

**“Our common multicultural future  
in Europe via our own cultural heritage”**

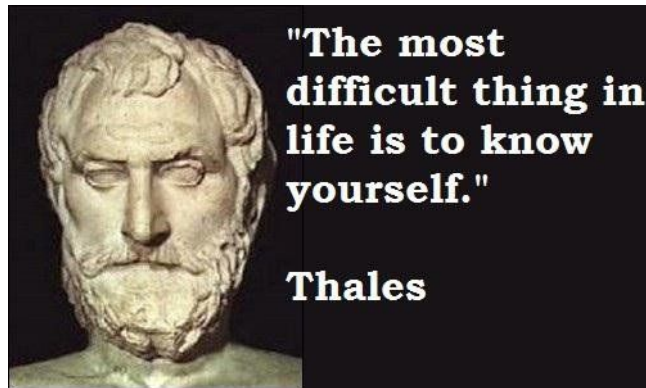
## **TEN GREEK PHILOSOPHERS**

**Kilkis 9/5- 13/5/2022**

## I. The Natural Philosophers

... nothing can come from nothing ...

The earliest Greek philosophers are sometimes called natural philosophers because they were mainly concerned with the natural world and its processes.



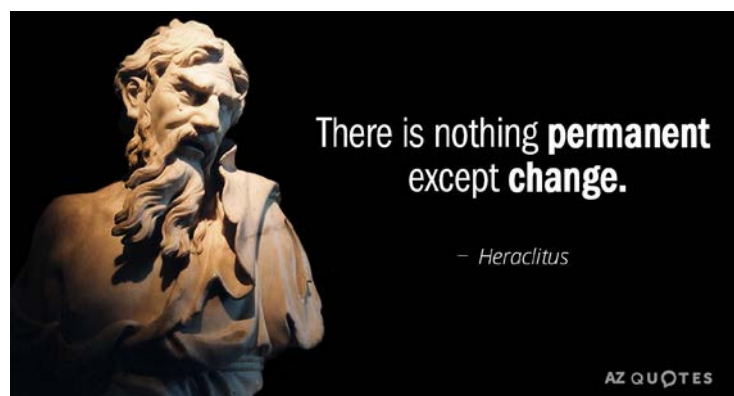
The first philosopher we know of is **Thales** ((640 ή 624 π.Χ. - 546 π.Χ.), who came from Miletus, a Greek colony in Asia Minor.

He was mathematical, physicist, astronomer, engineer and meteorologist.

He traveled in many countries, including Egypt, where he is said to have calculated the height of a pyramid by measuring its shadow at the precise moment when the length of his own shadow was equal to his height. He is also said to have accurately predicted a solar eclipse in the year 585 B.C.

Thales thought that the source of all things was water. We do not know exactly what he meant by that, he may have believed that all life originated from water—and that all life returns to water again when it dissolves.

### All Things Flow

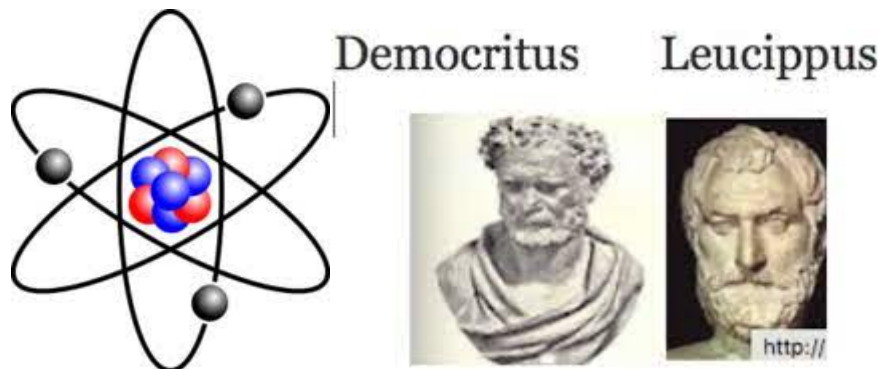


**Heraclitus** (c. 540-480 B.C.) was from Ephesus in Asia Minor. He thought that constant change, or flow, was in fact the most basic characteristic of

nature. Heraclitus' sense perceptions made it equally clear that nature was in a constant state of change.

