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~~it is an elaborate extension of the debate between Plato and Aristotle.~~ Plato is speculative, suggestive, poetic. His known works—most of them in dialogue form with Socrates as the main character—are as much drama as philosophy. The ultimate ideas remain half hidden like a great secret glimpsed by the very few. Aristotle, in contrast, is through and through a scientist, and although he may have written dialogues (now lost), what we know of his work is rather dry, clear, and cautious, thoroughly analytic and only rarely speculative. Of course, one can discern many suggestive analyses and arguments in Plato, and Aristotle has some spectacular philosophical visions, but their differences in style and substance define two different temperaments that are interwoven throughout the Western tradition.

Read This Too!

In Christian philosophy, for example, Augustine will follow Plato, Aquinas will follow Aristotle, to whom he will refer simply as "The Philosopher." In modern times, those philosophers who call themselves "rationalists" often look back to Plato in their appeal to reason as the faculty that can see "beyond" mere experience and seek absolutes. Those who call themselves "empiricists" often resemble, even if they do not follow, Aristotle the scientist, the careful observer, suspicious of any idea that does not rest on the testimony of experience and common sense, always open to revision. The nineteenth-century German idealists and many twentieth-century European philosophers shared Plato's speculative sensibilities even if they rejected his philosophy, while twentieth-century "analytic" philosophy clearly follows Aristotle in its demand for precision, thoroughness, and clarity.

Philosophers, accordingly, have adopted different images for themselves, beautifully depicted by the Renaissance artist Raphael in a mural near the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. Plato points upward, his mind on the heavens. Aristotle pushes his own hand down toward the ground, suggesting his own earthy temperament, indisposed to flights of speculation. Here are the two greatest philosophers in the West—teacher and student, intimate friends, virtually kin—disagreeing about the nature of philosophy in the deepest possible way. Even in the limited context of fourth century B.C.E. Athens, philosophy is anything but a singular enterprise, a single "discourse" or "discipline." Today there are philosophers who pride themselves on their bold ideas, their breadth, their sensitivity, their outrageousness. There are philosophers who pride themselves on their logic and hardheadedness. Unfortunately, too much of philosophy has been a not always amiable and self-righteous conversation about the "proper" way of doing philosophy. But if Plato and Aristotle are to teach us anything, it should, first of all, be the role of different temperaments and the need to find one's own style of philosophizing. There is still a great deal of philosophy to come, and little of it can be dismissed as mere "footnotes."

Tough Times: Stoicism, Skepticism, and Epicureanism

After Aristotle, philosophy became more and more a rivalry of various schools, not only between Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum (both now in other hands), but among new competing schools as well. Despite the "academic" settings, many of these philosophies were primarily concerned with the basic human question of *how to live*. To be sure, many followers of Plato pursued important investigations into the nature of numbers and geometry (as well as his theory of the Forms), and students of Aristotle pursued their various interests in logic and the sciences. We will not trace those developments here. Instead, we will concentrate on the very different paths that philosophers took in response to increasingly tough times—including the collapse of the Greek city-state, meaningless wars between ambitious monarchs, persecutions and massacres in Egypt, the overrunning of Greece by Rome, and the notorious decadence and decay of that great empire.

Plato's Academy lasted, and would play a significant role in philosophy, for several hundred more years. But the amazing breadth of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy and the world of the *polis* that nourished it came to a sudden end with the triumph and death of Alexander. "Political" philosophy came to an end. Much of Greek science migrated south to the ports of Alexandria and Pergamum. The philosophies that followed the death of Aristotle were surprisingly free of his influence, although the "Academics" influenced by Plato (and Socrates, of course) continued to be a force in philosophy. Both the Stoics and Epicurians rejected Aristotle as well as Plato (to whom they owed a far greater debt) in favor of a more materialistic conception of the world. But cosmology was not their primary concern. The "Hellenistic" world that followed the deaths of Alexander and Aristotle (323 and 322 B.C.E., respectively) became largely preoccupied with questions of ethics.[31] It was also significant for the proliferation of "schools," a phenomenon that would dominate philosophy throughout the Middle Ages and even influence contemporary philosophy. Accordingly, philosophy became something of a team sport as well as a search for the good life. Perhaps it is worth noting that it was in the Greco-Roman world that philosophy gradually became a "popular" enterprise as well.

