

Ancient Greece

HUMN2001 – VIDEO LECTURE – WK2/3
M. Curtis Allen

Ancient Greece: Lecture Itinerary

Part 1 - Context

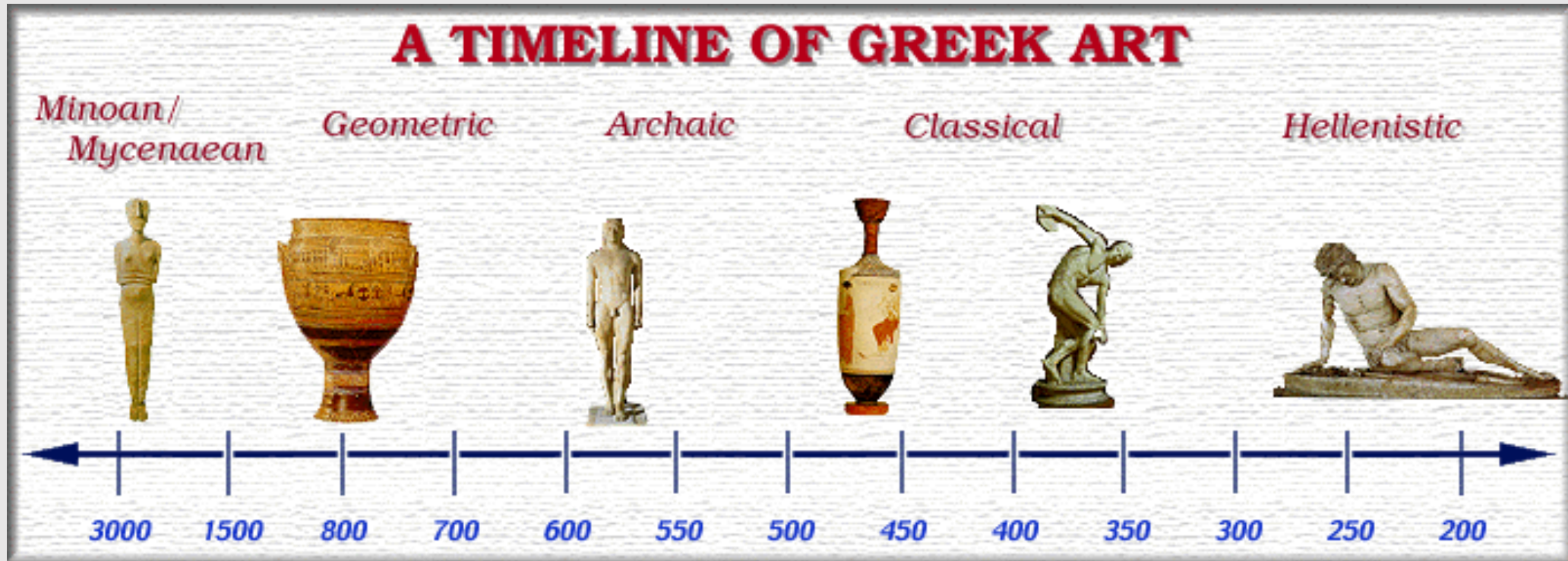
- **Context of Classical Greece**
 - Timeline
 - General History/Background
 - Athens
 - Classical Culture
- **Greek Philosophy Before Plato**
 - Presocratic Philosophers
 - Socrates
- **Philosophical Context**
 - Plato
 - Aristotle

Part 2 - Greek Aesthetics

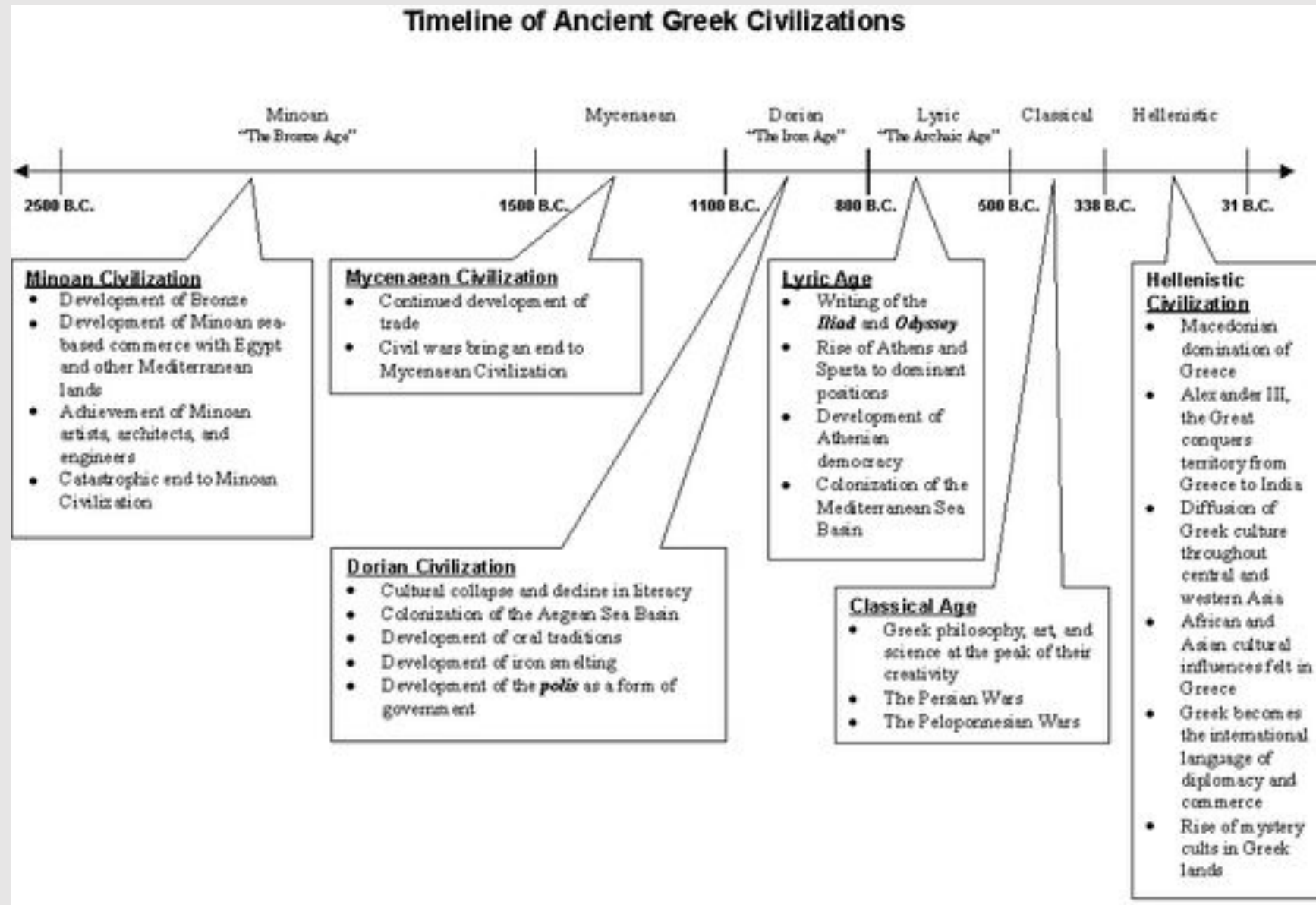
- **Plato's *Republic***
- **Aristotle's *Poetics***

Ancient Greece: Timeline

The Classical age sits between the earlier Archaic and the later Hellenistic



Ancient Greece: Timeline



Ancient Greece: General History and Background



Ancient Greece: General History and Background

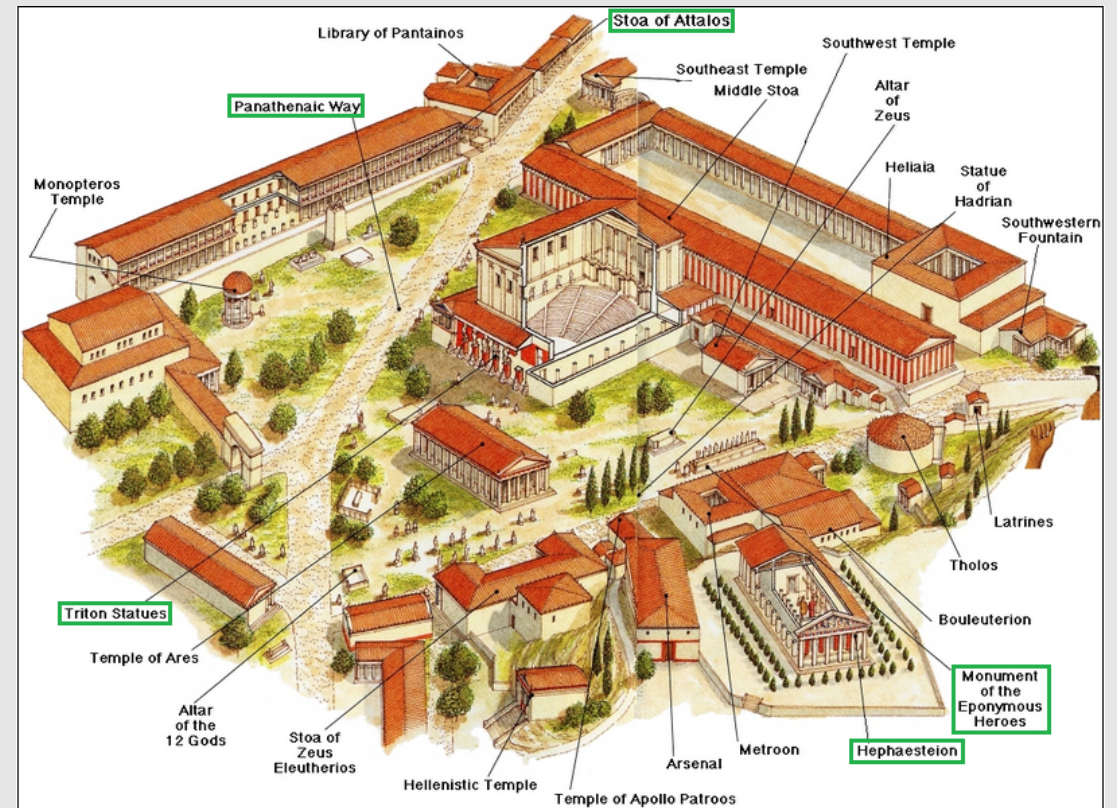
- Political Structure and Climate
 - Non-unified cities states (*polis*; pl. *poleis*)
 - War with Persia
 - Delian League
 - Partly united the military (i.e. naval) power of the classical Greece, under control of Athens, which was paid tribute by other cities.
 - Peloponnesian war (between Athens and Sparta)



