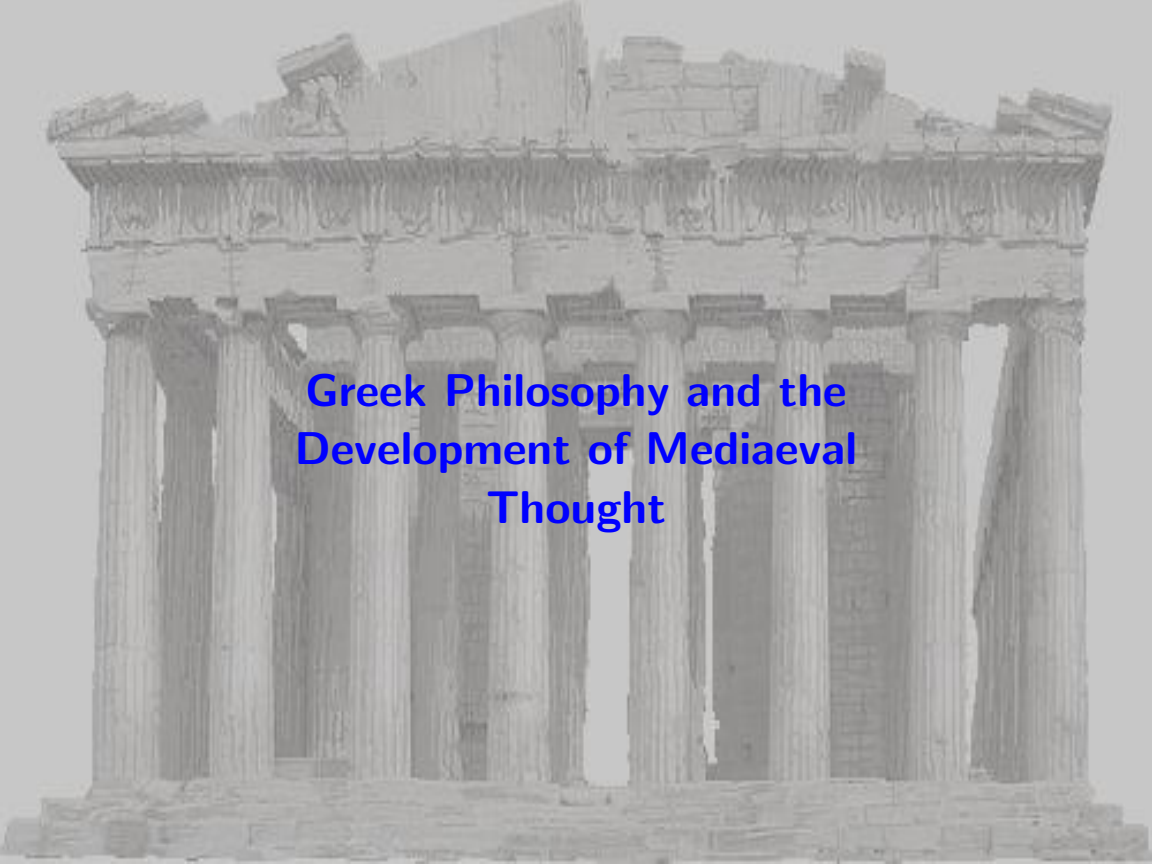


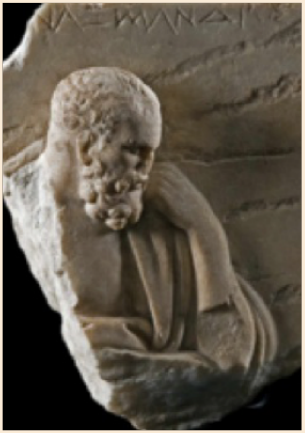
Greek Philosophy and the Development of Mediaeval Thought

The Triumph of Saint Thomas Aquinas

The First Greek Philosophers

(600 - 500 BC)

Thales



Anaximander

Anaximenes

The First Philosophers' Puzzle

What is the world really made of ?