Another remarkable aspect of the Hellenistic period was its cosmopolitanism, its universalism. This was due, in part, to the forced unification of Greece and the conquest of both Egypt and Persia. The Hellenistic world was (more or less) a single world, not unlike the Roman Empire that was to follow. Special mention should be made of the Egyptian city of Alexandria, at the mouth of the Nile. After the death of Alexander, Ptolemy (one of Alexander's generals) took charge of Egypt, which then flourished as a center of culture and philosophy. Because of the monumental library in Alexandria, the classics of Greece—and also the texts of the Hebrews—were preserved and studied. But the reign of Ptolemy's dynasty was a mixed blessing. Alexandria became the main bastion of Greek culture under Ptolemy I, but toward the end of the second century B.C.E., under Ptolemy IX (nicknamed "Fat Belly" by the Greeks), a series of persecutions and massacres scattered the scientists, poets, and scholars around the Mediterranean. Eventually Rome conquered Greece and Greek culture, as it did Egypt as well.

In Alexandria, the cross-currents of religion from the East increasingly affected the thinking of the Greeks and then the Romans. Alexandria was a meeting place for Greeks and Jews. The philosopher Philo was one of the first to combine

classic Greek philosophy with the Old Testament teachings of the Hebrew prophets, preparing the way for Christianity. The Greek Bible was an Alexandrian creation. One zealous philosopher even went so far as to claim that Plato had the same philosophy as Moses. Out of this confluence of cultures emerged much of the metaphysics that would later emerge as medieval theology.

But back in Athens, Hellenistic philosophy encouraged the flourishing of many schools, including the school of Epicurus, an atomist of sorts, a follower of Democritus, and the founder of *Epicureanism*. Epicurus (341–270 B.C.E.) has gotten quite a reputation, which he would no doubt deplore, as the ultimate party animal. An epicurean today is a person who takes special delight in the senses, who enjoys luxury, even to excess. Nothing could be further from the original. Epicurus was, in fact, a rather private individual, and the members of his school generally avoided the heated debates of the time. What they really believed in was peace of mind. Epicurus thought that the pursuit of pleasure and the delights of the senses were perfectly "natural." (He did not disdain or denounce them like some of the Cynics, but he did not encourage them, much less promote them as the purpose of life.) His main concern was freedom from anxiety—tranquility *(ataraxia)*. The wise man, said Epicurus, would have nothing to fear from life, even in the worst situations. Epicurus claimed that the truly wise man could be happy even under torture. Pain, he insisted, never lasts forever.

Death, according to Epicurus, is utterly nothing, just the separation of the atoms that make up our bodies and our psyches. As such, it is nothing to fear. For those who might have lingering anxieties about being judged and punished by the gods for their deeds, Epicurus assures us that the gods are not concerned with us at all. One should not conclude, however, that Epicurus was sour on life, a mere cynic. Quite the contrary, he did insist that pleasure was easy, and that we should enjoy it. He defended virtue, but not (like Socrates) as the highest end. Virtue was just another means to peace of mind. The virtuous person has fewer enemies, does not have to worry about being sued or arrested, and generally has less cause for anxiety.

Above all, Epicurus recommended friendship as the key to the good life, much like Aristotle forty years before him. Indeed, one of the most glaring if unnoted shifts from ancient ethics to our own is the diminished importance attributed to friendship in discussions of the good life. Philosophers today talk a great deal about morality, the public good, and the sanctity of contracts. The more vulgar philosophers talk about wealth and power. They rarely talk about the importance of friends. One might argue that modern philosophers are more prone to simply take friendship for granted and not consider it worth philosophical concern, but even this is revealing. For Epicurus, friendship was the centerpiece of a decent life, and perhaps this more than anything brought him recognition and respect as a philosopher. Later, in Rome, Epicureanism would become one of the two most influential philosophies, eclipsing those of Plato and Aristotle. (The other was the philosophy of Stoicism, which we will consider shortly.)

The Roman philosopher Lucretius, who wrote in the first century B.C.E. became Epicurus's most devoted and famous follower (if only because his works alone survived). While his *De Rerum Natura* (The Way of Nature) is often read primarily as a thesis in materialist metaphysics (a version of atomism), his deeper intention was to define again and defend the "settled, sweet, Epicurean calm" of *ataraxia*, particularly against superstition and unnecessary fear of the gods. Neither Epicurus nor Lucretius denied the existence of the gods. Indeed, Epicurus considered the existence of the gods a palpable fact, and Lucretius even declares that the gods come to visit us in dreams. But the true life of the gods is, on their accounts, calm and serene, free from anxiety of any kind, and (accordingly) unaffected by human behavior and unconcerned with human affairs. *Ataraxia*, and not the meddlesome ways of Zeus and Hera (or Jupiter and Juno, their Roman counterparts), is the truly divine life of the gods.

