat marked the collapse of Athenian democracy and ushered in the oppressive regime of the **Thirty Tyrants.** Mass executions and property confiscations began. The oligarchic regime of the Thirty Tyrants lasted for a relatively short period—about eight months, from 404 to 403 BCE. In 403 BCE, a rebellion broke out in Athens, led by supporters of democracy under the leadership of **Thrasybulus**. The rebels managed to defeat the forces supporting the regime of the Thirty Tyrants and restore democratic rule in Athens. But peace still did not return. Society remained divided. In 399 BCE, Socrates was executed.

All these events influenced Plato's views. He saw the weakness of a democratic society, mired in corruption and lies. Plato endeavored to envision more just and enduring forms of governance that could prevent the repetition of such catastrophic mistakes. In his works, Plato developed the concept of an ideal state in which power belonged to philosopher-kings, endowed with wisdom and virtue.

**The Idea of Philosophical Rule**

Plato asserted that only those who have dedicated their lives to the pursuit of truth and the understanding of justice are worthy of being rulers. This belief stems from his disillusionment with the democratic processes that led to the execution of Socrates. According to Plato, the general populace, driven by emotions and self-interest, is incapable of making just decisions. Only philosophers, who seek wisdom and are not swayed by personal gain, can govern in a manner that promotes the common good.

**The Theory of Ideas**

Plato asserted that true knowledge arises solely from the understanding of ideal forms—eternal, unchanging archetypes of reality. These forms represent the perfect versions of concepts like justice, beauty, and goodness. Plato argued that the physical world we perceive with our senses is only a shadow of the real world of forms. Philosophers, through rigorous intellectual training, are the only ones capable of grasping these true forms. This understanding justifies why philosophers should govern the state—because only they can comprehend the true forms of justice and goodness, which are essential for fair and wise rule.

**The Major Periods of Plato's Philosophy**

Plato's work can be roughly divided into three main periods, each characterized by specific philosophical themes and style of presentation. In each of these periods, Plato explores different aspects of philosophy, beginning with the influence of Socrates and ending with the development of his own complex theories.

**1.** **Early Dialogues**

**Features and Subjects**

Plato's early dialogues represent the closest works to the historical Socrates. These dialogues deal mainly with ethical and moral issues. In them, Plato portrays Socrates as a central character who asks questions and engages in philosophical disputations with various interlocutors.

**- *"Apology"*:** This dialogue features Socrates’ defense speech during his trial, where he is accused of corrupting the youth and showing impiety toward the gods. Socrates defends his philosophy and way of life, arguing that he is acting on a divine calling by examining and exposing false beliefs.

- *"****Crito"*:** In this dialog, Crito, a close friend of Socrates, urges him to escape from prison and avoid execution. Socrates refuses, claiming that to do so would violate his principles of justice and law-abidingness.

- *"****Euthyphron"*:** dialogue begins with an exploration of the concept of piety and delves into broader moral and religious questions. Socrates and Euthyphron attempt to define the essence of piety but conclude that it is a complex and multifaceted issue.

These works help us understand how Plato perceived and reworked Socrates' teachings, emphasizing the importance of ethical inquiry and moral improvement. They set the stage for Plato's further philosophical investigations.

**2.** **Middle Dialogues**

**Features and Theme**

The Middle Dialogues mark Plato's transition to developing his philosophical ideas. During this period, he begins to create his key concepts, such as the theory of ideas and the concept of the ideal state. These works are more philosophically mature and complex in content.

- *"****The******Republic"*:** One of Plato's most famous dialogues where he discusses the nature of justice and constructs a model of the ideal state. Plato outlines three classes of citizens—philosopher-kings, warriors, and producers—and emphasizes the necessity of harmony among them. The dialog also contains the famous "Allegory of the Cave," which illustrates the theory of knowledge.

- *"****Phaedon"*:** This dialog focuses on the immortality of the soul and the afterlife. Plato presents various arguments in favor of the soul's immortality and discusses the moral and ethical implications of this concept.

- *"****Phaedrus"*:** In this dialog, Plato explores the nature of love and beauty. He introduces the myth of the chariot, which symbolizes the struggle between the rational and irrational parts of the soul, and discusses the role of Eros in the pursuit of truth and beauty.

Plato's Middle Dialogues represent his most influential works, in which he developed his key philosophical theories.

**3.** **Late Dialogues**

**Features and Themes**

In the later dialogues, Plato delves into the complex philosophical issues of metaphysics, cosmology, and ontology. These works are characterized by a more abstract and technical style, often addressing the contradictions and limitations of his earlier theories.

- ***"The******Timaeus"*:** In this dialog, Plato describes the creation of the universe and its structure. He introduces the concept of a "demiurge," a divine creator who creates the universe out of chaos using eternal ideas as models. The dialog also discusses the nature of the soul and the cosmos.

- ***"Parmenides"*:** This dialog is a critical examination of the theory of ideas. Through the character of Parmenides, Plato scrutinizes the logical challenges and contradictions inherent in the theory of ideas, making this one of the most intricate and profound dialogues in his corpus.

- ***"Laws"*:** In his last and longest dialogue, Plato departs from the utopian model of the "Republic" and offers a more realistic and detailed concept of government. In "Laws," he discusses the laws and regulations necessary to create a stable and just society.

Plato's later dialogues represent the culmination of his philosophical inquiry and exploration. They deepen his understanding of complex metaphysical and ontological issues, continuing to have a significant influence on subsequent generations of philosophers.

Each of these periods - early, middle, and late - is characterized by unique themes and approaches that reflect the evolution of his philosophical thought. Understanding these periods sheds light on Plato’s evolving philosophy and its enduring impact on Western thought.

Plato's works give us a key to understanding his views on ethics, justice, and the way of human life. "Apology" is Plato's depiction of Socrates' trial. The dialogue is written in the form of Socrates' defense speech addressed to the Athenian court. The main ideas presented in the "Apology" include:

1. **Defense of the Way of Life:** Socrates explains that his mission is to question and expose false beliefs. He sees his mission as encouraging people to pursue self-knowledge and moral improvement. Socrates argues that his philosophy is not a crime but a divine calling. He claims that he serves the city better than any other citizen.
2. **Pursuit of Truth and Wisdom:** Socrates asserts that the pursuit of truth and wisdom outweighs the fear of death. He explains that wisdom begins with the recognition of one’s own ignorance and the striving for self-improvement. In his speech, Socrates condemns those who consider themselves wise without possessing true knowledge and emphasizes the importance of critical thinking and dialogue.
3. **Attitude Toward Death:** Socrates argues that he does not fear death, viewing it either as an eternal sleep or a passage to another world, where he might engage with the great thinkers of the past. This belief helped him remain true to his principles even in the face of execution. Socrates argued that a philosopher should always be ready for death, as a true way of life implies disdain for bodily pleasures and material values.

"Crito" is a dialogue that takes place in the prison after the trial of Socrates. Crito, a friend of Socrates, comes to him with a proposal to escape and avoid execution. However, Socrates refuses, and the dialogue reveals several key philosophical ideas:

1. **The Principle of Following the Laws of the State:** Socrates explained that he had a moral obligation to obey the laws of the state, even when they were unjust toward him. He believed that defying the law would sow chaos and erode the foundations of society. Socrates argued that citizens must respect the laws of their state because they receive protection and education from it. This obligation is the basis of the social contract.
2. **The Concept of Justice:** Socrates emphasized that justice is more important than personal interests. He believed that injustice cannot be corrected by another injustice. Socrates was convinced that moral behavior should be based on principles, not on personal gain or fear of punishment.
3. **Ethics and Moral Resilience:** During the trial, Socrates demonstrated moral resilience by refusing to compromise his principles to save his own life. He accepted the unjust verdict with dignity but remained true to his convictions. Socrates believed that true virtue lies in adhering to moral principles, even if it leads to personal sacrifices.

"Apology" and "Crito" are fundamental texts that reflect Plato's ethical and philosophical views as conveyed through the figure of Socrates. These dialogues emphasize the importance of the pursuit of truth, adherence to law, and moral resilience. Through these dialogues, Plato demonstrates that philosophy transcends theoretical discourse, demanding practical application in life, even amidst the most trying circumstances.

**Political Philosophy**

Plato's Dialogue Republic (Latin: Res Publica) stands as one of the foundational texts in the history of philosophy and political theory. In this dialogue, Plato explores the nature of justice, describes the structure of the ideal state, and discusses the role of philosophy in political governance. The main themes presented in the "Republic" include the structure of the ideal state, the concept of justice, and the idea of philosophical rule.

**The Ideal State**

Plato divides society into three classes: philosopher-rulers, warriors, and producers. He asserts that justice is achieved when each class fulfills its role according to its nature and abilities.

**1. Philosopher-Kings**

Plato believes that only philosophers, who possess knowledge of the forms and truths, can be just rulers. This is because of their ability to understand the highest forms, especially the form of the Good, and to guide the state based on these ideals.

This class comprises individuals endowed with the highest knowledge and wisdom. Philosopher-rulers undergo rigorous training in the sciences, dialectics, and statecraft. Philosopher-kings are trained in the sciences, dialectics, and statecraft. They understand the ideal forms, particularly the form of the Good, which makes them the most suitable for governance. Philosopher-kings guide the state and make decisions based on wisdom and justice. Their ultimate aim is the well-being of the entire society, transcending personal gain.

This concept of philosopher-kings is central to Plato's vision of a just society, where those who are most knowledgeable and wise are given the responsibility to govern, ensuring that the state operates for the common good.

**2. Warriors (Guardians)**

Warriors are characterized by their courage, discipline, and loyalty. They are trained to protect the state and maintain internal order. They possess the necessary strength and bravery to confront external threats and ensure the safety of the community. Warriors defend the state from external dangers and maintain law and order within the country. They are subordinate to the philosopher-rulers and carry out their directives, ensuring that the state functions smoothly and securely.

**3. Producers (Craftsmen and Farmers)**

This class includes farmers, craftsmen, merchants, and others engaged in the production of goods and services. Producers provide the economic foundation of the state, ensuring that all material needs are met. Producers supply the state with all necessities for life: food, clothing, shelter, and other goods. They maintain economic stability and prosperity, enabling the state to function effectively and support its citizens.

**Concept of Justice**

Plato posits that justice is realized when each class fulfills its natural role in society without encroaching upon the roles of others. This concept differs fundamentally from modern ideas of justice, which are based on equality of rights and freedoms.

**1. Justice at the Individual Level:**

Plato believes that justice within the individual is achieved when the three parts of the soul (reason, spirit, and desire) work in harmony. Reason must govern, the spirit should support reason, and desires should be kept under control.

**2. Justice at the State Level:**

In the ideal state, each class of society performs its function. Philosopher-rulers govern, warriors protect, and producers work to meet material needs. Justice emerges when each fulfills their role and refrains from meddling in the responsibilities of others.

**Theory of Knowledge and Theory of Forms**

Plato articulated his Theory of Forms, contending that true knowledge arises solely through the comprehension of ideal forms — eternal and immutable archetypes of reality. In our world, we see only shadows of these forms, reflections of true reality.

**1. Ideal Forms:**

According to Plato, every object or phenomenon in our world has its ideal form, which exists outside time and space. These forms represent perfect and unchanging models, upon which all things in the physical world are based.

**2. Knowledge:**

Plato believes that the human mind can grasp these ideal forms through a process of intellectual ascent. True knowledge resides in the intellectual apprehension of these forms, rather than in the observation of the transient and flawed objects of the physical world.

**Allegory of the Cave**

The Allegory of the Cave, presented in the seventh book of Plato’s Republic, is one of the most renowned and profound metaphors in philosophy. It illustrates the process of knowledge and the nature of reality, as well as emphasizes the difference between the visible world and the world of ideal forms.

Plato describes people sitting in a dark cave, chained so that they can only see the wall in front of them. Behind them burns a fire, and between the fire, the prisoners pass various objects that cast shadows on the wall. These prisoners, who have been chained since birth, know no other reality besides the shadows they see in front of them.

* **Shadows on the Wall:** The prisoners perceive these shadows as the only reality. They discuss and analyze the shadows, believing that they understand the true nature of the world.
* **Sounds and Echoes:** The sounds made by the people behind the prisoners' backs create echoes, and the prisoners mistake these echoes for the real sounds of the shadows in front of them.

**Liberation and Exit from the Cave**

One of the prisoners is freed and begins to realize that the shadows on the wall are merely reflections of real objects passing behind him. At first, he is blinded by the light of the fire and cannot see anything clearly, but gradually his eyes adjust to the light, and he begins to see the objects casting the shadows.

* **Ascent to the Light:** The prisoner climbs up the cave toward the exit, and his eyes adjust to the daylight. He begins to see the real world—sun, plants, animals, and people. He realizes that reality is far more complex and beautiful than the shadows he saw in the cave.
* **Contemplation of the Sun:** In the allegory, the sun symbolizes the highest form of the Good and truth. The freed prisoner understands that the sun is the source of all light and life, and without it, it would be impossible to see the real objects.

**Return to the Cave**

Having understood the truth, the freed prisoner decides to return to the cave to tell the other prisoners about his discovery and help them break free. However, his eyes, accustomed to the light, struggle to see in the darkness of the cave, and the other prisoners think he has gone blind. They refuse to believe his words and resist the idea of leaving the cave.

* **Rejection of the Truth:** The prisoners do not want to leave their places and see the real world, preferring the familiar illusion of shadows. They are even prepared to kill anyone who attempts to free them, clinging desperately to their familiar illusion of reality.

The Allegory of the Cave has deep philosophical significance and symbolizes several key ideas of Plato:

1. **The Difference Between the Visible World and the World of Ideas:** The cave and shadows symbolize the visible world that we perceive through the senses. The real world outside the cave is the world of ideas, accessible only through reason and philosophical inquiry.
2. **The Process of Knowledge:** The prisoner's liberation and ascent to the light symbolize the process of learning and self-discovery. It is a difficult path that requires effort and courage but leads to a true understanding of reality.
3. **The Role of the Philosopher:** The philosopher is the one who escapes the cave and grasps the true nature of things. However, his task does not end there—he must return to the cave and try to help other prisoners free themselves, despite resistance and misunderstanding.
4. **The Nature of Truth and the Good:** The sun in the allegory symbolizes the highest truth and the Good, the source of all existence. Understanding this highest truth is the goal of philosophical pursuit.

Does this myth remind you of anything? The world you live in now?

Look around you. Instead of caves, there are houses and apartments. Instead of a stone floor, there's a couch. And like thousands of years ago, people look at the wall on which hangs a TV, on the screen of which are the same shadows - a reflection of the world, but not the world itself. People are shackled by what they believe to be their own convictions, yet in reality, they are bound by invisible chains of reasoning imposed by others.

Those who have put these shackles on people talk a lot about freedom, but they are watchful that people like you don't break free from the shackles and don't see the true world. It's like Orwell's "1984," when notions were substituted, and freedom was called slavery.

From time to time in your world, as many years ago, some loners try to tell people the truth and show them reality. These weirdos want to change the lives of slaves and give them freedom. But only the slaves don't want that. They are even ready to kill anyone who tries to remove their shackles and make them free because if this happens, the slaves will inevitably come to the realization that all their previous life was spent in slavery, in deceit and lies.

Few people want to admit the truth. Parting with illusions is always a sharp, burning pain. Not everyone can go through this pain and start living again.

**The Soul and Immortality**

"**Phaedo**" is one of Plato's most renowned dialogues, representing a profound philosophical investigation into the nature of the soul, its immortality, and the afterlife. In this dialogue, Plato presents various arguments in favor of the soul's immortality and describes the afterlife through mythological imagery.

**Main Arguments in Favor of the Soul’s Immortality**

**The Theory of Opposites**

Plato posits that all phenomena in nature emerge from their opposites. For example, heat emerges from cold, and wakefulness from sleep. This principle of change and cycles observed in nature leads Plato to conclude that life arises from death and death from life. Therefore, the soul must exist before and after bodily death, passing through cycles of birth and dying.

**The Theory of Recollection**

Plato introduces the idea of anamnesis, or recollection, which posits that knowledge is the soul's recollection of what it already knew before its embodiment in the body. He argues that the soul possesses innate knowledge of the ideal forms, which it recalls during learning and understanding. This argument supports the idea of the soul’s pre-existence and, therefore, its immortality.

**The Argument of the Simplicity of the Soul**

Plato asserts that the soul is a simple and indivisible substance. Unlike the body, which consists of many parts and is subject to decay, the soul cannot be destroyed as it has no parts. The simplicity and indivisibility of the soul render it immortal.

**Judgment of Souls**

After death, souls undergo judgment, where their actions committed on earth are evaluated. The judgment of souls is a key element in the myth told by Plato, as it determines their future fate. The judges of the afterlife assess the souls' lives and direct them to the appropriate places for punishment or reward.

* **Righteous Souls:** Souls that lived a virtuous life are sent to places of bliss, where they enjoy eternal peace and joy. These souls are freed from suffering and rewarded for their virtues.
* **Sinful Souls:** Souls that committed crimes are subjected to punishments corresponding to their wrongdoings. They undergo purification processes before potentially entering a new incarnation.

**Rivers of the Underworld**

In the "Phaedo," Plato uses mythological rivers of the underworld to illustrate his philosophical ideas about the soul and life after death. These rivers represent various aspects of the afterlife and are important symbols in Plato's dialogue. There are five rivers in total, but Plato specifically mentions four:

* **Acheron:** Mentioned by Plato as the main river through which the souls of the deceased are transported to the underworld. Plato describes Acheron as a great water current, to which most souls go after death. It is a place where souls undergo purification through suffering. Righteous souls are sent through Acheron to calmer places in the underworld, where they find peace. This underscores Plato's idea that after death, souls receive rewards for their deeds in life and that a soul that has gone through suffering can find peace.
* **Cocytus:** Described by Plato as the river of wailing and lamentation. This river is a tributary of Acheron. Souls that fall into the waters of Cocytus suffer from grief and regret for their sins. This river represents a place of repentance and torment for those who committed sins in life but were not entirely evil. Cocytus emphasizes the idea of moral purification through suffering and sorrow, which is an important element of Plato's philosophy of the afterlife.
* **Pyriphlegethon (Phlegethon):** Described as a river of fire, flowing around the underworld. Plato speaks of Phlegethon as a place where the souls of evildoers undergo torments by being submerged in fiery waters. This image underscores the idea of just retribution and punishment for unrighteous deeds. Phlegethon symbolizes purification through suffering and fire, which burns away the sins accumulated during earthly life.
* **Styx:** The Styx is a sacred river that serves as the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead. It cannot be crossed without permission. Souls that cross the Styx are forever separated from the world of the living. Plato emphasizes the sanctity of this river, its inviolability, and its importance in maintaining order between worlds. The Styx also symbolizes the inevitability of death and the division between earthly life and the afterlife.

**Isles of the Blessed**

The most righteous souls, who have achieved the highest degree of virtue, are sent to the Isles of the Blessed. These islands symbolize ultimate liberation from the cycle of reincarnation and the eternal enjoyment of harmony and happiness.

* **Liberation from the Cycle of Reincarnations:** Souls that arrive at the Isles of the Blessed are liberated from the cycle of reincarnations and the constraints of bodily existence. They attain a state of eternal peace and happiness.
* **Community of Great Souls:** These souls live in peace with the gods and other great souls of the past, enjoying their company and harmony. The Isles of the Blessed represent the ideal afterlife.

The myth of the afterlife in Plato's "Phaedo" offers a vision of the soul's fate after death. Essentially, our earthly life is a preparation for the transition to other worlds. Like Pythagoras and many other sages, Plato speaks of the importance of a virtuous life and moral conduct for escaping the cycle of reincarnation and merging with the divine. In Plato's words, there is not only hope for eternal happiness but also faith in liberation from suffering for those who follow the path of virtue.

In everyday life, we often use the word "soul," uttering it automatically without giving much thought to what it truly means. **Phaedrus** is one of the most poetic and philosophically rich dialogues of Plato, where he explores the nature of love, beauty, and the soul. This dialogue includes the famous **Myth of the Charioteer**, which illustrates the inner struggle of the soul and the importance of harmonious interaction among its various parts.

This myth vividly illustrates the soul's structure and its eternal striving for truth and beauty, highlighting the inner conflict between rational aspirations and irrational impulses. Plato uses this myth to explain the complexity of human nature and the importance of harmony within oneself.

**Structure of the Soul**

In the Myth of the Charioteer, the soul is depicted as a chariot driven by a charioteer (representing reason) and two horses, each symbolizing different aspects of human nature.

1. **The Charioteer (Reason):**

The charioteer represents reason, which strives to guide the chariot toward truth and goodness. Reason possesses the knowledge and wisdom necessary to achieve the soul's highest goals. Its task is to control and direct the horses to move in the right direction.

1. **The White Horse (Noble Aspirations):**

One horse, white in color, symbolizes noble aspirations and virtues. It is obedient, disciplined, and strives toward higher ideals such as truth, beauty, and justice. The white horse represents the positive and rational aspects of human nature.

1. **The Black Horse (Base Desires):**

The other horse, black in color, represents base desires and passions. It is stubborn, willful, and seeks bodily pleasures and material goods. The black horse embodies the unruly and passionate elements of human nature, driven by instinctual desires and immediate gratification.

**The Struggle Between Rational and Irrational Parts of the Soul**

The Myth of the Charioteer illustrates the ongoing struggle between the rational and irrational parts of the soul. The charioteer (reason) must be able to control and direct both horses to achieve harmony and move toward truth and beauty.

1. **Harmonious Interaction:**

To achieve its higher goals, the soul must be in harmony. Harmony is achieved only when reason adeptly mediates between noble aspirations and base desires, aligning them with the soul's higher purpose. The white horse supports the pursuit of truth, while the black horse may pull the chariot back, seeking earthly pleasures.

1. **The Path to Truth and Beauty:**

When the charioteer successfully controls both horses, the chariot can move toward the highest ideals. This process symbolizes the philosophical ascent to understanding the ideal forms, such as truth and beauty, which lie beyond the material world.