Some Answers

Water

Air

Something entirely indeterminate.

The First Philosophical Answer

Parmenides (~ 500 BC)

(1) What do we mean by ‘real’?

(2) How do we answer this question?

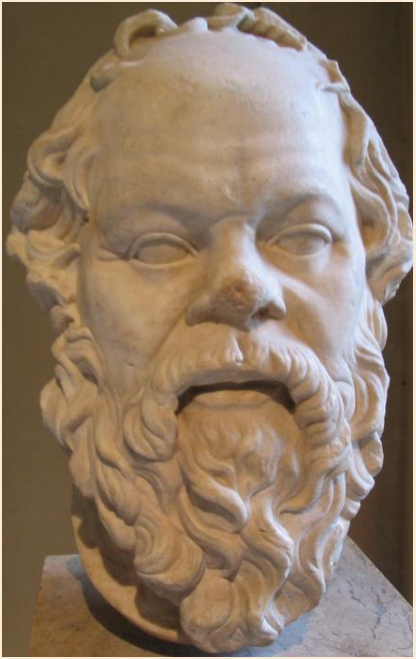
(A) THE GREEK PHILOSOPHERS' ANSWER TO (2)

By reasoning, and arguing we attempt to understand what is involved in being real and seek to discover what best satisifies these conditions.

(B) MOST GREEK PHILOSOPHERS' GENERAL ANSWER TO (1)

What is ultimately real is unchanging.

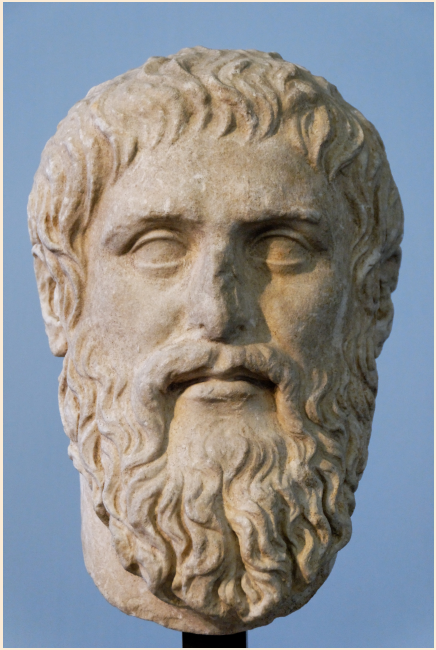
The First Great Exponent of (A)



Socrates 469-399 BCE

THE TWO GREAT GREEK THEORIES OF REALITY

(1) PLATO 429-347 BCE



(1) PLATO'S THEORY

(P1) What is ultimately real is unchanging.

(P2) Humans have knowledge of ultimate reality.

This knowledge enables us to make judgements about things, especially value judgments. We have knowledge of standards.

Example: Our knowledge of the standard of equality for lengths. Our knowledge of right and wrong.

(P3) All knowledge is by DIRECT ACQUAINTANCE.

(P4) Therefore humans are directly acquainted the standards.

(P5) The world of space and time is constantly changing.

(P6) Therefore the standards do not exist in space and time.

Plato calls the standards FORMS.

