

# LIVES OF SOME GREAT PHILOSOPHERS

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# INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

## Human history as cultural history

We need to reform our teaching of history so that the emphasis will be placed on the gradual growth of human culture and knowledge, a growth to which all nations and ethnic groups have contributed. In fact, the millennia-long accumulation of knowledge and culture is a much more important part of human history than the wars and power struggles of rulers and national governments.

## Against nationalism

Today, in an era of all-destroying nuclear weapons, instantaneous global communication and worldwide economic interdependence, nationalism has become a dangerous anachronism. History, as it is taught today, is centered on the country where it is being taught. Our own country is the most important. Our own country is always in the right, according to nationalist historians. Patriotic soldiers and generals are exalted. It is sweet and noble to die for one's country. But today, war has become prohibitively dangerous. Unless we rid the world of nuclear weapons, the end of human civilization and much of the biosphere is just around the corner.

Cultural history can be seen as an antidote for nationalism. It allows us to take a wider view of the world, where cooperation is more important than conflict, and where the contributions of all nations, cultures and ethnic groups are recognized.

## Other books on cultural history

This book is part of a series on cultural history. Here is a list of the other books in the series that have, until now, been completed:

- Lives of Some Great Film Directors
- Lives of Some Great Dramatists
- Lives in the Ancient World
- Lives in the Middle Ages

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<sup>1</sup>This book makes use of book chapters that I have previously written, but much new material has also been added.

- Lives in the Renaissance
- Lives in the 17th Century
- Lives in the 18th Century
- Lives in the 19th Century
- Lives in the 20th century
- Lives in Biology
- Lives of Some Great Novelists
- Lives in Mathematics
- Lives in Exploration
- Lives in Education
- Lives in Poetry
- Lives in Painting
- Lives in Engineering
- Lives in Astronomy
- Lives in Chemistry
- Lives in Medicine
- Lives in Ecology
- Lives in Physics
- Lives in Economics
- Lives in the Peace Movement

The pdf files of these books may be downloaded and circulated, free of charge, from the following web addresses:

<https://www.johnavery.info/>

<http://eacpe.org/about-john-scales-avery/>



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# Chapter 1

## CONFUCIUS

### 1.1 Confucius and Chinese culture

After the fall of Rome in the 5th century A.D., Europe became a culturally backward area. However, the great civilizations of Asia and the Middle East continued to flourish, and it was through contact with these civilizations that science was reborn in the west.

During the dark ages of Europe, a particularly high level of civilization existed in China. The art of working in bronze was developed in China during the Shang dynasty (1,500 B.C. - 1,100 B.C.) and it reached a high pitch of excellence in the Chou dynasty (1,100 B.C. - 250 B.C.).

In the Chou period, many of the cultural characteristics which we recognize as particularly Chinese were developed. During this period, the Chinese evolved a code of behavior based on politeness and ethics. Much of this code of behavior is derived from the teachings of K'ung Fu-tzu (Confucius), a philosopher and government official who lived between 551 B.C. and 479 B.C.. In his writings about ethics and politics, K'ung Fu-tzu advocated respect for tradition and authority, and the effect of his teaching was to strengthen the conservative tendencies in Chinese civilization. He was not a religious leader, but a moral and political philosopher, like the philosophers of ancient Greece. He is traditionally given credit for the compilation of the Five Classics of Chinese Literature, which include books of history, philosophy and poetry, together with rules for religious ceremonies.

### 1.2 Some sayings of Confucius

**By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.**

**Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it.**

Wheresoever you go, go with all your heart.

It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.

Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated.

If you make a mistake and do not correct it, this is called a mistake.

The man who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones.

The funniest people are the saddest ones.

Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves.

To be wronged is nothing, unless you continue to remember it.

Respect yourself and others will respect you.

Silence is a true friend who never betrays.

You cannot open a book without learning something.

When you see a good person, think of becoming like her/him. When you see someone not so good, reflect on your own weak points.

Attack the evil that is within yourself, rather than attacking the evil that is in others.

The man who asks a question is a fool for a minute, the man who does not ask is a fool for life.

What the superior man seeks is in himself; what the small man seeks is in others.

I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.

Music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without.

The hardest thing of all is to find a black cat in a dark room, especially if there is no cat.

It is not the failure of others to appreciate your abilities that should trouble you, but rather your failure to appreciate theirs.

The man of wisdom is never of two minds; the man of benevolence never worries; the man of courage is never afraid.

The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials.

Give a bowl of rice to a man and you will feed him for a day. Teach him how to grow his own rice and you will save his life.

Only the wisest and stupidest of men never change.

It is more shameful to distrust our friends than to be deceived by them.

Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance.

And remember, no matter where you go, there you are.

Hold faithfulness and sincerity as first principles.

If what one has to say is not better than silence, then one should keep silent.

Forget injuries, never forget kindnesses.

When it is obvious that the goals cannot be reached, don't adjust the goals, adjust the action steps.

Better a diamond with a flaw than a pebble without.

To put the world in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order; we must first cultivate our personal life; we must first set our hearts right.

A lion chased me up a tree, and I greatly enjoyed the view from the top.

To be wealthy and honored in an unjust society is a disgrace.

In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of.

If your plan is for one year plant rice. If your plan is for ten years plant trees. If your plan is for one hundred years educate children.

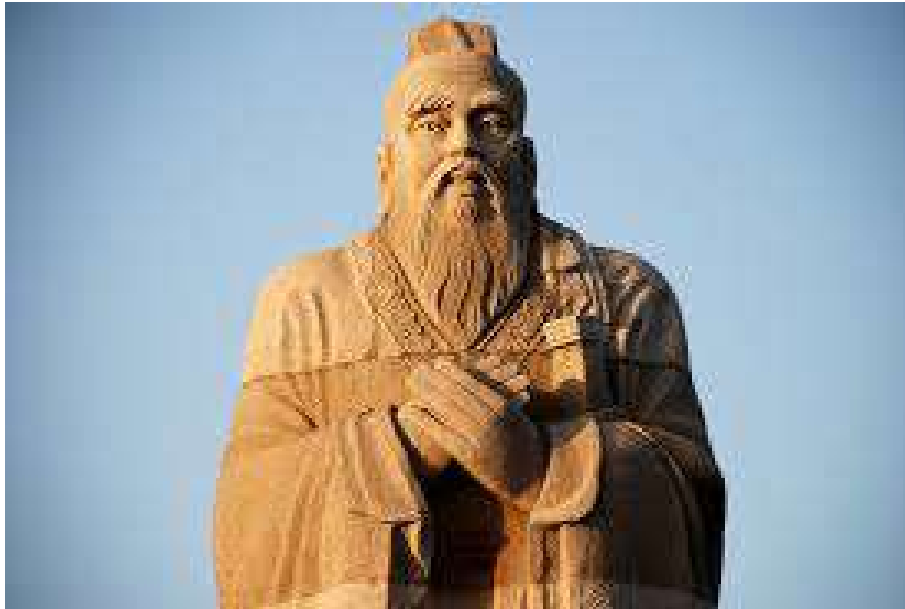


Figure 1.1: Confucius

Don't do unto others what you don't want done unto you.

Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace.

To see what is right and not do it is the worst cowardice.

Time flows away like the water in the river.

The superior man thinks always of virtue; the common man thinks of comfort.

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# Chapter 2

## BUDDHA

### 2.1 Early civilization in India

Evidence of a very early river-valley civilization in India has been found at a site called Mohenjo-Daro. However, in about 2,500 B.C., this early civilization was destroyed by some great disaster, perhaps a series of floods; and for the next thousand years, little is known about the history of India. During this dark period between 2,500 B.C. and 1,500 B.C., India was invaded by the Indo-Aryans, who spoke Sanskrit, a language related to Greek. The Indo-Aryans partly drove out and partly enslaved the smaller and darker native Dravidians. However, there was much intermarriage between the groups, and to prevent further intermarriage, the Indo-Aryans introduced a caste system sanctioned by religion.

### 2.2 Hindu religious belief

According to Hindu religious belief, the soul of a person who has died is reborn in another body. If, throughout his life, the person has faithfully performed the duties of his caste, then his or her soul may be reborn into a higher caste. Finally, after existing as a Brahman, the soul may be so purified that it can be released from the cycle of death and rebirth.

### 2.3 The life and teaching of Gautama Buddha

In the 6th century B.C., Gautama Buddha founded a new religion in India. Gautama Buddha was convinced that all the troubles of humankind spring from attachment to earthly things. He felt that the only escape from sorrow is through the renunciation of earthly desires. He also urged his disciples to follow a high ethical code, the Eightfold Way. Among the sayings of Buddha are the following:

“Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love.”

“Let a man overcome anger by love; let him overcome evil by good.”

“All men tremble at punishment. All men love life. Remember that you are like them, and do not cause slaughter.”

## 2.4 The spread of Buddhism

One of the early converts to Buddhism was the emperor Asoka Maurya, who reigned in India between 273 B.C. and 232 B.C.. During one of his wars of conquest, Asoka Maurya became so sickened by the slaughter that he resolved never again to use war as an instrument of policy. He became one of the most humane rulers in history, and he also did much to promote the spread of Buddhism throughout Asia.

Under the Mauryan dynasty (322 B.C. - 184 B.C.), the Gupta dynasty (320 B.C. - 500 A.D.) and also under the rajah Harsha (606 A.D. - 647 A.D.), India had periods of unity, peace and prosperity. At other times, the country was divided and upset by internal wars. The Gupta period especially is regarded as the golden age of India's classical past. During this period, India led the world in such fields as medicine and mathematics.

The Guptas established both universities and hospitals. According to the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Fa-Hsien, who visited India in 405 A.D., “The nobles and householders have founded hospitals within the city to which the poor of all countries, the destitute, crippled and diseased may go. They receive every kind of help without payment.”

Indian doctors were trained in cleansing wounds, in using ointments and in surgery. They also developed antidotes for poisons and for snakebite, and they knew some techniques for the prevention of disease through vaccination.

When they had completed their training, medical students in India took an oath, which resembled the Hippocratic oath: “Not for yourself, not for the fulfillment of any earthly desire or gain, but solely for the good of suffering humanity should you treat your patients.”

In Indian mathematics, algebra and trigonometry were especially highly developed. For example, the astronomer Brahmagupta (598 A.D. - 660 A.D.) applied algebraic methods to astronomical problems. The notation for zero and the decimal system were invented in India, probably during the 8th or 9th century A.D.. These mathematical techniques were later transmitted to Europe by the Arabs.

Many Indian techniques of manufacture were also transmitted to the west by the Arabs. Textile manufacture in particular was highly developed in India, and the Arabs, who were the middlemen in the trade with the west, learned to duplicate some of the most famous kinds of cloth. One kind of textile which they copied was called “quttan” by the Arabs, a word which in English has become “cotton”. Other Indian textiles included cashmere (Kashmir), chintz and calico (from Calcutta, which was once called Calicut). Muslin derives its name from Mosul, an Arab city where it was manufactured, while damask was made in Damascus.

Indian mining and metallurgy were also highly developed. The Europeans of the middle ages prized fine laminated steel from Damascus; but it was not in Damascus that the technique of making steel originated. The Arabs learned steelmaking from the Persians, and Persia learned it from India.



Figure 2.1: Gautama Buddha

## 2.5 The Noble Eightfold Path

1. **Right understanding.** *And what is right understanding? There are fruits, and results of good and bad actions. There is this world and the next world. There is mother and father. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are contemplatives and Brahmins who faring rightly and practicing rightly, proclaim this world and the next after having directly known and realized it for themselves.’ This is the right view with effluents, siding with merit, resulting in acquisitions*
2. **Right resolve.** *And what is right resolve? Being resolved on renunciation, on freedom from ill will, on harmlessness: This is called right resolve.*
3. **Right speech.** *And what is right speech? Abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from abusive speech, and from idle chatter: This is called right speech.*
4. **Right action.** *And what is right action? Abstaining from killing, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from sexual misconduct. This is called right action.*
5. **Right livelihood.** *And what is right livelihood? Not possessing more than is strictly necessary. Avoiding causing suffering to sentient beings by cheating them, or harming or killing them in any way.*
6. **Right effort.** *And what is right effort? Here the monk arouses his will, puts forth effort, generates energy, exerts his mind, and strives to prevent the arising of evil and unwholesome mental states that have not yet arisen. He arouses his will... and strives to eliminate evil and unwholesome mental states that have already arisen, to keep them free of delusion, to develop, increase, cultivate, and perfect them. This is called right effort.*

7. **Right mindfulness.** *And what is right mindfulness? Here the monk remains contemplating the body as body, resolute, aware and mindful, having put aside worldly desire and sadness; he remains contemplating feelings as feelings; he remains contemplating mental states as mental states; he remains contemplating mental objects as mental objects, resolute, aware and mindful, having put aside worldly desire and sadness; This is called right mindfulness.*
8. **Right concentration.** *And what is right concentration? [i] Here, the monk, detached from sense-desires, detached from unwholesome states, enters and remains in the first jhana (level of concentration, in which there is applied and sustained thinking, together with joy and pleasure born of detachment; [ii] And through the subsiding of applied and sustained thinking, with the gaining of inner stillness and oneness of mind, he enters and remains in the second jhana, which is without applied and sustained thinking, and in which there are joy and pleasure born of concentration; [iii] And through the fading of joy, he remains equanimous, mindful and aware, and he experiences in his body the pleasure of which the Noble Ones say: “equanimous, mindful and dwelling in pleasure”, and thus he enters and remains in the third jhana; [iv] And through the giving up of pleasure and pain, and through the previous disappearance of happiness and sadness, he enters and remains in the fourth jhana, which is without pleasure and pain, and in which there is pure equanimity and mindfulness. This is called right concentration.*

## Some of the sayings of Gautama Buddha

In the end, only three things matter: How much you loved, how gently you lived, and how gracefully you let go of things not meant for you.

Buddha was asked, “What have you gained from meditation?” He replied NOTHING! However let me tell you what i have lost: anger, anxiety, depression, insecurity, fear of old age and death.

When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.

The less you respond to negative people, the more peaceful your life will become.

Health is the greatest gift, contentment is the greatest wealth, A trusted friend is the best relative, liberated mind is the greatest bliss.

The thought manifests as the word: the word manifests as the deed: the deed develops into character. So watch the thought and its ways with care, and let it spring from love born out of concern for all beings.

Do not learn how to react learn how to respond.

If your compassion does not include yourself, It is incomplete.

Everything that has a beginning has an ending. Make your peace with that and all will be well.

If anything is worth doing, do it with all your heart.

Your worst enemy cannot harm you as much as your own unguarded thoughts.

The root of suffering is attachment.

Holding onto anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.

All that we are is the result of what we have thought.

Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment.

What you think you become, what you feel, you attract. what you imagine, you create.

nothing can harm you as much as your own thoughts unguarded.

The trouble is you think you have time.

Your work is to discover your world and then with all your heart give yourself to it.

Believe nothing, no matter where you read it or who has said it, not even if i have said it. Unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense.

On the long journey of human life, Faith is the best of companions.

To understand everything is to forgive everything.

No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path.

There is no path to happiness: Happiness is the path.

No matter how hard the past, you can always begin again.

If you want to fly, give up everything that weighs you down.

You only lose what you cling to.

When we meet real tragedy in life, we can react in two ways- Either by losing hope and falling into self-destructive habits or by using the challenge to find our inner strength.

Don't rush anything. When the time is right, it will happen.

The whole secret of existence is to have no fear.

Be kind to all creatures; this is the true religion.

Those who are free of resentful thoughts surely find peace.

It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light

Quiet the mind, and the soul will speak.

Each morning we are born again. What we do today is what matters most.

A man who conquers himself is greater than one who conquers a thousand men in a battle.

All human unhappiness comes from not facing reality squarely, exactly as it is.

It is better to be hated for what you are than to be loved for what you are not.

He who does not understand your silence will probably not understand your words.

You will not be punished for your anger, you will be punished by your anger.

Whatever befalls you, walk on untouched, unattached.

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# Chapter 3

## PYTHAGORAS

### 3.1 The Pythagorean brotherhood

Pythagoras, a student of Anaximander, first became famous as a leader and reformer of the Orphic religion. He was born on the island of Samos, near the Asian mainland, and like other early Ionian philosophers, he is said to have travelled extensively in Egypt and Mesopotamia. In 529 B.C., he left Samos for Croton, a large Greek colony in southern Italy. When he arrived in Croton, his reputation had preceded him, and a great crowd of people came out of the city to meet him. After Pythagoras had spoken to this crowd, six hundred of them left their homes to join the Pythagorean brotherhood without even saying goodbye to their families.

For a period of about twenty years, the Pythagoreans gained political power in Croton, and they also had political influence in the other Greek colonies of the western Mediterranean. However, when Pythagoras was an old man, the brotherhood which he founded fell from power, their temples at Croton were burned, and Pythagoras himself moved to Metapontion, another Greek city in southern Italy. Although it was never again politically influential, the Pythagorean brotherhood survived for more than a hundred years.