**Philosophical Significance of the Myth**

Plato's Myth of the Charioteer holds deep philosophical significance and symbolizes several key ideas:

1. **The Nature of the Soul:**

The soul is composed of distinct parts, each with unique desires and aspirations. Recognizing this internal composition provides insights into human behavior and motivation.

1. **The Role of Reason:**

Reason plays a central role in governing the soul. It must guide and control the passions and desires to achieve harmony and the soul's highest goals.

1. **Ethical and Philosophical Ascent:**

The myth illustrates how the soul can achieve the highest ideals through the harmonious interaction of all its parts. This ascent to truth and beauty is the foundation of Platonic ethics and philosophy.

These ideas are crucial elements of Plato's philosophical legacy. They offer a deep understanding of the nature of the soul, the role of reason, and the process aimed at achieving the highest ideals.

In "Phaedrus," Plato also links the Charioteer Myth to the concept of love. He views love as a powerful force that can help the soul reach its highest goals if it is guided by reason. According to Plato, love can be noble and uplifting when directed toward spiritual and intellectual development, or base and destructive when focused on bodily desires.

1. **Eros and Ascent:**

Eros (love) is central to the soul’s philosophical ascent. When guided by reason, love becomes a transformative force, propelling the soul toward the ideal forms of beauty and wisdom. This ascent through love is a central theme in "Phaedrus."

1. **The Role of Recollection:**

Plato also introduces the concept of anamnesis (recollection), arguing that the soul already knows the ideal forms from previous incarnations and strives toward them through memory. Love and beauty, observed in the physical world, awaken in the soul memories of higher ideals, guiding it toward truth.

**The Myth of the Origin of Love in "Symposium"**

In the dialogue "Symposium," Plato presents one of the most famous myths about the origin of love—the Myth of the Birth of Eros. This myth, told by the priestess Diotima through Socrates, explains the dual nature of love, which combines a striving for beauty and truth with an inner emptiness and desire.

**Context of the Dialogue:**

"Symposium" is a gathering of Athenian aristocrats who hold a banquet and take turns giving speeches in honor of Eros, the god of love. Each participant offers their understanding of love, and Socrates recounts Diotima's teaching about the nature of love.

**The Myth of the Birth of Eros:**

According to Diotima, Eros was born on the day of Aphrodite's birth, the goddess of love and beauty. His parents are Poros (the god of resourcefulness and abundance) and Penia (the goddess of poverty and lack).

1. **Poros (Resource):**

Poros represents abundance, inventiveness, and resources. He embodies the ability to achieve and possess what is desired. In the myth, he is depicted as clever and resourceful, able to find solutions in any situation.

1. **Penia (Poverty):**

Penia, in contrast, symbolizes poverty, need, and the constant striving for what she lacks. She is always in search of what is unattainable and seeks to satisfy her needs.

**Event of Birth:**

On Aphrodite's birthday, Penia, observing Poros intoxicated by nectar, seizes the opportunity to conceive a son, Eros.

**The Dual Nature of Eros:**

Eros, born from the union of Poros and Penia, inherits traits from both parents, explaining his complex and dual nature:

1. **Striving for Beauty and Truth:**

From Poros, Eros inherits resourcefulness, energy, and a desire for beauty and truth. He constantly seeks higher ideals, searching for and understanding what is beautiful and true.

1. **Inner Emptiness and Desire:**

From Penia, Eros inherits perpetual dissatisfaction, ceaselessly yearning for what he lacks, driven by unrelenting desire and passion. This aspect of his nature makes him restless and always seeking

**Philosophical Significance of the Myth:**

The Myth of the Birth of Eros is deeply symbolic and reflects Plato's philosophical ideas about the nature of love:

1. **Love as Striving:**

Love, according to Plato, is a striving for what is lacking. Eros symbolizes this yearning for beauty, truth, and virtue, which are always beyond reach but toward which the soul constantly aspires.

1. **The Dynamics of Love:**

Love is not static; it is a dynamic process involving search, striving, and movement toward higher goals. Eros is the force that drives the soul toward self-improvement and the pursuit of ideals.

1. **Love and Wisdom:**

In Diotima's teaching, love serves as a pathway to wisdom. Beginning with physical beauty, the soul ascends to the appreciation of spiritual beauty and ultimately to the pursuit of absolute truth.

In the Myth of the Origin of Love, Plato offers his understanding of the nature of love, showing its duality—striving for ideals and inner emptiness—as a powerful force that drives a person to seek what is desired and unattainable.

**Cosmology and the Creation of the World**

The dialog Timaeus is one of Plato's later works in which he deals with the issues of cosmology, the creation of the universe, and its structure. The dialog is an account of Timaeus, one of the participants, who explains how the world was created and the principles behind it. "Timaeus" not only describes the physical structure of the universe but also explores the metaphysical and philosophical basis for its existence.

**Platonic cosmology**

The central figure in Platonic cosmology is the demiurge, the divine creator who creates the universe out of chaos using eternal ideas as models. Plato depicts the demiurge as a benevolent and intelligent creator striving to fashion the best possible world.

**1. The demiurge and the creation of the universe**:

The demiurge does not create the world out of nothing but gives form to pre-existing chaos based on eternal and unchanging ideas. These ideas are perfect patterns or forms that the demiurge uses to create a harmonious and ordered cosmos.

**2**.  **Structure of the universe**:

Plato describes the universe as a living being with a soul and mind. The soul of the world mediates between the world of ideas and the material world, providing harmony and order. **According to Plato, the universe comprises four fundamental elements: fire, air, water, and earth.** These elements combine according to mathematical proportions and geometric shapes to create various physical objects and phenomena.

**3.**    **Harmony and order**:

Plato emphasizes that the universe is created according to the principles of harmony and proportion. He uses mathematical and geometrical concepts to explain the structure of the cosmos. The world created by the demiurge is a reflection of the ideal world of forms, and its beauty and order testify to the wisdom and goodness of the creator.

**The question of justice, morality, and political organization**

**in** **the myth of Atlantis**

The myth of Atlantis, set forth by Plato in the dialogues Timaeus and Critias, represents one of the most famous and enigmatic legends of antiquity. The myth narrates the history of a powerful and advanced civilization, ultimately destroyed by the gods for its hubris and unrestrained ambition. Plato uses this myth to discuss justice, morality, and political organization.

**Description of Atlantis**

**Geographical location and structure**

Atlantis is described as a huge island located beyond the Pillars of Hercules, which modern researchers identify as the Strait of Gibraltar. The island was part of a large empire that included several other islands and part of a continent.

- Center Island.

At the center of Atlantis was the main island, which had a magnificent capital city. The city was surrounded by concentric circles of water and land connected by canals. The central island contained the temple of Poseidon, the god of the seas, who was considered the patron saint of Atlantis.

- Architectural structures.

Atlantis was known for its grand architectural structures, including palaces, temples, and bridges. The city's walls were decorated with ornaments made of gold, silver, and other precious metals.

- Technological development.

The Atlanteans attained remarkable advancements in science, technology, and the arts. They used sophisticated irrigation systems for agriculture and built impressive ships for navigation and trade.

**Society and culture**

The inhabitants of Atlantis were highly developed and organized. Society was divided into different classes, each with its own responsibilities and rights.

- Government and laws.

Atlantis was ruled by a council of kings who followed the laws bequeathed to them by Poseidon. These laws ensured justice and order in society.

- Education and the arts.

Atlanteans highly valued education and the arts. They studied philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy, creating works of art that were striking in their beauty and grace.

**The decline and demise of Atlantis**

Over time, the people of Atlantis became arrogant and ambitious. They sought to dominate other nations and lost the virtues and justice that their ancestors had possessed.

- Loss of virtues.

The Atlanteans gradually forgot their moral duties and became greedy and avaricious. Their ambition and desire for power led to the internal decay of society.

- Punishment of the gods.

For its pride and ambition, Atlantis was punished by the gods. In a catastrophe caused by earthquakes and floods, the island submerged under water and disappeared. Plato portrays this catastrophe as divine retribution for Atlantis' abandonment of moral principles.

The myth of Atlantis serves as a warning that **moral decay and loss of virtues can lead to catastrophic consequences**. Plato uses this myth to illustrate the importance of justice and wisdom in political organization.

- Moral Warning.

Plato shows that even the most powerful and advanced civilizations can fall if they lose moral guidance and virtues. This warning is relevant to all times and people.

- The importance of justice and wisdom.

Plato emphasizes that true well-being and prosperity can only be achieved in harmony with moral guidelines and virtues. Justice and wisdom must be the foundation of any society to avoid the fate of Atlantis.

The myth of Atlantis, set forth by Plato in the dialogues Timaeus and Critias, is a profound and multi-layered story that serves as both a philosophical reflection on the nature of power and morality and a fascinating legend of an ancient civilization.

**The Myth of Erichthonius**

The myth of Erichthonius occupies an important place in Greek mythology and is closely associated with the origin and nature of the Athenian people. Erichthonius, a half-snake, half-man born from the union of earth and divine seed, symbolizes the profound religious and cultural beliefs of the ancient Athenians. Plato mentions this myth in his works, using it to discuss issues related to the identity and origins of the Athenian people.

Erichthonius is considered the son of Hephaestus, the god of blacksmithing and fire, and Gaia, the goddess of the earth. According to one version of the myth, Athena asked Hephaestus to craft weapons for her. Impressed by her beauty, Hephaestus attempted to seduce her, but Athena, the goddess of wisdom and war, rejected him. During the struggle, Hephaestus' seed fell to the ground, and from its union with Gaia, Erichthonius was born—a symbol of the fusion between divine and earthly forces.

1.    Hephaestus and Athena.

The myth begins with Hephaestus' attempt to conquer Athena. Athena, the goddess of wisdom and war, rejected him. Hephaestus' seed fell to the ground, resulting in the birth of Erichthonius.

2.    Gaia (Earth).

Erichthonius is born from the union of the seed of Hephaestus and the earth (Gaia). He is thus a symbol of the connection between heavenly and earthly forces.

**Half snake, half man**

Erichthonius is depicted as a being with a human top and a serpent bottom, symbolizing his dual nature and connection to earth and heaven.

**1**.    **Symbolism** of the serpent.

In Greek mythology, the serpent frequently symbolizes wisdom, renewal, and immortality.

**2**.    **Connection with the earth**.

The serpent part of Erichthonius emphasizes his origin from the earth and his connection to nature and its cyclical processes.

**Nurture by Athena**

Athena took Erichthonius under her protection, raising him in the Acropolis, the sacred heart of Athens. She imparted her wisdom and knowledge to him, making him an outstanding ruler. His upbringing in the Acropolis symbolizes Erichthonius' special place in Athenian society.

1. Acropolis.

Athena raised Erichthonius in the Acropolis, the sacred center of Athens. This symbolizes his special place in Athenian society.

2.    Athena's role

Athena, the patroness of Athens, imparted her wisdom and knowledge to Erichthonius, which made him an outstanding ruler.

**Rule and Contribution to Athenian Society**Erichthonius, as one of the first kings of Athens, made significant contributions to the city's development and cultural heritage. He strengthened the Acropolis by building defensive walls and temple structures. He is considered the founder of many cult places in Athens.  
Erichthonius established the Panathenaic Games, an important religious and sporting festival dedicated to Athena. These games became a major cultural event in Athens.

1. **Identity and Origin**  
   The myth underscores the Athenians' unique connection to both the divine and the earth. Erichthonius, born from the earth and raised by a goddess, symbolizes the divine origin and special role of the Athenian people.
2. **Wisdom and Rule**  
   Erichthonius’ connection with Athena highlights the importance of wisdom and justice in governance. His rule symbolizes the ideal of a wise and just ruler who governs the city in accordance with divine principles.

The myth of Erichthonius is an important part of Greek mythology and culture, reflecting the religious and cultural beliefs of ancient Athenians. It serves as a key element in the question of identity and origin for the Athenian people. This myth underscores the unique connection of the Athenian people with the earth and the gods, as well as the importance of wisdom and justice in governance.

**The Myth of Eras: Retribution and Moral Choice**

At the end of the Republic dialog, Plato recounts the myth of Eras, a warrior who survived a clinical death and came back to life to recount what he saw in the afterlife. This myth is the culmination of Plato's thoughts on justice and moral choice, illustrating the idea of retribution and the importance of a virtuous life.

**The Story of Er**

Er, the son of Armenius, was a warrior who died in battle. After ten days, his body was found intact, and twelve days after his death, he suddenly came back to life on the funeral pyre. Upon returning to life, Er told what he had seen in the afterlife.

**Journey to the Afterlife**

Er describes his journey through the different areas of the afterlife where souls are judged and receive retribution for their deeds on earth. He sees two openings in the earth and two in the sky through which souls leave and return after a period of retribution.

1.  **Judgment and ret**ribution:

The souls of the righteous ascend to heaven and pass through the gates of heaven. There they are rewarded for their virtuous lives. The souls of sinners descend through the underground gate, where they receive punishment for their sins.

2.  **The Plain of Oblivion**:

After being punished or rewarded, souls gather on the Plain of Oblivion to choose a new incarnation. This plain serves as a place where souls can discuss their past lives and prepare for the next life cycle.

**Choosing a new incarnation**

One of the key scenes in the myth is the soul's choice of a new incarnation. Each soul chooses its future life from several options offered based on its preferences and lessons learned from previous lives.

1. **Lottery of choice**:

Souls draw lots to determine the order of their choices. They are then given a choice of different lives, including animal and human lives.

Souls who have learned virtue and wisdom make intelligent choices, striving for a life of justice and wisdom.

2. **The importance of choice**:

Plato emphasizes the importance of free choice and moral responsibility. Even after death, souls must consciously choose their future lives to continue striving for virtue and justice.

**Return of the Era**

After observing the selection process and the rebirth of souls, Er returns to life to recount what he witnessed. His account serves as a reminder that there is life after death and that moral choices and justice matter not only in this world but also in the afterlife.

**Philosophical Significance of the Myth:**

The myth of Era has several important philosophical and ethical meanings:

1. **The** **idea of retribution**:

Plato uses myth to show that justice will prevail even after death. Righteous souls will be rewarded, and sinners will be punished.

2. **The importance of moral choice**:

Plato emphasizes the importance of free choice and moral responsibility. Souls must consciously choose their future lives to continue to pursue virtue and justice.

3. **Life after death**:

The myth of Era illustrates Plato's belief in the immortality of the soul and life after death. Souls continue to exist and learn even after physical death.

The Myth of Eras in The Republic of Plato powerfully reminds us of the importance of justice, moral choice, and responsibility. This myth emphasizes that every action we take has consequences not only in this world but also in the afterlife and that only a virtuous life leads to eternal good.

**The Myth of King Atalant in Plato's dialog "Laws"**

In the dialogue "Laws," Plato tells the myth of King Atalant to illustrate the principles on which the governance of a state should be based. This myth serves as an illustration of Plato's philosophical principles concerning political structure and the moral foundations of rulership.

**Plot of the Myth**

King Atalant was a legendary ruler known for his justice and wisdom. In his reign, he was guided by the principles of justice and always sought the well-being of his subjects.

* 1. **Origin of Atalant**

Atalant was born to noble parents and received an excellent education. From childhood, he was raised with the values of virtue and justice.

* 1. **Reign of Atalant**

Atalant ascended to the throne at a young age and quickly earned the respect and trust of his subjects through his wisdom and fairness. He established laws based on the principles of equality and justice and strictly ensured their observance. Atalant sought harmony in his state, creating conditions for the prosperity and well-being of his people.

* 1. **Trials and Wisdom of Atalant**

During his reign, Atalant faced numerous challenges, internal conflicts, and external threats. He successfully overcame these difficulties through sound judgment and wise governance. Atalant consistently made decisions guided by the welfare of the entire state rather than personal gain.

**Political and Moral Lessons of the Myth**

Plato uses the myth of King Atalant to discuss important philosophical and political lessons, emphasizing the significance of justice and wise governance.

* 1. **Justice**

Plato emphasizes that justice must be the foundation of any state. Rulers should be guided by the principles of justice to ensure harmony and the well-being of their citizens. Atalant serves as an example of a ruler who places justice above personal interests, creating a prosperous society.

* 1. **Wisdom**

Wisdom is a key quality of a ruler. Only with wisdom can a ruler make decisions that serve the common good. Atalant symbolizes the ideal ruler who uses his wisdom to govern the state and solve complex problems.

* 1. **Role of Laws**

Laws are essential for maintaining order and justice within a state, ensuring the well-being of all citizens. Atalant enacted laws that upheld equality and justice, fostering the prosperity of his state.

**Moral Principles of Governance**

Plato stresses that a ruler should be guided by moral principles such as virtue, justice, and wisdom. These principles enable a ruler to make the right decisions and create a just society. Atalant serves as an example of such a ruler, whose reign is based on moral principles and virtue.

The myth of King Atalant, as told by Plato in "Laws," is an illustration of wise governance. It shows that a society depends on the personality of the ruler and the principles they follow in governing the state.

**Modern Interpretations and Influence**

**Plato's influence on modern philosophy and science**

Plato's ideas and writings formed the basis of many philosophical and scientific trends, having a significant impact on subsequent generations of thinkers. He made fundamental contributions to philosophy, ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, and political theory.

**Influence on Philosophy**

**Aristotle**

- **Disciples and followers**: Aristotle was a student of Plato and founded his own philosophical school, the Lyceum, which continued and developed many of Plato's ideas. Although Aristotle disagreed with his teacher on many things, he adopted from him a methodological approach and a desire for systematic inquiry.

- **Theory of Ideas**: Aristotle criticized Plato's theory of ideas, yet his own metaphysics was deeply influenced by and constructed in dialogue with Platonic concepts.

**St. Augustine**

- **Christian Philosophy**

St. Augustine (354-430) used Platonic ideas to construct Christian theology and philosophy. He adapted the concept of eternal ideas existing in the mind of God and applied it to the Christian doctrine of God and creation.

- **The** **Problem of Evil**

Plato's ideas about metaphysical dualism and the nature of evil also influenced Augustine, who developed his theodicy based on these concepts.

**René Descartes**

- **Dualism**

René Descartes (1596–1650) expanded on the concept of soul-body dualism, drawing on Plato's ideas about the separation of the physical and metaphysical worlds.

**Methodological Skepticism**

Descartes' method of doubt and search for indubitable grounds of knowledge also echoes Plato's dialectic and quest for the apprehension of truth.

**Immanuel Kant**

- **Critique of Pure Reason**

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) introduced revolutionary ideas into philosophy, but his concept of the "thing-in-itself" and the world of phenomena carries echoes of Plato's distinction between the world of ideas and the visible world.

- **Ethics and morality**

Kant's ethics of duty and concept of the categorical imperative also has parallels with Platonic ideas about virtue and justice.

**Influence on Science**

**Mathematics**

- **Mathematical forms**

Plato placed special importance on mathematics and believed that mathematical forms were ideal and unchangeable. This idea influenced the development of mathematical science, particularly the works of Euclid and Archimedes.

- **Platonic** **solids**

The concept of Platonic solids (regular polyhedra) inspired mathematicians and geometers to investigate symmetry and structure.

**Astronomy**

- **Geocentric model**

Plato's concept of perfect circular orbits for the planets influenced the geocentric model of the universe developed by Ptolemy. Although this model was later refuted by Copernicus and Galileo, it dominated astronomy for many centuries.

- **Cosmology**

In the dialog Timaeus, Plato proposed a cosmological model where the universe has a soul and a mind. These ideas inspired the development of ancient Greek and medieval astronomy and cosmology.

**Natural Sciences**

- **Ideas and Forms**

Plato's concept of ideal forms influenced natural philosophers and Renaissance scientists such as Galileo and Newton, who sought to find the fundamental laws of nature.

- **Scientific method**

Plato's dialectical approach and emphasis on systematic inquiry significantly influenced the development of the scientific method.

Plato greatly influenced the development of Western philosophy and science; his ideas and concepts continue to be relevant and inspire thinkers to this day. His writings formed the basis of philosophical and scientific movements, having a significant impact on figures such as Aristotle, Augustine, Descartes, and Kant, as well as on the development of mathematics, astronomy, and the natural sciences.

**The Main Directions and Approaches in Modern Studies**

**of Platonic Philosophy.**

Modern scholars continue actively studying and interpreting Plato's works, exploring his philosophy from various perspectives. They consider both classical aspects of his teachings and his influence on various fields of knowledge.

**1.** **Dialogical method and dialectics**

Modern scholars have devoted considerable attention to Plato's dialogical method, which is central to his philosophical approach. They examine how Plato uses dialogue to reveal philosophical ideas, develop arguments, and emphasize the diversity of viewpoints.

Examples of works: Researchers such as Julia Annas and Marilyn McCord Adams analyze the structure of Plato's dialogues, their rhetorical devices, and the role of characters in the development of philosophical discussions.

**Dialectic as a method of knowledge**

Plato's dialectic is seen as a method of knowledge that helps discover truth through systematic reasoning and dialog. Modern scholars explore how dialectics is used to develop concepts and theories, such as the theory of ideas and justice.

Examples of works: The work of philosophers such as Nicholas White and Jonathan Lear focuses on exploring Plato's dialectical method and its application in various dialogues.

**2. Theory of Ideas and Metaphysics**

Plato's theory of ideas remains one of the most debated topics in contemporary philosophy. Researchers consider how Plato's ideas (forms) can be interpreted and applied in contemporary philosophical discussions.

Examples of works include Jonathan Lear and Terrence Irwin, who explore the nature of Plato's forms and their relation to contemporary questions of metaphysics and ontology.

**Metaphysical Aspects of Platonic Philosophy**

Modern scholars delve into the metaphysical dimensions of Plato's philosophy, examining concepts like eternal and unchanging ideas, the nature of being, and their influence on later philosophical traditions.

Examples of works: Miriam Griffin and Michael Frede's work focuses on analyzing Plato's metaphysical ideas and their significance for modern philosophy.

**3. Ethics and Political Philosophy**

**Plato's Ethics**

Plato's ethical ideas — encompassing virtue, justice, and moral education—remain relevant and widely studied in contemporary philosophy. Researchers analyze how Plato's ethical principles can be applied to contemporary moral and social contexts.

