

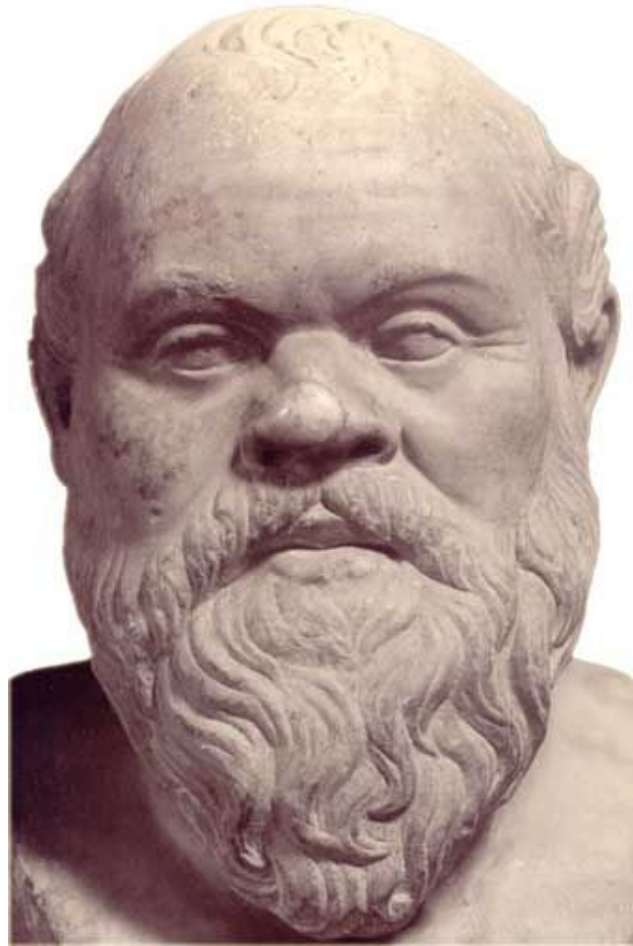
Ethical thought of the Ancient Greece

Socrates, Cynics, Cyrenaics,
Plato and Epicure

Sophists

- Protagoras and Gorgias
- Relativism and objectivism;
- “A man is a measure of everything”;

SOCRATES



THE HUMAN TORPEDO

- Born in Athens on 470 B.C. (his mother was an obstetrician)
- A soldier in the Peloponnesian War (Battles of Potidaea, Delium, and Amphipolis)
- Breaking the Athenian ideal of kalòs kai agathos (not a beautiful man)
- A simple life (with his wife and kids) dedicated entirely to philosophy as a never ending search (lead by a Daemon)
- He left no writings (Phedros 275 e): the problem of fonts (Aristophanes, Policrates, Xenophon, Plato, Aristotle)

SOCRATES AND THE SOPHISTS

Common issues:

- 1) Anti-conformism and anti-traditionalism: a rational search driven by an unconventional and critical attitude**
- 2) Inclined to dialectic and paradoxes**

SOCRATES MORALITY

A new concept of virtue (αρετή, areté)?

Virtue: the optimal realization of an inner quality (for example, cheetahs' virtue is speed, lions' virtue is strength). Traditionally it was something already given by birth or Gods.

With the Sophist and Socrates in particular virtue becomes a value and a goal that should be pursued through education.

Virtue is devotion to research and knowledge: a critical reflection on existence that leads to the concept of living life as an adventure disciplined by reason

The Death of Socrates



THE DEATH OF SOCRATES

399 BC Trial and Execution

Plato's *Apology* and *Crito*

Accuse: impiety (not recognizing the traditional Gods and trying to introduce new ones) and corruption of city's young men.

Requested punishment: death

Defense: glorification of his educational vocation

Judgment: exile or a punishment adequate to the verdict

Socrates' statement: he was disposed to pay a fine, but he suggested that the Polis should recognize his merits providing public money for for his livelihood

Verdict: Death

Possible different end proposed by his friends: To Escape and Live in Exile

Socrates' answer: if he escapes he would be unjust because he would not respect the Laws of the Polis (which can be challenged and changed, but not refused or the life of the Polis would collapse)

Death by poison

Socrates Imprisoned

- Socrates has been condemned to death by a jury in a (formally) regular trial**
- The sentence will be executed when the ship from Delos will arrive: a religious celebration during which any execution was forbidden**

Good Life

Not doing evil in return of evil

(Gandhi “An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind”)

+ Leo Tolstoy (non-resistance);

+ Pacifism

The example of Socrates

Socrates as an example of civil disobedience

- 1) Challenging a decision (or a law, but not the entire system of laws) because it is considered unjust with reference to a moral system that (although not necessarily shared) is understandable by other citizens (for example, contesting a law in the USA on the basis of the Spirit of the Constitution)**
- 2) The challenge should be staged in a public space (otherwise the action would not be different from a criminal act)**
- 3) The actor should take full responsibility for what he does and be ready to pay the price (for example, going to jail)**

Cynics

- Diogenes: born in Sinope, 4th c. B.C.
- “mad Socrates” – a nickname;
- His ethics was his lifestyle;
- “cynic” = dog;
- His philosophy was his lifestyle;
- Jokes and proverbs about Diogenes.
- Influence modern cynics even on the 20th century.

Cyrenaics

- Aristippus: the city of Cyrene;
- The foundation of hedonism!;
- The power of us controlling the destiny;
- Hegessies: no life without satisfaction and desires.

Epicure

- Hedonism and Eudemonic philosophy
- “Epicurean Garden”
- Works: “On Nature”; “On atoms and emptiness”; “On Gods”; “On Nature”
- Separation of pains and pleasures;
- Happiness is pleasure;
- Is hedonism an immoralism?
- Why do people suffer?
- What is fear? What is hope?
- ATARAXIS;

Epicure

- What is a “sweet life”?
- Our wishes often are too strong;
- 3 types of wishes: natural; natural, but not necessary; unnatural and unnecessary

Stoicism

- Greece and Rome;
- Total opposition to hedonism;
- Why must a man suffer?
- What is glory after all?
- What is a human life?

Stoicism

- Marcus Aurelius: “To Oneself”
- Seneca: the ideas of braveness and patience
- APATHY