The Pythagorean brotherhood admitted women on equal terms, and all its members held their property in common. Even the scientific discoveries of the brotherhood were considered to have been made in common by all its members.

### 3.2 Pythagorean harmony

The Pythagoreans practiced medicine, and also a form of psychotherapy. According to Aristoxenus, a philosopher who studied under the Pythagoreans, “They used medicine to purge the body, and music to purge the soul”. Music was of great importance to the Pythagoreans, as it was also to the original followers of Dionysus and Orpheus.

Both in music and in medicine, the concept of harmony was very important. Here Pythagoras made a remarkable discovery which united music and mathematics. He discovered that the harmonics which are pleasing to the human ear can be produced by

dividing a lyre string into lengths which are expressible as simple ratios of whole numbers. For example, if we divide the string in half by clamping it at the center, (keeping the tension constant), the pitch of its note rises by an octave. If the length is reduced to  $2/3$  of the basic length, then the note is raised from the fundamental tone by the musical interval which we call a major fifth, and so on. The discovery that harmonious musical tones could be related by rational numbers<sup>1</sup> made the Pythagoreans think that rational numbers are the key to understanding nature, and this belief became a part of their religion.

Having discovered that musical harmonics are governed by mathematics, Pythagoras fitted this discovery into the framework of Orphism. According to the Orphic religion, the soul may be reincarnated in a succession of bodies. In a similar way (according to Pythagoras), the “soul” of the music is the mathematical structure of its harmony, and the “body” through which it is expressed is the gross physical instrument. Just as the soul can be reincarnated in many bodies, the mathematical idea of the music can be expressed through many particular instruments; and just as the soul is immortal, the idea of the music exists eternally, although the instruments through which it is expressed may decay.

In distinguishing very clearly between mathematical ideas and their physical expression, Pythagoras was building on the earlier work of Thales, who thought of geometry as dealing with dimensionless points and lines of perfect straightness, rather than with real physical objects. The teachings of Pythagoras and his followers served in turn as an inspiration for Plato’s idealistic philosophy.

Having found mathematical harmony in the world of sound, and having searched for it in astronomy, Pythagoras tried to find mathematical relationships in the visual world. Among other things, he discovered the five possible regular polyhedra. However, his greatest contribution to geometry is the famous Pythagorean theorem, which is considered to be the most important single theorem in the whole of mathematics.

The Mesopotamians and the Egyptians knew that for many special right triangles, the sum of the squares formed on the two shorter sides is equal to the square formed on the long side. For example, Egyptian surveyors used a triangle with sides of lengths 3, 4 and 5 units. They knew that between the two shorter sides, a right angle is formed, and that for this particular right triangle, the sum of the squares of the two shorter sides is equal to the square of the longer side. Pythagoras proved that this relationship holds for every right triangle.

In exploring the consequences of his great theorem, Pythagoras and his followers discovered that the square root of 2 is an irrational number. (In other words, it cannot be expressed as the ratio of two integers.) The discovery of irrationals upset them so much that they abandoned algebra. They concentrated entirely on geometry, and for the next two thousand years geometrical ideas dominated science and philosophy.

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<sup>1</sup>i-e. numbers that can be expressed as a ratio of two integers

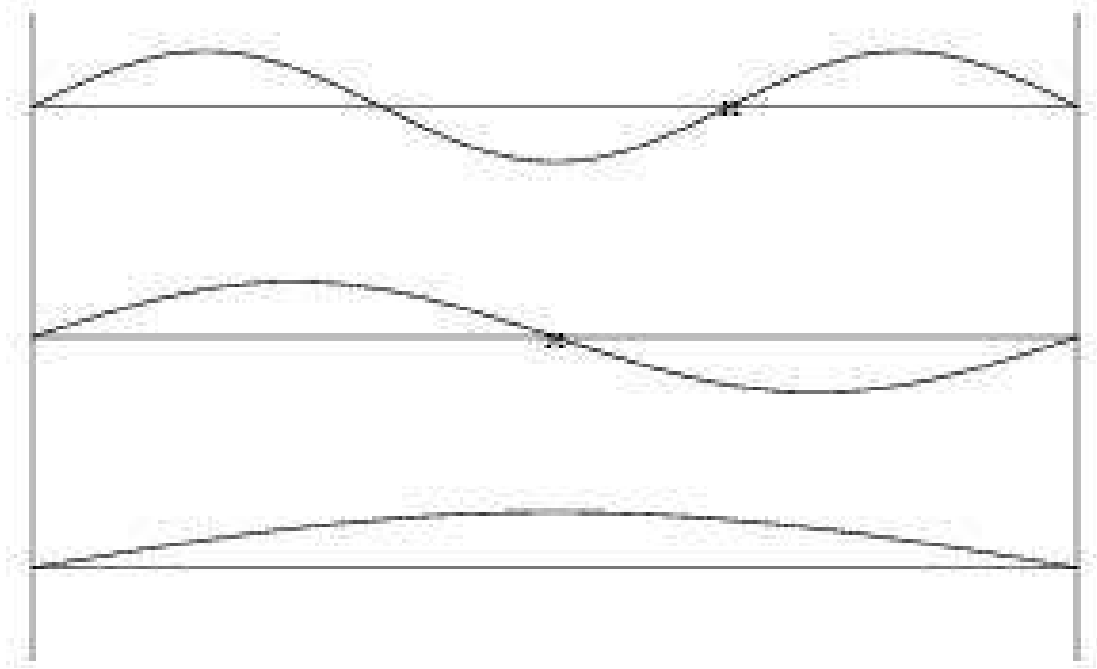


Figure 3.1: Pythagoras (569 B.C. - 475 B.C.) discovered that the musical harmonics that are pleasing to the human ear can be produced by clamping a lyre string of constant tension at points that are related by rational numbers. In the figure the octave and the major fifth above the octave correspond to the ratios  $1/2$  and  $1/3$ .

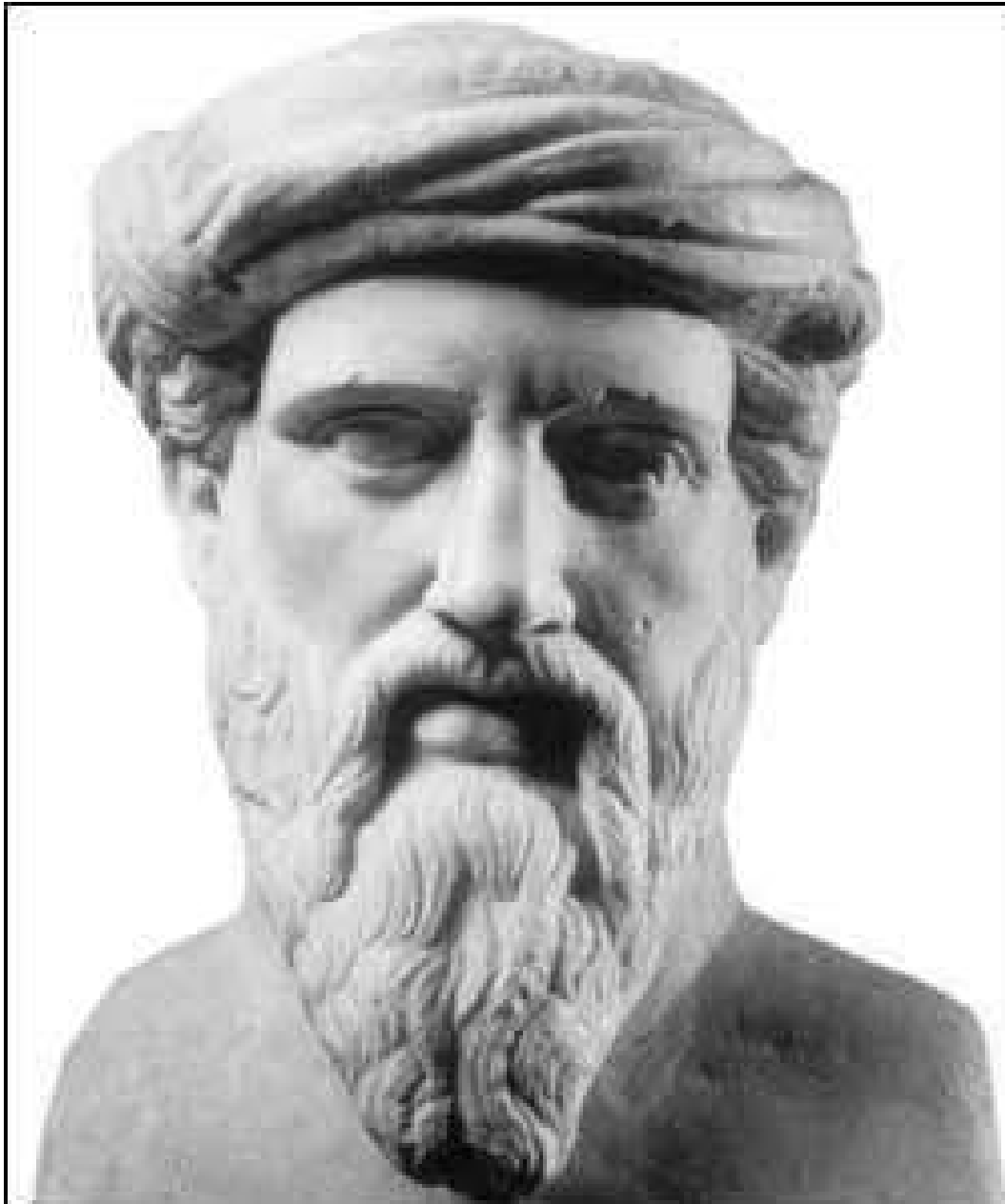


Figure 3.2: Pythagoras founded a brotherhood that lasted about a hundred years and greatly influenced the development of mathematics and science. The Pythagorean theorem, which he discovered, is considered to be the most important single theorem in mathematics.

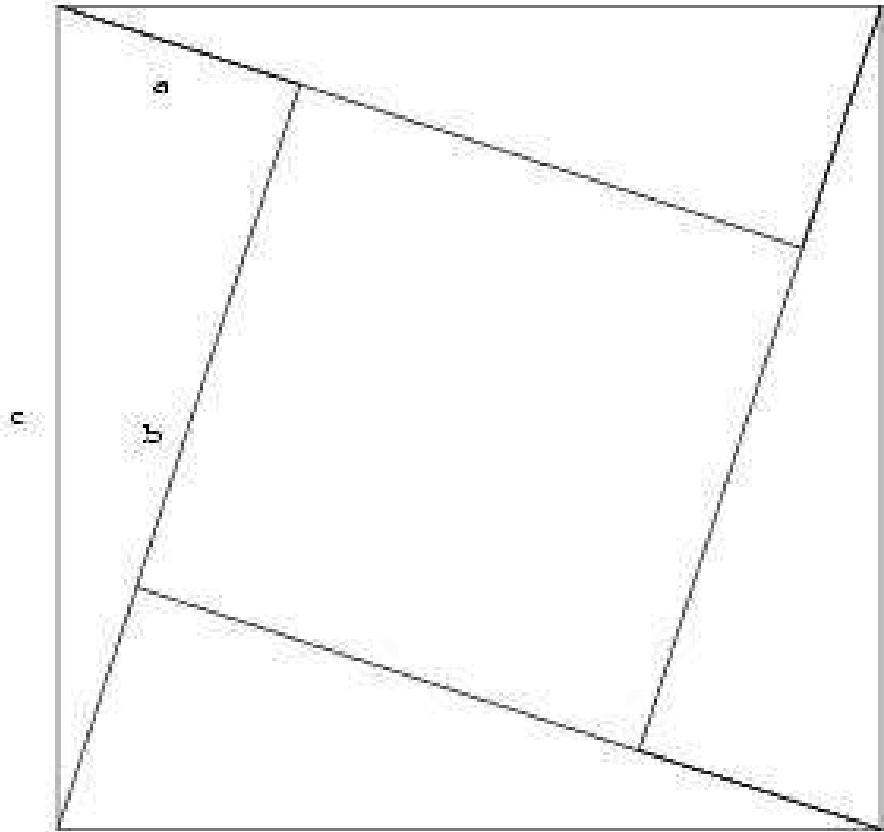


Figure 3.3: This figure can be used to prove the famous theorem of Pythagoras concerning squares constructed on the sides of a right triangle (i.e. a triangle where two of the sides are perpendicular to each other). It shows a right triangle whose sides, in order of increasing length, are  $a$ ,  $b$  and  $c$ . Four identical copies of this triangle, with total area  $2ab$ , are inscribed inside a square constructed on the long side.

### 3.3 Geometry as a part of religion

The classical Greek geometers, most of whom were Pythagoreans, discovered many geometrical theorems. They believed that the contemplation of eternal geometrical truths was a way of finding release from the suffering of human existence, and geometry was a part of their religion. There were certain rules that had to be followed in geometrical constructions: only a compass and a straight ruler could be used. The theorems of the geometers of classical Greece were collected and put into a logical order by Euclid, who lived in Alexandria, the capital city of Egypt founded by Alexander of Macedon.

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# Chapter 4

## PLATO

### 4.1 Plato, an Athenian aristocrat

Plato (427 B.C. - 317 B.C.) was an Athenian aristocrat, descended from the early kings of Athens. His real name was Aristocles, but he was called by his nickname, Platon (meaning “broad”) because of his broad shoulders. After the death of Socrates, Plato left Athens, saying that the troubles of the city would never end until a philosopher became king. (He may have had himself in mind!) He travelled to Italy and studied under the Pythagoreans. In 387 he returned to Athens and founded a school, which was called the Academy because it stood on ground which had once belonged to a Greek named Academus.

### 4.2 Plato and Pythagorean idealism

Plato developed a philosophy which was based on the idealism of the Pythagoreans. In Pythagorean philosophy, a clear distinction was made between mathematical ideas and their physical expression. For example, geometry was considered to deal, not with real physical objects, but with idealized figures, constructed from lines of perfect straightness and infinite thinness. Plato developed and exaggerated the idealism of Pythagoras. In Plato’s philosophy, the real world is corruptible and base, but the world of ideas is divine and eternal. A real table, for example, is an imperfect expression of the idea of a table. Therefore we ought to turn our eyes away from the real world and live in the world of ideas.

Plato’s philosophy was just what the Athenians wanted! All around them, their world was crumbling. They gladly turned their backs on the unpleasantness of the real world, and accepted Plato’s invitation to live in the world of ideas, where nothing decays and where the golden laws of mathematics rule eternally.

By all accounts, Plato was an excellent mathematician, and through his influence mathematics obtained a permanent place in education.



Figure 4.1: Plato and Aristotle by Raphael. According to Wikipedia, “The human soul in the works of Plato and Aristotle has a nature that is divided in a specifically human way. One part is specifically human and rational, being further divided into (1) a part which is rational on its own; and (2) a spirited part which can understand reason. Other parts of the soul are home to desires or passions similar to those found in animals.”

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# Chapter 5

## SOCRATES

### 5.1 The Sophists and Socrates

Since Athens was a democracy, the citizens often found themselves speaking at public meetings. Eloquence could be turned into influence, and the wealthy Athenians imported teachers to help them master the art of rhetoric. These teachers, called “Sophists” (literally “wisdomists”), besides teaching rhetoric, also taught a form of philosophy which denied the existence of absolute truth, absolute beauty and absolute justice. According to the Sophists, “man is the measure of all things”, all truths are relative, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder”, and justice is not divine or absolute but is a human institution.

Opposed to the Sophists was the philosopher Socrates, who believed passionately in the existence of the absolutes which the Sophists denied. According to Socrates, a beautiful object would be beautiful whether or not there were any humans to observe it. Socrates adopted from the Sophists a method of conducting arguments by asking questions which made people see for themselves the things which Socrates wanted them to see.

The Sophists talked about moral and political questions, rather than about the nature of the universe. Socrates was an opponent of the Sophists, but like them he also neglected the study of nature and concentrated on the moral and political problems of man, “the measure of all things”. The Sophists, together with Socrates and his pupil Plato, exerted a great influence in causing a split between moral philosophy and natural philosophy.