Ancient Greece: Athens

Democracy

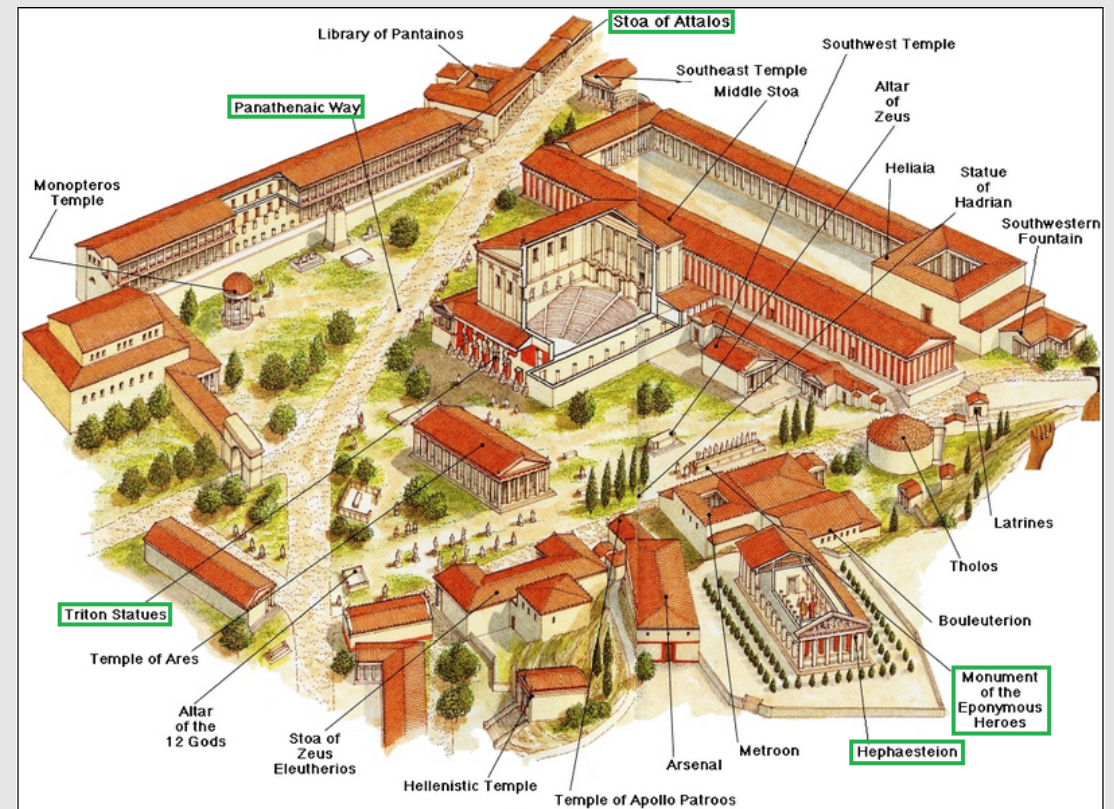
- Direct democracy
 - This is what many people today would call ‘anarchy’
 - Nothing like what we call ‘democratic’ government
 - Which is really a form of oligarchy, not democratic at all.
- Politics was done in public, in the open air (in public space known as the *agora*)



Ancient Greece: Athens

Democracy, cont.

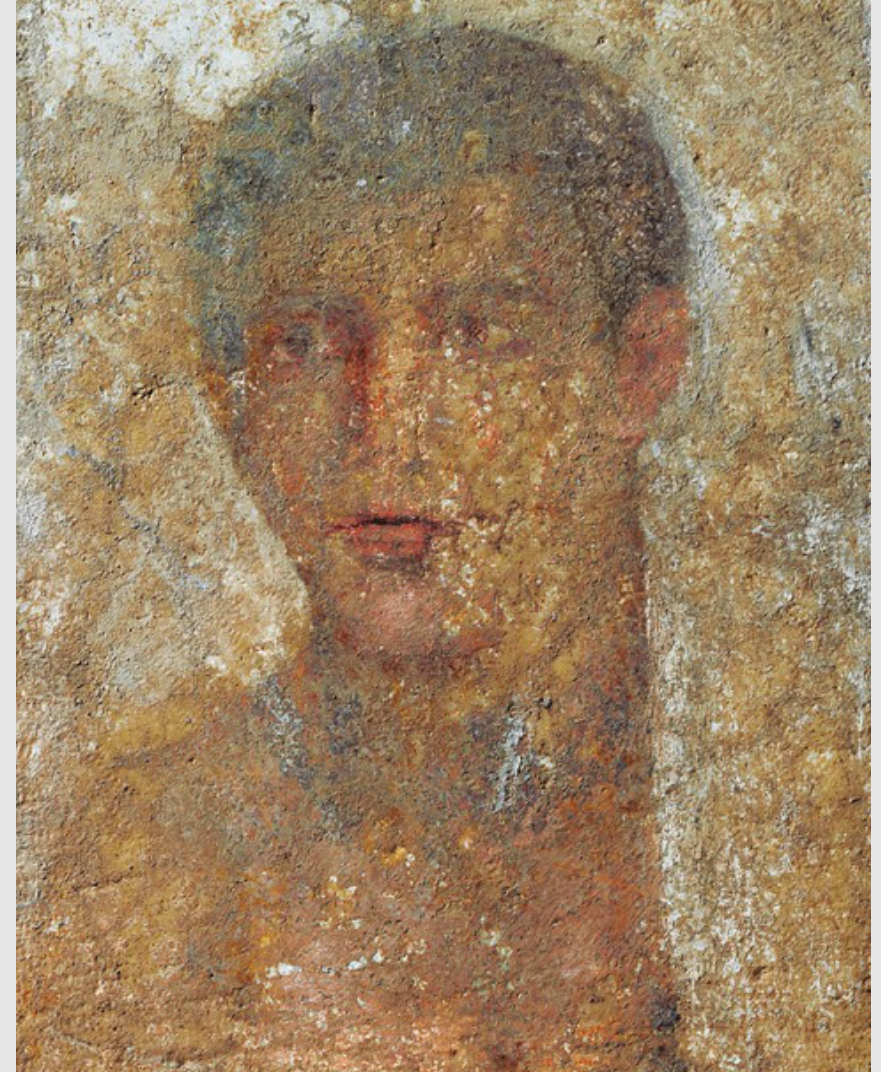
- What was done in politics was completely open to any citizen's proposal
 - Not just voting, but:
 - law making
 - policy and reform
 - Taxation
 - What public money is spent on
 - Etc.



Ancient Greece: Athens

Democracy, cont.

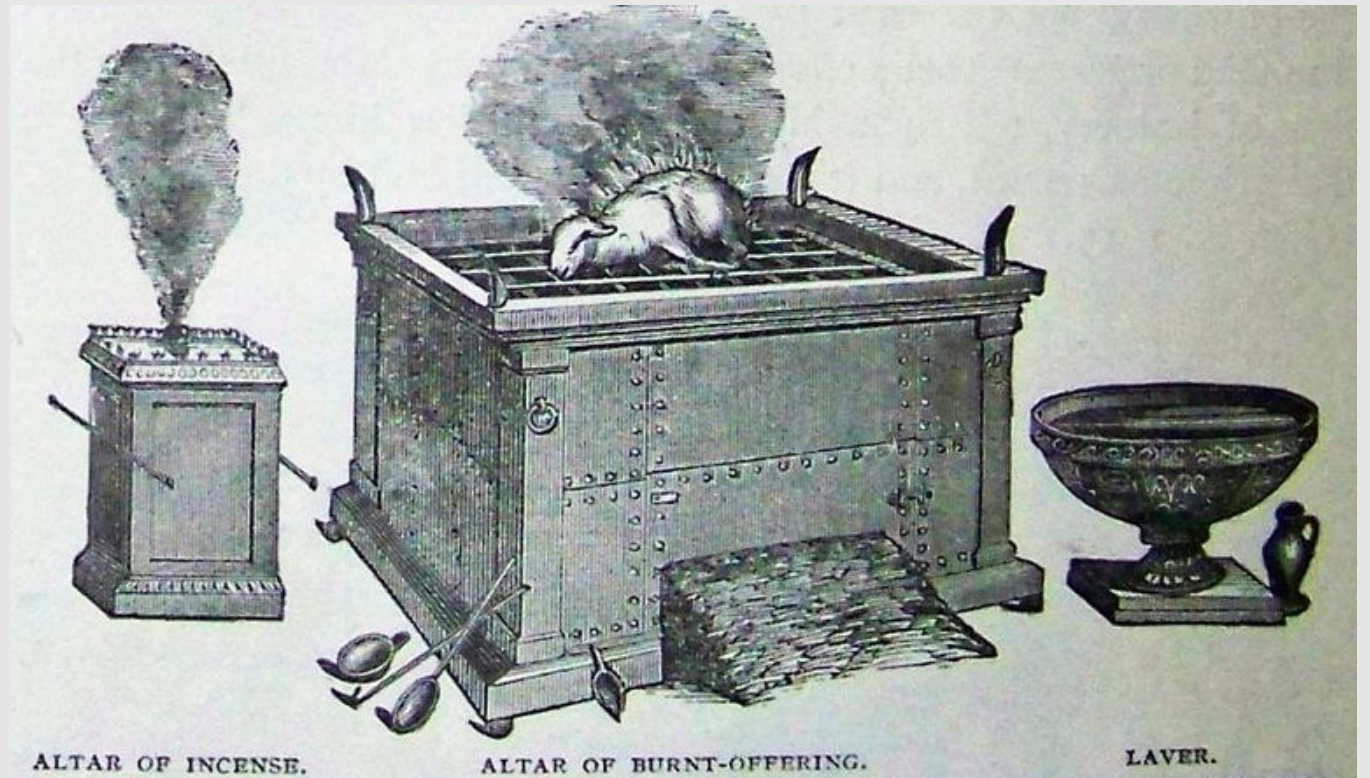
- Who could be a citizen?
 - Native born, free, male Athenians
- Who couldn't?
 - Women
 - Thoroughly Patriarchal society
 - Can't own property
 - Weren't educated (at least to the degree of men of the same social standing)
 - Slaves
 - Can't own property
 - Weren't educated (at least to the degree of men of the same social standing)
 - Citizens of Athens could not be enslaved in Athens
 - Foreigners
- Aristotle in his *Politics*, not an Athenian himself, actually argues the case for upholding all three of these.



Ancient Greece: Greek Culture

Religion

- No official religious institutions
- Regional variations
- Text
- Festivals
- Ritual Sacrifice
- Public religion and secret cults



Ancient Greece: Greek Culture



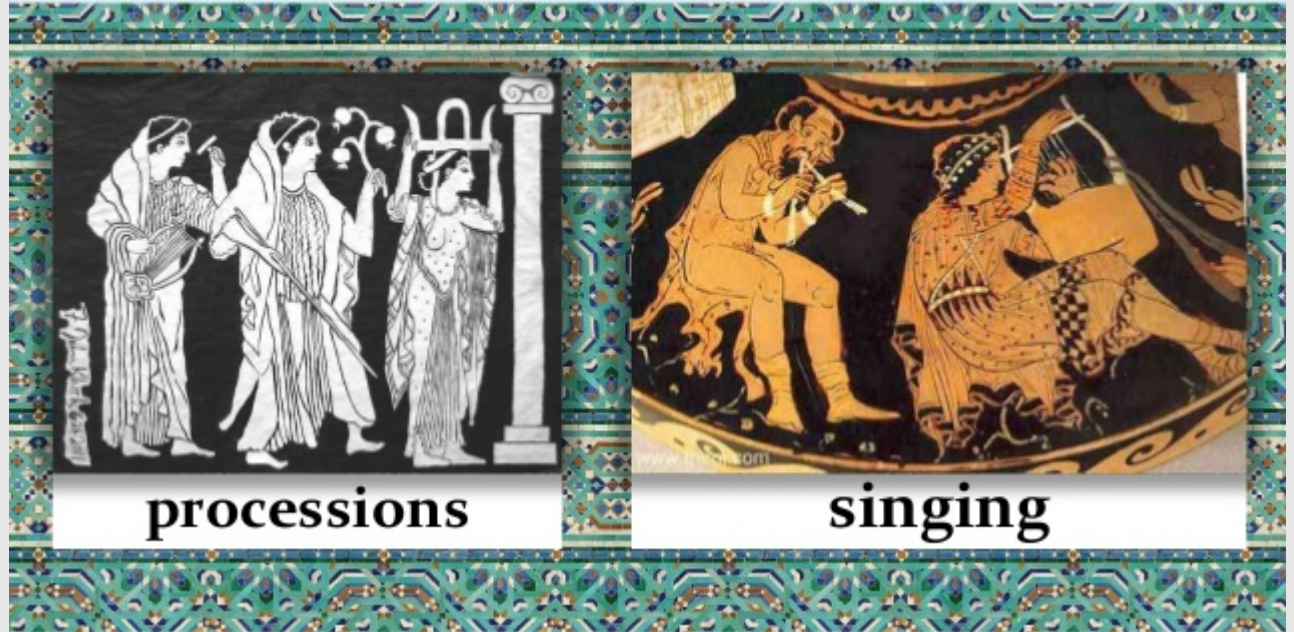
- **Religion**
- Text
 - No Scripture
 - Myth
 - Poetry
 - Homer
 - Hesiod
 - Others
 - Theatre
 - Other Arts