Examples of works: Julia Annas and Terry Pinkard examine Platonic ethics and its influence on the development of ethical theories in the history of philosophy.

**Political Philosophy**

Plato's ideas about the state, government, and justice are examined in the context of modern political theories. Researchers analyze Plato's concept of the ideal state and its applicability to modern political systems.

Examples of works: Marilyn McCord Adams and Richard Kraut's work examines Plato's political philosophy and its influence on the development of political thought.

**4.** **Influence on modern science and technology**

**Mathematics and Science**

Plato's ideas about ideal forms and their application to mathematics continue to influence the development of modern scientific theories. Researchers consider how Plato's concept of mathematical objects and symmetry can be applied to modern mathematics and physics.

Examples of work include: James Ludlow and Robert Kaplan explore the application of Platonic ideas to modern mathematics and their impact on the development of scientific theories.

**Computer science and artificial intelligence**

Modern scholars also consider the influence of Platonic philosophy on the development of computer science and artificial intelligence. Plato's ideas about cognition, learning, and reason find application in research related to the creation and development of intelligent systems.

Examples of works. The work of Brian Cantwell Smith and Marvin Minsky focuses on exploring the influence of Platonic philosophy on the development of computer science and artificial intelligence.

Contemporary interpretations and studies of Platonic philosophy cover a wide range of topics and directions, from the dialogical method and theory of ideas to ethics and political philosophy. Researchers continue to study and reinterpret Plato's ideas, applying them to contemporary philosophical and scientific debates, which demonstrates the enduring significance and relevance of his legacy.

**Final remarks (Part 3)**

In this part, we explored the key aspects of Plato’s philosophy, highlighting his profound influence on Western thought and modern interpretations of his ideas. Here are the central points to remember:

**1. Structure of Plato’s Ideal State:**  
Plato envisioned an ideal society divided into three distinct classes: philosopher-rulers, warriors, and producers. Justice, according to Plato, emerges when each class perfectly fulfills its own role. Philosopher-rulers, equipped with true knowledge of ideas, are naturally best suited to govern, making decisions rooted in wisdom and virtue.

**2. Theory of Ideas and Metaphysics:**  
Central to Plato’s thought is his theory of Ideas (Forms)—eternal and unchanging archetypes existing in an ideal realm. Genuine knowledge, Plato insists, can only be achieved by comprehending these Ideas. His metaphysics revolves around concepts of being, essence, and reality, clearly distinguishing between the physical world and the metaphysical realm, where the latter represents ultimate truth.

**3. Ethics and Morality:**  
Plato placed great emphasis on virtue and justice, advocating for moral education as essential to human fulfillment. Justice, in his view, is attained through harmony—within the soul of an individual as well as across society at large. Only when each part of society and the human soul fulfills its rightful purpose can true justice and virtue be realized.

**Myths and allegories**. Myths, such as the Allegory of the Cave and the Myth of Era, illustrate philosophical concepts and emphasize the importance of moral choices.

**4)**    **Influence on subsequent philosophy and science**:

**Aristotle**. He was a student of Plato, who developed many of his ideas, although he criticized some aspects of the theory of ideas.

**Augustine, Descartes, and Kant** used Platonic concepts to develop their philosophical systems.

**Mathematics and Science**. Plato's ideas about mathematical forms and ideals influenced the development of science, especially in mathematics and astronomy.

**5)**    **Modern interpretations and research**:

**The dialogical method.** Modern scholars continue to study Plato's dialogical method as a mode of philosophical inquiry.

**Ethics and Political Philosophy**. Researchers analyze Plato's ideas of justice and government in the context of modern political theories.

**Applications in science and technology**. Platonic concepts are applied in computer science, artificial intelligence, and other scientific fields.

Plato's philosophy remains important and significant even after thousands of years. His ideas on justice, the ideal state, the nature of reality, and moral education continue to influence contemporary intellectual discussions and developments. Understanding Plato's philosophy offers not only historical insight but also practical tools for addressing contemporary philosophical and scientific challenges.

**Part 4**

**ARISTOTLE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES: A JOURNEY**

**INTO THR DEPTHS OF REALITY**

He marched forward without looking back, leaving behind ruined towns and villages. He showed no pity for the heart-rending cries of the thirty thousand women and children sold into slavery after the siege of Tyre. His indifferent gaze swept over the mangled corpses piled haphazardly as he moved on.

His name inspired terror and awe. He built one of the world's greatest empires, stretching from Greece to Egypt and India. This was Alexander the Great—a brilliant general and devoted student of Aristotle.

Back in his tent, Alexander dismissed everyone and, with irritation, wrote a letter to his teacher: *"Alexander to Aristotle! You have done wrong by publishing your teachings on the secret sciences. How will we differ from others if the knowledge we have gained becomes public? I would rather surpass others in wisdom than in strength. Farewell."*

Only Alexander the Great was meant to possess this secret knowledge—no one else! After all, Aristotle had been well-compensated for his years in the royal palace. How dare he publish books that every mortal could now read? These books contained the exclusive knowledge Aristotle had shared with Alexander in private, one-on-one conversations—knowledge that had made him the most powerful ruler in the world!

There was no joy in victory on the battlefield. Alexander felt betrayed by someone he considered one of the closest people in his life, someone for whom he had done so much.

Soon, a reply arrived: *"You have nothing to worry about. These books will not be understood by anyone. Without verbal explanation, whatever is written in them remains meaningless."*

This brief answer holds profound meaning. Secret knowledge was transmitted in two forms: written and oral, each complementing the other. In this tradition, the oral transmission of knowledge — from teacher to student — was considered primary.

The relationship between Alexander and Aristotle spanned many years. Like enigmatic threads, the lives of these two great men intertwined within the fabric of history, weaving a complex and vibrant tapestry where knowledge and power, wisdom and ambition, and the rise and fall of empires were inextricably linked. For Alexander, the knowledge he gained became the tool that enabled him to forge one of the ancient world’s most powerful empires. For Aristotle, his close relationship with such an influential student became both a source of great prestige and, ultimately, a factor in his decline.

Nicomachus, Aristotle's father, was a renowned physician who served as the court doctor to King Amyntas III of Macedonia. Trusted implicitly by the royal family, Nicomachus held a position of great influence. Years later, Aristotle would honor his father by naming one of his most celebrated works, Nicomachean Ethics, after him.

As a child, Aristotle often played in the royal gardens with Philip, the king’s son. Their friendship began in early childhood and endured through the years. When Philip II succeeded Amyntas III as king, and Aristotle had risen to fame as a teacher and philosopher, Philip invited his old friend to mentor his 13-year-old son, Alexander. Philip’s trust in Aristotle was unwavering.

For three and a half years, from 343 to 340 B.C., Aristotle dedicated himself to educating Philip II’s son, Alexander. Under his mentorship, Alexander received a profound education that spanned a wide range of disciplines. He became exceptionally skilled in matters of governance and statecraft.

\* \* \*

Aristotle was born in 384 B.C. in the city of Stagira, on the coast of the Aegean Sea. After the death of his father in 367 B.C., when Aristotle was seventeen years old, he traveled to Athens, the intellectual center of that era. Here Aristotle joined Plato's Academy, where he stayed for about twenty years until 347 BC.

The death of Plato marked a turning point in Aristotle's life. He disagreed with the appointment of Speusippus as head of the Academy and his methods of leadership. This was one of the reasons for Aristotle's departure from the Academy.

Together with Xenocrates, another student of Plato, Aristotle moved to Assos, where he began teaching under the patronage of Hermias, the city’s ruler. In ancient Assos, located on the western coast of modern Turkey in the Aeolis region, Aristotle immersed himself in biological studies. Later, upon moving to the island of Lesbos, he continued his study of marine organisms and plants, further exploring the mysteries of the natural world.

In 343 B.C. Aristotle, at the invitation of King Philip II, settled in his palace in Macedonia. At this time he was engaged in the education of the young heir Alexander, who at that time was 13 years old. This period was an important stage in the life of the philosopher. Communication with the Macedonian nobility and the education of the future great commander made Aristotle's stay in Macedonia significant both for his personal destiny and for history. Alexander's education under Aristotle began in Pella, the capital of Macedonia, where the residence of King Philip II was located. This city, located at the foot of the mountains, was not only a political and military center, but also a place where the cultures and traditions of many nations intersected, creating ideal conditions for Alexander's education.

Later, their studies continued in the city of Miesa, known for its seclusion and tranquility. It was here, away from the hustle and bustle of the palace, that Aristotle and Alexander spent time in the sanctuary of the nymphs, the Nymphaeion (Greek: Νυμφαῖον). This place, surrounded by natural beauty, with picturesque groves and gurgling springs, has become a symbol of man's connection with nature and harmony. Here, under the shade of trees, Alexander immersed himself in the sciences that Aristotle passed on to his pupil.

Aristotle taught Alexander a wide range of disciplines, including medicine, which he considered important for a ruler to understand human nature not only in its spiritual aspect but also in its physical aspect. Aristotle's lessons were not limited to scientific knowledge. The philosopher awakened in Alexander a deep love for Homeric poetry, especially the Iliad, which Aristotle himself had carefully edited and compiled as a list for his student. "The Iliad" became Alexander's board book, accompanying him on his military campaigns. Legend has it that he kept it under his pillow, along with his dagger, as a reminder of the heroism and virtue to which he aspired.

In 340 BC, Alexander began temporarily serving as the ruler of Macedonia when his father, Philip II, went on a military campaign against Byzantium. This ancient city, located on the shores of the Bosphorus, was an important trade and strategic center connecting Europe and Asia. Control over Byzantium meant dominance over trade routes and the ability to regulate the movement of goods and fleets between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

Philip II, eager to solidify Macedonian power in the region, viewed Byzantium as a significant obstacle to his ambitions. The city, which had strong fortifications and the support of allies including Athens, resisted the Macedonian king's attempts to assert control over it. The campaign against Byzantium was part of Philip's broader campaign to gain key positions in Greece and surrounding territories.

During his father's absence, Alexander proved himself a capable ruler, taking on the responsibility of governing the state. This experience was an important test of his abilities and prepared him for his future role as a great conqueror.

This was a strategic decision by Philip, who entrusted the young Alexander with governing the state during his absence. Alexander was only 16 years old at the time, but he already had the knowledge and training he had received under Aristotle's tutelage.

In 340 B.C., Aristotle left the palace of Philip, and in 335 B.C., he moved to Athens, where he founded his own school, the Lyceum, named for its location near the temple of Apollo Lyceus.

At the Lyceum, Aristotle employed a unique teaching method to instruct his students. He preferred to discuss complex philosophical issues during walks in the garden located on the school grounds. These walks, in which students followed their teacher, became the basis for the term "peripatetic" (from the Greek "περίπατος" - walk), which later came to refer to the school of Aristotle and his followers.

At the Lyceum, Aristotle undertook extensive scientific research covering many fields: biology, zoology, logic, rhetoric, politics, and metaphysics. Under his guidance, his students not only studied theory but also conducted systematic observations and experiments. These works laid a solid foundation for many scientific disciplines, making the Lyceum one of the first research centers of the ancient world.

The Lyceum's library held a special place, surpassing most collections of its time in both size and importance. Aristotle collected books, manuscripts, and various scientific collections with great passion. His desire to accumulate knowledge made the Lyceum library not just a repository of texts, but also an indispensable tool for teaching and research.

Some historians suggest that it was Aristotle's library that could have been the prototype and basis for the famous Library of Alexandria.

Aristotle was married twice. His first wife was Pythias, who was the adopted daughter and niece of Hermias, the ruler of Assos. This union had both personal and political significance. Hermias, being Aristotle's patron, had given the philosopher shelter and support after his departure from Plato's Academy. Marriage to Pythias strengthened this bond, becoming not only an act of friendship but also a strategic alliance. They married around 347 BC. A daughter was born to their family and they named her Pythias, in honor of her mother and as a sign of respect for religious traditions.

After Pythias's death, Aristotle lived with a woman named Herpyllis, who bore him a son, Nicomachus, named in honor of Aristotle's father. Herpyllis was a slave and their union was not legalized. Historians describe Herpyllis as a caring and reliable woman on whom Aristotle could always rely. He appreciated her support and showed genuine concern for her. In his will, Aristotle mentioned Herpyllis, leaving her an inheritance so that she would be protected after his death. This was an important step to ensure the well-being of Herpyllis after she was left alone.

Nicomachus, following in his father's footsteps, devoted himself to philosophy. Little information about his life has been preserved. It is only known that he passed away at a young age.

People aspire to have influential friends and powerful patrons. Alexander's patronage was a reliable shield for Aristotle for many years. He was respected as a teacher and sage, and feared at the same time - the name Alexander the Great inspired reverence and fear. But fate is fickle and everything changed in an instant.

In 323 B.C., Alexander the Great died suddenly at the age of 32, shocking the ancient world. Those who yesterday were groveling before Aristotle, wasting sweet and flattering speeches, suddenly changed and showed their true face, full of envy and malice. After Alexander's death, anti-Macedonian sentiment intensified in Athens, putting Aristotle —Alexander’s former mentor and a supporter of Macedonian power — at risk. Persecution of those associated with the Macedonian dynasty began in Athens. In 322 B.C., Aristotle faced charges of impiety, echoing the accusations that had once condemned Socrates to death.

Aristotle vividly remembered how Socrates' trial had ended. Not wanting to share the same fate, he left everything behind and fled Athens. He relocated to Chalkida on the island of Euboea, where his mother's estate was situated. There he spent the last months of his life. Shortly after, he died under mysterious circumstances at the age of 62.

Most historians agree that Aristotle died of natural causes. However, some sources and legends suggest he was murdered by poisoning with aconite. Aconite is an extremely poisonous plant, lethal even in traditional external applications. Aristotle, possessing excellent knowledge of plants and meticulously monitoring his diet, would not have allowed such a plant to contaminate his food. Some speculate that Aristotle may have committed suicide to avoid persecution and humiliation, but this theory lacks historical evidence. Moreover, Aristotle would not have taken his own life; he did not flee Athens only to end it at his mother's estate.

**Major Works and Their Influence on Subsequent Generations**

Aristotle left behind many works covering a wide range of topics from logic and metaphysics to biology and politics, but only a fifth of them have survived to this day. The most famous of them are:

**"Metaphysics"** is one of Aristotle's most famous works, in which he explores the nature of being and asks eternal questions about the essence of things. In this work, he develops his theory of essence and accidence and introduces the concepts of potency and actuality, which explain the process of change and becoming.

**"Nicomachean Ethics"** — in this work, Aristotle examines virtue and happiness, asserting that true happiness is attained through virtuous living. Aristotle's Ethics is not merely a theoretical framework but a practical guide for those striving to live their best life.

In **“Politics”**, Aristotle examines the nature of the state and the role of its citizens. He describes the ideal state and discusses different forms of government, drawing conclusions that are still relevant today.

**"Organon"** — a collection of works on logic that laid the foundation for the development of the scientific method. In this work, Aristotle introduces the doctrine of syllogism — a system of logical inference still in use today.

Aristotle's passion for observing nature found its fullest expression in his writings on biology. Aristotle classified numerous animal species, describing their anatomy and behavior with such precision that his work remained unmatched until the Renaissance.

Aristotle profoundly influenced not only Western philosophy but also Islamic thought. His works were translated into Arabic and diligently studied by medieval Muslim scholars. His ideas also resonated in Christian Europe, especially in the writings of Thomas Aquinas.

Aristotle's ideas served as the foundation for medieval scholasticism, the Renaissance revival, and modern philosophical movements.

**Aristotle and His Philosophical System**

1. **Aristotle's Metaphysics**

**The Doctrine of Essence and Accidences ("Metaphysics")**

Travel back to ancient Greece and imagine a beautiful marble temple standing on a hilltop. The temple is majestic and beautiful, with perfection in every element. What makes this temple what it is? Why do we see it as a temple and not just a collection of stones and columns? Aristotle invites us to think about this through the lens of his doctrine of **essence and accidence.**

In Metaphysics, Aristotle asks the question: what makes things what they are? In his opinion, every thing has an essence - this is what determines its nature and uniqueness. Essence is a kind of "soul" of a thing, its very quintessence. For a temple, the essence may be the idea of a sacred place for the worship of the gods, its architectural design and its function in society.

Alongside essence, a thing also possesses accidents—incidental properties that can change without altering the essence. For instance, the color of the temple's stones, their placement, or even a specific style of decoration are all considered accidents. These properties may change, but the temple will still remain a temple. Accidents add individuality and variation, but they do not define the essence.

Aristotle illustrates this concept with the example of man. The essence of man is his nature as a rational being with the ability to think and feel. Accidents are hair color, height, clothing, and many other characteristics that can change without affecting the essence.

The doctrine of essence and accident helps us to understand the world around us more deeply. It teaches us to distinguish between major and minor things, to see the unchanging essence of things behind external changes. This Aristotelian doctrine became the foundation for many subsequent philosophical debates and scientific inquiries, aiding in the analysis and classification of natural and social phenomena.

**Potency and Relevance ("Metaphysics")**

In Metaphysics, Aristotle introduces two fundamental concepts that help explain the process of change and becoming in the world: **potency and actuality**. These seemingly abstract concepts have profound meaning and help us understand how things come into existence and change.

**Potency and Actuality: Basic Concepts**

Potency refers to the potential or capacity of something to become something else. It is the inherent possibility of existence or transformation that has not yet been realized.Potency embodies the potential for change or development. For example, the seed of a tree has the potency to become an adult tree. In that little seed lies all the possibility of future growth and development, even though it is not yet a tree.

**Actuality is the realized state, the fulfillment or embodiment of potency.**

It is what already exists in reality. Actuality is the result of the process of becoming, when potency becomes reality. Returning to the tree example: when the seed matures into a tree, its potency transforms into actuality. Now we see the adult tree, which was once only a possibility contained in the seed.

**Exploring the Process of Change and Emerge**

Aristotle uses these concepts to explain the process of change in the world. In his view, all change occurs through the realization of potency. When the potency of something becomes actuality, change occurs. This process can be gradual and requires conditions under which the potency can be realized.

Let's take another example: building a house. Initially, we have only a collection of building materials — bricks, cement, and wood. All these materials have the potency to become a house, but for now they are just materials. The architect and the builder transform this potency into actuality. As construction progresses, the materials gradually take the form of a house, and ultimately, the house becomes a reality — actuality. The process of building is the process of turning potency into actuality.

**The Importance of Potency and Actuality in Understanding the World**

Aristotle's concepts of potency and actuality are of great importance for understanding the world. They elucidate not only physical change but also numerous aspects of human life and development. For example, education can be seen as a process of transforming potency into actuality. Every student has the potency to become a scientist, a doctor, an artist, or an engineer. Education and experience help to realize this potency by turning it into actual skills and knowledge.

These ideas of Aristotle are also reflected in various fields of science and philosophy. In physics, potency and actuality can explain transitions between states of matter. In psychology, they can help to understand the process of personal growth and self-realization.

Understanding potency and actuality teaches us to view the world as dynamic, acknowledging its capacity for change and evolution. This teaching offers hope and inspiration, showing that in each of us and in everything around us there is a vast potency waiting to become actuality.

**The Concept of the "First Engine" ("Metaphysics")**

Imagine the unfathomable depths of space, teeming with stars, planets, and vast galaxies. This cosmos is not static - it is constantly moving and changing. Aristotle pondered: What is the ultimate cause of all these changes and movements? In the Metaphysics, Aristotle develops the concept of the "first engine" to explain the source of all motion and change in the universe.

**The Unmoved Mover: The Essence of the Concept**

Aristotle observed that everything in the universe is in perpetual motion: stars and planets revolve, living beings grow and develop, and natural processes unfold in endless change. But any movement must have a cause. If one movement triggers another, what is the ultimate source of them all? Aristotle concluded that there must be a final cause, the root cause of all change, and he called it "the first engine".

According to Aristotle, the Unmoved Mover is something that remains stationary yet sets everything else in motion. He compares the first engine to a stationary object that sets everything around it in motion. This Unmoved Mover is eternal and immutable, for if it could change, it would cease to be the ultimate cause of all change.

**The First Engine and Its Role in Space.**

Aristotle asserts that the Unmoved Mover must exist beyond the physical realm. It is not a material entity but pure intellect or pure actuality. It needs no movement or change because it is perfect and complete. The concept of the Unmoved Mover became a cornerstone in their explanations of cosmic order and harmony.

For Aristotle, the first engine is the divine beginning. He uses this concept to explain the order and harmony in the universe. Everything in the universe moves and changes in an effort to achieve its purpose, just as all living things strive for self-realization and perfection. The first engine is the force that directs and organizes all these strivings.

**The Impact of the First Engine Concept.**

Aristotle's concept of the first motor had a tremendous influence on subsequent philosophical and theological teachings. In the Middle Ages, it was adopted by Christian philosophers and theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, who used Aristotle's ideas to justify the existence of God as the first cause of all things.

The concept also resonated in Islamic philosophy, where thinkers such as Avicenna and Al-Farabi adapted it for their metaphysical systems. The first engine became a key element in their explanations of order and harmony in the universe.

Thus, Aristotle's concept of the first engine is not just an abstract philosophical doctrine. It is an attempt to explain the fundamental principles of motion and change in the Universe, to find the root cause of all processes and to see in this motion the reflection of the supreme, divine mind.

1. **Ethics and Politics**

Aristotle was a philosopher and practitioner who sought to uncover the principles of living the best possible life. In his treatise Nicomachean Ethics, he offers profound and inspiring teachings on how to achieve true happiness through virtuous living.

**The Concept of Virtue**

For Aristotle, virtue (or arete) is the centerpiece of ethical life. Virtue, in his view, is not merely a moral quality but a state of character that empowers a person to act rationally and strive for excellence. Aristotle distinguishes two main categories of virtues: intellectual and moral.

**The intellectual virtues** encompass wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. These virtues are developed through learning and experience. They help a person think clearly and make good decisions.

**Moral virtues** include qualities such as courage, justice, moderation, and generosity. These virtues are developed through practice and education. They help a person to act rightly in various situations in life.