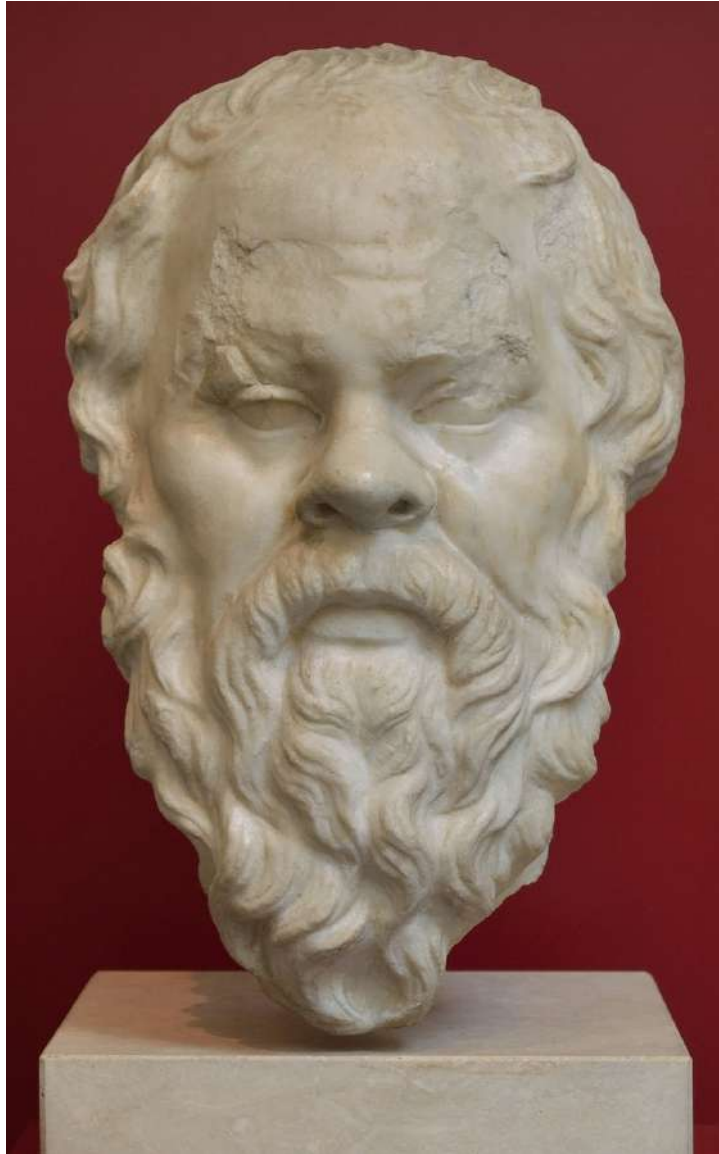


Figure 5.1: Head of Socrates in Palazzo Massimo alle Terme (Rome). Uploaded by Livoandronico2013, [CC BY-SA 4.0], Wikimedia Commons

## 5.2 The Peloponesian Wars and the plague

The beginning of the end of classical Greek civilization came in 431 B.C., when Athens, pushing her aggressive commercial policy to an extreme, began to expel Corinthian merchants from markets around the Aegean. Corinth reacted by persuading the Peloponesian League to declare war on Athens. This was the beginning of a long war which ruined Greece.

Realizing that they could not resist the Spartan land forces, the Athenians abandoned the farmland outside their city, and took refuge inside the walls. The Athenians continued their prosperous foreign trade, and they fed their population with grain imported from the east. Ships bringing grain also brought the plague. A large part of the population of Athens died of the plague, including the city's great leader, Pericles. No leader of equal stature was found to replace him, and the democratic Athenian government degenerated into mob rule.

In 404 B.C., when the fleet of Athens was destroyed in a disastrous battle, the city surrendered to the Spartans. However, the Spartans remembered that without Athens, they would be unable to resist the Persian Empire. Therefore they did not destroy Athens totally, but were content to destroy the walls of Athens, reducing the city to the status of a satellite of Sparta.

## 5.3 The death of Socrates

Looking for scapegoats on whom to blame this disaster, the Athenian mobs seized Socrates (one of the few intellectuals who remained alive after the Peloponesian War), and they condemned him to death for failing to believe in the gods of the city.

For a short period, Sparta dominated the Greek world; but soon war broke out again, and the political scene degenerated into a chaos of wars between the city states.

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# Chapter 6

## ARISTOTLE

### 6.1 Plato's favorite student

Plato's favorite student was a young man from Macedon named Aristotle. Plato called him "the intelligence of the school". He was born in 381 B.C., the son of the court physician of the king of Macedon, and at the age of seventeen he went to Athens to study. He joined Plato's Academy and worked there for twenty years until Plato died. Aristotle then left the Academy, saying that he disapproved of the emphasis on mathematics and theory and the decline of natural science.

### 6.2 Tutor of Alexander the Great

Aristotle traveled throughout the Greek world and married the sister of the ruler of one of the cities which he visited. In 312 B.C., Philip II, who had just become king of Macedon, sent for Aristotle and asked him to become the tutor of his fourteen-year-old son, Alexander. Aristotle accepted this post and continued in it for a number of years. During this period, the Macedonians, under Philip, conquered most of the Greek city-states. Philip then planned to lead a joint Macedonian and Greek force in an attack on the Persian Empire. However, in 336 B.C., before he could begin his invasion of Persia, he was murdered (probably by an agent of his wife, Olympia, who was jealous because Philip had taken a second wife). Alexander then succeeded to his father's throne, and, at the head of the Macedonian and Greek army, he invaded Persia.

### 6.3 A pioneer of evolutionary thought

Aristotle, no longer needed as a royal tutor, returned to Athens and founded a school of his own called the Lyceum. At the Lyceum he built up a collection of manuscripts which resembled the library of a modern university.

Aristotle was a very great organizer of knowledge, and his writings almost form a one-man encyclopedia. His best work was in biology, where he studied and classified more than five hundred animal species, many of which he also dissected. In Aristotle's classification of living things, he shows an awareness of the interrelatedness of species. This interrelatedness was later brought forward by Darwin as evidence for the theory of evolution. One cannot really say that Aristotle proposed a theory of evolution, but he was groping towards the idea. In his history of animals, he writes:

"Nature proceeds little by little from lifeless things to animal life, so that it is impossible to determine either the exact line of demarcation, or on which side of the line an intermediate form should lie. Thus, next after lifeless things in the upward scale comes the plant. Of plants, one will differ from another as to its apparent amount of vitality. In a word, the whole plant kingdom, whilst devoid of life as compared with the animal, is yet endowed with life as compared with other corporeal entities. Indeed, there is observed in plants a continuous scale of ascent towards the animal."

## 6.4 Aristotle's classification of living things

Aristotle's classification of living things, starting at the bottom of the scale and going upward, is as follows: Inanimate matter, lower plants and sponges, higher plants, jellyfish, zoophytes and ascidians, molluscs, insects, jointed shellfish, octopuses and squids, fish and reptiles, whales, land mammals and man. The acuteness of Aristotle's observation and analysis can be seen from the fact that he classified whales and dolphins as mammals (where they belong) rather than as fish (where they superficially seem to belong).

One of Aristotle's important biological studies was his embryological investigation of the developing chick. Ever since his time, the chick has been the classical object for embryological studies. He also studied the four-chambered stomach of the ruminants and the detailed anatomy of the mammalian reproductive system. He used diagrams to illustrate complex anatomical relationships - an important innovation in teaching technique.

Aristotle's physics and astronomy were far less successful than his biology. In these fields, he did not contribute with his own observations. On the whole, he merely repeated the often-mistaken ideas of his teacher, Plato.

## 6.5 The very wide range of Aristotle's work

Besides writing on biology, physics and astronomy, Aristotle also discussed ethics, politics and literary criticism, and he made a great contribution to western thought by inventing a formal theory of logic. His writings on logic were made popular by St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), and during the period between Aquinas and the Renaissance, Aristotle's logic dominated theology and philosophy. In fact, through his work on logic, Aristotle became so important to scholastic philosophy that his opinions on other subjects were accepted as absolute authority. Unfortunately, Aristotle's magnificent work in biology was forgotten,

and it was his misguided writings on physics and astronomy which were influential. Thus, for the experimental scientists of the 16th and 17th centuries, Aristotle eventually became the symbol of wrongness, and many of their struggles and victories have to do with the overthrow of Aristotle's doctrines.

Even after it had lost every vestige of political power, Athens continued to be a university town, like Oxford or Cambridge. Plato's Academy continued to teach students for almost a thousand years. It was finally closed in 529 A.D. by the Emperor Justinian, who feared its influence as a stronghold of "pagan philosophy".

Aristotle's Lyceum continued for some time as an active institution, but it soon declined, because although Athens remained a center of moral philosophy, the center of scientific activity had shifted to Alexandria. The collection of manuscripts which Aristotle had built up at the Lyceum became the nucleus of the great library at Alexandria.

The books of Plato and Aristotle survived better than the books of other ancient philosophers, perhaps because Plato and Aristotle founded schools. Plato's authenticated dialogues form a book as long as the Bible, covering all fields of knowledge. Aristotle's lectures were collected into 150 volumes. (Of course, each individual volume was not as long as a modern printed book.) Of these, 50 have survived. Some of them were found in a pit in Asia Minor by soldiers of the Roman general Sulla in 80 A.D., and they were brought to Rome to be recopied.

Some of the works of Aristotle were lost in the West, but survived during the dark ages in Arabic translations. In the 12th and 13th centuries, these works were translated into Latin by European scholars who were in contact with the Arab civilization. Through these translations, Europe enthusiastically rediscovered Aristotle, and until the 17th century, he replaced Plato as *the* philosopher.

The influence of Plato and Aristotle was very great (perhaps greater than they deserved), because of their literary skill, because so many of their books survived, because of the schools which they founded, and because Plato and Aristotle wrote about all of knowledge and wrapped it up so neatly that they seemed to have said the last word.

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# Chapter 7

## EPICURUS

### 7.1 Epicurus believed in atoms, and in knowledge through observation

Epicurus was a Greek sage who founded the highly influential philosophy of Epicurism. He was born on the island of Samos, of Athenian parents, in 341 BC, and he lived until 270 BC. Influenced by Democritus, he believed that the phenomena that we observe with our senses are due to the movement, combination, and recombination of atoms. He also believed that the only true knowledge of the world is that which we gain through observation.

Epicurus rebelled against the Platonism of his day, and he established his own school, known as “The Garden”. Here he and his disciples discussed a very wide range of topics. Epicurus allowed both slaves and women to attend these discussions.

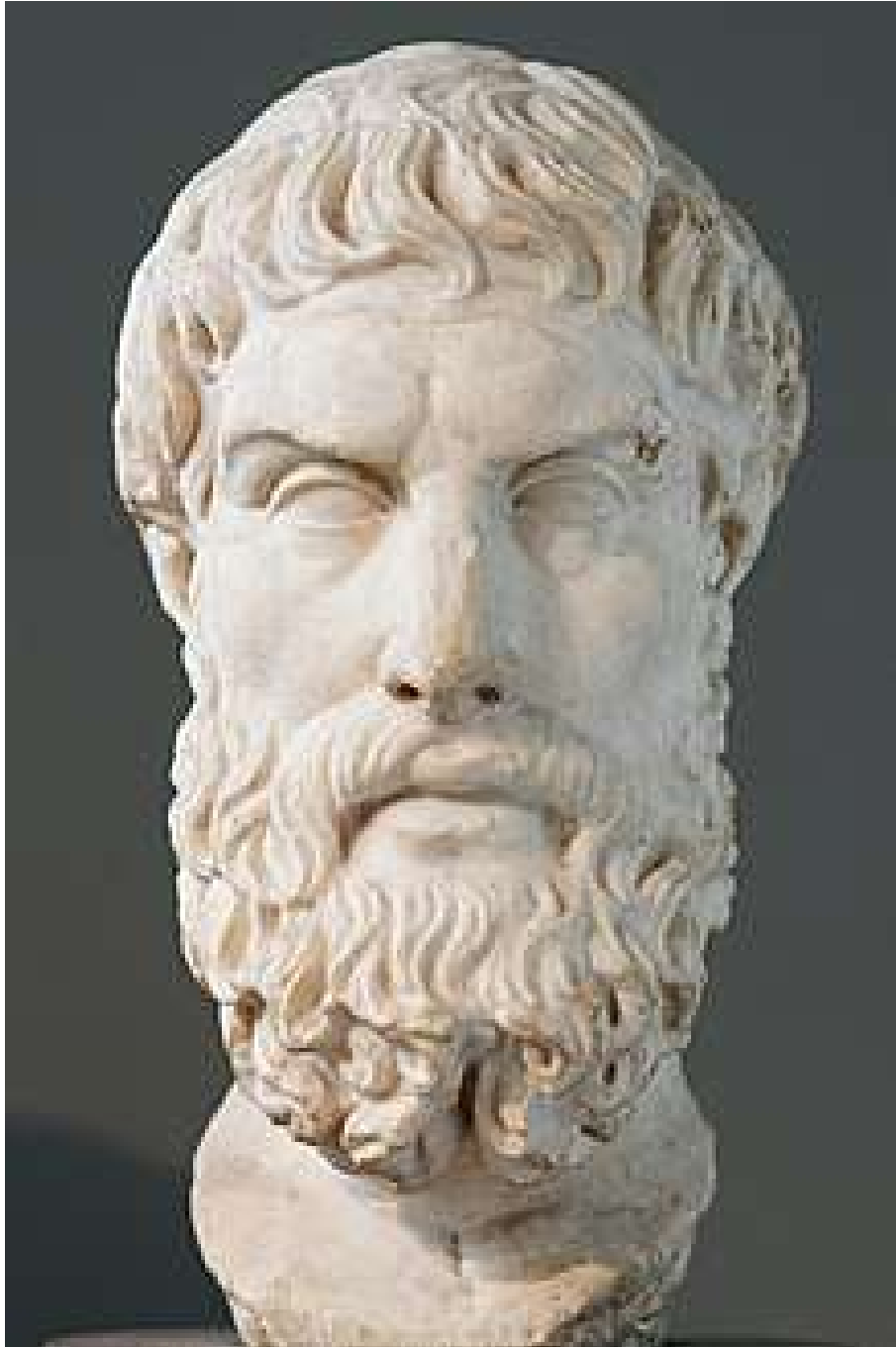


Figure 7.1: Roman marble bust of Epicurus

## 7.2 His aim was to help people to live a happy life

The aim of Epicurean philosophy was to help people to live a happy and peaceful life, free from fear and pain, self-sufficient, and surrounded by friends. Epicurus believed the death is not to be feared, because both the body and the soul end at death.

## 7.3 The popularity of Epicurean philosophy in recent times

Epicurism reached a height of popularity during the later years of the Roman Republic, but it was opposed by Christianity. The philosophy of Epicurus was popular, but misinterpreted during the Middle Ages. Later during the Enlightenment, a more accurate version of Epicurism was revived and promoted by many authors, including Robert Boyle, John Locke, Thomas Jefferson, Jeremy Bentham and Karl Marx.

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# Chapter 8

## AVICENNA

### 8.1 The Persian Leonardo

The greatest physician of the middle ages, Avicenna, (Abu-Ali al Hussain Ibn Abdullah Ibn Sina, 980-1037), was a Persian. More than a hundred books are attributed to him. They were translated into Latin in the 12th century, and they were among the most important medical books used in Europe until the time of Harvey. Avicenna also wrote on alchemy, and he is important for having denied the possibility of transmutation of elements.

Avicenna was born in present-day Uzbekistan, which was then a part of the Samanian Empire, a Persian empire that ruled the region between 819 and 999 AD. His father was a respected scholar from Afghanistan. By the age of 10, Avicenna had memorized the entire Koran. With the help of a merchant from India, he taught himself the Indian form of mathematics. At the age of 16, he turned his attention to medicine and not only learned medical theory, but also attended the sick without payment and discovered many new methods and treatments. Avicenna's later writings included an incredible range of topics - philosophy, medicine, astronomy, alchemy, geography, geology, psychology, Islamic theology, logic, mathematics, physics and works of poetry.

### 8.2 The Canon of Medicine

In 1025, Avicenna completed his masterpiece, *The Cannon of Medicine*, a five-volume encyclopedia of all the medical knowledge that the world possessed at that time. It included many of his own contributions. Translations reached the west, and it became the standard medical text both in Europe and in the Islamic world during the Middle Ages. Both *The Canon of Medicine* and Avicenna's other medical work, *The Art of Healing*, continued to be used as late as the 17th century. Because of his enormous influence, Avicenna has been called "the father of modern medicine".