The second great Hellenistic school, *Stoicism*, was the single most successful and longest-lasting movement in Greco-Roman philosophy. Some Stoic philosophers appeared soon after Aristotle, notably Zeno the Stoic (ca. 335–263 B.C.E.—not to be confused with Zeno of Elea, the disciple of Parmenides), and then Chrysippus (280–206 B.C.E.). Later Stoics taught during the height and the disintegration of the Roman Empire. Their "life is tough" theme affected not only those who were down and out, like the slave Epictetus (ca. 55–ca. 135 C.E.), but even those at the pinnacle of power. Indeed, one of the Stoics, Marcus Aurelius (121–180), was the emperor of Rome.

The Stoics are characterized by an almost fanatic faith in reason. In particular, they intensify the ancient antagonism between reason and emotion.[32] Plato distinguished among different parts of the soul (the appetitive, the "spirited," and the divine or rational), and Aristotle, too, had clearly distinguished between reason and emotion. But, although Socrates had warned his followers not to let emotions cloud their reason, Plato praised the ideal harmony of all three parts of the soul. Aristotle made emotion, just as much as reason, an essential part of virtue, character, and the good life. (A person who did not get angry when provoked, he said, would be a "fool.") But with the Stoics, reason and emotion part company.

Emotions, the Stoics suggested, are forms of irrational judgment, the sort that makes us frustrated and unhappy. As the Buddha had taught a few centuries earlier and more than a few thousand miles to the east: minimize your desires and you will minimize your suffering. Epictetus similarly declared, "Demand not that events happen as you wish, but wish them to happen as they do happen, and you will get on well."[33]

The Stoics looked around and found themselves in a world that had gone haywire, a social world in which vanity, cruelty, and foolishness reigned supreme. And yet they believed in a rational universe, however irrational or absurd it may seem to us. They also believed in the power of human reason, a "spark of the divine," to enable us to see through the cruel and petty foolishness of human concerns in order to appreciate that larger rationality.

Chrysippus, referring back to Aristotle's notion of cause, insisted that we should only be concerned with what he called *principle* (formal or final) causes—that is, those determinations of our world which are to be found *in us*, in our character. We should ignore those merely accidental (efficient) causes external to us. In general, the Stoics taught that we should live "in conformity with nature,"

but nature was now to be viewed "in accordance with reason," not according to our feelings. Indeed, the philosophical ideal of the Stoics could be summarized as "indifference" (*apatheia*, or apathy). Thus, they rejected human vanity and pride. They taught that anger is pointless and can only be self-destructive, that love and even friendship can be dangerous, and that the wise man forms only limited attachments and should not be afraid of tragedy or death.

The practical Romans had less love of philosophy than the more spiritual Greeks, and philosophers often had a hard time of it. Exemplary is the tragic fate of Seneca, one of the leading philosophers of Rome. He was a statesman in dangerous times. He barely escaped execution under the mad emperor Caligula only because of his ill health, and he got into serious trouble with Claudius (whose claims to divinity Seneca mercilessly ridiculed). But it was while serving under Nero, one of the more cultured of a long string of corrupt and dysfunctional emperors, that Seneca was ordered to commit suicide (for alleged conspiracy), and he did. The philosophy of the Roman Stoics was designed to cope with such tragedies and injustices, and one of its continuing themes, accordingly, was the importance of detaching oneself from the absurdities of life through reason.

Stoicism was an extreme philosophy but one that would serve many souls well in difficult and troubled times. It became an immensely popular philosophy in Rome and throughout the Roman Empire. Indeed, the Stoics' defense of asceticism and their vision of a larger rationality in a seemingly irrational world were picked up by the early Christians and became an essential part of their philosophy as well.

Finally, there was the even more extreme philosophy of *Skepticism*, which can be traced from Pyrrho (ca. 360–ca. 272 B.C.E.) to Sextus Empiricus (third century C.E.) in Rome. Pyrrho taught that the avoidance of belief is the way to tranquility. (It is worth noting that he may well have brought the ideal of tranquility [*ataraxia*] from India.) Epicurus was surely influenced by him, as were generations of Skeptics. Stories have circulated ever since antiquity about how Pyrrho would almost walk off cliffs or into the path of horses and chariots, how he would eat erratically and incautiously, surviving only because of the keen watchfulness of his friends and pupils. (Given that he lived to be somewhere around ninety, these stories are almost certainly false.) Needless to say, Pyrrho did not bother to write anything down. (There are limits to how far a philosopher will contradict himself in practice.) What would be the point of such a vain activity?

