**Philosophy**

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#Historical\_overview

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:%22The_School_of_Athens%22_by_Raffaello_Sanzio_da_Urbino.jpg)

[*The School of Athens*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_School_of_Athens) (1509–1511) by [Raphael](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raphael), depicting famous classical [Greek philosophers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_philosophy) in an idealized setting inspired by [ancient Greek architecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_architecture)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aristoteles_der_Stagirit.jpg)

Statue of [Aristotle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle) (384–322 BCE), a major figure of ancient Greek philosophy, in the Aristotlepark, [Stagira](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stagira)

**Philosophy** (from [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language): φιλοσοφία, *philosophia*, 'love of wisdom')[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-Online_Etymology_Dictionary-1)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-Webster's_New_World_Dictionary-2) is the study of general and fundamental questions, such as those about [existence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics), [reason](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reason), [knowledge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistemology), [values](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics), [mind](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mind), and [language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_language).[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-3)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-4) Such questions are often posed as problems[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-5)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-6) to be studied or resolved. Some sources claim the term was coined by [Pythagoras](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pythagoras) (c. 570 – c. 495 BCE);[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-7)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-8) others dispute this story,[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-9)[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-10) arguing that Pythagoreans merely claimed use of a preexisting term.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-11) [Philosophical methods](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophical_methodology) include [questioning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socratic_questioning), [critical discussion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socratic_method), [rational argument](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialectic), and systematic presentation.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-12)[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-justification-13)[[i]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-14)

Historically, *philosophy* encompassed all bodies of knowledge and a practitioner was known as a [*philosopher*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosopher).[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-:0-15) From the time of [Ancient Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek) philosopher [Aristotle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle) to the 19th century, "[natural philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_philosophy)" encompassed [astronomy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astronomy), [medicine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medicine), and [physics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physics).[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-FOOTNOTELindberg20073-16) For example, [Newton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Newton)'s 1687 [*Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophi%C3%A6_Naturalis_Principia_Mathematica) later became classified as a book of physics.

In the 19th century, the growth of modern [research universities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University) led academic philosophy and other disciplines to [professionalize](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contemporary_philosophy) and specialize.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-17)[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-18) Since then, various areas of investigation that were traditionally part of philosophy have become separate academic disciplines, and namely the [social sciences](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_sciences) such as [psychology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychology), [sociology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociology), [linguistics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistics), and [economics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economics).

Today, major subfields of academic philosophy include [metaphysics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics), which is concerned with the fundamental nature of [existence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Existence) and [reality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reality), [epistemology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistemology), which studies the nature of [knowledge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge) and [belief](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belief), [ethics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics), which is concerned with [moral value](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Value_(ethics)), and [logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logic), which studies the [rules of inference](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rules_of_inference) that allow one to derive [conclusions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consequent) from [true](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth) [premises](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Premises).[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-19)[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-20) Other notable subfields include [philosophy of science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_science), [political philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_philosophy), [aesthetics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesthetics), [philosophy of language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_language), and [philosophy of mind](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mind).

* [3Branches of philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#Branches_of_philosophy)
  + [3.1Aesthetics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#Aesthetics)
  + [3.2Ethics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#Ethics)
  + [3.3Epistemology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#Epistemology)
  + [3.4Metaphysics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#Metaphysics)
  + [3.5Logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#Logic)
  + [3.6Mind and language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#Mind_and_language)
  + [3.7Philosophy of science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#Philosophy_of_science)
  + [3.8Political philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#Political_philosophy)
  + [3.9Philosophy of religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#Philosophy_of_religion)
  + [3.10Metaphilosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#Metaphilosophy)
* [4Applied and professional philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#Applied_and_professional_philosophy)

Definitions

Initially, the term referred to any body of [knowledge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge).[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-:0-15) In this sense, philosophy is closely related to religion, mathematics, natural science, education, and politics.[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-21)

In section thirteen of his [*Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lives_and_Opinions_of_Eminent_Philosophers), the oldest surviving history of philosophy (3rd century), [Diogenes Laërtius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diogenes_La%C3%ABrtius) presents a three-part division of ancient Greek philosophical inquiry:[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-22)