Ancient Greece: Greek Culture

Religion

- Festivals
 - To honor specific gods and auspicious days/seasons/times
 - Olympic Games were a religious festival

FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:



processions

singing

Ancient Greece: Greek Culture

Religion

- Ritual Sacrifice
 - Animals
 - Libation
 - Gifts
 - Made as a form of prayer/offering to specific gods/goddesses
 - Humans partake in the offering
 - E.g., when sacrificing an animal they typically feasted on that animal as part of the ritual)



Ancient Greece: Greek Culture

- **Religion**
- Public religious cults and mystery cults
- Mystery cults were mystical/religious ‘clubs,’ with secret practices known only to cult members which often worshiped a particular god/dess or figure of myth.
 - Ex.:
 - Eleusinian Mysteries,
 - The Dionysian Mysteries
 - The Orphic Mysteries



Ancient Greece: Greek Culture

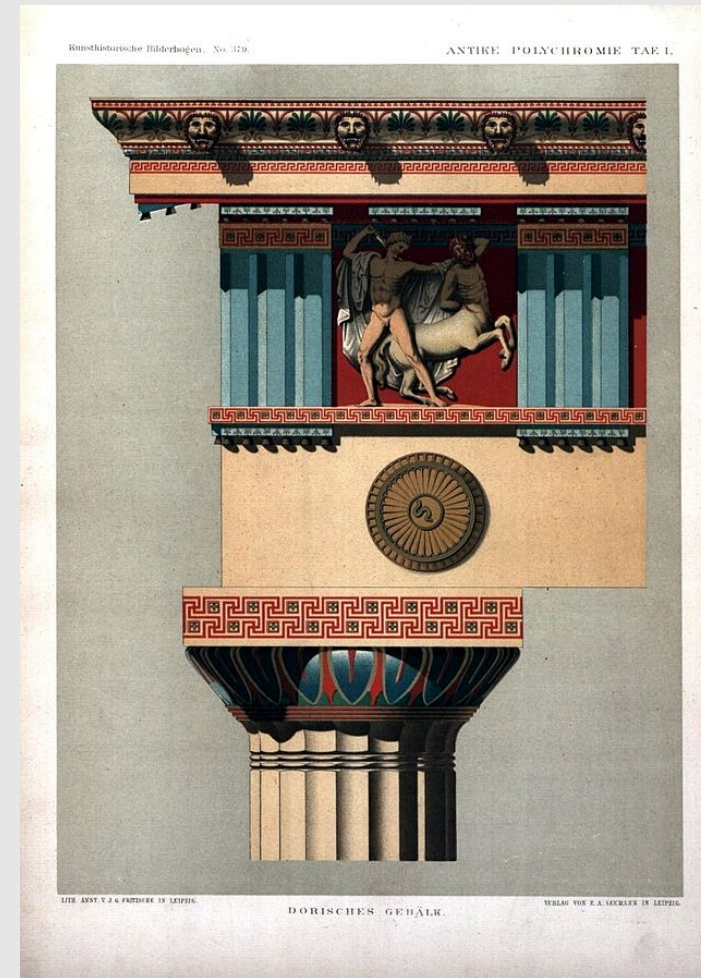
Pederasty

- Consensual erotic coming of age relationships practiced between an adult male (usually 25-40) and a younger, usually adolescent, male of military age (at least 13, and usually between 15-22).
 - The adult would be the active lover or admirer.
 - The boy would be the passive beloved.
- Various cities practiced pederasty with varying degrees of formality and intensity.
- But it was a widespread and accepted practice under the local norms.
- Usually also served a pedagogical function for the younger participant, in which they would spend time with the older male and learn from them.

Ancient Greece: Greek Culture

Art

- Architecture
- Pottery
- Painting
- Poetry and Music
- Tragedy and Comedy













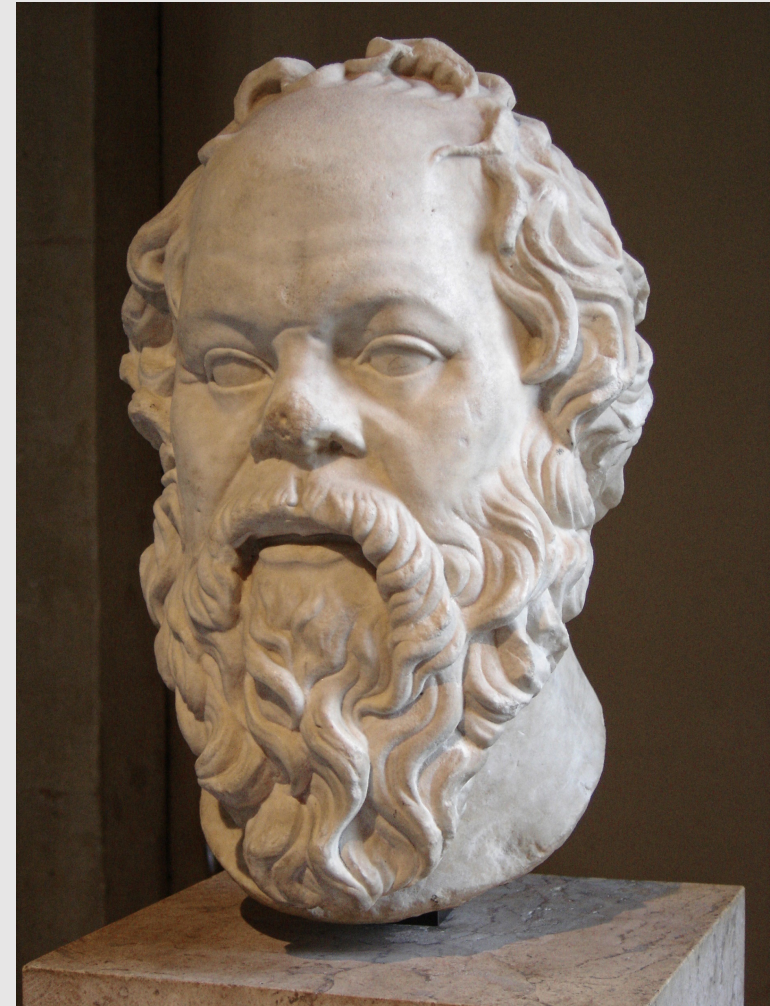
Ancient Greece: Philosophy Before Plato

- There were several philosophers and Philosophical Schools before Socrates. Called ‘Presocratics’
 - Thales
 - Anaximander
 - Pythagoras
 - Heraclitus
 - Parmenides
 - Zeno
 - Democritus
 - Anaxagoras
 - Empedocles
- Focused on the study of the external world, the study of Nature (Physis) or Being or Becoming

Ancient Greece: Philosophy Before Plato

Socrates

- DATES: 470 – 399 BCE
- Never wrote anything himself.
- What we know comes through others (e.g. Plato).
- Was not concerned with questions of Nature or Being but with human existence.



Ancient Greece: Philosophy Before Plato

Socrates

- Interested public thinking to question human life, esp. ethics or morality.
- Socratic Questioning, or *Elenchus* (translation),
- Did not teach doctrines
- This method of interrogation is today called the Socratic method.
- Claimed that the only thing he knew was that he didn't know anything

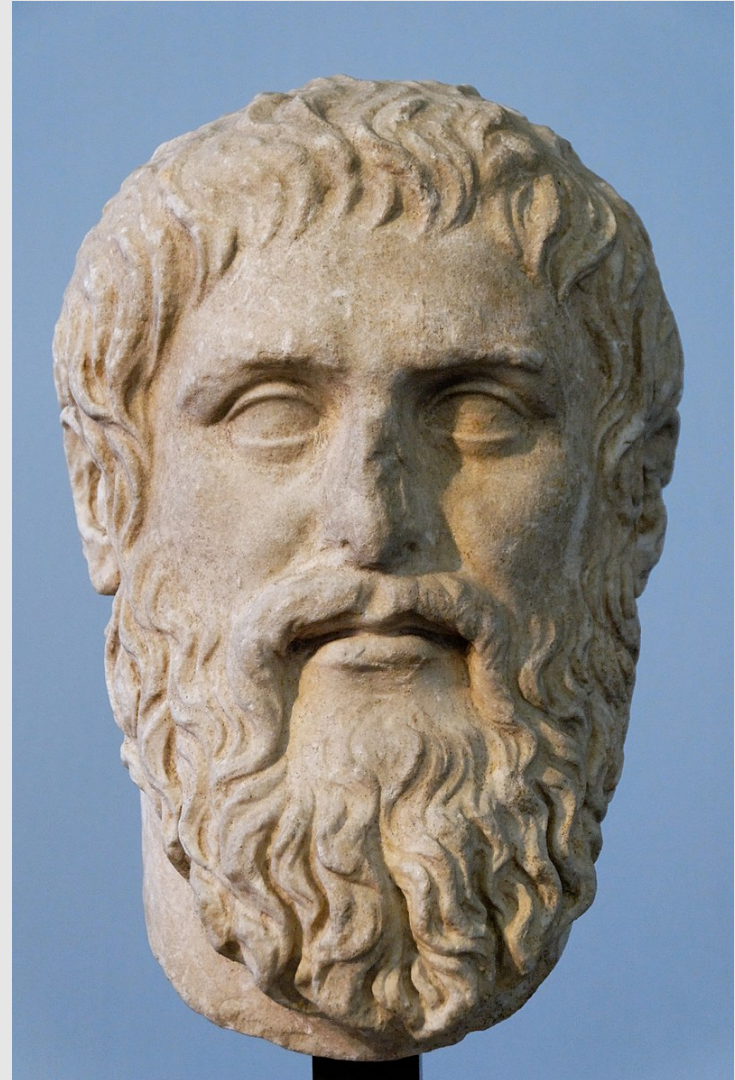
Ancient Greece: Philosophy Before Plato

Socrates

- Was a legendary figure in Athens in in his life.
- His questioning became dangerous to Athenian authorities
- He was eventually put on trial, and eventually sentenced to death by drinking Hemlock.
- Instead of pleading, he insults those who put him on trial and insists that they should honor him in the city
- Plato was among his students.