Aristotle asserts that virtue lies in the "golden mean" between extremes. For example, courage is the golden mean between cowardice and recklessness. Moderation is the middle ground between excess and deficiency. Thus, **virtue is the ability to find balance and harmony in one's actions and feelings.**

The goal of life, according to Aristotle, is happiness (or eudemonia). But happiness for Aristotle is not just a state of pleasure or enjoyment. True happiness, according to Aristotle, is achieved through an active and virtuous life. Aristotle believes that happiness is the highest good to which every human being aspires. It is connected with the realization of human potential and natural abilities.

Happiness, according to Aristotle, consists in the realization of one's best qualities and abilities, in living in accordance with virtue. It is achieved through intelligent activity that brings satisfaction and joy. This means that happiness cannot be achieved by chance or instantaneously - it is the result of a long and purposeful pursuit of virtue.

A virtuous life for Aristotle is a life lived in accordance with reason and virtue. It means following moral and intellectual virtues, striving for harmony and balance in all aspects of life. A virtuous life requires constant self-improvement, practice, and self-discipline.

Aristotle further emphasizes the critical role of communication and friendship in the pursuit of happiness. He believes that man is a social being and happiness is impossible without interaction with other people. Friendship, based on mutual respect and the pursuit of virtue, is an important part of a virtuous life.

"Nicomachean Ethics" by Aristotle is not merely a philosophical treatise but also a practical guide to achieving a happy and harmonious life. "Nicomachean Ethics" by Aristotle had a great influence on subsequent philosophical and ethical teachings. His ideas about virtue and happiness became the basis for the development of ethics in Western philosophy. They inspired many thinkers, including Thomas Aquinas, who adapted Aristotle's teachings to Christian theology.

Aristotle's concepts of virtue and happiness remind us of the importance of moral education, self-improvement, and the search for harmony in life. Aristotle teaches us that true happiness is not achieved through external pleasures but through inner perfection and virtuous living.

Aristotle was interested in the issues of state structure and the role of citizens in political life. In his treatise Politics, he offers a comprehensive analysis of the ideal structure of the state, considers the functions and duties of citizens, and reveals his views on political justice.

**The Ideal State: Structure and Principles.**

Aristotle believed that the state exists to enable its citizens to lead virtuous and fulfilling lives. He saw the state as a natural entity arising from the coming together of families and villages to achieve the best good. In this sense, the ideal state is a society that promotes virtue and self-realization among its citizens.

Aristotle distinguishes **three basic forms of government: monarchy, aristocracy,** and politeia (**republic**). Each of these forms of government has its advantages and disadvantages**, and all of them can turn into their perverted forms: tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy** respectively. In the ideal state, according to Aristotle, there must be a measure and harmony that prevents these perversions.

Aristotle favored the politeia, a mixed form of government combining elements of democracy and oligarchy. In such a state, power is distributed among different social groups, which avoids extremes and preserves stability. The cornerstone of the ideal state is justice, realized through equality and the proportional distribution of benefits and responsibilities.

For Aristotle, a citizen is not just an inhabitant of the state, but an active participant in political life. He defines a citizen as one who has the right to participate in the judicial and legislative branches of government. Citizens not only obey the laws but also participate in their creation, which makes them responsible for the fate of the state.

Aristotle highlights the importance of education and moral upbringing, asserting that only educated and virtuous individuals can be exemplary citizens. Education should be directed towards the development of intellectual and moral virtues necessary for active and conscious participation in political life.

The role of citizens in an ideal state also includes military service, participation in public works, and various administrative functions. Aristotle believed that active participation in the life of the state develops citizens' sense of responsibility and commitment to the common good.

Political justice, according to Aristotle, is the basis of an ideal state. He distinguishes two types of justice: distributive and equalitarian.

**Distributive justice** concerns the distribution of goods and resources in society. Aristotle argues that distribution should be proportional and in accordance with the merit and contribution of each citizen. This means that those who contribute more to society should receive more benefits, and those who contribute less should receive less.

**Equalizing justice is** concerned with correcting wrongs and restoring balance. It refers to judicial decisions and punishments where the aim is to restore justice through compensation or punishment. Aristotle believed that laws should be just and applied equally to all citizens, regardless of their position or wealth.

Aristotle further underscores the significance of the rule of law. He argues that laws should be supreme and rule the state, not individuals. This prevents abuse of power and ensures stability and order in society.

Aristotle's views on politics had an enormous influence on subsequent political theories and practices. His ideas about the mixed form of government and the importance of political participation of citizens resonated in the Roman republic and later in modern democratic systems.

Aristotle's writings became the basis for the development of political philosophy and continue to be studied and discussed in universities around the world. His concepts of justice, the rule of law, and the role of citizens remain relevant today, reminding us of the importance of active political participation and the pursuit of the common good.

1. **Logic and the Scientific Method**

**The Doctrine of Syllogism ("Organon")**

Aristotle, whose ideas and writings profoundly shaped Western philosophy and science, introduced one of the most foundational concepts in the history of logic: the doctrine of syllogism. This system of logical inference was set forth in his work Organon, which is a collection of six logical treatises.

**The Basics of the Syllogism**

**A syllogism is a form of deductive reasoning where a conclusion is deduced from two premises.** The structure of a syllogism is simple yet elegant: two premises lead to a logically inevitable conclusion. Aristotle developed this system to ensure the accuracy and reliability of logical thinking.

Here's a classic example of a syllogism:

1. All humans are mortal. (major premise)
2. Socrates is a human being. (second premise)
3. Hence, Socrates is mortal. (conclusion)

In this example, the first premise establishes a general principle, the second premise applies that principle to a particular case, and the conclusion logically follows from the two premises. The syllogism guarantees that if the premises are true, the conclusion will also be true.

**Structure of a Syllogism**

A syllogism consists of three parts:

1. **Major premise** - establishes a general principle or statement.
2. **Minor premise** - applies the principle to a specific case.
3. **Conclusion** - logically follows from the two premises.

Aristotle developed schemes of syllogistic figures and modus which describe various forms of logical inference.

**Significance of Syllogism for Philosophy and Science**

The doctrine of syllogism is of great importance to philosophy and science for several reasons:

1. **The formalization of logic**. Aristotle was the first who began to systematically study the rules of logical thinking. This allowed to create a basis for further development of logic as a science. The syllogism became the earliest systematic tool for verifying the correctness of logical reasoning.
2. **The development of the scientific method**. Syllogistic logic became the basis for the scientific method. It allowed scientists to formulate hypotheses and test them using deductive reasoning. This contributed to the development of science in general, as research became more structured and methodologically sound.
3. **Influence on Philosophy**. The syllogism has had a profound influence on philosophical thought. Philosophers began to use logical schemes to analyze and argue their ideas. Aristotelian logic became the basis for many philosophical systems, including medieval scholasticism and the modern rationalist tradition.
4. **Education and thinking**. The teaching of the syllogism has been an important part of educational programs for centuries. Students studied Aristotle's logic to hone their analytical skills and master the art of constructing sound arguments. This fostered a culture of critical thinking and intellectual discipline.

***Examples of applications of the syllogism:***

Let's look at a few more examples of the syllogism to better understand its application:

1. All mammals are warm-blooded. (big package)
2. A whale is a mammal. (small package)
3. Hence, the whale is warm-blooded. (conclusion)

This syllogism takes a general characteristic of mammals (warm-bloodedness) and applies it to a specific animal (the whale).

1. All planets revolve around a star. (big package)
2. Earth is a planet. (small package)
3. Hence, the Earth revolves around a star. (conclusion)

In this example, a common characteristic of planets (rotation around a star) is applied to Earth, leading to a logically correct conclusion.

**Influence on Modern Logic**

Aristotle's doctrine of syllogism became the basis for the further development of logic. Modern logicians have expanded and refined the Aristotelian system, but the principles laid down by Aristotle remain relevant today. Formal logic, mathematical logic, and computer science all have their origins in Aristotle's doctrine of syllogism.

**Aristotle's Contributions to the Development of Logic**

Aristotle made groundbreaking contributions to the development of logic and epistemology. In his treatise Organon, he systematized and developed the foundations of logical thinking that have become the cornerstone of the Western philosophical tradition and the scientific method. Let's take a closer look at how Aristotle influenced these fields.

**Formation of the Scientific Method**

Aristotle was the first philosopher to systematically develop a logical structure for scientific inquiry. His approach to the scientific method included several key components:

1. **Observation and Description**. Aristotle believed that cognition begins with observation. He emphasized the importance of detailed description of phenomena and systematization of knowledge. In his biological writings, for example, Aristotle carefully described the anatomy and behavior of various animal species, which became the basis for further scientific research.
2. **Classification and systematization**. Aristotle sought to organize knowledge through classification and systematization. He developed methods for classifying living things that have been used in biology for centuries. This approach allowed Aristotle to create coherent and logically consistent systems of knowledge.
3. **Induction and Deduction**. Aristotle introduced two basic methods of logical reasoning - induction and deduction. Induction enables the formation of generalizations based on observations of specific cases, while deduction derives specific conclusions from general premises. These methods became the basis of scientific thinking and are still used in modern scientific research.
4. **Syllogism**. As already mentioned, Aristotle developed the doctrine of the syllogism, a form of deductive inference. Syllogisms provide a rigorous logical structure for argumentation and allow for accurate and valid conclusions. It has become an important tool in scientific and philosophical reasoning.

**Aristotle's Contributions to Epistemology**

Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, studies the nature, sources, and limits of human knowledge. Aristotle made a significant contribution to this field by developing his ideas about the process of cognition and the truth of knowledge.

1. **Theory of Knowledge**. Aristotle argued that knowledge begins with sense perception. Through sensation we receive primary data about the world, which is then processed by our mind. This process leads to the formation of concepts and judgments that can be tested and validated by logic.
2. **A priori and a posteriori knowledge**. Aristotle distinguished between two types of knowledge: a priori (knowledge independent of experience) and a posteriori (knowledge derived from experience). He emphasized the importance of a posteriori knowledge, which is formed on the basis of observations and empirical experience.
3. **Truth and Proof**. Aristotle regarded truth as the correspondence of a judgment to reality. He developed criteria for evaluating the truth of judgments and arguments. An important aspect of this approach is the idea of proof - the process of logical reasoning, which allows to establish the truth of statements.
4. **Potency and actuality**. In his metaphysics, Aristotle introduced the concepts of potency and actuality, which also have implications for epistemology. Potency represents the potential for cognition, while actuality signifies realized knowledge. This approach helps to understand the process of cognition as a transition from potential knowledge to actual knowledge.

**Impact on Subsequent Generations**

Aristotle's contributions to logic and epistemology exerted an extraordinary influence on subsequent generations of philosophers and scientists. His ideas were adopted and developed by medieval philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great, who adapted Aristotelian logic and epistemology to Christian theology.

During the Renaissance and New Age, Aristotle's writings became the basis for the formation of the scientific method. Philosophers and scientists such as Francis Bacon, René Descartes, and Isaac Newton drew upon Aristotelian methods of observation, classification, and logical analysis to advance their scientific theories.

To this day, Aristotle's contributions continue to shape modern research in logic, epistemology, and scientific methodology. His work is studied in universities around the world, and his ideas remain relevant to philosophers, scientists, and all who seek to understand the nature of knowledge and truth.

**Contradictions Between Plato and Aristotle**

**Metaphysical Distinctions**

Metaphysics, a branch of philosophy, explores the nature of reality, the essence of being, and the fundamental principles of existence. Plato and Aristotle offered diametrically opposed views on these issues. The main difference between their metaphysical teachings lies in their approach to the nature of ideas and the essence of things.

**Plato's Theory of Ideas**

Plato developed a theory of ideas (or forms) that is the centerpiece of his metaphysics. According to Plato, true reality consists of eternal and unchanging ideas or forms that exist in their own world-the world of ideas. The physical world that we perceive with our senses is only an imperfect shadow or reflection of this higher world.

In the world of ideas, there exists a perfect form for everything: a perfect circle, a perfect chair, a perfect human being. All physical objects in our world are only copies or imitations of these ideal forms. For example, all the circles we see in the physical world are imperfect copies of the perfect circle that exists in the world of ideas.

For Plato, knowledge of truth consists in apprehending these ideal forms through rational thought and philosophical contemplation. He believed that our soul, before incarnating in the body, had access to this world of ideas and can now recall it through philosophical inquiry.

**Aristotelian Concept of Essence and Accidence**

Aristotle rejected the idea of the existence of a separate world of ideas. He believed that reality should be sought not in some transcendent world, but in the things of our world themselves. Aristotle proposed the concept of essence and accidence, which is radically different from the Platonic theory.essence

**Essence** refers to the intrinsic nature or defining characteristic of a thing, which makes it what it is.It is what defines an object and its species identity. For example, a person's essence is his or her ability to think rationally.

**Accidents** are incidental properties of a thing that can change without affecting its essence. Color, size, location are all accidents that can change, but the essence remains the same. For example, a person may change hair color, clothing, or age, but his essence as a human being remains the same.

Aristotle argued that essences do not exist apart from things. They are part of things themselves and are cognized through their study. Unlike Plato, who believed that true knowledge could be obtained through reflection on the world of ideas, Aristotle emphasized the importance of empirical investigation and observation.

**Comparison and Criticism**

The differences between the metaphysical views of Plato and Aristotle reflect two fundamentally different approaches to understanding reality:

1. **Transcendent vs. immanent**

Plato considered ideas to be transcendent, existing beyond the physical world, whereas Aristotle argued that essences are immanent, embedded within the things themselves.

1. **Dualism vs. Monism**

Platonic metaphysics posits a dualism of two realms: the world of ideas and the physical world. In contrast, Aristotle adheres to monism, contending that a single world encompasses both essences and accidents.

1. **Intellectualism vs. Empiricism**

Plato emphasized the importance of intellectual contemplation and philosophical reflection to comprehend truth, while Aristotle emphasized empirical observation and investigation.

These differences have generated much debate and discussion among the followers of both philosophers. The influence of Plato and Aristotle continues to have a tremendous impact on philosophy and science, forming two great traditions: Platonism and Aristotelianism.

The metaphysical differences between Plato and Aristotle mark a pivotal stage in the evolution of philosophical thought. They show how two great minds can interpret the nature of reality in different ways and offer different paths to the knowledge of truth.

**Epistemological Differences**

Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, studies the nature, sources, and limits of human knowledge. Plato and Aristotle presented two fundamentally distinct approaches to cognition, laying the groundwork for two major philosophical traditions: Platonism and Aristotelianism.

**Plato on Cognition Through Ideas**

In his theory of knowledge, Plato argues that true understanding can only be achieved through the apprehension of eternal and unchanging ideas, existing in a separate realm known as the world of ideas. He believed that the physical world that we perceive with our senses is only an imperfect reflection of this higher world of ideas. Therefore, in order to attain true knowledge, one must rise above sense perception and turn to intellectual contemplation.

Plato employed the allegory of the cave to illustrate his perspective on cognition. In his allegory of the cave, people live in a dark cave, seeing only shadows of objects on the wall, which they mistake for reality. However, the true reality is outside the cave - it is the world of ideas. The philosopher, according to Plato, is like a man who breaks out of the cave and sees the true light of the sun (the world of ideas), then returns to enlighten others.

For Plato, knowledge is a process of recollection (anamnesis), wherein the soul, having once accessed the world of ideas prior to incarnation, recalls these ideal forms through rational thought and philosophical contemplation. Thus, knowledge for Plato is the intellectual apprehension of eternal truths independent of sense experience.

**Aristotelian Empiricism and the Scientific Method**

In contrast to Plato, Aristotle argues that knowledge begins with sense perception and experience. His epistemology is based on empiricism, the idea that all knowledge comes from observations and interactions with the physical world. Aristotle emphasizes the necessity of systematic inquiry and empirical observation, establishing the foundation of the scientific method.

For Aristotle, cognition goes through several stages:

1. **Sensory Perception**

Cognition begins with sensations and perceptions, which provide us with primary data about the world. These data serve as the basis for the formation of more complex concepts and judgments.

1. **Abstraction**

From sensory experience, the mind abstracts common features and properties of objects, forming universal concepts. For example, observing different trees, we form a general concept "tree".

1. **Generalization and Classification**

Aristotle systematically categorized knowledge by identifying general principles and patterns. This allows organizing knowledge and making it more understandable and manageable.

1. **Deduction and Induction**

Aristotle used the methods of deduction and induction to construct logical arguments and test hypotheses. Deduction derives specific conclusions from general premises, whereas induction generalizes based on particular observations.

The differences between the epistemological approaches of Plato and Aristotle emphasize two different ways of knowing:

1. **Rationalism vs. Empiricism**

Plato favors rationalism, arguing that true knowledge can only be obtained through intellectual contemplation and comprehension of ideas. Aristotle, on the other hand, is an empiricist, emphasizing the importance of experience and observation.

1. **Intuitive Comprehension vs. Scientific Method**

Plato posits that knowledge arises through intuition and the recollection of ideal forms, while Aristotle advocates for a systematic scientific method rooted in observation, classification, and logical analysis.

1. **The World of Ideas vs. the Physical World**

For Plato, true knowledge is found in the world of ideas, which transcends physical reality. Aristotle argues that knowledge can be obtained by investigating the physical world itself since ideas or essences are immanent to things.

These epistemological differences shaped two major traditions in philosophy and science. The Platonic approach was reflected in idealist and metaphysical teachings, while Aristotelian empiricism and the scientific method became the basis for the development of science and rational philosophy.

**Ethical and Political Differences**

Plato and Aristotle offered significantly different views on ethics and politics. Their approaches to the ideal state and the role of citizens in society reflect profound differences in their philosophical systems.

**Plato's Ideal State**

Plato articulated his vision of the ideal state in his renowned dialogue *The Republic* (Politeia). In this work, he describes a utopian society based on a strict hierarchy and ruled by philosophers. The main features of his ideal state include:

1. **Three Estates**

Plato divides society into three distinct classes: rulers (philosophers), guardians (warriors), and producers (artisans and farmers). Each class has its own role and duty in society, and they must all work in harmony to achieve the common good.

1. **Philosopher-Kings**

In Plato's ideal state, power belongs to philosophers who possess the wisdom and knowledge necessary to govern society. Plato believed that only philosophers can see the true nature of things and make just decisions.

1. **Commonality of Property and Families**

Plato proposed the radical idea of a community of property and families among rulers and guards. He believed that this would prevent self-interest and corruption, allowing rulers and warriors to focus entirely on serving the common good.

1. **Education and Upbringing**

Education plays a key role in the Platonic state. Plato developed a detailed system of education that begins in early childhood and continues throughout life. According to Plato, education should cultivate virtuous citizens and rulers, equipping them for wise and just governance.

**Aristotle's Political Philosophy**

Aristotle critiqued his teacher's utopian ideals and proposed a more grounded and pragmatic approach to politics. In his treatise Politics, he examines various forms of government and offers practical recommendations for creating a stable and just state.

1. **Mixed Form of Government**

Aristotle advocated for a mixed form of government that combined elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. He believed that this would help to avoid extremes and prevent abuse of power.

1. **Middle Class**

Aristotle emphasized the importance of a strong middle class for the stability of the state. In Aristotle's view, the middle class serves as a stabilizing force, maintaining balance between the rich and poor, thereby fostering social harmony.

1. **Justice**

Unlike Plato, Aristotle placed great emphasis on justice and the rule of law. He believed that laws should be supreme and applied equally to all citizens, regardless of their social status.

1. **Education and Virtue**

While Aristotle acknowledged the importance of education, he placed greater emphasis on practical training in virtue and political competence. He believed that citizens should be active participants in political life and be responsible for the governance of the state.

The differences between the ethical and political views of Plato and Aristotle can be summarized as follows:

1. **Utopianism vs. Realism**

Plato envisioned an idealized model of society, whereas Aristotle adopted a more pragmatic approach rooted in the analysis of existing governments and practical solutions.

1. **Philosopher-Governors vs. Political Participation**

Plato believed that philosophers with superior knowledge should rule. Aristotle, on the contrary, emphasized the importance of participation of all citizens in political life and the necessity of the rule of law.

1. **Community vs. Individual Ownership**

Plato proposed communal ownership of property and families among rulers and guardians to eliminate personal interests. Aristotle criticized this idea, believing it to be unrealistic and contrary to human nature.

1. **Idealization vs. Pragmatism**

Plato sought to create an ideal society in which everything operates in harmony. Aristotle, on the other hand, was a pragmatist who analyzed real political systems and proposed improvements based on empirical observations.

These differences emphasize the fundamental differences between the philosophical approaches of Plato and Aristotle. They present two different views on the role of the state and citizens in society.

**Philosophical Schools Contemporary to Aristotle**, **Cynics**

The philosophical school of the Cynics emerged in the 4th century BC and had a significant influence on ancient philosophy. The founders of this school were Antisthenes and Diogenes of Sinope, whose ideas and lifestyle challenged established social norms and ideals.

The philosophy of the Cynics represented a radical protest against the dominant values and lifestyle of ancient Greek society. Their basic principles are revealed in the following provisions:

**1) Asceticism and renunciation of material goods**

The Cynics preached an ascetic way of life. They argued that happiness was possible only through limiting one's own desires and giving up luxuries. They believed that the excess of material goods created false values and overshadowed the true needs of man. For the Cynics, the renunciation of excesses was not an end in itself, but a way to achieve true inner freedom and independence.

**2) Autarky (self-sufficiency)**

Autarky meant complete inner self-mastery and independence from external circumstances. The Cynics believed that individuals should aspire to a state where their happiness and peace of mind are independent of external circumstances. For them, self-sufficiency consisted in the ability to cope with any life situation, relying only on one's own inner resources. It was in this capacity for autonomy and independence from public opinion that they saw the key to true freedom.

**3) Natural life**

The Cynics rejected artificial norms and conventions imposed by society. They believed that people should live in accordance with natural laws, not social regulations. For them, natural life meant a return to simplicity and sincerity, to get rid of the false, superficial values of civilization. The Cynics advocated a return to primordial simplicity, free from hypocrisy, false ambitions, and materialistic desires. This ideal consisted not only in physical proximity to nature, but also in adherence to natural moral principles.