"Everything flows," said Heraclitus. Everything is in constant flux and movement, nothing is abiding. Therefore we "cannot step twice into the same river." When I step into the river for the second time, neither I nor the river are the same.

**Leucippus**, (flourished 5th century BC, probably at Miletus, on the west coast of Asia Minor)



Greek philosopher. Democritus was a pupil of Leucippus. Together, Leucippus and Democritus are considered as the joint founders of atomic theory. Leucippus stated that atoms are :

*... imperceptible, individual particles that differ only in shape and position.*

**Democritus(c. 460-370 B.C.)**

### THE ATOM THEORY

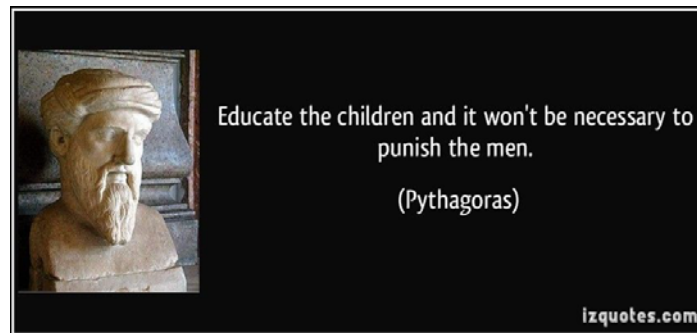
He was from the little town of Abdera on the northern Aegean coast.

He therefore assumed that everything was built up of tiny invisible blocks, each of which was eternal and immutable. Democritus called these smallest units atoms.

The word "a-tom" means "un-cuttable." For Democritus it was all important to establish that the constituent parts that everything else was composed of could not be divided indefinitely into smaller parts. If this were possible, they could not be used as blocks. If atoms could eternally be broken down into ever smaller parts, nature would begin to dissolve like constantly diluted soup.

He agreed with Heraclitus that everything in nature "flowed,". But behind everything that flowed there were some eternal and immutable things that did not flow. Democritus called them atoms.

**Pythagoras**, (born c. 570 BCE Samos, Ionia [Greece]—died c. 500–490 BCE)



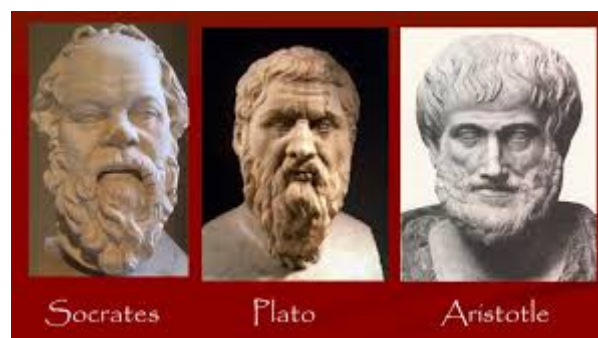
Greek philosopher, mathematician, and founder of the Pythagorean brotherhood that, although religious in nature, formulated principles that influenced the thought of Plato and Aristotle and contributed to the development of mathematics and Western rational philosophy.

He was married Theano, Greek philosopher and scientist.

He is Known for the discovery of the Pythagorean theorem.

The natural philosophers had been mainly concerned with the nature of the physical world. This gives them a central position in the history of science. In Athens, interest was now focused on the individual and the individual's place in society.

### **Socrates (470-399 B.C.)**



After about 450 B.C., Athens was the cultural center of the Greek world. From this time on, philosophy took a new direction. Socrates was the first of the great philosophers to be born in Athens, and both he and Plato and Aristotle, his two successors, lived and worked there.

Gradually a democracy evolved, with popular assemblies and courts of law. In order for democracy to work, people had to be educated enough to take part in the democratic process.

Is there such a thing as natural modesty? (“modesty” was an old fashioned word for shyness—for example, about being seen naked)

**Wisest is he/she who knows he/she does not know...**

**True insight comes from within.**

**He who knows what is right will do right.**

### **The Art of Discourse**

Instead of lecturing like a traditional schoolmaster, Socrates discussed.

