

## THE MAJOR SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

<u>School</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Main Centres</u>	<u>Names</u>	<u>Key Problem</u>	<u>Possible Solution</u>	<u>Summary</u>
1. <b>Early Naturalists</b>	600-400	Ionia (W.Turkey), Abdera (N.Turkey)	Thales, Heraclitus, Democritus	<i>What is the true hidden nature of reality?</i>	One of the simple ingredients of the visible world, such as air, earth, fire or water. Or hidden tiny simple units called 'atoms'. We can explain things without reference to the gods.	<b>Reality is simple</b>
2. <b>Early Rationalists</b>	510-430	Samos (off Turkey), Elea (Italy)	Pythagoras, Parmenides, Zeno	<i>If reason and appearances disagree, which one should we believe?</i>	Since reality is hidden, reason is more reliable. Maths is the key, or we can deduce the existence of some very simple single pure reality.	<b>Reality is in ideas</b>
3. <b>Athenian sophists</b>	450-400	Athens	Protagoras, Gorgias	<i>If people make judgements, don't morality and truth depend on the observer, and therefore they don't exist in reality?</i>	Relativism is indeed true, so morality is invented for our own convenience (usually selfish), and neither our sense nor our reason can be trusted	<b>Ideals are false</b>
4. <b>Socrates and his followers</b>	430-370	Athens	Socrates	<i>Can we avoid the dangers of relativism, which seems to undermine morality and make the pursuit of truth impossible?</i>	Although both senses and reason are riddled with doubts, right thinking will lead to truth, and moral goodness will naturally follow from a perception of the truth.	<b>Doubt leads to goodness</b>
5. <b>Platonic Academy</b>	390-270	The Academy in Athens	Plato	<i>Mustn't we be committed to some more eternal and unchanging ideals if we are going to be committed to goodness and truth?</i>	Reason shows us that there must be a set of fixed and unchanging ideas, which not only explain our highest ideals, but also the ordinary way we understand concepts and language	<b>Follow ideals</b>
6. <b>Aristotle and the Peripatetics</b>	350-270	The Lyceum in Athens	Aristotle	<i>Can't we get a clear grip on knowledge and goodness, without being committed to some unrealistic ideals which we can't experience?</i>	The essence of the things we experience are eternal and unchanging, so that we can come to understand the truth, purpose and virtue of each thing by a careful combination of observation and analysis	<b>Analyse the essence of each thing</b>
7. <b>Sceptics</b>	350-250	Greece	Pyrrho	<i>Aren't the doubts raised by philosophy so overwhelming and contradictory that it makes all confident judgement impossible?</i>	For every argument invented there seems to be a plausible counter-argument, so the best solution is just to become very passive, which brings great peace of mind	<b>Become passive</b>
8. <b>Cynics</b>	390-300	Greece	Diogenes	<i>Once it becomes clear that morality and custom are invented by humans, why should a rational person conform to them?</i>	We should abandon conventional rules and follow our own personal desires, though experience shows that the best life is not self-indulgent, but very simple and restrained	<b>Do your own thing</b>
9. <b>Epicureans</b>	310-250	The Garden in Athens	Epicurus, Lucretius	<i>If the naturalists are right in their explanations of reality, what implications has this for how we should live our lives?</i>	The naturalists do seem to give the best explanations of existence, so we should accept their reliance on the senses and their belief in atoms. The best life is therefore the one that brings happiness for us as physical creatures, which is a life of cautious pleasure	<b>Pursue quiet pleasure</b>
10. <b>Stoics</b>	300-200	Stoa Poikile in Athens	Zeno of Citium, Chrysippus	<i>Can't we find some balanced combination of the extreme doctrines, and then deduce a correct way of living?</i>	Knowledge must come from a combination of senses and reason. We must accept the material world, but it is designed and guided by gods. We must therefore live in accordance with nature, and learn a quiet acceptance of even the cruellest natural events	<b>Show restraint</b>
11. <b>Neo-Platonists</b>	230-350	Alexandria (Egypt)	Plotinus	<i>How far can reason go in deducing the true nature of reality behind the world of physical appearances?</i>	We can now see that Plato's forms are religious in character, and exist eternally in the mind of God. The form of pure goodness sought by Plato is the same as God himself	<b>Dream of the high ideals</b>