**4) Criticism of society**

The Cynics sharply criticized their contemporary society, seeing in it hypocrisy, ambition, and the pursuit of money and status. They opposed social norms and values that they believed contributed to human decay. For example, Diogenes mocked power and wealth, openly scorning those who prioritized material achievements over virtue. Cynic philosophy valued courage, moderation, and sincerity. The Cynics contrasted these qualities with greed, hypocrisy, and excesses that destroy people.

The philosophy of the Cynics offered a radically different way to achieve happiness and freedom, based on inner independence, simplicity, and living in harmony with nature.

**Main works: "Cynic fragments" of Diogenes,**

**accounts of the life of Antisthenes**

The main ideas of the Cynics can be found in the accounts of the lives of their founders, especially Diogenes of Sinope. Although many of their writings have not survived, we can understand their philosophy through the texts recorded by their followers and contemporaries.

**Antisthenes**.

Antisthenes, a devoted disciple of Socrates, is regarded as the founder of the Cynic school. He asserted that virtue alone suffices for happiness and championed the ideals of self-sufficiency and asceticism. Antisthenes wrote many works, but only fragments have come down to us. His teachings were aimed at rejecting excesses and striving for inner harmony.

**Diogenes of Sinope**.

Diogenes, a disciple of Antisthenes, became the most famous of the Cynics because of his radical lifestyle and incisive statements. Diogenes renounced all social conventions, choosing to live in a barrel as a demonstration of his disdain for material wealth. His many anecdotes and sayings became the basis for understanding the Сinic philosophy. Diogenes was famous for his eccentric acts. Here are some famous accounts of Diogenes' life:

1. The lamp and the search for an honest man.

One of the most famous stories about Diogenes is his legendary search for an honest man. With lamp in hand, he wandered the streets of Athens in broad daylight, claiming to be looking for an honest man. This gesture had a deep symbolic meaning. Athens at the time was the cultural and intellectual center of ancient Greece, but Diogenes saw it as a hotbed of hypocrisy and moral decay. He claimed that the lamp's light was essential, even in broad daylight, to uncover the truth in a society entrenched in falsehood and pretense. This act was not just a philosophical joke, but a serious challenge to society to make people reflect on their own morality and sincerity. Diogenes saw how many, cloaked in the appearance of virtue, concealed their true intentions. His lamp symbolized not just the search for an honest man, but the search for the truth hidden beneath the masks of public hypocrisy.

1. Diogenes and Alexander the Great.

Diogenes' meeting with Alexander the Great became a legend and an example of the philosopher's indomitable spirit. When Alexander, wishing to express his respect for the philosopher, approached him and offered to fulfill his every wish, Diogenes replied with unwavering calmness: "Please stand back, you are blocking my sun". This response deeply shocked Alexander, who was accustomed to reverence and adoration.

For Diogenes, sunlight was a symbol of natural and true life, independent of human benefits and honors. To Diogenes, Alexander, the embodiment of earthly power and material wealth, was merely an obstacle on the path to truth. This episode demonstrates not only Diogenes' contempt for power and wealth, but also his commitment to the idea of inner freedom, which cannot be bought or exchanged for earthly goods. By this act, Diogenes proclaimed that even before the greatest kings he remained a free man, independent of their favor.

1. Diogenes and the barrel.

Diogenes' life in a barrel (pythos) was the embodiment of his philosophy of rejecting everything superfluous and unnecessary in life. Diogenes deliberately chose to live in a barrel instead of a traditional house, which was a kind of manifesto against excesses and unnecessary comforts, which, in his opinion, only distracted from the true essence of life. His rejection of comfort was not merely a challenge to societal norms but also a testament to his belief that true happiness requires little—only the barest material needs to live in harmony with nature. It was not just an act of asceticism, but an aspiration for maximum independence from the outside world and its temptations. The barrel became a symbol of his inner conviction that true freedom is achieved not through the possession of material goods, but through the renunciation of them.

1. Lunchtime Dialogue.

Diogenes was going to have lunch. He always ate very modestly, avoiding excesses. Diogenes' lunch usually consisted of bread and lentils. At that moment, another philosopher approached him; it was Aristippus, a favorite of the king, who lived in luxury.

- “Learn to please the king, and you’ll dine on more than lentils,” Aristippus remarked with a sneer.

- “Learn to live on lentils, and you’ll never need to flatter the king,” Diogenes retorted, his tone laced with quiet disdain.

Unlike other philosophical schools, the Cynics offered not just theoretical reasoning, but a practical way of life that exemplified their beliefs. The Cynics profoundly influenced Stoics like Zeno of Citium, who adopted their principles of asceticism and self-sufficiency. Their teachings also foreshadowed some aspects of Christian asceticism and monasticism.

**Application of Сinic philosophy to everyday life**

**1) Minimalism and No Frills.**

In a world dominated by constant consumption, the Cynic philosophy serves as a timeless reminder of the value of limiting desires and shedding unnecessary possessions. Cynic minimalism is not just about saving money or avoiding unnecessary purchases; it’s a call to reevaluate priorities and focus on what truly matters. By consciously letting go of material excess, people learn to appreciate life’s simple yet profound treasures—meaningful relationships, the freedom of time, and inner peace. This perspective alleviates the stress of chasing status symbols, creating space for inner growth and true fulfillment.

**2) Self-Sufficiency and Independence.**

In our modern era, reliance on technology, supply chains, and social networks often leaves us vulnerable to external disruptions. The Cynic ideal of autarky, or self-sufficiency, becomes especially relevant in uncertain times. Cultivating practical skills — like growing your own food, repairing items, or managing your health — fosters greater independence and resilience. This doesn’t mean rejecting the outside world entirely; rather, it empowers individuals to rely less on external social and economic structures. In times of instability and crisis, self-sufficiency allows people to feel more confident and resilient in any condition.

**3) Simple and Natural Living.**

Amid environmental crises, climate change, and rampant pollution, the Cynic philosophy of living in harmony with nature feels more relevant than ever. Modern followers of this idea can apply it through conscious environmental choices (e.g. minimizing the use of single-use plastic) and participation in conservation initiatives. Living in harmony with nature embraces simple acts like walking in the fresh air, engaging in outdoor activities, and cultivating a mindful appreciation for the natural world as a wellspring of balance and inspiration.

**Cyrenaics**

The Cyrenaic philosophy developed by Aristippus of Cyrene centered on pleasure as the primary goal of human life. Aristippus of Cyrene emphasized hedonism as a way to align human actions with the natural pursuit of happiness and avoidance of pain.

Cyrenaica, a Greek colony in present-day Libya, gave its name to the school. Aristippus practiced his philosophical views in everyday life, arguing that philosophy should benefit the here and now. He was able to use material goods as means to achieve pleasure while remaining free from their influence.

**Core Principles of Cyrenaic Philosophy**

The Cyrenaic philosophy developed by Aristippus of Cyrene revolves around a central idea: pleasure is the ultimate goal of human existence. This hedonistic framework provides a unique lens through which to explore human behavior, reasoning, and well-being.

**1) Pleasure as the Supreme Good**

Aristippus firmly believed that pleasure (hedone) is not merely an incidental reward of human action but its ultimate purpose. According to him, all living beings are naturally inclined to seek joy and avoid suffering, and this innate drive is the foundation of moral action. He viewed pleasure as inherently valuable, a self-sufficient good that required no justification beyond itself.

Unlike other philosophical schools that extolled abstract virtues like duty or divine will, Aristippus positioned pleasure as tangible, immediate, and universal. He argued that lofty ideals and rigid moral frameworks often obscure life’s true purpose: the pursuit of happiness. By prioritizing individual satisfaction, the Cyrenaics challenged societal norms and emphasized the importance of personal well-being over collective expectations.

**2) The Value of Immediate Gratification**

For the Cyrenaics, the present moment held supreme importance. Aristippus warned against postponing happiness for future gains, as the future is uncertain and may never come. This principle is encapsulated in his assertion that *"the present is the only certainty."* Cyrenaic philosophy encourages individuals to savor the pleasures of the here and now, rather than deferring joy for uncertain rewards.

This idea sharply contrasts with the more calculated hedonism of the Epicureans, who advocated moderation and long-term planning to ensure sustained happiness. Aristippus, however, emphasized that delayed gratification often leads to unnecessary sacrifices, robbing people of their ability to fully experience life in its immediate beauty.

For example, in today's world, the Cyrenaic focus on the "now" finds resonance in mindfulness practices and the broader cultural embrace of living in the moment. Whether enjoying a meal, spending time with loved ones, or experiencing a fleeting sunset, the Cyrenaics remind us that the richness of life lies in its transient pleasures.

**3) Rational Control Over Desires**

While celebrating pleasure, Aristippus did not advocate unchecked indulgence. He emphasized the importance of moderation and rational control, cautioning against excesses that might lead to harm. True freedom, he argued, lies in mastering one's desires rather than being enslaved by them. This principle reflects a nuanced understanding of hedonism that distinguishes the Cyrenaics from accusations of reckless indulgence.

For instance, Aristippus recognized that excessive indulgence in physical pleasures could lead to long-term suffering—be it through ill health, damaged relationships, or financial ruin. He therefore taught that wise individuals should weigh their actions carefully, ensuring that the pursuit of short-term pleasures does not compromise their overall well-being.

This balance between indulgence and restraint mirrors modern discussions about sustainable happiness. It encourages individuals to enjoy life's pleasures while remaining mindful of their broader consequences, much like contemporary practices of self-care and responsible consumption.

**4) The Ethics of Self-Interest**

Central to Cyrenaic philosophy is the concept of self-interest. Aristippus maintained that individuals should prioritize their own happiness and well-being above all else. For the Cyrenaics, this "selfishness" was not a vice but a rational acknowledgment of human nature. They believed that personal well-being is the foundation of a fulfilling life and that one cannot meaningfully contribute to others without first securing their own happiness.

This principle does not imply disregard for others but underscores the importance of self-awareness and self-preservation. In a world where altruism is often celebrated, the Cyrenaics remind us of the value of setting personal boundaries and focusing on our needs before extending help to others. In this sense, their philosophy aligns with modern ideas of self-care and emotional intelligence.

**5) Pain as the Antithesis of Pleasure**

In Cyrenaic thought, pain is the ultimate evil, an obstacle to happiness that should be avoided whenever possible. Pain encompasses both physical suffering and emotional distress, and the Cyrenaics believed that life's purpose is to minimize its impact. However, they acknowledged that pain is an inevitable part of life and proposed strategies for coping with it.

For Aristippus, the key lay in perspective: pain, like pleasure, is a temporary state. By cultivating inner resilience and focusing on moments of joy, individuals can diminish the hold of pain over their lives. This outlook finds parallels in modern practices of stress management and mindfulness, which emphasize the transient nature of discomfort and the importance of anchoring oneself in positive experiences.

**6) The Centrality of Personal Experience**

Cyrenaic philosophy emphasizes the subjective nature of pleasure and pain, asserting that every individual is the best judge of their own happiness. Aristippus argued that external authorities, whether societal norms or religious doctrines, should not dictate how one seeks fulfillment. This emphasis on personal autonomy reflects a deeply individualistic ethic that values diversity in the human experience.

For example, while one person might find pleasure in solitude and reflection, another might derive joy from social interaction and adventure. The Cyrenaics taught that both paths are equally valid, as long as they lead to genuine satisfaction. This acceptance of individual differences resonates with contemporary ideas of personal freedom and the pursuit of diverse lifestyles.

**An Analysis of the Philosophy of the Cyrenaics**

Cyrenaic philosophy was a radical form of hedonism that established pleasure as the ultimate purpose of life. Unlike other philosophical schools, it prioritized sensual pleasures as intrinsic values, asserting their centrality to human existence. Aristippus taught that all human actions should be directed toward maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. However, despite the apparent simplicity of these ideas, Cyrenaic philosophy carries with it profound insights into the nature of happiness and how to find a balance between the pursuit of pleasure and responsibility.

1) Hedonism and modern society

Aristippus' emphasis on pleasure as the core of life finds resonance in modern society, which is dominated by the pursuit of consumption and sensory satisfaction. In an era where advertising and mass culture glorify pleasure, Cyrenaic philosophy reminds us of the importance of a measured and thoughtful approach to its pursuit. Aristippus emphasized that pleasures are important, but must be managed so that one does not become a slave to one's desires. In a modern context, this can be interpreted as a call for moderation in a consumer society: to enjoy the goods of life, but to avoid extremes that can lead to addiction, stress, and loss of control.

The Cyrenaics underscored the significance of immediate pleasure, aligning their philosophy with modern advocacy for mindfulness and living fully in the present. In a world where people often put happiness on hold in pursuit of future successes, Aristippus' philosophy can help us learn to appreciate the present.

2) Personal well-being and selfishness

Cyrenaic philosophy emphasizes the importance of personal well-being, which can be interpreted as concern for one's own health, mental balance, and self-development. In today's world, in which issues of mental health and self-development have gained great importance, Aristippus' ideas about personal responsibility for one's happiness become especially relevant.

The self-focused approach of the Cyrenaic philosophy does not advocate reckless indulgence in one's desires at the expense of others. On the contrary, it suggests that each person should focus on his or her own interests, realizing that personal well-being includes not only physical pleasure but also harmony within oneself. In a modern context, this can be seen as the pursuit of emotional and psychological health, taking care of oneself and one's needs without compromising others.

Intentional self-improvement and disciplined effort align closely with the ideals of the Cyrenaics. Their ethics teach one to become the master of one's desires rather than giving in to them, which allows one to achieve a more harmonious and meaningful life.

3) A critique of hedonism

The hedonistic philosophy of the Cyrenaics has been criticized both in ancient and modern times for its excessive emphasis on pleasure and its neglect of other aspects of life, such as moral duties or social responsibilities. Critics argued that prioritizing sensual pleasures might undermine both individual integrity and societal progress by neglecting higher ideals and aspirations.

Nevertheless, Aristippus underscored the necessity of wisely managing one's desires and pleasures. In this aspect, their philosophy calls not only for pleasure but also for self-control, which makes it relevant and useful in matters of personal development and life management. Modern criticism of consumerism also finds parallels with the philosophy of the Cyrenaics, emphasizing the need to harmoniously combine pleasure with responsibility for one's actions.

**Final remarks (Part 4)**

**Summarizing the Main Ideas of the Part**

Today we explored the philosophical teachings of Aristotle and his contemporaries. We delved into essential questions of metaphysics, ethics, politics, logic, and the scientific method, and examined how societal critiques and philosophies of pleasure were articulated by the Cynics and the Cyrenaics. It is important to remember that Aristotle’s thought developed against a backdrop of profound cultural and political change, which significantly shaped his ideas.

Regarding Aristotle’s metaphysics, the following key points stand out clearly:

* **Essence and accidence**: Aristotle differentiates between fundamental, intrinsic properties of things and their accidental characteristics.
* **Potency and actuality**: This doctrine explains how things change and evolve, focusing on the movement from potential possibility to realized form.
* **The “first engine”**: Aristotle identifies a primary, unmoved cause behind all change and motion in the world, demonstrating his systematic pursuit of understanding the fundamental principles of existence.

In Aristotle’s ethical and political philosophy, the essential insights include:

* **Nicomachean Ethics**: Aristotle emphasizes happiness as the ultimate aim, achievable through a life of virtue, moral self-improvement, and wise decision-making.
* **Politics**: He outlines the ideal state structure and discusses citizens' roles, placing justice at the core of social harmony.
* **Logic and epistemology**: Aristotle’s doctrine of syllogism represents a groundbreaking attempt to formalize logical reasoning, laying the foundation for the scientific method and structured knowledge.

We also compared Plato and Aristotle, highlighting their metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical differences. Although Aristotle studied under Plato, their approaches to understanding reality and knowledge differed significantly.

Turning to Aristotle’s contemporaries, we examined two influential philosophical schools:

* **Cynics** (Antisthenes, Diogenes): They challenged social conventions and advocated a life of simplicity, authenticity, and self-sufficiency, offering a practical and critical philosophy of living.
* **Cyrenaics** (Aristippus): They embraced hedonism, asserting that pleasure is life's highest goal, exploring deeply the nature and pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain.

Philosophical teachings never exist in isolation; they continuously interact, evolve, and enrich one another, creating an ongoing dialogue that shapes human thought.

**Part 5**

**FROM STOICS TO SKEPTICS: PHILOSOPHY IN THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD**

After Aristotle's death in 322 BC, philosophical thought underwent significant changes, giving rise to new schools and movements during the Hellenistic period. This led to the emergence of new schools and trends that developed during the Hellenistic period. The Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics hold a special place among these. These schools not only carried on the traditions of their predecessors but also introduced unique elements, enriching philosophy with fresh ideas and approaches.

Stoic philosophy emphasized virtue, harmony with nature, and the cultivation of inner peace (ataraxia). Its teachings on self-control, rational thinking, and ethics resonate in modern psychological and philosophical research.

The Epicurean school centered on attaining happiness through tranquility and freedom from fear.

Skeptical philosophy challenged the possibility of reliable knowledge and stressed the importance of suspending judgment (epocha). Its methods of critical analysis and doubt remain highly relevant in modern scientific research, contributing to advancements in epistemology and the scientific method.

**A brief overview of the political and cultural environment**

**after Aristotle's death**

The Hellenistic period, initiated by Alexander the Great's conquests, was defined by the spread of Greek influence across the East and the rise of new cultural and intellectual hubs. Alexander forged a vast empire stretching from Greece to India. This expansion enabled the diffusion of Greek culture and philosophy into the East, fostering exchanges with other traditions and enriching intellectual life.

Alexander's sudden death in 323 BC led to the empire's inevitable collapse, driven by the absence of a clear succession plan and the challenge of managing such an expansive realm. Alexander's legacy was divided among his generals, the Diadochi, each vying to claim a portion of the empire and establish themselves as sole rulers.

One of the largest and most influential states that emerged from the ruins of the empire was the **Seleucid Kingdom**. Extending from Asia Minor to India, it encompassed vast territories inherited from the Achaemenid Persian power. Seleucus I Nicator, the founder of this kingdom, managed to unite many peoples and cultures under his rule, but it was extremely difficult to manage such a diverse population. Although the Seleucids created a powerful empire, their rule was marred by internal conflicts and constant warfare with neighbors such as the Ptolemies and Parthians.

The second major state to emerge from Alexander's fragmented empire was the **Ptolemaic Kingdom**. Led by Ptolemy I Soter, one of Alexander's trusted companions, Egypt transformed into a powerful and prosperous realm. Alexandria, the capital of the Ptolemies, became one of the main cultural and scientific centers of the ancient world. Museums and libraries were founded here, which attracted scholars and thinkers from all over the Hellenistic world. The Ptolemies, characterized by their ability to govern and maintain stability, ruled Egypt for almost three centuries, until their conquest by Rome. Their reign saw a remarkable flourishing of art, science, and literature, alongside the harmonious integration of Hellenistic and Egyptian cultures.

**The Kingdom of Antigonus** emerged in Macedonia and Greece. The founder of this dynasty was Antigonus I One-Eyed, one of the most ambitious of the Diadochi. His son, Demetrius I Poliorcetes, continued his father's work. The Antigonids were in constant conflict with Greek city-states and other diadochs but managed to maintain control over Macedonia and part of Greece. The Antigonid kingdom lasted until its conquest by Rome in the 2nd century BC.

A special place among the Hellenistic states is occupied by the **Kingdom of Pergamon**, founded by the Attalid dynasty in Asia Minor. This state emerged as an independent state after the collapse of the empire of Lysimachus, one of the Diadochos. The kingdom of Pergamum quickly became a cultural center, known for its library, which rivaled that of Alexandria, and for its architectural achievements. The Attalids actively patronized the arts and sciences, creating an atmosphere of cultural flourishing. However, Pergamum could not maintain its independence for long and in 133 BC was handed over to the Roman Republic, becoming one of its provinces.

As you can see - the Hellenistic period was marked by the emergence and development of new intellectual centers, which became important centers of philosophical and scientific activity. Among them, Alexandria and Rome stand out especially, where philosophy and science received a powerful impetus for development.

**Alexandria** was home to the famous Library of Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great. This city was home to outstanding philosophers and scientists - Euclid, Archimedes, Ptolemy, and many others.

While Rome was not initially a hub of philosophical thought, it gradually evolved into a major intellectual center through the conquest of Greece and subsequent cultural exchanges. Many Roman philosophers, including Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, integrated Greek philosophical ideas into Roman culture, developing and adapting them to fit changing social and political conditions.

**Stoics**

Stoicism stands as one of antiquity's most influential philosophical schools, founded by Zeno of Cytius in the early 3rd century BC. Drawing on the ideas of the Cynics, particularly Antisthenes, and Diogenes, Zeno crafted a philosophical system that laid the groundwork for Stoic doctrine. The Stoics offered a comprehensive philosophy encompassing ethics, physics, and logic, with ethics as its cornerstone. The teachings of Zeno and his followers sought to cultivate inner peace and harmony by living in accordance with nature and reason.

Zeno held that virtue was the supreme value and the sole true good. Unlike other philosophical schools, the Stoics maintained that material wealth, health, and even pleasure possess no intrinsic value. The only thing that really matters is a person's moral state and his or her ability to live a virtuous life. This virtue, according to the Stoics, consists of wisdom, justice, courage, and moderation, which guide a person to the right path. Zeno emphasized that virtue is both a necessary and sufficient condition for happiness, while everything else is merely "indifferent" (adiaphora), holding no impact on true well-being.

Later, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius expanded upon the doctrine of living in harmony with nature. For the Stoics, nature encompassed not only the external world but also humanity’s inner nature, reason, and capacity for self-knowledge. Living in harmony with nature entailed embracing one’s role in the world, understanding one’s responsibilities, and adhering to natural laws. This concept led the Stoics to assert that individuals should strive for inner self-improvement, mastery over their passions, and adherence to rational behavior.