Socrates, whose mother was a midwife, used to say that his art was like the art of the midwife. She does not herself give birth to the child, but she is there to help during its delivery. Similarly, Socrates saw his task as helping people to “give birth” to the correct insight, since real understanding must come from within. It cannot be imparted by someone else. And only the understanding that comes from within can lead to true insight.

By playing ignorant, Socrates forced the people he met to use their common sense. Socrates could feign ignorance—or pretend to be dumber than he was.

We call this Socratic irony.

So it is not surprising that, as time went by, people found him increasingly exasperating, especially people who had status in the community. “Athens is like a sluggish horse,” he is reputed to have said, “and I am the gadfly trying to sting it into life.”

(What do we do with gadflies? “We usually kill them, exactly as they do with Socrates)

In the year 399 B.C. he was accused of “introducing new gods and corrupting the youth,” as well as not believing in the accepted gods. With a slender majority, a jury of five hundred found him guilty. Shortly thereafter, he drank the poison in the presence of his friends, and died.

There are several striking parallels between Jesus and Socrates.

As I have mentioned earlier, Socrates claimed that he was guided by a divine inner voice, and that this “conscience” told him what was right. “He who knows what good is will do good,” he said. By this he meant that the right insight leads to the right action. And only he who does right can be a

“virtuous man.” When we do wrong it is because we don’t know any better. That is why it is so important to go on learning. Socrates was concerned with finding clear and universally valid definitions of right and wrong.

He believed in the existence of eternal and absolute rules for what was right or wrong. By using our common sense we can all arrive at these immutable norms, since human reason is in fact eternal and immutable. (108)

### **Plato (428-347 B.C.)**



### **The Eternally True, Eternally Beautiful, and Eternally Good**

Plato was twenty-nine years old when Socrates drank the hemlock. He had been a pupil of Socrates for some time and had followed his trial very closely. The fact that Athens could condemn its noblest citizen to death did more than make a profound impression on him. It was to shape the course of his entire philosophic endeavor.

To Plato, the death of Socrates was a striking example of the conflict that can exist between society as it really is and the true or ideal society. Plato’s first deed as a philosopher was to publish Socrates’ *Apology*, an account of his plea to the large jury.

In addition to Socrates’ *Apology*, Plato wrote a collection of *Epistles* and about twenty-five philosophical *Dialogues*.

### **An Immortal Soul**

As I explained, Plato believed that reality is divided into two regions.

One region is the world of the senses, about which we can only have approximate or incomplete knowledge by using our five (approximate or

incomplete) senses. In this sensory world, “everything flows” and nothing is permanent. Nothing in the sensory world is, there are only things that come to be and pass away.

The other region is the world of ideas, about which we can have true knowledge by using our reason. This world of ideas cannot be perceived by the senses, but the ideas (or forms) are eternal and immutable.

According to Plato, man is a dual creature. We have a body that “flows,” is inseparably bound to the world of the senses, and is subject to the same fate as everything else in this world—a soap bubble, for example. All our senses are based in the body and are consequently unreliable. But we also have an immortal soul—and this soul is the realm of reason. And not being physical, the soul can survey the world of ideas.

Plato also believed that the soul existed before it inhabited the body.

### **The Philosophic State**

The Myth of the Cave is found in Plato’s dialogue the Republic. In this dialogue Plato also presents a picture of the “ideal state,” that is to say an imaginary, ideal, or what we would call a Utopian, state. Briefly, we could say that Plato believed the state should be governed by philosophers. He bases his explanation of this on the construction of the human body.

According to Plato, the human body is composed of three parts: the head, the chest, and the abdomen. For each of these three parts there is a corresponding faculty of the soul. Reason belongs to the head, will belongs to the chest, and appetite belongs to the abdomen. Each of these soul faculties also has an ideal, or “virtue.” Reason aspires to wisdom, Will aspires to courage, and Appetite must be curbed so that temperance can be exercised. Only when the three parts of the body function together as a unity do we get a harmonious or “virtuous” individual. At school, a child must first learn to curb its appetites, then it must develop courage, and finally reason leads to wisdom.