12. <b>Christians</b>	150-1400	N.Africa, Italy, France	Augustine, Aquinas	<i>What are the logical implications of Christ's teachings, and are they compatible with the teachings of the pagan philosophers?</i>	Although Aristotle and Plato lacked Christian revelation, their ideas on metaphysics, politics, virtue and logic fit well with Christianity, and greatly extend it as an intellectual theory. Christian problems like free will and the existence of evil need the help of pagan philosophers	<b>Follow Christ rationally</b>
13. <b>Islamic Aristotelians</b>	900-1100	Southern Spain	Averroes, Avicenna	<i>How far can the ideas of Aristotle be fitted into the teachings of Mohammed in 'The Koran'?</i>	Islam is an all-embracing religion, which should try to incorporate the obvious wisdom gained by the pagan philosophers into its own view of reality	<b>Islam is rational</b>
14. <b>Empiricists</b>	1690-1770	Britain	Locke, Berkeley, Hume	<i>Given that sense experience is our only source of knowledge, how far can knowledge extend, and what are the inevitable limitations?</i>	We can see that science is the best route to truth, and philosophy shows us the limitations of claims about perception, knowledge, truth, laws, causation, the future, morality and politics, when they are built up purely from basic sense experiences	<b>Be scientific</b>
15. <b>Rationalists</b>	1640-1800	Northern Europe	Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant	<i>Given that reason is our only reliable source of knowledge, what can we deduce about reality from pure thought, and how far can we trust the appearances of sense experience?</i>	Reason tells us to mistrust our senses, but ideas and truth exist within the mind, and by careful thought we can build a picture of reality, using reason, maths and intuition. Science has its place within a larger spiritual and intellectual world.	<b>Follow reason in everything</b>
16. <b>Idealists</b>	1800-1900	Germany	Hegel	<i>If we take a commitment to rationalism seriously, what can we deduce about the true nature and purposes of existence?</i>	If we follow our reason far enough, we can see all ideas (and even history itself) converging on a single ideal and a single vision of the Truth, which exists in a spiritual world	<b>Great ideas are reality</b>
17. <b>Materialists</b>	1600-1900	Northern Europe	Hobbes, Marx, Darwin	<i>Giving that the only thing existing in our world is physical matter, what can we deduce about our identity, and how individuals and communities should live their lives?</i>	If we start with our sense, we realise that nothing is sure except the physical world, so we must assume that nothing else exists, either inside our own heads, or in any greater world of the spirit. The laws of science are the laws of human life.	<b>Stick to what is physical</b>
18. <b>Phenomenologists</b>	1870-1930	France and Germany	Husserl	<i>If Kant has shown that knowledge depends on how our minds work, can we sometimes still get at the truth?</i>	By analysing our own minds, we should be able to gradually strip away any distortions and distinguish reality from appearances.	<b>Analyse the mind</b>
19. <b>Existentialists</b>	1850-1950	Northern Europe	Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre	<i>If we accept our feeling of mental freedom as being true, how should we exercise this responsibility in our lives?</i>	We must understand that we can not only escape social pressures, but also mental pressures. We are responsible for everything we do and everything we are.	<b>Live through decisions</b>
20. <b>Logical Analysts</b>	1880-1980	Britain and America	Frege, Russell, Moore, Ayer	<i>If problems are broken down into steps, and attention paid to precise logic and evidence (like science), surely we can reach the truth?</i>	While a cautious approach makes big metaphysical claims look very doubtful, we can make progress, especially in understanding the complex role which language and the nature of the mind play in our own thinking	<b>Analyse problems into parts</b>
21. <b>Pragmatists</b>	1880-1980	America	Peirce, James, Quine	<i>Can we bring philosophy closer to how normal people acquire knowledge and make decisions?</i>	We actually accept things as true because they <u>work</u> in practice, and this rule can be the basis for morality and politics, as well as scientific knowledge	<b>Follow what succeeds</b>
22. <b>Post-Modernists</b>	1970-1990	France	Derrida	<i>What follows from the fact that relativism is right, and truth and morality change continually with culture and prejudice?</i>	Nothing is objectively true, and even language is beyond our control, so we must just 'go with the flow', and not expect any kind of stable truth or science or morality or politics	<b>Relax</b>