**Zeno of Cytius (c. 334-262 BC)-stupidity and philosophy of mind.**

Zeno was born in Kythium (modern Larnaca) on the island of Cyprus, as the son of a merchant.As a young man, he likely followed in his father’s footsteps and engaged in trade until, around the age of 30, he was shipwrecked off the coast of Athens. Zeno never returned home again. Why? We do not know the answer to this question. One possible reason for his decision not to return might have been fear of punishment for losing valuable goods, though this remains speculation. Regardless of the reason, Zeno spent the remainder of his life in Athens.

According to legend, losing all his possessions prompted Zeno to reevaluate his outlook on life and reflect on what truly holds value in the world. In Athens, Zeno delved into philosophy, studying under the Cynic Crates of Thebes and exploring the teachings of the Platonists and the Megarian school₁ . Around 300 BC, Zeno founded his own school, named Stoa Poikile (The Painted Porch)₂ after the Athenian portico where he held his lectures. Hence the name of the school, Stoicism.

Zeno's Stoic philosophy combined elements of Kinism, the Megarian and Platonic schools, but also developed its own unique ideas. As previously mentioned, Stoicism is a comprehensive philosophical system encompassing three main branches: ethics, physics, and logic, with ethics at its core.

Among Zeno's disciples were such outstanding philosophers as Cleanthes and Chrysippus. It was Chrysippus who played a key role in systematizing and spreading Stoicism, turning it into one of the leading philosophical schools of the Hellenistic world.

Zeno was known for his restraint and ascetic lifestyle. He lived modestly and was an example to his students. He was respected in Athens, where he received honorary citizenship and was awarded a golden wreath for his contribution to philosophy.

Zeno believed that man should have control over his own life, including the right to leave it with dignity when life is burdensome and unprofitable. According to legend, Zeno committed suicide by stopping eating and then stopping his breathing by an effort of will. This happened when he was about 72 years old. According to legend, Zeno interpreted tripping and breaking his finger as a sign of fate. Zeno decided that his time had come and voluntarily passed away, following his beliefs about accepting the inevitable.

**The Structure and Content of the Stoic Fragments**

The original texts of Zeno and other Stoics have not survived, but excerpts are preserved in the writings of later philosophers and commentators. These excerpts were later compiled in the collection Fragments of the Stoics.

**1. Ethics**

**(a) Virtue as the only good**.

The Stoics believed that virtue is the only true good, and everything else, whether health, wealth, or fame, is only "indifferent" (adiaphora). True worth lies in one's moral state and pursuit of virtue, which is the foundation of right living. The four key virtues of the Stoics - **wisdom, courage, justice,** and **moderation** - form the basis of an ethic aimed at achieving inner peace and happiness.

The Stoics believed that virtue alone was sufficient for happiness, regardless of external circumstances. This belief sets Stoicism apart from other philosophical systems; it teaches that only inner virtue can ensure true well-being, even in difficult circumstances.

**(b) Living in harmony with nature and reason**.

The main goal of the stoic life is to live in harmony with nature and reason. This involves understanding one's place in the world and fulfilling one's responsibilities. The Stoics maintained that reason should guide human actions, enabling harmony within oneself and with the world. Living according to reason also means being able to accept external circumstances calmly and wisely.

An important aspect of mindful living is freedom from passions that distract one from one's true purpose. Inner discipline and self-control help mitigate the influence of negative emotions, such as anger or fear, fostering inner peace and harmony.

**(c) Apathy and freedom from passions**.

In Stoic ethics, apathy means liberation from the passions that prevent a person from pursuing virtue. This state requires the ability to maintain inner calm and clarity of mind in all situations. To achieve apathy, the Stoics recommended the regular practice of self-knowledge and self-control, which helped to strengthen inner stability and learn to accept events as they are.

Ataraxia (inner peace) is achieved through accepting events as they are and realizing that we cannot change external circumstances, but we can control our attitude toward them.

**2. Physics**

**(a) Pantheism**.

The Stoics viewed God as the universal Logos, a rational principle that permeates the entire universe. The Stoics viewed God and the world as inseparable, with the Logos imparting order and meaning to all things. Man, as part of this Logos, is responsible for his actions, living in harmony with nature. Understanding his connection with the Logos allows man to accept the laws of nature and follow them. This approach is the basis of the Stoic philosophy of life.

**(b) Determinism**.

The Stoics believed that all events in the universe are predetermined and occur in accordance with the laws of nature. While humans cannot alter the course of events, they remain free to choose their attitude toward them. Recognizing determinism helps the Stoics to maintain calm and inner freedom, realizing that everything happens in accordance with a higher intelligence and has a purpose.

**(c) Materialism**.

The Stoics argued that everything that exists has a material nature, including the soul and the Logos. Materiality, for the Stoics, does not necessarily refer to tangible substance. For the Stoics, it could also be the subtle, etheric substance that permeates the universe. The Logos, which governs the world, is a material entity, which emphasizes the holistic nature of their philosophy. The soul is also regarded by the Stoics as a material substance, It governs the body and mind. This approach makes Stoicism a monistic system that unites the spiritual and material into one.

**3. Logic**

**a) Theory of cognition.** The Stoics developed a theory of knowledge where the process begins with perception (imagination) and proceeds through reflection and verification by reason. True knowledge arises when perception and reasoned judgment converge to produce certainty.

**(b) Logic of statements**.

Chrysippus and other Stoics developed a system of statement logic, which explores the logical relationships between statements and the rules of inference. This logical system had a significant influence on the further development of formal logic.

**(c) Categories**.

The Stoics created a system of categories to analyze concepts and statements such as essence, quality, quantity, and relation. These categories helped to structure knowledge about the world and explain reality, which made Stoic philosophy more coherent and consistent.

**Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BC - 65) - Fortitude in the Face of Fate.**

I often wonder who Seneca truly was and how he lived his life. Is 69 years a brief flash or a long stretch of time? Seneca was born in 4 B.C. He had brilliant teachers - historians write that Seneca was educated by the Pythagorean Sotion, the Stoics Attala, Sextia Niger, Papyria Fabianus and other famous thinkers of the time. Thanks to his upbringing and education, Seneca becomes a senator at the age of 33. He is adored by the people. Fame, power, wealth - this man had everything that other people can only dream of. He was not just rich, but fabulously rich. Seneca managed to survive the reign of Caligula, who envied him and wanted to kill him, but then changed his mind, deciding that Seneca's health was weak and he would soon die.

In 49 AD, Agrippina the Younger, the fourth wife of Emperor Claudius, arranged for Seneca’s return from exile and appointed him as tutor to her son, Nero—the future emperor. Seneca is 53, Nero is 11. Seneca trains and educates the boy, and after Claudius is poisoned the throne is occupied by Nero. In effect, Seneca becomes the ruler of Rome. Could Seneca have imagined that he was shaping the mind of his future murderer? And how did Seneca feel when he later shielded Nero before the Senate and the people of Rome after his tutor ordered the murder of his own mother?

Historical chronicles say that Seneca tried to reason with Nero, but when he realized that it was pointless, he left his vast fortune to Nero and retired in 62 A.D. It was the price he paid for a quiet life. By then Seneca was 66 years old, and he wanted to live out the rest of his days safely in the arms of a young and beautiful wife.

Nero reveled in impunity, wealth, and power. He established a brutal dictatorship, and many Romans were executed and their property confiscated in Nero's favor. Suspicious and consumed by jealousy, Nero grew increasingly despised in Rome. In 65 AD a conspiracy arose to remove Nero from power, but the conspiracy was uncovered and its members executed. The conspiracy was the perfect excuse to eliminate the unwanted. Nero no longer needed a former mentor, someone who could make him remarks and whose authority was above the authority of the emperor. In addition, Nero was jealous of Seneca. He was jealous of the respect Seneca enjoyed among the citizens of Rome and of the love his wife gave him.

The old parable of the firefly and the snake tells the story of how the snake caught the firefly. The cornered firefly asked the snake three questions:

- Is it part of what the snake feeds on?

The snake replied:

- Uh, no.

- Did he do something bad to the snake?

Did the snake respond again?

- Uh, no.

Then the firefly asked:

- So why do you want to kill me?

The snake replied:

- Because you're glowing.

Envious people do not like those who are brighter, more successful and happier. Next to such people they feel their wretchedness and inferiority. Envious individuals subconsciously seek to destroy those who are better than them in some way, even if these people have done a lot of good for them.

Tacitus wrote in the Annals (book XV, chapters 60-64) that Seneca was ordered to commit suicide by Nero through messengers. Seneca had no choice. Surrounded by friends and relatives, he opened his veins and took poison, then immersed himself in a warm bath to hasten his death. Dion Cassius also wrote about this in his Roman History (book 62).

Seneca's wife Paulina tried to follow him by slitting her wrists, but she was saved by Nero's order. In this way, Nero once again demonstrated his power and control over the situation, so that everyone could see that only he decides who lives and who dies. Saving Paulina was a demonstration of his absolute power. In addition, Nero enjoyed watching Paulina suffer after Seneca's death.

**Structure of the "Letters to Lucilius" (Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium)**

"Letters to Lucilius" is a collection of 124 letters by Lucius Annaeus Seneca, addressed to his friend and student Lucilius. These letters go beyond mere friendly correspondence, delving deeply into philosophical reflections on human life, morality, and virtue. In them, Seneca lays out the fundamental principles of Stoicism, illustrating their practical application in daily life. This work has rightfully become a classic of Roman literature.

Each letter focuses on specific philosophical or practical life topics. They lack a strict sequence or unified thematic line, making the work feel personal and accessible. Seneca uses the letter format to demonstrate the application of Stoic principles in daily life. This approach allows him to present his philosophical ideas while engaging in a dialog with Lucilius, addressing potential questions and objections.

The letters are written in a lively, conversational tone, making them engaging and accessible. Seneca incorporates metaphors and examples from daily life and history to clarify and relate his philosophical ideas to practical experience.

**The Main Ideas of "Letters to Lucilius"**

1. **Ethics and virtue**

One of the central themes of the letters is ethics, namely how a person can achieve virtue and live a righteous life. Seneca emphasizes that virtue is the highest goal of life, and it consists of living in harmony with nature and reason. He looks at the different aspects of virtue, such as wisdom, courage, justice, and temperance, and discusses how they can be applied to everyday life.

1. **Time and its value**

Seneca pays special attention to the issues of time and its proper use. In his letters, he often reflects on the transience of time and urges Lucilius to treasure each moment of life. He teaches that life is short and that it should be used to achieve true goals, such as the development of virtue and self-improvement.

1. **Death and the nature of human existence**

In his letters, Seneca often discusses the nature of death and attitudes toward it. He argues that death is a natural part of life and should not be feared. Seneca views death as a release from suffering and an opportunity for the soul to reunite with nature. His reflections on death exemplify a stoic approach to life based on accepting the inevitable and focusing on what is within human control.

1. **Emotion management**

One of Seneca's key ideas is the need to master emotions. In his letters, he discusses how negative emotions such as anger, fear, and envy can destroy a person's life and proposes Stoic practices for mastering them. Seneca teaches that the mind must control the emotions so that a person can live a peaceful and harmonious life.

1. **Simplicity and self-sufficiency**

Seneca promotes the idea of simplicity of life and self-sufficiency. He argues that man needs little to live a happy life, and that excesses and material wealth can only distract from true happiness. In his letters, he encourages Lucilius to be independent of external circumstances and to find joy in simple things and in himself.

Normally, during a lecture I would only talk about this work of Seneca, but since you and I are not limited by time, I would also like to draw your attention to other books by Seneca that are important for understanding Stoicism. These books are also important because, in the midst of the constant stress that has become an inevitable companion in today's life, Seneca's books offer clear and understandable practical advice on how to maintain inner peace during the storms of life.

**"On the brevity of life"** is a philosophical treatise by Lucius Annaeus Seneca in which he discusses the nature of time and how people manage their lives. This treatise is one of Seneca's most famous works.

Seneca examines the human perception of time, noting that while many lament the brevity of life, they paradoxically squander it on trivial and unimportant pursuits. Seneca provides examples of activities that appear significant but are, in truth, meaningless distractions from genuine values. These pursuits include the pursuit of wealth, power, fame, and other external achievements that do not bring true fulfillment. Seneca asserts that life feels short when consumed by idle pursuits, yet it is more than sufficient for those who live with wisdom and intention.

To Seneca, time is humanity's greatest gift, yet many fail to recognize its true value, squandering it on frivolous distractions and forfeiting the chance to lead a meaningful and fulfilling life. Seneca believes that only a life guided by reason and devoted to meaningful goals can achieve true fulfillment. External achievements, according to Seneca, are just an illusion: people deceive themselves into believing that they can bring them happiness. In fact, external achievements most often lead only to disappointment.

**"On Tranquillity****of Mind"** is a philosophical dialogue by Lucius Annaeus Seneca that deals with issues of inner peace, harmony, and balance of mind. In this work, Seneca explores how individuals can overcome anxiety and destructive emotions to attain a state of inner peace and stability.

The treatise begins with an address to one of Seneca's students, Serenus, who complains of feelings of anxiety and restlessness. In response, Seneca gives advice and guidance on how to overcome these conditions. Seneca examines the reasons behind worry and anxiety in human life. He analyzes how external circumstances, internal fears and expectations lead to a loss of mental balance.

Seneca offers practical strategies to manage anxiety, including altering one's attitude toward external circumstances, regulating emotions, and embracing the inevitable.

Seneca explains that the root of human anxiety lies in misinterpreting external events and becoming overly attached to material possessions and social status. A person, in his view, suffers when he worries about things he cannot control. This only increases inner suffering. The central idea is emotional control: the mind must govern fears, anger, and envy to preserve inner balance in all circumstances. Seneca emphasizes the importance of accepting the inevitable - being able to come to terms with what cannot be changed - as a path to peace of mind. Seneca argues that cultivating the habit of examining and evaluating one's thoughts and emotions helps to uncover the true causes of anxiety and discover ways to overcome them. Seneca concludes by affirming that genuine peace of mind is attained through a life rooted in reason and virtue, guided by philosophical principles, and centered on inner harmony.

**"On Anger"** is devoted to analyzing the nature of anger and its destructive consequences. In this work, Seneca explores the causes of anger, and its impact on man and society, and proposes stoic methods for curbing and overcoming this destructive emotion.

Seneca argues that anger is among the most dangerous and destructive emotions, capable of causing serious harm to both the individual and those around him. Seneca provides a detailed analysis of anger, portraying it as an irrational and uncontrollable emotion. He explains that anger arises from the perception of insults, injustice, or obstacles to goals, but often these reasons are insignificant or exaggerated.

Seneca then describes the consequences of anger, both for the individual and for society as a whole. He shows that anger leads to violence, destruction of relationships, loss of self-control, and even crime. Seneca emphasizes that anger blinds the mind and prevents a person from making good decisions. He advises using reason to understand the causes of anger, avoiding its early stages, practicing patience and self-control, and learning forgiveness. Seneca argues that anger can be controlled by recognizing its harm and learning to manage one's reactions.

**“On a Happy Life”** *,* Lucius Annaeus Seneca writes about what happiness is and how to achieve it. He rejects the conventional wisdom that states that happiness depends on wealth, fame, or pleasure. Seneca asserts that true happiness lies in a life aligned with nature and reason, where virtue assumes a central role. Only a virtuous life brings lasting and deep satisfaction, as opposed to temporary material pleasures that lead only to disappointment and inner turmoil. Seneca criticizes the pursuit of external successes, considering them illusory values that cannot make a person truly happy. He emphasizes the importance of self-sufficiency and independence from external circumstances. Seneca argues that happiness must be sought within oneself, not through the approval of others or the pursuit of material goods. Management of passions and moderation, according to Seneca, helps a person to find peace of mind and harmony. This is the key to true happiness.

In his treatise De Constantia Sapientis, Lucius Annaeus Seneca describes how a wise man's steadfastness and equanimity help him maintain inner peace in the face of life's difficulties. Seneca is convinced that these qualities are based on inner virtue and reason because the wise man realizes that not everything in life depends on his will. Therefore, the wise man does not allow external circumstances to disturb his mental balance. The central idea of the treatise is that reason serves as the primary foundation for the sage's steadfastness. By following reason a person gains the ability to control his emotions and remains true to his beliefs, regardless of what is going on around him. An important theme of the treatise is the acceptance of inevitable events, which the sage accepts with clarity of mind, realizing that they cannot be changed. Seneca explains how the wise man overcomes suffering by acknowledging its transience and embracing it as a natural aspect of life. Moral fortitude, according to Seneca, is the main difference between the sage and ordinary people. A sage remains true to his principles despite any difficulties he encounters. This makes the sage a truly strong and free person.

**Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (121-180): A Stoic on the Throne**

Marcus Aurelius is counted among the most renowned Stoics. He was born on April 26, 121 in Rome, the son of Annius Verus and Domitia Lucilla. His father died when Marcus was only three years old and he was raised by his maternal grandfather, Marcus Annius Verus. In 138, Marcus was adopted by his maternal uncle, Emperor Antoninus Pius, who chose him as his heir.

From an early age, Marcus exhibited a keen interest in philosophy, particularly Stoicism. His teachers were Diognetus, Junius Rusticus, Apollonius of Chalcedon, and Quintus Secundus. At the age of 17, Marcus received the title "Caesar" and then, in 139, the title "Augustus", which formally marked him as heir to the throne.

After the death of Antoninus Pius in 161, Marcus Aurelius became emperor. At first, his adopted brother Lucius Verus ruled with him, which was the first case of co-emperor in the history of Rome. Lucius Verus lacked experience in governance. He was more interested in the benefits of power than in the duties of an emperor. The primary responsibility for governing the empire rested on Marcus Aurelius. They ruled together for 8 years, until the death of Lucius Verus in January 169.

Marcus Aurelius engaged in military campaigns despite lacking a warlike disposition. Parthians, taking advantage of the death of Antoninus Pius, invaded the Roman possessions and defeated the Romans in two battles. Marcus Aurelius and his co-emperor Lucius Verus were forced to concentrate all efforts on the eastern front. In 166, a peace was concluded in which Rome received Northern Mesopotamia and Armenia was recognized as part of the Roman sphere of influence. However, this peace was short-lived: in the same year, the Germanic tribes of the Marcomanni crossed the Danube and invaded the Roman provinces of Pannonia, Noricus, and Rhecia, penetrating even into Northern Italy as far as Aquileia. In response, the emperors moved troops from the eastern front and recruited additional forces, including gladiators and slaves. Marcus Aurelius personally led campaigns against the barbarians in an effort to defend the empire. Despite the considerable successes he achieved in these wars, a plague epidemic that broke out among his troops weakened their fighting ability.

In 178 he again led a campaign against the Germanic tribes and achieved significant victories in this war. Marcus Aurelius ruled the empire for 19 years from (161 to 180) and died on March 17, 180 in Vindobona (modern Vienna). His death, attributed by some sources to plague and by others to smallpox, marked the conclusion of the 'Five Good Emperors' era. With his death began a period of instability and crisis in the Roman Empire.

Marcus Aurelius was married to a cousin, Faustina the Younger, daughter of Antoninus Pius. They had 13 children, but only five of them survived to adulthood. His son, Commodus, took the throne, but his reign is remembered for despotism and corruption. On January 1, 193, Commodus was assassinated in a conspiracy. Alas, Commodus did not have a fraction of the wisdom that his father had.

The legacy of Marcus Aurelius exemplifies how a state can be governed with moral principles and philosophical wisdom.

**"Meditations"**

"Meditations"(Ta eis heauton) by Marcus Aurelius were written in Greek and are personal diary entries not intended for publication. In them, Marcus Aurelius reflects on Stoic ethics, the meaning of life, death, the management of emotions, and moral duties. "Meditations" offers a unique insight into the practical application of Stoic philosophy, particularly during challenging times. "Meditations" was written at different times in Marcus Aurelius' life, mostly during his military campaigns. These writings have become a classic text of Stoicism and an important source for understanding his philosophy.

The Diaries of Marcus Aurelius consists of 12 books, each of which is a collection of brief writings and aphorisms. These entries are not clearly divided by topic, but they all center around basic Stoic ideas and ethical reflections. Despite the lack of a clear structure, each book contains reflections on virtue, reason, death, nature, and the duties of the emperor.

**The Main Ideas of "Meditations"**

Marcus Aurelius focuses on virtue as the highest good. He wrote that a life lived in harmony with virtue and subordinated to reason is truly valuable, regardless of external circumstances. The emperor often reflected on the acceptance of fate, developing the Stoic notion of "Amor Fati"-one must humbly accept whatever happens, realizing that everything in the world is subject to divine order and logos.

Marcus Aurelius underscores the necessity of mastering emotions. He writes that the mind must govern them to preserve inner peace and resist the sway of passions. He sees death as an inevitable and natural part of life that must be met with dignity, seeing it as a release from bodily limitations and a return to nature. A cornerstone of his philosophy is the contemplation of man's bond with nature, emphasizing that resistance to its laws breeds imbalance and suffering.

As a ruler, Marcus Aurelius saw ruling the empire as the highest form of public service. He believed that a true leader must be just, wise and not be tempted by luxury and power. It is the duty of the ruler to always act in the interests of the people and the state.

Stoicism profoundly influenced the foundations of early Christianity. Some of the ideas of the Stoics, such as the importance of virtue, self-control, and patience, resonated with Christian teachings. The apostle Paul was familiar with Stoic philosophy and used Stoic ideas in his letters.

The Stoics developed practical exercises to train the mind and strengthen character. One of these exercises is called "premeditation" (praemeditatio malorum), when a person imagines possible difficulties and misfortunes in advance in order to be prepared for them and not to lose his mental balance.

The Stoics believed that death was a natural part of life and it was necessary to prepare for it. They developed the concept of "memento mori" (remember death) to remind themselves of the finitude of life and to appreciate every moment.

The Stoics emphasized the importance of living in harmony with nature. They believed that man should follow the laws of nature. The Stoics regarded the cosmos as an orderly, rational, and harmonious system governed by immutable natural laws. In their view, the cosmos was a living organism imbued with reason (logos). This logos, or universal mind, is the divine essence that governs all aspects of the universe. The Logos permeates all of reality, providing order and expediency to every particle of the cosmos.