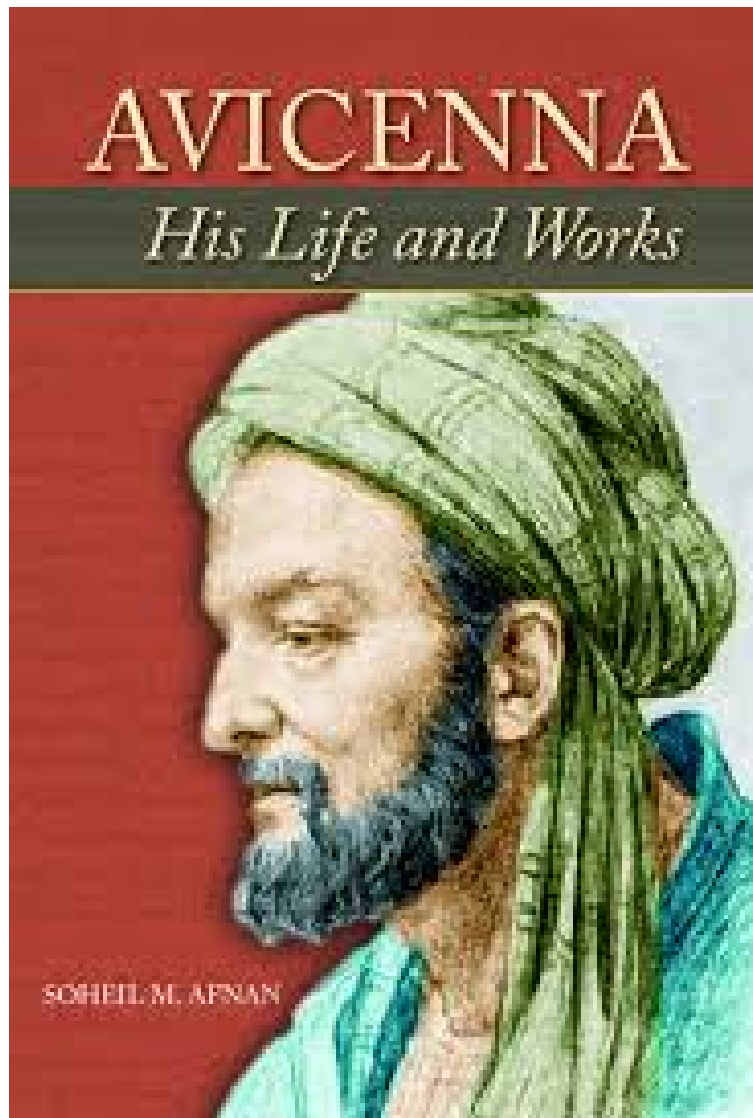


Figure 8.1: Abu-Ali al Hussain Ibn Abdullah Ibn Sina, (980-1037), known in the west as Avicenna, was a universal genius. He is believed to have written 450 works, on philosophy, medicine, astronomy, alchemy, geography, geology, psychology, Islamic theology, logic, mathematics, physics and works of poetry. Of these, 150 have survived, including his books *The Book of Healing* and *The Cannon of Medicine*. These medical books were standard texts in Europe during the Middle Ages, and were even in use as late as the 17th century. Avicenna has been called “The father of modern medicine”.

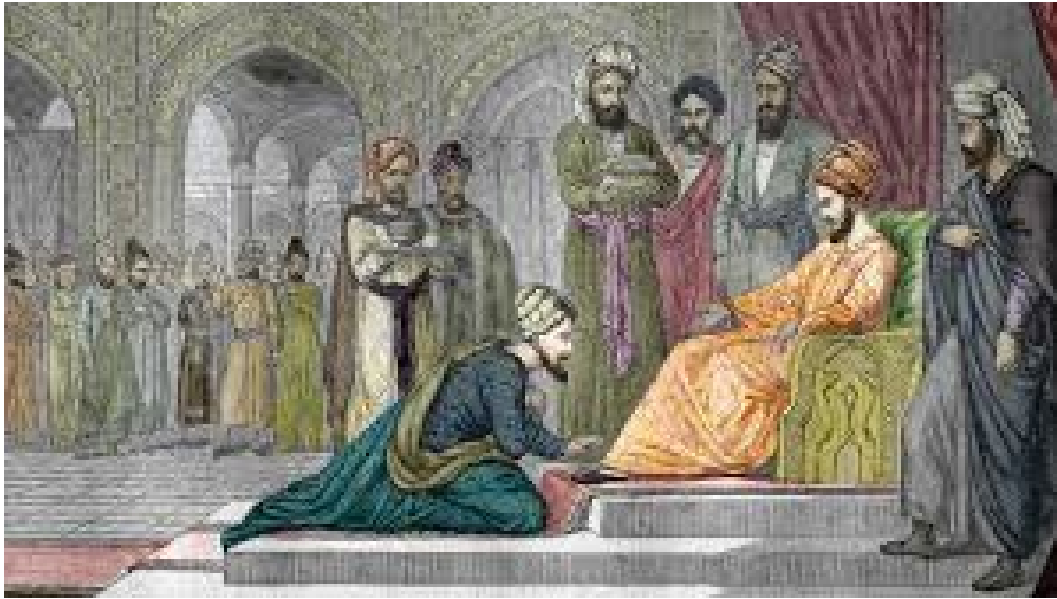


Figure 8.2: Avicenna sought the patronage of rulers.



Figure 8.3: Avicenna writing one of his many books.



Figure 8.4: A monument to Avicenna in Qakh city, Azerbaijan.



Figure 8.5: Image of Avicenna on the Tajikistani somoni.



Figure 8.6: Avicenna statue in Milad Tower, Tehran, Iran.



Figure 8.7: The statue of Avicenna in United Nations Office in Vienna.

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# Chapter 9

## RENÉ DESCARTES

### 9.1 Descartes and algebraic geometry

Until the night of November 10, 1619, algebra and geometry were separate disciplines. On that autumn evening, the troops of the Elector of Bavaria were celebrating the Feast of Saint Martin at the village of Neuberg in Bohemia. With them was a young Frenchman named René Descartes (1596-1659), who had enlisted in the army of the Elector in order to escape from Parisian society. During that night, Descartes had a series of dreams which, as he said later, filled him with enthusiasm, converted him to a life of philosophy, and put him in possession of a wonderful key with which to unlock the secrets of nature.

The program of natural philosophy on which Descartes embarked as a result of his dreams led him to the discovery of analytic geometry, the combination of algebra and geometry. Essentially, Descartes' method amounted to labeling each point in a plane with two numbers,  $x$  and  $y$ . These numbers represented the distance between the point and two perpendicular fixed lines, (the coordinate axes). Then every algebraic equation relating  $x$  and  $y$  generated a curve in the plane.

Descartes realized the power of using algebra to generate and study geometrical figures; and he developed his method in an important book, which was among the books that Newton studied at Cambridge. Descartes' pioneering work in analytic geometry paved the way for the invention of differential and integral calculus by Fermat, Newton and Leibniz. (Besides taking some steps towards the invention of calculus, the great French mathematician, Pierre de Fermat (1601-1665), also discovered analytic geometry independently, but he did not publish this work.)

Analytic geometry made it possible to treat with ease the elliptical orbits which Kepler had introduced into astronomy, as well as the parabolic trajectories which Galileo had calculated for projectiles.

Descartes also worked on a theory which explained planetary motion by means of "vortices"; but this theory was by no means so successful as his analytic geometry, and eventually it had to be abandoned.



Figure 9.1: Portrait of René Descartes, after Frans Hals.

## 9.2 Cartesian doubt

Descartes did important work in optics, physiology and philosophy. In philosophy, he is the author of the famous phrase “*Cogito, ergo sum*”, “I think; therefore I exist”, which is the starting point for his theory of knowledge. He resolved to doubt everything which it was possible to doubt; and finally he was reduced to knowledge of his own existence as the only real certainty.

## 9.3 Descartes and Queen Christina

René Descartes died tragically through the combination of two evils which he had always tried to avoid: cold weather and early rising. Even as a student, he spent a large portion of his time in bed. He was able to indulge in this taste for a womblike existence because his father had left him some estates in Brittany. Descartes sold these estates and invested the money, from which he obtained an ample income. He never married, and he succeeded in avoiding responsibilities of every kind.

Descartes might have been able to live happily in this way to a ripe old age if only he had been able to resist a flattering invitation sent to him by Queen Christina of Sweden. Christina, the intellectual and strong-willed daughter of King Gustav Adolf, was determined to bring culture to Sweden, much to the disgust of the Swedish noblemen, who considered that money from the royal treasury ought to be spent exclusively on guns and fortifications. Unfortunately for Descartes, he had become so famous that Queen Christina wished to take lessons in philosophy from him; and she sent a warship to fetch him from Holland, where he was staying. Descartes, unable to resist this flattering attention from a royal patron, left his sanctuary in Holland and sailed to the frozen north.

The only time Christina could spare for her lessons was at five o'clock in the morning, three times a week. Poor Descartes was forced to get up in the utter darkness of the bitterly cold Swedish winter nights to give Christina her lessons in a draughty castle library; but his strength was by no means equal to that of the queen, and before the winter was over he had died of pneumonia.

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# Chapter 10

## JOHN LOCKE

### 10.1 The Enlightenment

To the intellectuals of the 18th century, the orderly Newtonian cosmos, with its planets circling the sun in obedience to natural law, became an imaginative symbol representing rationality. In their search for a society more in accordance with human nature, 18th century Europeans were greatly encouraged by the triumphs of science. Reason had shown itself to be an adequate guide in natural philosophy. Could not reason and natural law also be made the basis of moral and political philosophy? In attempting to carry out this program, the philosophers of the Enlightenment laid the foundations of psychology, anthropology, social science, political science and economics.

### 10.2 Refuting the doctrine of the divine right of kings

One of the earliest and most influential of these philosophers was John Locke (1632-1705), a contemporary and friend of Newton. In his *Second Treatise on Government*, published in 1690, John Locke's aim was to refute the doctrine that kings rule by divine right, and to replace that doctrine by an alternative theory of government, derived by reason from the laws of nature. According to Locke's theory, men originally lived together without formal government:

“Men living together according to reason,” he wrote, “without a common superior on earth with authority to judge between them, is properly the state of nature... A state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another; there being nothing more evident than that creatures of the same species, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature and the use of the same facilities, should also be equal amongst one another without subordination or subjection...”

“But though this be a state of liberty, yet it is not a state of licence... The state of nature has a law to govern it, which obliges every one; and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that being equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions.”

### **10.3 The social contract**

In Locke's view, a government is set up by means of a social contract. The government is given its powers by the consent of the citizens in return for the services which it renders to them, such as the protection of their lives and property. If a government fails to render these services, or if it becomes tyrannical, then the contract has been broken, and the citizens must set up a new government.

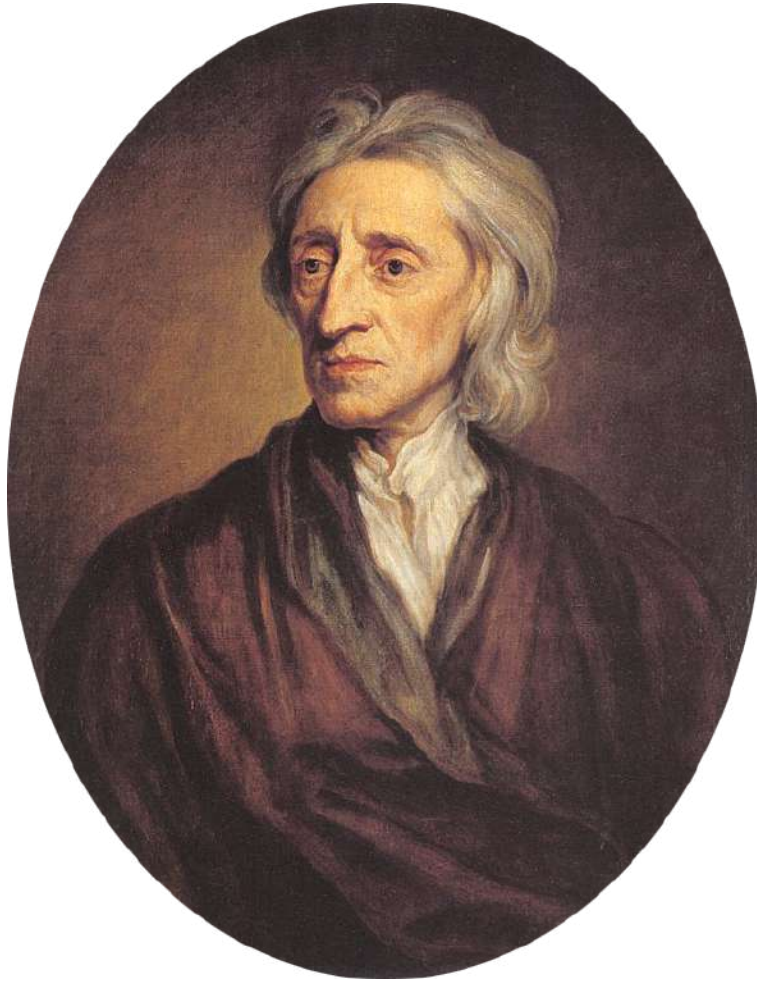


Figure 10.1: John Locke (1632-1705): “Men living together according to reason, without a common superior on earth with authority to judge between them, is properly the state of nature... A state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another; there being nothing more evident than that creatures of the same species, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature and the use of the same facilities, should also be equal amongst one another without subordination or subjugation...”

## 10.4 Locke's influence

Locke's influence on 18th century thought was very great. His influence can be seen, for example, in the wording of the American Declaration of Independence. In England, Locke's political philosophy was accepted by almost everyone. In fact, he was only codifying ideas which were already in wide circulation and justifying a revolution which had already occurred. In France, on the other hand, Locke's writings had a revolutionary impact.

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# Chapter 11

## VOLTAIRE

### 11.1 Voltaire becomes a writer (and extremely rich)

#### Voltaire (1694-1778)

Francois-Marie Arouet, who later changed his name to Voltaire, was born in Paris. His father was a lawyer and a minor treasury official, while his mother's family was on the lowest rank of the French nobility. He was educated by Jesuits at Collège Louis-le-Grand, where he learned Latin theology and rhetoric. He later became fluent in Italian, Spanish and English.

Despite his father's efforts to make him study law, the young Voltaire was determined to become a writer. He eventually became the author of more than 2,000 books and pamphlets and more than 20,000 letters. His works include many forms of writing, including plays, poems, novels, essays and historical and scientific works. His writings advocated civil liberties, and he used his satirical and witty style of writing to criticize intolerance, religious dogma and absolute monarchy. Because of the intolerance and censorship of his day, he was frequently in trouble and sometimes imprisoned. Nevertheless, his works were very popular, and he eventually became extremely rich, partly through clever investment of money gained through part ownership of a lottery.

### 11.2 Forced exile in England; Refuge with the Marquis de Chatelet and his wife

During a period of forced exile in England, Voltaire mixed with the English aristocracy, meeting Alexander Pope, John Gay, Jonathan Swift, Lady Mary Wortley Montague, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, and many other members of the nobility and royalty. He admired the English system of constitutional monarchy, which he considered to be far superior to the absolutism then prevailing in France. In 1733, he published a book entitled *Letters concerning the English Nation*, in London. When French translation was published in 1734, Voltaire was again in deep trouble. In order to avoid arrest, he stayed in the country

château belonging to Émilie du Châtelet and her husband, the Marquis du Châtelet.

As a result, Madame du Châtelet became his mistress and the relationship lasted for 16 years. Her tolerant husband, the Marquis, who shared their intellectual and scientific interests, often lived together with them. Voltaire paid for improvements to the château, and together, the Marquis and Voltaire collected more than 21,000 books, and enormous number for that time. Madame du Châtelet translated Isaac Newton's great book, *Principia Mathematica*, into French, and her translation was destined to be the standard one until modern times. Meanwhile, Voltaire wrote a French explanation of the ideas of the *Principia*, which made these ideas accessible to a wide public in France. Together, the Marquis, his wife and Voltaire also performed many scientific experiments, for example experiments designed to study the nature of fire.

### 11.3 Voltaire's vast literary output

Voltaire's vast literary output is available today in approximately 200 volumes, published by the University of Oxford, where the Voltaire Foundation is now established as a research department.



Figure 11.1: Voltaire used his satirical and witty style of writing to criticize intolerance, religious dogma and absolute monarchy. He wrote more than 2,000 books and pamphlets and more than 20,000 letters. His writings made a significant contribution to the Enlightenment, and paved the way for revolutions both in France and America.



Figure 11.2: The frontpiece of Voltaire's book popularizing Newton's ideas for French readers. Madame du Châtelet appears as a muse, reflecting Newton's thoughts down to Voltaire.