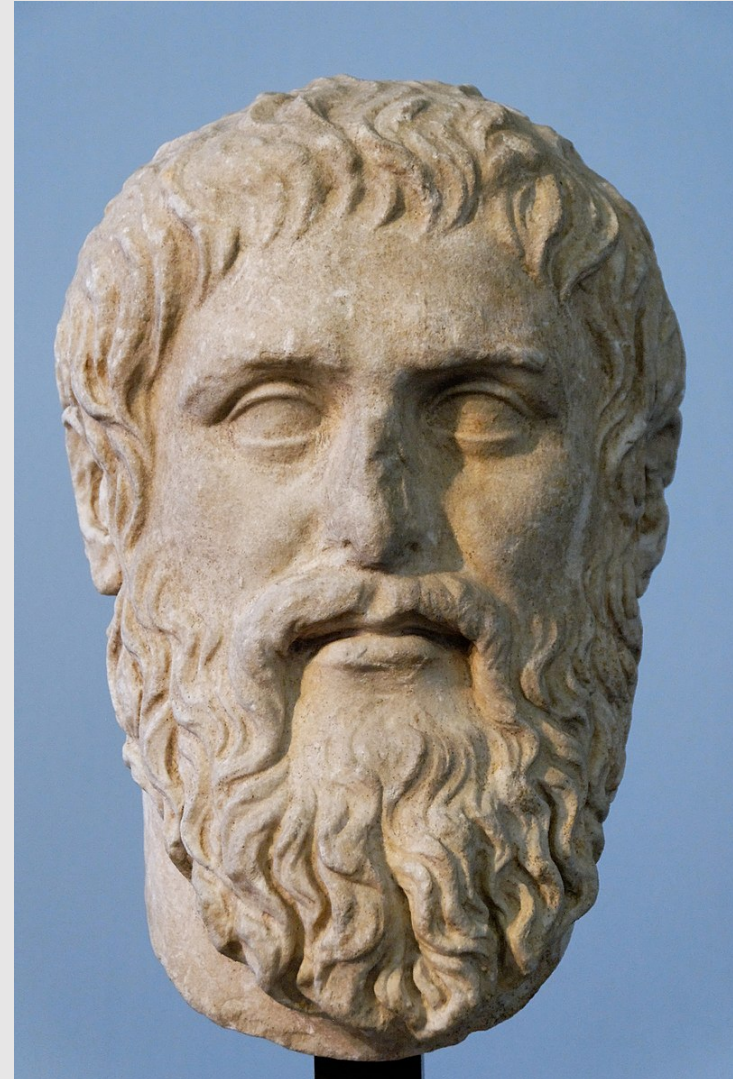
Ancient Greece: Plato

- DATES – 428? – 348/347 BCE
- Pivotal figure in the History of Philosophy
- One of the greatest philosophers who ever lived
- Student of Socrates
- Invented the philosophical dialogue



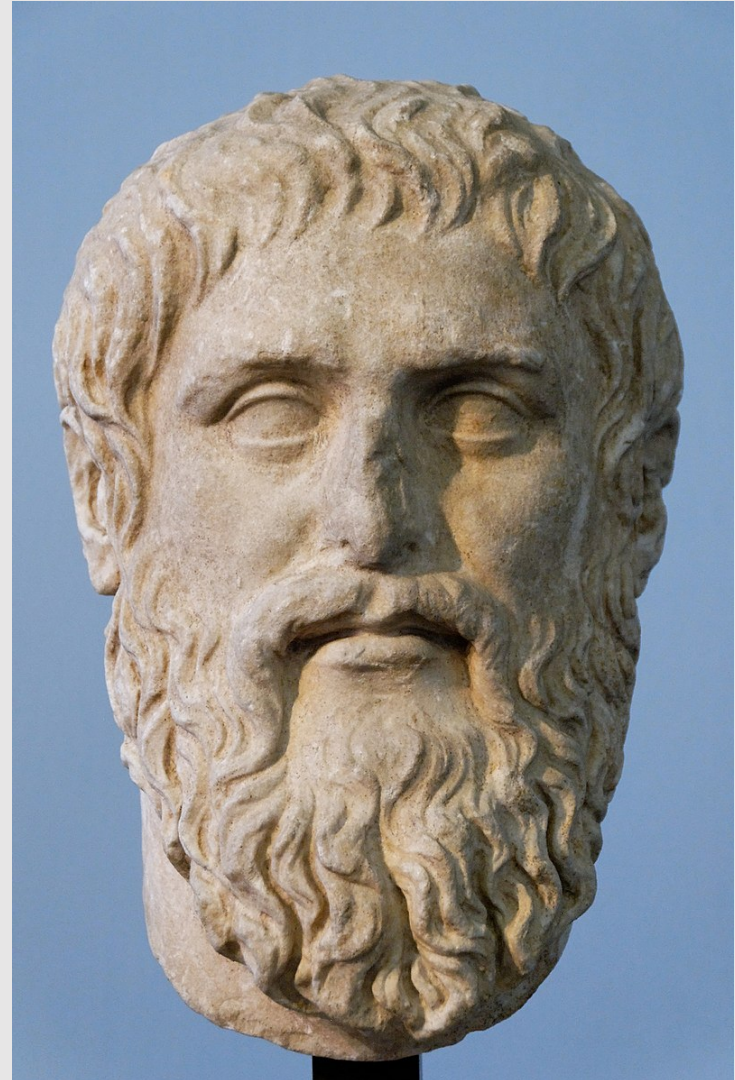
Ancient Greece: Plato

- Periods
 - Early
 - Middle
 - Late



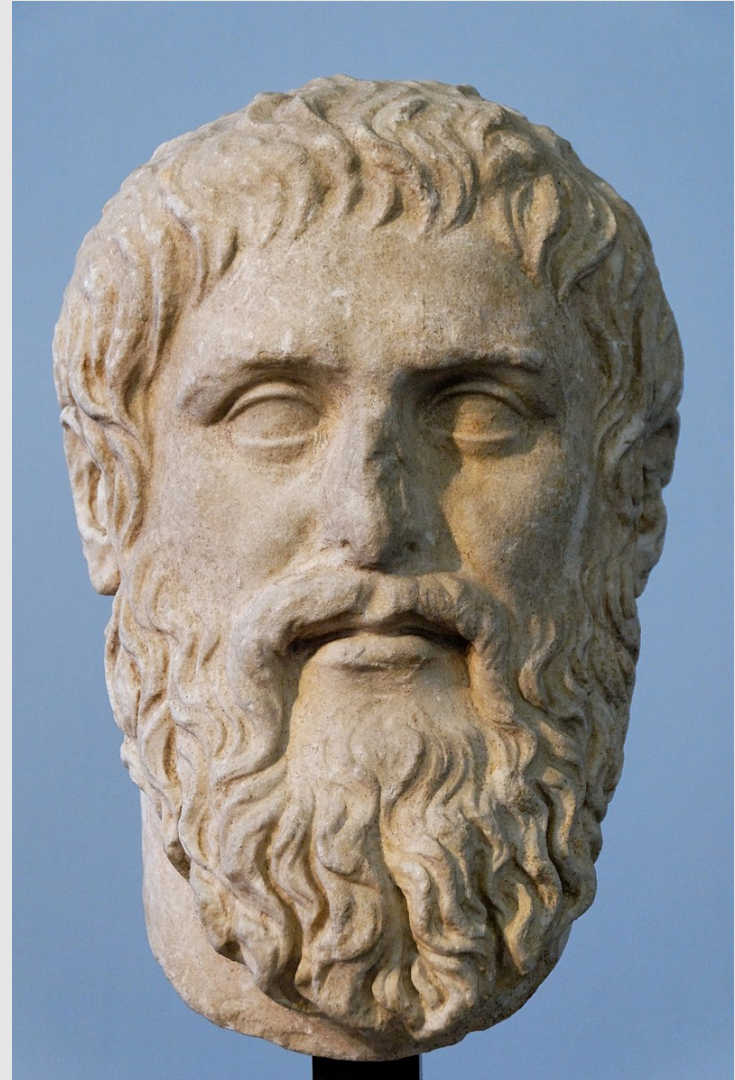
Ancient Greece: Plato

- Early Period
 - ‘Socratic Dialogues’
 - Attempt to answer a single question about what something is
 - E.g. ‘What is Justice?’
 - Don’t end in definitive answers but in a state of perplexity called *aporia*



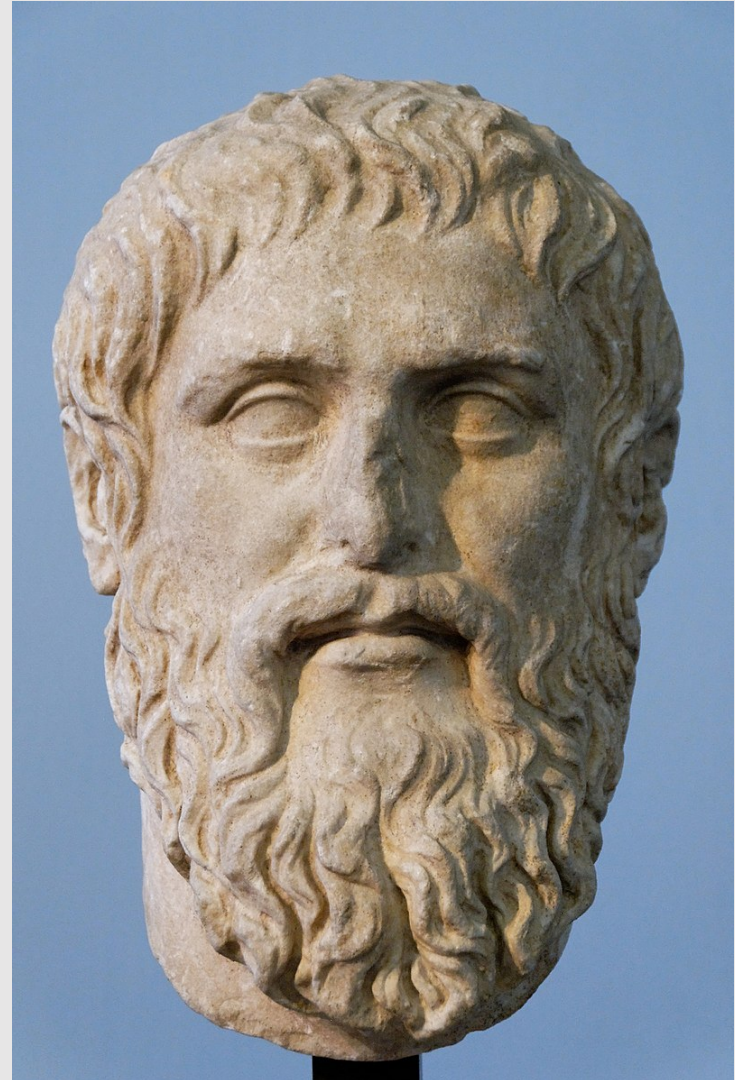
Ancient Greece: Plato

- Middle Period
 - Plato begins developing positive theories about the subject of his works
 - *Republic* is the most important middle period dialogue



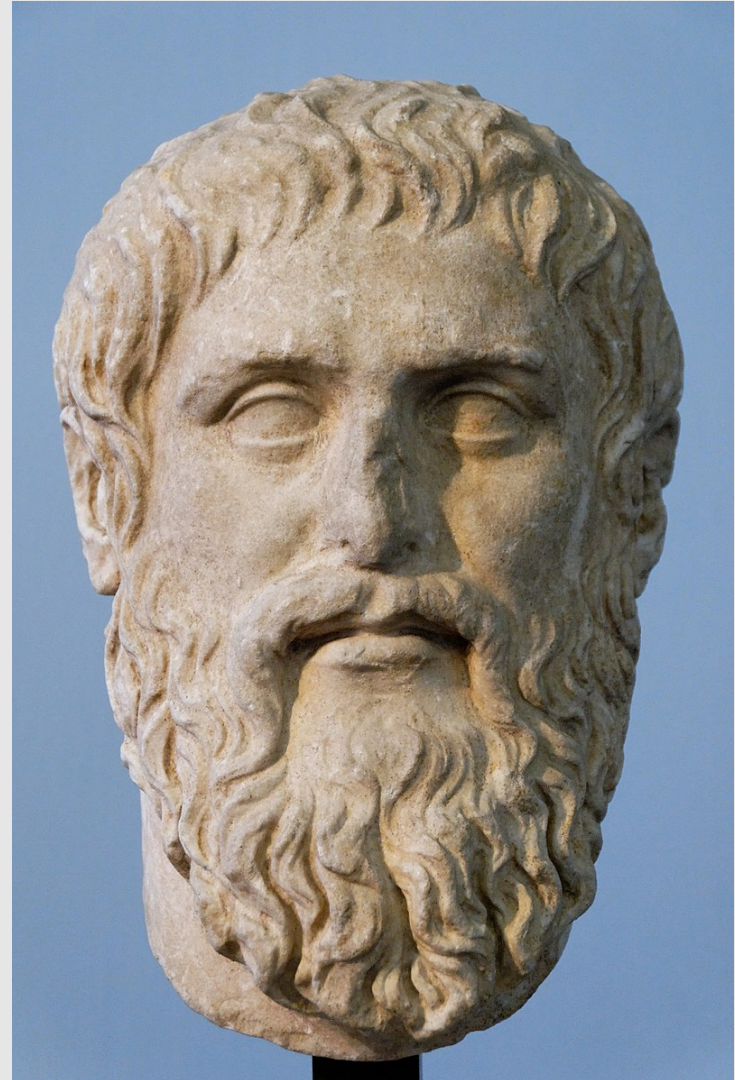
Ancient Greece: Plato

- Late Period
 - Focuses on unifying foundational accounts of Plato's other theories
 - Carries out certain fundamental problems, through which new questions and limitations of his philosophy emerge