Sextus Empiricus, however, was an energetic if not very eloquent writer, a powerful dialectician and, we are told, an excellent physician. He asserted very little, but he ruthlessly questioned everything and everyone. (Skeptics discovered, as did Socrates, the immense argumentative advantages of a position that does not assert anything but at the same time demands ample justification and proof from others.) Earlier Skeptics, from Plato's old Academy, went against the Stoics (whom they considered "dogmatic") and argued that belief of any kind, including belief in reason, is a source of discontent and disharmony. Unlike the modern movement that goes by that name, the ancient Skeptics were concerned almost entirely with ethics, not the possibility of knowledge and its justification.

Whatever its arguments about the nature and justification of belief, skepticism was first of all a philosophy of life. It was primarily concerned with the question of how to live in such a way that one can cope with an often brutal, tragic, and unjust universe. The Skeptics' insistence on the suspension of belief *(epoché)*, was above all a form of therapy, a way of detaching oneself, a way of achieving *ataraxia*—serenity and freedom from anxiety. It was quite different, therefore, from the skepticism that would flourish in modern times. The latter still continues in university life and books as a troublesome and apparently insoluble paradox concerning the justification of belief, but it is little concerned with the practical implications of such matters. For the ancient Skeptics, pervasive doubt was wisdom, a reasonable way of life. The idea of a merely intellectual skepticism, especially when coupled with dogmatic political or religious convictions, would have struck them as hypocritical and absurd.

The tradition of Skepticism, especially in its opposition to Stoicism, owes a great deal to the leaders of the "new" period of Plato's Academy. Beginning in the early third century B.C.E., they launched an all-out attack on the Stoic theory of knowledge by means of an expanded application of Socratic skepticism, the claim that one does not—and perhaps cannot—know anything. It was the Socratic method, as much as Platonic metaphysics, that the Academy pursued.

Perhaps the most famous proponent of this new Socratic method was the Roman statesman and orator Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.E.). Although he found much to admire (and sometimes even borrowed) from the Stoics (conversely, he found much to ridicule in the Epicureans), given his role in public controversies,[34] he felt that the confrontation of different viewpoints applauded by the Skeptics was both engaging and extremely practical. Not surprisingly, he became a champion of rhetoric and what we today would call "applied ethics," approaches to the everyday problems of politics and commerce. (If you are selling a house with a leaky roof, do you have an obligation to inform the buyer?) Like the other Skeptics, he did not formulate a "system" of philosophy so much as he made a sport—but a serious one—of confronting other views on their own intellectual ground. Accordingly, he was one of the inventors of the art of *casuistry* (the gathering together of principles convenient to making a particular argument in a particular context), an art that, like its earlier counterpart "sophistry," has unjustly acquired a bad name over the years.

Nevertheless, in the best Socratic Academy tradition, they held up knowledge as an ultimate ideal (and in the last century B.C.E., the Platonic Forms would enjoy the beginning of a long revival). The "Academics" considered the Stoics (and the Epicureans) "dogmatic." Indeed, both Stoics and Epicureans display a remarkable continuity in doctrine, however controversial their internal variations. This "dogma," however, also provided a source of solace—belief in larger meanings and the paradoxical combination of self-sufficiency and fate—and in the Stoicism of Emperor Marcus Aurelius we can find many of the attitudes that would become essential to early Christanity.

A vociferous opponent of skepticism, in turn, was the Greek physician Galen (129–ca. 199). (The Skeptic Sextus Empiricus would also be a physician-philosopher.) In addition to his many contributions to medicine and medical

theory, Galen was an outspoken critic: How can a teacher teach, he complained, when he begins by depriving students of the very foundation of education, namely, a teacher who knows something? But he also challenged the strong views of the Stoics, who put so much emphasis on the voluntary aspects of emotions and character. Since emotions are far more a matter of physiology than of choice, he argued, to hold a person responsible for his or her passions was misguided. When one observes young children, for example, one cannot but be struck by how early a sense of character has already been clearly established. There are definite limits to how much choice one has, how he or she should live, or who he or she will be. In the midst of the most flamboyant philosophies, one can always find such voices of common sense and practicality. Philosophy thrives in the exchange—even the shouting—among them.