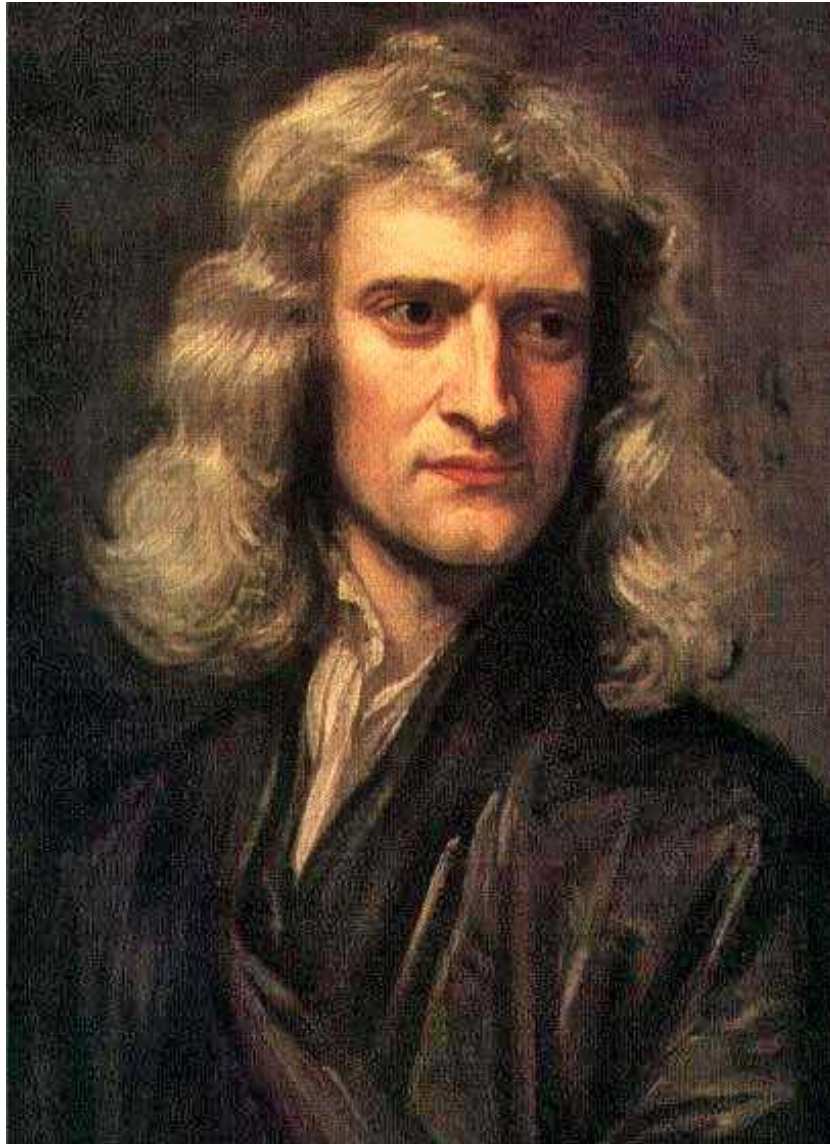


Figure 11.3: The work of Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1726) illustrates a key aspect of human cultural evolution: Because of the introduction of printing in Europe, Newton was able to build on the work of his predecessors, Copernicus, Brahe, Galileo and Kepler. He could never have achieved his great synthesis alone. During the Enlightenment, Newton became a symbol of rationality and reason. Alexander Pope wrote: “Nature, and nature’s laws, lay hid in night. God said ‘Let Newton be’, and all was light!”

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# Chapter 12

## ROUSSEAU

### 12.1 Rousseau and the importance of emotions

Rousseau (1712-1778)



Figure 12.1: Unlike Voltaire, Rousseau was not an advocate of science, but instead believed in the importance of emotions. He believed that civilization has corrupted humans rather than making them better. Rousseau was a pioneer of the romantic movement. His book, *The Social Contract*, remains influential today.

## 12.2 Rousseau's influential book, *The Social Contract*

In 1754 Rousseau wrote: "The first man who, having fenced in a piece of land, said 'This is mine', and found people naïve enough to believe him, that man was the true founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows: Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody."

Later, he began his influential book *The Social Contract*, published in 1752, with the dramatic words: "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. Those who think themselves the masters of others are indeed greater slaves than they." Rousseau concludes Chapter 3 of this book with the words: "Let us then admit that force does not create right, and that we are obliged to obey only legitimate powers". In other words, the ability to coerce is not a legitimate power, and there is no rightful duty to submit to it. A state has no right to enslave a conquered people.

These ideas, and those of John Locke, were reaffirmed in 1776 by the American Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, and that among these are the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; and that to pursue these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Today, in an era of government tyranny and subversion of democracy, we need to remember that the just powers of any government are not derived from the government's ability to use of force, but exclusively from the consent of the governed.

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# Chapter 13

## IMMANUEL KANT

The highly influential philosopher, Immanuel Kant, was born in Königsberg, East Prussia, in 1724. and he died there in 1804 at the age of 79. He obtained a Ph.D. from the University of Königsberg in 1770.

Before turning his attention to purely philosophical topics, Kant made many important contributions to science. In his book *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, he put forth a theory of the formation of the solar system which agrees very largely with modern theories. He also postulated that the Milky Way was a galaxy of stars formed from a much larger spinning gas cloud, and the nebulae were distant galaxies, In Kant's 1756 essay on the theory of winds, he put forward original ideas concerning the Coriolis force. In the same year, he published three papers on the Lisbon earthquake, which represented the first attempt to explain earthquakes as being due to natural, rather than supernatural forces. Kant pioneered the teaching of geography as a subject in its own right. He became a professor at the University of Königsberg in 1770.

### 13.1 Kant's philosophical ideas and interests

Here is a list of Immanuel Kant's influential ideas and interests:

- Abstract-concrete distinction[12]
- Aesthetic-teleological judgments
- Analytic-synthetic distinction
- Categorical and hypothetical imperative
- Categories
- Cosmotheology
- Critical philosophy
- Copernican revolution in philosophy
- Disinterested delight
- Empirical realism
- Kant's antinomies
- Kant's pitchfork

- Kantian ethics
- Kingdom of Ends
- Mathematical vs. dynamical sublimity
- Nebular hypothesis
- Noogony and noology
- Noumenon vs. thing-in-itself
- Ontotheology
- Primacy of practical reason
- Public reason
- Radical evil
- Rechtsstaat
- Sapere aude
- Transcendental schema
- Theoretical vs. practical philosophy
- Transcendental idealism
- Transcendental subject
- Transcendental theology
- Understanding-reason distinction



Figure 13.1: Portrait of Kant by Johann Gottlieb Becker, 1768

## 13.2 Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

In this book, Kant distinguishes between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge. A proposition is true *a priori*, if it is necessary and universal, independent of experience, and could not possibly be otherwise. Examples can be found in mathematical relationships, which are entirely independent of observation and experience. By contrast, knowledge obtained from observation is uncertain, because in the future, exceptions to various propositions may be discovered.

## 13.3 *Perpetual Peace*

In his book, *Perpetual Peace*, Kant lists the following steps, that should be taken as quickly as possible:

1. "No secret treaty of peace shall be held valid in which there is tacitly reserved matter for a future war"
2. "No independent states, large or small, shall come under the dominion of another state by inheritance, exchange, purchase, or donation"
3. "Standing armies shall in time be totally abolished"
4. "National debts shall not be contracted with a view to the external friction of states"
5. "No state shall by force interfere with the constitution or government of another state"
6. "No state shall, during war, permit such acts of hostility which would make mutual confidence in the subsequent peace impossible: such are the employment of assassins (*percussores*), poisoners (*venefici*), breach of capitulation, and incitement to treason (*perduellio*) in the opposing state"

Furthermore

- "The civil constitution of each state shall be republican."
- "The law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states."
- "The rights of men, as citizens of the world, shall be limited to the conditions of universal hospitality."

## 13.4 Kant's students founded German nationalism

Although Kant believed in perpetual peace, his students founded German nationalism, which has proved to be anything but peaceful! One of the founders of the German nationalist movement was Johan Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), a student and follower of Kant. Besides rejecting objective criteria for morality, Fichte denied the value of the individual. According to him, the individual is nothing and the state is everything. Denying the value



Figure 13.2: **A romantic figure representing Germany**

of the individual, Fichte compared the state to an organism of which the individual is a part:

“In a product of nature”, Fichte wrote, “no part is what it is but through its relation to the whole, and it would absolutely not be what it is apart from this relation; more, if it had no organic relation at all, it would be absolutely nothing, since without reciprocity in action between organic forces maintaining one another in equilibrium, no form would subsist... Similarly, man obtains a determinate position in the scheme of things and a fixity in nature only through his civil association... Between the isolated man and the citizen there is the same relation as between raw and organized matter... In an organized body, each part continuously maintains the whole, and in maintaining it, maintains itself also. Similarly the citizen with regard to the State.”

Another post-Kantian, Adam Müller (1779-1829) wrote that “the state is the intimate association of all physical and spiritual needs of the whole nation into one great, energetic, infinitely active and living whole... the totality of human affairs... If we exclude for ever from this association even the most unimportant part of a human being, if we separate private life from public life even at one point, then we no longer perceive the State as a phenomenon of life and as an idea.”

The doctrine that Adam Müller sets forth in this passage is what we now call Totalitarianism, i.e. the belief that the state ought to encompass “the totality of human affairs”. This doctrine is the opposite of the Liberal belief that the individual is all-important and that the role of the state ought to be as small as possible.

Fichte maintains that “a State which constantly seeks to increase its internal strength

is forced to desire the gradual abolition of all favoritisms, and the establishment of equal rights for all citizens, in order that it, the State itself, may enter upon its own true right - to apply the whole surplus power of all its citizens without exception to the furtherance of its own purposes... Internal peace, and the condition of affairs in which everyone may by diligence earn his daily bread... is only a means, a condition and framework for what love of Fatherland really wants to bring about, namely that the Eternal and the Divine may blossom in the world and never cease to become more pure, perfect and excellent."

Fichte proposed a new system of education which would abolish the individual will and teach individuals to become subservient to the will of the state. "The new education must consist essentially in this", Fichte wrote, "that it completely destroys the will in the soil that it undertakes to cultivate... If you want to influence a man at all, you must do more than merely talk to him; you must fashion him, and fashion him, and fashion him in such a way that he simply cannot will otherwise than you wish him to will."

Fichte and Herder (1744-1803) developed the idea that language is the key to national identity. They believed that the German language is superior to French because it is an "original" language, not derived from Latin. In a poem that is obviously a protest against the French culture of Frederick's court in Prussia, Herder wrote:

"Look at other nationalities!  
Do they wander about  
So that nowhere in the world they are strangers  
Except to themselves?  
They regard foreign countries with proud disdain.  
And you, German, alone, returning from abroad,  
Wouldst greet your mother in French?  
Oh spew it out before your door!  
Spew out the ugly slime of the Seine!  
Speak German, O you German!

Another poem, "The German Fatherland", by Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769-1860), expresses a similar sentiment:

"What is the Fatherland of the German?  
 Name me the great country!  
 Where the German tongue sounds  
 And sings *Lieder* in God's praise,  
 That's what it ought to be  
 Call that thine, valiant German!  
 That is the Fatherland of the German,  
 Where anger roots out foreign nonsense,  
 Where every Frenchman is called enemy,  
 Where every German is called friend,  
 That's what it ought to be!  
 It ought to be the whole of Germany!"

It must be remembered that when these poems were written, the German nation did not exist except in the minds of the nationalists. Groups of people speaking various dialects of German were scattered throughout central and eastern Europe. In many places, the German-speaking population was a minority. To bring together these scattered German-speaking groups would require, in many cases, the conquest and subjugation of Slavic majorities; but the quasi-religious fervor of the nationalists was such that aggression took on the appearance of a "holy war". Fichte believed that war between states introduces "a living and progressive principle into history". By war he did not mean a decorous limited war of the type fought in the 18th century, but "...a true and proper war - *a war of subjugation!*"

The German nationalist movement was not only quasi-religious in its tone; it also borrowed psychological techniques from religion. It aroused the emotions of the masses to large-scale political activity by the use of semi-religious political liturgy, involving myth, symbolism, and festivals. In his book "German Society" (1814), Arndt advocated the celebration of "holy festivals". For example, he thought that the celebration of the pagan festival of the summer solstice could be combined with a celebration of the victory over Napoleon at the Battle of Leipzig.

Arndt believed that special attention should be given to commemoration of the "noble dead" of Germany's wars for, as he said, "...here history enters life, and life becomes part of history". Arndt advocated a combination of Christian and pagan symbolism. The festivals should begin with prayers and a church service; but in addition, the Oak leaves and the sacred flame of ancient pagan tradition were to play a part.

In 1815, many of Arndt's suggestions were followed in the celebration of the anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig. This festival clearly exhibited a mixing of secular and Christian elements to form a national cult. Men and women decorated with oak leaves made pilgrimages to the tops of mountains, where they were addressed by priests speaking in front of alters on which burned "the sacred flame of Germany's salvation". This borrowing of psychological techniques from religion was deliberate, and it was retained by the Nazi Party when the latter adopted the methods of the early German nationalists. The Nazi mass rallies retained the order and form of Protestant liturgy, including hymns, confessions of



Figure 13.3: Celebration of the “German May” at Hambrach Castle

faith, and responses between the leader and the congregation.<sup>1</sup>

In 1832, the first mass meeting in German history took place, when 32,000 men and women gathered to celebrate the “German May”. Singing songs, wearing black, red, and gold emblems, and carrying flags, they marched to Hambrach Castle, where they were addressed by their leaders.

By the 1860’s the festivals celebrating the cult of nationalism had acquired a definite form. Processions through a town, involving elaborate national symbolism, were followed by unison singing by men’s choirs, patriotic plays, displays by gymnasts and sharp-shooters, and sporting events. The male choirs, gymnasts and sharp-shooters were required to wear uniforms; and the others attending the festivals wore oak leaves in their caps. The cohesion of the crowd was achieved not only by uniformity of dress, but also by the space in which the crowd was contained. Arndt advocated the use of a “sacred space” for mass meetings. The idea of the “sacred space” was taken from Stonehenge, which was seen by the nationalists as a typical ancient Germanic meeting place. The Nazi art historian Hubert Schrade wrote: “The space which urges us to join the community of the *Volk* is of greater importance than the figure which is meant to represent the Fatherland.”

Dramas were also used to promote a feeling of cohesion and national identity. An example of this type of propagandist drama is Kleist’s play, “Hermann’s Battle”, (1808). The play deals with a Germanic chieftain who, in order to rally the tribes against the Romans, sends his own men, disguised as Roman soldiers, to commit atrocities in the neighboring German villages. At one point in the play, Hermann is told of a Roman soldier

<sup>1</sup> The Nazi sacred symbols and the concept of the swastika or “gamma cross”, the eagle, the red/black/white color scheme, the ancient Nordic runes (one of which became the symbol of the SS), were all adopted from esoteric traditions going back centuries, shared by Brahmins, Scottish Masons, Rosicrutians, the Knights Templars and other esoteric societies.

who risked his own life to save a German child in a burning house. Hearing this report, Hermann exclaims, "May he be cursed if he has done this! He has for a moment made my heart disloyal; he has made me for a moment betray the august cause of Germany!... I was counting, by all the gods of revenge, on fire, loot, violence, murder, and all the horrors of unbridled war! What need have I of Latins who use me well?"

At another point in the play, Hermann's wife, Thusnelda, tempts a Roman Legate into a romantic meeting in a garden. Instead of finding Thusnelda, the Legate finds himself locked in the garden with a starved and savage she-bear. Standing outside the gate, Thusnelda urges the Legate to make love to the she-bear, and, as the bear tears him to pieces, she faints with pleasure.

Richard Wagner's dramas were also part of the nationalist movement. They were designed to create "an unending dream of sacred *völkisch* revelation". No applause was permitted, since this would disturb the reverential atmosphere of the cult. A new type of choral theater was developed which "...no longer represented the fate of the individual to the audience, but that which concerns the community, the *Volk*... Thus, in contrast to the bourgeois theater, private persons are no longer represented, but only types."

War did not seem especially evil to the 18th and 19th century nationalists because technology had not yet given humanity the terrible weapons of the 20th century. In the 19th century, the fatal combination of space-age science and stone-age politics still lay in the future. However, even in 1834, the German writer Heinrich Heine was perceptive enough to see the threat:

"There will be", Heine wrote, "Kantians forthcoming who, in the world to come, will know nothing of reverence for aught, and who will ravage without mercy, and riot with sword and axe through the soil of all European life to dig out the last root of the past. There will be well-weaponed Fichtians upon the ground, who in the fanaticism of the Will are not restrained by fear or self-advantage, for they live in the Spirit."

Although World War I was started by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, its severity was at least partly due to German nationalism. Blame for World War II rests more solidly on German nationalism.

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# Chapter 14

## G.W.F. HEGEL

### 14.1 Hegel's life

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was born in Stuttgart, the capital of the Duchy of Württemberg, where his father worked as secretary to the revenue office at the court of the Duke. Hegel's mother was the daughter of a lawyer at the High Court of Justice at Württemberg. She died of a "bilious fever" when Hegel was 13 years old. Hegel and his father became ill with the same disease, and narrowly escaped dying from it.

At the age of 18, Hegel began to study theology at a Protestant seminary attached to the University of Tübingen, although he had no intention of becoming a clergyman. Probably he did so because the seminary was state-funded. He and his friends at the seminary watched with enthusiasm as the French Revolution unfolded. Hegel also greatly admired the classical Greek civilization.

From 1793 until 1796, Hegel worked as house tutor to an aristocratic family in Berne, Germany. During this time, he composed a book-length manuscript which has become known as *The Life of Jesus*. His relationship with the family for which he was working became strained, and in 1796, Hegel accepted a similar position with the family of a wine merchant in Frankfurt.

In 1801, Hegel came to Jena, where he secured a position as a Privatdozent (unsalaried lecturer) at the University of Jena. In 1805, he was promoted to the (still unsalaried) position of Extraordinary Professor. Students paid to hear his lectures, so although he had no salary from the university, he had a source of income.

In 1807, Hegel's illegitimate son, Georg Ludwig Friedrich Fischer was born. He was the result of Hegel's affair with his landlady Christiana Burkhardt née Fischer.