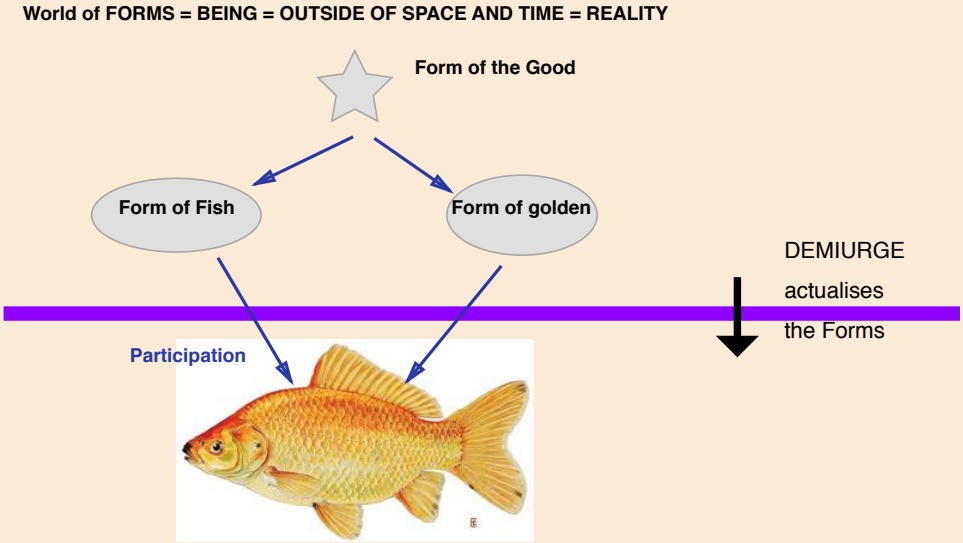
(P7) The human soul exists apart from the body before and after death.

(P8) In this state it has access to the Forms.

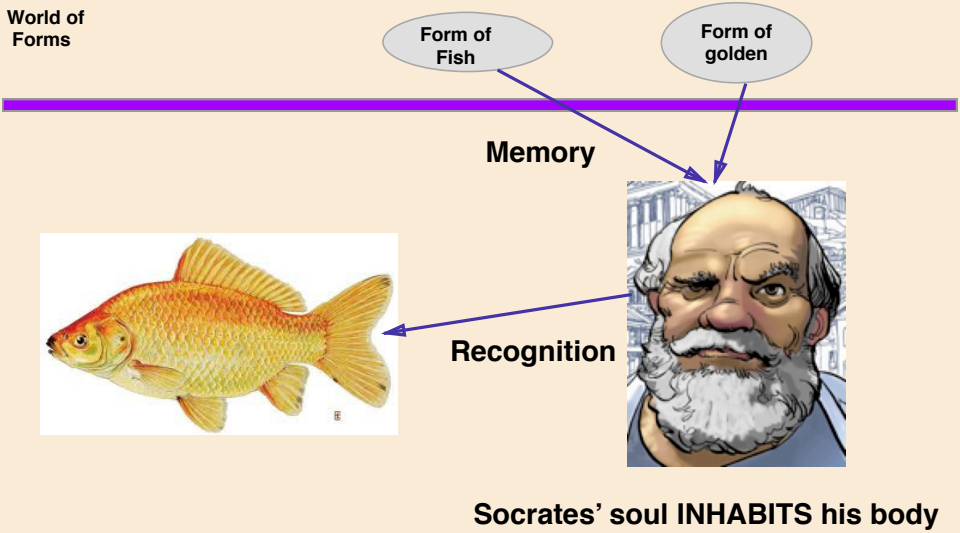
(P9) Our knowledge is recollection of this state.

(P10) Things in space and time are what they are because they PARTICIPATE in the Forms.

(P10) The world of space and time is eternally and necessarily produced as an image of the Forms by the DEMIURGE.

