

1. Greek Rationalism

- ❖ Important **thinkers** in **Athens** produced **many perspectives** on the **meaning of human life**.
- **Socrates'** statement that **a life without critical examination is not worth living** may be seen in the **tragic poets** as well as in the **rationalistic philosophers**.
- ***Mythos*** and ***Logos*** are two **terms** that can help us appreciate **different approaches** in the **interpretation** of meaning in human life.

2. Greek Philosophy

- **Pre- Socratic Cosmologists** : Anaximander, Democritus, Thales, **Parmenides, Heraclitus...**
- **Socratic “revolution”** : bringing down philosophy from the “heavens” to the “human world” - *what is the good life ?*
- **All Greek philosophers after Socrates claimed him as their muse.**
- **Plato and Aristotle especially influenced the progress of European and Islamic thought.**

3. Plato's *Republic*

- **Title, technical connotation : *Politeia* = the best rational structure (*inner form*) for the *POLIS***
- **The main topic : Justice in the **state** and in the **soul****
- **Structural analysis : necessary and sufficient conditions for **any** society or human soul**
- **Tentative definition :**
order/balance/harmony/excellence/beauty
(a rationalistic Homeric/ Apollonian - aesthetic perspective, in comparison with a tragic one where justice is order but is ambiguous)

4. Plato's Rationalistic Vision

- *The simile of the Cave* : a philosophical picture of human life
- Main stages: imprisonment-forced liberation-resistance- gradual accommodation- willing progress- comprehensive understanding of the physical world- forced return to the Cave
- Physical journey a symbol of the intellectual journey of the human mind from *improper* use to *proper*

5. The use and abuse of the human mind

- ***The simile of the Divided Line* : main stages**
- **Below the Line** (imprisonment inside the Cave) :
passive and active – improper use of the mind
seeking primarily pleasure, comfort, wealth, honor, power...
 - ***superficial thinking OR**
might is right (the Sophists -Thrasymachos)
- **Crossing the Line** (setting the prisoner free and forcing him to go up until he stops resisting):
 - ***Socratic shock – recognition of ignorance and need to change direction – begin to seek truth**
(philosophy=love of wisdom: *precedes* other loves)

5a. (continued)

- **Above the Line** (willing ascent out of the Cave ending with seeing the Sun and returning to the Cave) : **proper use of the mind** to understand **objective truth** along the model of **mathematical reasoning** culminating in **comprehensive knowledge**
- This corresponds to Plato's vision of the need to **reform the education system** and the need for **qualified people to rule the Polis** along **rational lines** :the so-called *philosopher- ruler*

6. Journey's End

- ***The simile of the Sun*** : corresponds to ***the vision of the Form of the Good***
 - *The End of the **comprehensive, rigorous education and training of the philosopher**, which includes ***physical, musical, mathematical, aesthetic, moral, philosophical*** training, as well as ***broad experience*** in **socio-economic-political life**
 - *Intellectual enlightenment demands **political commitment** (the “forced” return to the Cave)

7. Plato's *Forms/Ideas*

- **GOODNESS** is the ultimate reality(*Form*) in Plato's **rationalistic** reinterpretation of **Homer's Cosmos**.
- * **The *Forms (Ideas)*** are a **rationalist** reinterpretation of **Homer's gods (Zeus, Apollo, Athene, Aphrodite...)**.
- * This **replaces** the more ambiguous **MOIRAI (lots)** of the **tragedians**.
- * **Goodness** provides the **comprehensive perspective** for a profound understanding of the **Justice** that is needed for the **Polis** and the **human soul** .

***8. The philosopher-king*(ruler)**

- Plato's **rationalistic vision of human life** may be **summed up** in his concept of the ***philosopher-king***.
- Simply stated it expresses **the faith in the power of human reason, properly applied, to penetrate to an adequate understanding of the universe(*wisdom*)**.
- Further it expresses **the conviction that human society can be improved if *power* (kingship,rule) is in the hands of those who have wisdom (*philosophers*)**.

8a. (continued)

- **NOTE WELL.** To achieve this vision, the **necessary and sufficient conditions** include:
 - * A **radical reform** of the **education system** so that everyone has the **opportunity** to discover and demonstrate her/his **full potential (social mobility- not inheritance or a caste-system)**.
 - * The **assumption** that **self-knowledge** will lead to **social harmony** (we will do what **rationally** we are **best fit by nature** to do).

9. (finally...)

- **Remember that Plato's philosopher is not a specialist in a contemporary academic institution.**
- **Note** that he repeatedly stresses in *The Republic* that he does **not** believe **naively** that this **revolutionary** project will ever be **implemented**.
- **Philosophy is not politics.** Each has its **unique function**. Philosophy is **the ongoing attempt to clarify rationally** desirable direction, goals, values. Politics is **the art of implementing** as much as is *possible* of the project.

10. Plato speaking...

- “ **Unless** either **philosophers** become **kings** in their countries, or... **kings**... come to be... inspired with a genuine **desire for wisdom**, **unless** that is to say **political power** and **philosophy** meet together ...there can be **no rest from troubles**... for **states**, nor... for all **mankind**...” (V, 473d)