* [Natural philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science) (i.e. physics, from [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language): *ta physika*, [lit.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literal_translation) 'things having to do with *physis* [nature]') was the study of the constitution and processes of transformation in the physical world.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-23)
* [Moral philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics) (i.e. ethics, from *êthika*, 'having to do with character, disposition, manners') was the study of goodness, right and wrong, justice and virtue.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-24)
* [Metaphysical philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics) (i.e. logic, from *logikós*, 'of or pertaining to reason or speech') was the study of [existence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Existence), causation, [God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God), [logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logic), [forms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_(metaphysics)), and other abstract objects.[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-25) (*meta ta physika*, 'after the [*Physics*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physics_(Aristotle))')

In *Against the Logicians* the [Pyrrhonist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyrrhonism) philosopher [Sextus Empiricus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sextus_Empiricus" \o "Sextus Empiricus) detailed the variety of ways in which the ancient Greek philosophers had divided philosophy, noting that this three-part division was agreed to by Plato, Aristotle, Xenocrates, and the Stoics.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-26) The [Academic Skeptic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_skepticism) philosopher [Cicero](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cicero) also followed this three-part division.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-27)

This division is not obsolete, but has changed: *natural philosophy* has split into the various natural sciences, especially physics, [astronomy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astronomy), [chemistry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chemistry), [biology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biology), and [cosmology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmology); *moral philosophy* has birthed the [social sciences](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_science), while still including [value theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Value_theory) (e.g. ethics, [aesthetics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesthetics), [political philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_philosophy), etc.); and *metaphysical philosophy* has given way to formal sciences such as logic, [mathematics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathematics) and [philosophy of science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_science), while still including epistemology, cosmology, etc. For example, [Newton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Newton)'s [*Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophi%C3%A6_Naturalis_Principia_Mathematica) (1687), since classified as a book of physics, uses the term [*natural philosophy*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_philosophy) as it was understood at the time, encompassing disciplines such as [astronomy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astronomy), [medicine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medicine) and [physics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physics) that later became associated with [the sciences](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science).[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-FOOTNOTELindberg20073-16)

Historical overview

In one general sense, philosophy is associated with [wisdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wisdom), intellectual culture, and a search for knowledge. In this sense, all cultures and literate societies ask philosophical questions, such as "how are we to live" and "what is the nature of reality." A broad and impartial conception of philosophy, then, finds a reasoned inquiry into such matters as [reality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reality), [morality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morality), and life in all world civilizations.[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-28)

**Western philosophy**

*Main article:*[*Western philosophy*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_philosophy)

[Western philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_philosophy) is the philosophical tradition of the [Western world](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_world), dating back to [pre-Socratic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Socratic_philosophy) thinkers who were active in 6th-century [Greece](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greece) (BCE), such as [Thales](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thales) ([c.](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/circa#English) 624 – [c.](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/circa#English) 545 BCE) and [Pythagoras](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pythagoras) (c. 570 – c. 495 BCE) who practiced a 'love of wisdom' ([Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_language): *philosophia*)[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-:02-29) and were also termed 'students of nature' (*physiologoi*).

[Western philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_philosophy) can be divided into three eras:[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy" \l "cite_note-auto2-30)

1. [Ancient](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_philosophy) ([Greco-Roman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greco-Roman_world)).[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-auto2-30)
2. [Medieval philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_philosophy) (referring to Christian European thought).[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-auto2-30)
3. [Modern philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_philosophy) (beginning in the 17th century).[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-auto2-30)