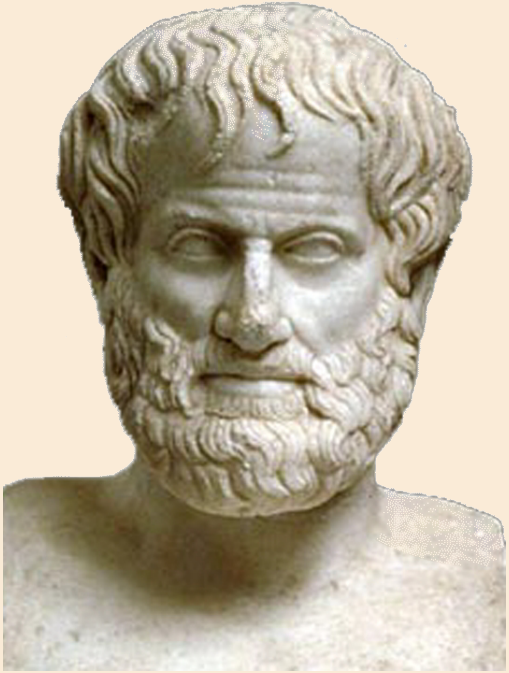


Plato's World



Plato's Theory of Knowledge

(2) ARISTOTLE 384-322 BCE



(2) ARISTOTLE'S THEORY

(A1) What is ultimately real is unchanging.

(A2) Humans have knowledge of ultimate reality.

(A3) The ultimate reality is not located outside of space and time but in things in the world.

Aristotle calls the ultimate reality the SUBSTANTIAL FORM, ESSENCE, or NATURE of a natural thing such as a human being.

(A4) Accidental forms give things their accidental features

Example: The substantial form of humanness makes Socrates human and the accidental form whiteness makes him white.

(A5) Individual substances are composed of matter, a substantial form, and many accidental forms

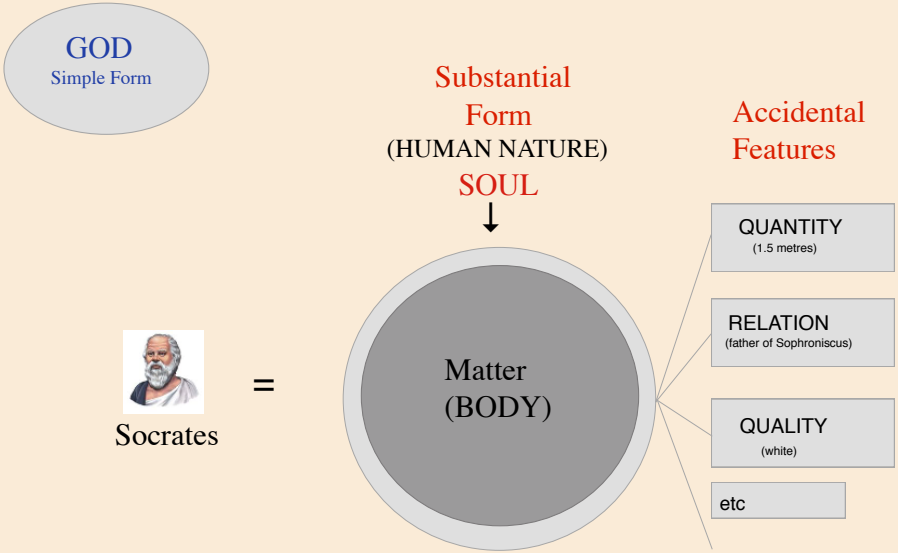
(A6) Humans obtain knowledge of the world through their senses by ABSTRACTING the substantial and accidental forms.

(A7) Forms can exist both in the world and in the mind.

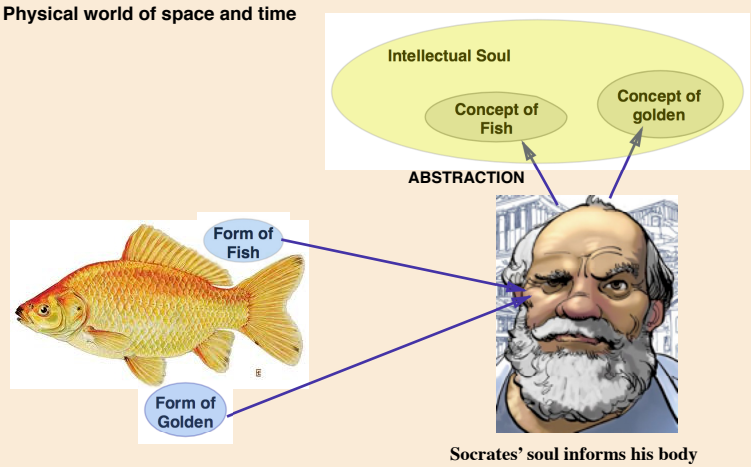
(A7) The form of a living thing is its soul.