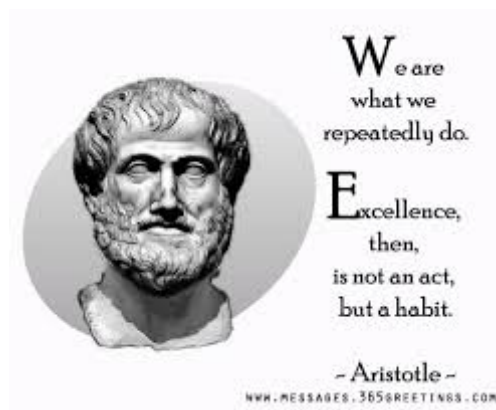
Plato now imagines a state built up exactly like the tripartite human body. Where the body has head, chest, and abdomen, the State has rulers, auxiliaries, and fa-borers (farmers, for example). Here Plato clearly uses Greek medical science as his model. Just as a healthy and harmonious man exercises balance and temperance, so a “virtuous” state is characterized by everyone knowing their place in the overall picture.

Like every aspect of Plato’s philosophy, his political philosophy is characterized by rationalism. The creation of a good state depends on its being governed with reason. Just as the head governs the body, so philosophers must rule society.

Let us attempt a simple illustration of the relationship between the three parts of man and the state:

BODY	SOUL	VIRTUE	STATE
head	reason	wisdom	Rulers
chest	will	courage	Auxiliaries
abdomen	appetite	temperance	Laborers

### Aristotle (384-322 B.C.)



He was a pupil at Plato’s Academy for almost twenty years.

Aristotle was not a native of Athens. Aristotle was born in Stagira, on the Chalcidic peninsula of Macedonia, in northern Greece and came to Plato’s Academy when Plato was 61. Aristotle’s father, Nicomachus, was a respected physician— and therefore a scientist. This background already tells us something about Aristotle’s philosophic project. What he was most interested in was nature study. He was not only the last of the great Greek philosophers, one of the greatest intellectual figures of Western history, but he was Europe’s first great biologist.

Aristotle’s intellectual range was vast, covering most of the sciences and many of the arts, including biology, botany, chemistry, ethics, history, logic, metaphysics,



rhetoric, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, physics, poetics, political theory, psychology, and zoology. He was the founder of formal logic, devising for it a finished system that for centuries was regarded as the sum of the discipline; and he pioneered the study of zoology.

### **Logic**

Aristotle was a meticulous organizer who set out to clarify our concepts. In fact, he founded the science of Logic. He demonstrated a number of laws governing conclusions or proofs that were valid. One example will suffice. If I first establish that “all living creatures are mortal” (first premise), and then establish that “Human being is a living creature” (second premise), I can then elegantly conclude that “Human being is mortal.

### **Ethics**

According to Aristotle, man can only achieve happiness by using all his abilities and capabilities.

Aristotle said that there are three forms of happiness:

The first form of happiness is a life of pleasure and enjoyment.

The second form of happiness is a life as a free and responsible citizen.

The third form of happiness is a life as thinker and philosopher.

Aristotle then emphasized that all three criteria must be present at the same time for man to find happiness and fulfillment. He rejected all forms of imbalance. Had he lived today he might have said that a person who only develops his body lives a life that is just as unbalanced as someone who only uses his head. Both extremes are an expression of a warped way of life.

The same applies in human relationships, where Aristotle advocated **the “Golden Mean.”** We must be neither cowardly nor rash, but courageous (too little courage is cowardice, too much is rashness), neither miserly nor extravagant but liberal (not liberal enough is miserly, too liberal is extravagant). The same goes for eating. It is dangerous to eat too little, but also dangerous to eat too much. The ethics of both Plato and Aristotle contain echoes of Greek medicine: only by exercising balance and temperance will I achieve a happy or “harmonious” life.

### **Politics**

He says that man is by nature a “political animal.” Without a society around us, we are not real people, he claimed. He pointed out that the family and the village satisfy our primary needs of food, warmth, marriage, and child rearing. But the highest form of human fellowship is only to be found in the state.

## **3 Kinds of Friends You Meet in Life according to Aristotle**

The 3 kinds of friends you will meet. **Aristotle** was a Greek philosopher and scientist born in the Macedonian city of Stagira in 384 B.C. As **Aristotle** has said -“Wishing to be friends is quick work, but friendship is a slow-ripening fruit”.