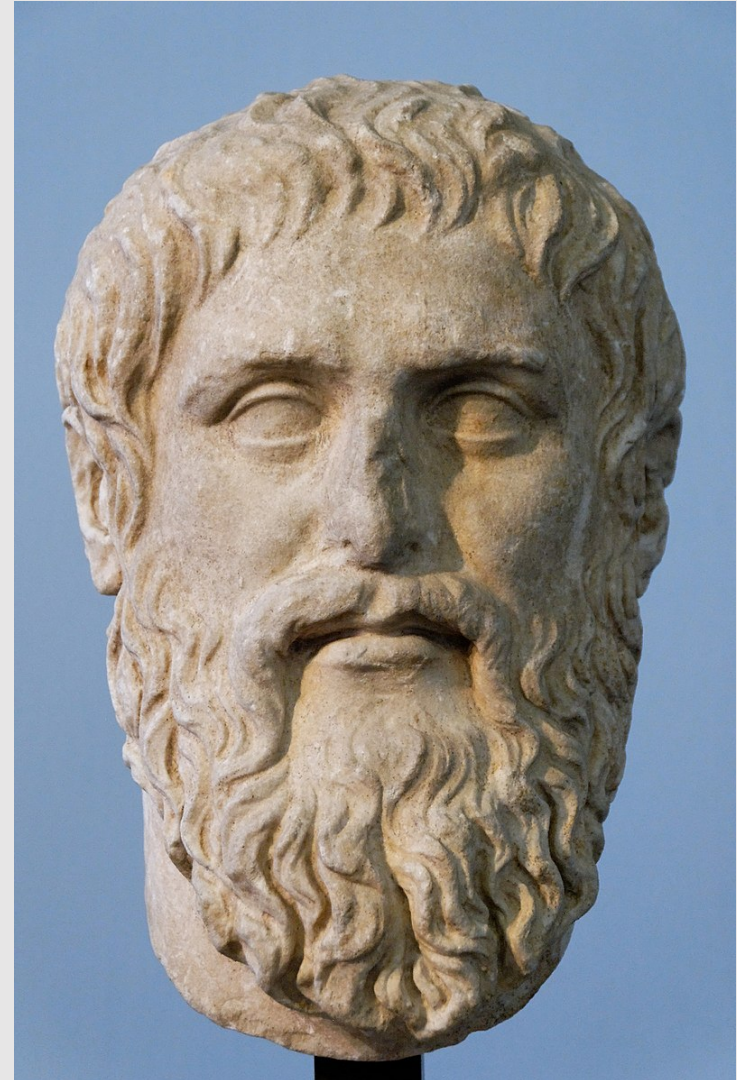
Ancient Greece: Plato

- Philosophical Concepts
 - The General and Universal
 - One/Many
 - Form/Idea
 - *Methexis*
 - Essence/Appearance
 - Intellect (*nous*)



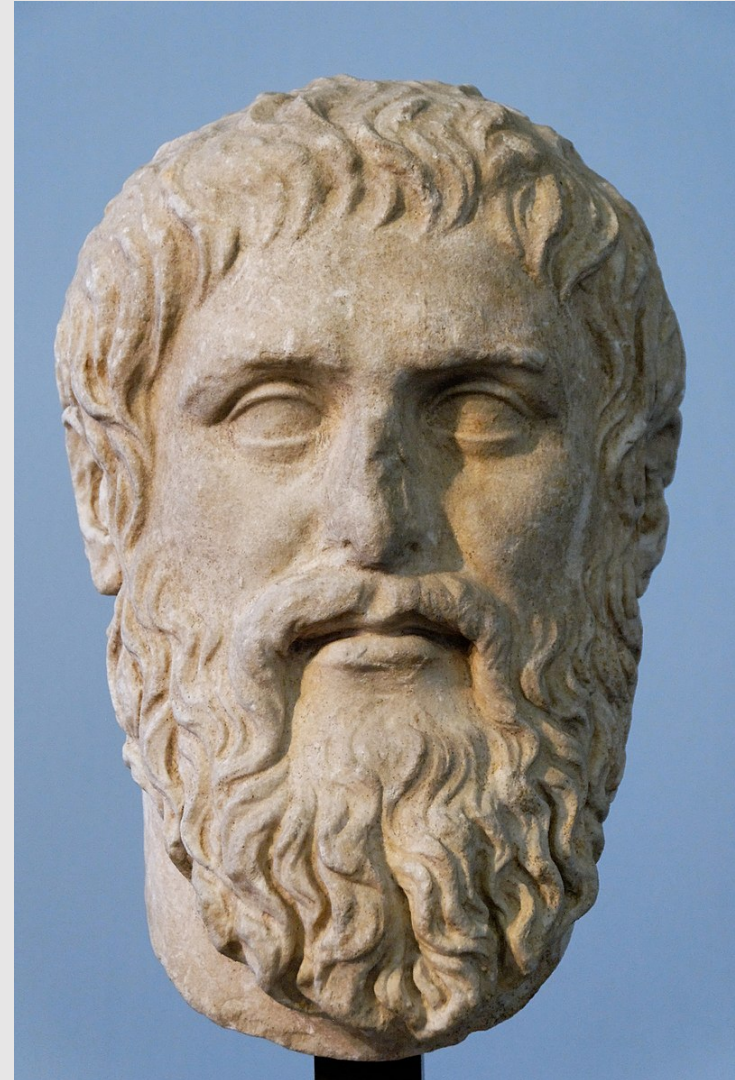
Ancient Greece: Plato

- One/Many
 - There is **one** thing (which we could call a category or general or universal or kind or type)
 - Of which **many** things instantiate (which we could call a particular or instance or example or species or token)
 - Ex. One = Beauty; Many = young people, or paintings, etc. e.g., beautiful things.



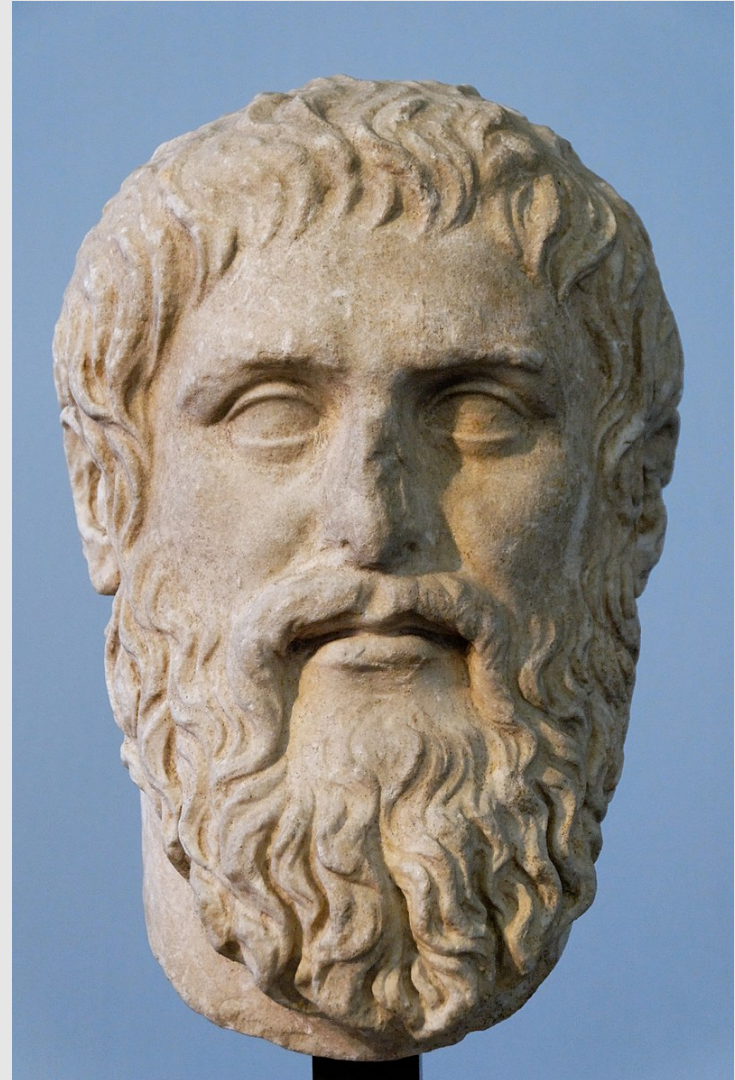
Ancient Greece: Plato

- Idea (*idea*)/Form (*eidos*)
 - Form = the Beautiful or Beauty
 - This is something which Plato thought ordinary things ‘participated’ in. ordinary things partake in (have *methexis* of) the Forms or Ideas.
 - The Form itself subsisted outside the world of appearances, the world we can sense.
 - Think of the number 3. Have you ever seen ‘Three-ness’? NO. we only see things that come in ‘threes’. However, three-ness must ‘exist’ in some sense.
 - While we can’t see it, we can think it.



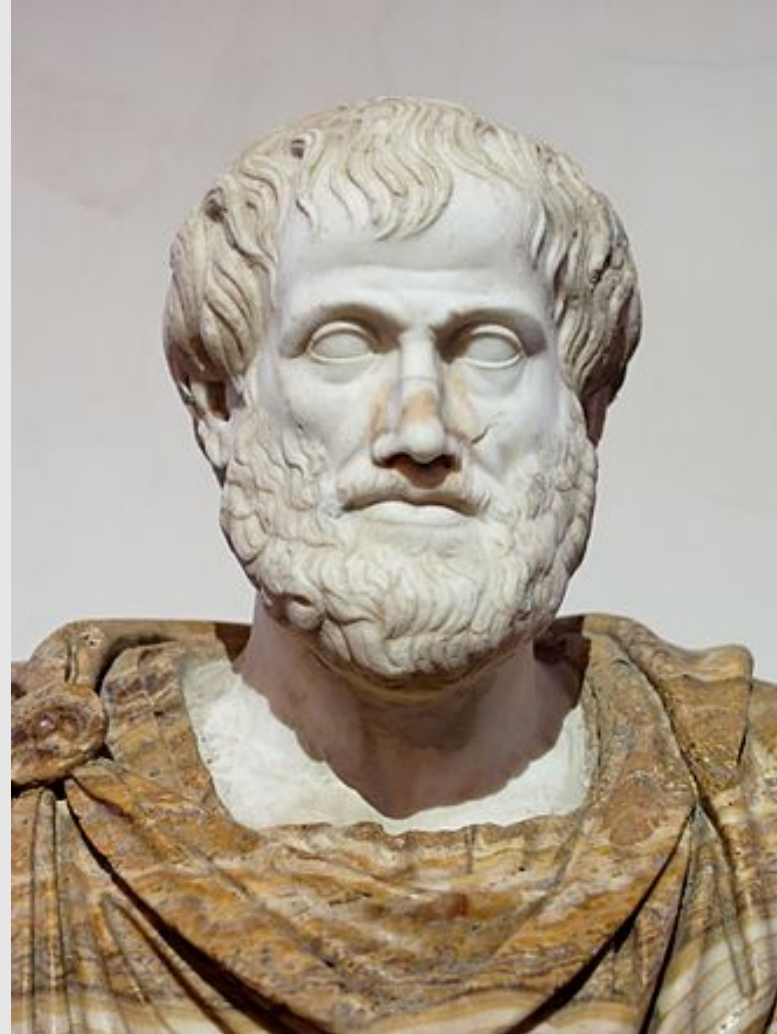
Ancient Greece: Plato

- Intellect (*Nous*)
 - Thus Plato gave priority to thinking, or intellectual activity because, he thought, this was the only way we gained absolute knowledge of things.
 - With this knowledge, we would continue to be misled, misguiding, stupid, and miserable.
 - With it we could be happy, just, and virtuous.