The Stoics argued that everything in the cosmos is interconnected and is part of a whole. This interconnection is ensured by the logos, which governs the movement and change of all things. Each element of nature has its own specific role and place in the overall system.

The Stoics embraced the idea of the cosmos' cyclical nature, positing that the universe undergoes perpetual cycles of creation and destruction. They argued that at the end of each cycle the universe is plunged into fire (ekpyrosis) to be reborn anew. This process repeats endlessly, and all events in the cosmos occur according to the unchanging laws of nature.

**Man's Role in the Universe**

According to the Stoics, man occupies a special place in the universe due to his mind, which is part of the universal logos. According to the teachings of Stoicism, man should strive for self-improvement and fulfillment of his duties in accordance with nature and reason.

**1) Duty and obligation**

The Stoics emphasized the importance of fulfilling one's duties and responsibilities to society and nature. They believed that each person had certain roles and responsibilities that must be fulfilled for the common good and harmony.

**2) Self-improvement**

A person should constantly strive for self-improvement by developing his virtues and reason. This includes self-examination, study, and the practice of virtuous behavior.

1. **Unity with the cosmos**

The Stoics believed that human beings should feel part of the cosmic whole and strive to be in harmony with nature and society. This helps to achieve inner peace and happiness and contributes to the common good.

Stoic philosophy is a unique combination of cosmology and ethics, offering a whole doctrine of life in harmony with nature and reason.

**Epicureans**

**Epicurus (c. 341 - 270 B.C.)** was born on the island of Samos to an Athenian family. His father, Neocles, worked as a schoolteacher, providing Epicurus with early access to education. During his teenage years, he studied philosophy under Pamphilus, a student of Plato, and was introduced to the philosophy of Democritus through Nausiphanes.

At 18, Epicurus, like other Athenians, completed compulsory military service. Around 311 BC, he began teaching in Mytilene, on the island of Lesbos, but his ideas faced opposition from the local community, leading to his departure.

In 306 BC, Epicurus founded his school in Athens, famously known as the Garden of Epicurus. This site became synonymous with Epicureanism, representing a philosophy that transcended theoretical study to embody a practical way of life. There, Epicurus taught his followers the virtues of simple living, the pursuit of pleasure through moderation, and the avoidance of pain and fear.

Epicurus was a proponent of atomism, arguing that everything in the world consists of atoms and void. He is also renowned for his approach to life, which emphasized achieving happiness through peace of mind (ataraxia) and the absence of pain (aponia). A key element of his teachings was overcoming the fear of death, which he considered the cessation of sensation and, therefore, unworthy of fear.

Epicurus suffered from kidney stones and passed away due to related complications in 270 B.C. Despite enduring severe physical pain, he remained steadfast, continuing to teach until his final days.

Of the more than three hundred works attributed to Epicurus, only three letters—to Herodotus, Pythocles, and Menoeceus—have survived, along with two collections of aphorisms and sayings: "Principal Doctrines" and the "Vatican Collection," as well as fragments of his writings. Most of what we know about the life and teachings of Epicurus comes from later authors, notably Diogenes Laertius in "Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers," Lucretius' poem "On the Nature of Things," and works by Philodemus of Gadara, Sextus Empiricus, and Cicero.

**Epicurus: The Doctrine of Pleasure and Deliverance from Fear**

The Epicureans emphasized the importance of pleasure, not as hedonistic excess, but as a state of peace and tranquility.

Epicurean philosophy focused on achieving ataraxia (inner peace) and aponeia (freedom from bodily pain). Epicurus taught that happiness depends on attaining these states through the rational management of desires and fears. Epicurus argued that happiness lies in the acquisition of these states, which is achieved through the intelligent control of desires and fears.

**Pleasure is the highest good**

Epicurus considered pleasure (hedonia) the highest good and the ultimate goal of life. However, he stressed that genuine pleasure arises not from sensual indulgence but from inner peace and liberation from suffering.

**Three kinds of pleasures**.

**- Natural and necessary pleasures**. These pleasures include basic needs such as food, water, and shelter. They are easily satisfied and necessary for survival.

**- Natural but not necessary pleasures**. These pleasures include luxuries and excesses that are not necessary for survival but may bring pleasure.

**- Unnatural and unnecessary pleasures**. These pleasures are based on false desires such as wealth, fame, and power, which do not lead to true happiness.

**Deliverance from fear**.

**- Fear of the gods**

Epicurus taught that the gods are indifferent to human affairs and, therefore, should not be feared. According to him, the gods dwell in their own realm, separate from human life.

**- Fear of death**

Epicurus believed that death was not evil because it represented the end of feelings and experiences. He taught that "where I am, there is no death; where death is, there is no me," urging people not to fear death because it does not bring suffering.

**Intelligent desire management**

Epicurus highlighted the necessity of managing one's desires and aspirations. He advised limiting desires to those that are natural and necessary, thus avoiding the frustration and stress caused by unmet desires.

**Epicurus' atomistic theory and theory of cognition is a comprehensive doctrine that explains the nature of reality and the process of cognition through the interaction of atoms and sense perceptions**, which became an important part of ancient philosophy.

**Atomism**

The Epicurean school of philosophy developed its teachings on the basis of the atomistic theory dating back to Leucippus and Democritus. This theory is fundamental to understanding the nature of reality in the philosophy of Epicurus. It explains that all things are made up of tiny, indivisible particles - atoms - that move in the void. According to atomism, everything that exists—living beings, inanimate objects, and even feelings and thoughts—is the result of the interaction of atoms and the void through which they move. This view of the world gave Epicurus the opportunity to focus on a rational and scientific approach to understanding the universe.

Epicurus developed the atomistic theory proposed by Leucippus and Democritus and used it to explain a wide variety of phenomena, from physical processes to moral and ethical issues. Epicurus believed that understanding the atomistic nature of reality helped man to free himself from fears, particularly the fear of death and the gods since these fears were based on misconceptions about the nature of things. Epicurus taught that all events in the world occur naturally, without interference from supernatural forces. Epicurus believed that knowing this was the key to achieving happiness and peace of mind.

**An Explanation of Epicurus' Atomistic Theory**

**The basic principles of atomism.**

* 1. **Atoms and the void**. Epicurus, following Democritus, argued that the foundation of all reality lies in atoms and the void through which they move. Atoms are tiny, indivisible particles that exist in great number and variety. They vary in shape, size, and weight, which determines their ability to interact with each other and form different material objects. For example, smooth and round atoms can join together to form dense and stable structures, while more angular atoms can create less stable and more mobile forms. Epicurus believed that even phenomena such as mind and soul were composed of particularly thin and light atoms that had their own special properties and functions.
  2. These differences in atoms explain the variety of forms and substances in the world. The void in which atoms move is necessary for them to move and interact. Without the void, atoms could not move and the world would remain static. Epicurus emphasized that everything in the world, from the smallest speck of dust to the grandest of cosmic objects, is made up of atoms, and all changes in the world occur because of the changing position of atoms in the void. This understanding of the nature of reality allowed Epicurus to formulate his doctrine that everything that happens in the world is the result of natural processes that obey the laws of nature, not the will of the gods or other supernatural forces.

**The infinity of atoms and the universe.**

* 1. **The infinity of atoms**. Epicurus believed that the number of atoms is infinite and that they are infinitely diverse. These atoms move in infinite space, creating countless combinations and forms. This idea goes against the view of the finiteness of the world prevalent in ancient philosophy. Epicurus argued that atoms are not only infinite in number, but also diverse, which helps explain the variety of forms and phenomena in nature. Atoms are in constant motion, and this motion is infinite in time, which makes the universe eternal and indestructible.
  2. The **eternity of the universe**. According to Epicurus, the universe has neither beginning nor end. It exists forever and is not subject to any destruction. The atoms that make it up retain their essence and cannot be destroyed. This belief helped Epicurus dispel fears of the end of the world and divine judgment that were common among his contemporaries. He believed that the universe functions according to natural laws and that everything that happens in it can be explained on the basis of the interaction of atoms. This eternity and infinity of the universe also emphasized the importance of a reasonable and sober perception of life, without fear of the unknown.

**Motion and interaction of atoms**

**Random deviations (clinomen).**

* 1. The **concept of** the **clinomene**. Epicurus introduced into the atomistic theory the concept of the clinomene - a random deviation of atoms from their original trajectory. This deviation, in his opinion, allows to explain the emergence of the variety of forms and phenomena in the world. Unlike Democritus, who considered the motion of atoms to be strictly deterministic, Epicurus believed that it was random deviations that allowed atoms to collide and combine into new structures. This principle of the clinomene explains why there is diversity in nature and why the world is not static.
  2. **The ethical significance of the clinoman**. The clinomenon held significance not only in the realm of physics but also in ethics. Epicurus believed that the random deviations of atoms gave man free will, allowing him to make decisions and be responsible for his actions. If the movement of atoms were completely deterministic, man would be deprived of the possibility of choice and would become a puppet in the hands of fate. The wedge gives a man the opportunity to act at his own discretion, which makes him responsible for his actions and their consequences. Thus, the cuneiform became an important element of Epicurus' ethics, asserting that free will is possible due to random deviations in the motion of atoms.

**Formation of complex structures.**

* 1. **Formation of complex structures**. Complex structures in the world, such as living things, planets and stars, arise from combinations and interactions of atoms. These structures may change, collapse, and re-form, but the atoms themselves remain unchanging and eternal. Epicurus believed that everything in the world is subject to change and that these changes are explained by the interaction of atoms. For example, the human body is made up of many atoms that combine to form various organs and tissues. Over time, these atoms may disintegrate, and the body is altered or destroyed, but the atoms themselves continue to exist and can form new structures.
  2. The **eternity of atoms**. Epicurus emphasized that despite the change and destruction of complex structures, atoms themselves remain unchanging and eternal. This meant that although everything in the world is subject to change and destruction, the basis of reality - atoms - remains stable and continuous. According to Epicurus, atoms provide constancy and order within the universe, even amidst apparent change and chaos. This concept helped Epicurus explain why both constancy and change exist in the world, and how the nature of reality can be conceptualized through the interaction of these two principles.

**Sources of Epicurus' atomistic theory**

**"Letters" by Epicurus .**

* 1. **Letter to Herodotus**. In this letter, Epicurus lays out the basic principles of his physics, including the atomistic theory. He explains that the entire universe is made up of atoms and the void and that this knowledge is necessary to properly understand the nature of the world. Epicurus emphasizes that knowledge of the atomistic nature of the universe helps man get rid of fears of gods and death, which are based on misconceptions about the nature of things. According to Epicurus, knowledge is the key to attaining peace of mind and happiness, as it liberates humans from irrational fears and enables them to live harmoniously with nature.
  2. **Letter to Pythocles**. In this letter, Epicurus discusses meteorological and astronomical phenomena in terms of the atomistic theory. He rejects mythological and superstitious explanations of natural phenomena, arguing that all processes in nature obey natural laws and can be explained through the movement and interaction of atoms. Epicurus examines phenomena such as thunderstorms, earthquakes, and eclipses, offering rational explanations that help humans free themselves from fear of the unpredictable forces of nature. Realizing that the world is governed by natural laws rather than the will of the gods allows man to find peace of mind and freedom from the fear of the unknown.
  3. **Significance for ethics**. These letters not only explain the physical nature of the world, but also have important ethical implications. Epicurus argues that knowledge of nature helps humans realize their true needs and avoid unnecessary suffering due to false beliefs and irrational fears. Epicurus' letters serve not only as a scientific but also as an ethical guide, showing how knowledge of the nature of the world can help a person achieve happiness and peace of mind.

**"On the Nature of Things" by Lucretius .**

* 1. **Structure and content of the poem**. Lucretius' epic work On the Nature of Things is a poetic exposition of the teachings of Epicurus. Lucretius describes the atomistic theory in six books, beginning with an explanation of the nature of atoms and the void and ending with considerations of human existence and man's role in the world. The poem is written in Latin and is one of the most important sources of knowledge about the teachings of Epicurus. Lucretius explains in detail how atoms interact, form different structures, and cause changes in nature. His work also contains arguments about man's place in the world and how atomistic theory can help people find peace of mind, freeing them from fear of death and the gods.
  2. **Ethical Aspects**. In addition to physics, Lucretius pays much attention to ethical issues. He argues that knowledge of the nature of things helps man to free himself from fear and live in harmony with nature. Lucretius underscores the importance of reason and liberation from fear in human life, asserting that a true understanding of the world's nature is the path to genuine happiness. This idea underlies the teachings of Epicurus and was developed by Lucretius in his poem. Lucretius also criticizes superstition and religious beliefs, arguing that they are based on ignorance and fear and that only scientific knowledge can lead to true understanding and peace.

**Epicurus' Theory of Knowledge**

Epicurus developed a theory of cognition that closely connects the physical structure of the world with the processes of perception, thought, and understanding. In his system, sense perceptions occupy a central role as the primary source of knowledge about the world, while reason interprets these perceptions and forms ideas about reality.

**1)** **Empiricism and Sensationalism**

**Sense perceptions**. Epicurus argued that all human knowledge originates from sense perceptions. He maintained that the senses serve as a direct channel for receiving information about the external world and are inherently reliable in conveying the immediate impressions of objects. For Epicurus, sense perceptions (sight, hearing, smell, etc.) form the foundation of all subsequent cognitive processes. He believed that the senses perceive the world as it truly is, without distortion. Even if a person is sometimes mistaken in interpreting his perceptions, the senses themselves remain reliable sources of information.

**Representations and images**. Epicurus explained that sense perceptions arise from a stream of subtle images, known as eidols, which emanate from objects and reach the senses. These eidols are material entities that retain the form and structure of the object from which they emanate. Thus, they serve as a bridge between the objects of the external world and the human perception of them. Epicurus explained that thanks to these eidols, our senses can perceive not only objects present nearby, but also objects at a distance or even those that have already disappeared, since the eidols continue to move and reach the senses.

**2)** **Cognition and Reason**

**The role of reason**. Although sense perceptions are the basis of knowledge, Epicurus emphasized the importance of reason in the process of knowledge. **Reason interprets the data received from the senses, organizes them into perceptions, and draws conclusions about the nature of things. It helps to distinguish between true and false perceptions by evaluating them on the basis of prior experience and logic.** Epicurus believed that reason plays a key role in making sense of the world and making good decisions because it can analyze and verify sense data, thus avoiding errors.

**Criteria of truth**. In order to distinguish true knowledge from false knowledge, Epicurus distinguished **three main criteria of truth**. The first criterion is **sense perceptions**, which, in his opinion, are always true. The second criterion is **anticipation** - concepts that arise as a result of frequent perception of the same objects and allow a person to quickly recognize familiar things. The third criterion is **affects**, or feelings of pleasure and pain, which serve as a guide in evaluating one's actions and their consequences. These criteria help the mind to correct errors and make more accurate and informed decisions.

**3)** **Errors in cognition**

**Causes of error**. Epicurus recognized that errors in cognition can occur despite the reliability of sense perceptions. He considered the main causes of errors to be misinterpretation of sensory data or anticipations. For example, a person may misjudge the distance or shape of an object due to a lack of information or perceptual conditions. Also, errors can arise from false assumptions based on incomplete or distorted data. Epicurus emphasized that **most fallacies do not occur at the stage of perception, but at the stage of reasoning and inference, when the mind misinterprets the data received.**

**Correction of error**. Epicurus suggested using reason and philosophical reflection to correct errors and achieve true knowledge. He believed that human beings need to analyze their perceptions, identify possible sources of error, and test them against the criteria of truth. This involves philosophical reflection, examining the causes of one's errors, and constantly striving to improve one's understanding of the world. Epicurus believed that through careful analysis and rational thinking, a person could free himself from delusion and achieve a more accurate and correct understanding of reality.

**Skeptics**

**Pyrrhon (c. 360 - c. 270 BC)** is the founder of skepticism. He was born around 360 BC in Elida, in the Peloponnese. Pyrrhon originally practiced painting, but soon turned to philosophy and became a student of Anaxarchus₃ . During Alexander the Great's campaigns in the East, Pyrrhon traveled to Persia and India, during which he became familiar with the teachings of Indian ascetics and Persian magicians.

Pyrrhon left no written works behind. His teachings are known through his disciple Timon of Fliunt. Pyrrhon's central principle asserted that it is impossible to attain certain knowledge of the world; therefore, one must abstain from judgment (epocha), which leads to peace of mind (ataraxia).

Pyrrhon's teachings became the foundation of skepticism, later developed further by philosophers such as Sextus Empiricus.

**Doubt as a method**

Skepticism, founded by Pyrrhon of Elida in the late 4th century BC, is a philosophical school that questioned the possibility of reliable knowledge. Skeptics argued that true knowledge is unattainable and that we should refrain from judgment (epocha) and strive for inner peace (ataraxia).

**1)** **Epoch (refraining from judgment)**

Pyrrhon, the founder of skepticism, introduced a unique approach to knowledge called epocha. Epocha refers to abstaining from judgments about the nature of things and the world in general. According to Pyrrhon, humans cannot achieve absolute knowledge of reality due to the limitations of their senses and reason. Any statements about the nature of the world, whether positive or negative, can be erroneous. Therefore, in order to avoid mistakes and not to fall into dogmatism, Pyrrhon suggested that any final judgments and assertions should be abandoned. This allows a person to remain open to new points of view and avoid the trap of dogmatic thinking, in which one considers one's beliefs to be the only true and unquestionable.

Pyrrhon believed that through the practice of epocha, man could free himself from the unnecessary anxieties and worries associated with trying to find absolute truth or resolve unsolvable philosophical questions. Instead of striving for a non-existent ideal of complete knowledge, he suggested that we should focus on accepting that our knowledge will always be limited and incomplete. Abstaining from judgment helps avoid the frustrations and conflicts that arise when different opinions clash with each other. In this way, epoche promotes mental balance and reduces emotional stress.

**2)** **Ataraxia (inner calm)**

The practice of epocha, according to Pyrrhon, inevitably leads to ataraxia—a state of equanimity and inner calm. Ataraxia, the ultimate goal of skepticism, is a state in which one is freed from anxieties, fears, and doubts that usually accompany attempts to comprehend the world and achieve certainty in one's knowledge. Pyrrhon argued that ataraxia is achieved through the complete acceptance of uncertainty and the abandonment of the search for absolute truth.

Instead of worrying that the truth may be unattainable, the individual should accept the fact of uncertainty and focus on maintaining inner peace. Ataraxia does not mean indifference or apathy; rather, it is an active attitude of life in which one strives to maintain mental clarity and emotional equilibrium despite the uncertainties of the external world. Pyrrhon believed that only through abandoning dogmatic beliefs and accepting the limitations of one's knowledge can one achieve true peace and harmony in life.

**Influence on Followers**

After Pyrrhon, skepticism continued to develop and was greatly promoted by Anesidemus and Agrippa.

**Anesidemus**, who lived in the first century BC, played an important role in systematizing skepticism. He proposed the concept of **ten tropes** - arguments that show why any claim can be questioned. These tropes demonstrate the relativity of perceptions and beliefs by pointing out that:

* 1. Different species of animals perceive the world in different ways.
  2. People differ in perceptions too.
  3. The perception of the same person changes depending on their condition.
  4. The environment and perceptual conditions affect perception.
  5. The position, distance, and location of an object affect its perception.
  6. Perceptions are mixed and depend on many factors.
  7. The properties of things depend on their quantity and composition.
  8. Perceptions change depending on the relationship to other perceptions.
  9. Frequency and habit change perception.
  10. Perceptions and beliefs are shaped by social norms.

**Agrippa**, who lived in the first century CE, continued the work of Anesidemus and added five more tropes that reinforce the skeptical position:

* 1. The constant disagreement between philosophers and scientists shows that it is impossible to reach a single truth.
  2. Any proof needs further proof, which leads to infinite regress.
  3. All things are perceived relative to each other, which makes knowledge subjective.
  4. In any system of knowledge, there are assumptions that cannot be conclusively proven.
  5. Circular reasoning, where assertions are proved one through another, invalidates the evidence.

These tropes strengthened the arguments of the skeptics and showed why it is impossible to attain reliable knowledge.

**Sextus Empiricus**, who lived in the 2nd-3rd centuries AD, was one of the most prominent and influential representatives of skepticism. A physician and philosopher, his writings remain key sources of information about ancient skepticism.Sextus Empiricus authored numerous works in which he systematized and expanded upon the skeptical arguments of Pyrrhon, Anesidemus, and Agrippa. His most notable works, Pyrrhon's Outlines and Against the Mathematicians, thoroughly examine the skeptics' arguments against the dogmatists, demonstrating why reliable knowledge is unattainable.

Sextus Empiricus played a crucial role in preserving and transmitting skeptical ideas. His writings significantly influenced the development of philosophy, particularly during the Renaissance and Modern periods, when skepticism attracted renewed attention from philosophers like Michel de Montaigne and David Hume.

**"Essays on Pyrrhonism" Sextus Empiricus: Structure and Main Ideas**

In Essays on Pyrrhonism, Sextus Empiricus critiques various aspects of philosophy. The work lacks a linear structure but is divided into several sections, each addressing specific issues. The primary aim of Essays on Pyrrhonism is to demonstrate how skepticism avoids dogmatism and preserves intellectual freedom through the analysis of philosophical, scientific, and religious issues.

**Book I** introduces the fundamentals of skepticism, including the concepts of epocha (suspension of judgment) and ataraxia (peace of mind).Sextus explains that any claims about the nature of the world are subject to doubt because of the limitations of human perception. He shows that refraining from judgment relieves inner conflict and helps one find peace of mind. Skepticism does not deny knowledge, but offers a methodical approach to life by avoiding unprovable assertions.

**Books II and III** are devoted to criticizing philosophical schools such as Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Platonism. Sextus points out that their teachings are based on premises that cannot be proven, making them vulnerable to criticism. He demonstrates that any system claiming absolute knowledge inevitably encounters internal contradictions. Skepticism, on the other hand, maintains intellectual flexibility by avoiding claims that cannot be fully verified.