According to Aristotle, he classifies friendship into three different types:

**1. Friendships of utility** are those where people are on friendly terms mainly due to the benefits each brings to the table. Business partners, colleagues, and schoolmates are examples.

**2. Friendships of pleasure** are those where people find each other because of the enjoyment it brings. People hanging out due to fitting hobbies, common interest, and fishing buddies are examples.

**3. Friendships of the good**, are most important as among the three types of friendship. These are friendships based upon respect, appreciation for each other's qualities, and a strong will to aid and assist the other person because one recognizes their greatness. **Friendship of the good** are hard to find and develop. If you happen to have more than a handful of friends based on goodness, you are indeed blessed. As my mother always say, “a friend will tell you what you want to hear, but a good friend will always tell you **what you need to hear**”.

## The Cynics

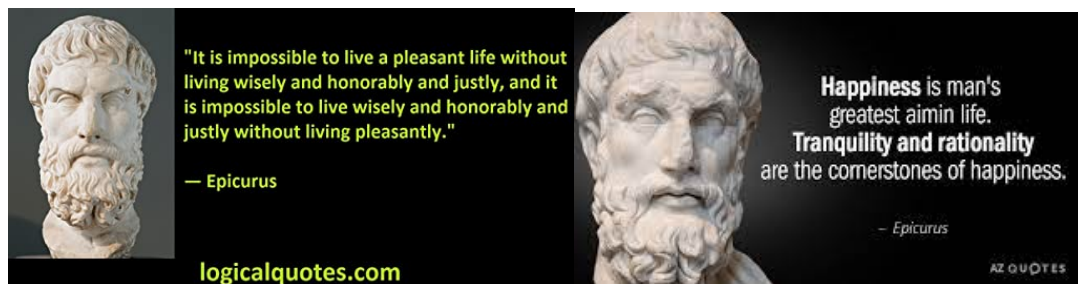


The best known of the Cynics was Diogenes Diogenes, who reputedly lived in a barrel and owned nothing but a cloak, a stick, and a bread bag. He was best known for holding a lantern (or candle) to the faces of the citizens of Athens claiming he was searching for an honest man.

The Cynics emphasized that true happiness is not found in external advantages such as material luxury, political power, or good health. True happiness lies in not being dependent on such random and fleeting things. And because happiness does not consist in benefits of this kind, it is within everyone's reach. Moreover, having once been attained, it can never be lost.

Nowadays the terms "cynical" and "cynicism" have come to mean a sneering disbelief in human sincerity, and they imply insensitivity to other people's suffering.

### Epicurus (341-270 B.C.)



He founded a school of philosophy in Athens. His followers were called Epicureans. He developed the pleasure ethic of Aristippus and combined it with the atom theory of Democritus.

The story goes that the Epicureans lived in a garden. They were therefore known as the "garden philosophers." Above the entrance to this garden there is said to have hung a notice saying, "Stranger, here you will live well. Here pleasure is the highest good."

Epicurus emphasized that the pleasurable results of an action must always be weighed against its possible side effects. If you have ever binged on chocolate you know what I mean. If you haven't, try this exercise: Take all your saved-

up pocket money and buy two hundred crowns' worth of chocolate. (We'll assume you like chocolate.) It is essential to this exercise that you eat it all at one time. About half an hour later, when all that delicious chocolate is eaten, you will understand what Epicurus meant by side effects. Epicurus also believed that a pleasurable result in the short term must be weighed against the possibility of a greater, more lasting, or more intense pleasure in the long term. (Maybe you abstain from eating chocolate for a whole year because you prefer to save up all your pocket money and buy a new bike or go on an expensive vacation abroad.) Unlike animals, we are able to plan our lives. We have the ability to make a "pleasure calculation." Chocolate is good, but a new bike or a trip to England is better.

Values such as friendship and the appreciation of art also count. Moreover, the enjoyment of life required the old Greek ideals of self-control, temperance, and serenity. Desire must be curbed, and serenity will help us to endure pain.



**Based on the book "*Sophie's World*"  
of the Norwegian author GAARDER  
JOSTEIN**