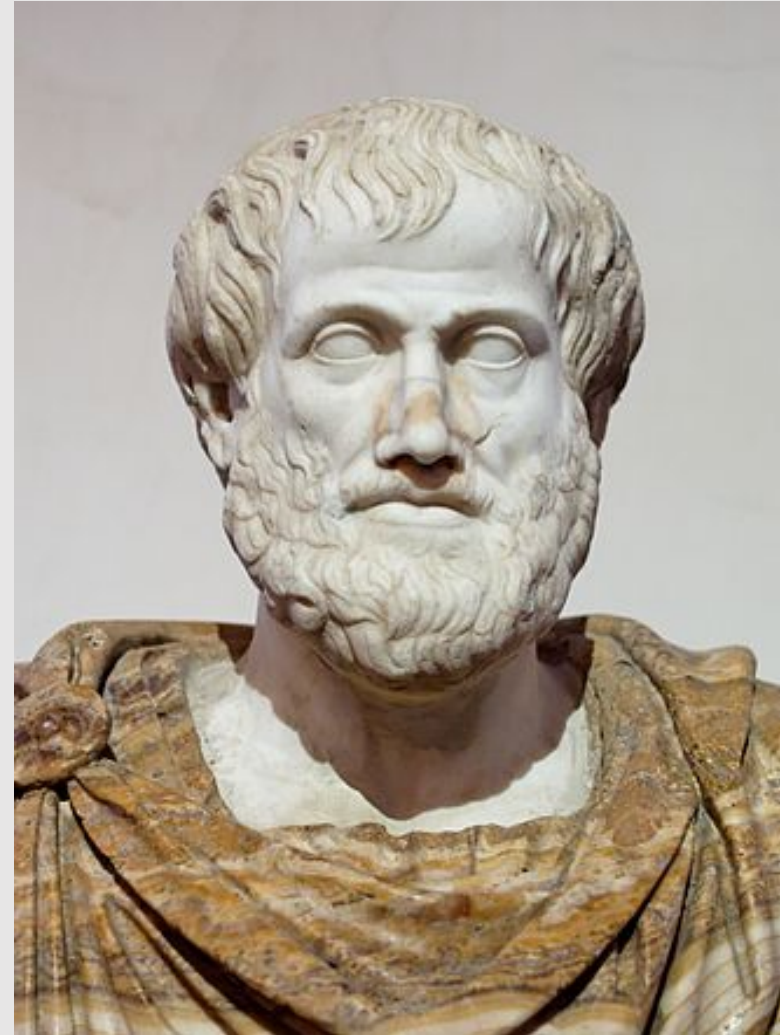
Ancient Greece: Aristotle

- **DATES** 384–322 BCE
- Alongside Plato as the greatest Greek philosopher of all.
- Not very much known about his life.
- Though he published a huge amount (both dialogues and treatises); most has not survived.
- What we have are basically lecture notes.
- Pupil of Plato at his Academy
- Started his school after Plato's death, The Lyceum
- Tutored Alexander the Great



Ancient Greece: Aristotle

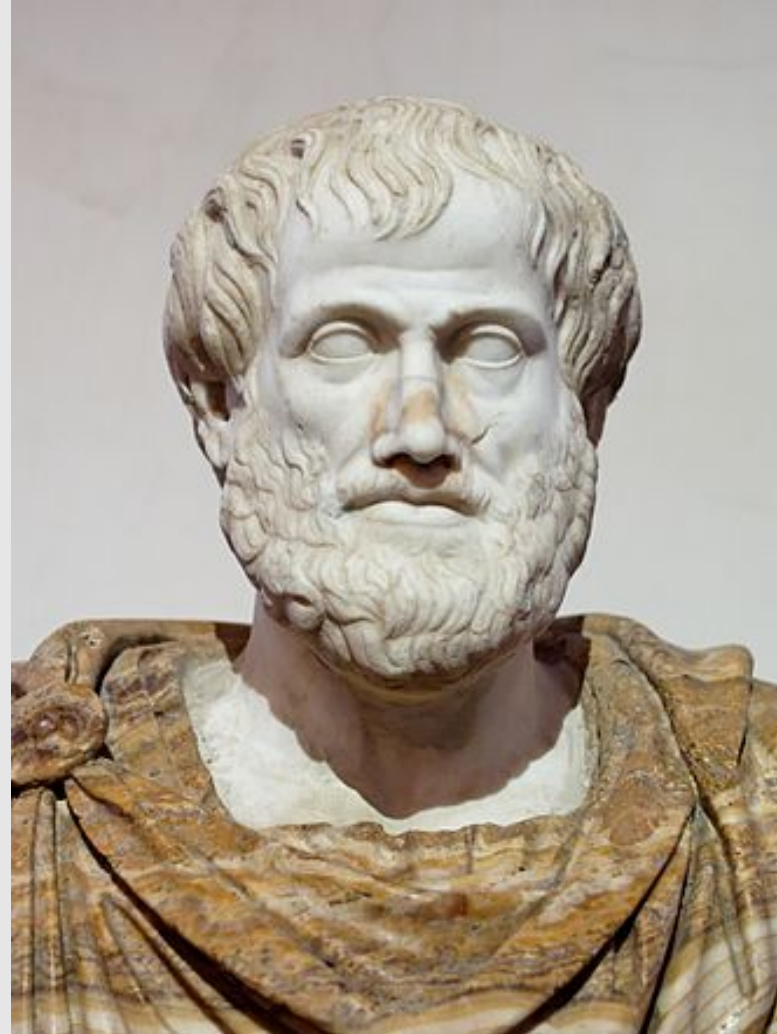
- Constructed the first attempt at a complete and exhaustive philosophical system.
- Contributed foundational studies in:
 - Physics, biology, zoology, metaphysics, logic, ethics, aesthetics, poetry, theatre, music, rhetoric, psychology, linguistics, politics, economics, and government.
- He also wrote down the only surviving constitution of Athens from the Classical period.
- Invented much of the European Philosophical lexicon
- If Plato is roughly the first systematic rationalist/idealist, Aristotle is roughly the first systematic empiricist.



Ancient Greece: Aristotle

Aristotelean Concepts

- Substance (*ousia*)
- The Four Causes
- Prime/Unmoved Mover
- Five Elements
- The Three Souls (*psyche*)
- Virtue Ethics (*ethos arete*)
- Politics

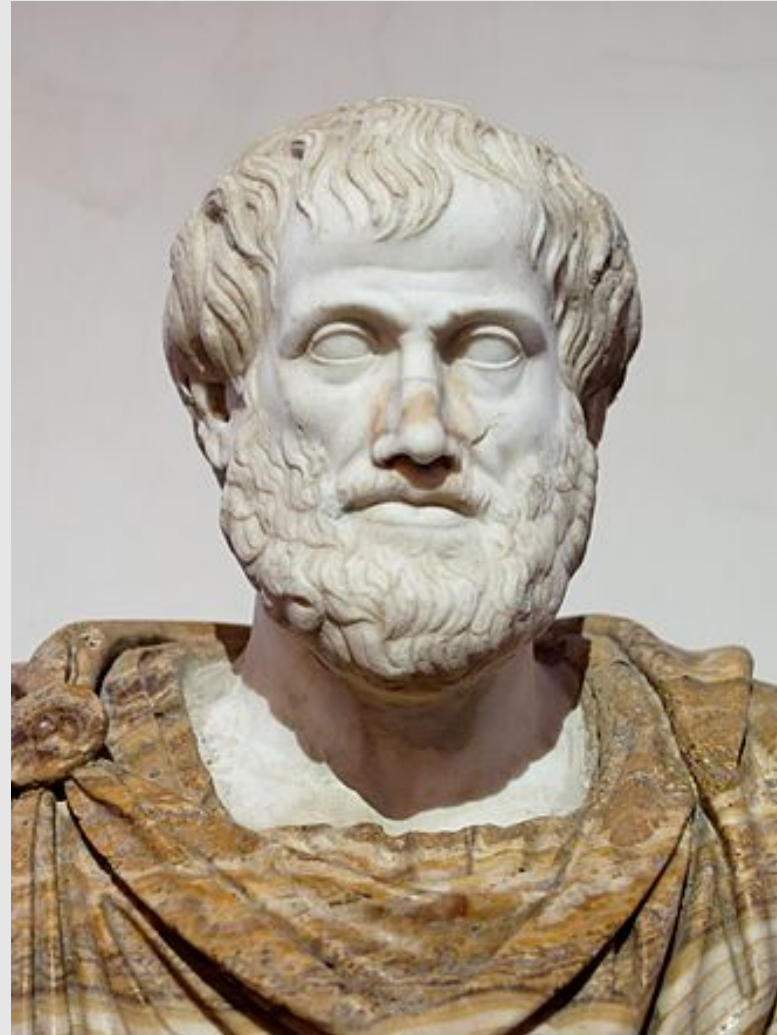


Ancient Greece: Aristotle

Aristotelean Concepts

Substance (*ousia*)

- That which persists
- Made of:
 - Matter (*hyle*)
 - Potential (*dynamis*)
 - Form (*eidos*)
 - Actual (*energeia* or *entelecheia*)

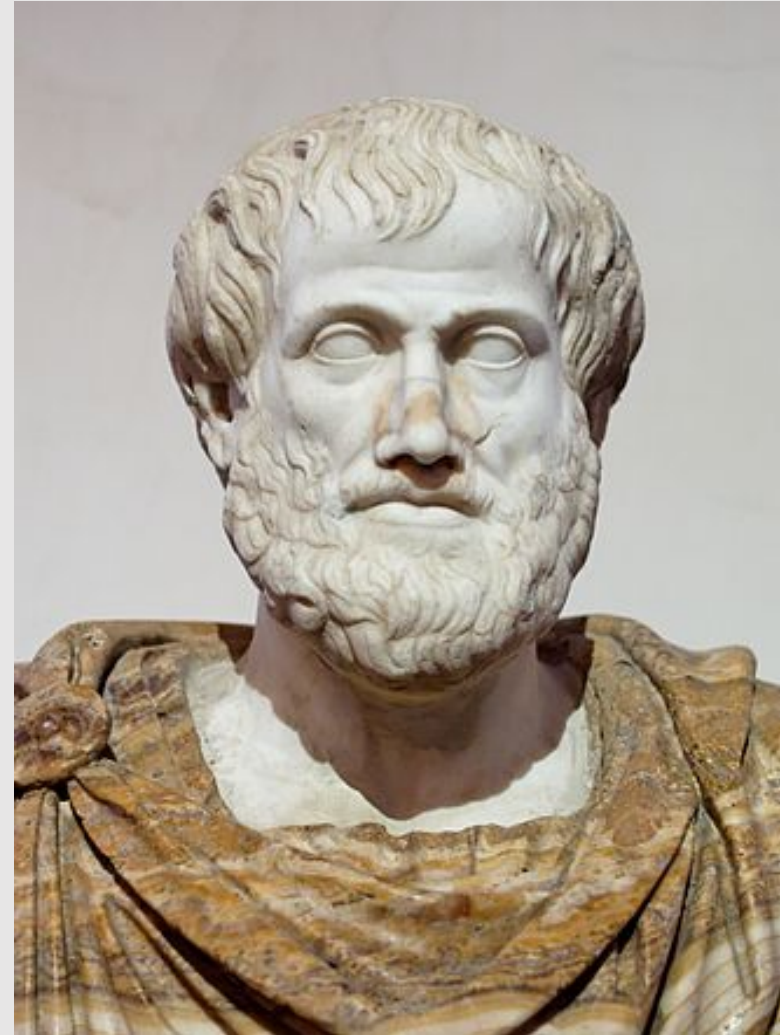


Ancient Greece: Aristotle

Aristotelean Concepts

The Four Causes

- Material (*hyle*)
- Formal (*eidos*)
- Efficient (*kinoun*)
- Final (*telos*)