**Books IV-VI** focus on ethical issues. Sextus criticizes the attempts of dogmatic systems to establish objective moral truths, pointing out their tendency to generate conflict. He argues that the flexibility of the skeptical approach allows for peace of mind and adaptation to different circumstances, making it more viable than dogmatic moral systems.

**Books VII and VIII** deal with the exact sciences, such as mathematics and logic. Sextus shows that they too are not free from dogmatic assumptions, since they are based on axioms that require faith. He argues that even scientific conclusions depend on unprovable postulates, and therefore must be subjected to critical analysis.

**Book IX** concludes "Essays on Pyrrhonism" with a critique of religious belief. Sextus shows that belief in gods is based on dogmas that cannot be proved by rational or empirical means. He criticizes religion for its tendency toward fanaticism and violence when its tenets are imposed on society. Skepticism, on the other hand, maintains neutrality in matters of faith and helps to avoid dogmatic traps.

The main ideas of "Essays on Pyrrhonism" include a critique of dogmatism, a defense of skepticism as a flexible method of knowledge that promotes peace of mind and inner harmony. Sextus demonstrates that the skeptical approach is applicable to all aspects of knowledge, from philosophy and ethics to science and religion, showing that absolute truth is unattainable and any claim should be subjected to critical questioning.

**Influence and Interaction of Philosophical Schools**

The philosophical schools of the Hellenistic period interacted dynamically rather than existing in isolation. They actively interacted with each other and with the teachings of their predecessors. These interactions played a key role in the formation and evolution of Western philosophy.

**1)** **Influence of Aristotle and Plato**

**Aristotle** profoundly influenced the Hellenistic philosophical schools, particularly in logic, metaphysics, ethics, and politics. His works became the basis for many philosophical discussions, and even schools that disagreed with his views often adapted or developed his ideas. For example, the Stoics borrowed Aristotelian concepts of virtue and natural order, although they interpreted them within their own ethical system. Aristotle viewed virtue as a middle state between two extremes, which became one of the foundations of Stoic ethics, although the Stoics emphasized the universality and absoluteness of virtue. In addition, the Aristotelian idea of natural purpose or teleology also influenced the Stoic concept of natural order and harmony in the universe.

The Epicureans were also influenced by Aristotle, though in a different area. They drew on his atomistic physics, but developed it in their own unique direction. Epicurus, following in the atomistic tradition of Leucippus and Democritus, adopted the Aristotelian concept of the random motion of atoms to justify his theory of the clinomenon-the spontaneous deflection of atoms-that allowed him to explain free will and the unpredictability of events in the material world. Although Epicurus rejected many of the metaphysical and ethical aspects of Aristotelian philosophy, his influence on physics and ideas about the nature of reality was notable.

**Plato**, in turn, shaped subsequent philosophical schools through his theory of ideas (forms) and his dialogical method of presenting teachings. Academic skeptics such as Carneades and Arcesilaus used Plato's dialectical method to criticize the dogmatic claims of other philosophers. They emphasized the importance of doubt and refraining from final judgments, which was inspired by the Platonic method of inquiry through dialogue and questioning. Thus, the Platonic Academy, in its skeptical phase, retained the spirit of critical analysis and dialogue inherent in Platonic philosophy.

The Stoics were also influenced by Plato, although they approached his teachings with criticism. They rejected Plato's theory of ideas, arguing that ideas or forms cannot exist apart from concrete things. However, the Stoic concept of the logos and cosmic mind was partly inspired by Plato's ideas of the world mind and the idea of the good. Plato's idea of harmony in the cosmos was reflected in the Stoic doctrine of nature and the divine mind that governs all things. The Stoics sought to synthesize elements of Plato's metaphysics with their own materialist ontology, creating a comprehensive doctrine of cosmic order and human well-being.

Despite their differing philosophies, Aristotle and Plato significantly shaped the Hellenistic schools, which adapted their ideas to create new concepts and approaches to understanding reality.

**2)** **Stoics and Epicureans**.

The Stoics and Epicureans were two diametrically opposed philosophical schools that held very different views on ethics, metaphysics, and the purpose of life. **The Stoics** emphasized living in harmony with nature, which included developing and practicing virtues such as wisdom, courage, justice, and temperance. They believed that virtue was the only true good and that man should strive for inner equanimity (ataraxia) and resilience in the face of life's difficulties. For the Stoics, the most important goal of life was to achieve virtue and peace of mind, regardless of external circumstances.

**The Epicureans**, on the other hand, believed that the purpose of life was to achieve pleasure (hedonia) and to rid oneself of fear, especially fear of death and the gods. Epicurus argued that pleasure was the highest good, but understood it not as sensual pleasures but as the absence of pain and anxiety (ataraxia). For the Epicureans, the avoidance of excesses and the reasonable satisfaction of natural desires were important, which, in their view, led to true happiness.

These differences in approach to life and ethics led to fierce mutual criticism. **The Stoics** accused the Epicureans of hedonism and selfishness, arguing that the pursuit of pleasure led to moral decay and the destruction of social bonds. They also criticized the Epicureans for refusing to participate in public and political life, seeing in this a manifestation of indifference to the fate of society and the state. **The Epicureans**, in turn, accused the Stoics of excessive harshness and suppression of natural human feelings. They considered Stoic ethics excessively demanding and incompatible with real human nature, which, in their opinion, cannot exist without pleasures.

Despite deep disagreements, the **Stoics and Epicureans** played a key role in the development of ethical thought, expanding the understanding of human happiness and moral principles.

**The Stoic concept of virtue**, based on reason and self-control, formed the basis for many subsequent ethical teachings centered on inner fortitude and moral responsibility. Their idea that human beings should act in accordance with nature and the cosmic order influenced the development of ethics within the Western philosophical tradition, including Christian morality.

**The Epicurean theory of pleasure** also made a significant contribution to philosophical debates about the nature of happiness and well-being. The Epicurean idea that true pleasure is associated with the deliverance from suffering and the pacification of the soul influenced the development of hedonistic and utilitarian theories in Modern times. Epicurean ethics offered an alternative view of morality based on concern for personal well-being and minimization of pain, which inspired many philosophers to rethink traditional ideas about morality.

**3)** **Stoics and Skeptics**

Skeptics criticized the Stoic doctrines for their confidence in the possession of absolute knowledge. Skeptics proceeded from the assumption that human perceptions and reasoning are unreliable and therefore no knowledge can be conclusively proven. The Stoics, by contrast, argued that knowledge of the nature of the world was possible through reason and logic, particularly through an understanding of logos, the universal rational principle governing all things. For the Stoics, logos was the basis for both ethics and metaphysics, serving as proof that the nature of the world is subject to strict laws and harmony.

Skeptics contended that the Stoic doctrines of nature, fate, and ethics could not be verified with absolute certainty. They highlighted that Stoic claims about reality overlooked the potential for error and the inherent limitations of human cognition. As an alternative, the skeptics advocated for epocha (suspension of judgment) as a philosophical practice to evade the distress linked to uncertainty. Skeptics believed that by not asserting anything definitive, one could achieve peace of mind (ataraxia) and escape the anxieties associated with the search for truth.

Criticism from the Skeptics had a significant impact on Stoic philosophy, prompting the Stoics to strengthen their methodology and argumentation. The Stoics were forced to think more carefully about their philosophical positions in order to respond to skeptical doubts and reproaches. As a result of this interaction, Stoic philosophy became more rigorous and logically consistent.

One of the most prominent Stoics, Chrysippus,developed sophisticated logical systems, such as the theory of conditional judgments, to defend his beliefs and used them extensively to explain the ethical and metaphysical teachings of the Stoics. For example, Chrysippus insisted that although many things in the world are subject to necessity (determinism), human beings still retain an inner freedom with respect to their moral actions, which was the main defense against skeptical arguments about indeterminacy and unknowability.

**4)** **Epicureans and Skeptics**

Despite significant differences in their ethical teachings, **Epicureans and skeptics** found common ground in their views on fear of the gods and death. **Epicureans** argued that the gods existed, but they did not interfere in human affairs or influence the world, allowing people to eliminate their fear of divine punishment. Epicurus believed that fear of the gods and death were the main sources of human suffering, and liberation from these fears leads to a state of peace of mind or ataraxia.

**Skeptics**, especially those who followed Pyrrhonism, did not accept any dogmatic statements about the nature of the gods or their intervention in the world. They refrained from making judgments (epocha) about the divine, believing that any assertion on this subject could not be reliably proven. The skeptics argued that abstaining from judgment allowed them to avoid the anxiety caused by dogmatic beliefs and thus achieve a state of equanimity similar to Epicurean ataraxia.

**Epicureans** believed that happiness lay in the pursuit of pleasure, which they understood as the absence of pain and suffering. Their ethics emphasized the prudent fulfillment of natural needs and moderation to achieve a state of ataraxia. According to Epicurean philosophy, understanding the nature of the world and being assured of the gods' non-interference in human affairs were central to overcoming fear and attaining peace of mind.

**Skeptics**, on the other hand, did not seek to attain knowledge or certainty in any matter, including questions about the nature of the world and divine intervention. They believed that since reliable knowledge was impossible, one should abstain from all assertions and opinions, which in itself led to a state of inner peace. The skeptical approach was less defined than the Epicurean one: skeptics aimed not at happiness or pleasure but at avoiding mental unrest by abstaining from fixed beliefs.

Skeptical arguments about the impossibility of attaining reliable knowledge and the necessity of suspending judgment found resonance in the Epicurean pursuit of ataraxia through liberation from fear. This shared perspective fostered the evolution of philosophies focused on attaining inner tranquility and liberation from suffering. This mutual influence contributed to the development of a philosophy aimed at achieving inner peace and freedom from suffering. Although the methods used by these schools differed, both philosophies emphasized the importance of freedom from fear and anxiety as a key element in achieving peace of mind.

**Critical Reviews and the Development of Philosophical Thought**

**1)** **Philosophical polemics**

**Dialogues and disputes**

Philosophical polemics between different schools of ancient Greece and Rome often took the form of dialogues and public debates. Such dialogues served not only as a means of exchanging opinions, but also as an important method of clarifying positions and revealing the weaknesses of arguments. In such disputes, philosophers not only defended their doctrines, but also developed them when confronted with the arguments of their opponents. For example, Plato made extensive use of the dialogic form of presentation in order to present different points of view and gradually lead to key conclusions.

**Letters and Treatises**.

Beyond oral discussions, philosophers frequently articulated their ideas and criticisms through letters and treatises. These writings were crucial for transmitting knowledge and served as primary records of philosophical teachings. For instance, Seneca's Letters to Lucilius and Lucretius' On the Nature of Things not only expounded their respective philosophies but also engaged in critiques of others' views. This practice advanced philosophical thought by compelling authors to deeply analyze both their own positions and the arguments of others, refining their perspectives in the process.

**2)** **The development of philosophy through criticism**

**The pursuit of truth**.

Criticism and philosophical polemics among schools advanced philosophical thought by compelling philosophers to justify their doctrines and respond to challenges. For example, criticism from the Skeptics forced the Stoics to develop more sophisticated logical arguments and refine their ethical positions. Polemics between schools not only helped to identify the weaknesses of philosophical doctrines but also served as a catalyst for their further development and improvement.

**Integration of ideas**.

Through criticism and polemics, philosophers often borrowed ideas from one another, fostering the synthesis of diverse doctrines. This process of integration contributed to the creation of more complex and multidimensional philosophical systems. For example, Neoplatonism, which emerged from the teachings of Plato, integrated the ideas of Aristotle and other philosophers, creating a coherent philosophical system that influenced subsequent Western philosophy. Such syntheses show how criticism and polemics lead not only to opposing views but also to the mutual enrichment of philosophical traditions, which contributed to the development of more universal philosophical systems.

**Examples of Synthesis and Conflict Between Philosophical Schools**

**1) Stoics and Platonism**

Some Stoics aimed to incorporate elements of Platonism into their teachings, creating more intricate and adaptable philosophical systems. For instance, Posidonius is notable for his efforts to merge Stoic ideas with Platonic views on the nature of the soul and the cosmos. He adopted Plato's idea of the soul's divine nature and its connection to the cosmic mind, integrating it with the Stoic concept of logos. This contributed to the development of a more universal and comprehensive Stoic philosophy that could account for both material and immaterial aspects of reality.

However, not all Stoics supported this integration. Many representatives of the Stoic school continued to criticize Plato's theory of ideas, considering it too abstract and detached from reality. For example, the Stoic Chrysippus insisted that reality had a material nature and that even concepts such as soul and logos were material, though more subtle in structure. This contrasted them with the Platonic idea of the existence of immaterial and eternal forms, which was a major source of conflict between these philosophical traditions.

**2) Skepticism and academic Platonism**

**The evolution of Platonism**.

Under the influence of skepticism, academic Platonism, represented by philosophers such as Arcesilaus and Carneades, took a more skeptical form. Arcesilaus, after leading the Academy, began to criticize dogmatic claims, arguing that true knowledge was unattainable. Instead, he suggested that philosophers should strive for probable knowledge, which may be reasonably valid but is not absolute truth. This transformation of Platonism under the influence of skepticism led the Academy to become less dogmatic and more flexible in its teachings.

**Contradiction and synthesis**.

The synthesis of skepticism and Platonism sparked conflicts with traditional Platonists, who maintained more dogmatic positions and upheld the belief in the possibility of attaining absolute knowledge through the dialectical method. These conflicts fostered philosophical debates and stimulated the emergence of new directions in philosophy. Ultimately, the combination of skepticism and Platonism led to the creation of more nuanced and realistic approaches to knowledge that had a significant influence on subsequent schools of philosophy.

**3) Epicureans and natural philosophy**

**Synthesis with physics**.

The Epicureans, drawing on the ideas of atomism of Leucippus and Democritus, created their natural philosophical system, which offered a physical explanation of nature and freed people from fear of supernatural phenomena. Epicurus developed the theory of atoms and the void, arguing that all entities, including souls and gods, are composed of atoms that move in infinite space. This physical theory allowed the Epicureans to explain all natural phenomena without having to resort to mythological or religious explanations, which contributed to the development of scientific thinking.

**Conflict with religious beliefs**.

Epicurean natural philosophy conflicted with traditional religious beliefs, which were based on the notion of gods interfering in human affairs and the existence of supernatural forces. The Epicureans contended that if the gods existed, they did not intervene in human affairs and therefore should not be feared. This drew criticism from more religious philosophical schools who saw Epicurean philosophy as a threat to established moral and religious values.

**Influence of Ancient Philosophical Schools on Modern Philosophy**

The Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics left behind a significant legacy that still shapes modern philosophical and scientific thought. Their teachings and methodologies formed the foundation of many aspects of Western philosophy and continue to inspire contemporary movements. The influence of these schools can be seen in fields ranging from ethics and psychology to epistemology and political philosophy.

**1) Influence of Stoicism**

**Ethics and Psychology**.

Stoic philosophy influenced the development of ethics and psychology, especially in the area of self-control and emotion management. Marcus Aurelius and Seneca emphasized the importance of living in harmony with nature, focusing on the cultivation of virtue and the pursuit of inner peace. These ideas are reflected in modern cognitive behavioral therapies (CBT), which teach people to be rational about their thoughts and emotions. In Stoicism, one can see the early roots of approaches that are used today to overcome anxiety, depression, and other psychological problems. The Stoic concept of ataraxia (equanimity) echoes modern meditation and mindfulness practices aimed at achieving inner peace and resilience to stress.

**Political Philosophy**.

Stoicism made a significant contribution to the development of political philosophy, especially through the ideas of cosmopolitanism and natural law. The Stoics believed that all people were part of a single cosmic community, a concept that later influenced modern ideas about human rights and international law. The Stoics' ideas of justice, equality, and responsibility to society influenced the development of liberal thought and the concept of the rule of law. John Locke and Immanuel Kant borrowed from the Stoics' ideas about natural rights and morality.

**2) The Influence of Epicureanism**

**Ethics and Hedonism**.

The Epicurean ethic, based on the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of fear, continues to inspire contemporary philosophical discussions about happiness and well-being. The Epicureans argued that true pleasure lies in the absence of pain and anxiety, which requires a sensible approach to life and the avoidance of excess. These ideas are still relevant today, reflected in modern theories that view happiness as a state of inner well-being rather than the accumulation of material goods. Epicurean criticism of the fear of death and divine punishment echoes modern secular and humanistic views that emphasize the importance of rational thinking and liberation from superstition.

**Natural Philosophy and Science**.

Epicurean atomism and natural philosophy laid the foundation for the scientific method and materialist worldview that became key to the development of the natural sciences. Epicurus' idea that the universe consists of atoms moving in the void influenced later philosophers and scientists, including Lucretius, who popularized these views in his work On the Nature of Things. Later, materialist and atomistic ideas influenced philosophers such as Leibniz and science in general, contributing to the development of physics, chemistry, and biology. These ideas also paved the way for revolutionary theories such as the atomic theory of matter and quantum physics.

**3) The influence of Skepticism**

**Epistemology and Methodology**.

Skeptical arguments about the impossibility of attaining reliable knowledge and the necessity of refraining from judgment (epocha) significantly influenced the development of epistemology and the scientific method. Skeptics, from Pyrrhon to Sextus Empiricus, emphasized the importance of doubt and critical analysis, which inspired philosophers such as René Descartes to develop new methods of knowing. Descartes used methodical doubt as a starting point for his philosophical inquiry, which became the basis for the rationalist tradition in European philosophy. Skeptical ideas were also reflected in the writings of David Hume, who developed the concept of empiricism and emphasized the limitations of human reason.

**Critical Thinking**.

Skeptical ideas about the need to test and revise beliefs inspire modern approaches to critical thinking and scientific skepticism. These methods are now widely applied in science, philosophy, and education, emphasizing the importance of a critical approach to information and beliefs as the foundation of rational thinking and scientific inquiry. Skepticism has also played a key role in the development of the scientific method, which requires careful testing of hypotheses and theories and a willingness to recognize their failure in the light of new evidence.

**Modern Philosophical Trends**

**1)** **Neostoicism.**

Neostoicism aims to blend ancient philosophy with the practical demands of contemporary life. Representatives of this movement emphasize the importance of self-control, rational thinking, and the development of virtue as ways of overcoming life's difficulties. Adherents argue that embracing Stoic principles enables individuals to attain inner peace and stability, irrespective of external circumstances.

Neostoicism is actively used in modern programs for stress management, personal growth, and professional development. Stoic techniques are often included in self-development and psychotherapy courses. These techniques help people develop emotional resilience, better manage their reactions to stress, and achieve harmony in their lives.

**2)** **Neoepicureanism.**

Epicurean ideas about the importance of pleasure, happiness, and freedom from fear continue to be developed in contemporary ethical and psychological theories. Philosophers and psychologists are exploring how the principles of Epicureanism can promote well-being and peace in the context of the modern world. For example, works on positive psychology and well-being theory often incorporate Epicurean ideas that happiness is achieved through the rational fulfillment of needs and liberation from irrational fears.

Epicurus' atomistic natural philosophy remains a significant influence on modern scientific research, particularly in physics and cosmology. Epicurus' ideas about the nature of matter, atoms, and the universe are reflected in the work of modern scientists who investigate the structure of matter and the fundamental laws of nature.

**3)** **Neoskepticism.**

Modern philosophers such as Karl Popper and Peter Unger develop the ideas of skepticism by emphasizing the importance of critical thinking and empirical testing of hypotheses. For instance, Popper introduced the concept of falsifiability, asserting that scientific theories must be open to verification and refutation. This idea, echoing the classical skeptical tradition, questions the possibility of absolute knowledge and requires a constant willingness to revise existing beliefs.

**Final remarks (Part 5)**

Today we have looked at the philosophy of the Hellenistic period, exploring the key schools and their influence on modern philosophy. These philosophical movements, formed in antiquity, offer time-tested approaches to solving life's problems that remain relevant today.

Stoicism offers powerful tools for stress and emotion management, crucial in the fast-paced and unpredictable nature of modern life. The principles of self-control developed by the Stoics are widely used in psychotherapy and personal growth programs, helping people to maintain stability and clarity of thought in the most difficult situations. The study of Stoicism contributes to the formation of stable moral values and the ability to make balanced decisions, which is the basis of ethical behavior.

Epicureanism teaches us the art of living happily, finding a balance between satisfying natural desires and achieving inner peace. The Epicurean ethic, based on the pursuit of rational pleasures and freedom from irrational fears, remains relevant to understanding and practicing personal well-being. Knowledge of Epicurean principles helps to free oneself from superstition and develop rational thinking, which is important in today's secularized society.

Skepticism encourages the development of critical thinking and the scientific method, making it an indispensable tool for any intellectual endeavor. The skeptical tradition encourages doubt and the testing of beliefs, helping to avoid fallacies and fostering a deeper understanding of the world. In an age of information overabundance and the proliferation of misinformation, the critical thinking skills suggested by skeptics become vital.

Studying and understanding these schools of philosophy not only broadens our horizons, but also develops resistance to stressful situations, helps in achieving inner peace, and contributes to building a life based on solid and sound principles. Incorporating these ideas into a worldview makes people not only more educated, but also happier and more harmonious individuals.

**Conclusion**

Ancient Greek philosophy remains one of the essential cornerstones of Western thought, profoundly shaping the values and worldview of Western civilization.

Greek philosophers established the foundation for systematic and critical thinking. By exploring fundamental questions about nature, existence, and human life, they introduced powerful methods of logical analysis and rational inquiry. These methods became essential tools for critical thought, deeply influencing not only modern science but also everyday decision-making.

Through careful observation, rigorous analysis, and logical reasoning, Greek thinkers sought a deeper understanding of the world. Their inquiries gave rise to disciplines such as physics, biology, and mathematics. Moreover, their philosophical ideas profoundly impacted art and literature, influencing aesthetic standards and ethical values that remain significant today.

Figures such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle explored ethics and politics, offering visions of a just society and proposing fundamental principles for moral behavior. Their timeless insights continue to inspire and guide contemporary thought and action.

Studying ancient Greek philosophy offers far more than mere historical knowledge—it provides valuable perspectives for addressing enduring questions and discovering deeper truths about ourselves.