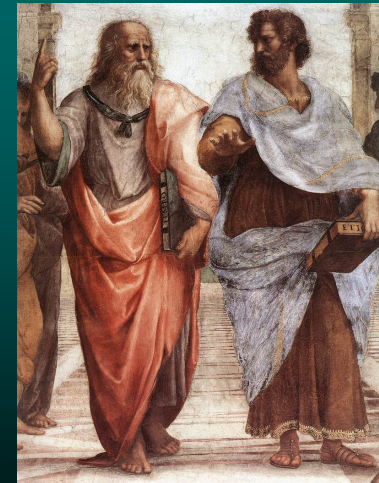
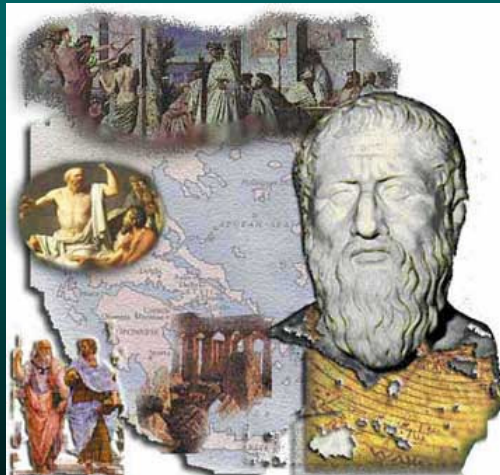


# Plato

C. 427 – 347 B.C.



# Plato

- Born into a distinguished Athenian family in the fifth century B.C. at a time when the city-state was flourishing as one of the most dominant and culturally enlightened places on earth.
- One of the central figures in the intellectual canon.
- Founded the Academy of Athens – the first institution of higher learning – and went on to leave a lasting imprint on Western philosophy.



# Socrates' Influence

- Strongly affected by arguments of Socrates.
- Socrates' approach was to constantly strive for clearer definitions of word's and people's perception of those words in order to get nearer to 'the truth'.
- When Socrates was executed for allegedly 'corrupting' the youth of Anthems with his ideas, Plato fled the city-state and began a decade tour of many countries.
- During his travels met and was influenced by the Pythagoreans.



# The Theory of Forms

- Nature, as seen through human eyes, was merely a flawed version of true ‘reality’ or ‘forms’.
- Instructive metaphor:
  - Compares humanity with cave dwellers who lived facing the back wall of the cave.
  - What they perceive as reality is merely the shadows thrown out by the sun.
  - Therefore, little to be learned from direct observation of them.
- For Plato, the only valid approach to science was a rational, mathematical one which sought to establish universal truths irrespective of human condition.



# The Academy

- Founded an Academy on his return to Athens in 387 B.C.
- Some claim it to be the first European University
- Athenian Academy became recognised as the leading authority in mathematics, astronomy, science and philosophy
- Survived for nearly a thousand years until the Roman emperor Justinian shut it down in 529 AD. around the time the Dark Ages began.



# The Legacy of Plato

- Best remembered as one of the greatest philosophers of the Western tradition
- His influence stretched in many academic areas such as education, literature, political thought, epistemology\* and aesthetics<sup>+</sup>
  - \*noun Philosophy the theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope.
  - + plural noun [usually treated as singular] a set of principles concerned with the nature and appreciation of beauty, especially in art. the branch of philosophy which deals with questions of beauty and artistic taste