**Ancient era**

While our knowledge of the ancient era begins with [Thales](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thales) in the 6th century BCE, little is known about the philosophers who came before [Socrates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socrates) (commonly known as [the pre-Socratics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Socratic_philosophy)). The ancient era was dominated by [Greek philosophical schools](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_philosophy). Most notable among the schools influenced by Socrates' teachings were [Plato](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato), who founded the [Platonic Academy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platonic_Academy), and his student [Aristotle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle),[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-process-31) who founded the [Peripatetic school](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peripatetic_school). Other ancient philosophical traditions influenced by Socrates included [Cynicism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cynicism_(philosophy)), [Cyrenaicism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrenaics" \o "Cyrenaics), [Stoicism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stoicism), and [Academic Skepticism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_Skepticism). Two other traditions were influenced by Socrates' contemporary, [Democritus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democritus): [Pyrrhonism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyrrhonism" \o "Pyrrhonism) and [Epicureanism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epicureanism). Important topics covered by the Greeks included [metaphysics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics) (with competing theories such as [atomism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atomism) and [monism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monism)), [cosmology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmology), the nature of the well-lived life (*[eudaimonia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eudaimonia" \o "Eudaimonia)*), the [possibility of knowledge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistemology), and the nature of reason ([logos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logos)). With the rise of the [Roman empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_empire), Greek philosophy was increasingly discussed in [Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin) by [Romans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Rome) such as [Cicero](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cicero) and [Seneca](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seneca_the_Younger) (see [Roman philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_philosophy)).

**Medieval era**

[Medieval philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_philosophy) (5th–16th centuries) is the period following the fall of the [Western Roman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Roman_Empire) and was dominated by the rise of [Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity) and hence reflects [Judeo-Christian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judeo-Christian) theological concerns as well as retaining a continuity with Greco-Roman thought. Problems such as the existence and nature of [God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God), the nature of [faith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faith) and reason, metaphysics, the [problem of evil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Problem_of_evil) were discussed in this period. Some key Medieval thinkers include [St. Augustine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Augustine), [Thomas Aquinas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Aquinas), [Boethius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boethius), [Anselm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anselm_of_Laon) and [Roger Bacon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Bacon). Philosophy for these thinkers was viewed as an aid to [Theology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theology) (*ancilla theologiae*) and hence they sought to align their philosophy with their interpretation of sacred scripture. This period saw the development of [Scholasticism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scholasticism), a text critical method developed in [medieval universities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_universities) based on close reading and disputation on key texts. The [Renaissance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance) period saw increasing focus on classic Greco-Roman thought and on a robust [Humanism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism).

**Modern era**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kant_doerstling2.jpg)

A painting of the influential modern philosopher [Immanuel Kant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immanuel_Kant) (in the blue coat) with his friends. Other figures include [Christian Jakob Kraus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Jakob_Kraus), [Johann Georg Hamann](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Georg_Hamann), [Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodor_Gottlieb_von_Hippel_the_Elder) and [Karl Gottfried Hagen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Gottfried_Hagen)

[Early modern philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_modern_philosophy) in the Western world begins with thinkers such as [Thomas Hobbes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Hobbes) and [René Descartes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ren%C3%A9_Descartes) (1596–1650).[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy#cite_note-diane-32) Following the rise of natural science, [modern philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_philosophy) was concerned with developing a secular and rational foundation for knowledge and moved away from traditional structures of authority such as religion, scholastic thought and the Church. Major modern philosophers include [Spinoza](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spinoza), [Leibniz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gottfried_Wilhelm_Leibniz), [Locke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Locke), [Berkeley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Berkeley), [Hume](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Hume), and [Kant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immanuel_Kant).

[19th-century philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/19th-century_philosophy) (sometimes called [late modern philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Late_modern_philosophy)) was influenced by the wider 18th-century movement termed "[the Enlightenment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Enlightenment)", and includes figures such as [Hegel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hegel) a key figure in [German idealism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_idealism), [Kierkegaard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kierkegaard) who developed the foundations for [existentialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Existentialism), [Nietzsche](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nietzsche) a famed anti-Christian, [John Stuart Mill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Stuart_Mill) who promoted [utilitarianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utilitarianism), [Karl Marx](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Marx) who developed the foundations for [communism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communism) and the American [William James](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_James). The 20th century saw the split between [analytic philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Analytic_philosophy) and [continental philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continental_philosophy), as well as philosophical trends such as [phenomenology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phenomenology_(philosophy)), [existentialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Existentialism), [logical positivism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logical_positivism), [pragmatism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pragmatism) and the [linguistic turn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistic_turn) (see [Contemporary philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contemporary_philosophy)).