Mysticism and Logic in Ancient India: Nagarjuna and Nyaya

Stoicism and Skepticism were desperate philosophical responses to desperate circumstances. At the same time that the Roman Empire was colonizing the farthest reaches of Europe (as far as England), Asia (virtually to India), and Africa (from Egypt to Algeria), its central government was disintegrating in scandal and corruption. Emperors such as Nero and Caligula were among the most demented rulers in history. Marcus Aurelius, another emperor who was also a Stoic philosopher, was something of a *saint* by comparison. He, of course, was murdered. The Empire weakened within and around its many borders. Rebellions were put down without mercy. But by the fourth century C.E., pagan Rome had been won over by Christianity, and by the end of the fifth century, it was gone, conquered by "barbarians."

Of course, we have insisted that one culture's barbarians may be another's civilization. But there can be little comparison between the Eternal City, the center of authority and culture with over one million citizens, and the decimated ruins with merely forty thousand inhabitants at the middle of the millennium. The Germans, Saxons, Celts, and Franks would eventually earn their own place at the center of Western civilization, but, for now, they were indeed the destroyers. Thor's hammer was not yet a sufficiently delicate instrument to supplement the philosophy, arts, and literature, not to mention the good life, of the Rome that was.

Civilization, however, was not dead. It was not even in eclipse. It had just been relocated, to the east. The Christian Roman Empire survived and flourished in Byzantium (now Istanbul), and soon Islam would extend its Semitic empire across Africa and throughout the Middle East. Indeed, the following chapters of Western philosophy would all be sketched in the non–Indo-European languages of the Middle East (Hebrew and Arabic), even if they would continue to receive their formal codification in Greek (see Part II).

Further East still, however, philosophy in India was and had long been flourishing. In ancient India, poets and philosophers had been developing the deep

insights of the Vedas and sophisticated philosophical theses and arguments in Sanskrit,[35] which strongly resembled Latin and Greek (thus *Indo*-European). Sanskrit was the language of the Vedas and the Upanishads and of all classical Indian philosophy. "Hinduism"—or, more accurately, Vedanta—had developed an immensely complex philosophy before the time of Plato. The Buddha had appeared in the sixth century B.C.E. and Jainism dates back at least that far. Both Buddhism and Jainism had formulated deep and intriguing accounts of the soul and human (and, in the case of the Jain, nonhuman) nature. Hindu pundits,[36] Buddhist and Jain sages, and scholars had created a rich philosophical world in India by the second century B.C.E. (Jain scholars, because they insisted on having no doctrinal axes to grind—they sometimes defended a philosophy called "*maybe-ism*"—are for that reason among the most reliable reporters of ancient Indian philosophy.)

The period following the collapse of Alexander's empire proved to be a golden epoch for Indian politics, culture, and philosophy, beginning with the Mauryan dynasty in 320 B.C.E. and culminating in the classical age of 320–550 C.E.

In China, meanwhile, the Chou dynasty (1120–256 B.C.E.) had produced Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.) and then his very different followers, Mencius (ca. 371–ca. 289 B.C.E.) and Hsün-tzu (ca. 298–230 B.C.E.) as well as the Taoists and other schools of flourishing thought (see Part II.) Over the next several hundred years in "the East," philosophical productivity, both in volume and originality, would overtake philosophy in the West.[37]

Some of these topics (including Brahmanism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, and Taoism) will be covered and compared with their Western religious counterparts, namely, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in Part II. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to leave the ancient world with the idea that philosophy in the East was exclusively or primarily religious philosophy. True, philosophy and religion are never really distinguished in India and China as they are by many Western philosophers, but in China much of what is called religion is extremely secular by Western (Judeo-Christian) standards, and in India religious concerns sparked an enormous amount of what in the West would be called metaphysical and epistemological speculation about the nature of reality and human knowledge.

Perhaps what is most striking to the Western reader is the powerful combination of mysticism and logic in India, two fields of philosophy (insofar as either is considered to be "in" philosophy) that are usually considered as far apart as possible, indeed, flatly opposed to one another.[38] But in India, *mysticism* in one form or another, would become the focal point of all three major religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Indeed the Sanskrit word for "philosophy" is "seeing" *(darsana)*. All three traditions would develop powerful logics and arguments both in support of this experience and as weapons against those who would compromise the possibility or integrity of such experiences through over-intellectualization or excessive attachment to the things of the everyday world and the categories of common sense.

Vedanta thrives on ambiguity and contradiction in order to make a single point, the unity of the One Absolute Reality (Brahman) despite its infinitely many