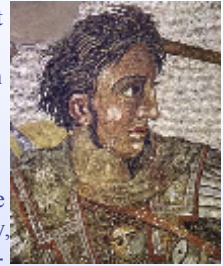


## Lecture 21: After Aristotle: A Search for the Good Life

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Introduction

- Philosophy After Aristotle
  - Alexander the Great brought Greek language and culture to the eastern Mediterranean world and beyond.
  - His death in 323 BCE ushered in the “Hellenistic age.” in which Greek culture (art, architecture, philosophy, etc.) was brought to the non-Greek nations conquered by Alexander the Great



### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Introduction

- Philosophy After Aristotle
  - Hellenism reached as far south as southern Egypt, and as far east as modern Iran.
  - Flipside: The “Hellenizing” of the world also opens Greek thought to Eastern ideas.
  - There are still 700+ years of Greek and Roman Philosophy to go after Aristotle’s death!



### The Hellenistic World



## I. INTRODUCTION

### B. Hellenistic Age

- The Hellenistic Age (323–31 BCE)
  - The Greek city states lose their political independence; they are “ruled from above.”
    - This loss of independence brings with it a cultural crisis: citizens need to learn to adapt to a world that is outside of their control.
  - The “philosophies” that arise are designed to offer solutions to the problem of how to live in an uncertain world!
    - Although constructed against the background of a certain world view (metaphysics), these philosophies are less intellectually rigorous, and more “therapeutic” and focused on ethics: “How now shall we live?”

## II. HELLENISTIC SCHOOLS

### A. Skepticism

- Not so much a “school” as a movement.
  - A reaction against the “dogmatism” of Plato’s Academy, Aristotle’s Lyceum, the Stoic school and the Epicurean school.
    - Skeptics doubt that these “schools” have the answers. These schools dispute among themselves, but have no clear way of proving their theories.
  - Skeptics reject the possibility of knowing the truth about any proposition.
  - They recommend “suspension of judgment” as the best attitude toward any philosophical claim.
    - Such “suspension of judgment” brings peace of mind.

## II. HELLENISTIC SCHOOLS

### A. Skepticism

- Pyrrho of Elis was the founder of not so much of a “school” as a movement.
  - A reaction against the “dogmatism” of Plato’s Academy, Aristotle’s Lyceum and other schools.
    - Skeptics doubt that these “schools” have the answers. These schools dispute among themselves, but have no clear way of proving their theories.
  - Skeptics reject the possibility of knowing the truth about any proposition.
  - They recommend “suspension of judgment” as the best attitude toward any philosophical claim.
    - Such “suspension of judgment” brings peace of mind.

## II. HELLENISTIC SCHOOLS

### B. Cynicism

- School founded by Diogenes, who was known for his “unconventional” behavior.
  - “Cynic” means “dog-like” which was a nickname for Diogenes
    - Cynics’ primary message was that nature should guide human behavior.
  - The valued “the simple life.” “Live according to nature” and *reject all social norms*.
    - Social conventions, including religion, were human inventions which causes shame, guilt, hypocrisy, greed, envy, and hate.
    - Cynics argued that animals provide the best model for human behavior

## II. HELLENISTIC SCHOOLS

### C. Epicureanism

- Epicureanism
  - Philosophy of materialism, free will, no supernatural influences in the world, and no after-life.
    - Goal of life is individual happiness, but not pure hedonism
  - Strive for tranquility that comes from balance between a lack or an excess of anything; life of moderation.
    - The good life was free, simple, rational, and moderate and to be lived now because there was nothing else after death.

## II. HELLENISTIC SCHOOLS

### D. Stoicism

- The Cynic School eventually morphed into Stoicism.
  - Zeno (of Citium) came to Athens and set up a school around 300 BCE.
    - Site of the school was in a building on the Athenian agora, known as the Stoa Poikilê (the “painted colonnade”).
  - The universe is material in nature. Fire is the ruling element, and it is rational!
  - Fire can be identified with “the (divine) Logos.” (Notice the influence of Heraclitus!).

## II. HELLENISTIC SCHOOLS

### D. Stoicism

- The Logos determines all things, including all the circumstances of one’s life.
  - There is no free will; the Logos is universal law.
    - The goal of life is “to live in conformity to nature,” i.e., to adjust one’s life to the great cosmic series of events as determined by the Logos.
  - There is only one thing of any value in and of itself: virtue!
    - Wealth, health, family, friends, etc. are “indifferent” in themselves, but “preferred” only in so far as they tend to promote virtue.
    - They sought to follow Socrates.