The Battle of Jena occurred just as Hegel was putting the finishing touches on his book *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* or *The Phenomenology of the Mind*. Hegel admired Napoleon, and wrote, "I saw the Emperor - this world-soul [Weltseele] - riding out of the city on reconnaissance. It is indeed a wonderful sensation to see such an individual, who, concentrated here at a single point, astride a horse, reaches out over the world and masters it."

Since few students returned to the University of Jena after the battle, Hegel's financial position there became hopeless. He then traveled to Bamberg, where he secured a position as editor of a local newspaper, the *Bamberger Zeitung*. However, difficulties with the authorities forced him to move again. He wrote to his friend Niethammer, now a high official in Munich, asking for help in securing a teaching position. In 1808, with Niethammer's help, Hegel was appointed headmaster of a gymnasium in Nuremberg. He remained at this post until 1816.

In 1811, Hegel married Marie Helena Susanna von Tucher (1791-1855), the eldest daughter of a Senator. She and Hegel had two sons.

Hegel received offers of teaching posts from the universities of Erlangen, Berlin and Heidelberg. He chose Heidelberg, and moved there with his family, including his illegitimate son, in 1816. However, he remained at the University of Heidelberg for only two years, before accepting the offer of the Chair in Philosophy from the University of Berlin. Here he delivered lectures on the philosophy of fine art, the philosophy of religion, the philosophy of history, and the history of philosophy. His fame spread and his lectures attracted students from all over Germany and even beyond Germany's borders. The lectures were published posthumously from his students' notes.

Hegel died in 1831, at the time of a cholera epidemic. Whether he died of cholera, or some other cause is not clear.



Figure 14.1: While at Jena, Hegel helped found a philosophical journal with his friend from Seminary, the young philosophical prodigy Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854).

## 14.2 Hegel's major works

According to Wikipedia, “He is considered one of the most important figures in German idealism and one of the founding figures of modern Western philosophy. His influence extends to the entire range of contemporary philosophical issues, from epistemology and metaphysics to aesthetics, philosophy of history, philosophy of religion, political philosophy, and the history of philosophy. ”

Among Hegel's major works are the following books:

- *Phenomenology of Spirit*, published in 1807. This book “has been praised and blamed for the development of existentialism, communism, fascism, death of God theology, and historicist nihilism”.
- *Science of Logic* was published between 1812 and 1816. The book includes the traditional Aristotelian syllogism, but additionally maintains that logic depends on the unity of thought and being rather than existing as an abstract instrument of inference.
- *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* was published in 1820. In this book, Hegel expresses his ideas concerning free will, society and ethics.
- *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* was published in various editions, in 1817, 1827 and 1830. The book outlined Hegel's entire philosophical system. It was intended as a textbook to help students attending Hegel's lectures. After Hegel's death, his students added many examples and other details to the book, basing these additions on their lecture notes.



Figure 14.2: **Portrait** of Hegel by Jakob Schlesinger, 1831.

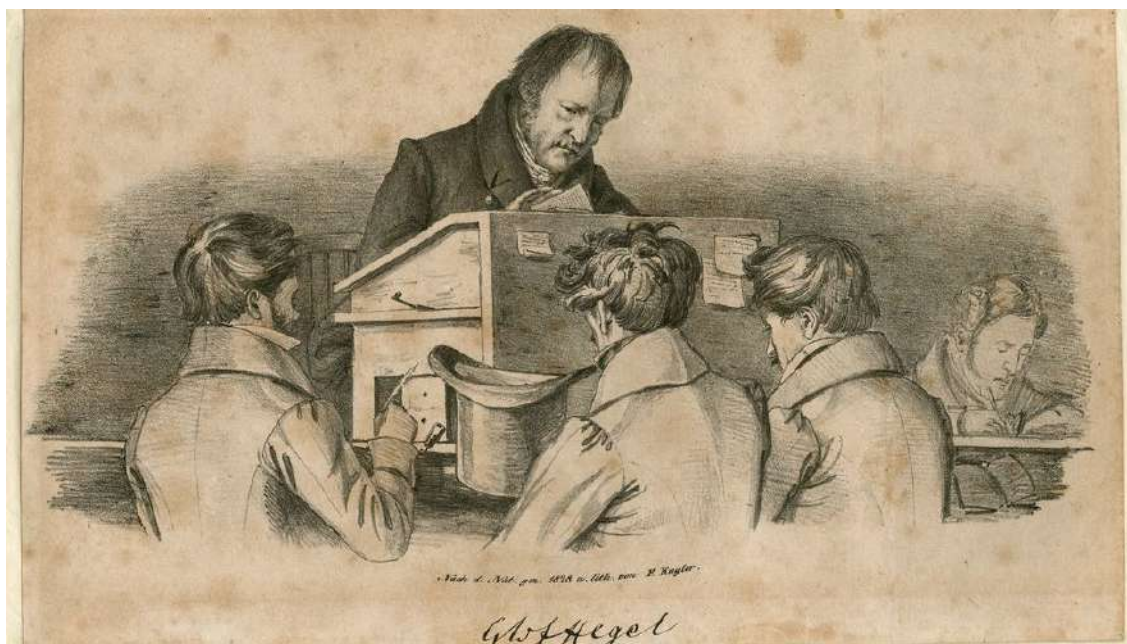


Figure 14.3: Hegel with his Berlin students (1828 sketch by F. T. Kugler).

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# Chapter 15

## JOHN STUART MILL

### 15.1 He was not allowed to have a childhood

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) showed his genius at an early age, and his father, the Utilitarian philosopher and political economist James Mill, immediately began to groom him to replace Jeremy Bentham as the leader of the Utilitarian movement. From the age of 3 onwards, Mill was deliberately kept away from children of his own age and made to spend all his waking hours in study. Play was not allowed, since it would break the habit of continual diligence.

At the age of three, Mill was taught Greek. By the time he reached eight, he had read Aesop's Fables, Xenophon's Anabasis, and all the works of Herodotus. He was also acquainted with Lucian, Diogenes Laërtius, Isocrates and six dialogues of Plato, in their original language. Furthermore, he had also read a great deal of history in English and had been taught arithmetic, physics and astronomy.

When he was twelve, Mill began a thorough study of the scholastic logic, at the same time reading Aristotle's logical treatises in the original language. At thirteen, he was introduced to political economy and studied the classical economists Adam Smith and David Ricardo. In fact Ricardo, who was a close friend of his father, used to invite the young Mill to his house for a walk in order to talk about political economy.

At the age of fourteen, Mill spent a year in France, where he attended the winter courses on chemistry, zoology, logic of the Faculté des Sciences, as well as taking a course of the higher mathematics. He also met the economist Jean-Baptiste Say, a friend of his father, and the political philosopher Henri Saint-Simon.

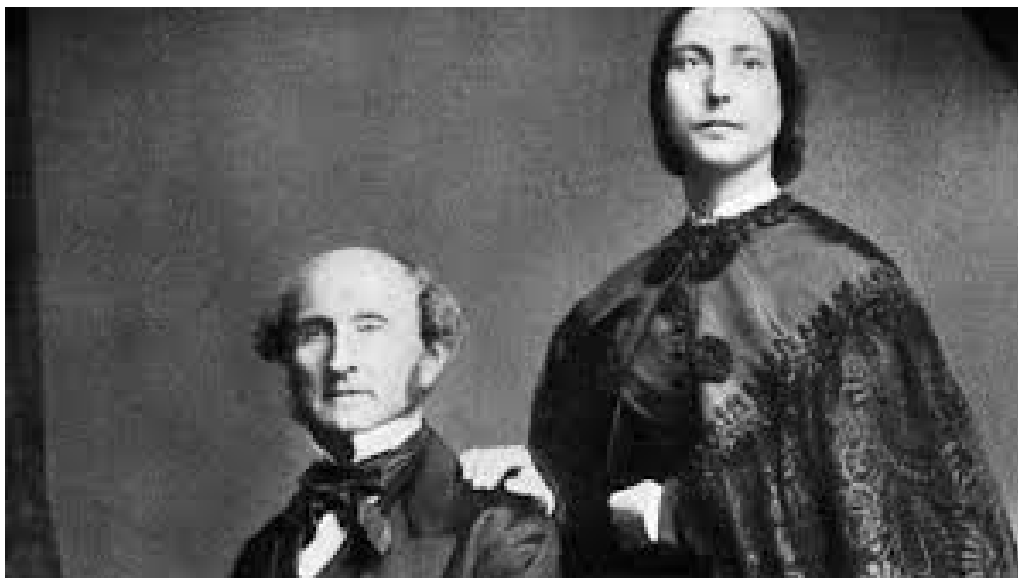


Figure 15.1: John Stuart Mill and his stepdaughter Helen Taylor, with whom he worked for fifteen years after the death of his wife, Harriet Taylor Mill (Wikipedia).

## 15.2 Limits to growth

John Stuart Mill pioneered the concept of a steady.state economy. He realized that on a finite earth, neither the population of humans nor the economy can continue to grow forever. In 1848 (when there were just over one billion people in the world), he described the optimal global population in the following words:

“The density of population necessary to enable mankind to obtain, in the greatest degree, all the advantages of cooperation and social intercourse, has, in the most populous countries, been attained. A population may be too crowded, although all be amply supplied with food and raiment.”

“... Nor is there much satisfaction in contemplating the world with nothing left to the spontaneous activity of nature; with every rood of land brought into cultivation, which is capable of growing food for human beings; every flowery waste or natural pasture plowed up, all quadrupeds or birds which are not domesticated for man’s use exterminated as his rivals for food, every hedgerow or superfluous tree rooted out, and scarcely a place left where a wild shrub or flower could grow without being eradicated as a weed in the name of improved agriculture. If the earth must lose that great portion of its pleasantness which it owes to things that the unlimited increase of wealth and population would extirpate from it, for the mere purpose of enabling it to support a larger, but not better or happier population, I sincerely hope, for the sake of posterity, that they will be content to be stationary, long before necessity compels them to it.”

## 15.3 Contributions to Utilitarian theory

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) had written that “it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong”. Mill refined this basic principle of Utilitarianism by pointing out the difference between higher pleasures, for example moral or intellectual pleasures, and lower ones, such as pleasures of the flesh. Mill remarked that “It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question.”

## 15.4 Ideas on economics and on individual liberty

According to David Ricardo’s “Iron Law of Wages”, laborers must always live on the exact borderline between starvation and survival. Wages, Ricardo argued, are determined by the laws of supply and demand. If wages increase above the starvation level, more children of workers survive, the supply of workers increases, and the wages fall once more.

Mill rebelled against Ricardo’s dismal “Iron Law” by pointing out that although the means of production might be regulated by the necessities of economics, social conscience can determine the way in which the goods are distributed. (Later Mahatma Gandhi extended this idea by showing that social conscience can also play a role in the way that goods are produced).

John Stuart Mill also contributed importantly to the idea of individual liberty as opposed to unlimited control by the state or by social opinion. He is the author of the following influential principle: “The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.”

## 15.5 Opposition to slavery

Regarding slavery, Mill wrote: “This absolutely extreme case of the law of force, condemned by those who can tolerate almost every other form of arbitrary power, and which, of all others, presents features the most revolting to the feeling of all who look at it from an impartial position, was the law of civilized and Christian England within the memory of persons now living: and in one half of Angle-Saxon America three or four years ago, not only did slavery exist, but the slave trade, and the breeding of slaves expressly for it, was a general practice between slave states. Yet not only was there a greater strength of sentiment against it, but, in England at least, a less amount either of feeling or of interest in favour of it, than of any other of the customary abuses of force: for its motive was the love of gain, unmixed and undisguised: and those who profited by it were a very small numerical fraction of the country, while the natural feeling of all who were not personally interested in it, was unmitigated abhorrence.”

## 15.6 Member of Parliament and advocate of for votes for women

During the years between 1865 and 1868, John Stuart Mill served simultaneously as a Member of Parliament and as Lord Rector of the University of St. Andrews. In Parliament, Mill was the first person to call for votes for women. His motion was defeated, but it set an important precedent. Mill may have been influenced by his wife, Harriet Taylor Mill, who was a brilliant person in her own right.

Together with his wife and stepdaughter, Mill composed a book entitled *The Subjugation of Women*, which was completed in 1861. It contains a passage arguing that “the legal subordination of one sex to another - is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a system of perfect equality, admitting no power and privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.

## 15.7 Some quotations from Mill

Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing.

A person may cause evil to others not only by his actions but by his inaction, and in either case he is justly accountable to them for the injury.

I have learned to seek my happiness by limiting my desires, rather than in attempting to satisfy them.

In this age, the mere example of non-conformity, the mere refusal to bend the knee to custom, is itself a service. Precisely because the tyranny of opinion is such as to make eccentricity a reproach, it is desirable, in order to break through that tyranny, that people should be eccentric. Eccentricity has always abounded when and where strength of character has abounded; and the amount of eccentricity in a society has generally been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigor, and moral courage which it contained. That so few now dare to be eccentric, marks the chief danger of the time.

The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it. Each is the proper guardian of his own health, whether bodily, or mental or spiritual. Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest.

It is not because men's desires are strong that they act ill; it is because their consciences are weak

Every man who says frankly and fully what he thinks is so far doing a public service. We should be grateful to him for attacking most unsparingly our most cherished opinions.

Those only are happy (I thought) who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness by the way. The enjoyments of life (such was now my theory) are sufficient to make it a pleasant thing, when they are taken en passant, without being made a principal object.

Whatever we may think or affect to think of the present age, we cannot get out of it; we must suffer with its sufferings, and enjoy with its enjoyments; we must share in its lot, and, to be either useful or at ease, we must even partake its character.

What is called the Law of Nations is not properly law, but a part of ethics: a set of moral rules, accepted as authoritative by civilized states.

If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.

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# Chapter 16

## HENRY DAVID THOREAU

### 16.1 Simple life in harmony with nature

In the distant future (and perhaps even in the not-so-distant future) industrial civilization will need to abandon its relentless pursuit of unnecessary material goods and economic growth. Modern society will need to re-establish a balanced and harmonious relationship with nature. In preindustrial societies harmony with nature is usually a part of the cultural tradition. In our own time, the same principle has become central to the ecological counter-culture while the main-stream culture thunders blindly ahead, addicted to wealth, power and growth.

In the 19th century the American writer, Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), pioneered the concept of a simple life, in harmony with nature. Today, his classic book, *Walden*, has become a symbol for the principles of ecology, simplicity, and respect for nature.

Thoreau was born in Concord Massachusetts, and he attended Harvard from 1833 to 1837. After graduation, he returned home, worked in his family's pencil factory, did odd jobs, and for three years taught in a progressive school founded by himself and his older brother, John. When John died of lockjaw in 1842, Henry David was so saddened that he felt unable to continue the school alone.

### 16.2 Nonviolent civil disobedience

Thoreau refused to pay his poll tax because of his opposition to the Mexican War and to the institution of slavery. Because of his refusal to pay the tax (which was in fact a very small amount) he spent a night in prison. To Thoreau's irritation, his family paid the poll tax for him and he was released. He then wrote down his ideas on the subject in an essay entitled *The Duty of Civil Disobedience*, where he maintains that each person has a duty to follow his own individual conscience even when it conflicts with the orders of his government.

In his essay, Thoreau said: "A common and natural result of an undue respect for law is that you may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys,

and all marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, ay, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart. They have no doubt that it is a damnable business in which they are concerned; they are all peaceably inclined. Now, what are they? Men at all? or small movable forts and magazines, at the service of some unscrupulous man in power?"

"Under a government that which imprisons any unjustly", Thoreau wrote, "the true place for a just man is in prison." Civil Disobedience influenced Tolstoy, Gandhi and Martin Luther King, and it anticipated the Nuremberg Principles.

### 16.3 Thoreau, Emerson and the transcendentalist writers

Thoreau became the friend and companion of the transcendentalist writer Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 1882), who introduced him to a circle of New England writers and thinkers that included Ellery Channing, Margaret Fuller and Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Nathaniel Hawthorne described Thoreau in the following words: "Mr. Thorow [sic] is a keen and delicate observer of nature, a genuine observer, which, I suspect, is almost as rare a character as even an original poet; and Nature, in return for his love, seems to adopt him as her especial child, and shows him secrets which few others are allowed to witness. He is familiar with beast, fish, fowl, and reptile, and has strange stories to tell of adventures, and friendly passages with these lower brethren of mortality. Herb and flower, likewise, wherever they grow, whether in garden, or wild wood, are his familiar friends. He is also on intimate terms with the clouds and can tell the portents of storms. It is a characteristic trait, that he has a great regard for the memory of the Indian tribes, whose wild life would have suited him so well; and strange to say, he seldom walks over a plowed field without picking up an arrow-point, a spear-head, or other relic of the red men, as if their spirits willed him to be the inheritor of their simple wealth."



Figure 16.1: Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). Daguerreotype by Benjamin D. Maxham, 1856).

## 16.4 Walden, an experiment in simple living

At Emerson's suggestion, Thoreau opened a journal, in which he recorded his observations concerning nature and his other thoughts. Ultimately the journal contained more than 2 million words. Thoreau drew on his journal when writing his books and essays, and in recent years, many previously unpublished parts of his journal have been printed.