(A8) Humans differ from other living things by having intellectual souls, giving them the power to think and understand.

(A9) God is a form without matter.



Aristotle's World



Aristotle's Theory of Knowledge

Christianity took its philosophy indirectly from Plato via Saint Augustine (354-430CE) and directly from Aristotle via Boethius (475-526CE) and translations made from Arabic and Greek in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and commentaries, especially those of Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274CE).

Augustine

Aquinas

Some Problems for Christianity

(1) The Christian god

(a) is the highest being.

(b) is personal and providential.

(c) creates all other beings.

(d) is the free cause of the existence of all other beings.

(a) and (b) rule out the Demiurge.

(b) and (c) rule out Aristotle's God

(d) rules out all the Greek options.

For Plato and Aristotle the world exists eternally and necessarily.

(2) The human soul according to Christianity:

(a) survives death retaining its personal identity.

(b) will reoccupy its body at the resurrection.

(a) rules out Aristotelian intellectual soul

- it does not survive death with a personal identity.

(b) rules out the Platonic soul

- being in the body is a bad thing.

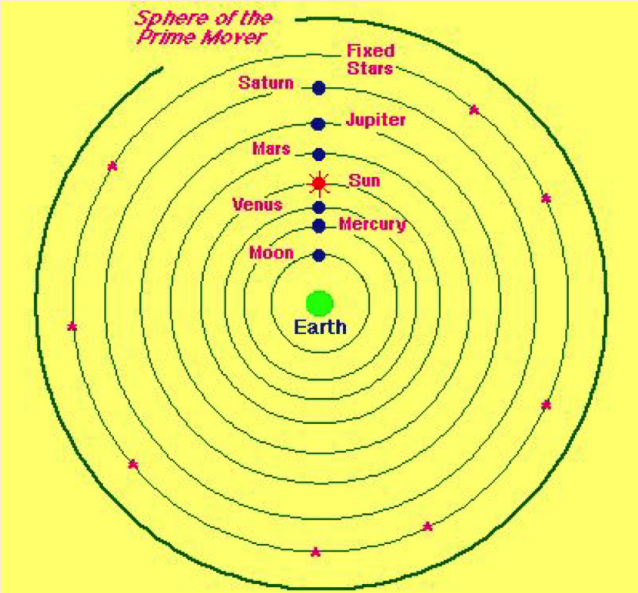
Aristotle's Support For Scripture

(A) Astronomy.

(B) Biology.

(C) Women.

(A) Astronomy.



Aristotle's Geocentric Universe

In Aristotle's Universe:

(a) The earth is at the centre.

(b) Everything beyond the moon is unchanging, except that it moves in a circle.

These ideas were challenged by the development of modern physics and astronomy in the sixteenth and sevententh centuries by Copernicus and Galileo.

(B) Biology.

The Great Chain of Being

In Aristotle's World:

(a) Species exist eternally and do not change.

(b) All the species that could exist, do exist.

(c) There is a hierarchy of beings.

These ideas were challenged by the development of the theory of evolution in the nineteenth century by Darwin.

(C) Women.

The goal of reproduction is to reproduce the father:

> **"Even he who does not resemble his parents is already in a certain sense a monstrosity; for in these cases Nature has in a way departed from the type. The first departure indeed is that the offspring should become female instead of male; And the monstrosity, though not necessary in regard of a final cause and an end yet is necessary accidentally."**
>
> **[Aristotle, On The Generation of Animals.]**

For Aristotle women are NATURALLY inferior to men.