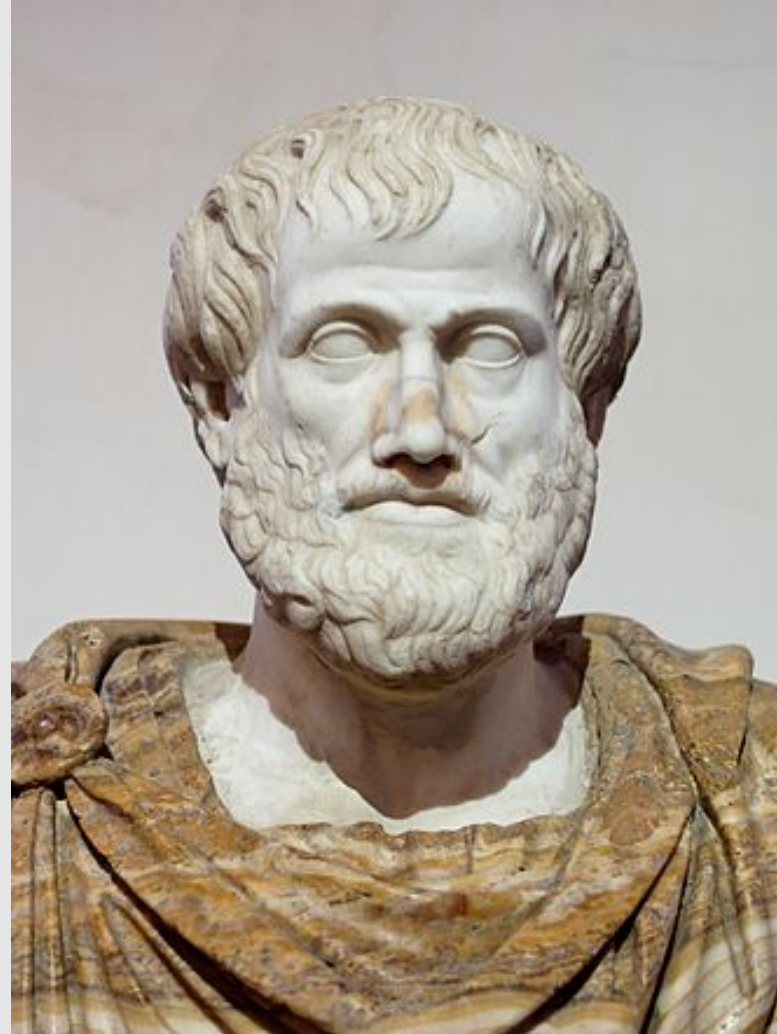


Ancient Greece: Aristotle

Aristotelean Concepts

Prime/Unmoved Mover

- If every efficient cause (everything that is in motion) is itself put in motion
- Then, according to A., there must be a first mover, something which causes motion, but is uncaused
- This was used to justify belief in some form of God or Theological Principle

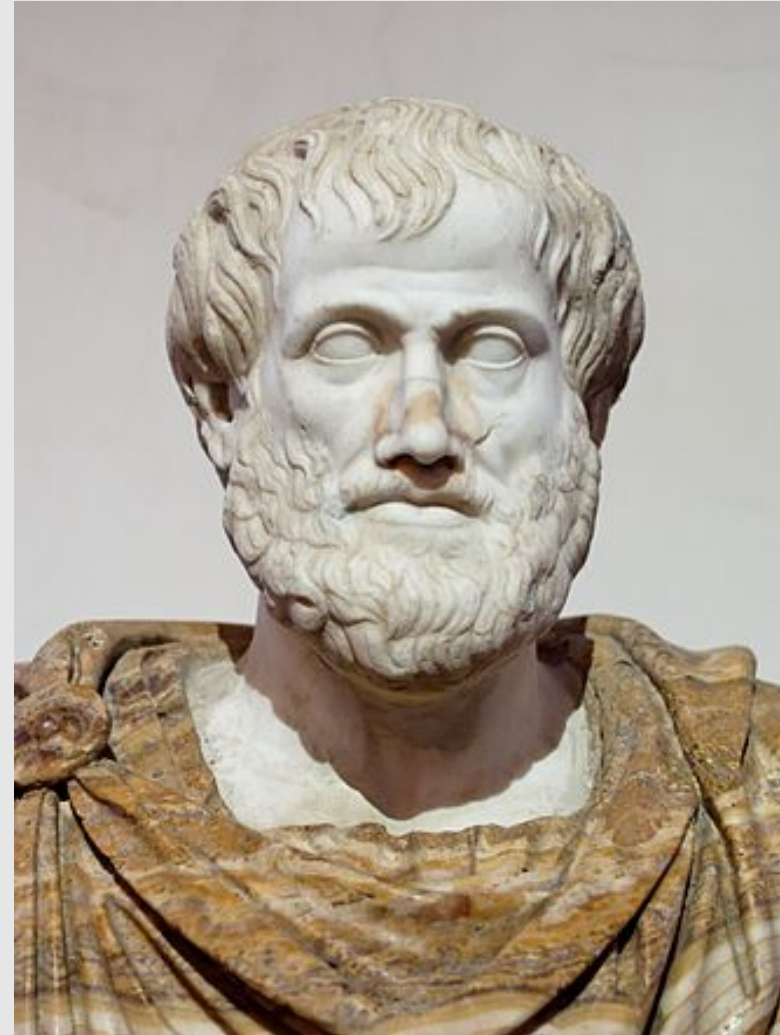


Ancient Greece: Aristotle

Aristotelean Concepts

Five Elements

- Earth
- Water
- Fire
- Air
- Aether

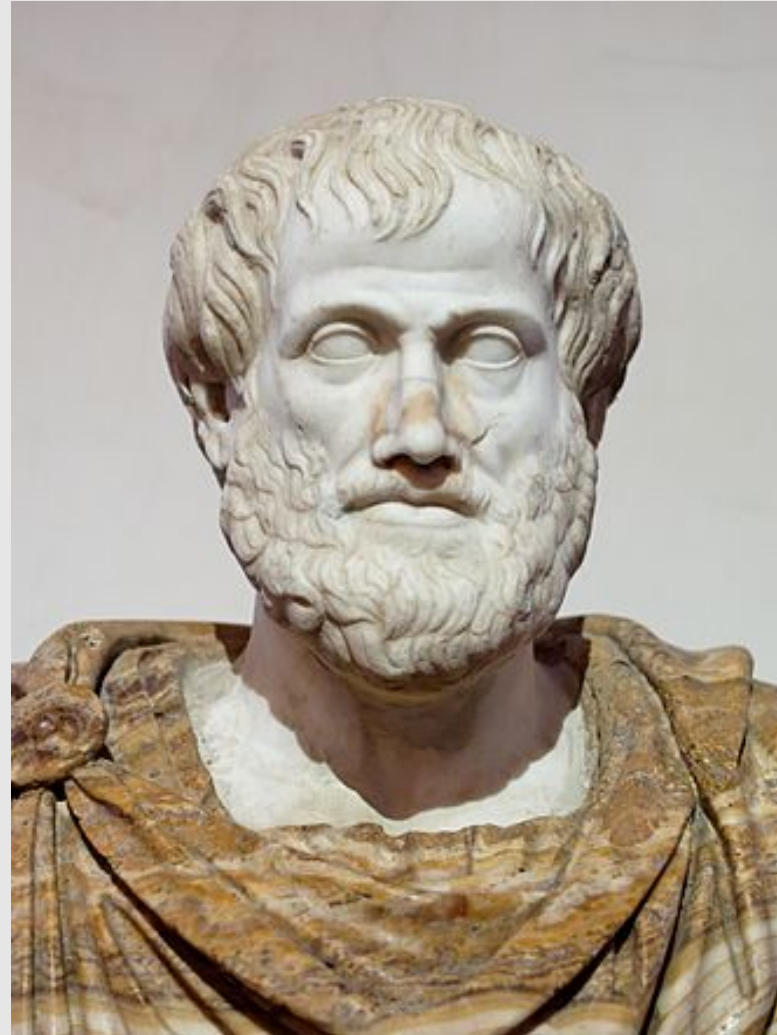


Ancient Greece: Aristotle

Aristotelean Concepts

The Three Souls (*psyche*)

- Vegetative
- Sensitive
- Rational



Ancient Greece: Aristotle

Aristotelean Concepts

Virtue Ethics (*arete, ethos*)

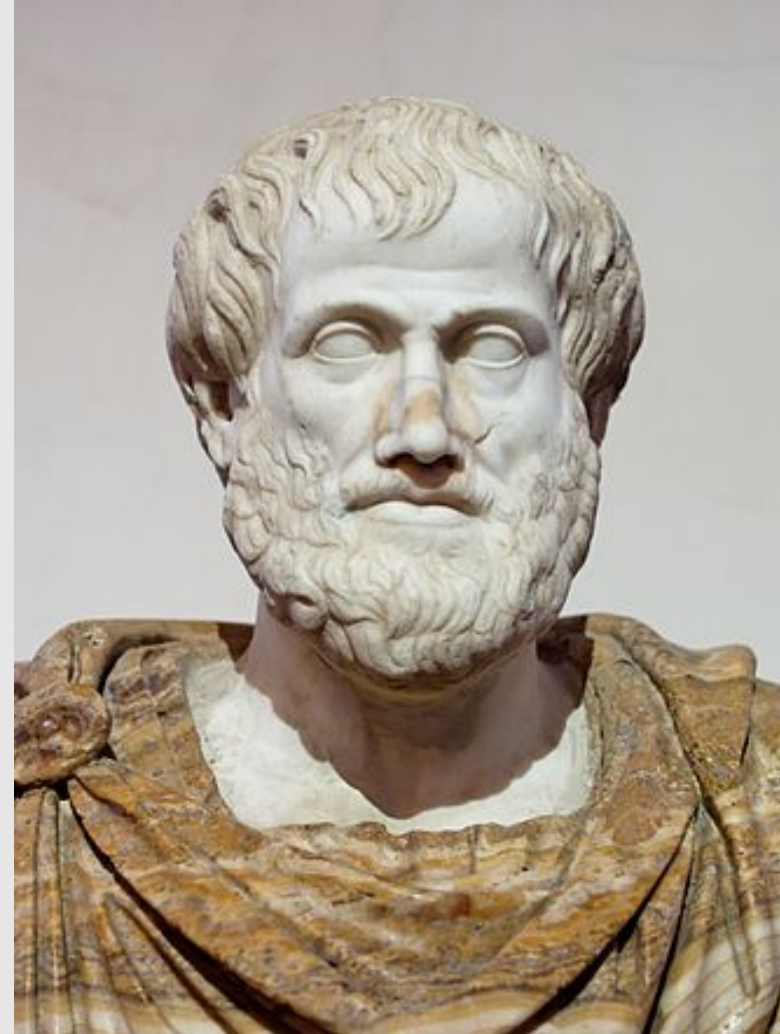
- For Aristotle, as for general Greek *ethos*, ethics was not about doing right and wrong in the sense in which we typically think of it today
- Instead it was about a Greek concept called *arete*, which means ‘excellence’ or ‘virtue’.
- Even where it means virtue, this virtue is not determined, first and foremost, by avoiding sin, or wrongdoing, but by living up to your potential, acting in accordance with your nature, and not overstepping your limitations. It is about someone’s character (*ethos* or *ethike*).
- Ethics is not about ‘good’ and ‘evil’ but about what makes someone interesting, strong, courageous, capable, intelligent, prudent, and generally worth being around or worth emulating.