From 1845 until 1847, Thoreau lived in a tiny cabin that he built with his own hands. The cabin was in a second-growth forest beside Walden Pond in Concord, on land that belonged to Emerson. Thoreau regarded his life there as an experiment in simple living. He described his life in the forest and his reasons for being there in his book *Walden*,

"Most of the luxuries", Thoreau wrote, "and many of the so-called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind. With respect to luxuries, the wisest have ever lived a more simple and meager life than the poor. The ancient philosophers, Chinese, Hindoo, Persian, and Greek, were a class than which none has been poorer in outward riches, none so rich in inward."

Elsewhere in "Walden", Thoreau remarks, "It is never too late to give up your prejudices", and he also says, "Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed, and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer." Other favorite quotations from Thoreau include "Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth", "Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes", "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation" and "Men have become tools of their tools."

Thoreau's closeness to nature can be seen from the following passage, written by his friend Frederick Willis, who visited him at Walden Pond in 1847, together with the Alcott family: "He was talking to Mr. Alcott of the wild flowers in Walden woods when, suddenly stopping, he said: 'Keep very still and I will show you my family.' Stepping quickly outside the cabin door, he gave a low and curious whistle; immediately a woodchuck came running towards him from a nearby burrow. With varying note, yet still low and strange, a pair of gray squirrels were summoned and approached him fearlessly. With still another note several birds, including two crows flew towards him, one of the crows nestling upon his shoulder. I remember that it was the crow resting close to his head that made the most vivid impression on me, knowing how fearful of man this bird is. He fed them all from his hand, taking food from his pocket, and petted them gently before our delighted gaze; and then dismissed them by different whistling, always strange and low and short, each wild thing departing instantly at hearing his special signal."

## 16.5 Thoreau's views on religion

Towards the end of his life, when he was very ill, someone asked Thoreau whether he had made his peace with God. "We never quarreled", he answered.

In an essay published by the Atlantic Monthly in 1853, Thoreau described a pine tree in Maine with the words: "It is as immortal as I am, and perchance will go to as high a heaven,

there to tower above me still.” However, the editor (James Russell Lowell) considered the sentence to be blasphemous, and removed it from Thoreau’s essay.

In one of his essays, Thoreau wrote: “If a man walk in the woods for love of them half of each day, he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer; but if he spends his whole day as a speculator, shearing off those woods and making the earth bald before her time, he is esteemed an industrious and enterprising citizen.”

## 16.6 A few more things that Thoreau said

It is the beauty within us that makes it possible for us to recognize the beauty around us. The question is not what you look at, but what you see.

Simplify your life. Don’t waste the years struggling for things that are unimportant. Don’t burden yourself with possessions. Keep your needs and wants simple and enjoy what you have. Don’t destroy your peace of mind by looking back, worrying about the past. Live in the present. Simplify!

Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you’ve imagined.

Happiness is like a butterfly; the more you chase it, the more it will elude you, but if you turn your attention to other things, it will come and sit softly on your shoulder.

You must live in the present, launch yourself on every wave, find your eternity in each moment. Fools stand on their island of opportunities and look toward another land. There is no other land; there is no other life but this

Be not simply good, be good for something,

Books are the treasured wealth of the world and the fit inheritance of generations and nations.

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music he hears, however measured or far away.

The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer.

We need the tonic of wildness...At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature.

I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in.

A man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone.

The man who goes alone can start today; but he who travels with another must wait till that other is ready

I would not have any one adopt my mode of living on any account; for, beside that before he has fairly learned it I may have found out another for myself, I desire that there may be as many different persons in the world as possible; but I would have each one be very careful to find out and pursue his own way, and not his father's or his mother's or his neighbor's instead. The youth may build or plant or sail, only let him not be hindered from doing that which he tells me he would like to do. It is by a mathematical point only that we are wise, as the sailor or the fugitive slave keeps the polestar in his eye; but that is sufficient guidance for all our life. We may not arrive at our port within a calculable period, but we would preserve the true course.

Be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you, opening new channels, not of trade, but of thought.

I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude.

For more than five years I maintained myself thus solely by the labor of my hands, and I found, that by working about six weeks in a year, I could meet all the expenses of living. The whole of my winters, as well as most of my summers, I had free and clear for study.

Perhaps we are led oftener by the love of novelty, and a regard for the opinions of men, in procuring it, than by a true utility.

Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from

serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end, an end which it was already but too easy to arrive at; as railroads lead to Boston or New York. We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate.

The grass flames up on the hillsides like a spring fire,—“*et primitus oritur herba imbribus primoribus evocata*,”—as if the earth sent forth an inward heat to greet the returning sun; not yellow but green is the color of its flame;—the symbol of perpetual youth, the grass-blade, like a long green ribbon, streams from the sod into the summer, checked indeed by the frost, but anon pushing on again, lifting its spear of last year’s hay with the fresh life below.... So our human life but dies down to its root, and still puts forth its green blade to eternity.

I sometimes wonder that we can be so frivolous, I may almost say, as to attend to the gross but somewhat foreign form of servitude called Negro Slavery, there are so many keen and subtle masters that enslave both north and south. It is hard to have a southern overseer; it is worse to have a northern one; but worst of all when you are the slave-driver of yourself.

I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.

Books are the treasured wealth of the world and the fit inheritance of generations and nations.

We need the tonic of wildness...At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature.

Live in each season as it passes; breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influence of the earth.

However mean your life is, meet it and live it; do not shun it and call it hard names. It is not so bad as you are. It looks poorest when you are richest. The fault-finder will find faults even in paradise. Love your life, poor as it is. You may perhaps have some pleasant, thrilling, glorious hours, even in a poorhouse. The setting sun is reflected from the windows of the almshouse as brightly as from the rich man’s abode; the snow melts before its door as early in the spring. I do not see but a quiet mind may live as contentedly there, and have as cheering thoughts, as in a palace.

As if you could kill time without injuring eternity.

Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads.

Every generation laughs at the old fashions, but follows religiously the new.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.

Here are a few quotations from Thoreau's essay *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*

Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it.

After all, the practical reason why, when the power is once in the hands of the people, a majority are permitted, and for a long period continue, to rule, is not because they are most likely to be in the right, nor because this seems fairest to the minority, but because they are physically the strongest. But a government in which the majority rule in all cases can not be based on justice, even as far as men understand it. Can there not be a government in which the majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience? - in which majorities decide only those questions to which the rule of expediency is applicable? Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume, is to do at any time what I think right. It is truly enough said that a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation of conscientious men is a corporation with a conscience. Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice. A common and natural result of an undue respect for the law is, that you may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys and all, marching in admirable order over

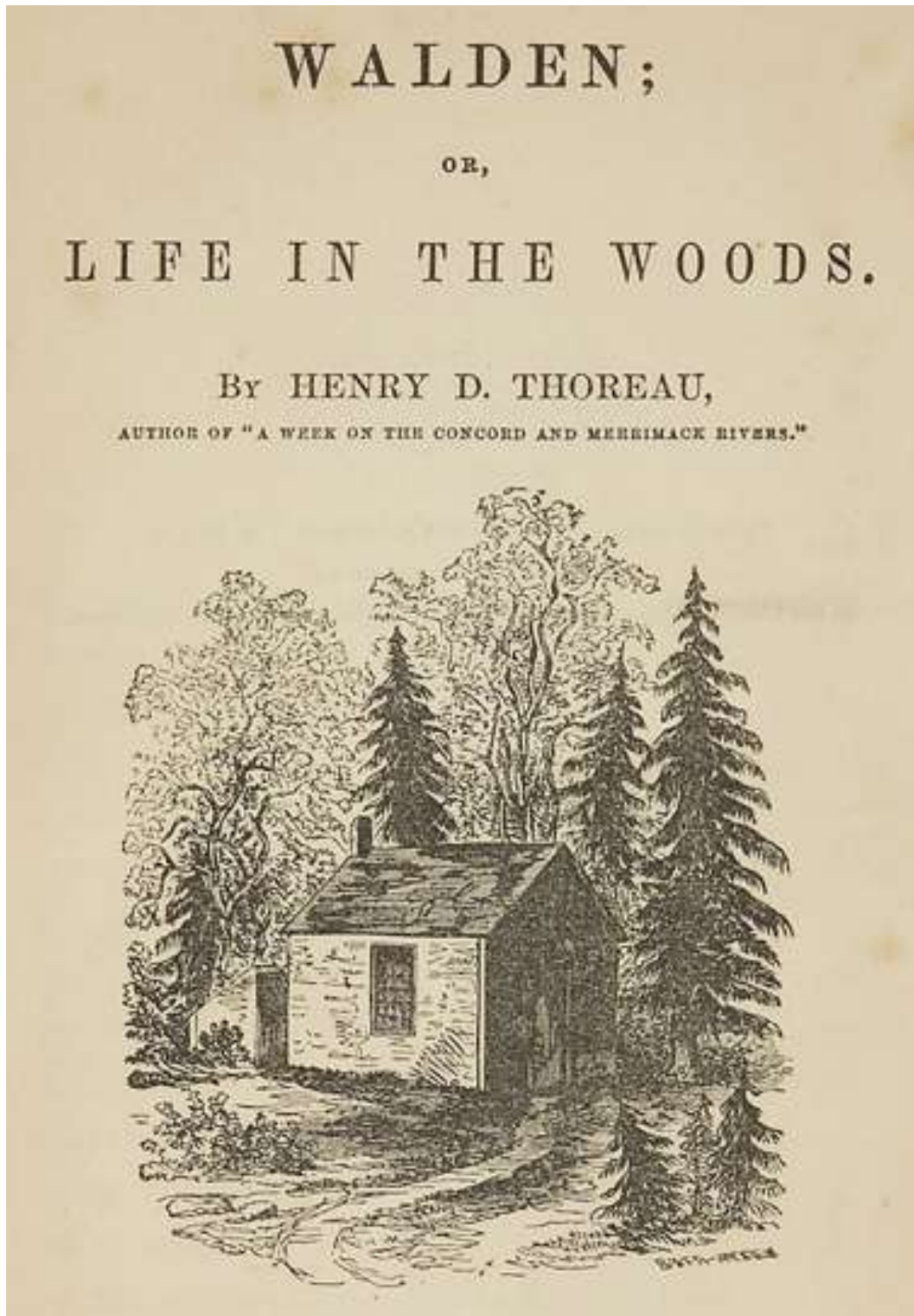


Figure 16.2: The frontpiece of Thoreau's book, *Walden*.



Figure 16.3: A portrait of Ralph Waldo Emerson by Eastman Johnson, 1856. Expressing ideas that he would later develop in his famous essay *Nature*, Emerson wrote, “Nature is a language and every new fact one learns is a new word; but it is not a language taken to pieces and dead in the dictionary, but the language put together into a most significant and universal sense. I wish to learn this language, not that I may know a new grammar, but that I may read the great book that is written in that tongue.”



Figure 16.4: Walden Pond, as it looks today. The small cabin which Thoreau built with his own hands was near to the pond. Today Walden has become a place of pilgrimage for the environmental movement. Thoreau's complete *Journals*, which are in fact his major work, have today been published. They contain roughly seven thousand pages, and two million words.

hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, aye, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart. They have no doubt that it is a damnable business in which they are concerned; they are all peaceably inclined. Now, what are they? Men at all? or small movable forts and magazines, at the service of some unscrupulous man in power? Visit the Navy Yard, and behold a marine, such a man as an American government can make, or such as it can make a man with its black arts, a mere shadow and reminiscence of humanity, a man laid out alive and standing, and already, as one may say, buried under arms with funeral accompaniment, though it may be...

Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy is worse than the evil. It makes it worse. Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority? Why does it cry and resist before it is hurt? Why does it not encourage its citizens to be on the alert to point out its faults, and do better than it would have them? Why does it always crucify Christ, and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?...

Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison.

Thoreau's essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" influenced Mahatma Gandhi and Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Here are Dr. King's words about Thoreau's essay:

Here, in this courageous New Englander's refusal to pay his taxes and his choice of jail rather than support a war that would spread slavery's territory into Mexico, I made my first contact with the theory of nonviolent resistance. Fascinated by the idea of refusing to cooperate with an evil system, I was so deeply moved that I reread the work several times. I became convinced that noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. No other person has been more eloquent and passionate in getting this idea across than Henry David Thoreau. As a result of his writings and personal witness, we are the heirs of a legacy of creative protest. The teachings of Thoreau came alive in our civil rights movement; indeed, they are more alive than ever before. Whether expressed in a sit-in at lunch counters, a freedom ride into Mississippi, a peaceful protest in Albany, Georgia, a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, these are outgrowths of Thoreau's insistence that evil

must be resisted and that no moral man can patiently adjust to injustice.

### Suggestions for further reading

1. Furtak, Rick, *Henry David Thoreau*. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, (2013).
2. Allen, Francis H. *A Bibliography of Henry David Thoreau*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, (1908)
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4. Harding, Walter. *A Bibliography of the Thoreau Society Bulletin Bibliographies: 1941-1969*. Troy, N.Y.: Whitston Publishing, (1971).
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6. Sattelmeyer, Robert. *Thoreau's Reading: A Study in Intellectual History, with a Bibliographical Catalog*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, (1988).



# Chapter 17

## BERTRAND RUSSELL

### 17.1 Third Earl Russell

Bertrand Arthur William Russell, 3rd Earl Russell, OM, FRS, (1872-1970), was born into a wealthy and influential English family, whose members had been active in politics since the time of the Tudors. Bertrand Russell's grandfather, Lord John Russell, the third son of the Duke of Bedford and 1st Earl Russell, had twice served as Prime Minister during Queen Victoria's reign.



Figure 17.1: Pembroke Lodge, near Richmond Park, Bertrand Russell's childhood home.



Figure 17.2: **Russell at the age of four.**

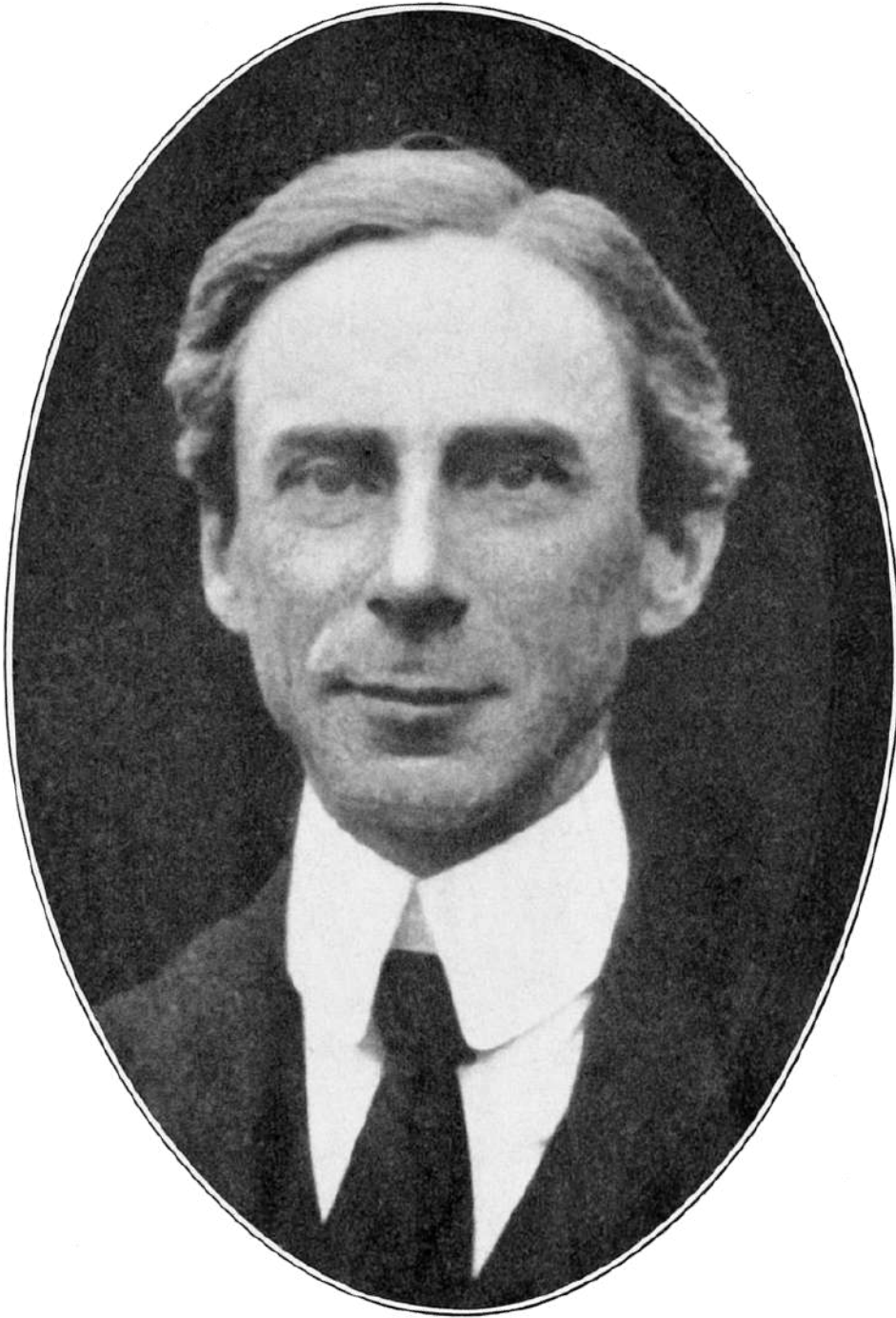


Figure 17.3: Russell as a young man.



