

Handout for HUM 124 Lecture: Ancient Western Philosophy

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October 26, 2009

Goals of this lecture: 1) To understand the role and significance of Greek philosophers from the Pre-Socratics to Aristotle, with particular focus on Socrates and Plato; 2) to understand some basic terms, doctrines, and practices associated with each; 3) to learn some of the contexts and interpretations of ancient philosophical literature

I. The definition of *Philosophia*

- 1) "Love of wisdom"
- 2) "Parts" of philosophy
 - A) Logic (*logos* = word)
 - B) Physics (*phusis* = nature)
 - C) Ethics (*ethos* = custom)

II. Pre-Socratics (The Nature of Reality)

- 1) Reality is Change: Heraclitus (ca. 570-510 BCE)
- 2) Reality is Constant: Parmenides (ca. 515-445 BCE) and Zeno of Elea (b. ca. 490 BCE)
- 3) Reality is Atomic: Democritus of Abdera (b. ca. 460)

III. Sophists: Protagoras, Gorgias, Hippias, Prodicus

IV. Socrates (469-399 BCE)

- 1) Life and death
- 2) *Elenchus* (cross-examination)
- 3) Socratic "Doctrines": Virtue and knowledge
- 4) Socratic "strangeness" (*atopia*)

V. Plato (c. 429-347 BCE)

- 1) Life
- 2) Dialogues
 - A) What are they?
 - B) Why did he write them? How do we interpret them?
- 3) Dialectic
- 4) Platonic "Doctrines"
 - A) Forms: Allegory of the Cave; "Ladder of Love"
 - B) "Architecture" of the soul
 - C) Philosopher-kings, education, poetry

VI. Aristotle (384-322 BCE)

- 1) Aristotelian Ethics
 - A) The Goal of Life; the "Architecture" of the Soul
 - B) Intellectual and Moral Virtues
 - C) The Virtue of the Mean
- 2) His texts

VII. Where They Go From There...

Question: Is the university more Socratic (*elenchus*), Platonic (*dialectic*), or Aristotelian (*taxonomy*)?

Online translation of Plato's *Apology of Socrates*:
people.stfx.ca/jmensch/Plato's%20Apology%20text.doc