## II. HELLENISTIC SCHOOLS

### D. Stoicism

- Emotions
  - Emotions *get in the way* of your pursuit of virtue and attempt to live in conformity to nature.
    - *Therefore you should eliminate your emotions from your life.* (This part of Stoicism lives on in our language.)
  - We should “stoically” accept losses in our life (loss of wealth, health, of loved ones, etc.) as part of the “grand scheme” that the divine *Logos* providentially bestows on us.
    - It is useless (as well as lacking in virtue) to resist or complain against Providence.

### III. ROMAN INFLUENCE

#### A. Introduction

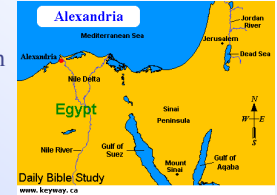
- Roman Influence
  - The political center of world power shifts toward Rome, in Italy.
  - The armies of the Roman Republic conquer much of the previous empire of Alexander the Great. Athens is “sacked” in 86 BCE by the Roman general Sulla.



### III. ROMAN INFLUENCE

#### A. Introduction

- Philosophical Shift
  - *The intellectual center of philosophy* shifts away from Athens, toward Alexandria, in Egypt.
  - The homes of the “schools” remain in Athens, but now Alexandria becomes a prominent place of study and research.



### III. ROMAN INFLUENCE

#### B. Roman Philosophy

- Roman Philosophy
  - Stoicism, more than any of the other schools, that inspired the ideals of the Roman Republic. The Romans admired the discipline inherent in Stoicism.
  - The greatest philosophical mind of the Roman Republic was *Cicero*.
  - Cicero blends Stoicism with elements of Platonism and Aristotelianism (but not Epicureanism). His philosophy has been described as “eclectic.”

### III. ROMAN INFLUENCE

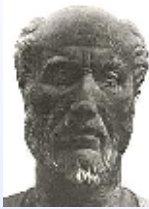
#### B. Roman Philosophy

- Roman Philosophy
  - Epicureanism died out during the course of the Roman Empire.
  - Platonism revives in Alexandria (see Plotinus, later in this presentation).
  - Aristotle’s philosophy persists, but does not have much influence.
  - The dominant school of thought throughout most of the empire is Stoicism.
  - Two great Stoic authors of the Roman Imperial Age are Seneca and (Emperor) Marcus Aurelius

### III. ROMAN INFLUCENCE

#### C. Neoplatonism Philosophy

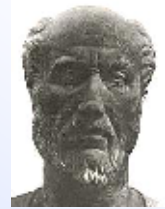
- Plotinus (204/5–270)
  - In the 3<sup>rd</sup> C Plotinus moves to Rome from Alexandrian
  - He founds a philosophical school based on Plato but emphasizing the more mystical aspects.
  - Like Plato and Aristotle, Plotinus is a great *systematic* thinker.
  - Arranged all things in a hierarchy:
    - First was God, followed by the Spirit, (a part of every human soul), next, the soul, the cause of all things that exist in the world.



### III. ROMAN INFLUCENCE

#### C. Neoplatonism Philosophy

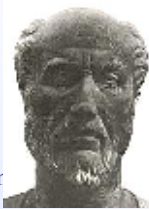
- Plotinus
  - We must aspire to learn of world beyond the physical world.
  - There, things are eternal, immutable, and in a state of bliss.
  - The body is the soul's prison; through intense meditation the souls of all humans can reach and dwell with the eternal and changeless.



### III. ROMAN INFLUCENCE

#### C. Neoplatonism Philosophy

- Plotinus
  - Neo-Platonism flourished alongside Christianity for a number of centuries (with extended debates between them).
  - Despite the debates, Plotinus' Neo-Platonism had a great influence upon early Christian thinkers and upon Christian theology in the early centuries of the Christian era.



### III. ROMAN INFLUCENCE

#### C. Emphasis of the Spirit

- There were a number of religious influences on the Roman Empire and early Christian thought.
- Religions from India and Persia
  - Vendantism
    - Perfection could be approximated by entering into semiecstatic trances
  - Zoroastrianism
    - Individuals are caught in an eternal struggle between wisdom and correctness on one hand, and ignorance and evil on the other hand

### III. ROMAN INFLUCENCE

#### C. Emphasis of the Spirit

- Religious influences
  - Mystery religions from near east promulgated secret rites, emphasis on death and renewal, purification, and forgiveness of sins, and exaltation to new life.
  - Greek culture was recognized by the Romans as being important; thus it was preserved and disseminated.
  - Judaism—one God with an interest in human affairs and a strict code of behavior for which one could be rewarded or punished.