Figure 17.4: Russell at Trinity College Cambridge in 1893.



Figure 17.5: Russell with two of his children, John and Kate. His second son, Conrad (1937-2004, not shown here) became the 5th Earl Russell, and had a very distinguished career as a liberal parliamentarian and historian.

## 17.2 Russell's early life at Pembroke Lodge, Richmond

Because of the early death of his parents (Viscount and Viscountess Amberly) Bertrand Russell was brought up by his grandparents, Lord John Russell and Lady Russell, who lived at Pembroke Lodge near Richmond Park, about fifteen miles west of London. Bertrand Russell's grandfather soon died too, and his grandmother became the dominant influence on the boy's early life. Although she was a religious conservative, Russell's grandmother nevertheless believed in independence of thought, accepted Darwinism, and supporter Irish Home Rule. She also had the motto (taken from the Bible) "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil."

Bertrand Russell and his elder brother Frank were educated at home by tutors, and they had rather lonely and unhappy childhoods in the emotionally repressed atmosphere of Pembroke Lodge. However, when Bertrand was eleven years old, Frank introduced him to the work of Euclid. Bertrand Russell later described this event in his autobiography as "one of the great events of my life, as dazzling as first love". It is interesting that Albert Einstein had similar feelings when he encountered the works of Euclid at almost the same age.

During these early years Russell also discovered the writings of the poet Shelley, and he later wrote: "I spent all my spare time reading him, and learning him by heart, knowing no one to whom I could speak of what I thought or felt, I used to reflect how wonderful it would have been to know Shelley, and to wonder whether I should meet any live human being with whom I should feel so much sympathy".

## 17.3 Studies at Cambridge University

In 1890, when Bertrand Russell was 18, he started his studies in mathematics at Trinity College, Cambridge University. He graduated with distinction, but because of his agnostic religious beliefs, he encountered difficulties. Nevertheless he continued to teach at Cambridge University, his most notable student being the Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951).

## 17.4 Principia Mathematica

During the years 1910-1913, Russell collaborated with his former teacher. Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) to write a 3-volume treatise entitled *Principia Mathematica*, which dealt with the logical foundations of mathematics and languages. At the end of the huge effort which he had devoted to writing this enormous work, Russell underwent a sudden conversion, during which all the aims of his life changed completely. Observing the terrible isolation of Whitehead's wife while she suffered an attack of angina, he had a sudden insight into the isolation of each human being and the need for better communication to

break this isolation. As a result of this moment of intuition, Bertrand Russell resolved to abandon mathematics, and instead devote his life to making human existence happier and better.

## **17.5 Books aimed at improving human lives; The Nobel Prize in Literature**

Russell's idealism, honesty and humor shine from the pages of the enormous number of books, articles and letters that he wrote during the remainder of his life. His wide-ranging and influential writing won him not only great fame, but also the 1950 Nobel Prize in Literature.

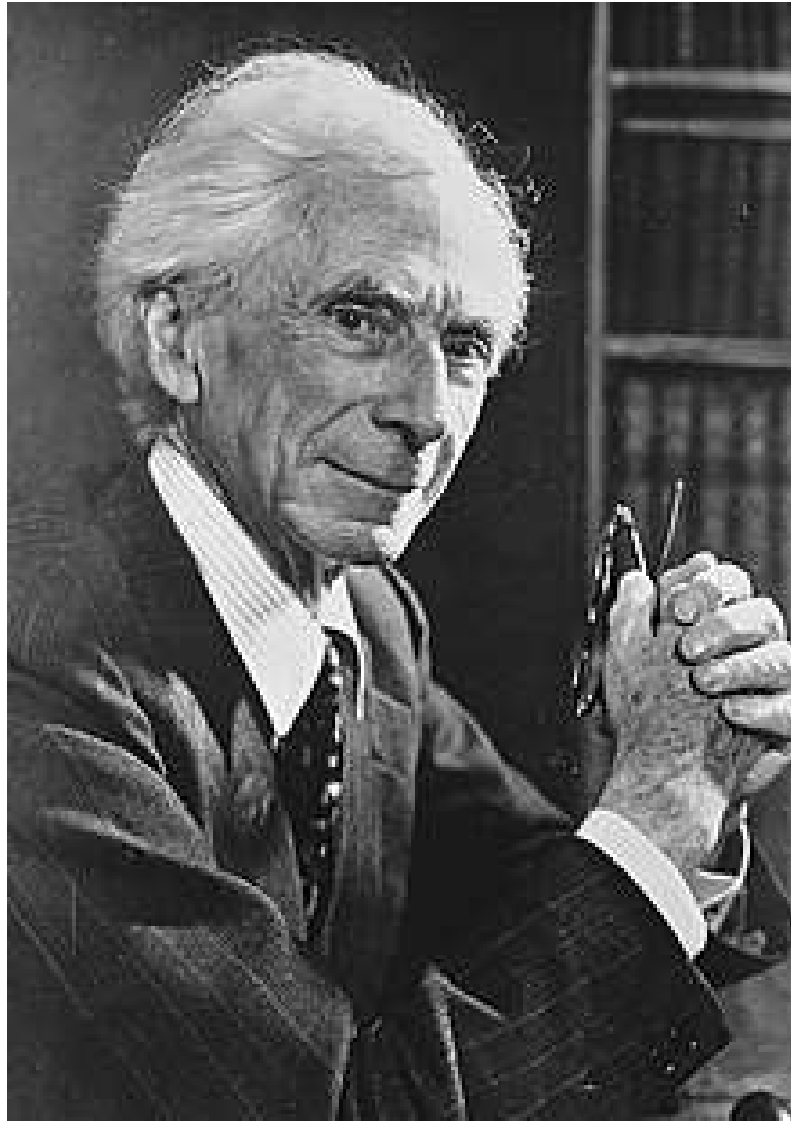


Figure 17.6: Lord Russell received the 1950 Nobel Prize in Literature “in recognition of his varied and significant writings in which he champions humanitarian ideals and freedom of thought”.



Figure 17.7: After discussing the Bikini test and its radioactive fallout with Joseph Rotblat, Lord Russell became concerned for the future of the human gene pool if large numbers of such bombs should ever be used in a war. To warn humanity of the danger, he wrote what came to be known as the Russell-Einstein Manifesto. On July 9, 1955, with Rotblat in the chair, Russell read the Manifesto to a packed press conference. The document contains the words: “Here then is the problem that we present to you, stark and dreadful and inescapable: Shall we put an end to the human race, or shall mankind renounce war?... There lies before us, if we choose, continual progress in happiness, knowledge and wisdom. Shall we, instead, choose death because we cannot forget our quarrels? We appeal as human beings to human beings: Remember your humanity, and forget the rest. Lord Russell devoted much of the remainder of his life to working for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Here he is seen in 1962 in Trafalgar Square, London, addressing a meeting of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. (Public domain)

## 17.6 The Russell-Einstein Manifesto

Bertrand Russell was the author of the Russell-Einstein Declaration of 1955, the founding document of Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, an organization which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995. Russell devoted much of the last part of his life to working for the complete abolition of nuclear weapons. Here is the text of the document:

In the tragic situation which confronts humanity, we feel that scientists should assemble in conference to appraise the perils that have arisen as a result of the development of weapons of mass destruction, and to discuss a resolution in the spirit of the appended draft.

We are speaking on this occasion, not as members of this or that nation, continent, or creed, but as human beings, members of the species Man, whose continued existence is in doubt. The world is full of conflicts; and, overshadowing all minor conflicts, the titanic struggle between Communism and anti-Communism.

Almost everybody who is politically conscious has strong feelings about one or more of these issues; but we want you, if you can, to set aside such feelings and consider yourselves only as members of a biological species which has had a remarkable history, and whose disappearance none of us can desire.

We shall try to say no single word which should appeal to one group rather than to another. All, equally, are in peril, and, if the peril is understood, there is hope that they may collectively avert it.

We have to learn to think in a new way. We have to learn to ask ourselves, not what steps can be taken to give military victory to whatever group we prefer, for there no longer are such steps; the question we have to ask ourselves is: what steps can be taken to prevent a military contest of which the issue must be disastrous to all parties?

The general public, and even many men in positions of authority, have not realized what would be involved in a war with nuclear bombs. The general public still thinks in terms of the obliteration of cities. It is understood that the new bombs are more powerful than the old, and that, while one A-bomb could obliterate Hiroshima, one H-bomb could obliterate the largest cities, such as London, New York, and Moscow.

No doubt, in an H-bomb war, great cities would be obliterated. But this is one of the minor disasters that would have to be faced. If everybody in London, New York, and Moscow were exterminated, the world might, in the course of a few centuries, recover from the blow. But we now know, especially since the Bikini test, that nuclear bombs can gradually spread destruction over a very much wider area than had been supposed.

It is stated on very good authority that a bomb can now be manufactured which will be 2,500 times as powerful as that which destroyed Hiroshima. Such a bomb, if exploded near the ground or under water, sends radio-active particles

into the upper air. They sink gradually and reach the surface of the earth in the form of a deadly dust or rain. It was this dust which infected the Japanese fishermen and their catch of fish. No one knows how widely such lethal radioactive particles might be diffused, but the best authorities are unanimous in saying that a war with H-bombs might possibly put an end to the human race. It is feared that if many H-bombs are used there will be universal death, sudden only for a minority, but for the majority a slow torture of disease and disintegration.

Many warnings have been uttered by eminent men of science and by authorities in military strategy. None of them will say that the worst results are certain. What they do say is that these results are possible, and no one can be sure that they will not be realized. We have not yet found that the views of experts on this question depend in any degree upon their politics or prejudices. They depend only, so far as our researches have revealed, upon the extent of the particular expert's knowledge. We have found that the men who know most are the most gloomy.

Here, then, is the problem which we present to you, stark and dreadful and inescapable: Shall we put an end to the human race; or shall mankind renounce war? People will not face this alternative because it is so difficult to abolish war.

The abolition of war will demand distasteful limitations of national sovereignty. But what perhaps impedes understanding of the situation more than anything else is that the term "mankind" feels vague and abstract. People scarcely realize in imagination that the danger is to themselves and their children and their grandchildren, and not only to a dimly apprehended humanity. They can scarcely bring themselves to grasp that they, individually, and those whom they love are in imminent danger of perishing agonizingly. And so they hope that perhaps war may be allowed to continue provided modern weapons are prohibited.

This hope is illusory. Whatever agreements not to use H-bombs had been reached in time of peace, they would no longer be considered binding in time of war, and both sides would set to work to manufacture H-bombs as soon as war broke out, for, if one side manufactured the bombs and the other did not, the side that manufactured them would inevitably be victorious.

Although an agreement to renounce nuclear weapons as part of a general reduction of armaments would not afford an ultimate solution, it would serve certain important purposes. First, any agreement between East and West is to the good in so far as it tends to diminish tension. Second, the abolition of thermo-nuclear weapons, if each side believed that the other had carried it out sincerely, would lessen the fear of a sudden attack in the style of Pearl Harbour, which at present keeps both sides in a state of nervous apprehension. We should, therefore, welcome such an agreement though only as a first step.

Most of us are not neutral in feeling, but, as human beings, we have to

remember that, if the issues between East and West are to be decided in any manner that can give any possible satisfaction to anybody, whether Communist or anti-Communist, whether Asian or European or American, whether White or Black, then these issues must not be decided by war. We should wish this to be understood, both in the East and in the West.

There lies before us, if we choose, continual progress in happiness, knowledge, and wisdom. Shall we, instead, choose death, because we cannot forget our quarrels? We appeal as human beings to human beings: Remember your humanity, and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you cannot, there lies before you the risk of universal death.

Resolution:

We invite this Congress, and through it the scientists of the world and the general public, to subscribe to the following resolution:

“In view of the fact that in any future world war nuclear weapons will certainly be employed, and that such weapons threaten the continued existence of mankind, we urge the governments of the world to realize, and to acknowledge publicly, that their purpose cannot be furthered by a world war, and we urge them, consequently, to find peaceful means for the settlement of all matters of dispute between them.<sup>2</sup>

Max Born

Percy W. Bridgman

Albert Einstein

Leopold Infeld

Frederic Joliot-Curie

Herman J. Muller

Linus Pauling

Cecil F. Powell

Joseph Rotblat

Bertrand Russell

Hideki Yukawa

## 17.7 A few things that Bertrand Russell wrote or said:

War does not determine who is right, but only who is left.

The world is full of magical things patiently waiting for our wits to become sharper.

Men are born ignorant, not stupid. They are made stupid by education.

To fear love is to fear life, and those who fear life are already three parts dead.

The only thing that will redeem mankind is cooperation.

The trouble with the world is that the stupid are cocksure, and the intelligent are full of doubt.

Love is something more than desire for sexual intercourse; it is the principle means of escape from the loneliness which afflicts men and women throughout the greater part of their lives.

The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge.

Those who have never known the deep intimacy and the intense companionship of mutual love have missed the best thing that life has to give.

Science is what you know, philosophy is what you don't know.

I would never die for my beliefs, because I might be wrong.

Extreme hopes are born from extreme misery.

To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom.

The fact that an opinion has been widely held is no evidence whatever that it is not utterly absurd.

I have made an odd discovery. Every time I talk with a savant, I am convinced that happiness is no longer possible. Yet when I talk with my gardener, I'm convinced of the opposite.

Patriotism is the willingness to kill and be killed for trivial reasons.

Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind.

There lies before us, if we choose, continual progress in happiness, knowledge, and wisdom. Shall we, instead, choose death, because we cannot forget our quarrels? We appeal, as human beings, to human beings: Remember your humanity, and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you cannot, there lies before you the risk of universal death.

## Suggestions for further reading

1. Russell, Bertrand, *Autobiography*, Psychology Press, 1998. Bertrand Russell was born in 1872 and died in 1970. One of the most influential figures of the twentieth century, he transformed philosophy and can lay claim to being one of the greatest philosophers of all time.
2. John Newsome Crossley. *A Note on Cantor's Theorem and Russell's Paradox*, Australian Journal of Philosophy 51, 1973, 70-71.
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4. Alan Ryan. *Bertrand Russell: A Political Life*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
5. Alfred Julius Ayer. *Russell*, London: Fontana, 1972. A lucid summary exposition of Russell's thought.
6. Elizabeth Ramsden Eames. *Bertrand Russell's Theory of Knowledge*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969. A clear description of Russell's philosophical development.
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# Chapter 18

## SARTRE

### 18.1 Sartre: Existence is prior to essence

Here is an excerpt from Wikipedia's article on Sartre:

Jean-Paul Charles Aymard Sartre (1905-1980) was a French philosopher, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, political activist, biographer, and literary critic. He was one of the key figures in the philosophy of existentialism and phenomenology, and one of the leading figures in 20th-century French philosophy and Marxism. His work has also influenced sociology, critical theory, post-colonial theory, and literary studies, and continues to influence these disciplines.

### 18.2 Simone de Beauvoir

Sartre was also noted for his open relationship with prominent feminist and fellow existentialist philosopher and writer Simone de Beauvoir. Together, Sartre and de Beauvoir challenged the cultural and social assumptions and expectations of their upbringings, which they considered bourgeois, in both lifestyle and thought. The conflict between oppressive, spiritually destructive conformity (*mauvaise foi*, literally, 'bad faith') and an 'authentic' way of 'being' became the dominant theme of Sartre's early work, a theme embodied in his principal philosophical work *Being and Nothingness* (*L'Être et le Néant*, 1943). Sartre's introduction to his philosophy is his work *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (*L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, 1946), originally presented as a lecture.

### **18.3 The Nobel Prize in Literature**

He was awarded the 1964 Nobel Prize in Literature despite attempting to refuse it, saying that he always declined official honours and that ‘a writer should not allow himself to be turned into an institution.’



Figure 18.1: Sartre in 1967. His famous maxim, “Existence is prior to essence”, conveys his belief that a person’s identity is defined more and more distinctly during his or her life by a series of events and decisions. Sartre believed that each person has a responsibility for the fate of all of humanity.



Figure 18.2: Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre in Beijing, 1955. Although they never married, they were a couple until his death in 1980.



Figure 18.3: **Hélène de Beauvoir's house in Goxwiller, where Sartre tried to hide from the media after being awarded the Nobel Prize.**



Figure 18.4: Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) in 1967. Like Jean-Paul Sartre, she was an important existentialist writer. In addition, she was a pioneer of feminism, famous for her book, *The Second Sex*.

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