Ancient Greece: Aristotle

Aristotelean Concepts

Politics

- The point of Politics for A. is not merely protection from violence, it should also help realize the good life (eudaimonia) of citizens.
- Forms of Polis
 - Constitutional Government/Democracy
 - Aristocracy/Oligarchy
 - Royalty/Tyranny



Reading Plato's *Republic*

“Could you tell me what imitation in general is? I don't entirely understand what sort of thing imitations are trying to be.”
(*Republic*, 595c 6-7, pp.1200)

- Imitation = *mimesis*
- Art as *mimesis*

Reading Plato's *Republic*

“As you know, we customarily hypothesize a single form in connection with each of the many things to which we apply the same name. Or don't you understand?”

I do.

Then let's now take any of the manys you like. For example, there are many beds and tables.

Of course.

But there are only two forms of such furniture, one of the bed and one of the table.

Yes.

And don't we also customarily say that their makers look towards the appropriate form in making the beds or tables we use, and similarly in the other cases? Surely no craftsman makes the form itself.

How could he?

There's no way he could.

Well, then, see what you'd call *this* craftsman?

Which one?

The one who makes all the things that all the other kinds of craftsmen severally make.

That's a clever and wonderful fellow you're talking about.” (Ibid, 596a5-c4, pp.1200)

Reading Plato's *Republic*

“You could do it quickly [recreate everything around you] and in lots of places, especially if you were willing to carry a mirror with you, for that’s the quickest way of all. With it you can quickly make the sun, the things in the heavens, the earth, yourself, the other animals, manufactured items, plants, and everything else mentioned just now.

Yes, I could make them appear, but I couldn’t make the things themselves as the truly are...

I suppose the painter too belongs to this class of makers, doesn’t he?” (Ibid, 596d7-e6, pp.1201)

Reading Plato's *Republic*

“Now, if he doesn't make the being of a bed, he isn't making that which is, but something which is like that which is, but is not it. So, if someone were to say that the work of a carpenter or any other craftsman is completely that which is, wouldn't he risk saying what isn't true?” (Ibid, 597a3-6, 1201).

Reading Plato's *Republic*

“We get, then, these [three kinds of beds](#). The [first](#) is in nature a bed, and I suppose we'd say that a god makes it, or does someone else make it?

No one else, I suppose.

The [second](#) is the work of a carpenter.

Yes.

And the [third](#) is the one the painter makes. Isn't that so?

It is.

Then the painter, carpenter, and god correspond to three kinds of bed?

Yes, three.” (Ibid, 597b5-13, 1201).

Reading Plato's *Republic*

“Because, if [the god] made only two [forms of a thing], then again one would come to light whose form they in turn would both possess, and *that* would be the one that is the being of a bed and not the other two.” (Ibid, 597c5-7, 1201)

Reading Plato's *Republic*

“And is a painter also a craftsman and maker of such things?

Not at all.

Then what do you think he does do to a bed?

He imitates it. He is an imitator of what the others make. That, in my view, is the most reasonable thing to call him.

All right. Then wouldn't you call someone whose product is third from the natural one an imitator?” (Ibid, 597d8-e3, 1202)

Reading Plato's *Republic*

“...[W]henever someone tells us that he has met a person who knows all the crafts as well as all the other things that anyone else knows and that his knowledge of any subject is more exact than any of theirs is, we must assume that we're talking to a simple-minded fellow who has d apparently encountered some sort of magician or imitator and been deceived into thinking him omniscient and that the reason he has been deceived is that he himself can't distinguish between knowledge, ignorance, and imitation...

...Then shall we conclude that all poetic imitators, beginning with Homer, imitate images of virtue and all the other things they write about have no grasp of the truth?” (Ibid, 598d-600e, 1203-5).

- Because the painters, the poets, and the other imitators (like the sophists), have as their knack *mimesis*, they cannot be teachers of virtue, because they have no knowledge of virtue but only produce images of virtue

Reading Plato's *Republic*

“That for each thing there are these three crafts, one that uses it, one that makes it, and one that imitates it?” (Ibid, 601d1-2, 1205).

(Cf. 601d-602b, 1205-6).

- USER: The one who knows (has *episteme*).
- MAKER: The one who has the right opinion (has what Aristotle calls *endoxa*).
- IMITATOR: The one who has neither, or who has mere opinion (*doxa*).

Reading Plato's *Republic*

“And it is because they exploit this weakness in our nature that *trompe l'oeil* painting, conjuring, and other forms of d trickery have powers that are little short of magical.

That's true.

And don't measuring, counting, and weighing give us most welcome assistance in these cases, so that we aren't ruled by something's looking bigger, smaller, more numerous, or heavier, but by calculation, measurement, or weighing?

Of course.

And calculating, measuring, and weighing are the work of the [rational part of the soul](#).

They are.

But when this part has measured and has indicated that some things are larger or smaller or the same size as others, the opposite appears to it at the same time.

Yes...

Reading Plato's *Republic*

[CONT.] ...And didn't we say that it is impossible for the same thing to believe opposites about the same thing at the same time?

We did, and we were right to say it.

Then the part of the soul that forms a belief contrary to the measurements couldn't be the same as the part that believes in accord with them.

No, it couldn't.

Now, the part that puts its trust in measurement and calculation is the [best part of the soul](#). [...]

This, then, is what I wanted to get agreement about when I said that

painting and imitation as a whole produce work that is far from the truth, namely, that imitation really consorts with a part of us that is far from reason, and the result of their being friends and companions is neither sound nor true.

That's absolutely right.

Then [imitation is an inferior thing](#) that consorts with another inferior thing to produce an inferior offspring." (Ibid, 602c-603b, 1207).

Reading Plato's *Republic*

“If you admit the pleasure-giving Muse, whether in lyric or epic poetry, pleasure and pain will be kings in your city instead of law or the thing that everyone has always believed to be best, namely, reason.” (Ibid, 607a4-7, 1211)

Reading Plato's *Republic*

“Now, if the soul isn't destroyed by a single evil, whether its own or something else's, then clearly it must always be. And if it always is, it is immortal.”

(Ibid, 610e-611, 1214).

Plato's argument for the immortal soul (cf. 1212-1214):

- Good and bad exist.
- Bad destroys/corrupts, good preserves/benefits.
- There is good and bad for each thing.
- If a thing is afflicted with evil (badness) but is incapable of being destroyed that thing is immortal.
- The soul is such a thing.
- Therefore the soul is immortal.

Reading Plato's *Republic*

Plato's argument for the immortal soul, continued. (cf. 1215-1214):

- If the soul is immortal, then there is some part which is not corruptible, and this part is immortal
- But we've seen that the rational part alone is not susceptible to corruptions from desire, pleasure and pain, or the deception of the senses. (These are due to the soul's association with the body).
- Therefore, only the rational part of the soul is immortal.

Reading Plato's *Republic*

“The soul, too, is in a similar condition when we study it, beset by many evils. That, Glaucon, is why we have to look somewhere else in order to discover its true nature.

To where?

To its philosophy, or love of wisdom. We must realize what it grasps and longs to have intercourse with, because it is akin to the divine and immortal and what always is... Then we'd see what its true nature is and be able to determine whether it has many parts or just one and whether or in what manner it is put together. ” (Ibid., 611d5-612a6, 1215).

Reading Plato's *Republic*

“Virtue (*Arete*) knows no master, each will possess it to a greater or less degree, depending on whether he values or disdains it. The responsibility lies with the one who makes the choice; the god has none.”

(The Myth of Er, *Ibid.*, 617e2-4, 1220)

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Poetry is a species of imitation (*mimesis*)

- Differentiated in three respects:
 - Media
 - Objects
 - Modes

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Different Media:

- Rhythm
- Language
- Melody

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Objects of *mimesis*:

- Imitation in poetry pertains to agents (people doing things)
- Of these agents:
 - Some are better
 - Some worse
 - Some like us

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Modes of *mimesis*:

- Narration
 - One or many narrators
- Imitation of the action itself

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Origins of poetry:

- Innate propensity for *mimesis* in childhood
- Innate/universal pleasure in viewing imitations
 - This is shown even for things which in reality distress us.
 - We delight in seeing images.

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Origins of poetry, continued:

The [early history of poetic genre](#) is split by the differentiae of character:

- Superior people ([epic](#))
 - later: tragedy
- Trivial people
- Inferior people ([lampoons](#), *iamboi*, where the iambic meter comes from).
 - Later: comedy – moves from particular (about an actual individual) to universal story.

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Tragedy, defined:

“Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete and possesses magnitude; in language made pleasurable, each of its species separated in different parts; performed by actors, not through narration; effecting through pity and fear the purification (*katharsis*) of such emotions.” (*Poetics*, pp. 10)

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Tragedy, component parts of quality:

- Plot
- Character
- Diction
- Reasoning
- Spectacle
- Lyric

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

“Character is the kind of thing which discloses the nature of a choice” (Ibid., 12).

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Tragedy cont.

- Completeness
 - Includes:
 - Beginning
 - Middle
 - End

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Tragedy cont.: Completeness

- Beginning:

“That which itself does not follow necessarily from anything else, but some second thing naturally exists or occurs after it” (Ibid., 13).

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Tragedy cont.: Completeness

- Middle:
 - That which follows from something else, and which has something follow from it.

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Tragedy cont.: Completeness

- End:
 - That which follows from something else, but from which nothing necessarily follows.

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Tragedy cont.: Completeness

- This analysis of the completeness of action in the narrative structure of tragedy can also be viewed as an analysis of action, or agency, in general.
- The study of completeness is the study of the order of tragic theatre.

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Tragedy cont.: Magnitude

- Magnitude here pertains to the length of the play
- It should be of a duration so as the mind can take the whole in at once ('simultaneous perspicuity', *Ibid.*, 14)
- The greater, and more complex the plot is, while maintaining the proper magnitude, the greater the work.

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Tragedy cont.: Unity

- The unity of the tragedy is determined by the unity of the action or events
- NOT the unity of a single person (Ibid., 15)

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Tragedy cont.: Unity

- What is required for this is that the events follow from one another through either necessity or probability

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Tragedy cont.: Structure

- The plot should express a ‘single, unified action’.
- Everything that makes no difference to the plot should be excluded.
- “If the presence or absence of something has no discernible effect, it is not part of the whole” (Ibid., 15)
- And all necessary sections should be of the sort to change the whole if moved/removed.

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Tragedy cont.: Universality

“The function of the poet is not to say what *has* happened, but to say **the kind of thing that *would* happen**, i.e. what is possible in accordance with probability and necessity... For this reason poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history” (Ibid., 16).

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Tragedy cont.: Astonishment

“Imitation is not just of a complete action, but also of events which evoke pity and fear. These effects occur above all when things come about contrary to expectation but because of one another” (Ibid., 17)

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Tragedy cont.: Reversal, Recognition, Suffering

- The ways in which pity and fear are chiefly evoked are through the three important parts of the plot, reversal, recognition, and suffering (*pathos*):
 - Tragedy involves a **reversal** from good fortune to bad fortune.
 - **Recognition** represents a moment with which knowledge about the portents of the plot are discovered by the characters.
 - **Suffering (*pathos*)** involved destruction or pain.

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Tragedy cont.: Complication and Resolution

- **Complication** pertains to everything leading up to the reversal of fortune
- **Resolution** pertains to the completion of the action. In a tragedy this typically ends in a recognition of the deed done, which is also a recognition of that one's fate is sealed (*fait accompli*) or inevitable.

Reading Aristotle's *Poetics*

Conclusion:

- Aristotle shows us how we can use tragedy as a **complex theoretical model of what our actions mean**, what kind of people we aspire to be, etc.
- And to **provide critical insight into the deep relationship between our deeds and practices, and our reasoning and thoughts**. This is why this form of narrative is still largely relevant to us today (chiefly in the form of film and television).