### III. ROMAN INFLUCENCE

#### C. Emphasis of the Spirit

- Religious influences
- Jesus
  - Taught that the knowledge of good and evil is revealed by God and should guide human conduct.
  - Early Christian thought best described as a meshing of Judeo-Christian
- St. Paul
  - Was the first to proclaim Jesus was the Messiah
  - Developed a combination of Judaic and Platonic philosophy with emphasis on faith rather than reason

### III. ROMAN INFLUCENCE

#### C. Emphasis of the Spirit

- St. Paul
  - Humans divided into three parts: body, mind, and spirit
    - Spirit was spark of God within humans
      - Through the spirit, humans can become close to God
    - Body is source of evil
    - Mind is caught between body and spirit: sometimes serves the body, sometimes serves the spirit.
    - Since humans are partly animalistic and partly divine, conflict is the necessary consequence.
  - He held the same sexist views (women were inferior) that were common at the time.

### III. ROMAN INFLUCENCE

#### C. Emphasis of the Spirit

- Emperor Constantine
  - Made Christianity a tolerated religion in the Roman Empire
  - Charged bishops with the task of creating a single set of Christian documents concerning the teachings of Jesus
  - Christianity may have been more of political expediency than religious conviction for Constantine

### III. ROMAN INFLUENCE

#### C. Emphasis of the Spirit

- St. Augustine
  - Combined Stoicism, Neoplatonism, Judaism, and Christianity into a powerful Christian world view that dominated Western life and thought for 1000 years until the 13th century
  - Proposed a dualistic nature of man, with the body similar to animals and the spirit close to or part of God.
  - These two opposing aspects became the Christian struggle between God and Satan for human souls

### IV. THE DARK AGES & PRERENAISSANCE

#### A. Introduction

- The “Dark Ages”
  - Greek and Roman books and knowledge were lost.
    - There was little or no progress in science, philosophy, and literature.
  - Europe became dominated by mysticism, superstition, and anti-intellectualism.
  - Church dogma became very powerful because it was no longer challengeable.
  - Crusades (end of the Dark Ages) resulted in “rediscovery” of Aristotle’s writings preserved by Arab, Muslim thinkers.

### IV. THE DARK AGES & PRERENAISSANCE

#### A. Introduction

- Scholasticism
  - Synthesis of Aristotle’s philosophy and Christian theology and showing what implications that synthesis had for living one’s life
  - Critical debate between realism and nominalism and realism .
    - Once formed concepts exist apart from the individual experiences upon which they were formed (realism).
    - Concepts summarize individual experiences, which is nominalism.
  - Scholastics assumed a higher truth was beyond that which could be experienced through the senses

### IV. THE DARK AGES & PRERENAISSANCE

#### B. William of Occam

- William of Occam
  - Argued that in explaining things, no unnecessary assumptions should be made
    - Explanations need to be kept as parsimonious (simple) as possible.
    - By “shaving” these extraneous assumptions, one is using Occam’s razor.
  - Argued that we can trust our senses to tell us what the world is really like, and that we can know the world directly without need to worry about what lurks beyond our experience.

#### IV. THE DARK AGES & PRERENAISSANCE

##### C. At the Advent of the Renaissance

- Science, philosophy, and religion at advent of the Renaissance were in a state of murgence.
- Two classes of people: believers and nonbelievers
  - Nonbelievers, if not converted, were punished, imprisoned, or killed and considered stupid or possessed by the devil.
- Astrology and magic was practiced everywhere by almost everyone.
  - Superstition was omnipresent
    - Characterized the behavior of peasants, kings, scholars, and clergy.

#### IV. THE DARK AGES & PRERENAISSANCE

##### C. At the Advent of the Renaissance

- Because science, philosophy, and religion were merged, there was little progress in any of these enterprises.
- For centuries there was little philosophical, scientific, or theological progress.
- For progress to occur, the church's authority had to be broken
- It was beginning to fall apart...

#### State of science, philosophy, and religion at advent of the Renaissance

- Two classes of people: believers and nonbelievers
  - Nonbelievers, if not converted, were punished, imprisoned, or killed and considered stupid or possessed by the devil.
- Astrology and magic was practiced everywhere by almost everyone.
  - Superstition was omnipresent
    - Characterized the behavior of peasants, kings, scholars, and clergy.

Chapter 3

*Slide 31*

#### State of science, philosophy, and religion at advent of the Renaissance (continued)

- For centuries there was little philosophical, scientific, or theological progress.
- For progress to occur, the church's authority had to be broken
  - It was beginning to fall apart.

Chapter 3

*Slide 32*